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Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments

Gordon Bowen and Wilson Ozuem

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Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments

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A volume in the Advances in Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, and E-Services (AMCRMES) Book Series

Published in the United States of America by
IGI Global
Business Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)
701 E. Chocolate Avenue
Hershey PA, USA 17033
Tel: 717-533-8845
Fax: 717-533-8661
E-mail: cust@igi-global.com
Web site: http://www.igi-global.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bowen, Gordon, 1950- editor. | Ozuem, Wilson, 1974- editor.
Title: Leveraging computer-mediated marketing environments / Gordon Bowen and Wilson Ozuem, editors.
Description: Hershey, PA : Business Science Reference, [2019]
Identifiers: LCCN 2018024608| ISBN 9781522573449 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781522573456 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Internet marketing--Social aspects. | Online social networks. | Social media. | Marketing--Social aspects.
Classification: LCC HF5415.1265 .L4648 2019 | DDC 658.8/72--dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018024608

This book is published in the IGI Global book series Advances in Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, and E-Services (AMCRMES) (ISSN: 2327-5502; eISSN: 2327-5529)

British Cataloguing in Publication Data
A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

Advances in Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, and E-Services (AMCRMES) Book Series

Eldon Y. Li
National Chengchi University, Taiwan & California Polytechnic State University, USA

ISSN:2327-5502
EISSN:2327-5529

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The active presence of fashion brands online serves as a channel for customers to connect with brands for different intentions. This connection acts as an outlet customers employ in furthering social identity through brand associations. Brand perceptions are accordingly formed among consumers based on the promised functional and symbolic benefits consumption of that brand guarantees. Social media has assumed an integral role in fostering brand-customer relationships that ultimately augment social identity. The following chapter examines the role social media has played on brand perceptions in the fashion apparel and accessories industry from a social identity theory perspective. The chapter focuses on theoretical implications and managerial implications. The concluding section offers some significant roles that social media and social identity may play in keeping up with the design and development of marketing communications programs.

Online behavioral tailoring has become an integral part of online marketing strategies. Contemporary marketers increasingly seek to create an influential environment on social media to empower online users to participate in online brand communities. By interacting in this way, online communities hosted by brands marketers can enhance the nature of the complex interactions that occur amongst those that participate. Such online interactions lead to three different types of social influence compliance, internalization, and identity, which develop the consumers' purchase intentions. This chapter explains how the social influence support the change in beliefs, attitude, and intentions of the online consumers in the user-generated social media networking sites (SNSs). Furthermore, it discusses the functional impact of such online social influence that enables companies to understand the perceptions and needs of online users making sense of how multiple levels of social influence phenomenon on social media impact on consumers purchase intentions.

Information plays an important role in the individual lives of people, and social media as an aspect of online information phenomenon is an exciting topic to explore in terms of its impact on social entrepreneurship. Many theoretical fields have contributed to the development of social entrepreneurship, looking in particular at the financial, political, and psychological impacts. This chapter is unique since it focuses on social enterprises and the impact of evolving technologies on social entrepreneurship. This chapter contributes to the literature on social media usage in social enterprises and offers a better understanding of the issues in the specific context of developing countries.

The success of an online recovery strategy is largely attributed to the provider's response speed. Essentially, engagement in conversation with the customer immediately after he/she complains shortens the pre-recovery phase. Service firms expect complaints from consumers when a service failure occurs. Advances in modern information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructures have changed the way in which customer-firm interactions take place and the nature of the conduct of services. Computer and internet technologies mean that services can be provided over long distances without the requirement for the physical presence of customers and employees. With the continued rapid development in the field of modern computer-mediated marketing environments (CMME) more and more services will be delivered in technology-mediated environments (TMEs). This chapter provides some insights on failure recovery strategies as competitive tools in computer-mediated marketing environments.

Debates on the importance of user-generated content (UGC) and consumer brand engagement have increasingly gained attention amongst researchers, practitioners, marketing managers, and business leaders. UGC is a concept popularized in the 21st century with the advent and rise of Web 2.0 technology. Web 2.0 has gained recognition due to its novel features that include openness, participation, and the facilitation of the creation and sharing of content. It revolutionized interactions amongst people, and users are now able to share and create personalized content on the internet instead of merely using the content available. The primary objective of this chapter is to evaluate the influence of UGC on consumer brand engagement and discuss its impact on customers and organizational marketing practices.

In omni-channel retailing, the combination of different retail channels along the different customer touchpoints has become the predominant purchasing pattern for customers. The consumers´ purchasing behavior has changed tremendously with the development of e-commerce. The so-called omni-channel customers tend to switch retail channels during their purchasing process. In order to address changing consumer behavior, omni-channel fashion retailing companies still need to learn how to be able to provide an excellent service to these customers. This chapter aims to investigate this phenomenon from the perspective of omni-channel customers.

Understanding the adoption of technologies is crucial for researchers and practitioners, as identifying key factors helps to predict and explain users' attitude towards adopting or rejecting technology. However, as smartphones are well-diffused technologies, there is contention that research efforts shift to understanding their usage comprehensively. As personal technologies that users make meaning of, smartphone usage is assumed to be more comprehensive than that of previous generation mobile phones. This chapter examines how the usage of smartphones is redefining and increasingly adding value to consumer consumption processes.

Digital media literature suggests that social media has eased the process of conceptualizing the customer, inclusive of their perception of fairness in the recovery provision. This is because individuals in social media reveal personal information and engage in online conversation and online communities. However, the inherited risk in social media such as the rapid spread of online negative word-of-mouth and the ease of switching behavior to other online providers no longer permits superficial understanding of customers' perception of failure-recovery experiences. Drawing on extant conceptual theories, the current chapter examines online failure and recovery strategies and argues that effective recovery strategies not only enhance the development of marketing communication programs but act as an effective tool for customer retention.

The ideas of service failure and recovery strategies have been transformed, due to the internet environment, from a consumer-provider perspective to a multifaceted web quality activity. The research on service failure and recovery strategies has been well-developed in terms of the consumer's viewpoint of service as well as the responsibility for recovery conventionally expected to be allotted to the marketer. On the contrary, existing research indicates that there is a limited range of understanding of consumer-website interactivity relating to online service failure and recovery strategies as well as less understanding of the highly diverse characteristics of computer-mediated marketing environments (CMMEs). The perspectives of CMMEs relate to online customer behavior as distinct from conventional behavior. In fact, providers are involved in intense activity in the online environment in terms of market competition, as customers are positioned just a click away from switching providers in the case of service failure.

This chapter demonstrates how to assess the performance of organic and sponsored activities on Facebook using the data available in Facebook Ads Manager, Facebook Page Insights, and Google Analytics. The main aim of the proposed ROI calculation model is to connect common social media marketing objectives with the analytical information available. The main emphasis is put on the technical aspect of ad performance assessment. The authors explain how the Facebook attribution system and post-impression algorithm work, describe the relation between advertising goals and metrics displayed as achieved campaign results, and demonstrate how to derive ROI indexes from different Facebook conversions. The chapter also includes a practical example how to calculate current and future value of ongoing ads.

Together with the internet, social networking sites provide the consumers and the companies with a new marketing channel. In these online platforms, people make groups and come together for specific purposes. This new vivid and productive environment attracts the consumers seeking for product information and the companies trying to be in close contact with the customers. So the traditional WOM (word of mouth) has gained a new momentum and transformed into a new form in this online environment, called e-WOM (electronic word of mouth). Setting out from this recent fact, the chapter aims to give a general review of word of mouth communication starting with the traditional word of mouth and then elaborating e-WOM. It tries to tell about what e-WOM is and how it functions in online environments. As well as the definitions and the explanations of e-WOM, the chapter also aims to give the underlying reasons and the related factors during the process of e-WOM communication, thus putting a general framework for the companies and brands about this new marketing communication.

The concept of nation branding, the origins of the term, and how brand management is applied to obtain the expected results are investigated. Governments are driving nation branding projects, but some, like in the case of the Spanish project Marca España (ME), fail in detailing their objectives. Even when the objectives are weak, it is necessary to evaluate the performance of these projects. This is why some studies and indexes have been created. The indexes distinguish how a country ranks in various areas of study (economic, social, cultural, etc.), and the results are used to measure the efficiency of nation branding. Certain methodologies are used in this study together with various sets of data: from economic indicators and reputation indexes to the digital relevance of Spain.

The impact of identity on brand loyalty has taken precedence as an area of focus in recent marketing research. This has occurred in an era defined by technological revolution, which has created market disruptions, and there are implications for customer-brand relationships. Nonetheless, existing research has failed to acknowledge the impact of socio-psychological attributes and functional utility maximization. Knowledge that illuminates how firms can reposition themselves to sustain brand loyalty when disruptions occur in today's complex and globalized business environment is also required. The chapter presents an empirical investigation into the phenomenon of brand switching behavior among consumers in a specific competitive market, particularly in the smartphone industry. It explores how resistance could be built from an identity theory perspective, as emphasis has historically been placed on the functional utility of products at the expense of social meanings. This chapter provides consideration for market disruptions in the smartphone industry. It confirms that the literature does not capture other non-utilitarian factors such as socio-psychological benefits; hence, there are underlying factors that motivate consumers to continue buying brands they buy.

Preface

Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments is an update on how social media has evolved and explore new areas of development such as a tool for value co-creation. These changes have occurred during social media's relatively short-life span. The benefits and challenges of social media can be harnessed and leveraged by the different marketing environments. The book takes a wider perspective of the application of social media so it is not just a marketing tool, but the societal benefits and implications are discussed from a millennial generation viewpoint. Because of the broad coverage of different areas of current and new roles of social media makes this book an important and distinctive reference book for those working in social media marketing and related areas, but also consultancies that specialise in social media or require core understanding on how social media has changed and the increasing potential of its use in a business and societal context. Governmental agencies will have a better understanding of the application of social media and its implication and influence on government policies in future years. Think tanks will also gain value from reviewing this book as it attempts to identify white spaces in marketing and society that could deliver new opportunities for social media in the business environment. Furthermore, academics and market practitioners (not necessarily working in social media) would find the book an invaluable review of the new landscapes in social media. Students would also improve their understanding of social media to give them the necessary depth and detail to galvanise their interest and identify workplace opportunities for social media. The aim of the book is to give its readers a compelling competitive advantage in the field of social media that could be leverage currently and in the future.

The book is structured around three pillars, namely framing and situating computer-mediated marketing environments, perspectives and practice of computer-mediated marketing environments, and opportunities and challenges in designing computer-mediated marketing environments. Thus the chapters will be aligned as follows:

Section 1: Framing and Situating Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments

1. The Dynamics of Social Media Marketing Content and Customer Retention – Michelle Willis
2. Social Media and Value Co-Creation – Kamna Sahni and Kenneth Appiah
3. Social Media and Social Identity in the Millennial Generation – Guida Helal and Wilson Ozuem
4. Exploring the Relationship Between Social Media and Social Influence – Ali Usman and Sebastian Okafor
5. Social Media and Social Entrepreneurship – MD Nazmul Islam and Vivek Chitran

Section 2: Perspectives and Practice of Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments

Section 3: Opportunities and Challenges in Designing Computer-Mediated Marketing Strategies

Section 1 is the location of four chapters of which there is a total of thirteen chapters. The first chapter in Section 1 considers social media platforms as a key to customer retention, online engagement and discussion, drawing on social influence theory. Trust, satisfaction, mutual dependency and fairness are key factors in retaining customers. Moreover, positive media posting have a healthy relationship between brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions.

Chapter 2 discuss the nature of social media platform benefits (co-creation) and security issues. Although social media in conjunction with the consumers and firms is a co-creator of economic wealth, the decentralisation of the platform does pose security issues. Social media networking is one strategy that firms reap the benefit, because of its ability to share information and apply viral marketing techniques.

Connecting fashion brands to online consumers is an effective channel to enhance brand intentions is the focus of Chapter 3. The channel connection acts as a further opportunity for brand identity through brand association. Consequently, brand perceptions are also formed and consolidated to generate symbolic and functional benefits. Furthermore, the latter part of the chapter offers suggestions on some of the roles that social media and social identity may play in future-proofing the design and development of marketing communications programmes.

Chapter 4 discusses the technique of tailoring online behaviour. Marketers have wished for a long time to be able to create an influential environment on social media to empower users online to engage in online brand communities. The online interaction lead to three different types of social influence compliance, internalization and identity, these influence purchase intention. Thus the aim of the chapter is to explain how social influence supports the change in beliefs, attitude and the intentions of the online consumers.

The final chapter in Section 1 is Chapter 5. This chapter explores the important role of information in an individual's life, and particularly social media information and its impact on social entrepreneurship. What is unique about the discussion in this chapter is that it focuses on social enterprises and the impact of technologies on social entrepreneurship in the context of developing countries.

Section 2 is structured around five chapters relating to perspectives and practice in computer-mediated marketing environments.

Chapter 6 focuses on the multi-shopping channel environment in the apparel clothing marketing environment. The chapter research aim to assess the hedonic shopping value in several contexts (in store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media). The results from the empirical study suggests the highest level of hedonic shopping value is linked to in store and website channels.

Chapter 7 suggests that brands have adjusted to the vocal customer, by the backward and forward interchange on social media platforms. Brand communities seek to engage customers in an interactive environment at different levels. The special focus of this chapter is the augmentation of brand awareness and how brand impressions are formed in the context of the millennial generation.

Chapter 8 explores the service recovery strategies in the online environment. Essentially, the immediacy of customer conversation and thus engagement once a complaint has been made shortens the pre-recovery phase. Advances in Information, Communication and Technologies infrastructures (ICT) facilitates the immediacy of the conversation and distance is no longer an impediment to engaging in conversation.

Chapter 9 in the group focuses on Use-generated Content (UGC) and consumer brand engagement. UGC has the potential to revolutionise interactions amongst people and reinforce sharing and give them the opportunity to create content and not merely using the available content on the internet.

Chapter 10 discusses omni-channels in the retail environment. The advent of e-commerce has given omni-channel customers the ability to switch retail channels during the purchasing decision making process. To minimise switching retailers will need to provide excellent service.

Chapter 11 develops an understanding of the key factors that help to explain and predict users' attitude to adopting or rejecting technology. The discussion centres around smartphones a deeply-diffused technology and correspondingly the emphasis is on the personal usage of mobile phones and what is the meaning of usage.

Chapter 12 discusses a recurring theme in the digital media literature that social media makes the process of conceptualising customers intentions easier, that is inclusive of their perception of fairness in the online service recovery situation. This is predicated on the behaviour of online consumer, which revealing personal information, engaging in online conversation and belonging to online communities. Thus the chapter aim to explore from the literature online failure and recovery strategies, and further suggest that successful recovery strategies improve customer retention and improve communications.

The final grouping in the book is Section 3, which investigates the opportunities and challenges in designing computer-mediated marketing strategies.

Chapter 13 takes a different perspective on service failure and recovery strategies. Currently, the literature focuses on the consumer's viewpoint. This chapter focuses on consumer-website interactivity relating to online failure and recovery strategies and the characteristics of the computer-mediated marketing environments.

Chapter 14 investigates the performance of organic and sponsored ads on the Facebook platform. The secondary data is evaluated to derive an ROI index for the different ad conversion rates. Moreover, the model uses a practical example to calculate current and future value of ongoing ads.

Chapter 15 gives an account on how WOM is transformed by the online environment. The general discussion on WOM and e-WOM considers the underlying reasons and related factors that make e-WOM an effective communication tool using a general framework.

Chapter 16 discuss nation branding and its context to marketing techniques. Practical use of nation branding includes enhancing country reputation for tourism, gaining FDI momentum, increasing exports and a magnet to attract talent. The chapter uses secondary research including economic, social, cultural and digital indices.

Chapter 17 reflects on brand loyalty as a market disruptor. Knowledge that illuminates how firms can reposition themselves to sustain brand loyalty when disruptions occur in today's complex and globalised business environment is also required. The chapter presents an empirical investigation into the phenomenon of brand switching behaviour among consumers in a specific competitive market, particularly in the Smartphones industry. It explores how resistance could be built from an identity theory perspective, as emphasis has historically been placed on the functional utility of products at the expense of social meanings.

CONCLUSION

This book advances the concepts in computer-mediated marketing and brings practical advice and knowledge that are influential on the online marketing environment and social media platforms. Movement to digital applications is moving at a pace and requires engagement by firms to improve their market position. *Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments* attempts to assist and promote the new marketing concepts of the offline and social media environments. Furthermore, to enable firms to develop a holistic perspective of computer-mediated activities and environments.

Section 1

Framing and Situating Computer–Mediated Marketing Environments

Chapter 1
The Dynamics of Social Media Marketing Content and Customer Retention

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms are the key tools to facilitate online engagement; however, to stimulate a discussion, the content published on the platforms is significant as it must appeal to different consumers. The quality of the content and platform type is key to successful engagement. Maintaining positive relationships with consumers is a vital activity for many brands in social media. Trust, satisfaction, fairness, and mutual dependency are key factors to retaining customers. Moreover, positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions were found to be linked to positive evaluations of companies' social media postings. To maintain value, firms use social media platforms that facilitate consumer-to-consumer as well as consumer-to-business engagement. Drawing from social influence theory, this chapter explores how social media marketing content (SMMC) impacts customer retention.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Maintaining positive relationships with consumers is a vital activity for many brands in social media. Trust, satisfaction, fairness and mutual dependency are key factors to retaining customers (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Moreover, positive brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions were found to be linked to positive evaluations of companies' social media postings (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, & de Vries, 2015). To maintain value, firms use social media platforms that facilitate consumer-to-consumer as well as consumer-to-business engagement. However, there is no general classification of what counts as engagement (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2010) due to the many types of social media platforms and usage purposes.

Online engagement does not solely depend on the medium of technology; Shin's (2018) study on virtual reality environments, described as a type of social media platform (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch001

& Tao, 2015), concluded that technical quality does not directly impact value or experience. For VR, content that encourages active conversation or community gaming is what motivates human-media interaction and facilitates users' online experience. Harrigan, Soutar, Choudhury & Lowe (2015) agree, stating that customer relationship orientation is needed to drive social media technology. Additionally, the interpersonal communication among users, including communication with the brand, can impact how content is perceived by the majority of observers. Lu, Fan, & Zhou (2016) propose that the presence of social media increases the consumers' trust. This means that exposure to socially shared posts by active sharers can increase the likelihood of purchase intentions, because trust can be established if material content is shared by a mass network or by central social networks.

Various scholars have developed taxonomies of social media in specific areas of study (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Tafesse & Wien, 2017; Vilnai-Yavetz & Levina, 2018). Kietzmann *et al*. (2011) developed the Honeycomb social media model, which focuses on addressing seven functional building blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. The model provides guidance on how companies can respond to various audience needs with the social media platforms they use. Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) affirm that their framework is useful for analysis of the increasing number of social media platforms and their various capabilities towards specific user communities. However, the model views the various social media platforms subjectively and focuses on the technology value. The model does not consider the possible social influence that induces online users to engage. Therefore it is important to understand social media content from the perspective of consumers and the social influence behind the content that observers acknowledge to impact their decision-making.

Tafesse & Wien (2017) developed a framework that categorises different social media posts for different online activities from the perspective of customer management and message strategy. The model details various categories of post content and their purpose, providing guidance on maintaining online customer interactions. However, the types of post content categorised in the study were based on a single-message strategy. Customers have multiple interests and reasons for using social media, therefore marketers would likely be expected to generate post content with more than one message strategy. An issue in generating content for brands is posting content that encourages consumers to share or interact based on the content that also benefits the firm.

Akpinar & Berger's (2017) study addresses what type of content is effective and valuable. Their study's findings implied that content that evokes emotion impacts consumers' decision to share or interact. However, Akpinar & Berger (2017) implied that whether the content is emotionally or informatively appealing will depend on the purpose of attracting the consumer. This is supported by Pressgrove, McKeever & Jang (2018) who investigated the likelihood of content being shared on Twitter. Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) concluded that while positive emotions can evoke content sharing, if it does not have a practical significance to the observer, the likelihood of content sharing reduces. Yet unlike Akpinar & Berger's (2017) study, Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) do not specify what content is categorised as informative information or an emotional content, or consider the various engagement purposes. Individuals are likely to use social media platforms for various reasons, so responses will vary.

The studies of Vilnai-Yavetz & Levina (2018) and Fu, Wu & Cho (2017) were undertaken from the perspective of the non-financial motives for sharing e-business content. Both found that self-expression, community connection and belonging were key motivations. It is important for firms to understand how they can develop their social media strategies, by understanding how online consumers access content and what influences them to become interactive based on firm-generated content. However, the study does not consider the non-active social media users who form the majority of the online population. Although that population may be irrelevant to viral sharing activity, it can be argued that their decision to remain with an airline can still be majorly influenced by the type of content posted and shared by the company and its followers.

With the majority of online users being observers rather than content contributors, it is important to understand the extent to which they are socially influenced by followers or company-generated content to remain with airline brands. This can be developed from Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo's (2004) decision-making and participation variable on online communities' frameworks. Two of the main variables include an individual's desire and intention to act and commit with others within an online community. If individuals have a strong social influence over other online consumers, the likelihood of brands being positively perceived by a mass number of social networks would be greater than directly posting content to them. This can be the case even if grouped consumers share similar motivations and values or if the content is directed to a particular audience.

Muller & Peres (2018) analysed the key components of social media networks, such as the quality of networks and their key characteristics that define social influence status. The two key messenger groups identified are market mavens and social hubs; these have access to large volumes of marketplace information or online networks and engage in online activities. These two groups impact consumers' perception of marketing messages and encourage them to share the content. This indicates that the type of information these two main groups deliver and their position in the social media community can impact consumers' brand perception. However, it is important to understand whether the observing social media users perceive these two groups significant to influencing their purchasing intentions and decision to remain with brands.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Some scholars define social media as an Internet-based application that builds on technological foundations, consisting of a series of words, images and audio hosted by well-known sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and blogs (Yates & Paquette, 2011; Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, D., 2012; Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). In contrast, other scholars define social media as platforms of interaction through user-generated content, promoting the encouragement of individuals or communities to socialise, learn, play, engage and exchange information at their convenience (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011; Bonsón, Torres, Royo, & Flores, 2010; Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Ozuem, 2016). Although there is no single definition of what social media is, it is clear that social media can be used as a method of online communication to redefine how services are delivered to retain customers (Ayertey, Ozuem, & Appiah, 2018). In general, social media has been defined as a technology and community engagement platform. In addition, there have been various studies of social media that have primarily focused on researching the effects of its activity and connection to online behavioural patterns (Kuksov, Shachar, & Wang, 2013; Blazevic, Wiertz, Cotte, de Ruyter, & Keeling, 2014; Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010; Stokinger & Ozuem, 2018).

Kuksov *et al.*'s (2013) study focused on the impact online participants have on companies' management of their brands. Kuksov *et al.* state that brand managers are no longer the key stakeholders for presenting a brand, as social media has more effectively enabled consumers to contribute content. Bertot *et al.* (2010) highlight the notion that social media facilitates collaboration, participation and empowerment to enable online users to interact. This, according to Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy, & Skiera (2010) is more effective because consumer-generated content spreads more quickly and is more readily available. In addition, Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz (2013) argue that consumer-generated brand stories add to a brand's identity. Consequently, when consumers volunteer content or their own networks, they impact not only the image of the brand but also the authenticity of the brand's social identity. However, the availability of technology that enables interaction does not mean that users will respond in the same way even when provided with equal access to do so. Gensler *et al.* (2013) and Bertot *et al.* (2010) do not specifically mention the various motivations online users have to participate in social media or how firms can use social media to encourage online observers to take part in online discussions.

Every online user will deliver different volumes and types of engagement, resulting in brands receiving different response outcomes for their online content. Blazevic *et al.* (2014) studied the extent to which an individual will probably participate in online interaction in contrast to another who will not, even when equal access and motivational settings are available. The study aimed to examine the difference between online and offline interaction behaviours. Blazevic *et al.*'s study (2014) recorded three themes that characterise general online social interaction behavioural patterns:

1. **The Level of Interaction:** The amount of interactive behaviour from different participants, from lurking to contributing content
2. **Social Preferences:** The level of wanting to be a part or a creator of online community interaction or a discussion
3. **Enjoyment in Interaction:** The extent to which an individual enjoys the online interactive exchange with others

These themes suggest that interactivity is a feature not only linked to technology but also to the consumer focused in the online discussion. Wiertz & de Ruyter (2007) support this argument that online interaction does not solely depend on the medium of technology, but on the individuals who make the decision to use those facilities. Blazevic *et al.* (2014) found that there is a clear distinction between online and offline communication, which they determined from the groups involved in online communication. When communicating online, individuals are more likely to interact with strangers, rather than people they are familiar with. Consequently, the participation or disclosure of information online may be different, or limited, in contrast to the disclosure of information in conversations in an offline environment. This means that there is a difference in types of online consumers, the lurkers or observers, and the contributors that post or participate in online activities (Schlosser, 2005).

Various researchers have found that active contributors constitute a small population in contrast with the number of lurkers, who mainly observe content posted by others (Cothrel & Williams, 1999; Kozinets, 1999; Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004). Therefore, technology platforms do not guarantee consumer engagement, and each user, even with common interests and goals, will respond differently to content posted online. Yet it is important to note that individuals who are active posters may be more willing to communicate in online situations rather than offline. Consequently, mass online content is still likely to be generated by the small population of contributors, but it will depend on the nature of the interaction in which they are participating.

Brands that publish SMMC on their fan pages are one method of producing popularity among other brands and encouraging online interaction. De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang (2012) argued that a range of characteristics of brand posts can impact the brand's popularity. The first characteristic discussed is the vividness of the post, emphasising that the features of the content generate a variety of attitudes towards the brand. Various researchers have found that stimulating the vividness of the post can be achieved through different forms of online features, such as pictures and animations (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Goodrich, 2011). Such elements that augment the richness of a post's features can generate different perspectives of the brand from various observers (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). Consequently, the response will vary amongst individuals who develop their own attitudes towards such richness that is published. Therefore interactivity will be different across different post and communication channels, which is another key feature examined in the study. Liu & Shrum (2002) explain that the form of the medium of communication that enables groups to interact with each other is vital when communicating online. In contrast, Blazevic *et al.* (2014) disagree that the technology platform is the most important characteristic of online interaction. Nevertheless, it is the platform that impacts the effectiveness of, and access to, online interaction, therefore there is a connection between online interaction levels and the technology platform that enables such interaction.

Additionally, de Vries *et al.*'s (2012) study of brand-related content specifically focuses on the characteristics of information and entertainment. Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit (2011) point out that individuals consume brand-related content to obtain information concerning the brand and its products or services. This implies that brand posts that contain informative content about the brand are more likely to retain a certain volume of popularity. However, another essential point de Vries *et al.* mention is the content that retains consumers' psychological attachment to the brand. According to Taylor, Lewin & Strutton (2011) advertisements with entertaining characteristics can impact the perception of the brand through the advertisement, which can potentially increase the consumers' psychological connection with the brand (Raney, Arpan, Pashupati, & Brill, 2003). While this is the case, it is important for firms to consider the objectives of enhancing the online interaction or the response they aim to attain in relation to the content they publish.

For example, de Vries *et al.* found that entertainment brand posts can contain unrelated content which thus negatively impacts the brands' objective as to how they are perceived. However, in contrast, Berger & Milkman's (2012) work on what makes online content viral found that content will most likely be shared if it evokes high emotions. The study suggested that consumers share content for the purposes of self-presentation, as positive content may reflect a positive image of the sender. Considering the findings in the studies referred to on the relationship between content and online consumers, it can be argued that the online engagement objectives must match the purpose of the content posted. Although online participants have different levels of need regarding what experience they want from the content and the social media tools, brands using social media must incorporate customisation into their posting activity.

Similarly, Kim & Ko (2012) concluded that the entertainment, interaction and trendiness characteristics are important for application to marketing social media activities for luxury fashion brands. By way of contrast, their study deemed the element of customisation and word-of-mouth (WOM) to be equally important. Moon (2002) proposed that consumers perceive personalisation as having a practical and symbolic value. Bernritter, Verlegh, & Smit (2016) confirmed that brand symbolism is a great benefit for for-profit firms due to the emotional attachment it generates from customers, therefore increasing their likelihood to endorse brands through social media. In this way, personalisation can impact consumers' perspectives of the brand's symbol and values, encouraging the practice of individualism amongst online users (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010). When examining customisation of international marketing, Markus & Kitayama (1991) assert that understanding cross-cultural differences is vital, as a significant example of customisation in online international marketing (Lim, Leung, Sia, & Lee, 2014; Roth, 1995).

Likewise Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden's (2016) research in marketing focused primarily on the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, which can be linked to Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimension study. However, establishing the extent to which a country's culture impacts social media activity is difficult, as individual countries also have sub-groups that can be categorised under different social media activities. These individual studies similarly imply that incorporating customisation into social media posts is significant to retaining online engagement. If firms aim to maintain a continuation of online WOM, it is vital to publish content that matches consumers' interests and connects them with other networks with similar interests. This also contributes to maintaining online consumers' interaction, and it is essential to consider the various activities and reasons that motivate individuals to be active on social media platforms that support brands' social media activity.

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS AND TAXOMOMIES

Focusing on the subject of social media, the key significant factor is the technology platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Wikipedia. While these platforms are some of the most globally used, the definition of social media is not limited to the platforms mentioned above (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). As there are various types and formats of social media, there is no methodical way in which social media can be categorised. Thus, it is important to distinguish the different types of social media by the definitions of their intended use. Ngai *et al.* (2015) define six categories of different social media platforms as:

- Media sharing sites
  - Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram that enable users to upload and share audio or visual material online with other people or communities.
- Blogs/microblogs
  - These sites are where individuals can post their own written material online for people to read and comment upon the material or subject. Microblogs are mostly for short and high-frequency posting, whereas blogs are similar to a personal online journal. (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr and Blog sites).
- Social bookmarking sites
  - This is the activity of saving and organising specific web contents through the use of tags in order to share with other online users.
- Virtual/online communities
  - These enable the sharing of specific information and interests through interactive tools.
- Social networking sites
  - These are platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn that facilitate connecting individuals who may share common interests, or building friendships or promoting acquaintance among individuals. These sites allow individuals to post profiles of themselves and upload pictures and videos.

- Virtual worlds
    - Users can create their own personal identity in computer-generated environments to explore communicating with others and joining in activities.

The definitions of these types of social media indicate that the perceived advantages of social media platforms affect the consumers' motivation to use them. Therefore it is clear that the type and purpose of SMMC will be implemented using the method that best suits the aims and objectives of the material posted in regard to generating consumer interaction and engagement.

Over time the various motivations of consumers using social media have increased from 'lurking' to being active participants. As the motivations of use have increased so have studies to understand the usage behaviour of consumers. So with results not drawing the same conclusions or definitions of social media, there is no generally accepted taxonomy to classify social media as a whole. Yet while there is no generally accepted taxonomy, various researchers have found taxonomies for specific studies of social media, especially in the types of users and their motivations for social media usage. For instance, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) proposed a taxonomy of social media based on media theories, social presence and media richness, and social processes theories, self-presentation and self-disclosure. Taking into account the type of media and its degree of richness, the study focuses on measuring the media richness of six types of social media and the levels of interaction they enable. To illustrate this, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) found that blogs score the lowest for media richness due to their basic text-based activity, whereas content communities like YouTube and social networking sites like Facebook scored higher for media richness and social presence due to their combination of text-based communication and sharing of other media content such as pictures and videos. This study helps identify the effectiveness of different social media platforms, but it does not consider the various activities that users can undertake using the social media platforms.

Tafesse & Wien (2017) developed a framework that categorises different social media posts for different online activities and communities. These are:

- **Emotional Brand Posts:** Posts consisting of emotion-laden language, inspiring stories or humour to arouse affective responses
- **Functional Brand Posts:** Posts highlighting the qualities of products or services, or benefits of companies and their performance criteria
- **Educational Brand Posts:** help consumers acquire new knowledge or skills
- **Brand Resonance:** Posts highlighting the main characteristics of a brand's identity and image, including logos, slogans and celebrity associations
- **Experiential Brand Posts:** Highlight the personified qualities of the brand, which can come in the form of visualised product launches, sponsored events or festivals
- **Current Event:** Posts commenting on current themes such as cultural holidays or events to initiate conversations
- **Personal Brand Posts:** Posts tailored around consumer relationships, preferences and experiences
- **Employee Brand Posts:** Posts about a company's employees and their roles within the company and even their personal interests
- **Brand Community:** Posts used to promote or reinforce a brand's online community. This involves tagging and user-generated content to encourage users' participation

- **Customer Relationship:** Customer feedback reviews and testimonies to improve the impact of customer relationship in social media channels and encourage others to submit feedback
- **Cause-Related Brand Posts:** These are created by companies to promote social causes they are supporting and aim to inspire customers to support them
- **Sales Promotion Posts:** The purpose of these posts is to attract consumers toward a buying decision; these include price discounts, coupons and product competitions

The social media post categorisation provides a framework that can be used to inspire new brand post ideas and encourage daily customer interaction on social media, and to improve content strategies. The framework supports determining which category of posts should be published frequently and which ones are more likely to generate consumer engagement. However, the limitation to Tafesse & Wien's (2017) framework is that it does not consider brand posts that incorporate multiple messages into a single post. Therefore measuring the effectiveness of a post category becomes complicated if the post's message cannot be linked to a specified category. Furthermore, the model does not provide an in-depth understanding of how online users are influenced by social factors or networks to engage or share content.

Although it is important to know the various online activities, it is important to understand the various characteristics linked to consumers' psychological or social reasons for interacting through social media or sharing particular content. Vilnai-Yavetz & Levina's (2018) study focuses on addressing four non-financial motives for sharing e-business content: self-enhancement; hedonism; community and belonging; and society and business community. Similarly, Fu *et al.* (2017) examined the social and psychological motivations of content sharing on Facebook. The two broad categories they developed were self-interest (achievement, self-expression, loneliness) and communal incentives (connection, altruism, and group joy). This supports that though consumers may share interest in types of content, there are various consumer behavioural characteristics that social media posts must consider to generate the customers' response to act within the social media community.

In comparison, Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) developed the Honeycomb social media model, which focuses on addressing seven functional building blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Their study addresses these features of social media and how companies respond to them, providing an understanding of the audience for each social media platform and what their engagement needs are. The Honeycomb framework primarily focuses on the ways in which social media activities vary and impact consumers' online activity. While the framework does not provide specific examples of external social influences that motivate consumers to comply with brands' SMMC or activities, it is a useful framework relating to the strategic development of SMMC.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND VIRAL MARKETING

Social media platforms have a high volume of online users encountering many brands and their fan pages. A key marketing method suitable for social media applications is viral marketing, as the community element of social media enables brands to take advantage of the large group of people available to transfer marketing messages to their online networks. Some researchers have therefore combined viral marketing and social media marketing into their study (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Viral marketing is a method that uses consumer-to-consumer communication to spread information about a company's product or service. Viral marketing provides the advantage of rapidly transmitting marketing messages to a mass audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011) without the high investment costs of other traditional advertising (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). Viral marketing has been studied in literature under a variety of subject areas including word-of-mouse and word-of-mouth marketing (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010). Previous research on the determinants of viral marketing success has primarily focused on the features of the content (Shehu, Bijmolt, & Clement, 2016; Pressgrove *et al.*, 2018; Peng, Agarwal, Hosanagar, & Iyengar, 2018) and seeding strategies (Hu, Lin, Qian, & Sun, 2018; Muller & Peres, 2018; Hinz, Schulze, & Takac, 2014).

Features of content often primarily focus on creating effective viral messages that encourage consumers to pass the message to others. Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) developed the Viral Marketing Process Model which identifies three main elements in creating viral marketing, one of which includes the content of the marketing message. Akpinar & Berger's (2017) study investigated the likelihood of content becoming viral based on the viewers' emotional response. Their results from the study indicated that content with more emotional appeal was more likely to be shared than informatively appealed content. Additionally, the study concluded that submitting content that has emotional appeal contributes to boosting brand evaluation and purchase intent. In comparison, Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) found that content evoking positive emotions is more likely to go viral than content evoking negative emotions. However, in contrast their study found that only content with practical value was shared on the basis that it was viewed as having practical value or information relevant enough to share with others. Although Pressgrove *et al.* (2018) was based on a study of the platform Twitter, other sites like Facebook and Instagram that have frequent sharing and posting may have different conclusions as to why content goes viral.

As mentioned earlier, social media users range from being simple observers to active sharers of content. Viral marketing can only occur if consumers are willing to share and promote a brand (de Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). It can be argued that the impact of viral marketing campaigns reaching mass audiences is strongly influenced by key consumer seeds that have a strong social influence in online communities. Samadi, Nagi, Semenov, & Nikolaev (2018) developed the two-level network model which separates the potential seeds or influencers from the regular 'influencees'. The first level contains the influencers that can support a campaign through sharing content consentingly, resulting in the content reaching the 'influencees' who are part of the second stage of the model. However, this study is based on the process of 'paid bloggers' being employed or sponsored to generate or share content, and does not provide assumptions for voluntary activation of potential seeds.

Muller & Peres (2018) analysed components such as the quality of networks and identified key messengers and their characteristics to support the viral message process, as follows:

- **Market Mavens:** As the group who are typically the first to receive the message, these individuals have access to large volumes of marketplace information and engage in online discussions with other consumers to spread information.
- **Social Hubs:** These are individuals with large numbers of online connections who pass marketing messages to a large population of consumers.

Kaplan & Haenlein's (2011) model has limitations to providing an understanding of the 'seeds' impacting the successful spread of viral messages. While the model provides general groups that could impact the process of viral marketing, the model does not specify the social position of seeds that have particular influence over other online consumers. A consumer's social network position within an online community can be defined by his/her relationship with other networks (Kiss & Bichler, 2008; Susarla, Oh,

& Tan, 2012). If the individual is central to the online network it is he/she who impacts other consumers' perception of the marketing messages or encourages other networks to share the content the main seed has shared with them (Muller & Peres, 2018). The development of online communities through social media has extended consumer influence beyond immediate close friends to acquaintances and strangers (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008). Therefore mass networks involved in viral marketing may be a significant factor in influencing individuals to join viral marketing campaigns with heavily populated networks. However, this may be more relevant once a viral campaign has established viral attention, hence the small numbers of fundamental consumers at the start of the process are significant in contrast to targeting a large population at the beginning. Overall, despite research into content and senders and receivers, there is limited understanding on what the main drivers are for successful viral marketing efforts (Ferguson, 2008; Kalyanam, McIntyre, & Masonis, 2007). Yet it can be argued that message content and the influence of key individuals that share it are essential fundamentals to viral marketing.

Social Influence Theory

Social influence is considered essential when studying human behaviour; with regard to social media, it is possible that individuals' online behaviour is impacted by the volume of individuals active online. Social influence occurs when an individual adapts his/her behaviour or beliefs to the behaviour of others in the social system (Leenders, 2002). Scholarly research regarding social and communication networks, opinion leadership, source credibility and uses and consumer indulgence can provide insights into the marketing process and motivations of participants (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004). Face-to-face interactions are not essential for social influence, as influence is based on the information about other individuals (Robins, Pattison, & Elliott, 2001). With technology in social media advancing further, the role of social influence may be vital to influencing the usage of the various types of technology platforms (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014).

Trusov, Bodapati & Bucklin (2010) studied the types of social network users that influence others. They believed that aspects of online social networks like MySpace and Facebook are similar to types of interactions found on consumer product review sites. However, they found that differences in different social network sites were too numerous for them to be treated in the same way. These differences included the volume of people involved and the motives and nature of interactions in online communities. Previous studies had focused more on aggregated group influence than individual influence within groups (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Trusov *et al.* (2010) found that having a long list of networks does not have a significant influence. Hence it is likely that online users will rely on a small percentage of individuals they are connected to online, supporting the concept that the information or nature of the influencer is key.

Bagozzi & Dholakia's (2002) study adopted a marketing lens to identify two key social influence variables: group norms and social identity. By incorporating the social psychological model of goal-directed behaviour and social identity theory, Bagozzi & Dholakia modelled group participation as a function of individual and social determinants. However, their model has limitations. First, they consider social influence variables to be caused by external forces, and do not consider the background or experience of group norms or social identity. Furthermore the study is limited to virtual communities and does not consider the distinctions among different virtual communities. Dholakia *et al.*'s (2004) study is built on Bagozzi & Dholakia's (2002) framework, but includes the background experience of social influences in the model. Dholakia *et al.*'s model comprises three factors: value perception, social influence variables and decision making, and participation. The value perception consists of five individual value groups:

- **Purposive Value:** Value derived from accomplishment of a pre-determined instrumental purpose (including giving and receiving information).
- **Self-Discovery:** Understanding the notable, unique aspects of one's self through social interactions, supporting individuals to determine their preferences and values.
- **Maintaining Interpersonal Interconnectivity:** The social benefits resulting from online social networks.
- **Social Enhancement:** Value obtained from gaining acceptance and approval from other members, and the image they develop from being a contributor.
- **Entertainment Value:** A result from having fun interacting with others.

Finally there are three main decision-making and participation variables, namely:

- **Desire:** An individual's motivation to favour acting as part of an online community
- **We-Intentions:** An individual's commitment to co-operate actively in agreement with others
- **Participation Behaviour:** Frequency of online behaviour

Dholakia *et al.* (2004) hypothesised that strong group norms indirectly generate consent among members regarding when and how they engage in online interactions. In other words, group norms encourage mutual agreements among members regarding participation details. Research on group negotiation shows that group norms enable co-operative motivation among group members (Weingart, Bennett, & Brett, 1993). Therefore the stronger the group norms, the greater the likelihood of individuals' choice to jointly accommodate their preferences and commitments with others.

Cheung & Lee (2009) investigated important aspects of the social influence processes and their roles in influencing online behaviour. Their model illustrates that intentions to continue using a virtual community are determined by satisfaction, commitment and group norms. These are then affected by online users' needs for purposive value, self-discovery, entertainment value, social enhancement, and maintaining interpersonal inter-connectivity. The model focuses on two behavioural intentions of online members: the intention to continue use and the intention to recommend. Cheung & Lee concluded that satisfaction has the strongest impact on the intention to recommend, as satisfied consumers will engage favourably with firms (Yang & Peterson, 2004). This aspect of satisfaction can be applied to the context of a virtual community. If members are satisfied with their experience, they are more likely to share their positive experiences.

However, Cheung & Lee did not find a connection between satisfaction and commitment. It can be argued that the sense of belonging impacts commitment, which can link with group norms that individuals share with others (Helal & Ozuem, 2018). In this way they generate satisfaction due to the virtual community facilitating individuals' social position in the community. However, this study was only applied to understanding virtual communities. With more social media platforms allowing social interaction it is important to apply an understanding of users' engagement on different platforms. Cheung, Chiu, & Lee's (2011) study hypothesised that individuals with strong social identity generate strong intentions to interact online. Yet it is important to note that individuals' perspectives of online interaction will affect the social influence they accept. So the behavioural outcome of individuals generated will be different even when they are provided with equal access to online platforms. Moreover, it is important to understand the social factors rather than the intended social action (Cheung & Lee, 2009; Dholakia *et al.,* 2004).

According to Prentice-Dunn & Rogers (1985) social influence is strong when individuals belong to groups. Hence it can be argued that when individuals have limited knowledge, the social influence is likely to be high. For example, Cohen & Golden (1972) and Venkatesan (1966) found that social influence is high if product quality detail is unclear. This perspective can be applied to users on social media who may place value on brands based on the volume of online WOM which may reduce individuals' uncertainty. An understanding of human behaviour can be drawn from Kelman's (1958) social influence theory. Kelman states that an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behavioural outcomes are influenced by others through three processes, which are:

- **Compliance**: is assumed to occur when individuals accept influence and adopt the encouraged behaviour to gain rewards or avoid punishment
- **Identification:** Occurs when individuals adopt a behaviour to create or maintain a connection with other individuals or groups
- **Internalisation:** is the adoption of decisions based on finding similarity of one's value systems with other group members

According to Cheung & Lee (2010) earlier models of human behaviour have primarily centred on subjective norms of social influence, which can be linked to the compliance process of Kelman's theory. The limitation of Kelman's model however is that it does not measure the growth of relationships between variables, such as social factors and social identity, or apply them to measuring social interaction. Kelman's research was primarily focused on attitude change, tested scientifically, in contrast to investigating a social community, which limits the understanding of variables influencing social interaction in social media. However, Kelman's theory can contribute to extended studies of different users on social network sites, as many social media may well move through the three different processes. This is supported by Karahanna, Straub, & Chervany (1999) and Taylor & Todd (1995) who compared experienced and inexperienced Internet users, finding that subjective norms are less influential in decisions for usage among experienced users.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Social media has the potential to increase firms' value as a result of maintaining an online interaction with their customers. As well as using social media to connect with peers, many individuals require organisations to adopt a similar level of interaction with their consumers (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Ansarin & Ozuem, 2015). Therefore many firms are expected to increase their use of social media as a medium to maintain personal communication with their customers and monitor their online interaction behaviour. According to Trainor (2012), CRM is defined as a customer-facing activities and technology activity combined to create online conversations and develop customer relationships. Wang & Kim (2017) further point out that CRM involves firms managing knowledge about the customers' buying habits in order to personalise product and service offers for individual customers. Research by Xiang, Du, Ma & Fan (2017) has identified social media as significant in motivating users to engage in knowledge-sharing and has recognised that social media incorporates a ‘human side’ in customer knowledge management (Carlson *et al.*, 2018).

A good relationship between firms and customers is vital for CRM. However, what makes a good relationship in CRM is not always clear. A study by Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard (2017) implied that customers’ social participation with preferred brands in online communities impacts the relationship quality regarding trust, loyalty and enhancing customer-brand relationships. Kamboj, Sarmah, Gupta, & Dwivedi’s (2018) study tested Hajli *et al.*’s (2017) study by assessing the effects of social media participation motivations, including building interpersonal relations, entertainment, brand likeability, information seeking and incentives, and the consequent effect of customer participation on brand trust and brand loyalty. According to Kamboj *et al.* (2018) the findings of the study supported that customer participation in online brand communities leads to brand trust and loyalty and to co-creation of SMMC. The study therefore establishes a link between brand trust and brand loyalty through brands’ social media communities.

Kamboj *et al.*’s (2018) findings can be confirmed by Sashi’s (2012) model of the process of customer engagement, which confirms that customer engagement focuses on satisfying customers by providing superior value to build trust and commitment in long-term relationships in order to compete with other suppliers. Social media interaction facilitates the process of forming permanent relationships between sellers and buyers. The process of creating a customer engagement cycle has been used in reference to the purchase cycle process which represents customers’ stages of purchase decision-making. Sashi (2012) has highlighted the notion that social media enables frequent, faster and richer interactions among groups of people. However, his study does not take different social media platforms into account or examine the advantages and disadvantages of each stage of the engagement cycle regarding social media use. Understanding how social media platforms like Facebook or YouTube combine with CRM to produce affective and calculative commitment is vital. This can be studied with the research into social influence.

According to Üstüner & Godes (2006) social media technology has the potential to support firms in obtaining effective sales through CRM, by enabling them to understand their customers’ perspective of the brand. The application of social media to CRM can also support firms in developing strategies for customer solutions and improving the effectiveness of online operations to manage the high demand from customers. Yet while social media is viewed as significant in customer knowledge management, particularly for the personalisation of service and product offers and encouraging consumers’ motivation to share knowledge (Moe & Schweidel, 2017; Ozuem and Tan, 2014), it is important to point out that social media alone will not have a direct impact on maintaining online customer relationships. Consequently, the firms’ capabilities in facilitating and managing social media platforms and the discussions taking place on them will generate the effectiveness of social media in CRM. Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp, & Agnihotri’s (2013) study concluded that social media technology should be used to develop capabilities in online consumer relationships. Therefore social media is vitally significant in maintaining online communication and customer knowledge management, but firms have to organise effective social media activities to generate customer interaction in order to obtain the required information and sustain customers’ satisfaction with the brand.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consumer Engagement: A communication connection between an organisation and consumers through different channels of communication. This can be linked to the customers experience in communicating with organizations regarding its products and services and how effective it is in retaining customer satisfaction.

Influencer Seeding: Influential individuals within a large network that promote brands and their messages on various social media channels to attract the larger target audience to brands. These individuals are highly significant to starting viral marketing campaigns.

Message Strategy: A plan on how to attract target markets to a brand, its services and products and equity through creative and persuasive marketing messages.

Social Influence: The change in behavior, opinions, and emotions of an individual caused as a result of their perception of themselves in relation to the influence, group, or society. Social influence can be seen in socialization, conformity, obedience, compliance, and sales and marketing.

Social Media: Communication channels facilitated through websites and applications linked to social networking, forums, wikis, and microblogging dedicated to community interaction, collaboration, and content sharing.

User-Generated Content: Content such as images, videos, text, and audio that have been created and posted on social media platforms by unpaid contributors or fans of a brand.

Viral Marketing: A marketing technique that encourages online users to share marketing messages to other users or sites, potentially increasing the message's visibility and effect to a larger audience.

Chapter 2
The Dynamics of Social Media and Value Co-Creation

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ABSTRACT

Social media is considered trustworthy by consumers, and this has resulted in a strong consumer focus on social media to acquire information related to products and services. There are various benefits offered by social media, but security is a major concern as viruses and other threats can affect a huge number of users of social media. These platforms are not well governed. Indeed, they are highly decentralized and could easily be accessed, and this presents a high risk of illegal activity. Businesses continue to reap the benefits of incorporating social media into their strategies. There has been a shift in focus from conventional media to online and digital media in the form of social networking sites, wikis, and blogs. This has given rise to viral marketing as a means of effective communication and sharing information. The current chapter aims to explore the relationship between social media and value co-creation.

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing understanding in literature that social media is evolving to offer the consumer platforms to connect with others with the help of user-generated content in the form of images, text, videos and audio recordings (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). This has encouraged user participation that is not restricted in any form. The social media platforms allow users to participate in a conversation and share views and reviews about products and services. According to Hanna *et al*. (2011), businesses influence consumers and consumers influence brand messages. Social media offers opportunities for customers to contribute to a value co-creation process with companies.

A number of studies have depicted various ways in which businesses can take advantage of and produce worth from user participation on social media platforms (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2009; Bechmann & Lomborg, 2013; Nambisan & Nambisan 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). The growing importance

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch002

of social media has provided benefits such as: (a) building a network, content contribution by customers and updating content; (b) helping to enhance the growth of a company and foster innovation; and (c) trading the information obtained from digital profiles. Therefore, with the help of social media businesses and consumers get involved in different co-creation processes, which include designing and developing products, services and service support ideas (Nambisan & Nambisan, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Allan (2005) also noted that companies' online views and collaboration have the potential to enhance the characteristics of products by taking on board user-generated content on social media.

The digitalisation aspect of the social media platforms enables consumers to have better knowledge related to the products and services and thus to participate in the value co-creation process and interact more with the brands (Aluri *et al*., 2015; Chathoth *et al*., 2014; Lin *et al*., 2018). Business can enhance the customer experience by employing the benefits of social media. Applying social media as a tool for managing the experience of the customer is vital in a highly competitive market scenario. Businesses have also acknowledged the prospect of utilising social media as a marketing tool within their operations (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Luo, Zhang, & Lui, 2015; Mangold & Faulds, 2009 ; Ozuem & Yankova, 2015). Previous studies highlighted the adoption of the types of tools mentioned by Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou, and Valvi (2015). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Kietzmann, Hermlens, and Silverstre (2011), social media has developed to provide to consumers with opportunities to become involved in an exchange of ideas through video content, images, text, and audio. According to Gallaugher and Ransbotham (2010), interactions and collaborations between organisations and consumers have become simpler and more common than in the past.

Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of using social media for value co-creation in various sectors. For example, Cao, Ajjan, and Hong (2013) have applied social media to educational outcomes in college teaching. Xie and Stevenson (2014) applied social media in digital libraries. Kao *et al*. (2016) investigated co-creating value with consumers through social media using a service firm. Islam, Agarwal, and Ikeda (2015) conceptualised the business notion of value co-creation in the framework of libraries. Santos, Alves, and Brambilla (2016) examined value co-creation in retail using social networks. Social media has helped to develop better relationships between businesses and various stakeholders. Social media has gained paramount importance and is greatly used by the masses due to its user-friendly nature and easy access to the Internet.

CONTEXTUALISATION: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a global and useful application that is based on the technological foundations of the World Wide Web. It is a means of social interaction that is facilitated by the Internet. There has been rapid progress in the usage of the Social Media Applications (SMA) in recent years. Social media has made customers more aware about businesses and their products. It has also resulted in stronger connections between buyers and sellers. Social media is grounded on the technologies of Web 2.0 (Hew & Cheung, 2012). Web 2.0 has experienced exponential growth that has resulted in the development of new technologies. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008) note that Web 2.0 technologies empower end-users to be able to use different kinds of media content like video, audio, images and comments. Customers can review, create, comment and share content on social media with the help of online networks. Customers thus have uninterrupted access to businesses, brands and marketers (Chau & Xu, 2012).

Social media has affected the life of people over the past decades. The main objective of social media was to connect people socially but subsequently it has broadened from connecting people to connecting industries. Many definitions of social media have been developed based on various studies. Most of them have a similar indication: that social media encompasses platforms that are Internet-centred and encourages an unrestricted stream of user-generated material (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Safko, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013; Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015; Stokinger & Ozuem, 2015).

A social media platform is a channel used for communication, not only amongst people who want to connect with their friends and relatives, but also by businesses who seek to interact with other organisations and users. It is an efficient method for individuals to communicate, interact and connect within their networks. At the same time, social media is used by many businesses to advertise products and services and to interact with customers and prospective customers. Social media compromises two-way communication and offers opportunities for the individuals and businesses to take advantage of the network of people and valuable digital space for the exchange of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Kaplan and Haenlein 2011). Social media differs from traditional communication methods in facilitating two-way communication. Examples of one-way, traditional methods of communication include newsletters, magazines, television, billboards, and radio (Hasan, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media is better than traditional methods of communication as it enables two-way communication and is technologically more hi-tech. There has been a shift in focus from conventional media to online and digital media in the form of social networking sites, wikis and blogs. This has given rise to viral marketing as a means of effective communication and sharing information (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). Businesses influence consumers and consumers influence brand messages (Hanna *et al*., 2011). Social media presents a strong opportunity for customers to exchange views with hundreds and even thousands of customers worldwide. Businesses are not the only source of brand communication. Social media helps businesses to formulate strategies and reduce R&D costs. Using social media organisations can collect information, develop databases and improve service delivery (Barnes, 2010). They can also extend their geographical presence as social media has worldwide reach (Wright *et al*., 2010). Social media is preferred by many organisations and customers over traditional forms of media to explore information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media has many advantages so many businesses harness these to interact with their customers. Taylor (2009) argues that social media is a highly effective global application. It is a powerful personalised tool which individuals can use to create and circulate matter by participating in discussions. Taylor (2012) asserts that from a promotion and marketing perspective, the biggest opportunity associated with any digital medium is interactivity. Social media is no different from another digital medium when it comes to interactivity. It affects not only our daily lives but also the business activities we are familiar with. There has been a steady increase in the number of businesses adopting social media to market their goods and services. It is also utilised by firms to expand upon their conventional marketing activities. In the marketing strategies literature, social media is simply approached as a new method, but its purposes are far from new. Social media are used by businesses to grow sales and to improve reputation (Sapena & Paniagua 2014). Organisations can take advantage of and create value from consumer involvement in social media. Bechmann and Lomborg (2013) suggest that value can be created in the form of networks which facilitate the ability to update and contribute content. Social media also enhances organisational development and innovation of new products and services. It supports the trading of information and data across numerous digital profiles.

Social media is considered trustworthy by consumers and this has resulted in a strong consumer focus on social media to acquire information related to products and services (Foux, 2006). There are various benefits offered by social media, but security is a major concern (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007). Viruses and other threats can potentially affect a huge number of users of social media. These authors argue that such platforms are not well governed. Indeed, they are highly decentralised and could easily be accessed and this presents a high risk of illegal activity. Businesses continue to reap the benefits of incorporating social media into their business strategies. The main features of social media are conversation, participation, community formation, information openness and connectedness (Chan-Olmsted *et al*., 2013).

Ward and Ostrom (2006) draw attention to some of the disadvantages of social media for businesses. They suggest that social media helps organisations to access valuable knowledge about their customers including their personal information, interests and preferences. However, when customers are not happy with particular goods or services they will use social media to complain and this can affect their loyalty towards brands. Such views can, in turn, influence others that are exposed to them. It is very difficult to control the creation of User Generated Content (UGC) in various forms such as comments, views and reviews on social media. Social media is not a closed system and marketers must be aware of the associated risks. Marketers are concerned about this, as only a single unfavourable input to an official website, blog or forum online can have lasting effects on the reputation of businesses (Ryan & Jones, 2009).

There are two different perspectives relating to the applicability of social media. Some scholars who have discussed the benefits of using social media have noted that organisations are willing to adopt social media to enhance their business. In contrast, others are reluctant to adopt social media due to its open nature, which means that anyone can share a negative experience quite easily. These two contrasting perspectives have resulted in a growing body of research associated with social media. Some has assessed the impact of social media on businesses and consumers. Consumers have gained power because social media has enabled them to raise negative opinions related to products and services. This power helps to reduce physical and psychological costs to consumers (Ayertey, Ozuem, & Appiah 2018). Social media, as a term, describes a dynamic and evolving set of technologies (Kane *et al*., 2013). It has been described as a ‘moving target’ (Sinha *et al*., 2013; Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010).

Safko (2010, p. 4) describes social media in general terms, noting that it is composed of two words, i.e. ‘social’ and ‘media’. Social satisfies the ‘instinctual needs we humans have to connect with other humans’ and the ‘need to be around and included in groups of similar like-minded people with whom we can feel at home and comfortable sharing our thoughts, ideas, and experiences’. Media, in this context, refers to ‘media we use with which we make connections with other humans’. Such media are ‘technologies we use to make those connections’.

Social Media From Technological Perspective

Evolving digital technology has enabled consumers to dynamically regulate how and when they interact with businesses to structure personalised product experiences and co-create value with businesses and other customers (Gummesson & Mele, 2010). Various scholars have defined social media from a technological perspective (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Coursaris, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Rodriguez *et al*., 2012). Social media is the study of digital traces of online user activities with a strong focus on the organisational usage of technological platforms. Social media has also been discussed in terms of both the material and virtual worlds, and is considered to represent several technological artefacts from the material and virtual dimensions. It supports different actors in diverse communication activities to create UGC to enhance and sustain social relationships, and to allow other computer-facilitated interactions and collaborations (Coursaris, 2013, p. 703).

In addition, social media has been defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as an example of Web 2.0. The authors suggest that social media is ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’.

O’Reilly (2005) suggests that ‘Web 2.0 refers to developments in online technology that enable interactive capabilities in an environment characterised by user control, freedom, and dialogue’. In the same vein, Paris, Lee, and Seery (2010) define social media as ‘a second generation of web development and design features, social media websites facilitate communication, information sharing, and collaboration among people’. It can therefore be concluded that social media websites enable two-way communications, the sharing of the information and relationship building amongst people, all facilitated by second generation web technology and its attendant design characteristics.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 content is altered continuously by all actors by means of sharing and collaboration. Web 2.0 is based on technologies that facilitate the creation of highly interactive platforms that help people and groups of people to share, review, co-create and amend content that is generated by users. The term ‘social media’ has wide implications and includes all websites based on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 that empower operators to produce UGC that can be shared. Such content is created and replicated on the social media networks by users of Web 2 technology. The content that is created can be shared amongst other members of social media websites which are linked to users. Other members may have different opinions and can reply in alternative ways to the content created by the original users since the process is entirely interactive in nature.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) discuss the use of social media within businesses. They identify various ways in which social media can be used by businesses to communicate internally and externally. Businesses can use social media to share information internally amongst staff members, and externally in the form of consumer-to-consumer communication. They can also communicate using social media with other external stakeholders of the organisation and they can communicate beyond organisational boundaries based on a consumer-to-organisation format. This kind of communication presents an implementation challenge for many organisations due to their conventional hierarchies and centralised control structures. The authors suggest that social media is an online communications tool that encourages users to share views and exchange information. The sharing and exchange of views results in the creation and exchange of UGC. This definition covers various types of social media. Amongst the different kinds of social media, Social Networking Sites (SNS) are the most popular formats, and the most resonant example is Facebook. Other kinds of social media include formats that allow users to upload and share various types of media such as photos, text messages, and audio and video files. These include Flickr, YouTube, and podcasts. Finally, there are some innovative types of social media that comprise virtual worlds, widgets, and crowdsourcing.

Social Media and Symmetrical Communication

The success of social media depends on the capability of the various applications available to enable two-way symmetrical communication between corporations and communities across the Internet. Gurnig (2009) and Phillips (2009) note that two-way communication is regarded as a critical success factor by organisations that seek to create and sustain strong relationships with the public. Phillips (2009) discussed the concept of two-way symmetrical communication and indicated that novel media tools differ with respect to their capability to facilitate communication in two directions. For instance, the interactional levels of Facebook and Twitter can be regarded as very symmetric since they permit extraordinary levels of interactions. In contrast, content-sharing sites including Wikipedia entries and blogs enable one-way asymmetrical communications. These tools have low levels of feedback facilitating two-way systems of communication with the public. This has resulted in a better understanding of the individual features of each social media application and has simultaneously helped to inform best practice in terms of communicating with the public using social media.

According to Rodriguez *et al*. (2012), social media has been considered as a linkage that can facilitate:

- The creation of content
- Online reviews
- Online dialogue
- Real-time feedback
- The creation and maintenance of relationships and group building.

In addition, social media influences the user's network and wider society based on the cumulative number of social networking sites (Curran & Lennon, 2011). Social media possesses all the features of Internet-based platforms and its core characteristic comprises innumerable directions of communication. Interactions are more extreme, richer and larger in magnitude than traditional forms of media. The numbers of spectators are higher, and the scale and reach are greater (Sawhney *et al*., 2005). Social media is therefore more effective than traditional methods of communication due to the kinds of two-way communication that it enables. Social media helps businesses to create and maintain strong relationships with their stakeholders. Social media also provides a platform for consumers to express their views about businesses and their products and services, whether these are positive or negative. This helps businesses to maintain a public presence. Social media is an efficient method that can be used to communicate and interact. Social media brand communities provide substantial occasions for firms to provide resources, typically in the form of posts, e.g. the posts generated by the firms (Kumar *et al*., 2016). Posts also permit social group members to create their own resources in the form of user-generated content posted on the sites (Schamari & Schaefers, 2015)

Social networking sites offer a simpler mode to encounter information and to share information with other users. This results in decentralised user level content (Abrahams *et al.,* 2012). There are several kinds of social networking sites that enable different kinds of social interactions. Interactions can occur in the form of social viral activities and community engagement (Kapoor & Dwivedi, 2015; Li & Shiu, 2012). Social media depends on users to co-create content (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Social media comprises content produced by consumers and which is known as UGC. Such UGC is publicly available, immediately distributable, and creative in nature. UGC is not generated through professional content creation practices (Habibi *et al*., 2014). Social media that is based on Web 2.0 is extremely popular and has intensified online social networks in the e-commerce field. Web 2.0 has been defined as a range of technologies that permit operators to produce content, communicate, and share content across social networks with other users, communities, and virtual worlds. Less effort is required compared to analogue forms of media. These tools and technologies highlight the power of operators to choose, filter, circulate and amend information (Tredinnick, 2006) in addition to partaking in the creation of content in social media.

The spectrum of online media is very broad and has empowered consumers in electronic markets. They can now opine about products and services on social media based on UGC. Offering an opinion can take the form of numeric scores which are structured and/or unstructured. An example of the latter might be written comments (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The data generated based on both approaches helps traders and shoppers by empowering them to reach more informed conclusions (Lukyanenko *et al*., 2014a). In contrast, it was claimed by Lukyanenko and Parsons (2015) that both kinds of UGC produced by casual content providers can lead to unclear, unrelated and even inconsistent messages when they refer to the same product or service.

A vast amount of structured and unstructured UGC is produced at a very fast pace as public users create a great deal of content. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has defined UGC as information that: 'is published on a Web site that is publicly accessible or available to a select group of people … demonstrates some degree of creativity (and) is not created for commercial purposes' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Structured UGC on web pages shares a number of qualities and comprises fixed scales including overall structured ratings or detailed ratings based on scales including Likert scales (Dellarocas, 2010). Unstructured UGC refers to product reviews, blogs, discussion forums, free-formatted texts, and rich media data; or even sensory data (Leskovec, 2011; Lukyanenko & Parsons, 2015). The most common form of unstructured data includes written comments associated with brands, products, services and traders. It appears that communication between businesses and customers results in the generation of UGC. Such content can be structured or unstructured, but the format of content is equally important and can empower organisations and consumers to make more efficient decisions.

Social media is used by firms in three ways. The first approach sees social media used as a traditional marketing method, and the businesses' key objective is to create an economic Return on Investment (RoI). A second approach is the traditional-experimental approach. Based on this, the economic features are also linked with social interactions (social-RoI). The third approach is the experimental approach which sees firms incorporate a human voice into social media platforms. The main aim is to influence the thoughts of consumers, businesses and brands (Dijkmans, Kerkhif, Buyukcan-Tetic, & Beukeboom 2015). Firms are aware of the consequences of adopting social media and are equally aware of its impacts on consumers and the power that social media provides to customers to involve them in the development of digital business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In contrast, Fournier and Avery (2011) note that firms are the 'uninvited gate crashers' of social media. They debate the main purpose of social media and suggest it can link individuals rather than impose businesses and brands on social media audiences.

Social media is an important factor that inspires the behaviour of consumers in the form of opinions, usage, awareness, intentions, evaluations, information sharing and purchasing habits (Chang, 2008). Social media permits interconnectivity between users and between content and communication technologies (Dann & Dann, 2011; Stokinger & Ozuem, 2014). Social media can be adopted by businesses to enhance their conventional marketing activities. This can help businesses to increase their sales, improve their reputation and enhance their brand image. In contrast, a dearth of knowledge and skills essential for the successful implementation and management of social media could negatively affect the benefits derived from social media.

WEB-ENABLED MARKETING ECOSYSTEM

Social media has been examined from a marketing perspective by various scholars including Weinberg (2009), Solomon & Tuten (2015) and Gordhamer (2009). Social media marketing is a novel marketing strategy. Businesses embrace social media to enhance their reach to customers using virtual networks.

'Social media marketing is the utilisation of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organisation's stakeholders' (Solomon & Tuten 2015, p. 73.1).

Social media marketing has been defined by Weinberg (2009, p.3) as 'the process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional channels'. It can be concluded that social media marketing is a process that helps businesses to utilise the web to create awareness about products and information that would be more difficult to spread via traditional marketing methods. Organisations also use social media applications as platforms to inform prospective clients about the current state of the organisation. This includes communicating strategies and the possible introduction or promotion of novel models or merchandise to provide up-to-date news about the business. Social media marketing has been debated from the perspective of relationship marketing by Gordhamer (2009). The author suggests that firms should move away from 'trying to sell' towards an ethos of 'making connections' with customers. This suggests that organisations should focus on constructing relationships with current and potential customers. This is crucial to encourage repeat purchasing and greater brand loyalty amongst customers. He also suggests that currently, customers are busy but they are more powerful than ever before. Therefore, organisations must be easily accessible through social media communications channels like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and forums. They must always be accessible so that customers can reach them easily. Jan and Khan (2014) further suggest that social media is a modern tool used by businesses to build extremely strong public relationships with customers across virtual networks.

Social media (SM) is continuously growing and performing a progressively important function in marketing. It enhances the communications of organisations in their dealings with other businesses, societies and people (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Social media is harnessed as additional marketing channels by businesses and marketers who value the fact that such platforms can be used to correspond or interact with consumers and prospective consumers (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlstrom, 2011). Many scholars have noted an upsurge in the number of firms adopting social media to conduct marketing activity and augment traditional marketing efforts (Dahnit, Oztamur, & Karahedilar, 2014). As stated by Barnes (2010), social media offers huge benefits and opportunities. Thus, it is very important for businesses to implement social media successfully as part of a well-organised marketing strategy. It is essential for businesses to fully utilise the opportunities offered by social media platforms.

The web-enabled marketing ecosystem has huge power. It has upgraded and intensified the way in which buyers communicate among themselves and with companies. Consumers are using this as a channel to harmonise their everyday activities, which is not possible in the case of traditional communication methods. The computer-mediated marketing environment has improved relationships between friends, consumers and organisations. This has resulted in better attachment among individuals and businesses (Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008). Businesses can no longer depend on the one-way communication of traditional marketing, which has become outdated. Due to this, two-way communication has gained more authority as it does not diminish the power of the consumers but takes them as an integral part of the communication process (Andersen, 2001; Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008).

The roles of marketers have reduced due to the dominance of consumers. All kinds of information are easily available to consumers thanks to the user-friendliness and reach of the Internet. Accordingly, businesses using traditional organisational communication frameworks may be viewed as having features that are non-transparent (Ozuem & Tan, 2014).

The benefits of social media, its easy accessibility and significance for efficient marketing communications have received great consideration (Bolton *et al*., 2013; Hamid, Akhir, & Cheng, 2013; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Ozuem & Stokinger, 2015, Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster 2008).

It has been argued that social media not only helps individuals to promote their websites, products or services but enables them to develop two-way communication by providing opportunities for stakeholders to co-create value. The current paper defines social media as ***the process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, apps, products, or services through online social channels and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional channels, which results in opportunities for the users of these social media sites to co-create value for them and other users.***

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VALUE CO-CREATION

The importance of customer engagement in marketing activity has been highlighted in the work of Hollebreek (2011) and Brodie *et al*. (2011). This concept has been examined in virtual contexts by Brodie *et al*. (2013), Hollebreek *et al*. (2014), Kao *et al*. (2016), and Tregua *et al*. (2015). Customer engagement has been defined as 'a psychological state which occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal object (e.g. a brand) within a dynamic, iterative process of service relationships that co-create value' (Brodie *et al*., 2011, p. 258). It can be inferred that customer engagement with organisations can guide the process of value co-creation with the help of experiences and 'engagement objects' as they are called by Brodie *et al*. (2013, p. 109). The satisfaction levels of consumers and their loyalty are affected by customer engagement since customers are allowed to customise the subject matter of their experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

Interactions among the members with posts generate both value-in-use and value-in-context for society as a whole and also serve as the basis for further resources for participants' interactions, creating continuing opportunities for value creation and value co-creation (Sorensen *et al*., 2016). There is a difference between the terms value creation and value co-creation. Value creation is the creation of value-in-use by customers when they use products or services. Value co-creation is based on interactions between businesses and customers (partners). Such interactions can be understood to represent the convergence between organisations and customer spheres of influence (Gronroos & Voima, 2013). Value co-creation not only encompasses an association with customers, but also includes collaborating with associates to model new services and improve customer value (Jaakkola *et al*., 2012). Value co-creation has been defined as 'the joint collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically' (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014, p. 644).

Scholars are interested in how resourcefully businesses can inspire and determine ways to successfully inspire and enable consumers to co-create value on social media platforms. The significance of the process is extensively recognised in the literature on service-dominant logic and co-creation (Maglio *et al*., 2009; Payne *et al*., 2009). The process of co-creation takes place due to a combination of activities between traders and producers that ensures the supply of 'unique' value to customers. The same experience of added value will not give same level of satisfaction to two different customers since all interactions are unique (Cova, Dalli, & Zwick, 2011). Consumers can be regarded as partial workforces as they are moderately accountable for the result of the co-created service (Xie, Bagozzi, & Troye, 2008; Bowers, Martin, & Luker, 1990). Based on this concept, producers and consumers are much more integrated than they are based on conventional views, and consumers adopt the role of prosumers who 'undertake value creating activities that result in the production of products they eventually consume and that become their consumption experiences' (Xie *et al*., 2008, p. 110). In Service Dominant Logic (SDL), the customer is always the co-creator of value. Vargo and Lusch (2004) identify two-way interactions in SD logic as the main concept of value co-creation between the service provider and the customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004b). Vargo and Lusch (2006, p. 181) emphasised that the value-creation process takes place not when the output is manufactured, but when a product or service is consumed or used by a customer. Resources cannot create value on their own. Rather, the customer is the co-creator of value in SD logic. Potential value is realised from resources when resources are used in context and are combined with other resources (Vargo & Lusch *et al*., 2008). SD logic perceives all actors, especially customers and businesses, as accomplishing an identical phenomenon, i.e. integrating resources to enhance their own situation or wellbeing (Vargo & Lusch, 2011).

SD logic is based on the principle that all providers are service providers; i.e. all marketing exchanges are service-dominant, and hence, service is the central basis of exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Therefore, SD logic contradicts the function of the traditional goods-dominant logic of the role of exclusive value creator. Companies and consumers are value co-creators in SD logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Gronroos and Gummerus (2014) support this concept and suggest that the consumer is the sole value creator whereas companies occupy the normal position of the value facilitator. The exceptions to this are situations where interactions exist. They also note that firms can only co-create value when they interact with customers (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014). These interactions are not occasional. Businesses and consumers usually participate in service-by-service interactions to attain new resources which are integrated with pre-existent resources. Value creation must not be considered as something that takes place through the manufacturing process. Instead, it is directed by the customers in their respective consumption circumstances (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008a; Gronroos, 2008a, b; Strandvik *et al*., 2012). Customers are perceived to be active operant resources rather than passive targets of marketing actions that finally control and create value in numerous value-creating processes. They can restructure their functions from consumer, to contributor, to creator (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). There is therefore a shift of focus from value creation toward value co-creation. It appears that consumers can actively take part by contributing their resources towards the creation of modified products and services. They can employ their resources for the creation of tailor-made products and services according to their needs. Consumers can be regarded as partial workforces as they are moderately accountable for the result of the co-created service (Xie, Bagozzi, & Troye, 2008; Bowers, Martin, & Luker, 1990). Based on this concept, producers and consumers are much more integrated than they are based on conventional views, and consumers adopt the role of prosumers who 'undertake value creating activities that result in the production of products they eventually consume and that become their consumption experiences' (Xie *et al*., 2008, p. 110).

The advantage of involving customers at this level with the help of the co-creation model gives the customer a feeling of pride as an outcome of a co-created accomplishment (Moreau and Herd, 2010; Roberts *et al*., 2013). A variety of research has explored the ways in which value is co-created by trader and purchaser. For example, the fundamentals of service science applying the value co-creation concept were explained by Maglio and Spohrer (2008). Perks *et al*. (2012) examined the value co-creation process in motor insurance through the lens of radical service innovation. Dong, Evans, and Zou (2008) explored service failure in relation to value co-creation. Vargo *et al*. (2008) and Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) created models to realise value co-creation in service systems, and managing value co-creation. In the case of tourism, involving customers helps increase loyalty, faith and brand evaluations (So, King, & Sparks, 2014). Xiang *et al*. (2015) concluded that the growing popularity of the Internet for trip choices is understandable since the Internet offers greater quality information and a richer experience than ever before. Kaplan and Haelein (2010) and Mangold and Faulds (2009) note how remarkably social media has altered the tools and strategies applied by businesses to interconnect and create loyal customers in B2C settings. Research has also explored social media uses by manufacturing organisations for product development or modifications to existing product support (Nambisan & Nambisan, 2008; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a). The ways in which products and services are created are very different (Sampson & Froehle, 2006) and the methods used for the marketing of products and services also vary (Song, Di Benedetto, & Song, 2010). More studies should be conducted to explore the drivers of co-creation activities that relate to the actions of firms and processes (Van Doorn *et al*., 2010).

In the product development process, social media can be utilised very efficiently. Extra and significant information can be gained about the products on the social media platform. The use of social media is not only restricted to the promotion of the products. It can be very efficiently incorporated in the process of product development. The cost of collecting huge amounts of information is very low in comparison with the traditional methods of data collection such as surveys and focus group discussions. The quality of information collected on social media is better and the time needed to collect the information is also reduced. It ultimately results in better products for the community (Rathore *et al*., 2016).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The current paper proposes a number of managerial implications. Businesses must keep in mind that social media tools have made the marketspace very transparent and increased the awareness of consumers in terms of different organisations, products, prices and features of various products and services. The awareness developed due to the Internet, social media, technological advancements and other computed-mediated marketing channels have resulted in making customers and prospective customers very active in creating their experiences by contributing their skills, experiences and knowledge gained through various channels, and they are no longer passive. This has resulted in value co-creation by customers in the process of buying the products and services that meet their individual needs.

The social media ecosystem has resulted in openness and transparency that have increased consumers' knowledge and options. Social media is assisting the development of new products and helping to provide better ideas to businesses for development of new product designs and modification of their products. Social media marketing must be used in conjunction with traditional media to ensure that organisations are not missing out any segment of their target customers and that they are reaping the benefits of the symmetrical communication. Businesses must have a team of members who are well qualified to look after the social media marketing so that none of the queries go unnoticed or unanswered. This team should have good knowledge of social media, its usability and applications. Visually based rather than text-based social media communications should be utilised by businesses as images are more appealing than long text messages that viewers could find boring.

In today's scenario, businesses must focus on the core value of providing excellent customer service. All the activities of the business must be customer-centred and the customers must be the focus of the business. Social media can help business to provide exposure but great customer services are the only key for retaining customers. The business must understand the needs and requirements of its customers and encourage them toward value co-creation. A social media platform helps in reducing research and development costs for the business. The products that are developed after taking suggestions from customers have less chance of product failure and are easily accepted by the customers in the market once the products are launched.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Customer Engagement: Involving customers in sharing, spreading and discussing their knowledge and experiences on the social media platform with the business and other users, thus allowing them to co-create value as co-designers, co-marketers, co-distributors, and co-producers of products/services and magnifying the role of consumers as co-creators of value.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM): The communication via the internet of the views, opinions, or experiences of current, potential, and prior customers related to products, services, or businesses, which could take the form of constructive or adverse statements.

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL): One of the main theories that describe value co-creation between firms and customers. It considers customers as the operant resources which have capabilities of combining their skills, experiences and knowledge in the co-creation process for the advantage of another actor or the self. The main cause of the empowerment of customers is the advanced internet-based technologies that have forced businesses to be more customer-centric.

Social Media: An online platform based on internet technology that facilitates multi-directional communication among users which not only provides space to the participants to connect with their friends and family on a regular basis by sharing their posts, locations and pictures or videos to stay more connected, but also helps them to promote their views and opinions about apps, products or services and their experiences, furthering value co-creation.

Social Media Marketing: Marketing techniques adopted by businesses that are based on the ecosystem of social media to communicate information, knowledge, values, and morals related to the service or product in order to attract customers to interact with the business and help to establish and manage cordial relationships with customers.

Symmetrical Communication: Two-way communication that assists in the development of trust, reliability, transparency, openness, interchange of views and opinions that generate feedback and discussion motivating participants to maintain trusting relationships.

User-Generated Content: The content that is created during the process of sharing the views, opinions and information by consumers on the social media platform. It is very difficult to be controlled in the form of views, comments and discussion from posts, blogs, videos, reviews or any other kind of media that is widely accessible to other consumers.

Value Co-Creation: The creation of value due to the direct interactions between businesses and customers. It is joint actions by a customer and a service provider. It also includes collaborating with associates to model new services and improve customer value. The value is co-created during the resource integration process in which businesses integrate their various resources such as market, individual and public resources and customers integrate individual resources and social network resources.

Chapter 3
Social Media and Social Identity in the Millennial Generation

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ABSTRACT

The active presence of fashion brands online serves as a channel for customers to connect with brands for different intentions. This connection acts as an outlet customers employ in furthering social identity through brand associations. Brand perceptions are accordingly formed among consumers based on the promised functional and symbolic benefits consumption of that brand guarantees. Social media has assumed an integral role in fostering brand-customer relationships that ultimately augment social identity. The following chapter examines the role social media has played on brand perceptions in the fashion apparel and accessories industry from a social identity theory perspective. The chapter focuses on theoretical implications and managerial implications. The concluding section offers some significant roles that social media and social identity may play in keeping up with the design and development of marketing communications programs.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing logics and developments have comparably and effectively progressed over the years to parallel the whirlwind innovations that primarily define the fashion industry. The dynamic nature of marketing means fashion companies are relentlessly on guard for the next groundbreaking development (Jayachandran, Gimeno & Varadarajan, 1999; Lusch, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Webster, 1992). One case of a sought after phenomenon that has dramatically revolutionised today's society, is the technological Millennial approach to communication. Traditional marketing has gradually lost bearing, as the rigid likes of one-way communication is superseded by active two-way interchange (Houman Andersen, 2001; Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008). The shift in communication has consequently encouraged worldwide organisations to assume the likes of Internet technologies along with their varied manifestations, such as social media,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch003

as an outlet allowing brands to produce content for followers (Evans, 2012; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Zarrella, 2009). An abundance of literature has consequently surfaced examining the evolution social media has enthused in routine life (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Hoffman & Fodor, 2016; Huy & Shipilov, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Further studies have explored the application of social media within a brand's marketing strategy (Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013; Naylor, Lamberton & West, 2012; Simmons, 2008; Tuten & Solomon, 2014).

Kim and Ko (2012) addressed the promising relationship between social media marketing and resultant customer equity among luxury fashion brands. The study aimed to demonstrate †he success luxury fashion brands gain from employing social media marketing activities including entertainment, interaction, or word of mouth. Based on the findings, the study concluded that the use of social media is directly correlated with subsequent enhanced purchase intentions and customer equity within the luxury fashion industry. However, the study paid limited attention to a demographic age that is familiar with social media and able to produce pertinent feedback that enhances the accuracy of research results. An analysis conducted by a statistic portal, Statista, on the worldwide daily usage of social media found that the highest degree of daily social media usage in 2016 was held by global users aged 25 to 34 years old (Statista, 2016). A more recent study revealed the highest time consumption of visual activities on social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram to be among ages 16-34 years, while preceding generations demonstrated fewer percentages of average time spent participating in such activities (Statista, 2017). The Millennial generation outruns other age groups as the leading social media user. Albeit the current extensive literature investigating social media, few studies have examined the use of social media in the fashion industry, particularly on the Millennial generation.

Social media is a development of the World Wide Web that began gaining ground between the late 1990's and early 2000's, establishing worldwide prominence by the late 2000's (Dewing, 2010). Yet before delving into the profound significance social media has exerted globally, the course of events leading up to its inception are considered

The initiation of the World Wide Web began in the early 1990's upon Tim Berners-Lee linking hypertext technology to the Internet. This allowed for one common worldwide foundation to be formed, whereby networked communication was born (Van Dijck, 2013). The consequent evolution of Web 2.0 brought about social media. Web 2.0 is described as consisting of two features that help define it, and these are *microcontent* and *social media*. *Microcontent* comprises of pieces of content that express a primary idea. Such pieces cover much less information than websites and may take the form of blog posts, comments, or small images. These are designed for easy upload, reuse, and stimulating participation. The second feature of Web 2.0, *social media* or *social software*, consists of platforms organized around the framework of connecting people to one another. The *microcontent* produced by multiple users creates a page of shared interests different users can access to bond with one another (Alexander & Levine, 2008). In time, the growth of Web 2.0 prompted the birth of two-way communication platforms and the flow of user-generated content, which is today identified as social media (Arora, 2014; Fuchs, 2014; Gillies & Cailliau, 2000; O'Reilly, 2005).

A study conducted by Statista further affirms the significance social media has gained across the fashion industry (Statista, 2016). This study emphasizes the sheer 'clout' that virtual channels have when it comes to the fashion domain through the integration of social media throughout London Fashion Week. The show is a highly anticipated bi-annual fashion trading weeklong event, and in 2014, it generated over half a million mentions on social media. The majority of these mentions emerged over

Instagram. Reports show that user access to fashion brands online is set to reach over one billion users by the year 2020 (Statista, 2016). Additional analyses identified social media as the most commonly used source by Millennials for updates on high-end fashion (Statista, 2017). These figures demonstrate the on-going unification social media has brought about within the fashion world, as more brands race towards social networking sites to attain followers. Online channels offer fashion brands further leeway for original content contribution that facilitates for an intimate connection with Millennials. The social platform cultivates brand-customer relationships, as brands strive to publicly evoke customer loyalty, and customers, in turn, are receptive to demonstrate brand association and acquire the promised relationship equity such brands are perceived to offer (Lemon, Rust, & Zeithaml, 2001; Kim & Ko, 2012; Vogel, Evanschitzky, & Ramaseshan, 2008).

Drawing on social identity, this study investigates the application of social media in advancing online brand communities and relationship equity that consumers chase in enforcing social identity. Social identity theory holds that individuals seek to allocate themselves or others according to social categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Individuals trail the groups that guarantee positive recognition and ultimately enhance the self through association (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Numerous studies have explored the tendency of customers to identify with particular brands in forming a desired social identity (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010). Consumption can be a significant attribute within an individual's journey to build an identity for his/her own self, as well as for others (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). The consumption of popular culture has been recognized as a paramount contributor to the attainment of social status or social placement for individuals. Fashion, a major segment of present pop culture, has manifested into a prominent facilitator of social enhancement (Barron, 2012). Fashion brands are pursued by consumers with the intention of embracing individuality that, in fact, complies with a universal standard of social classification. People seek to individually speak, behave, or dress in a manner that is perceptible and significant, but that simultaneously resides within putative group norms. A consumer is placed amid two forces, the individual/psychological influence of personal opinions and preferences, and the public/social weight of uniform beliefs and attitudes (Burke, 2006; Carlson, Suter, & Brown, 2008; Nowak, Szamrej and Latané, 1990).

Customers are enticed by a brand's online presence as a means of furthering social identity through brand association, and ultimately this can shape brand perceptions among customers through promised functional and symbolic benefits. Social media embodies the leading channel for casual interactions that develop brand-customer relationships and enrich social identity. Consumer touch points have accordingly been reinvented to accommodate for more than physical exchanges. Rather, brand-customer interaction has ensued beyond the point of sale and into a virtual realm of open interchange (Edelman, 2010; Fromm & Garton, 2013) that has become second nature to the Millennial generation. This study supplements present available research on social media in numerous ways. There exists abundant literature examining the implementation of social media means as marketing tools, however current literature does not account for Millennial presence in investigating the influence social media exerts on brand perceptions in the fashion industry. In exploring the impact social media holds as a marketing instrument, consequent outcomes from this study develop literature concerning the impact of social media on the Millennial age, and this cohort's dependence on social identity in further connecting with brands. This research provides a footing for fashion brands to develop in future research, which might look at how social media accounts can be appropriately handled in targeting consumers. The findings in this study uncovers the imprint social media has provoked on Millennial brand perceptions in the fashion industry.

BACKGROUND

The fashion industry comprises of various sectors from apparel and accessories, perfumes and cosmetics to watches and jewellery. This vast industry has been globally valued at 3 trillion US dollars (approx. 2.4 trillion pounds) with a compound annual growth rate of 2 percent. Positive market figures are anticipated to resume with industry growth projected across major regions such as China, Europe, USA and India, to name a few (Statista, 2016). Sales growth in the fashion industry have noticeably materialised across regions such as Asia Pacific and Europe, with anticipated global fashion industry growth to reach 4.5 percent in 2018 (Statista, 2017). As the fashion world engages a wide scope of sectors, this study focuses on the use of social media among the Millennial generation exclusively within the apparel and accessories sector.

In a study conducted by Deloitte on the global fashion and luxury market in 2016, the apparel and accessories sector demonstrated more than 80% of revenues recorded in the industry for years 2014 and 2015. Consequently, the expected market trends for 2016 demonstrated a 59% increase in the apparel and accessories sector worldwide (Deloitte, 2016). These figures can be expected to materialize among top billionaire players such as Zara (Inditex), LVMH, and H&M, among others (Statista, 2016). Multinational fast-fashion retailer Zara (Inditex) revealed a 10% climb within nine months of fiscal 2017 as the group persisted with its' effective tactic of globally locating flagship stores around peak shopping strips. Inditex complemented its highly visible brick-and-mortar stores with an integrated online-offline model offering same-day delivery and next-day delivery in certain markets (Inditex, 2017). Major competitor, H&M, was ranked one of the world's largest retail companies in 2016 with a 4 percent sales growth in the financial year of 2017. The company acknowledges the prominence of complementing the industry shift moving into 2018, through digital and offline integration of customer interaction and purchase points (H&M, 2017). Parent luxury fashion company LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) has likewise asserted its place in the fashion industry boasting a revenue growth of 13% in 2017 compared to the previous year. LVMH's *Fashion and Leather Goods* sector exhibited optimistic figures across all luxury brands citing Louis Vuitton's innovative operation as a strong contributor to performance (LVMH, 2018). In an exhaustive forecast titled *The State of Fashion 2018,* conducted by Mckinsey & Company and The Business of Fashion, the report demonstrates an evolving shift in consumer behaviour as online platforms gain primary grounds as points of consumer exposure to brands. Revenue growth is subsequently projected to witness 2-3x increase online in 2018 versus 2015 as consumers push to personalise experiences through online channels and global mobile payment transactions surge (BOF & McKinsey & Co., 2018).

Social media has empowered the fashion industry with the free-flow of content shared between brands and consumers worldwide. Brands are able to penetrate international markets through the likes of Facebook, Instagram and fashion blogs that document the latest runways, campaigns and trends to an active audience. Brand followers likewise share their own content among brands and consumers. This two-way interchange and freedom in exchanging content has allowed brands and customers to connect, customers to express affiliation to brands, and online fashion communities to develop. Such a platform of communication enables vast brand exposure and awareness among worldwide social media users. H&M was recorded to have an average of over 10 million Instagram engagements consisting of likes, retweets and comments across over a one month period, signifying the scope of market saturation a single social media platform is capable of achieving (Statista, 2016).Luxury brands Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior were placed in the top most influential luxury brands on social media worldwide as of October 2016 (Statista, 2016). The implementation of social media as a promotional technique has served as a gateway to market prominence as brands are given the opportunity to reach global customers on an intimate level. Consumers are drawn to online platforms to connect with brands in a more unique experience that may contribute to a brand's exclusivity and authenticity.

As affirmed by Van Dijck (2013), upon the initial development of social media, "participatory culture was the buzzword that connoted the Web's potential to nurture connections, build communities, and advance democracy." (Van Dijck, 2013, p.4). Such universal engagement has propelled the immense growth of social media into worldwide cultures. A study by Statista (2018) reveals the enormity social media holds as a defining phenomenon of the present time through a global infiltration of approximately 2 billion active social media users. Instagram, a photo-based application and social networking site, solely yielded a 21% global reach merely one year after its launch in 2013; and reached a record in 2018 of over 800 million monthly active users (Statista, 2018). Social media has infiltrated a generation of devoted users comprising of the Millennial age, as more than 85% of 18-29 years olds use online social platforms (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Fashion leaders Zara and H&M have prevailed among the Millennial age group (Forbes, 2012); a technological age that has grown to embody social media as a key communication portal. By utilizing social media as a major delivery approach, such brands are able to considerably impress their weight within the Millennial market.

MILLENNIAL GENERATION

The Millennial Generation is defined as a demographic cohort born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. This generation differs remarkably from previous groups, as the Millennial perception of communication is that it is conveniently available and instant, therefore obstacles such as time or geography do not impinge upon the presence of technology (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Lingelbach, Patino, & Pitta, 2012; Rainer & Rainer, 2011). Global boundaries are diminishing as the use of the Internet empowers the Millennial age as a consumer group defined by homogeneous behaviour (Moore, 2012). Millennials worldwide are able to relate through identical behaviour and consumption patterns due to the network of mass media. The innate existence of the Internet has altered their way of interaction and characterised them as *digital natives* (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Prensky, 2001). The Millennial generation is the first cohort to entirely absorb social media as the leading source of communication within an era that values public and conspicuous behaviour (Bennett, Matson & Kervin, 2008; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Paulin, Ferguson, Jost & Fallu, 2014). Twenge (2006) and Twenge, Campbell and Freeman (2012) interestingly describe the generation as both "Generation We", concerned with public and environmental obligations, and "Generation Me", stemming from the significance placed on materialistic behaviour and preserving image. Social media offers the platform to express activities, consumption and lifestyles that accentuate the "*me"* quality Millennials seek to achieve.

This cohort has wholly integrated social media into daily activities including the use of such interactive portals to connect to brands (Moore, 2012; Nowak, Thach & Olsen, 2006). Marketers recognise the reliance Millennials place on social media to connect with peers and brands in acquiring relevant information from such networks (Eastman, Iyer & Thomas, 2012; Eastman & Liu, 2012; Hewlett, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2009). The notion of remaining connected to real-time occurrences is an underlying motivation for Millennials to seek social media, and brands to consequently use interactive technologies to directly reach Millennials (Engel, Bell, Meier & Rumpel, 2011; Fiore, Kim & Lee, 2005; Valentine & Powers, 2013). Recurring brand-customer contact bears the potential to evolve into emotional interaction through trust, loyalty and commitment that advances brand equity (Nowak, Thach & Olsen), symbolically influencing Millennial perceptions of brands. The relevance of social media is only expected to grow with continuing consumer dependence on the network to which it caters, and newfound proficiency amongst brands in delivering a unified message worldwide is also set to evolve (Stephen & Galak, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Prensky, 2001). Such characteristics justify the worth of social media as a phenomenon that merits exploration.

CONTEXT AND FOUNDATION

Social media has shrewdly manoeuvred its way into people's lives over the past decade. While it may have commenced with the prime intention of socially linking people together, it later developed and was described using broader definitions spanning from connecting individuals to connecting industries. The extensive exploration of this communication portal through numerous studies has generated multiple definitions, all of which tend to highlight a parallel overview: social media comprises of Internet-centred platforms that enable and promote a free flow of user-generated information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Safko, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013; Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015; Stokinger, & Ozuem, 2015).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). This, much celebrated, definition has prevailed in acknowledging the key role of social media in facilitating the movement of content across a shared floor. Safko (2012) outlines a comparable explanation whilst emphasizing the efficiency social media facilitates in allowing human interactions and relationships to develop. Social media has cultivated an environment driven by an open exchange between networks of users. Ngai, Tao and Moon (2015) recognize the capacity of social media networks to form relationships, but they also discuss the potential of networks to influence career prospects. Building on this progression of explanations, social media can be defined as an evolving phenomenon that continues to mature across society.

Mayfield (2008) describes five characteristics of social media which are 1) *participation* that stimulates sharing 2) *openness,* which eliminates barriers and enables free-flow of information 3) *conversation* generated from the public stream of content shared 4) *community* that develops from open interactions, and 5) *connectedness*, which describes the network created between users. Kietzmann et al. (2011) have likewise categorized social media into seven similar functional blocks and these are 1) *identity,* that considers the degree to which a user is willing to reveal his/her identity 2) *conversation*, which considers the level of communication between users 3) *sharing,* which is the degree of content circulating between users 4) *presence,* which refers to the access given to display available users 5) *relationships* reflect the extent of users relating to one another 6) *reputation* considers the degree to which users can identify their stance within settings, and finally 7) *groups* refers to the ability to form or belong to a community. The functional blocks social media are built on create its flexibility in producing an open environment that consolidates worldwide users and progresses relationships.

Before proceeding to the next section, it is imperative to address the connotation of social media with regards to social networking sites. While social media and social networking sites are frequently used interchangeably, the two terms hold separate meanings. Social media generally concerns collective construction and the circulation of media on a large scale, which can include countless applications and services such as social networking sites, wikis, or podcasts, to name a few (Collin, Rahilly, Richardson, & Third, 2011; Dewing, 2010; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Social networking sites are web-based services, which are a part of social media and which are crafted for sharing media between networks of users (Collin, Rahilly, Richardson, & Third, 2011). Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social network sites as, "web-based services that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p.211). Social networking sites comprise of websites such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter that characteristically require users to primarily register on the website and create a network, after which content can be shared with networks of connections. The virtually interactive platforms that social media create have induced a shift in the web towards a more people-driven community, whereby regular users influence the content produced (Berthon, Pitt, Planger, & Shapiro, 2012; O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009; Smith, 2009). Account holders now have the liberty of broadcasting (receiving) any message on a global scale with the click of a button. This self-expression encourages a dynamic and democratic setting through which users feel more inclined to engage and share their own opinions (Susarla, Oh, & Tan, 2012). This study focuses on exploring how social media has influenced Millennial brand perceptions through different marketing methods.

Social Media as a Marketing Tool

Social media has progressively emerged on marketing agendas as an influential promotional tool within business operations (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Luo, Zhang & Duan, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This communication portal has compelled organizations to combine different marketing strategies, such as outbound marketing (dispensing promotional messages) with inbound marketing (receiving consumer messages through social media), to achieve an optimized balance of promotion (Smith & Zook, 2011). The viral chatter and ample exposure social media incites, cues brands to capitalize on potential networks as part of founding strong brand-customer relationships within brand communities, while amassing critical customer feedback (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; Enders, Hungenberg, Denker, & Mauch, 2008). Brands benefit from eliciting social ties with customers that evoke an exchange of resources, such as trust between users, and facilitate a shared vision for companies that extend beyond overpowered geographic distances and broken organization-customer barriers (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015; Heinonen, 2011; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

Certain axioms are applied in designing attractive platforms for consumers when implementing social media within organizational marketing strategies. These axioms allow companies to reflect on each nation's local economic, political, and cultural stance in communicating with users on social media, while also maintaining consistency of content produced at a global level (Berthon, Pitt, Planger, & Shapiro, 2012; Hinz, Skiera, Barrot, & Becker, 2011). Brands form a universal norm of social network activities that produce memorable content worldwide customers pertain to. Corresponding touch-points are employed to connect with customers throughout the day and ultimately ensure incessant brand awareness (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

Viral Marketing and E-WOM

Stealth marketing has permeated industries via engagement of practises, such as viral marketing, that tactfully and subtly promote brands (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Martin & Smith, 2008; Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010; Ozuem, Borrelli & Lancaster, 2017). Viral marketing is defined as, "the process of getting customers to pass along a company's marketing message to friends, family, and colleagues." (Laudon & Traver, 2015, p.381). The unreserved, free flow quality supporting social media instigates web circulation. One form of viral marketing that has predominantly flourished offline, as an eminent promotional technique is word-of-mouth (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been defined as the exchange of information on a particular subject among consumers (Arndt, 1967; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Stern, 1994).

Buttle (1998) describes WOM according to five characteristics; *valence, focus, timing, solicitation* and *intervention. Valence* considers the positive or negative force WOM may impress on receivers with regards to a brand. According to a study by File et al. (1994), WOM can be appropriately managed to produce a desired effect among customers. The second characteristic Buttle (1998) addresses is the *focus,* which the brand adopts in influencing customers through the management of WOM. *Timing* refers to the use of WOM as a pre-purchase or post-purchase evaluation amongst consumers. *Solicitation* discusses the potential of customers to accept WOM and this may be influenced by the *intervention* of spokespeople, or celebrities hired by the brand. In most cases, WOM is assumed to occur naturally among customers who share brand experiences, and this consequently creates trails of chatter that diffuse across multiple receivers (Anderson, 1998; Bone, 1995; Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; v. Wangenheim & Bayon, 2004). However, brands have managed to exert their own influence over handling WOM, particularly through virtual outlets (Biyalogorsky, Gerstner, & Libai, 2001; Godes & Mayzlin, 2009; Mayzlin, 2006).

A movement of shoppers probing for broader brand reviews and scrutiny has summoned for the progression of traditional WOM to online channels as electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM), consequently unveiling copious volumes of user inputs (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Chu & Kim, 2011; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Being mindful that while virtual interchange cannot suffice as the sole vehicle to contact in place of conventional offline communication, it bears the competence to act as an adjunct to evolving consumer behaviour (Kozinets, 1999).

Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) undertook a study to evaluate customer dependence on eWOM. This study compared sales of the same products from different websites. The results demonstrated a discrepancy between the businesses in terms of sales of the same products generated, as the website with more positive feedback submitted on those products generated more sales. Positive eWOM exhibits the capability of shaping customer purchase decisions. However, Schlosser (2005) demonstrates that negative reviews also significantly influence buyer behaviour by discouraging potential customers whilst swaying current customers that have a positive stance towards the brand. You, Vadakkepatt & Joshi (2015) draw on varied factors that may affect the reception of eWOM. The study underlines the potency of eWOM to be dependent on the motivation of the sender. EWOM is accordingly categorised into *organic*, material that an eWOM sender innately chooses to share, or *incentivised eWOM,* material that is induced by the promise of company incentives (You, Vadakkepatt & Joshi, 2015). The latter may not be perceived as genuine or trustworthy.

Electronic word of mouth enables an accumulation of customer feedback that evidently adds to the image of a brand, and shapes a customer's screening process (Baker, Donthu & Kumar, 2016; Chakravarti & Janiszewski, 2003; Dellarocas, 2006; Dhar & Chang, 2009; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

Consumers have gradually come to refer to and rely on eWOM to make purchase decisions. Typically, the consumer decision process involves different stages, beginning with *need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase,* and *post-purchase evaluation* (Solomon, 2012; Liang & Huang, 1998). De Valck, van Bruggen, & Wierenga (2009) conducted a study to explore the influence of virtual communities on the consumer decision processes. The findings reveal that substantial virtual interactions weighed on a number of the phases involved within the decision process; largely the first three stages and the final stage of the process through the retrieval, supply, and discussion of information. This study accentuates the development in decision-making as the profusion of information online contributes to customers' retrieval of choices for needs recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and encourages supply of experiences in the post purchase stages.

Brand Communities and E-WOM

The accessibility of sharing content online has expedited eWOM's wide reception among Millennials and empowered the upswing of online communities and brand-customer relationships (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Taken Smith, 2012; Veloutsou and McAlonan, 2012). Social media interactions have developed into a trialogue of communication between brands and customers, and among customers as online communities are formed through back and forth user exchanges (Hung & Li, 2007; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Miller, Fabian, & Lin, 2008). This trialogue is further matured as companies cultivate brand communities to enrich brand-customer relationships and offer customers a platform to bond with one another, eliciting a sense of belonging (Robards & Bennett, 2011; Veloustou & Moutinho, 2009). A tribe of followers is consequently founded based on shared behaviours or preferences around a particular brand (Cova & Cova, 2001).

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define brand community as, "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand." (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.412). Consumers are gathered under one umbrella of brand devotees irrespective of geographic distances.

According to (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009), brand community can be categorized into four value-creating activities,

1. Social networking, which centres on building and maintaining relationships within the brand community.
2. Impression management, that involves managing a positive brand image both within and past the brand community.
3. Community engagement, which ensures continuous interaction among members and brand.
4. Brand use, whereby the brand regularly shares guidance for greater utilization of the product.

The population of brand communities on social media has granted companies a leverage of brand impressions that can be crafted and communicated across global networks. A triad of interchange between brand-customer and customer-customer has advanced to produce an unrestricted environment for continuous engagement, relationship growth and, in the long run, customer loyalty (Fischer, Bristor, & Gainer, 1996; Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Amid the instant communication of social media, brand-customer interaction is escalated as more frequent engagement propels satisfaction, trust and commitment among followers (Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, &

Kim 2008; Kim, Choi, Qualls, & Han, 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013). Consistent brand-customer interchange further impels brands to reinforce the brand image among consumers, and evidently create an attractive environment that drives purchase intentions (Adjei, Noble, & Noble, 2009; Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012).

Brand-customer interactions via social media are openly displayed for the entire brand community to see. Brands are even more so compelled to heed and preserve positive customer experiences and customer engagement (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Thomas, 2015; Gu and Ye, 2014; Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2016a). According to Gummerus et al. (2012), a study was conducted on customer engagement with a company Facebook profile. The findings of the study showed that members of online brand communities were predominantly drawn to connect with a brand to seek help or express approval. Brands benefit from creating inviting environments that encourage customers to reach out when given the chance.

Fournier and Lee (2009) identify the development of brand societies as competitive business strategies engineered to produce pools of admirers that sustain stronger brands. This band of followers takes on the role of a buffer, whereby every individual openly demonstrates support for his/her community. An interactive community facilitates the strength of brand impressions beyond the place of purchase into a society of individuals that, in turn, act as ambassadors in further extending the brand name (Dobele et al., 2007; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Online brand community members are exposed to large-scale global networks that embody diverse demographics, thus enlisting worldwide users under a common union of social integration. Relationships are formed across worldwide customers that have diverse backgrounds, but share a similar devotion, or following towards a particular brand, and who institute a strong community solely based on that devotion (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Jones, 1998). A study on the correlation between the presence of online brand communities and consequent customer purchase frequency demonstrated a parallel link of the variables (Wu, Huang, Zhao & Hua, 2015). Wu, Huang, Zhao & Hua (2015) revealed positive outcomes for brands involved in online communities regardless of the degree of online participation by customers.

Reference Groups

The degree of influence customer interactions are capable of exerting on receivers depends on the credibility and expertise of the sender (Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2008). Messages produced by opinion leaders, or reference groups hold higher appeal and exert greater influence on consumer brand judgments (Flynn, Goldsmith, & Eastman, 1996; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). A reference group is defined as, "that group in which the actor aspires to gain or maintain acceptance: hence, a group whose claims are paramount in situations requiring choice." (Shibutani, 1955, p.563). Shibutani (1955) portrays the modern world as consisting of mass societies that have been segregated into communities of social groups run by different communication systems, ultimately identified as reference groups. Such social groups have today been utilized in the marketing realm as a means of influencing consumers by assigning more than just a functional use for products. Such products are instead assigned a symbolic significance (Ekinci et al., 2011; Englis & Solomon, 1995; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Levy, 1959). Hogg et al. (2009) comparably highlight the significance the social environment imposes on consumption through consumers' symbolic interaction with brands that they perceive and interpret to be embraced or rejected within different social groups. The symbolic value a brand is believed to deliver, weighs heavily on consumption behaviour.

Reference groups may be normative in the sense that family members, friends and peers influence one another through direct interactions. They may be comparative when, for example, public figures set benchmarks that individuals aspire to (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Childers & Rao, 1992; Kelley, 1952; Li & Su, 2007). Marketers have long used the exploitation of the demographic, psychographic and cultural characteristics of public figures as a tactic of reference groups (McCracken, 1989; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Amaldoss & Jain, 2008; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Ozuem & Tan, 2014). The aspirations of consumers to achieve the perfect self and to belong within a specific social group further drive their idolization of celebrity figures (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Atkin & Block, 1983; Choi & Rifon, 2012). Association with such figures brings them one step closer to achieving their lifestyle objectives. A study conducted on the impact of celebrities using social media to endorse a brand found that the greater the following a celebrity had, the bigger the resulting product exposure and buying intention towards that brand (Jin & Phua, 2014). Social media users are drawn to, and follow brands that reflect the people those users strive to be and emulate through overt consumption of brands. Customers become more committed to virtual communities that not only assist in product research, but more importantly they become attached to communities that enhance their social needs (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Pentina, Prybutok, & Zhang, 2008).

Within the presence of brand communities, the consumption of brands surpasses their functional use. Brand acquisition becomes symbolic as social gratification is experienced and emotional fulfilment is achieved from the brand (Cova, 1997). Self identification, group identification and involvement in a brand community add to the emotional attachment customers foster for brands. The more emotional feelings are elicited, the greater the prospect that customers will maintain a relationship with the brand (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). Social media further intensifies customer immersion as the brand assumes a customer-centric approach to generating value within a community built on the principal notion of active engagement with customers (Huy & Shipilov, 2012; Sashi, 2012).

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has granted individuals a large platform in relaying identities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Pentina, Prybutok, & Zhang, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Veletsianos, 2013). By route of social media and subsequent online brand communities, current and aspirational customers are emboldened in voicing affiliation with a brand and consequently augmenting self-presentation. Consumers seek to rely on brands, among the public network of social networking sites, to enhance the self. Customer engagement is consequently heightened and relationships are formed within brand communities as such interchanges promise customers the symbolic benefit of social placement (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Ma & Agarwal, 2007; Ren et al., 2012; Zhu & Chen, 2015). Individuals are more compelled to express affiliation with a brand that empowers them to climb the ladder of social enhancement.

Social identification of the self is comprised of two identities, personal and social. Personal identity refers to an identification of personal characteristics; whereas social identity considers a collective identification of the group that the individual belongs to (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Nowak, Szamrej,

& Latané, 1990; Onorato & Turner, 2004). Individuals seek to enhance both identities by embracing behaviour that accentuates their individuality; however, individualism that is socially commended. Customers pursue brands that convey personal attributes, while maintaining societal compliance over a public scale. Drawing on Onorato and Turner's (2004) study to investigate the weight individuals place on either identity, their findings revealed that greater importance is placed on social identity, since personal identity has more of a context-driven, variable nature. Individuals altered their behaviours according to societal standards, especially within circumstances involving high salience. Conspicuous situations influenced individuals to assert behaviour that complied with the salient identity.

Social media is a prime example of a public setting that may exert such social influence. The consolidated global network of users, under a common platform of user-generated content, encourages individuals to express any personal opinion or preference. However, personal identity is shared under the premise that it parallels the salient identity held by the public (Clement & Krueger, 2002; Haslem, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Individuals adopt social media as a platform to enforce social inclusion by expressing identical behaviour among the desired social group.

Turner, Oakes, Haslem, & McGarty (1994) describe social identity theory as, "self-categories that define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories." (Turner, Oakes, Haslem, & McGarty, 1994, p.454). Social categories are used as a means of social classification or identification. Individuals form definitions of themselves based on the characteristics of the groups they follow (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). The self-definition formed by an individual arises from the social categories he/she pursues. Individuals identify themselves with groups of similar social categories that grant them a sense of social consensus from being affiliated with that group (Jenkins, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Trepte, 2008). Such social consensus ensures a sense of belonging, and reinforces self-identity. Individuals chase social identification within groups to establish prominent inclusion that is socially recognized (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Social identification foments value among individuals as affiliation with the desired group stimulates public perception, and inflates an individual's identity.

Bearden and Etzel (1982) demonstrated a connection between social influence and subsequent consumption behaviour in a study that explored influences between public-private consumption and luxury-necessity dimensions. The findings revealed a significant influence of social reference on the public consumption of luxury products. Motivation for consuming certain products may be elicited through functional values; however noneconomic values are also drawn from investing in the purchases of a particular brand (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Laverie, Kleine III, & Kleine, 2002). Brands are built on foundations of an image and personality that is communicated to the public through brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2012). The image of a brand is associated with the brand community it has manifested, and with particular consumers that fit into particular social collectives. Customers seeking to identify with certain groups or consequent statuses may resort to brands and brand communities to advance personal image based on brand equity (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda, 2005; Gurau, 2012; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Bearden & Etzel, 1982). For instance, individuals may adopt pronounced fashion or luxury brands in depicting a level of wealth and establishing identification with a certain socio-economic status.

The desire to establish social consensus among a particular social group drives individuals to exploit brand association across a public platform, like social media. Online brand communities retain a vital presence for consumer assertion of affiliation. Interestingly, brand-customer connections are strengthened as consumers publicly identify with brands in pursuit of building a self-identity based on what that brand represents (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Customers form distinct relations with brands through their personal pursuit of gaining the desired social identity.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media constitutes of various Internet-based services enabling audiences to partake in user-generated online interactions; such services range from blogs, wikis, and social networking sites, among others (Campbell, Pitt, Parent & Berthon, 2011, Dewing, 2010; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Social networking sites especially gained prominence amid recent generations, particularly empowering consumers' open exchange within a formerly restricted market (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Bolton et al., 2013; Dutta, 2010; Hansen, Dunne, & Shneiderman, 2010). The likes of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat as well as blogs have assumed a platform role that has permitted the free-flow of user-generated information among consumers, but also the interchange between companies and customers. While Facebook and Twitter have amassed pronounced success, this study will focus on the surge visual social networking sites such as Instagram, Snapchat and lifestyle blogs have gained in the fashion industry.

Instagram

Social networking sites have created and accelerated dynamic communication settings in which users interchange globally within seconds. This has compelled marketers to adapt accordingly via the utilization of such platforms to promote corresponding brands. One noteworthy social networking site, Instagram, has ensured its mark in generating significant influence, and it has caught the attention of marketers worldwide (Holmes, 2015; Miles, 2014; Kerpen, 2015; Richards, 2015; Macarthy, 2013). Instagram began in 2012 as an easy, direct photo-sharing application, later expanded into a website, allowing universal users to connect through pictures. Almost overnight, Facebook had acquired the application, and Instagram boasted the adoption of over six million users within a six-month period (Holmes, 2015; Miles, 2014). Its simple purpose and layout demonstrated vast success as the mere sharing of photos birthed a fascination for communicating with appealing visuals that ultimately spoke louder than words.

As the name indicates, Instagram revolves around the notion of capturing an 'instant', and sharing it. Unlike Facebook or Twitter, the central theme employs visuals rather than words, aside from the caption or *hashtag*[1], which is part of the post. In addition, through the use of a *hashtag,* the image is shared beyond a constricted line-up of followers (Miles, 2014). The publicity one shared post is capable of accumulating within moments not only underlines the clout the social networking site carries, but also highlights the speed of communication the world has embraced. Marketers have thus assumed their place in such platforms to remain relevant among customers (Kerpen, 2015; Richards, 2015; Macarthy, 2013). Considering the immediacy of Instagram, brands from consequent dynamic industries have found their presence within this progressive portal an effective match in relaying fleeting messages. A study on the influence marketers may expect through Instagram demonstrated the significance a brand successfully exerts on consumers upon employing an active Instagram account with many followers (Veriman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017).

Snapchat

One prominent fast-growing social network is Snapchat. Similar to Instagram, Snapchat primarily employs the use of visuals. Founded in 2011, the social networking site was built on the notion of communication via ephemeral photos and videos that last between a timeframe of a few seconds to 24 hours after being posted, to engage its' users in real-time interaction (Snap Inc., 2018). As of the fourth quarter of 2017, Snapchat was reported to have over 185 million active users worldwide on a daily basis, predominantly between the millennial ages of 18 and 24 years old (Statista, 2018). While the social media company is relatively novel to marketers in most industries, the fashion and lifestyle industry holds a leading presence on Snapchat as of late 2017 (Statista, 2018). In a study on the impact of brand presence via Snapchat on college students, Sashittal, DeMar & Jassawalla (2016) produced a figure highlighting the relationship between a brand's use of Snapchat and subsequent brand perception among college students. The results demonstrated greater familiarity linked with brands on Snapchat that ultimately led to intimate brand-customer relationships and emotional association. The higher the brand was placed on an intimacy axis (proportional to its' presence on Snapchat), the more superior that brand's social status was perceived to be (Sashittal, DeMar & Jassawalla, 2016). Another exploratory analysis of brand use of Snapchat demonstrated immense potential for marketers to reach millennials through the spontaneous nature of storytelling and posts on Snapchat (Gomen, Alvarado, Bernabe & Melendez, 2017). As Snapchat is in the midst of being deciphered by marketers, this study indicates significant prospective brand resonance among users if Snapchat is coherently utilised within a brand's marketing communication practice.

An industry that has especially revelled in the use of Instagram and on a successive path in Snapchat is the fashion industry. The nature of immediate and relatively momentary crazes that swarm social networking sites before receding behind the next craze is proportional to the unceasing evolvement the fashion industry is known for. Fashion brand marketers are able to apply this instant marketing tool as a means of promoting ever-changing fashion trends while receiving immediate feedback (Gomen, Alvarado, Bernabe & Melendez, 2017; Kim & Ko, 2012; Sashittal, DeMar & Jassawalla, 2016; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). A brand profits from painting the exact image it wishes to depict on a more intimate level with customers. Instagram and Snapchat serve as channels for brands to interact with, amid key prevailing moments in pop culture to remain relevant among the consuming masses.

Blogs

Apart from operating their own social networking sites and using reference groups, brands have taken the approach of liaising with bloggers to further influence customers (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Weblogs or blogs began as dated virtual writing tools for personal use before expanding into globally influential social networking sites run by bloggers of various demographic and geographic backgrounds. Blogs are outlets for any potential bloggers to document life activities, share opinions and feelings and also create relationships with readers in a community (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Kumar, Novak, & Tomkins, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004; McKenna & Pole, 2008; Singh, Veron-Jackson, & Cullinane, 2008). This further shapes social identity as readers shadow such blogs as part of an attempt to obtain belonging within a group or community (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Farrell & Drezner, 2008).

The blog environment of free flowing information within a friendly setting has uniquely captured the attention of marketers to further promote brands as the open nature of blogs, similar to other social media platforms, has minimized the power a brand has over its own reputation (Simmons, 2008). Devoted followers are indirectly fed brand promotions via third parties they occasionally refer to for general advice.

The additional buzz of a brand generated through supplementary websites such as bloggers boosts visibility and allows for further perceptions of brands through eWOM (Weinberg, 2009; Huang, Shen, Lin, & Chang, 2007). Evidently, as users more frequently visit blogs for reference, bloggers gain prominence among users (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011; Rettberg, 2008). Para-social interaction involves the fantasy of having a relationship with a media personality (Horton & Wohl, 1956). While the theory of para-social interaction initially originated from media personalities seen on television or heard on the radio, the following para-social relationship a viewer establishes on television can be paralleled to the relationship a computer-mediated user forms with a brand spokesperson or blogger on social media. Repeated encounters drive customers to develop a strong bond of trust and association with media figures (Ballantine & Martin, 2005; Hoerner, 1999). According to Escalas & Bettman (2017) in a study on consumers' use of celebrities to find belonging, consumers expressed belonging by affiliating to particular brands endorsed by celebrities they established a one-sided (para-social) relationship with. Another study administered on the degree of influence an online personality inflicts on readers indicated that eWOM is received with more credibility and effectiveness when delivered by a particular brand or website representative (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). Bloggers develop into instrumental reference groups as the pin-up example of trending actions. As consumers develop social identification in which people identify themselves with social groups, consumer behaviour is assessed by brands and reference groups that allow for ideal placement of personal social identity according to model group norms (Langner, Hennigs, & Wiedmann, 2013; Liu & Hu, 2012; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDED VALUE ON BRANDS

Brand salience is considerably elevated through social media, as one mention of a brand is expected to travel across a global network of receivers. Brand communities accordingly flourish to accommodate wider customer engagement and commitment that progressively fosters into brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Chauhun & Pillai, 2013). Companies advancing into a customer-centric environment of users stimulating substantial content require an adjustment of brand promotion that accentuates brand-customer interchange. Considering the paramount importance of brand and customer interactions on social media, managing customers has become an increasingly crucial asset, which is managed comparably to other company assets (Blattberg, Getz, & Thomas, 2001; Da Silva & Alwi, 2008; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; Malthouse et al., 2013; Sashi, 2012). The widespread interchange facilitated through social media develops brand perceptions and brand equity that is communicated to all customers alike across prevalent platforms (Keller, 2009; Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Worldwide users receive the same brand messages that ensure identical brand presentation across all audiences.

Brand equity represents the incremental value that a brand name adds to the product (Feldwick, 1996; Park & Srinivasan, 1994; Rangaswamy, Burke, & Oliva, 1993). Keller (1993) further elaborates on this explanation in noting that "a brand is said to have positive (negative) customer-based brand equity if consumers react more (less) favourably to the product, price, promotion, or distribution of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix element when it is attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service." (Keller, 1993, p.8). A brand has succeeded in establishing strong brand equity once it exerts a profound impact on a customer that a similar marketing mix approach under a different brand name did not have.

Keller (2001) describes four building blocks that make up customer-based brand equity. These blocks are achieved in sequence and begin with *brand identity*, established through creating *brand salience. Brand salience* is described as the brand awareness customers have, and the degree to which they are able to identify a brand. The second block is *brand meaning,* which involves the perspective image customers have towards a brand or brand image. *Brand meaning* includes *brand performance;* the functional aspect of the product belonging to the brand, and *brand imagery* focuses on more of a symbolic approach to how the customer is fulfilled mentally, emotionally or socially. This may include aspects that consider the demographic and psychographic characteristics of a typical customer, the channel through which the brand is sold, the history and personality of the brand and the overall the manner in which the brand is portrayed to customers.

The third block is *brand responses* that refer to *judgments,* in terms of quality or advantage a brand holds, and *feelings,* in terms of the favourability felt from consuming or being associated with the brand. The fourth and final block is *brand relationships*, which considers *brand resonance* and the degree of commitment, loyalty, or engagement a customer may build with a brand (Keller, 2001). The relationship a customer establishes with a brand involves a series of steps from the point at which a customer primarily becomes aware of a brand to when he/she benefits from it functionally or symbolically, and creates a perception of it. It also extends to the moment at which the customer forms feelings towards a brand, and interacts with it well enough to form a connection.

Aaker (1996) identified a similar method to determine brand equity called The Brand Equity Ten. This proposes four classifications to denote how the customer perceives a brand, and a fifth classification, which measures market behaviour. The first category is labelled *loyalty* and comprises of how much a customer is willing to pay for a brand and consequently how fulfilling the experience of consuming the brand was for the customer. The second category, *perceived quality/leadership*, involves what the customer believes will be achieved in terms of functionality and, more importantly, recognition from investing in the brand. The third set is called *association/differentiation*, which involves key factors that distinguish the brand from other brands within the same industry. The next set considers *value,* and this is mainly centred on notions of what the brand physically offers in return for the price paid. This category also considers *brand personality* and how the customer deems the brand by defining the typical customer. Finally, this measure comprises of *organizational association* that focuses on the credibility and reliability of the company. Lastly the *awareness* set reflects on the extent to which a brand is recognized, remembered and truly considered in the market (Aaker, 1996). This brand equity measurement attempts to pinpoint how a customer primarily assesses a brand, according to different categories, before proceeding to consumption.

After the initial awareness stage of a brand, a perception of the potential advantages of using that brand is drawn from the brand image, before an acquisition is made following customer recognition and evaluations of producing brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Biel, 1993; Kirmani & Zeithaml, 2013; Bong Na, Marshall, & Keller, 1999; Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2016b). Lemon et al. (2001) consider customer equity to be at the heart of any effective business strategy that ensures long-term success. Customer equity is driven by value, brand and relationship equity. Value equity comprises of the price, quality, and convenience of consuming a brand. It also refers generally to how a customer evaluates a brand depending on the perception of what is forgone in exchange for the value of the brand. Brand equity is believed to entice, serve as a reminder of the brand, as well as construct customer attitudes towards the brand. Finally, relationship equity ascertains the emotional bond and the prospect that a customer returns to the brand. Relationship equity may be strengthened by how the brand has promised to enhance social identity through consumption (Lemon et al., 2001). The foundation of brand equity is considered through the potential social media exhibits in generating brand awareness. Moreover, whether by conceptualizing the brand through an ideal customer or considering the possible personality that brand personifies (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Brakus et al., 2009; Valette-Florence et al., 2011), the brand image that is drawn from a customer's outlook is the chief reflection that embodies brand perceptions in this study.

Social media retains a reach that extends beyond brand communities to touch on prospective customers. The potential of online platforms drives companies to follow suit in the adoption of social media as a vital portal to communicating brand messages (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). The widespread chatter social media is capable of steering induces awareness and enriches brand knowledge among potential customers (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Wider brand recognition through exposure triggers reassurance among customers as the presumed risk of interacting with, and purchasing from the brand is reduced (Huang, Schrank, & Dubinsky, 2004). Brand awareness assumes the role of a foundation and paves the way to the development of brand equity. Thus, a brand lacking in awareness is subsequently bereft of equity, as it holds no value among consumers (Hakela, Svensson, & Vincze, 2012; Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). Exposing a brand through multiple platforms, amid the interactive global interchange of social media, manifests brand awareness that underpins the development of a brand's equity. Once a brand has attained initial attention, the ensuing step comprises of delivering an identifiable brand image that an audience can grasp, relate to, and retain for later use. Park et al. (1986) identified three stages in managing a brand image commencing with the *introduction stage,* during which a brand establishes its image and positioning in the market. This allows it to distinctly communicate itself to customers. The second stage, the *elaboration stage,* centres on developing and augmenting the brand image to create value that is superior to, and provides an edge over competitors. Finally, the *fortification stage,* aims to build a consistent image fit to sheltering all subsequent products produced under the following solitary image of a brand. Companies may have succeeded in accentuating brand images through offline outlets; however the advent of presence and communication through social media has pushed brands to evolve brand promotion in accordance with online channels.

Aaker and Joachimsthaler, (2000) describe brand identity as "a set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations imply a promise to customers from the organization members." (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p.45). Brand identity represents the core that remains consistent to the company and customers throughout a brand's evolvement into new domains such as social media; and hence it acts as the connection between brand and customer (Aaker, 2004; Ghodeswar, 2008). However, the core that forms brand identity consists of exclusive brand associations. The brand image entails a series of associations of a brand carried in the memory of a customer. Brand association begins with brand awareness as certain brand nodes are initially realized and, with repeated exposure, more information is assembled around the brand (Keller, 1993). Based on the following accumulation, customers construct a meaning around the brand.

Social media allows a brand to translucently communicate its own identity through direct communication while offering transparency to its followers via communal interaction, and subsequent customer profiles. It is in the marketers' hands to generate and maintain brand associations that leave a positive impression and distinguish the consequent brand from competitors (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Pitta &

Katsanis, 1995; Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012; Bolton et al., 2013; Huang & Sarigollu, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2008). Another study has shown that such virtual presence exposes brands to a greater chance of expression and richer brand associations, impacting brand evaluations and purchase intentions (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Brand-mapping techniques have been constructed to assist companies in identifying the associations customers hold of the brand (John et al., 2006). Brands may apply such techniques in generally evaluating where it is positioned in customers' minds.

As social media depicts the brand on a larger scale, brands must remain mindful that exposure and engagement stretches beyond committed customers to a wider audience (Kozinets et al., 2010; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012) thus appropriate brand presentation and association is exceedingly crucial to users that are less familiar with the brand. Organizations have succeeded in leveraging social media as a means of accentuating brand associations, and evidently brand perceptions, through the publicity of spokespeople and celebrity endorsers (Cornwell, Roy, & Steinard, 2001; Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005). The use of influential reference groups creates brand associations that are retained in customers' minds and are evidently associated with the attainment of social consensus. The greater prominence brand associations are able to exert, the greater chance a brand can expect to have in achieving strong brand equity and a competitive edge (Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001). Another association of brand image that influences perceptions is brand personality. Brand personality has been defined as, "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." (Aaker, 1997, p.347). As part of digesting a brand, consumers tend to anthropomorphize brands in an attempt to further relate to the label on a humanly level and to better envision and grasp an identity. This also helps them to evaluate the brand in terms of a status enhancer and social group admission (Maehle, Otner, & Supphellen, 2011; Plummer, 2000; Wee, 2004). As a brand establishes an image with human traits constituting a personality, and as it depicts this through boundless platforms via social media, a global consumer perception is drawn (Parker, 2009) that brands are significantly able to manipulate through the widespread communication of social media. Consumer preference further grows as the brand becomes easily identifiable and distinguished and as the symbolic values the brand personality imbues allows customers to extract it from a market of competitors (Biel, 1993; Freling & Forbes, 2005). The subsequent surge of preference in a particular brand emanates loyalty and induces emotion towards that brand. Brands are continually in pursuit of expanding interactions with consumers, beyond the point of purchase, into grounds of connection and emotional brand-customer bonding (Malar et al., 2011; Whan Park et al., 2010; Gobe, 2010). Fashion brands have assumed increasingly active roles on Instagram through posts that communicate the latest trends, campaigns and collaborations that feed into the ultimate fantasy of the brand. This approach has enticed customers as communication transpires past the product into a deeper and more authentic feature of the people, time and effort devoted to creating the outcome of the brand customers see. Brands have thus produced a more intimate nature in reaching and relating to customers. Emotional branding, as such, takes on an angle of richer interchange that inspires and manifests into a relationship with customers (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006; Roberts, 2006). The overall emotion-stimulating brand experience further evokes contentment and loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Sung & Kim, 2010). According to a study performed on potential influencers of brand equity, the method in which a brand communicates itself coupled with consumer interference, through their own input and promotion, enhances brand equity (Valette-Florence et al., 2011). Social media is thus applied as a complement to a brand's strategy in building a presence and image among viewers.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this paper is that it offers an insight into a relatively unexplored area of how social media influences brand perceptions in the fashion industry, particularly among Millennials (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011; Gensler et al., 2013; Kim & Ko, 2012; Moore, 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012; Taken Smith, 2012). The results suggest there is much for the fashion industry to be optimistic about in reaching customers through social media by identifying a relationship between social media and social identity in influencing brand perceptions. Millennials (today's main users of social media) express social identity through brand affiliation on social media, depending on that brand's social status.

Brands benefit from the use of social networking sites such as Instagram or Snapchat as dynamic platforms to maintain relevance in real-time events. The consistent brand presence allows for powerful resonance as the brand asserts its' existence in consumers' social world. Brands supplement awareness and image through marketing efforts produced on social media (Godey et al., 2016). Instagram, for example, can be used to entice customers, develop relationships and to draw them to the website or, more conventionally, to stores. Lifestyle bloggers, for instance, use Snapchat and Instagram stories to document authentic day-to-day associations to fashion brands through fashion weeks, promotional events, or product endorsements that assist both brand and blogger in preserving social status among audiences. The fashion industry would benefit from employing social networking sites in promoting never-ending new collections, seasons, runways, and campaigns that define the fashion businesses. Finally, the findings from this study can be used to initiate future research based on a larger sample.

The conception of social media induced a shift in brand-customer dynamic causing consumers to possess more power (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ngai, Tao and Moon, 2015; Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2008). Brands have transferred communication to the virtual realm in being active pursuers of customers. This study presents a richer understanding of how social media has developed in the fashion industry. Industries are moving at a quicker pace and the fashion sector has become the frontrunner in generating a rapid turnover of ever-changing trends to feed the relentless demand of consumerism. The findings of this research demonstrate the significance of social media as a marketing tool in remaining relevant within the modern world, as traditional methods can no longer sustain such power. This study contributes to the existing literature on marketing to the technologically savvy generation of Millennials (Kilian, Hennigs and Langner, 2012; Moore, 2012; Taken Smith, 2011). This age has grown with the presence of technology and resorts to social media for regular interaction. Brands may find social media beneficial for communicating with such customers in real-time. However, Millennials use offline channels as well, and view social media as a complement to traditional brand outlets. Companies should be mindful of creating an online presence that is in keeping with a brand identity. Brands should reconsider handling social media as a separate entity. Rather, social media should be integrated as a key aspect of a marketing strategy. The content produced through social networking sites represents the brand DNA aligned to fit the entire personality of the brand. This study highlights the importance of integrating online channels into business operations when employing social media as a marketing tool among Millennial ages.

This research contributes to the literature on the application of social identity theory within virtual platforms (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Ozuem, Thomas & Lancaster, 2016; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Pentina, Prybutok, & Zhang, 2008). This study acknowledges the motivations behind the use of social media by consumers for social benefits. Social media extends beyond providing a common portal between brands and customers. Rather it acts as a platform for the two to further relationships. Continuous interaction manifests into a society of casual triad interchange that facilitates belonging, and establishes the symbolic benefits of brand association. This study demonstrates that individuals enjoy the pursuit of specific brands to express their sense of belonging to a social group or status. Connecting with a brand becomes a vital facet to satisfy the personal needs of inclusion within a society, but additionally, to flaunt that association to others. Social media provides the public podium of expressing affiliation and fulfilling social identity through brand communities. Brands can profit from offering customers such non-economic values.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Brand Associations: Brand associations are the main factors that differentiate one brand from another.

Brand Equity: Brand equity is the value of a brand based on the consumer's perception of that brand in his/her mind.

Brand Perceptions: Brand perceptions are consumers' perceptions of the potential advantages, disadvantages or overall image portrayed from consuming a certain brand.

E-WOM: E-WOM involves the online exchange of information about a product among customers.

Fashion Industry: The fashion industry comprises a global enterprise that involves the production, retail, and consumption of clothing.

Millennial Generation: The millennial generation is a demographic cohort born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s and raised in a technological age where communication has become globally boundless.

Social Identity Theory: Social identity theory considers how individuals may classify themselves or others according to certain social categories.

Social Media: Social media comprises internet-centered platforms that enable and promote a free flow of user-generated information.

ENDNOTE

[1] A *hashtag* acts as a form of categorization so that any user searching a topic will be exposed to a considerable volume of images (Miles, 2014).

Chapter 4
Exploring the Relationship Between Social Media and Social Influence

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ABSTRACT

Online behavioral tailoring has become an integral part of online marketing strategies. Contemporary marketers increasingly seek to create an influential environment on social media to empower online users to participate in online brand communities. By interacting in this way, online communities hosted by brands marketers can enhance the nature of the complex interactions that occur amongst those that participate. Such online interactions lead to three different types of social influence compliance, internalization, and identity, which develop the consumers' purchase intentions. This chapter explains how the social influence support the change in beliefs, attitude, and intentions of the online consumers in the user-generated social media networking sites (SNSs). Furthermore, it discusses the functional impact of such online social influence that enables companies to understand the perceptions and needs of online users making sense of how multiple levels of social influence phenomenon on social media impact on consumers purchase intentions.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from traditional modes of marketing to a consumer-centric marketing approach in B2C environments has had an explicit impact on the psychological behaviours of consumers. Such developments have captured the attention of marketers and academic researchers (Michaelidou et al., 2011). The shift to an integrated marketing communication paradigm from traditional media to internet based multi-channel marketing has revolutionised the concept of integrated marketing communication (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Furthermore, the continuous development of online media from computer mediated

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch004

marketing applications to more sophisticated Web 2.0-based social media has dramatically transformed the purchase behaviours of online users by enhancing the speed of communications between businesses and consumers and reducing the costs associated with doing so (Tsai & Men, 2013). The development of social media has become one of the prime tools of online marketing, and this has captured the attention of stakeholders due to its significant impact on promotional communications between businesses and consumers, as well as amongst consumers (Ansarin & Ozuem, 2014). However, the empirical efforts for online consumers behavioural modelling on social media could result in its greater acceptability, making it a real-time online marketing tool for transforming online users into potential customers through change of behaviour via valuable information exchange. The extent to which social media and the development of behavioural modelling based on networked online social interactions can determine changes to purchase intentions and decision making behaviour lacks empirical understanding (Zhu & Chen, 2015). The aim of this chapter is to explain recent changes in the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and intentions of individuals as a result of complex heterogenic online social interactions among online users. Such interactions take place to expedite exchange information. They are valued for facilitating collaborative learning and circulating vital information about products and services (Lim & Heide, 2015). Further, this chapter also reveals how group-based online social interactions develop multiple levels of social influence to create behavioural uniformity among members of online social groups based on social influence.

The development of appropriate marketing and communication strategy on the basis of impartial changes to integrated marketing communication helps businesses to establish a direct connection with end-consumers at relatively low cost, and in an efficient timely manner. Such exchanges can socially influence the purchase behaviour of online users (Bhatli & Mehri, 2015). Businesses can exert significant influence by taking advantage of interactions between online members who join communities to satisfy a need to belong. This is achieved when they associate themselves with certain brand communities to feel socially connected and recognised after interacting with similar, like-minded online users (Bamberg et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2015). Such an enhanced sense of belonging increases the desire of online users to become part of an online brand community. It also significantly increases the level of trust that exists between online users in financial services and enhances interactions and information sharing between group members who engage with financial services brands. Such online users feel more valued and recognised when associating with certain brands, and this is a direct result of engagement which significantly influences purchase intentions (Zhou, 2011).

Social media is facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies and is based on user-generated content. This is also known as user-generated media since it enables active participation amongst online users allowing them to communicate with, and respond to, promotional content that they interact with on social media (Nelson-Field et al. 2012). User-generated content has changed the layout of social media which helps in shaping the behaviour of customers by making social media a prevalent information source which, as a result, creates positive Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) (Ozuem et al. 2015). User-generated media has transformed communication tools and strategies in such a way as to control information and the speed of information that is exchanged. Such control rests with consumers rather than with marketing experts (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010). This phenomenon not only supports two-way communication between consumers and businesses, but also transforms online users into active participants rather than passive recipients of promotional communications based on traditional models of media. For example, on a Social Networking Site (SNS) an online user can actively express his or her views at an individual level or in a group setting. They can circulate messages and evaluate information on the basis of informational exchanges and knowledge sharing. The use of social networking sites for business has greatly enhanced the adaptability of social media as a vital source of promoting products and services and has transformed the behaviour of consumers through education. In this way, online social media users gain more information and knowledge through socialisation.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Most previous researchers have approached social media as a vital tool for online marketing communications due to its clear significance within marketing discussions (Holsapple et al., 2018; Yankova & Ozuem, 2014; Brengarth & Mujic, 2016). However, a widely recognised empirically-based definition of social media is still lacking in academic literature. The term social media is defined as the collection of internet-based applications purposely built for the exchange and creation of digital content within the technological foundations of Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Such technologies are built with the intention of helping companies engage in two-way communications with customers, such as listening to customers and responding appropriately.

Furthermore, Safko & Brake (2009,p.6) defined social media in their research as:

Activities, practices and behaviour among communities of people who gather online to share information knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios.

Constantinides & Fountain (2008) interpret the term social media as a synonym for Web 2.0, suggesting both terms can be used interchangeably. Cox et al. (2008), suggest the term social media means “user-generated content websites” that explain and promote digital content produced by users in the form of podcasts and blogs. Endress (2014) defines social media as social software that enables online users to undertake social networking, including photo sharing, blogging and instant messaging. Social media facilitates instant communication, providing an easy interface for the sharing of digital information to help online users to achieve quick access by removing the barriers to, and inherent time constraints of, traditional media (Azemi & Ozuem, 2014). Social media is a hub and can be simply described as a starting point for acquiring intelligence on the buying behaviour of consumers using social media marketing strategies (Stokinger & Ozuem, 2014). A variety of explanations and definitions have been propounded by various scholars but a universally accepted definition of social media is unavailable in the academic world. The issue of how these scholars have contributed to social media marketing and explained the phenomenon of social media and its implications for social media marketing has been investigated by a number of key authors in the field of digital marketing (Helal & Ozuem, 2017; Hlebec et al., 2015; Carr et al., 2016).

Developments in technology have enabled individuals to interact online and exchange communications through computer mediated online social media. Online social media of the type developed across Web 2.0-based technologies offers online users the ability to communicate and instantly exchange information through multiple forms of social media social networks, social bookmarking and blogs (Holsapple et al., 2018). Online social media has facilitated joint learning through collaboration and social networking which has enabled millions of online individuals to enhance their communication within their social circles. Such users have also been able to communicate promotional and marketing messages to entire populations of online consumers on a consumer-to-consumer communication exchange basis (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). Compared with traditional media and the integrated marketing communication paradigm, new computer-mediated online social media have empowered consumers to communicate, not just amongst themselves, but with companies as well (Dolan & Goodman, 2017). This type of online social communication and the speedy exchange between members of the online platforms it supports strengthens participation by connecting populations of online members. This significantly impacts on their behaviour and mindset (Sinha et al., 2012).

Online social media enables the creation, alteration and modification of user-generated content that is publicly available to online consumers and end-users (Jiang et al. 2009; Herget & Mader, 2009; Litvin et al. 2008). The development of internet-based information technologies and communications platforms facilitated by Web 2.0-based technologies has enabled, not just the publication of user-generated content on social media, but it has also dramatically improved the aesthetics of websites (Brengarth & Mujic, 2016). Depending on the usage and influence of the associated technologies, Web 2.0 offers a unique technological set-up to enhance the use of online applications developed with and based on these technologies. For example, enhancing social networking amongst individuals, collaborative learning and the rapid exchange of information facilitates a form of two-way communication which not only enables online users to receive user-generated content-based messages, but also enables such users to respond to and interact with the sender at the same time (Hearn et al., 2009). This further enables online consumers to potentially engage in communication, information sharing and empowerment in anticipation of some kind of economic exchange between the companies involved and consumers in the form of consumer purchase intentions (Sinha et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2016). Li & Bernoff (2008) explained that the significance and outcome of online social media from a business perspective differs considerably from the traditional communication paradigm where marketers have been able to control promotional content. This high degree of contrast has implications for businesses in multiple dimensions. First, it allows marketers to communicate promotional content to a wide audience on social media quicker than ever before. Secondly it has supported the efficiency of an integrated marketing communications strategy through cost reduction based on inexpensive, direct engagement and communication with clients on the basis of two-way communication. This is achieved with greater efficiency and a sharper focus greater than any other integrated marketing communication tool (VanMeter et al., 2015; Felix et al., 2017).

Within the context of social media, marketing is understood to be planned and based on an online, inbound consumer-centric strategy that uses social media networking sites as tools to facilitate online interactions and the consumption of user-generated content in the form of blogs, micro-blogs, product ratings, product reviews, group discussions and social book-marking. This creates a two-way communication process between marketers and online consumers (Dang et al. 2014; Bojārs et al. 2008). Social media marketing has been widely used in the context of integrated marketing communications through social networking. Such marketing is considered to be discrete and different from its long-standing existence in the field of sociology (Qi et al., 2018). The term ‘social network’ is a subset of online communities, platforms, or group pages where users interact and share their ideas and choices with others (Jansen et al., 2009). It is important to note that the terms ‘social media’ and ‘social networking sites’ cannot be used interchangeably, as the former is a broader term compared with the latter, which is a component of ‘social networking sites’.

Chan & Guillet (2011, p. 347) define Social Media Marketing (SMM) as

A set of Internet-based applications that enable interaction, communication, collaboration of user-generated content and hence, sharing of information such as ideas, thoughts, content, and relationships.

Understanding social media marketing as a platform for the promotion and communication of products and services on social networking sites through user-generated content using Web 2.0 provides a fundamental basis upon which to establish two-way conversation and communications between companies and customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). User-generated content is the material generated by online members of social media websites, comprising information in the form of blogs, product reviews, videos, micro blogs and informational content, based on experiences of products. Examples include Facebook and YouTube. Cox et al. (2008), note that online users interact with online social media in three ways i.e.: i) by consuming social media, ii) by participating in social media and iii) by producing social media content. Consuming social media involves a range of activities such as using social media to read information and view interactive content without participating in it. Participation concerns user-to-user and user-to-content interactions in which users share their personal experiences about content use. They share content socially and evaluate content on the basis of its value proposition to the public (Jia et al., 2018). Finally, producing user-generated content entails the creation, modification and publication of content generated by a user on social media, such as pictures, videos or podcasts. Such user-generated content on social media sites has drawn the attention of many customers and it plays a significant role in modifying perceptions of, and awareness about, products and services (Füller, 2006).

Malthouse et al. (2013), state that since social media is all about users sharing user-generated content for information and knowledge-sharing purposes, the creation of such content on social media could limit a company's control over its promotional and advertising messages which are accessible to the general public. Such user-generated content and information exchange activities cannot be isolated and limited to a certain group of people on social media, as it is viewed in multiple contexts on social media (Lee, 2018). Thus, whenever a company designs a promotional campaign to target certain users with specific needs, this phenomenon necessarily signifies that the campaign will hit users on social media who are not specifically targeted (Arrigo, 2014). In real-time practice it is almost impossible for organisations to limit the audience of a marketing promotional campaign based on specific needs and requirements (Hajli, 2015). In almost every case, whenever a company launches a promotional campaign directed at a certain group of specific users on social media with defined needs, such promotions must make provision for the high probability of users sharing such advertising information with fellow online social media users regardless of whether they share their specific needs and/or requirements with others. This phenomenon has created a positive impact on viral marketing as part of social media marketing strategies because a considerable audience can be reached with promotional advertisements, encouraging information-sharing amongst social media members (Miller & Lammas, 2010)

Social media explicitly emphasises user-generated communication between consumers and consumers and companies. The importance of web-based technologies, such as Web 2.0, functions is based on the principle of user-generated content and the instant creation and sharing of content amongst communities and groups (Harrysson et al. 2012). The transition of marketing strategies from a company-centric matrix has influenced the target audiences of marketing strategies with the elaboration of the mechanism of online value creation (Lee, 2018). The phenomenon of two-way communications between users, and users and marketers as a function of user-generated content has increased the scope of marketing online due to its extensive influence and ability to target wide audiences within a short time span (Hajli, 2015). Broadly, users participate in value creation by creating innovative activities on the social medium. The vital aspect of users' innovation in terms of online content by adding value to it stems from online engagement with content, where users actively participate in value addition to the online content of promotional campaigns (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Such a process of adding value can include value creation in the context of a company's promotional campaign achieved when consumers share their personal experiences (Ozuem & Tan, 2014). In so doing they demonstrate loyalty to a certain brand by helping other online users with product evaluation, generating new ideas or sharing information on specific problems (Scott, 2012). Such a process of content modification by users on behalf of the company on social media helps the company to reach increasing numbers of potential customers online. To achieve this they harness contributions made by online users and incorporate value into their promotional campaigns, subsequently changing the online behaviour of consumers (Qualman, 2009). Technological developments in social media fit with the current marketing landscape and challenge the usefulness of traditional media as an influencing agent that can shape consumer behaviour.

Marketers use this phenomenon as a cushion for their online marketing strategies by purposely engaging online users in promotional content, and by further empowering them to share information and knowledge with fellow-users in order to achieve a maximum population of online users exposed to promotional content (Hajili, 2015). However, the limitations related to social media marketing can impose restrictions on the use of social media for marketing purposes. Predominantly, there are two major perspectives that clearly indicate the limitations of social media. The first factor defines the limitations of the social medium on a platform in terms of information exchange and knowledge-sharing, which completely overlook self-expression amongst users. The second factor indicates a limitation of social media as an online social interaction platform where information exchange, knowledge-sharing and online interactions with content are exchanged in a marketing environment inextricably connected to consumption-related activities (Iankova et al. 2018). On social media, social influence stems from social interactions which triggers the development of new attitudes and intentions due to significant changes to consumer behaviour and makes social media an intensely valuable medium for marketing in the current business environment (Qualman, 2009). With particular reference to the emergence of social media websites, user-generated content has undergone a tremendous development whereby online members not only consume but create content and share it on social media. This kind of creation of digital content on social media, and the concurrent consumption of user-generated content has created the phenomenon of "prosumers"; a term used to describe the members of online media who create and at the same time consume digital content (Laestadius & Wahl, 2017). Fuchs (2010) describes the mechanism of prosumers as a process that merges the creation and consumption of user-generated content simultaneously on social media. Such prosumers are both the creators and consumers of content on social media.

Online users interact with social media in multiple ways. For example, the way users participate in the content creation process as active consumers, and the way they act as passive consumers consuming such online content is significant. So too is the process of users acting as facilitators in sharing content and information with fellow-users online. The interactive motive of online users on social media is categorised into two major groups based on the nature of the interaction. The first view holds that online social interactions are based on rational motivation, for example knowledge-sharing and/or advocacy. Similarly, the second view approaches online user interactions as an emotional motivation. An example might be developing social networking by interacting with more social media members and expressing personal views, thereby gaining confidence and identity (Li et al., 2017). Further, the integration of online user interactions combined with complex internet tools and technologies creates electronic word-of-mouth (Balaji et al., 2016). However, this phenomenon is limited in the sense that, when confronted with such an output on certain occasions due to extensive overloading of information, online users face difficulty in choosing the promotional campaign they would like to participate in. In the majority of cases, consumers are drawn to those companies that are most familiar to them.

Contemporary academic research has mainly focused on consumer responses to social media marketing, although significant research has yet to be undertaken regarding the optimisation of social media, which would significantly explain how firms attain greater numbers of customers with rapid customer responses using social networking websites as a trade platform (Chong et al., 2018). Hoffman & Novak (1997) first used the term 'digital medium' as a platform for online marketing to sell goods and services. They used the term "hyper-mediated computer environments" to explain the behavioural targeting of consumers by firms as the root cause of the origin of digital media. They suggested that marketing trends are shifting, with more emphasis on the digital-based marketing of products and services. They affirmed that the traditional communication paradigm, fundamentally based on the traditional promotional mix strategies of integrated marketing communications strategies, must be replaced with a new communication paradigm which explicitly relies on computer-mediated environments and platforms. These must include all forms of social media and potential tools for creating an IMC strategy in online B2C marketing settings (Ozuem et al., 2016). For example, in a computer-mediated environment and in terms of a technological setup, web pages hold key information and are composed of banners and other forms of advertising through which marketers reach customers by tailoring their behaviour when a customer clicks on their details and passes on their information (Chang & Wang, 2008).

Most importantly, this phenomenon speaks to the specific manner of change that impacts on digital searches and online search decision aids in computer-mediated environments (Wu & Chang, 2005). Hoffman *et al.*, (2013) indicate that the development of such computer-mediated environments, with the explicit development of social media, is an evolution of the type of electronic commerce that highlights the impact of social media and social networking on online marketing. This creates a new dimension of online social media marketing called 'social commerce'. Such social commerce is a notable platform for providing online shopping information with the help of social media and social networking sites by engaging the maximum possible number of customers with social network ties, enabling them at the same time to develop a social identity by sharing, recommending, and discovering online financial services information (Vemuri, 2010; Sciglipaglia & Ely, 2006). Such an adaptive process based on technologies elicits the true capabilities of firms in computer mediated environments and creates value for customers in the retail banking industry (Walsh et al. 2004).

Hau & Kim (2011) explained that the concept of social media marketing became operational in the middle of the last decade, when the growing use of these social networking sites made them an important platform for online trade (Sashi, 2012). This created a change for consumers and led them to rely more on online shopping using social media and social networking sites. The most popular of this social networking and social media sites are Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, YouTube & LinkedIn. Chan & Ngai (2011), argue that the motivation of users and their interactions with online promotional messages depends on their perceptions of online advertising and the participation of consumers in online communities. This takes place through discussion and the sharing of advertised information with peers on social networks. This also includes the self-disclosure of behaviour and attitudes in online social communities amongst the participants of a social group (Ouirdi et al. 2015; Chen & Li, 2017). Such self-disclosure and intentional involvement in social media, and engagement with communication, can influence buying decisions (Lin & Utz, 2017). This self-disclosure by consumers on social media takes place in various forms of online media where users create content and share it. The nature of how this takes place depends on their level of engagement and interactivity. This creates a form of social capital based on personal or mutual interactions on social media. It creates common knowledge in relation to consumer-to-consumer information sharing and it encourages discussions and personal experiences through interactions and the sharing of promotional messages. This helps marketers to communicate with online clients using a B2C approach (Iankova et al., 2018). Chang & Zhu (2011) found that individual, personal interactions on any social medium define the personality influences and so-called self- presentation of users. In this way, users share their thoughts, feelings and ideas and are motivated to help develop a relationship and, crucially, an identity, in social circles on social media. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) classified such individual self-presentation and disclosure which triggers a level of engagement with online users on social media as a form of social media based on individual social presence which is shaped by various levels of self-disclosure and self-presentation.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

To comprehensively understand the concept of social media, it is first essential to understand the background of its development and the wider implications of Web 2.0, since the concepts of social media and Web 2.0 are closely related and are often used in the same context (Berthon et al. 2012). The term Web 2.0, which is used to describe a subset of the internet, comprises websites on the internet which operate on the principle of user-generated content. These sites facilitate users on the internet and help them to actively participate in altering and editing web content for ease of use (Kang, 2016). Web 2.0 is the composition of images, graphics and texts on the internet based on user-generated content (Ho & Chang, 2010). Jansen *et al.* (2009) argue that Web 2.0 has revolutionised the world on the internet, based on the active participation of users. These users create digital content online rather than act as passive recipients of such content, as was the case in the era of Web 1.0 (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). They further stated that the development of Web 2.0 has had a considerable impact on the world of the internet. For example, the internet has undergone certain modifications which have led to the development of new internet-based applications and new categorisations of internet-based applications. The most valuable transformation that the internet has undergone with the development of Web 2.0 is the facilitation of user-generated content which has led to the development of social media and other interactive communicational platforms as contributions to the electronic economy (Cox et al., 2008). Further, Web 2.0 categorises internet-based applications as: user-generated content applications which run on Web 2.0 platforms such as social media; digital content communities; online forums; blogs and micro blogs.

Webs 1.0 was based on the arrangement that online users were passive recipients of web content and were unable to alter or create content due to its limited functionality (Newman et al., 2016). The term “Web 2.0” came into focus in 2004 when online network developers integrated Web 2.0 platforms with user-generated content (Newman et al., 2016; Cox et al., 2008). Such user-generated content relaunched the World Wide Web as a platform harnessed by end-users to alter and modify online content and share it on the internet. This sat in stark contrast to first-generation Web 1.0, where users had limited access as passive viewers of content on a website (Rodriguez-Ardura et al., 2010). Further, Web 2.0 evolved as an open foundation platform, supporting the sustainable development of innovative technological applications through the generic features of royalty-free technologies (De Valck et al., 2009). This enabled the establishment of unlimited web-based links to web pages and unrestricted, instant access to those webpages. McQuail (2005), stated that, for the majority of prominent search engines which run on Web 2.0, the smallest unit is a webpage. This is particularly the case with social media, also referred to as Web 2.0 by the majority of users. The smallest entity of social media is considered to be content bits, altered or created by active online social media users in real time. These are commonly known as "user-generated content units". This explains why Web 2.0 and social media differ, as each webpage has several content entries created or altered by users or companies and is greater than the smallest entity on a social medium (Newman et al., 2016).

The development of Web 2.0 is also linked with the evolution of the development of the internet serving as a medium to help share and alter user-generated content online. Jansen et al., (2009), affirmed that the purpose of the development of the internet with subsequent Web 2.0 development is primarily concerned with enabling online feasibility for the general public to more actively engage with the internet to communicate and interact, to form a new era of development towards online democracy (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). As a step further from the development of the internet, the development of Web 2.0 means it is friendlier and easier to use where user-generated content is concerned. This has empowered users and revolutionised the process for marketers and companies to interact and share information with each other (Newman, 2018). Furthermore this second-generation web service has also led to the exchange of digital content in many ways, for example between one-to-many, many-to-many consumers on digital platforms.

Focussing on the basics of the multi-dimensional functionality of Web 2.0, marketers consider it a prime medium for the development of internet-based applications developed using digital content creation. Web 2.0 has become a mass medium, since it encompasses a much wider role than traditional Web 1.0, as it has modernised the structure of online communications, giving a clearer focus regarding the transfer of promotional messages. It has enabled the polarisation of social and digital content-based interactions (Murugesan, 2007). The modernisation of such a mass medium in the form of Web 2.0 has out-performed traditional marketing and communications methods, thanks to instant two-way communication and the ability to reach a far wider audience with quick customer responses (Fuchs et al., 2010). Additionally, it has enabled a power shift on the internet from sender to receiver with more emphasis on information acquisition leading to the transition of the landscape of the marketing mix and orientation of marketing strategies from push to pull (Faci et al., 2017). This seismic change in the paradigm of marketing communications has enabled the communication and interaction processes among online users to enhance the credibility and vitality of online promotions. This is enabled through confident user exchange of information initiated by organisations in an expeditious and convenient way (Newman, 2018). Changes to the behaviour of online stakeholders are an explicit function of Web 2.0 and its interactive features which have made online applications more user-friendly. Consumer interaction-based applications such as social media have empowered consumers to interact as individuals or in communities to seek information and gain wide acceptance in social media circles to create content (Brengarth & Mujkic, 2016; Walther et al., 2012)

Web 2.0 has made social interactions easier through the technologically innovative development of online social communities connecting online users all over the globe. Such users have formed a sophisticated platform of human interaction in a virtual online environment (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015). Predominantly, Web 2.0 has proven to be the key medium for the development of online communications, linking users around the world and supporting interaction-based applications development such as social media networking sites. An explicit feature of Web 2.0 is its user-friendly interface which has enabled online users to participate in, and control, online interactions, social information sharing, and the promotion of products and services (Dang et al. 2014). With such a user-friendly interface, the development of online communities where consumers become members sharing a common interest and similar characteristics of membership has also been made possible. Such online communities represent evolution in this sense, enabling content consumption by online users who achieve satisfaction by reading and sharing valuable content which enables them to shape their buying behaviour. This in turn has had a subsequent impact on their online purchase decision(s) (Berthon et al. 2012), who noted that, with the development of social networking sites running explicitly on user-generated content, the internalisation of content information shared on social media can be used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. Within this scenario, consumers use digital content which has originated, not from a commercial source, but from a reference group on a social networking site, in the form of product reviews, experiential product reflections and online user recommendations on Web 2.0 (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2018). The advancement and development of technology such as the development of online search engines, sophisticated mobile communication devices, online social networks and websites for peer-to-peer communications and online group discussions has helped marketers to extend their capacity to form a detailed understanding of online communities, social trends and user preferences regarding buying branded products and services advertised online (Habibi et al., 2014). This has led to the development of social networking sites on the web that has made it easier for online users to develop a greater understanding about how to make a rational choice when it comes to electronically available products and services. Such developments lead to consumer engagement which has a subsequent impact on purchase intentions based on the creation of a sense of loyalty and affiliation between consumers and the brand (Hollebeek et al. 2014). However, the question that remains salient in the literature is whether social media has a direct influence on consumer engagement and interactions. It is not yet known how useful social media is when it comes to boosting the sales revenue of companies by transforming the psychological behavior of online users, or if it has a long-term influence over post-purchase related behavior (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Social Media and Social Influence

Arguably social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram transform consumer perceptions and preferences through online social interactions. These include group discussions, information exchange among members. Such group based online interaction together with gratification features of social media such as interactivity and entertainment result in development of social influence through significant change in members' knowledge, attitude and intentions as a result of informational content exchange and increase in value perception (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). The term social influence is explained as a product of individual group-based online social interactions which are determined by individual attitudes towards perspective social behaviour and value systems (Dholakia et al., 2004). Changes to the behaviour and intentions of individuals are an explicit outcome of the acceptance of social influence in online network-based communities. Hutter et al. (2013) note that such online social interactions and group-based mutual social actions on social media develop social influence which significantly impacts on decision making amongst online members. Furthermore, the consumers' engagement with promotional content together with individual or group level social exchange explicitly add aesthetic value towards developing a rational mindset for making a buying decision (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Previous research has established the connection between social media and the purchase intentions of consumers but there exists a knowledge gap in terms of how social media influences the psychology of consumers and how it motivates consumers to make purchases (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Zhu et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2012; Hutter et al., 2013). In particular, the role of social influence in transforming consumer behaviour and decision-making in terms of social media has yet to be conceptualised on an empirical basis, leaving an extensive knowledge gap. There is scope, therefore, to develop a conceptual framework in relation to social influence and consumer purchase intentions in academic literature. (Dholakia et al., 2004) argued that social influence provides a more subjective understanding of the direct connection between social media and consumer purchase intentions. Social influence is related to the attitude and behaviour of online consumers.

The consumer social influence model includes three fundamental components which are value perceptions, social identity and group norms. These share some similarity with the initial framework of social influence (Kelman, 1958) which includes compliance, internalisation and identity. Kelman (1958), explained that social influence develops at various levels in society; and each level has a unique outcome associated with it. Social influence develops based on mutual agreement to adopt the common attitude and behaviours of the group. An individual either conforms to the new behaviour by accepting it to gain acceptance, or finds a match between his/her personal value system, norms, attitude and behaviour with the group's norms, values and attitudes (Zhou, 2011). In addition, identity-based influence determines self-defined relationships and the acceptance of group behaviour by individuals. In this way an individual can become recognised and accepted by other members in the online media (Shen et al., 2011).

Dholakia et al., (2004) used the social influence theory (Kelman 1958) to determine to measure the participative behaviour of individuals in network based online social communities. The social influence model introduced by Dholakia et al. (2004) contains three components which are: consumer value perceptions; social influence predictors; and decision-making variables. Consumer value perceptions or antecedents of the model include the five-factor framework in relation to the use and gratification paradigm framework which incorporate purposive and self-discovery values as well as the maintenance of interpersonal connectivity, social enhancement and entertainment values (Shen et al., 2011). Consumer value perceptions act as antecedents to the main predictors, group norms and social identities in terms of determining changes in attitude and intention in the form of group based social actions known as we-intentions (Zhou, 2011). The antecedents and social influence framework (group norms and social identity) impact on the mediator variable of desire, which leads to the we-intentions that create changes in participative behaviour (Cheung, 2011). There are two component parts belonging to the social influence group norms of mutual agreement and mutual accommodation, and the three components of social identity and online social communities which are affective identity, evaluative identity and cognitive identity.

However, Dholakia et al.'s (2004) social influence model, the compliance factor (subjective norms) which develops normative social influence has not been included since it is less useful in determining 'we-intentions' in online communities. Furthermore, the value perceptions of consumers are psychological triggers of engagement with online groups on the social media. Such value perception serves as an antecedent and reveals potential clues as to the change in group members' beliefs, intentions and norms. (Dellarocas et al., 2007). Tsai & Bagozzi (2014), argued that individuals accept influence either by becoming active members of online groups by sharing their opinions, ideas and thoughts in group based online interactions or by acting as passive members who receive information and knowledge and accept social influence.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The explicit role of social media in transforming the psychological behaviours of online users and in helping them to make purchase decisions adds economic value to the marketing communications that take place between consumers and companies (Hutter et al., 2013). In addition to the socialisation perspective, social media also helps marketers to promote brands, thereby helping companies to create online brand identity and brand communities (Hajli & Sims, 2015). As a platform of exchange of user-generated content, companies endorse the features and use of brand related products and services with an embedded message of brand value to improve the lifestyle of customers or to meet more specific needs. This is also true of the retail financial services industry where social media has played a prominent role in disseminating information-sharing about the value of financial services. Such data is shared amongst online members on social media (Liang & Chen, 2009).

Developments on social media networking sites gained popularity when the practices of different forms of user-generated content became available on different websites created by end-users. However, in order to qualify as a social networking website, some basic features and regulations must be recognised in order to meet the criteria and requirements. For example, the website must contain online users' profiles, personal content and information in order to enable users to develop a unique identity on a social network and to be able to participate in online communities and establish a connection with other online users. This enables users to post online in online communities and seek out information by reading online blogs and expert testimonials on social media (Alarcón et al., 2018). According to the OECD (2007) for a user-graphic interface to be considered as an online social exchange platform it should fulfil certain requirements. First of all, the content needs to be available online as published content available to a group of online users to access and alter. Secondly, it needs to demonstrate innovation in containing vital information for online users. These characteristics perfectly support the development of social media, which is explained by many researchers as the internet-based applications developed on Web 2.0, helping online users to exchange user-generated content (Dang et al., 2014; Faci et al., 2017). The most recognised forms of user-generated content exchange include micro blogs, weblogs, podcasts, social blogs, ratings and bookmarks, especially on Facebook, which supports group discussions amongst members.

Kietzmann et al., *(*2011) explained that such interactions reveal the human behavioural matrix on online social platforms. For example, online social networking and group discussions on a Web 2.0-based application increase human exposure to the desired content and information related to consumption, initiating the transition process from ordinary user to potential online consumer (Fu et al., 2018). Such a behavioural matrix supported by online interactions and active membership has dominated Web 2.0 with extensive online traffic enlarging the overall function of user-generated content applications in online behavioural change (Ozuem et al., 2015). Online user traffic on Web 2.0-based applications is based on the act of participation by online users and the heterogeneous nature of interaction. For example, on social networking sites, online users create digital content and interact simultaneously to share information and knowledge. They actively participate in group discussions or become members of a group associated with specific content related to information concerning a product or services, such as product reviews, personal experiences, or post-purchase behaviour. Cheema (2017) argues that, today the exchange of user-generated content on Web 2.0 has enabled the development of many potential social networking websites that provide extensive benefits to online users, such as Facebook, Wikipedia, or LinkedIn.

Such a social influence has unique implications for change in individuals' mindsets on online social medium. Similarly, modification in Dholakia et al.'s (2004) social influence model could enhance the vitality and credibility of its use in determining the purchase intentions in the financial services industry. From a managerial perspective, the framework of the consumers' social influence model has potential significance in explaining the behavioural and attitudinal change of consumers interacting through social media networking sites such as Facebook. Indeed, the research model of this study also functions as an integrated marketing communication process, especially while promoting financial services online (Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011; Mason et al., 2007). Such a cumulative social influence supported by social identity, group association and the value perceptions of consumers will enhance consumer trust in information about financial services in online, group-based social interaction.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

B2C: The business environment where firms directly communicate and promote their products and services to the consumers through adopting multiple media and using integrated marketing communication strategies.

Purchase Intention: The willingness of a customer to buy a product or service in a certain condition.

Social Influence: The phenomenon which explains the change in the individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions occurs at different levels because of social interaction between an individual and another individual or a group of individuals.

Social Interaction: The communication or contact of an individual with another individual or a group of individuals in the society for purpose of information exchange, entertainment, or to maintain essential social connection.

Social Media: Web 2.0-based application that runs on the principles of user-generated content, facilitating the online users to create, share, modify, and alter the digital content enabling the two-way communication on internet.

User-Generated Content: UGC represents all the ways by which users create and exchange digital content and use social media on the technological basis of Web 2.0.

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is a platform in which software and digital content are not only produced and published by individual companies and people but are also produced and developed by different participants in a continuous and collaborative manner.

Chapter 5
Social Media and Social Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Information plays an important role in the individual lives of people, and social media as an aspect of online information phenomenon is an exciting topic to explore in terms of its impact on social entrepreneurship. Many theoretical fields have contributed to the development of social entrepreneurship, looking in particular at the financial, political, and psychological impacts. This chapter is unique since it focuses on social enterprises and the impact of evolving technologies on social entrepreneurship. This chapter contributes to the literature on social media usage in social enterprises and offers a better understanding of the issues in the specific context of developing countries.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Previous work has established a lengthy list of internal and external aspects that affect the acceptance of IT by SMEs (Ahmad et al., 2014; Brunswicker and Vanhaverbeke, 2013; Ongori and Migiro, 2010; Venkatraman and Fahd, 2016). Research also holds that internal factors are more influential than external factors in terms of the acceptance of IT in business (Fernández-Olmos and Ramírez-Alesón, 2017). The characteristics of leaders, entrepreneurs and administrative experts including creativeness, age and experience/knowledge of IT are particularly salient in terms of the impact that they have (Fernández-Olmos and Ramírez-Alesón, 2017; Fosso Wamba & Carter, 2014).

Other issues such as virtual benefits (Mehrtens, Cragg, & Mills, 2001; Pillania, 2007), ease of practice (Lane, Wafa and Hassan, 2014; Yang et al., 2014) the size of the business (Bogataj Habjan and Pucihar, 2017) and its structural readiness (Son and Han, 2011; Alshawi and Goulding, 2008) also have an impact on the adoption of IT in businesses. On the other hand, Government support, as well as rules and procedures and the nature of the business and national setting (Gunasekaran and Ngai, 2009), are the key external factors that influence IT adoption.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch005

Recently, the role of SM has captured the imagination of business researchers and academics. Organizations recognize the tactical value of social media and are making advances in terms of how it can be used strategically. On the other hand, they are taken as an influential means for concluding the worldwide digital gaps (Ali, 2011; Ozuem, Prasad and Lancaster, 2016). Social media can also exert a powerful influence over social conduct, social relations and socio-politics (Stepanova, 2011). Moreover, the dissemination of SM within organizations produces both prospects and challenges (Deng, Joshi, & Li, 2015).

THEORETICAL CONTEXT: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social connection is considered a fundamental component in terms of the psychology of communities (Laroche et al., 2012). The evolution of technology from telegraph, radio and telephone to the computer and other modern devices has made it easier and faster for people to maintain interactions with each other. In an era of rapid technological development and ubiquitous digital technologies, the use of social media is possibly the most notable contribution in the field of networked society (Vodanovich et al., 2010; Harris, Rae & Misner, 2012). Recent studies demonstrate that around the globe there are now over one billion people that use social media for different purposes (Karikari et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2016). This has revolutionised the process of obtaining information and this has in turn created increased online brand assurance amongst customers (Hammedi et al., 2015; Pagani and Malacarne, 2017; Brodie et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2015; Kim, 2016; Kumar et al., 2016).

Social media is comparatively a recent phenomenon facilitated by increasing global access to the internet. This has given rise to the concept of the so-called "Networked Society" (Castells 2003). The origins of social media interacting can be traced to the advent of Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) in 1978, where users could log in to share software and information as well as to send messages and post to public communication panels. At the same time, because of the increasing interest and availability of home computers, social media became increasingly familiar to users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). More importantly, this BBS is considered as a predecessor of the World Wide Web.

In 1979, Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis, from Duke University came up with the idea of "Usenet", which was a worldwide conversation or communications system that allowed users to post public messages over the internet (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This platform was mainly used for posting articles or news. The idea came into being in a major way in 1980. The difference between BBS and Usenet was the dependency of Usenet on a server to create a news feed and to forward messages and information to different servers. BBS was based on central administration or a server.

In 1991 the discovery of the World Wide Web (WWW) provided new energy to connect the nerd culture with an increasing counterculture. After successfully change the dot. Communism to dot. Commercialism, Web 1.0 had been changed into the new form of two-way communication with the launch of Amazon and eBay in the early 2000s. Consequently, web 2.0 has grown to facilitate a more democratic style of interaction among users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Indeed, Web 2.0 is predominantly an exchange process for gaining access to resources and co-creating value (Finch et al., 2012).

In 1997 Bruce and Susan Abelson initiated ''Open Diary,'' which was a premature social networking site that combined all online diary writers into one segment (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). At the same time Six Degree, which is considered the first distinguishable social media site was also formed in 1997 (Grizane and Jurgelane, 2017; Boyd and Ellison, 2007). This site added features which allowed users to create individual profiles and make friends with other users. SixDegrees.com permitted users to make personal profiles, invite Friends and browse the profiles of other users. Six Degrees endorsed itself as a means to allow individuals to send messages to others. Although this social networking site managed to attract millions of individuals, it closed in 2000 as a consequence of unsustainable business operations.Blogging sites were formulated in 1999 and added a new arm to the establishment of social media. Blogging remains popular among social media users. Blogging was first called "weblogging" in 1997 later transformed into "Blogging". The format because very popular (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

In 2000 with the evolution of social networking sites like Myspace, LinkedIn and Facebook, and the increasing access to high-speed Internet services, social media usage grew ever more popular. The appearance of several sites changed how people in general, and entrepreneurs, in particular, shared common interests. For example, applications like Photobucket and Flickr delivered give photo sharing services to users. At this point social networking because a key consumer trend and sites such as Facebook and Twitter became, for some, an essential part of daily life. Around 2003 social media began to focus on conventional organisations and mass audiences. MySpace, which acquired around $580 million when it first appeared, is considered to be the first example of an SNS which managed to attract mainstream media attention.

Although several explanations exist regarding social media, there remains no objectively recognised definition, in terms of both functional and theoretical contexts (Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Currently, existing definitions have either emphasized the specific structures of social media that have since become out-dated (Grizane and Jurgelane, 2017; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) or have focussed on the energetic aspects of social media usage (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). As a consequence of the incessant and rapid advancement of Social media, it is difficult to define it using a single perspective (Kane et al., 2014).

This chapter focuses on both the substantial features of social media and the dynamic interpretations of social media. The concept of social media can be defined using different perspectives, and each explanation tends to have been instigated by the insight brought to bear from each corresponding study (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In terms of behavioural observation, social media has been defined as a set of actions, performances, and behaviours of groups of people who gather to share information, knowledge, and views using familiar online media (Safko, 2012; Zafarani & Liu, 2014). In other words, social media is more about the thoughts that people produce and share rather than their perceptions (Lincoln, 2010). Three main characteristics of social media from a behavioural perspective are constructive, shared aptitude and conversation enabler (Lincoln, 2010; Ahlqvist et al. 2008). Constructive social media users add value to the sites or apps they use in social interactions. Social media diverts private individuals to become the pioneers of particular sources of information by sharing thoughts, perceptions and knowledge online. Social media platforms have continued to prosper and to shape society (Richey, 2016).

On the other hand, shared aptitude in the context of social media means working collectively and efficiently without any geographical restrictions. Social media is a collaborative tool which is easily adaptable and flexible in nature (Wang, Yu and Wei, 2012; Georgescu & Popescul, 2015; Ozuem, Prasad and Lancaster, 2016). Social media represents the evolution of a process of content distribution through social communications. The idea of enabling conversation is one of the key features of social media. The term 'enabler' refers to the use of social media practices and actions to achieve a course or function. Kadam, & Ayarekar (2014) suggested that the interactive nature of social media sites breaks down class and other barriers. Wikipedia, which has the ultimate aim to produce encyclopaedic content employs shared perceptions and contributions from a number of Web users. Wikipedia is an example of using social media as an enabler.

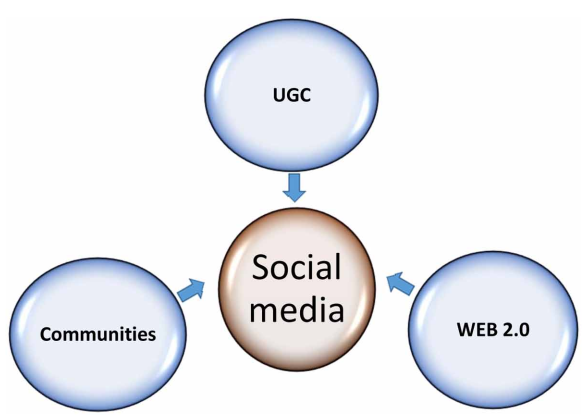
From a media viewpoint, Social media is an upgraded version of mass media and niche media. Social media has three explicit features. First, social media is collaborative. Thus, several authors have described social media as a mode of receiving and publishing messages to extensive audiences who can empower an exchange of dyadic and networked collaboration (Järvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluoto, & Jayawardhena, 2012; Lacka & Chong, 2016). Russo, Watkins, Kelly, and Chan (2008) defined social media as a collaborative platform that supports online communications and networking. Secondly, the content generated in social media is mainly produced by users rather than professionals. Finally, social media stresses the centrality of content and community rather than information.

From a conceptual perspective, social media is a platform on which people interact and it is constructed based on three key principles of content, communities and Web 2.0. This new way of communication enables users to generate, share, exchange and observe content in simulated groups and networks (Stockdale, Ahmed and Scheepers, 2012; Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen and Heinonen, 2008). Thus, social media is not viewed equally amongst business practitioners or academics and the concepts of Web 2.0 and User Generated Content are complex (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Laroche et al., 2012). According to Boyd and Ellison, (2007) the socially interactive nature of social media encompasses content, communities and Web 2.0 technologies and delivers services through web-based and mobile applications.

For hundreds of years, the construction and propagation of content have been evolving, and the possibilities for typical users to interconnect and influence mass audiences have only recently been realised with the arrival of Web 2.0 technologies. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) Web 2.0 was first evaluated in 2004 as a means of generating and publishing content and applications by software inventors and users in a collaborative manner. The author's introduced Web 2.0 as a platform for the revolution of social media, and a symbol of a new conceptual and technological foundation. From his point of view, Web 2.0 signifies an ideological and scientific revolution with elementary functionalities in terms of where the World Wide Web (WWW) can be accessed by operators and end-users. Therefore Web 2.0 is considered as a key platform to produce and establish software and content in a collaborative manner instead of at the individual level (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Web 2.0 tends to refer to the broad phenomenon of social media. However, in this study, the term is used to review the technical aspects of social media. Web 2.0 incorporates a diverse range of applications

Figure 1. Social media under a conceptual perspective



including wikis, blogs, podcasts, social networking sites, debate forums, conference spaces, direct messaging, group journals and address records, cybernetic offices, joint whiteboards presentation systems and many more. Web 2.0 provides the possibility of an enhanced interactive setting that enables a high grade of interaction, support, alliance and assembly amongst users (Barnes et al., 2012). The features of Web 2.0 offer the opportunity to overcome the restrictions of distance for all businesses, whether large, medium or small (Barnes et al., 2012). In addition, Web 2.0 delivers the combined collaborative and participatory approaches to relationship building using tactics such as consumer relationship management. It depends on enterprise applications which are intricate and expensive (Barnes et al., 2012). Thus, industries all around the world are beginning to extensively embrace Web 2.0 in order to forge closer links with stakeholders in more effective ways (Barnes et al., 2012). However, Constantinides and Fountain (2008) suggest that the particular nature of Web 2.0 has not been fully understood and, more importantly, there is no universal definition of the term. Therefore, from a practical viewpoint, the term Web 2.0 is not universally understood (Barnes et al., 2012).

On the other hand, Ahlqvist et al. 2008 consider User Generated Content (UGC) to be something that users can engender and share on the web. However, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) view UGC as the overall procedure through which individuals make use of social media. The term UGC is useful to distinguish between the various types of media content like audio, video, images, information, labels, assessments, playlists and so on that are publicly available.

User Generated Content (UGC) can be described as the collaborative outputs of all the opportunities that people take advantage of in social media settings (Ozuem, Almeida, and Azemi, 2016; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). UGC comprises several forms of media content which are openly accessible and formed by end-users; from text to video and audio resources (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Tang, Fang, and Wang (2014) define UGC simply as media content used to exchange information and views with users. Others have also suggested that UGC is content that is made available on the web which is codified by users without having professional knowledge and practice. Such users, however, have a certain amount of creative ability (Shao, 2009; Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007).

UGC has the ability to appear in many forms and formats. Letters in newspapers can be regarded as the oldest examples of UGC whereby users had the ability to modify written content in newspapers (Fill, 2009). Currently, Most UGC takes the form of online media which ranges from podcasts, online forums, ‘comments’, pictures and videos, blogging and reviews (Simon, 2016).

Therefore, UGC is any form of content from digital images, videos, audio files, statements, tweets and blog discussions to forum posts, and everything in between which has been generated by amateur contributors or users. This form of content sharing is considered the consequence of users that endorse brands, rather than content created by the brand itself.

Social Media from a communication perspective refers to the revolution that occurred following the dawn of the information age which expanded human intellect and enhanced social practices and the sharing of intelligence. From this point of view, social media lets users create, discover, share, appraise, and collaboratively create information which is easily accessible online to mass audiences. This suggests that social media has changed the way we communicate from one-to-many (monologue) to many-to-many (dialogue).

Remarkably, even though experts have sought to define social media, limited attention has been given to exploring how organisations define and understand social media (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). The internet plays an integral role in the development of all types of businesses by giving them chances to diverse forms of social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These are used by millions of people on an hourly basis. On the other hand, through peer communications, social media exert a significant influence over consumer purchasing behaviours (Wang et al., 2012; Lueg et al. 2006; Okazaki 2009). At the same time, social media which can be used as powerful marketing tools can support enterprises to create new and dynamic business prospects (Jagongo and Kinyua, 2013). According to Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) social media has changed the nature of communication between manufacturers and marketers and their targeted clients. Social media is now instrumental in the strategies of several industries (Laroche et al., 2012).

Conversely, social networking provides access to the resources businesses require that are normally very difficult for them to reach (Jagongo and Kinyua, 2013). Social media resources can increase contact between customers and suppliers. It can promote innovation and drive organisations to engage in strategic partnerships (Della Corte, Iavazzi and D'Andrea, 2015). In addition, social media is a platform for businesses to inspire and enhance the sense of intimacy and meaningful relationships they maintain with their customers (Felix et al., 2017; Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder, 2010; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014). It also creates more potential to link up with corporate allies internationally (Drummond, McGrath and O'Toole, 2017; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Kim and Ko (2012) and Ozuem, Howell and Lancaster, (2008) see social media as a two-way direct communications medium whereby marketers and consumers both contribute to a new way of trading, servicing and generating corporate models and standards. This would suggest that social interactions via social media are useful for communicating with likeminded individuals and for establishing networks with the public. Hogan & Quan-Haase, (2010) labelled social media as a "moving target" while Sorenson, (2013) contended that social media belongs to a period of rapid development that, at its peak, will overtake anyone's aptitude to make sense of it.

By reviewing different opinions about social media, it can be determined that social media is a platform which allows users to publish and observe a diverse form of information. It can thus be implemented as a strategy for marketing, which involves continuous updating. Enterprises continue to enjoy a variety of advantages from social media. Such a platform of communication has very wide reach. It is low cost to use and offers effective and efficient communications potential (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kim and Ko, 2012). Businesses can draw attention to different types of users in different parts of the world and they can link with current loyal, and potential customers (Wang et al., 2016; Schultz et al., 2012; Della Corte et al., 2015). This can be carried out effectively and in a more affordable way than with traditional media (Wang et al., 2012). Social media swap physical immediacy for a virtual interface (Barnes et al., 2012). Interaction is vibrant for business actors who can assemble resources quickly to build links (Finch et al., 2012).

Currently, corporate social networking platforms create the opportunity to involve the consumer to generate value in online experiences with offline outcomes. Moreover, whether carried out to fulfil needs or to enjoy interactions in social media platforms, individuals like the idea of contributing, creating and participating online (Laroche et al., 2012). Thus, consumer socialization means that this new and alternative way of communications has changed consumer behaviour permanently. (Lueg et al. 2006; Okazaki 2009).

The intense level of competency of social media compared to traditional ways of communicating through networks has encouraged established leaders to use online content such as Twitter, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn and so on to build a more sustainable and dynamic environment for their businesses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The arrival of social media has created powerful options for relational and logistic communication (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Therefore, it can be argued that social media provides an opportunity for all types of businesses to widen their scope and grow their operations to even greater levels of capacity.

Previous studies have claimed that non-profit making enterprises are unable to practice or adopt websites and that social media is underrealized as a tactical, collaborative stakeholder engagement tool (Kent, Taylor, &White, 2003; Saxton, Guo, & Brown, 2007; Chang et al., 2015; Kim, 2016). This perception was perhaps formulated due to a lack of opportunity to create more communications sites with comment options and argument panels. The arrival of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter make those observations invalid since they are free to use and have built-in interactive features (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Therefore, any business, whether large or small, profit or non-profit can generate an online site and start to build a network and grow business activity.

Regardless of the prevalence and rising concentration on social media, an empirical enquiry is only in its embryonic stage. Research has demonstrated the importance and impact of social media usage for consumer marketing (Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Valvi, 2015; Swani et al., 2014) as well as the implications and practices of social media in firms (Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Koch, Leidner and Gonzalez, 2013; Leonardi, 2014). Other research has focussed on branding in large organisations (Ali, Jiménez-Zarco, & Bicho, 2015; Hudson et al., 2015; Kilgour, Sasser, & Larke, 2015; Colleoni, 2013; Arora & Predmore, 2013; Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014). Yet very little has been written about the impact on or usage of social media in SMEs (Dahnil et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Öztamur & Karakadilar, 2014) especially in social entrepreneurial firms.

Social Media as a Strategic Weapon

Although the literature exposes the various theoretical benefits of social media, most of these are operational in nature rather than strategic (Barnes et al., 2012). The adoption of ICTs has been considered a strategic weapon to reach an extensive market and compete with big enterprises for some time (Safari et al., 2015; Ongori and Migiro, 2010). Social media can be used as a tool to develop a dynamic strategy in business (Williams & Williams, 2008). Social networking sites have become central aspects of network resources for administrations. They add strategic value to business performance (Zhou, Wu, & Luo, 2007). Since they offer businesses the potential to interact with distant audiences, social media also create the opportunity to determine new prospects in business strategies. Social media, which offer a widespread source of information, have transformed the strategies of many companies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Once introduced as a part of business strategy, social media can play a significant role in managing customer relationships, enhancing communication and facilitating the sharing of knowledge amongst all stakeholders.

Social media help businesses to understand what the public think about their brands, and help them better understand competitors. This helps to inform future strategies. At the same time, social media can help firms to better engage with existing customers (Della Corte et al., 2015). They can influence customers to make repeat purchases. Social media offers an adaptive and sustainable business strategy to entrepreneurs by helping them to join forces and share a diverse range of knowledge with their networks (Drummond et al., 2017). However, Jagongo & Kinyua, (2013) suggest that policymakers in the world of social media should offer constructive online surfing tariffs and e-business strategies in order to inspire entrepreneurs to engage with technological advantages which could add a new dimension to any business format.

Social Entrepreneurship

Any discussion related to "social entrepreneurship" must begin with the term "entrepreneurship" (Martin and Osberg, 2007). Entrepreneurship is a leading component of economic growth and expansion (Anokhin et al. 2008; Rani 2013; Kedmenec et al. 2015). Alongside economic progression, entrepreneurship influences and transforms social conditions (Harding, 2007). Gurol & Atsan, (2006) claim that entrepreneurship is an engine to create new job opportunities, as well as social modifications. On the other hand, it is recognised as a potential breeding ground for technological advancements as well as product and market revolution (Mueller and Thomas, 2000). Entrepreneurship is the process of starting up a business and then contributing to the development of a strong economic position (Harding, 2007). Entrepreneurship is a process which seeks opportunities without concern for the currently controlled resources (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990). Miller (1983), categorises entrepreneurial behaviour as "innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking". On the other hand, Shane (2003) states that revolution, evaluation and exploitation are all key aspects of entrepreneurship.

Dess et al. (1999) argue that there are two different ways of setting up corporate entrepreneurship. One is to develop an entirely new way to trade, and the other is to alter the present circumstances and curricula via strategic revitalization. Messeghem, (2003) agrees and suggests that launching a business is just a technique which is associated with nursing entrepreneurial behaviour. Such behaviour involves generating or adding to new activity as part of entrepreneurial actions (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990; Messeghem, 2003). In this sense, the entrepreneur can come up with a new product or service in existing markets to dominate market share and to increase value for the enterprise (Certo and Miller, 2008).

Messeghem, (2003) also suggests that the dynamic detection of new opportunities is part of entrepreneurship and is a tactical dimension of the firm. According to Alvord et al. (2004), entrepreneurship is the process of forming a viable business organization. Thus, it can be said that entrepreneurship is the creation of value through innovation. However, entrepreneurial research has both academic and practical importance which invite further research (Abdulwahab and Al-Damen, 2015).

Social entrepreneurship is the arena in which entrepreneurs modify their actions to be directly knotted with the pivotal goal of bringing social value (Abu-Saifan, 2012). Last few decade, social entrepreneurship has become a progressively important global cultural phenomenon (Dacin et al. 2011; Thompson et al. 2000) because of the failure of government and other responsible authority to lessen toughest and most intractable social challenges such as poverty, social expulsion, and the diverse nature of environment (Harding, 2007).

According to Alvarez and Barney, (2007) the idea of developing new value is vital for the field of entrepreneurship and spreading this sense to the land of social entrepreneurship has directed to an evolving research stream of concentration to scholars (Mair & Martı, 2006; Austin et al., 2012; Certo and Miller, 2008; Trivedi and Stokols, 2011; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006; Dacin et al. 2011; Schendel and Hitt, 2007).

Social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional concept concerning the entrepreneurially virtuous activities to eradicate social problems or attain the social objectives (Mort et al., 2003; Thompson, 2002). Even though social entrepreneurship is comparatively new, the practice of this phenomenon is considerably older and has been undertaken with government support by private foundations for many years. Social entrepreneurship is a creative activity that can support needy and relegated groups and take an approach to explain social difficulties in inventive ways (Noruzi, Westover, & Rahimi, 2010;

Unkwu, Jude and Obiajulu, Egbunike and Ozuem, 2016). Social entrepreneurship has been the subject of a great deal of academic attention in recent decades.

Awareness of social entrepreneurship within the academic world and amongst government only developed in the 1990s. This took place alongside the evolution of new media in the 2000s. In 2004, social co-operatives were launched in the UK to help social businesses to harness their returns and resources for social purposes. As the borders between government, not-for-profit, and commercial sectors have become increasingly blurred, and as further ground-breaking and profitable ways of addressing social problems have emerged, there has been a greater focus on how ideas like social entrepreneurship can address critical social problems (Dees & Anderson, 2003).

Even though the focus on social-oriented business has increased over the years (Dacin et al. 2011; Thompson et al. 2000), it is clear that the concept of social entrepreneurship remains indistinct (Haugh, 2005; Robinson and Lo, 2005; Certo and Miller, 2008; Dacin et al. 2011). Scholars like Smith, Bell and Watts, (2014) have suggested that more comprehensive research to look at how advanced social projects are determined is essential in order to comprehend the phenomena more clearly. In addition, since much research has emphasized the charitable nature of social enterprises, their commercial role has never fully come into focus (Dees, 1998).

In this study the process of resource mobilization in terms of developing market strategy considered as a leading research gap. During the growth phase, every organisation requires doing their marketing broadly which involve extensive resource acquisition. The selection of this gap was determined by many aspects. Regardless of the dominant theoretical evidence on the role of marketing in the development of commercial businesses, it is a surprising fact that there is a lack of academic research on marketing in the context of social enterprise (Agafonow, 2014; Shaw & Carter, 2007). On the other hand, to obtain the required funding, influence customers perception, spread business activity and distinguishable business model, social enterprises need to promote themselves (Agafonow, 2014).

Compared to developed countries, in developing countries like Bangladesh, Social enterprises operate in a condition of resource constrained. Regularly they are competing with several other organizations for resources together with the shortage of capital and expert employees. Lack of adequate funding is considered as a primary obstacle for the growth of social enterprises in developing countries especially in the Asian region (Kim and Lim, 2017).

Social media can deliver an excellent return for entrepreneurs and can help them to capitalise on social investments. Currently, almost all types of businesses are engaging in social networking communications (Bughin, 2008). The cooperative actions of entrepreneurial organisations and their partners through two-way communication on social media platforms has proven productive (Lacka & Chong, 2016; Singaraju et al., 2016). The co-creation of new products, facilities, concepts and systems has been accelerated with the evolution of social media (Drummond et al., 2017).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Social media has modified the way businesses deal with customers (Nadeem, 2012). Blogs, social networking sites, content communities, virtual worlds and collaborative projects collectively represent groups of individuals that generate and distribute content internally and outside of specialised practices. It is now one of the core elements of communicating with consumers (Ozuem, Patel, Howell, and Lancaster, G., 2017). Businesses are starting to form expressive and constant affairs that comprise regular connections with their clients. This new description of customer engagement permits firms to establish reliable relations that spread and exist a long time.

Research increasingly reveals numerous motives for the uptake of social media usage amongst companies (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014; Uyar and Boyar, 2015; Leonardi,2014). In several cases, researchers have focussed on the practice of internal social media stands (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014; Lee, 2016; Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013) by prominent companies communicating with international networks (Karjaluoto and Ulkuniemi, 2015). In this sense, social media offers many interactional benefits and outcomes that were previously difficult, and often impossible to attain. Social media facilitates an innovative way to share knowledge (Koch, Leidner and Gonzalez, 2013) and a new means to reach geographically isolated users (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) have underscored the significance of social media platforms and proposed some approaches to adopting social media in business. There is scope to explore social media more strictly in terms of its uses in social enterprise.

Indeed, most academic literature examines commercial enterprises rather than social enterprises when it comes to social media. A consequence of this is that researchers have perhaps overlooked an essential context (Lewis, 2015; Koch Gonzalez & Leidner, 2012; Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2016; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) and have tended to depend on the inaccurate hypothesis that social entrepreneurs understand and thus unable to take full advantage from social media (Ho, 2016). Besides, such assumptions do overlook the fast-paced nature of technology and variation in the types of users and business settings that are implicated.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Online Communities: A group of people who have shared interest and communicate through interactive platforms such as discussion boards, websites, e-mail, and chat.

Social Entrepreneurship: Social entrepreneurship mainly focuses on identifying various intractable social difficulties with the innovative concept to eliminate those problems as well as to elevate economic value and the condition of the society.

Social Marketing: Social marketing is the Combination of the concepts of commercial marketing and the social sciences. This is one of the cost-effective and most sustainable idea to influence an individual's behavior.

Social Media: Social media is a platform which allows to publish and observe the diverse form of information and thus it can be implemented as a strategy for marketing and communication, which involves continuous updating.

Social Networking Sites: Social networking sites give the opportunity to create and share a personal profile in the form of text, photo, video and audio in order to connect with other users.

User-Generated Content: User-generated content can be described by way of any form of content, it can refer to digital images, videos, audio files, statements, tweets, blog discussion form posts, and everything in between which has been generated and placed by amateur contributors or users.

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 consider as a platform to produce and established software and content in a collaborative manner instead of the individual company.

Section 2

Perspectives and Practice of Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments

Chapter 6
The Differences of Hedonic Shopping Value and Purchase Intention in the Multichannel Shopping Environment for Apparel Shopping

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ABSTRACT

Multichannel shopping has changed the way that consumers shop by offering them more choice and convenience. The growing competitive apparel market forces retailers to assess their current marketing strategies and their implementation. It is fundamental that multichannel retailers constantly provide high levels of hedonic shopping value through multichannel shopping in order to stimulate purchase. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasize the importance of hedonic shopping value in the context of multichannel shopping (in store, website, catalogue, mobile, and social media). The benefits of this chapter are evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each channel from the perception of the five channels for apparel shopping based on 18 hedonic shoppers in central London by using semi-structured interviews. The result shows that store and website gain the highest in the level of hedonic shopping value for apparel shopping and those are the most likely channels in which hedonic shoppers intend to shop for apparel in the future, while shopping via catalogue shows the lowest score of both hedonic shopping value and purchase intention. This chapter suggests that exploring the hedonic shopping value that consumers derive across five channels can enhance the understanding of hedonic shopping value in the context of the multichannel shopping environment.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch006

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has recently caused a shift towards the multichannel retail strategy. Multichannel shopping has currently become a purchasing pattern in which consumers use multiple channels such as retail stores, websites, television, catalogues and mobile to purchase products or service (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005; Hsiao et al., 2012; van Dijk et al., 2005; Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002). Multichannel strategy is more than the different channels to reach consumers but rather how the consumers use and interact across channels (Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002). Hence, the consumer journey become more complex (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014). As channels differ in their constraints and advantages, consumers also perceive the shopping experience differently across channels (Chatterjee, 2010; Levin et al., 2003; Pinto, 2013). Consumers may undoubtedly perceive different levels of hedonic shopping value and purchase intention across channels. This chapter will cover five different channels: store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media. The understanding of hedonic shopping value and purchase intention that consumers derive from each channel is essential for the implementation of a multichannel retail strategy.

HEDONIC SHOPPING VALUE

Babin et al. (1994) defined shopping value as the outcome of a shopping experience. They proposed two fundamental dimensions of shopping values, which are the hedonic and utilitarian benefits of a shopping trip. Shopping is normally characterised by both values but with different weight depending on the shoppers, products, shopping condition and their interaction (Chung, 2015). Moreover, consumers can perceive both hedonic and utilitarian shopping value at the same time in one shopping experience (Babin et al., 1994). Consumers perceive utilitarian value from purchasing what they need while simultaneously perceiving hedonic shopping value from the enjoyment of the shopping experience itself.

Babin et al. (1994) defined hedonic shopping value as the potential entertainment and emotional worth of the shopping experience. Overby and Lee (2006) describe hedonic shopping value as an overall assessment of experiential benefits such as pleasure and entertainment. Hedonic shopping value is more subjective and personal than utilitarian shopping value (Babin et al., 1994). Hedonic shopping value is derived from exploration and entertainment (Davis, 2013). Consumers regularly seek pleasure rather than task completion from a shopping experience. Increased arousal, fun, fantasy fulfilment, entertainment, freedom and escapism all indicate a hedonically valuable shopping experience (Babin et al., 1994). Moreover, shopping activity can provide hedonic shopping value with or without purchase (Chang, 2001; Irani and Hanzaee, 2011).

On the contrary, utilitarian shopping value reflects a shopping trip as task-specific, rational and goal-fulfilling (Batra and Ahtola, 1991). Overby and Lee (2006) defined utilitarian shopping value as an overall assessment of functional benefits and economic value. Utilitarian shopping value is seen as work or missions to be accomplished (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Utilitarian shopping value is derived from cost-effectiveness and convenience (Davis, 2013). The hedonic shopping value aims to measure whether consumers enjoyed apparel shopping, hence for the purpose of this chapter, hedonic shopping value therefore refers to the degree to which consumers derived hedonic value from shopping activity in a particular channel (store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media).

Hedonic Shoppers

Hedonic shoppers and utilitarian shoppers understand differently when it comes to a perceived shopping value (Kazakeviciute and Banyte, 2012). Hedonic shoppers are people who are deeply involved in the satisfaction of shopping (Kirgiz, 2014). Hedonic shoppers may shop for various reasons apart from economic reasons, such as a desire for new trends, socialisation, reducing tension and shopping for others (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Hedonic shoppers spend a longer time than average on a shopping trip since they find that the time spent on shopping is pleasant and rewarding (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980). Hedonic shoppers can be seen as impulsive buyers since they are more likely to be engaged with unplanned purchases (Scarpi, 2006).

While hedonic shoppers are motivated towards shopping and looking for fun, amusement, fantasy and sensory stimulation, utilitarian shoppers consider shopping to be a necessary task involved with rational buying motives (Babin et al., 1994; Batra and Ahtola, 1991). Utilitarian shoppers look for convenience in a shopping experience that makes their lives easier (Kim, 2002). Unlike hedonic shoppers, utilitarian shoppers are generally information seekers who search for information through various channels about products that will help them to decide which products to buy (Timothy, 2005). However, they do not necessarily end up with an actual purchase (Kazakeviciute and Banyte, 2012). Still, hedonic shoppers can also be seen as information seekers when they are browsing even though they may or may not have products in their mind (Nurmikko, 2011). Yet they purchase on impulse.

Hedonic shoppers are more likely to be women than men because women generally prefer to go shopping more than men (Tifferet and Herstein, 2012). Men are found to be utilitarian type consumers because they would rather look for apparel to fulfil a practical use (Babin et al., 1994). They see shopping as a task that they want to accomplish within the least possible time and with the least effort (Cardoso and Pinto, 2010). Compared to women, men are not likely to relate with emotional need in order to drive their purchase (Parker, 2011). In contrast, women view shopping as more than just a purchase, and they look at the overall shopping experience (Tifferet and Herstein, 2012). Women usually spend more time shopping, and look for more information and more options than men (Cardoso and Pinto, 2010).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers are willing to purchase certain products or services again after they have evaluated that the products or services are worth buying (Hosein, 2012; Madahi and Sukati, 2012; Whitlark et al., 1993). Purchase intention reflects the subjective value of individuals' plans, goals or expectations of what they will do in the future (Armstrong, 2001; Chih and Lin, 2010). Consumers with an intention to purchase certain products will have a higher actual purchase rate (Armstrong, 2001). Therefore, purchase intention can be used to predict consumer purchase behaviour (Chih and Lin, 2010). However, it does not always result in an actual purchase (Kotler et al., 2013). Purchase intention in this chapter refers to the degree of possibility of purchasing apparel through a particular channel (store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media) in the future (Whitlark et al., 1993).

Multichannel Shopping

Multichannel shopping is becoming the standard for retailers rather than complementary technology due to the boom of online purchases (Mintel, 2011). Apart from traditional retailing formats such as store, website, television and catalogue, consumers can shop from mobile phones and even via social media. Multichannel retailing offers many benefits not only to retailers but also to consumers. For retailers, the new online channel can be used to support the entire purchase, and at the same time it can be considered a complementary service for a company (Karimi, 2013). The multichannel retail strategy increases the opportunity to drive traffic and sales across channels (Berman and Thelen, 2004). The greater the number of channels, the more consumers can be reached, and the more effectively consumer needs can be catered for (Berman and Thelen, 2004). Therefore, multichannel shopping helps consumers to step closer to make a purchase (Mintel, 2011). On the other hand, the benefits of multichannel shopping help consumers to increase trust and reduce risks that come from online purchasing (Görsch, 2002). For example, consumers can see the products in-store before purchasing online, or they can return items in-store that they purchase online (Görsch, 2002). Furthermore, multichannel shopping increases levels of convenience and degrees of control now that they can choose different channels for their shopping activities (Görsch, 2002). Multichannel shopping extends choice of sources of product information, product choices and different ways to obtain the products (Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002). However, not all consumers take advantage of this wider channel choice, as some channels are still not available and some consumers still prefer to shop in traditional stores. Although buying in-store is still the most popular channel, the Internet is involved in many in-store purchases since some consumers browse online before buying their apparel in stores (Balasubramanian et al., 2005; Mintel, 2013; Sarkar, 2011). Thus, the distinction between shopping in-store and online has become increasingly blurred (Mintel, 2013).

Channel Proliferation

There are various factors affecting consumers' channel choice such as consumers' objectives, consumers' characteristics, product characteristics, channel characteristics and organisational factors (Balasubramanian et al., 2005; Black et al., 2002; Chiang et al., 2006; Gupta et al., 2004; Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002). Consumers' channel choice is complex and dynamic (van Dijk et al., 2005). The preference of their channel choice depends on which channel suits them best and how they can achieve a maximum outcome for the minimum cost (van Dijk et al., 2005).

However, it can be concluded that consumers choose to purchase in a certain channel due to three major factors: convenience, product availability and price (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2011). Consumers choose to shop where it is convenient for them (Hsiao et al., 2012). When shopping from online channels, consumers can shop anywhere at any time without being concerned as to whether the stores are closed (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2011). Hence, it can be seen that consumers use online shopping to save time and effort (Hsiao et al., 2012). In terms of product availability, consumers may not find specific sizes of products in-store (Mintel, 2011). Therefore, they search for real-time stock availability online and place an order from an online channel instead (Mintel, 2011). In addition, consumers may use multichannel shopping to seek special offers (PwC, 2011). They use the benefits of multichannel shopping to compare prices before making a decision about which channel to buy from (PwC, 2011). They think they would make better decisions by comparing prices between offline and online channels (Verhoef et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, perceived risks are still a major barrier in online purchase (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2011; Schröder and Zaharia, 2008). Perceived risks in online commerce are related to the uncertainties consumers feel when they believe that the Internet is unsafe or that there will be negative consequences when they engage with online purchasing (Glover and Benbasat, 2011). Therefore, perceived risks are linked to consumers' trust in online purchase and these risks cause some consumers to be reluctant to purchase from the Internet (Glover and Benbasat, 2011). Those issues include *product risks* from inability to see and try a product on before making a purchase decision (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005; Yu, 2009), *convenience risks* that may arise from technology such as technical difficulties or the complexity of websites including delayed delivery (Chiu et al., 2014; Rosa, 2012; Sarkar, 2011) and *financial risks* that may occur from insecurity of credit card usage such as the risks of personal information being exposed or money lost during an online transaction (Rosa, 2012; Sarkar, 2011).

THE HEDONIC BENEFITS DERIVED FROM EACH CHANNEL

Shopping channels differ in their constraints and advantages, such as whether a channel is used primarily for purchase or for information, whether it is physical or virtual, the degree of accessibility, the type of communication that a channel permits, the nature of its interface, its level of convenience, how easily the consumer is able to switch from one channel to another, the degree of flexibility and the ability to record the history of consumers' behaviour (Dholakia et al., 2010). Hence, some channels are more appropriate for certain situations (Gefen and Straub, 2003).

In Store

Shopping in stores still remains the most popular channel in multichannel strategies (Balasubramanian et al., 2005; Mintel, 2011; Sarkar, 2011) due to the fact that consumers prefer to have the experience of visiting stores, seeing what new items there are and trying products on as well as substitute products before making a purchase (Falk, 2014). Moreover, they can collect the products immediately after they make a purchase without having to wait for a delivery (Berman and Thelen, 2004; Chatterjee, 2010; Falk, 2014). Kim (2002) explains that consumers may go shopping in-store just to get out of their home, to relieve boredom and stress. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) also state that consumers enjoy shopping in traditional stores because of their need to socialise. Shopping as a social activity can be done only in stores, whereas through other channels it cannot (Berman and Thelen, 2004). Arnold and Reynolds (2003) further pointed out that traditional stores allow consumers to experience pleasure from shopping with friends and family members and bonding with others during shopping trips. Thus, store employees could enhance consumer experience through personal interaction (Cottet et al., 2006; Olsen and Skallerud, 2011). Cox et al. (2005) imply that shoppers enjoy being pampered by store employees due to their personal service. On the other hand, some consumers prefer to have less personal contact with others and will go online instead (Balasubramanian et al., 2005). According to Nicholson et al. (2002) and Cox et al. (2005), shopping in stores can be seen as a leisure activity. They stated that consumers are excited and motivated by the store atmosphere such as lighting, background music and overall store layout. Therefore, creating a pleasant environment for shopping in-store can motivate consumers to stay longer and return to the store more often (Kim, 2002). However, the disadvantages of shopping in stores can be seen as overcrowding and queuing to pay and travel costs (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2002). Moreover, product information is limited since consumers have to rely on packaging, labels and store employees' knowledge (Noble et al., 2005).

Website

Consumers can now have 24/7 access to the global market and to markets without retail stores (Berman and Thelen, 2004). Making a purchase at home and waiting for the products to be delivered to the doorstep are the key that stimulates consumers to shop online (Ramayah and Ignatius, 2005). Moreover, shopping from websites enables consumers to avoid service personnel or social contact when mood is low (Nicholson et al., 2002). Websites provide consumers with a wide range of information and are easy to access (Noble et al., 2005). Hence, websites are commonly used to search about product features and to compare offers and prices across online retailers (Berman and Thelen, 2004; Chatterjee, 2010; van Dijk et al., 2005). In addition, the application of technology on websites can now provide interactive features such as image enlargement, mix-and-match facilities, three-dimensional virtual models and virtual fitting rooms that allow consumers to have actual experience with the products (Lee et al., 2010). The technological advances can create positive website shopping experiences and decrease perceived risks from website shopping (Blázquez, 2014; Cai and Xu, 2011). However, the disadvantages of websites include the inability to see the products before purchasing, poor quality illustrations of products, delayed delivery, products not meeting with expectations (size, fabric, colour), unclear product description, lack of human contact and transaction-related risks (Kim, 2002; Mintel, 2014; Nicholson et al., 2002).

Catalogue

The benefit of printed catalogues is their portability (Berman and Thelen, 2004). Catalogue shopping is convenient since consumers can shop anywhere at any time of the day (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005). They are easy to read and can be picked up repeatedly (Nicholson et al., 2002). Consumers see catalogues as relaxing reading in their leisure time (Nicholson et al., 2002). Catalogues are often seen as lookbooks to get ideas about product information (Rud and Wong, 2011). Catalogue shopping can be a resource to inspire consumers or to interest them in products they would not have had in mind beforehand (Rud and Wong, 2011). Moreover, Fiore (2002) explains that shopping via catalogues provides sensory and affective pleasure through colourful pictures, and that catalogues are able to stimulate consumers to imagine themselves using the products. However, there is some evidence that shows the decline of shopping via catalogues in traditional post-based mail order since consumers often channel-shift from catalogue to online channel (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005). Nevertheless, printed catalogues can be used to stimulate consumers to purchase though online or in-store shopping (Mintel, 2011). However, the amount of information provided in catalogues is restricted (Noble et al., 2005). Catalogues make less information available to consumers compared to the Internet (Noble et al., 2005). Therefore, consumers might find that the information provided in catalogues does not meet their needs (Noble et al., 2005).

Mobile

Mobile is the channel closest to consumers since the mobile phone is a portable device which is easy to carry around. Consumers are able to use mobiles instantly and more frequently compared to personal computers (Lu and Su, 2009). The unique characteristic of shopping via mobile is that consumers can access online anywhere and at any time while they are on the move or even in severe time constraints (Lu and Su, 2009; Yang and Kim, 2012). The ability to search for information while shopping is the main reason that mobile shopping is different from shopping from websites (Yang and Kim, 2012).

Consumers use their smartphones or tablets to find information such as product details, opening times, store locations and latest offers, whether they are in-store or not (Falk, 2014). Moreover, mobile devices, especially tablet computers offering good screen size, are easy to hold and browse, have a touchscreen interface and click-to-order features that can enhance consumer experience (Mintel, 2011). Consumers can enjoy the fun through the features in mobile applications and the easy-purchase experience (Chen et al., 2009). Bruner and Kumar (2005) agreed that the enjoyment from mobile shopping comes from the ease of use and the sense of control. However, the limitations of mobile commerce are still found to be a small screen and limited data processing capacity and network connection (Yang and Kim, 2012; Lu and Su, 2009).

Social Media

Social commerce merges e-commerce with social media (Anderson et al., 2011). Social media is a place where consumers can stay tuned to their favourite brands (Ramlugun, 2014). Marketers and retailers use social media to reach their consumers (Ramlugun, 2014). Social media allows consumers to browse and place orders easily at any time and at a reduced cost (Cha, 2009). This is because social media provides consumers with a wide variety of products, which makes their information search and product selection easier (Paquette, 2013). Consumers perceive arousal from the trend of discovering new fashions, products and brands through their followers in social media (Mikalef et al., 2013). Furthermore, Ramlugun (2014) points out that product browsing via social media creates a sense of adventure. This is because social media platforms effortlessly provide non-stop updates of the latest products in contrast to traditional stores.

Consumers are able to exchange and share messages in real time, such as posting, sharing pictures and comments and peer support with their networks (Pozza, 2014; Ramlugun, 2014). Since social media allows consumers to communicate directly with retailers, they can ask for information about products and report problems with products and services via social media (Paquette, 2013). In addition, retailers use social media to support in-store activities, which in turn boosts traffic and sales. Furthermore, consumers tend to share information with their friends after browsing (Paquette, 2013; Mikalef et al., 2013; Shankar et al., 2011). Hence, word-of-mouth or, in this case, positive feedback from a peer about a product is a strong motivator for future purchasing. Conversely, however, negative comments and feedback including product reviews from social media will subsequently affect consumers' decision-making (Pfeffer et al., 2014). Social media has become an essential tool for retailers to build relationships with consumers (Pozza, 2014). The wide range of consumers utilising social media means that most target markets can be reached (Cha, 2009). Retailers use social media to enhance their brand image, for targeting advertising and creating social interaction and social networking with other social network members so as to reach potential buyers (Kang et al., 2014; Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). In addition, retailers employ social media to promote their brands and share promotions. Hence, the influence of social media motivates shoppers to buy products (Mintel, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The sample is based on 18 participants achieved through data saturation. Semi-structured interviews using snowball sampling were employed to show the outcomes. Due to the scope of this chapter, all samples had to be hedonic shoppers who are very satisfied with apparel shopping, currently reside in central London and have purchased apparel through more than one channel (store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media) within the past 12 months. The preliminary questions are designed to eliminate unqualified participants in order to ensure the representativeness of the sample and the validity of this research. The researcher asks a few questions about their shopping behaviour in order to make sure that they are *Hedonic shoppers*. If they have positive feelings towards apparel shopping that correspond to the research of Babin et al. (1994) such as that they feel that shopping for apparel is truly a joy, apparel shopping is a very good time out, the time spent on apparel shopping is enjoyable, or they feel that apparel shopping like an escape, the researcher will catagorise them as *Hedonic shoppers.* The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using thematic analysis via *NVivo*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result focuses on how consumers perceive different levels of hedonic shopping value across the five channels of store, website, catalogue, mobile and social media. The result from the semi-structured interviews shows that website is the most enjoyable channel for apparel shopping, followed by store, mobile, social media and catalogue respectively. This outcome is inconsistent with Balasubramanian et al. (2005), Mintel (2013), Sarkar (2011) and Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014) which state that shopping in-store is the most popular channel for shopping for apparel in multichannel strategies. Nevertheless, there is no significant difference between website and store. Accordingly, it can be concluded that store and website equally gain a significant level of hedonic shopping value.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews show that the major reason that hedonic shoppers enjoy shopping from a website is that they find it easy to use. Respondent No. 7 explains that:

It is easier to access, some websites have styles that you can link together, for example Topshop and H&M. They allow you style them up and if you like that style you can buy the whole outfit, so it is easier for me.

Furthermore, hedonic shoppers enjoy shopping for apparel from websites because it is convenient for them. The result is consistent with the research of Kim (2002) who points out that the key benefit of searching and purchasing from a website is that it is convenient and easy. Respondent No. 2 gives a reason for enjoying shopping via a website:

Website because it fits my work and lifestyle. Websites are convenient for me.

Hedonic shoppers also fond of website shopping because of product variety. This outcome shows the similarity with the research of Berman and Thelen (2004) that consumers can access the global market and some of the products on a website might not available in-store. Respondent No. 17 states in relation to shopping via website that:

It has more variety, you can see a model wearing it and sometimes they have a catwalk. Online, it is better.

For store, the ability to try the clothes on (2 out of 6) is still the major reason that hedonic shoppers like shopping in-store. Respondent No. 18 states the reason that:

I love to go in-store more than others, I can try the clothes on and see the clothes before I purchase. Sometimes, when you order online, it depends on the company, it might be difficult to return it if it does not fit right.

Additionally, hedonic shoppers enjoy shopping for apparel in-store because they can physically see the products. This reason is coherent with the research of Mintel (2011) that consumers prefer to go to stores because of the ability to see the products and try them on before purchasing. Respondent No. 13 explains that:

It is because it's convenient and you get availability of different sizes. And you can accessorise the items as well whereas online, you cannot tell how it will physically look and what accessories you can match with it. In-store, you can do it.

Another reason that hedonic shoppers enjoy shopping in-store is immediate possession. This finding is supported by Berman and Thelen (2004) and Chatterjee (2010) and Falk (2014) who point out that shopping in-store allows consumers to purchase and collect the products immediately without having to wait for a delivery. Respondent No. 3 states:

In-store because I can be there with the product, also I can take it home straightaway.

Shopping in-store was also found to be a relaxing activity. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) state that consumers are excited and motivated through store atmospheres. Respondent No. 4 states in relation to this point that:

When you shop in-store. I find that you don't mind about the time. You are just browsing.

Furthermore, hedonic shoppers enjoy being spoiled by store employees through the service. This finding is consistent with the research of Cox et al. (2005) who emphasise that consumers are pleased to be served through store service and they enjoy it when store employees spend time helping them. Respondent No. 8 give a reason that:

You get the whole experience, you get the customer service. You can feel the clothing and you can try your clothes on. You get a 360 degree retail experience. It is just nice.

For mobile, the main reason is that they enjoy shopping via mobile because it is convenient when they are on the go. This finding is supported by Yang and Kim (2012). The unique benefit of mobile is that it is portable and can be carried around (Lu and Su, 2009). Hence, the ability to shop anywhere and at any time when they are on the go offers hedonic shoppers an omnipresent shopping experience (Yang and Kim, 2012). Respondent No. 16 states:

Because it is convenient wherever I am. You can access it anywhere at any time.

However, social media and catalogue are found to be the least enjoyable for apparel shopping. The key reason most of the respondents do not choose catalogue, social media and mobile is that they do not use them for apparel shopping. Only one respondent from 18 rates catalogue as the most enjoyable channel for shopping for apparel. The same situation happens in social media. The main reason that hedonic shoppers enjoy shopping via catalogue is for ideas. Catalogue shopping for *Hedonic shoppers* seems to be as a lookbook for dress-up ideas and inspiration (Rud and Wong, 2011). Respondent No. 12 states that:

It gives ideas about what goes with what, new trends and it is convenient for me.

For social media, the reason given is that it is easy to access and convenient to use. This finding is linked to the research of Cha (2009) and Paquette (2013) that social media is easy to use in searching for information. Respondent No. 15 states in relation to social media shopping that:

It is easy and convenient. I can access anytime. When you see someone's clothes, you can search for it like on Pinterest.

The findings show that hedonic shoppers are concerned about making online payment. They do not feel secure when it comes to online payment. It is seen that this perceived risk is the major barrier in online purchase, which is supported by the research of Katawetawaraks and Wang (2011) and Schröder and Zaharia (2008) who point out that many consumers are aware of transaction-related risks when they shop online. Respondent No. 4 states in relation to shopping via mobile that:

I don't like shopping via mobile. Mobile is not a secure thing for a payment.

For purchase intention, all channels differed significantly in order of probability: store, website, mobile, social media, and catalogue. The result shows that catalogue shopping is the least popular channel among hedonic shoppers to shop for apparel. The main reasons that hedonic shoppers intend to purchase in-store in the future are that they can try apparel on and physically see the products. Again, this is is related to the market research of Mintel (2011) which points out that the ability to see the items and try them on before make a purchase are the unique benefits from shopping in the store channel. Respondent No. 3 states the reason:

In stores because you'll get pleasure from touching the products and trying them on.

Furthermore, hedonic shoppers choose to purchase in-store in the future because they can get products immediately. This is also related to the research of Berman and Thelen (2004) and Chatterjee (2010) and Falk (2014), who mention that there is no need to wait for delivery when shopping in-store since consumers can take products with them immediately after purchase. Respondent No. 13 explains:

In-store because it is convenient, you can get the products immediately whereas online you have to send it back and change the size if it's not right and in-store you can try it on as well.

Another reason that hedonic shoppers intend to shop in store in the future is that it is an enjoyable activity when they have the time for it. This is linked to the research of Kim (2002) pointing out that consumers may go to shop in-store just to get out of their home, to relieve boredom and stress and enjoy crowds. Respondent No. 7 explains that:

It would be in-store if I have time. It is easier. When I go to buy jeans, I end up buying tops and jackets as well. It is more enjoyable in that way.

On the other hand, hedonic shoppers switch to websites because it is time-saving for them and easy to access. Respondent No. 5 in the semi-structured interviews states that:

I will carry on with websites because it saves me a lot of time and is easier.

They also intend to purchase via website in the future because it is convenient. These two main reasons can be linked to the research of Kim (2002) who emphasises that the key benefits of shopping via website are convenience and ease of use. Respondent No. 10 gives a reason for purchasing via website in the future that:

I prefer to purchase online because I don't have to leave my house. I can do it at my convenience at home.

Hedonic shoppers also find that websites provide more variety of products and they therefore intend to shop through websites in the future. This outcome is related to the research of Berman and Thelen (2004) pointing out that shopping via website has more variety of products since consumers can access the global market. Respondent No. 15 gave the reason:

Website because it has more variety than in-store.

Furthermore, hedonic shoppers are willing to shop via websites to avoid people. This is supported by Nicholson et al. (2002) who found that shopping via website can enable avoidance of social contact. Respondent No. 8 gave a reason for purchasing via website in the future that:

I will continue buying from websites. I think it's a bit too busy in-store especially at this time of the year. Christmas and January, it is going to be absolutely horrible for shopping. I will stay away from the stores as much as possible.

The only reason that hedonic shoppers choose to purchase apparel via mobile in the future is because it is handy and quick. This is related to the research of Yang and Kim (2012) pointing out that the ability to search for information when they are on the move is the reason why mobile shopping is different from shopping from websites. Respondent No. 14 states in relation to this point that:

It's handy and quick to use.

In contrast, the main reason that *Hedonic shoppers* will purchase via social media in the future is its exclusiveness. Respondent No. 1 states that:

Social media is probably the way forwards because you might not find it in- store or it might be exclusively online only.

Furthermore, they intend to purchase via social media in the future because of product variety. This is supported by Paquette (2013) who points out that social media sites provide consumers with a wide variety of products. Respondent No. 15 give a reason that:

It has more variety.

Lastly, some *Hedonic shoppers* may choose to purchase via catalogue in the future because it is easy. Respondent No. 12 give the reason:

Catalogue because it is easier.

Some of them also intend to purchase via social media in the future because it is convenient. Respondent No. 4 states a reason for purchasing via social media that:

It is more convenient for me.

It can be seen from the repetitive answers that the main reasons that they like certain channels are almost the same as why they choose to purchase in those channels in the future. The findings show that consumers do perceive different enjoyment (which is a sub-dimension of hedonic shopping value) and purchase intention when they shop across channels. Hence, the findings can be beneficial to marketers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each channels from the perception of hedonic shoppers.

CONCLUSION

The challenge for the multichannel strategy is to understand clearly how consumers use or evaluate different channels to purchase from. Hence, understanding the perception of each channel among hedonic shoppers across five channels is important for any apparel business. The strengths and weaknesses of each channel are the key to maintain or minimise in order to increase sales in certain channels.

Multichannel retailers need to constantly monitor their services. Adding hedonic features to every channel is essential in order to motivate hedonic shoppers to purchase. This research finds that store and website are the most enjoyable channels to shop in for apparel. Furthermore, those are the most likely channels in which hedonic shoppers intend to shop for apparel in the future. Hence, marketers should focus closely on these two channels. Maintaining an enjoyable shopping experience in those channels is crucial in order to gain more sales. At the same time, the negative perceptions of each channel have to be reduced.

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Chapter 7
Social Media, Online Brand Communities, and Customer Engagement in the Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

Fashion brands have shifted communication to social media as part of evolutionary modern-day marketing approaches to reaching consumers. Brands have adjusted to a vocal customer through back-and-forth interchange on social media platforms that have progressively facilitated for online brand communities. Social media brand communities serve to engage audiences in interactive settings that resonate with individual consumers across different levels. As brand awareness is augmented, brand impressions are conceived, brand-customer relationships are formed, and a sense of community is fostered around a brand, consumers exploit association to such social media brand communities in advancing social identity. The following chapter explores the impact of social media brand communities on Millennials in the fashion industry, while considering the social identity theory. The chapter focuses on theoretical and managerial implications. This chapter considers the influence social media brand communities and social identity may have on a fashion brand.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing advancements have continued to mature as contextual disciplines dependent on factors such as the economy, society, technology, globalisation, or emerging markets, among other elements (Sheth, 2011; Sheth & Sisodia, 1999; Zinkhan & Hirschheim, 1992). These external realities allow for ever-evolving marketing logics that industries venture to embrace (Jayachandran, Gimeno, & Varadarajan, 1999; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The Internet is a paramount example of a revolutionary influence that has radically transformed interaction in today's society. The modernised Millennial take on communication

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch007

marks the extensive assumption of Internet manifestations, such as social media, that have facilitated dynamic interchange. Social media platforms have notably crept into marketing operations as lead tools in reaching, sharing and interacting with customers (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016; Chappuis, Gaffey & Parvizi, 2011), as traditional marketing regresses from providing the active two-way interchange social media encapsulate (Houman Andersen, 2001; Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008). Brands have accordingly adjusted to online communication channels in the chase to ensure timely prominence among consumers within an inviting setting (Evans, 2012; Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Over the years, the fashion industry among others has invested in social media presence in hopes of reaping the benefits direct, two-way interchange promises to provide through online brand-customer interactions (Kim & Ko, 2012; Phan; Thomas & Hein, 2011; Helal & Ozuem, 2017). Expansive literature has been produced on the development of social media in routine interactions and its potential leverage on consumer intentions (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Hoffman & Fodor, 2016; Huy & Shipilov, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Qualman, 2013). Additional studies have examined the principles of applying social media within a brand's marketing strategy (Habibi, Laroche & Richard, 2014; Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012; Simmons, 2008).

Kim and Ko (2012) examine the success of luxury fashion brands utilising social media activities, including interaction or word-of-mouth, in securing encouraging customer intentions. The findings reveal a parallel relationship between the two factors as greater application of social media activities resulted in positive purchase intentions and overall customer equity in consumption of luxury fashion brands (Kim & Ko, 2012). Nevertheless, the study was performed on a broad age pool that gave limited attention to the leading social media demographic age to yield relevant responses that produce precise results. Habibi, Laroche, and Richard (2014) address the evolution of brand communities to online platforms by exploring the building blocks of a social media brand community in impacting brand trust. The results revealed a generally positive link between social media brand community interaction and consequent brand trust. However, the study was performed on a broader age group on a wide range of brand communities from various industries. This paid limited attention to an age pool that has most integrated social media into different branches of daily life. It also posits limitations since a general sample of brand communities and industries was used, which may result in lenient definitions of what constitutes a brand community and being a part of it, thus producing general results. An annual demographic analysis by PewResearch Center demonstrated that the highest percentage of social media usage was exhibited by ages 18 to 29 years between years 2006 to 2018 (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Among the current vast literature examining the evolution and implementation of social media, few have investigated the influential use of social media brand communities on Millennials in the fashion industry.

The discipline of marketing has been on an evolutionary path from a tangible focus on commodities to an emphasis on an intangible approach of service marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Lusch, 2007; Vargo, Lusch, & Morgan, 2015; Hunt & Madhavaram, 2015). Marketing practices have progressed to a logic that places power on creating value and relationships with customers (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Lusch (2007) dissects the development of marketing practices into three stages over the past 100-year period. The first stage begins with "to market", which involves the idea of the supplier and buyer once being separate and marketers working to bring products into the market to bridge that gap. The expansion of the industry sector advanced marketing focuses to "market to", involving generating demand from customers. Finally, the third stage, "market with", transforms the customer from a mere receiver of promotion and persuasion to a contributor of value through brand-customer interaction (Lusch, 2007). Brands have recognised the significance of creating consequential interactions with consumers (Ramaswamy, 2008). As interaction is the core of co-creating value, brands are pressed to visit the process of value creation in more depth to accommodate a more active customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggest the DART model as the central building blocks for co-creating value. The first block, *dialogue*, includes receiving and sharing information and conversation with customers. *Access*, the second block, considers the degree to which both brand and customer can access information. Third, *risk assessment*, involves the potential risk or harm consumers may be exposed to from consumption of a product. Consumers are informed of full risks and hold responsibility for consumption. Finally, *transparency* reflects on the adaptation of firms from vague to the present-day transparent sharing of product detail with consumers. The four building blocks merge to create an environment that reinforces engagement between brand and customer. By sharing information, awareness and responsibility, participation is created between brand and customer as well as customers among one another, forming a community (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Pongsakornrungslip & Schroeder, 2011). Brand communities are important in building unique social structures between affiliates of the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand communities have been transposed to online communities that allow members to venture into novel, prevalent channels (Romero & Molina, 2011), and foster brand-customer relationships from ongoing social interactions (Manville, 2004). Brand presence on social media outlets has brought about social media brand communities with devotees across varied geographic points (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014; Pitta & Fowler, 2005). Greater reliance is allotted to social media sites for worldwide information acquisition than traditional media channels (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Social media was developed from the World Wide Web as an Internet-based service that granted users a platform to exchange user-generated content (Dewing, 2010). The World Wide Web came about in 1991 as a result of Tim Berners-Lee connecting hypertext technology to the Internet and establishing networked communication (Van Dijck, 2013). This later evolved to Web 2.0 as an interactive channel for networked bodies (O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009; Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009; Solomon & Schrum, 2007). Tim O'Reilly (2005) described Web 2.0 as having a core with "a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core" (O'Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 introduced collaborative platforms that created community spaces for users to participate, share and connect with other networks of users (Van Dijck, 2013). The progression of Web 2.0 triggered a hike in user-generated communication platforms, which is today recognised as social media (Arora, 2014; Fuchs, 2014; Gillies & Cailliau, 2000; O'Reilly, 2005).

A study conducted on the number of worldwide social network users from the years 2010 to 2021 demonstrates a significant rise in active users every year, with almost 1 billion users in 2010 to a projected 3 billion active users by 2021 (Statista, 2017). An analysis performed on various sources utilised by Millennials worldwide to acquire updates on fashion trends revealed social media to be the first go-to informant of the latest styles (Statista, 2017). Social media continue to be notably integrated in the fashion world, with Milan Fashion Week in 2016 displaying Instagram traffic of over 60 per cent of users following personal contacts or bloggers to keep informed of the latest happenings (Statista, 2016). The following analyses expose the level of influence social media practices have gained in communicating trends in the fashion industry. Online platforms grant fashion brands the prospect of exercising novel, real-time content across a wider scope of recipients. Millennials innately embrace social media as an outlet for information, entertainment, and social interaction (Kilian, Hennigs, & Langner, 2012; Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012; Whiting & Williams, 2013). These social platforms cultivate social contact into relationships among users, allowing for brands to evoke customer loyalty, develop intimate relationships, and create a promised relationship equity that both customer and brand can benefit from (Lemon, Rust, & Zeithaml, 2001; Kim & Ko, 2012; Vogel, Evanschitzky, & Ramaseshan, 2008).

From a social identity perspective, this chapter examines the use of social media brand communities and relationship equity that appeal to customers in invoking social identity. Social identity theory sees that an individual seeks to assign him/herself or others to social groups that carry a symbolic value (Tajfel, 1972). An individual pursues social groups that promise positive recognition and contribute to self-quality through association (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). There are a number of studies examining consumers' motives to associate with particular brands in developing desired social identities (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010). Product and brand consumption may act as imperative contributors in an individual's quest to form his/her own identity, as well as decipher others' (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). Popular culture consumption is perceived to be an enabler of social status for individuals. Fashion is a pivotal example of influential pop culture that aids in inflating social placement (Barron, 2012). Social placement is advanced by way of flaunting discernible fashion labels that exemplify an individuality/lifestyle comparable to a desired social group conceived on the premise of that lifestyle. Fashion brands serve as a means that consumers capitalise on in their chase to exert a 'distinctive' identity among a social circle of similar social identities. Individuals enforce inclusion by mirroring an identity imposed by a social collective and instilled by its respective followers, indicating the dependence of self-identity on identities in a sought community (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Heere et al., 2011).

Online brand presence ventures beyond a purpose of mere visibility to become a symbolic motive that consumers interact with in furthering social identity through brand association. Social media brand communities evolve as integral grounds for perceived functional and symbolic benefits brands can offer customers. Brands have gained a reach of customers that goes beyond physical touch-points limited by brick-and-mortar stores. Brand-customer interaction has extended past the point of sale into ongoing engagement over a virtual communicative world (Edelman, 2010; Fromm & Garton, 2013) that the Millennial generation has grown with. There is vast literature exploring the application of social media marketing practices; however, the available research does not acknowledge Millennial interaction in social media brand communities in the fashion industry. This research aims to develop literature regarding the impact social media brand communities have exerted as marketing instruments on Millennials, and this cohort's reliance on social identity in interacting with brands. This study offers a basis for fashion brands to further develop in potentially consolidating online brand communities on social media in suitably pursuing consumers.

BACKGROUND

The apparel market, which may comprise clothing, footwear and accessories, is globally valued at an estimated 2.4 trillion US dollars, with a projected progressing growth in coming years (McKinsey, 2016). The McKinsey Global Fashion Index anticipates an industry sales growth in 2018 to potentially reach 4.5 per cent, with major growth originating from Asia-Pacific and Latin American regions (BOF & McKinsey & Co., 2018). According to an extensive study, The State of Fashion 2018, performed by the UK-based Business of Fashion and renowned McKinsey & Company, the fashion industry is expected to experience internal and external transformative shifts. Consumers' digital adoption tips the power of control into the consumers' domain, as shoppers become key players in sharing product information among one another. Moreover, an active consumer demands an omni-channel journey commencing with online platforms such as information search points on social media to brand websites, in-store click-and-collect and comparable services that facilitate the move between offline and online channels (BOF & McKinsey & Co., 2018). Brands are consequently encouraged to re-invent user-experiences through digitisation. Digitising communication via social media produces direct, personalised relationships between brands and customers as networking sites grant leeway for immediate interaction. As the fashion world delves into new-age communication, this study explores the use and impact of social media brand communities among the Millennial generation in the apparel sector.

The worldwide penetration of social networks sits at approximately 71 per cent in 2018, with an estimated growth to over 73 per cent by 2021 (Statista, 2017). This indicates the degree of global online infiltration in daily interaction. Social network penetration may vary from one region to another. Statistics from January 2018 reveal a 70 per cent social media penetration in North America, followed by 66 per cent in Europe and nearing percentages from Asia-Pacific (Statista, 2018). Social network region penetration demonstrates the worldwide saturation of online channels in offering communicative platforms for users of broad geographic locations to partake in. Brands can ensure universal presence through the reach of social media outlets. Fashion brands such as H&M, Zara, Louis Vuitton and Chanel, among others, have scored high social visibility percentages over social networking sites (Statista, 2016). Strong virtual visibility can be attributed to a social media platform like Instagram, which boasts a 98-percentage penetration rate by fashion brands (Statista, 2016). Top fashion players are taking advantage of conspicuous social networking sites in maintaining awareness and presence among consumers. Fashion brands similarly demonstrated one of the highest penetration rates on Snapchat, with visual posts ranging from images to live video shares (Statista, 2017).

Social media has transported the fashion industry into a digitised realm of free-flow content exchanged between brands and consumers worldwide. Brand-customer relationships cultivate over a common floor of interchange, intensifying brand communities and enriching consumers' inclination to affiliate with a brand. The model of consumer-driven content becomes a key contributor to brand perceptions (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008; Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012). Consumers openly share opinions, reviews, devotion, and association to a brand among one another. This use of virtual platforms evokes brand impressions that resonate with customers, demonstrating encouraging links between a brand's social media activity and corresponding brand recognition (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Fuller, 2013). Customers pursue association with a brand's community as part of an agenda to build their own social identity based on what that brand is perceived to denote (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Lemon, Rust, and Zeithaml (2001) emphasise customer equity as a pivotal footing to any marketing strategy in a study that investigates three drivers of customer equity: brand, value or relationship equity. Value and brand equity involve a consumer's assessment of a brand based on what is given up for brand purchase and overall perception of the brand, respectively. Relationship equity alludes to a brand-customer connection that exceeds objectivity; rather, it implicates a deeper relation that bonds customers to brands. Meaningful attachments can be created by incentives that offer aspirational value of brand consumption (Lemon, Rust, & Zeithaml, 2001). Hosting social media brand communities can build emotional ties between members and motivate consumers to seek brand affiliation for the perceived value of social enhancement.

Social media is conceived on the foundation of free-flowing content from any participating user, invoking universal engagement across global cultures (Van Dijck, 2013). According to Evans (2012), "Social media is the democratisation of information, transforming people from content readers to content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers" (Evans, 2012, p. 32). A sense of equality is instilled among parties as any one user can contribute or receive material. By route of social media, conversations have reformed to embody a casual, back-and-forth standard for interacting.

The Millennial age has extensively integrated social media into daily communication across a range of platforms. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are used to share the latest on ample subjects including politics, economy, and society. Numerous studies have shown the Millennial generation of ages 18 to 29 years to be the highest age group utilising social media platforms for regular use (Deloitte, 2017; Smith & Anderson, 2018; Statista, 2016). The Millennial generation is the demographic cohort following Generation X. This cohort does not have precise beginning and end dates but some researchers believe Millennials' birth years fall between the early 1980s and the early 2000s (Ng, Schweitxer, & Lyons, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011). However, Howe and Strauss (2000) define the generation as individuals born between 1982 and 2004. Millennials move between different convenient and immediate communication avenues (Rainer & Rainer, 2011). This cohort esteems virtual socialisation and community environments (Bolton et al., 2013). The absorption of Internet communication technologies blurs geographic boundaries, allowing worldwide Millennials to merge through homogeneous behaviour (Moore, 2012). As collective, global platforms expose Millennials to harmonised experiences that shape values and attitudes, marketers gain the intelligence to target Millennial groups based on those values (Schewe & Meredith, 2004).

CONTEXT AND FOUNDATION

Social media has continued to assert influence as an imperative instrument in daily life for over a decade. Its initiation offered a foundation for user-generated content originally used by individuals before maturing into a virtual phenomenon adopted by individuals, corporations and industries alike (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Expansive literature has been dedicated to the explanation and thorough examination of social media (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Murugesan, 2007; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) famously defined social media as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media offers a networked culture fuelled by easy information reach and accessibility (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Content is produced and circulated by online users to inform one another of various issues, including product and service reviews (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006). This has produced an age of technologically skilled Millennial consumers, liberated by the free-flow distribution of online platforms (Kozinets, 1999; Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012). Online users are empowered to contribute and engage in social interactions (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Susarla, Oh, & Tan, 2012) that can coalesce into collective influences capable of weighing on other individual users, consumers, and organisations (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007).

In a study deliberating the rationale of using social media based on extensive research on existing uses and gratifications literature, Whiting and Williams (2013) identified seven themes including social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, and convenience utility. These themes produce a framework for social media use that is highly dependent on social connectivity to self-educate and associate with others. Simple back-and-forth dialogue on niche topics induces connections between users that potentially prosper into communities (Hansen, Schneirderman, & Smith, 2011). As individuals are motivated to voice opinions, consumers gain cumulative force among brands allowing for 'bottom-up marketing' (Karpinski, 2005). Marketers strive to reach consumers through collaborative engagements. Social media platforms share communities that marketers employ to engross audiences and exert influence on consumers (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Brands and customers are presented the opportunity to connect and form relationships and attachments through online communities on social media. Before proceeding to the exploration of online communities, it is important to define what brand communities entail.

The notion of brand communities has gained immense grounds among researchers, marketers and organisations over the years (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Cova & Pace, 2006; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; McAlexander, Koenig, & Schouten, 2006; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009). Marketers have progressed beyond an individualistic approach to a communal outlook of consumption (Cova, 1997). A 'tribal' effect has been identified through social dynamics that display individuals being influenced by groupings they identify with (Cova & Cova, 2002; Gainer & Fischer, 1994). One-on-one relationships between brand and customer have regressed in effectively securing outcomes (Berry, 1995; Iacobucci, 1994) as the recognition of social influence has provoked marketing interest in brand communities (Cova & Cova, 2002; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; McAlexander, Koenig, & Schouten, 2006; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define brand community as a non-geographically bound group of social relationships among consumers of a brand, who share common admiration and interest toward the brand. Communities have three core indicators, the first being consciousness of kind, which is the feeling that links community members to one another while separating them from non-members of the community (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Gusfield, 1978; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Weber (1978) recognises shared consciousness as a sense of belonging. The second marker is shared rituals and traditions that evolve over the brand's history and allow for a symbolic community culture (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). The third indicator of community is the responsibility members develop towards other members, the community, and the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). These core components form the foundation of a community by which brands and members connect, grow and form relationships.

McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) conceptualised a customer-centric model of brand community stressing the gravity of customer experience in sustaining brand communities. The model holds the customer at the centre of the equation with member and brand integration resulting in positive relationships and ensuing aftermaths. McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2006) further dissect the model by examining four component relationships within a brand community. *Customer-product relationship* considers the tangible product that is exchanged between brand and customer, or in the case of an intangible exchange, the quality and experience acquired. Positive outcomes from this exchange result in stronger consumer-perceived identity from being connected with a brand. *Consumer-brand relationship* emphasises the emotional and symbolic connections customers establish with a brand. *Customer-institution relationship* reflects on the relationship developed between the customer and the company to which the brand belongs that ultimately contributes to loyalty. Finally, the *customer-customer relationship* examines the tribal influence word-of-mouth yields among customers. The collective leverage of customers sways other community members' purchase intentions, experiences, and behaviour (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2006). The thorough breakdown of integrated relationships within brand communities accentuates the intricate dynamics a brand community surmises and strives to harmonise to succeed.

Consumers are presented greater networking opportunities with similar individuals through the vast reach of social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Kozinets (1999) addressed the tribalising of society through virtual networked communications he refers to as 'e-tribalizing'. Online communities act as supplements marketers can employ to understand consumer behaviour (Kozinets, 1999; Kozinets, 2002) in the manner that social media exposes organisations to insightful information on consumers. While the Internet has always been a host to collective interactive settings as online forums, social media platforms such as social networking sites have displayed more life-like interactions since users are encouraged to use their own identity and connect with their offline networks (Ross et al., 2009). Marketers gain a deeper perspective on consumers, as interpersonal relationships and behaviours are made public through networked platforms like Facebook or Instagram.

Habibi, Laroche, and Richard (2014) underscore five elements that differentiate social media based brand communities from other brand communities. The first aspect is the *social context* and detailed information social media platforms offer on community members. The second dimension that makes social media a unique host of brand communities is the flexible *structure* communities are able to offer. Thirdly, the immense *scale* social media brand communities are capable of obtaining is affirmed by the reach that social media platforms retain. The fourth crucial element to brand communities that is profoundly accentuated in social media's articulate characteristic is *storytelling.* Social media offers platforms for appealing posts through visuals and texts that spur interaction among community members. The final feature is *affiliated brand communities* that may come about from interactive members further interlinking through related smaller sects within a brand community (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014). The nature of social media produces brand communities with charismatic environments that customers can relate to in self-expression and ultimately brand identification. Online social networks are an essential contributor to valuable brand communities, offering human connections and memorable experiences (Fournier & Lee, 2009). Marketers can expect to offer customers an experience beyond the purchase of a product by exercising brand communities among worldwide networks on social media.

ADDED VALUE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNITIES

Brands recognise the advantages of engaging in the two-way communication social media entails as a potential for leveraging brand-customer interactions (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016; Laroche, Habibi, Richard & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Pentina, Gammoh, Zhang, & Mallin, 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Zhang, Benyoucef, & Zhao, 2016). Social media allows for a generous audience reach, inciting brand presence over expansive platforms. The networked nature of social media encourages social exchanges within brand communities (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014; Zaglia, 2013), supporting brand-customer exchange and consumer engagement. Brand-customer relationships through social media have matured into an essential focus within marketing practices (Fournier & Avery, 2011). This chapter focuses on the influence marketing through social media brand communities may induce on Millennial customers.

Knowledge Seeking/Sharing and EWOM

A worldwide infiltration of over 2.4 billion social network users in 2017, with a projected 3 billion users by 2021 (Statista, 2017), demonstrates the possible clout a brand mention on social media is capable of exerting over a global audience of consumers. Social media users are encouraged to engage in worldwide interactive platforms, and brands are ultimately pulled into this environment in reaching customers (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Brand exposure to social media and Internet technologies enriches brand-customer reciprocation allowing for rapid production and distribution of content between parties (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, Jr., 2003; Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010). Rich and inviting brand communities are founded based on availability of customers, brands, and content circulating social platforms. Social media provides an additional source for unbiased information generated by consumers, known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Trusov, Buckin, & Pauwels, 2009). As consumers seek more genuine reviews in gathering brand or product knowledge, brands have recognised the importance of preserving eWOM as a marketing tool (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Dellarocas, 2003; Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008). The travel of eWOM through social media networks can contribute to the attention a consumer gives a brand (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014), and extend beyond mere attention to act as an influence of purchasing decisions among customers (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Park, Lee & Han, 2007).

The ease of accessibility through network means marks the positive reception of eWOM among individual Millennials and collective brand communities alike (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Taken Smith, 2012; Veloutsou and McAlonan, 2012). Online social interactions prompt an exchange of information and consumer input that serve brands and customers (Tikkanen, Hietanen, Henttonen & Rokka, 2009). Consumers may seek to engage in eWOM within online communities for different motives (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) identified three utility types that rationalise eWOM in communities: *focus-related utility* involves the satisfaction a customer acquires when contributing value to the community. *Consumption utility* considers the value customers attain from directly absorbing the inputs of other community members. *Approval utility* reflects on the satisfaction received when other community members consume and approve of a member's contribution (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001). The following utility types derive the motivation behind consumers sharing and receiving eWOM and information within online brand communities. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) add a further two utility types: *moderator-related utility*, which comprises a moderator handling complaints within a consumer-to-consumer interactive setting, and *homeostase utility*, which is constructed on the idea of balance theory (Heider, 1946; Newcomb, 1953) that individuals strive to inject balance in their lives, thus encouraging consumers to express both positive and negative experiences as a way of reinforcing a neutral state (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Brands are intimidated by the notion of diminished control of brand information due to the flexibility of user-generated content in the form of eWOM, yet the impact of negative eWOM can be monitored and handled accordingly (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Some studies argue that publicity via eWOM, positive or negative, can produce optimistic results as the volume of eWOM contributes to brand awareness (Berger, Sorensen, & Rasmussen, 2010; Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008; Liu, 2006). Partaking in online communities, through knowledge posting and viewing actions, is an imperative course for community members to dispense information (Butler, 2001; Koh & Kim, 2004). Fashion brands can experience positive aftermaths through consumer circulation of eWOM across social media since information is viewed as authentic (Kulmala, Mesiranta, & Tuominen, 2013; Wolny & Mueller, 2013), even more so within worldwide brand communities of large-scale user-generated information.

Community Participation and Consumer Engagement

Online users are further inclined to share information upon being motivated to participate as community members in brand communities (Woisetschlager, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008). Brand communities unite members around a mutual interest (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) that grants members an appeal of participating to that community (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011). Participation extends paramount support for the growth and continuity of online communities (Casalo, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2007). Recurrent member participation ensures the long-term sustainability of a community (Koh & Kim, 2004). In a study investigating the knowledge shared in online communities, Koh and Kim (2004) demonstrated a parallel relationship between knowledge shared and community participation. Greater degrees of participation in virtual communities allowed for a vaster amount of knowledge distributed (Koh & Kim, 2004). Continuous participation ultimately results in the development of emotional ties such as trust and loyalty to the community and brand (Casalo, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2007; Holland & Baker, 2001; Koh & Kim, 2004).

The shift to consumer power through social media means has empowered customer-centric techniques in advancing brands (Sashi, 2012). Marketing professionals have embraced the importance of consumer engagement among the advent of digital social platforms encouraging interaction (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Sashi, 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013). Social media users are incited to engage in virtual channels, and brands are ultimately pulled into this environment in reaching customers (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) define consumer brand engagement as "a consumer's positively valenced cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions" (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Baldus et al. (2015) define online brand community engagement as "the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community" (Baldus et al., 2015, p. 2). Consumers may engage in social media communities through interactive activities such as posting photos, stories, commenting or liking other members' posts. A greater extent of engagement is attributed to greater cooperation and interaction, and the ensuing optimistic effects of rich brand-customer and customer-customer relationships (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014). Social media's interactivity paves the route for continual instant contact that bears the potential to elicit deeper ties among community members.

Sashi (2012) considers the development of customer engagement through a customer engagement cycle consisting of seven stages. The first stage, *connection*, acts as a preliminary step of customers establishing connections with brands or other customers in their search for products that meet their needs. The second stage, *interaction*, is a consequence of regular dialogue and a contributing factor in consumers and brands co-creating value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sashi, 2012). Sashi (2012) holds *satisfaction* to be the third stage in which customers continue to interact in a community based on the satisfaction achieved from interactions. Satisfaction over a period of time induces *customer retention*, the fourth stage, which results in the following fifth stage, *commitment.* Commitment consists of calculative commitment, a realistic approach that is a product of the absence of alternative choices, and affective commitment, which is based on an emotional stance that develops from reciprocity in a relationship (Gounaris, 2005; Kumar, Hibbard, & Stern, 1994; de Ruyter, Moorman, & Lemmink, 2001). As emotions materialise, customers may feel more motivated to engage in social media brand communities in the sixth stage of *advocacy*. Customers feel an impulse to share experiences of a brand with the community (Sashi, 2012). Finally, through the stages of interacting, committing and advocating a brand, the last stage of *engagement* is reached. This stage progresses community relationships and enforces consumers' role as co-creators of value (Sashi, 2012). Fashion labels have transposed to visual social networking sites such as Instagram and Snapchat in creating posts that engage consumers in the identity of a brand and its establishment in the market.

Customer Equity

Customer equity is regarded as a crucial financial asset that organisations should handle in running and expanding customer value, similar to other assets (Blattberg, Getz, & Thomas, 2001; Kumar & George, 2007; Rust, Lemon, & Zeithaml, 2004). Lemon, Rust, and Zeithaml (2001) and Rust, Lemon, and Zeithaml (2004) explore three drivers of customer equity: value, brand and relationship equity. Value equity comprises the customer's evaluation of a brand's utility depending on what is forgone in exchange for what is gained. Brand equity surpasses the objective value of a brand to consider the subjective evaluation customers form of a brand. Relationship equity highlights the relationship between a brand and customer regardless of the objective and subjective views of a brand (Rust, Lemon, & Zeithaml, 2000).

Brand Equity

Lemon, Rust, and Zeithaml (2001) interpret brand equity as a customer's intangible outlook of what a brand offers. Keller (1993) explores *customer-based brand equity* as the influence of brand knowledge on a consumer's reaction to that brand's promotion. Keller (1993) further investigates brand knowledge as a brand node in customers' minds connected to brand associations, made up of brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness deliberates the strength of the brand with regard to consumers being able to identify and recognise it (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Brand awareness may consist of brand *recognition*, which involves consumers identifying a brand, and brand *recall*, which acknowledges consumers' ability to recollect a brand from memory (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness denotes the initial and simple brand recognition on a scale of brand knowledge (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Wider brand recognition through exposure triggers reassurance among customers as the presumed risk of interacting with, and purchasing from, the brand is reduced (Huang, Schrank, & Dubinsky, 2004). Brand image encompasses the perceptions of a brand drawn from brand associations in a customer's memory (Keller, 1993). Brand associations represent a customer's impression of a brand as part of a brand node kept in mind. Positive and inimitable brand associations assist a customer in distinguishing among different brands, forming brand equity (Keller, 1993).

In a study on the management of brand equity within a multimedia retail environment, Keller (2009) uses the brand resonance model (Keller, 2001) to outline the appropriate experiences that effectively reach customers and strengthen brand-customer relationships. The employment of online interactive marketing communications has enabled resonating benefits among consumers and contributed to brand equity. The first, *brand awareness*, is heightened via online channels as consumers seek interactive outlets to gather information in determining purchase decisions. The second, *brand associations*, are amplified by imagery associations through a brand's creative content, which expresses brand personality. *Brand attitudes* involve meaningful experiences that are expressed via interactive communication settings such as in brand communities. *Brand activity* is especially significant within online interactive environments as it embodies active consumer engagement that expresses informative content and symbolic commitment and brand loyalty (Keller, 2009). Interactive brand communities on social media can bring about singular elements that co-operatively build brand equity among the engaged community as well as outsider observers. Millennials are exposed to brand experiences through social media brand communities that contribute to the collective perception and equity shaped around a brand.

Relationship Equity

Relationship equity considers the aspects that bind a brand and customer beyond brand and value equity (Richards & Jones, 2008; Rust, Lemon, & Zeithaml, 2000). A brand can preserve relationship equity by creating specialised emotional bonds with customers through loyalty programmes or brand communities that encourage interaction (Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2000). Brand-customer relationships undergo a shift from transactional to emotional when trust and commitment are present (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As consumers become more engaged in brand communities, trust, commitment and loyalty ensue among the parties. Trust is argued to be an antecedent of loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Chiu, Huang, & Yen, 2010; Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011). Social media brand communities encourage interaction that fosters social structure and strengthens brand trust and loyalty (Ba, 2001; Walden, 2000; Zheng, Cheung, Lee, & Liang, 2015). Habibi, Laroche, and Richard (2014) assume two ways in which improvement of connections between brand-customer components could escalate brand trust. First, recurring interactions over a prolonged period of time act as the basis of prospering trust as enhanced relationships within a brand community result in positive trust outcomes. The second considers the parallel improvement of relationships and information sharing. The abundance of information disseminated via brand communities appeals to consumers as uncertainty is decreased and trust is developed (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014; Ba, 2001). Positive engagement on social media contributes to positive functional and emotional experiences that influence brand loyalty (Bruhn, Schnebelen, & Schafer, 2014; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Online brand community engagements may include non-interactive actions such as reading comments, which are just as effective in ensuring loyalty (Shang et al., 2006).

MOTIVATOR FOR SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNITIES

Millennial social media users may gain information, be encouraged to engage and form brand perceptions and relationships as a result of online brand communities. However, Millennials may feel compelled to resort to social media brand communities for self-expression. A consumer may seek to identify with a brand community to belong to a social collective (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005).

Social Media and Social Identity

Social media networks have provided users with an expansive reach in publicly conveying identities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Pentina, Prybutok, & Zhang, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Veletsianos, 2013). With the aid of webs of connections entwining into communes around brands and mutual social interests, brand admirers are encouraged to enrich the self through brand affiliation. Customers exercise their presence in overt social media brand communities as a way of shaping and showcasing identity. Aside from sparking knowledge sharing and consumer engagement (Ma & Agarwal, 2007), brand communities aid in augmenting a customer's self-worth by providing social interactions based on the individual he/she believes to be and seeks to be perceived as (Donath, 1999). Social interactions among members mature to relationships as such bonds offer customers the immaterial profit of social placement (Ma & Agarwal, 2007; Ren et al., 2012; Zhu & Chen, 2015). Customers are drawn to associate with brands that potentially advance their social placement through a desired identity.

Social identity theory holds that people are apt to classify themselves and others into social groupings (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Turner (1985) sites groupings or categories as members' prototypical attributes. Social classification allows individuals to cognitively section other individuals into definitive settings while defining themselves; it thus entails the notion of inclusion in an aggregate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). An individual characterises him/herself according to groups that possess the social categories that individual seeks (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Such social categories are pursued on the basis that they pertain to a social consensus from being associated to that group (Jenkins, 2008; Trepte, 2008). Acquiring social consent among a group grants an individual 'belonging' that bolsters self-identity. Social identification is used interchangeably with group identification as the social identity is derived from identifying with a group (Tolman, 1943; Tajfel, 1982). Tajfel (1978) outlines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 62). Three components add to social identity: a *cognitive* factor (awareness of membership within a group), an *evaluative* factor (awareness of membership is connected to a positive or negative value connotation), and an *emotional* factor (an emotional immersion in the group) (Tajfel, 1978, 1982). Group identification is achieved through a combination of the following components. Individuals are driven to associate with a group that offers the mental and emotional benefits they seek (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Affiliation to a group elicits the desired social perspective and instigates a sense of self-worth that advances identity.

While social categorisation draws members into a group based on mutual similarities (in-group), it comparably accentuates the differences between members of different groups (out-group) (Tajfel, 1959, 1969). This is referred to as *depersonalisation* as members are not regarded as individuals but rather as affiliates of a group. Depersonalisation weighs on an individual's self-perception, causing him/her to adapt to attitudes and behaviours that align with the overall perspective of the desired group (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Social identity theory concerns both a personal view of oneself and a social outlook of the collective an individual belongs to (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Nowak, Szamrej, & Latané, 1990). Individuals pursue personal and social identities through actions that personally appeal to their individuality while pertaining to the prototypical qualities of the group they socially embrace. Customers comparably consume brands to express personal character that also appropriates their status within their social group. Personal identity is subdued and dominated by the social identity an individual desires to embody, particularly during settings of high salience (Onorato & Turner, 2004; Turner 1982). Visible consumption of products or brands may induce individuals to exert behaviour that is compliant with a salient identity they socially express. At times of uncertainty, individuals may seek in-group identification to adjust perceptions, behaviour and interaction according to conformed group knowledge that validate an individual's sense of self (Hogg et al., 2006). A variety of activities in daily life can be applied to further an individual's self-expression, including communicating the self through brand consumption (Belk, 1988; Schembri, Merrilees, & Kristiansen, 2010; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). Symbolic consumption represents individuals with a means to inflate identity that emotionally pertains to the social circle they presently do or aim to share a similar lifestyle to (Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Customers chase brands that fulfil the symbolic connection of inclusion to a societal circle or brand community that aids their social presence. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2003), customers are triggered to identify with brands that indulge in consumers' production of the self.

The publicity of social media bears a social influence that may sway individuals' verbalisation. Global social media platforms offer networks of users the potential to voice a free-flow of personal expression across any topic. However, as personal identity is communicated under the basis that it complements the salient social identity (Clement & Krueger, 2002; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011), individuals may seek to utilise social media as a means to exert behaviour that adheres to a preferred social group and allows for social inclusion. Kleine, Kleine & Kernan (1993) revealed the degree of identity salience that grants individuals self-fulfilment is dependent on the extent of social links that commend that identity; thus the greater the social response, the more significant that identity becomes. Salience is increasingly prominent via the existence of brand communities that have been transposed to social media platforms to become virtual global communes of brand admirers. Such online communities are regarded as groups gathered with the intention of achieving individual and collective goals (Rheingold, 2002; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Tajfel's (1978) three components, previously mentioned, can be revisited through *cognition*, as an individual becomes aware of his/her presence within a conspicuous brand community, and this sense of belonging matures into *emotional* attachment to a network of users, which fosters loyalty and relationships (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Online community members experience the *evaluative* component as the community members evaluate social identity based on the collective self-placement and self-worth from engaging with that group (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004).

The aspiration of ascertaining social consensus among a desired society pushes consumers to manipulate brand association through social media brand communities. Within the fashion industry, social media users connect to brands and communities on social networking platforms that conspicuously allow consumers to depict brand affiliation and ground their presence in a particular social collective.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter aims to provide an understanding of how social media brand communities have exerted influence on Millennials in the fashion industry (Godey et al., 2016; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlstrom, 2012; Habibi, Laroche, Richard, 2014; Kim & Ko, 2012; Laroche, Habibi, Richard & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Zheng, Cheung, Lee, & Liang, 2015). As social media advances as the underlying network for modern-day communication, Millennials proceed to interact with such platforms in self-expression over an array of manners including flaunting brand affiliations. This chapter explores the potential of employing brand communities through widespread social media platforms to produce collectively symbolic experiences that further consumers' social identities. Consumers may aspire to publicly engage with a brand and its respective community that fulfils the social prestige they are seeking.

Brands profit from engaging social media communities that bring together global users, allowing brands to deliver information in real-time. Loyal community members accelerate the spread of information as each interaction, ‘like’, comment or share further exploits a brand message to a new network of users. Consumers’ brand devotion grows as they experience a sense of responsibility in contributing to brand information across the community (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Fournier & Lee, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Social media marketing efforts ensure customer reach and enrichment of brand awareness and image (Godey et al., 2016). Fashion brands have successfully applied the dynamic nature of social media in documenting live feeds of fashion weeks, promotional campaign events, product launches and celebrity/blogger endorsements that contribute to a brand’s equity over an expansive viewing. As a result, brand followers are exposed to a richer experience representative of a lifestyle that accompanies consumption of a brand. Consumers interact in social media brand communities in demonstrating resemblance and self-identification to what that brand symbolises. This study can be used as groundwork for future research to build on.

As marketing principles evolve to accommodate for consumer power shifts and a significance of creating value and relationships with customers (Grönroos & Voima, 2012; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000), the notion of social media has further empowered consumers with a voice to widely proclaim (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Brands are given universal platforms to interact with customers in co-creating value and experiences. This research considers how social media brand communities have exerted a presence among Millennials in the fashion industry. The fashion world was built on a rigid structure of top-to-bottom delivery of tangible products presented within a brick-and-mortar experience. However, brand-customer interactions have been transposed to online means as social media paves the way to tap into experiences providing brands direct real-time access to consumers, and consumers greater insight into brands. Brands and customers are granted leeway to create value through engaging social media brand communities that produce symbolic relationships among community parties. This study demonstrates, within a fast-paced industry abundantly saturated with comparable brands, the importance of reaching Millennial consumers using channels Millennials use and environments Millennials relate to in expressing themselves. This study adds to the literature on marketing to the Millennial cohort (Moore, 2012; Taken Smith, 2011), with the application of social media means that this age has grown with. It is important to note that with the liberation of social media comes diminished brand control over information communicated about the brand. Management of customer experiences gains greater relevance within an online brand community that can be accessed by users across the world. Moreover, the ease and immediacy of consumer interaction exerts an implication for brands to maintain a tone that is in keeping with the brand personality and characterises an inclusive brand image. Social media is a promotional tool that must be run parallel to offline operations as part of an exhaustive marketing strategy that communicates a brand’s DNA across multiple channels, eliciting an omni-channel experience.

This research explores the manifestation of social identity theory in social media platforms and brand communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Pentina, Prybutok, & Zhang, 2008). This study recognises the incentives for Millennials to engage in social media brand communities to achieve a desired social identity. The potential to connect with individuals of similar or aspired lifestyles enforces a customer’s social placement. Continuous informal contact between brand and customers, centred on the mutual devotion to that brand, develops a sense of belonging that augments the symbolic importance of brand association. Customers are motivated to consume brands and interact in respective communities for the aspirational intention of being grouped into the desired social circle. Brands profit from cultivating a brand image that fits into a particular lifestyle, inducing its community to uphold this perception through group identification that unifies members while dissociating the collective from other groups. Social media brand communities allow self-expression through brand association to be witnessed by a wider network of connections that may or may not belong to the community, allowing social identity to be expressed on a larger scale.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Brand Association: Brand association involves brand attributes set in consumers' minds upon reflecting on a brand.

Brand Communities: Brand communities comprise collectives formed around an interest/attachment to a brand.

Brand-Customer Relationship: Brand-customer relationships consider the recurring interactions between brand and customer that carry the potential to mature into trust, loyalty, and relationships.

Customer Equity: Customer equity consists of the total value of all a company's customers.

Millennial Generation: Millennial generation is a demographic cohort that is born between the early 1980s up to the early 2000s.

Social Identity Theory: Social identity theory reflects on how a person may evaluate him/herself and other based on groups he/she belongs to.

Social Interaction: Social interaction involves reciprocal exchange and response between individuals.

Social Media: Social media includes Internet-centered platforms that facilitate for the production and circulation of user-generated content.

Chapter 8
Service Failure and Recovery Strategy in Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments (CMMEs)

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ABSTRACT

The success of an online recovery strategy is largely attributed to the provider's response speed. Essentially, engagement in conversation with the customer immediately after he/she complains shortens the pre-recovery phase. Service firms expect complaints from consumers when a service failure occurs. Advances in modern information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructures have changed the way in which customer-firm interactions take place and the nature of the conduct of services. Computer and internet technologies mean that services can be provided over long distances without the requirement for the physical presence of customers and employees. With the continued rapid development in the field of modern computer-mediated marketing environments (CMME) more and more services will be delivered in technology-mediated environments (TMEs). This chapter provides some insights on failure recovery strategies as competitive tools in computer-mediated marketing environments.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

When a firm or service supplier fails to meet customer anticipations it is known as a service failure whereas the actions taken by firms or service suppliers to overcome the occurrences are described as recovery strategies in the service marketing literature (Hazée, Van Vaerenbergh, & Armirotto, 2017). Changing buying activities from physical stores to retail websites has been a shift for a number of customers. Attaining a successful formula for e-commerce is challenging, in spite of numerous advantages

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch008

of online shopping. Service failures are experienced by many customers. For example, according to the Ombudsman Services' fifth annual CAM 2018 report, there were a total of 173 million issues with services and products in 2017 alone, with 57 per cent of the population affected in the UK. Furthermore, the report shows that the most common sectors for complaints were Retail, registering 25 per cent (Ombudsman Services, 2018). Due to its popularity Torres et al. (2014) argue that social media has also received increasing attention from scholars. Hence, the uncertainty of purchasing online can be reduced by social media. The retail sectors that deal mostly with information products or intangibles have also been affected by digital technology and social media. Now that tablets or smartphones can be used, social media platforms (e.g. Instagram and Facebook) and the Internet offer an instant, easy complaint channel for clienteles (Lopez-Lopez *et al.,* 2014) at no significant cost and a slight effort (Obeidat *et al.,* 2017). Recovering from such failures is one of the most thought-provoking tasks faced by management and companies as service failure is a very common situation in doing business. Service failures have unfavourable consequences on both clients and firms such as complaining and switching providers (Zhang *et al.,* 2017). These unfavourable consequences can be minimised by effective service recovery strategies (Strizhakova, Tsarenko, & Ruth, 2012). However, online service organisations face challenges in providing a successful service recovery. Academics and practitioners have been focusing keenly on online service failure and recovery strategies since 2002 (Albrecht, Walsh, & Beatty, 2017; Ozuem & Lancaster, 2014). The complexity of this area has prompted scholars to consider strategies to restore service failures. These include the airline industry (Park & Park, 2016), online retailers (Wang, Wu, Sh., Lin, & Wang, 2011), restaurant services (Nikbin, Marimuthu, & Hyun, 2016), production and management services (Craighead, Karwan, & Miller, 2004), business in general (Choi & Choi, 2014) and marketing (Sivakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014). Research into online service failure and recovery strategies has succeeded in assigning meaning to online service failures and categorising these into many typologies (Tsai *et al.,* 2014 ; Kuo, Yen, & Chen, 2011; Sparks & Bradley, 2017). Further attention has been given to the effects of online service failure and recovery strategies on lenses of traditional encounters and antecedents, with fewer antecedents in online failures being considered (Kuo *et al.,* 2011; Wang *et al.,* 2011; Sopadjieva *et al.,* 2017). Such epistemological orientations limit the potential opportunities inherent in the selling of goods on the Internet. Understanding service inadequacy depends on individual expectations, so approaching the ontology of customers where failure and recovery processes are concerned should be contextual, rather than generic or standardised. Mental accounting theory (Chuang *et al*., 2012), the disconfirmation paradigm theories (McCollough, Berry, & Yadav, 2000) and so on have been used to examine service failure and service recovery. Recently, as identified by McColl-Kennedy and Sparks (2003), Tax, Brown, and Chandrasherakan, (1998) and Hazée, Van Vaerenbergh, and Armirotto, (2017), justice and fairness theory has been of service in increasing understanding about service failure and recovery. The principles of justice theory depend on equal fairness assessed from all parties in a society (Mandle, 2009). The recovery evaluation stages and the recovery strategy provision were examined by Siu, Zhang, and Yau (2013). The authors combine recovery assessment with the theory of justice and, specifically, the customers' evaluation of how fairly they were treated in the course of recovery. They further put forward that if a client recognises a fair recovery, his/her prior satisfaction with the firm will be maintained. Zhu, Nakata, Sivakumar, and Grewal (2013) sought to understand customer perceptions of what causes service failure (such as the extent to which it is the customer's or the provider's fault) by means of attribution theory.

Different factors are assigned to the lacuna between customers and the provider when a failure arises. This begins with anonymous customer complaints which hinder providers who seek to comprehend customers' conceptualisations of failure, leading providers to view customers as 'heterogeneous' (Sivakumar *et al.,* 2014) when it comes to recovery strategy expectations. Similarly, Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg (2003) contend that 'most dissatisfied customers generally do not bother to complain' (p. 390), situating providers in a position where they do not comprehend the need to provide any kind of recovery strategy. The issue appears to be even more complex in the context of online encounters. Scholars have undoubtedly enriched the service discipline with research, although no satisfactory definition of service failure and recovery strategies exists. Most research has investigated service failure and recovery in conventional services (Lee, Singh, & Chan, 2011; Xiao & Dong, 2015). Justice theory has also been applied to investigate how customers respond in terms of their satisfaction following recovery. Research into the behavioural intentions of customers in online settings has also been scant (Wang *et al.,* 2011).

Empirical research into consumer perceptions of online service failure and recovery, however, is surprisingly scarce, despite the fact that service failures, both off- and online, are inevitable for service firms. Crucially, online service failures can have a negative impact on profitability. Holloway and Beatty (2003) suggest that customers complain online more than offline. For consumers, the Internet offers a platform that makes complaining effortless yet impactful, and a wide and geographically dispersed audience can be reached. Compared with offline environments, switching is easier on the Internet since customers can browse and look for alternative providers with the click of a mouse. Given this background, gaining an understanding of how to manage online service failures effectively is essential to the success of firms operating in an online environment. Current research mainly concerns customer reactions at brick-and-mortar outlets (i.e. offline) to service analysed systematically through research. Studies in this domain underline the importance of fair (or just) service recovery in restoring customer satisfaction following offline service failures (Roschk & Kaiser, 2013; Azemi, Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2018). In earlier research into online service failures, Holloway and Beatty (2003) noted that, following recovery attempts by online businesses, some customers feel a sense of injustice specifically related to issues of interaction, distribution, and procedures. More recently, Rosenmayer, McQuilken, Robertson, and Ogden (2018) examine the typologies of service failures and recoveries in the omni-channel setting using complaints on Facebook. The study reveals the most predominant failures to include problems with delivery, 'bricks and mortar' shopping, activities of marketing as well as pricing and communications, problems with customer service and also goods. The authors noted that the distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal justice dimensions are valid in terms of recoveries on Facebook.

THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Over the past 35 years, fashion retailing, an innovative, dynamic and challenging industry, has undergone immense changes, with the United Kingdom remaining at the forefront. As a result, this phenomenon has received considerable academic scrutiny (Doherty, 2000), particularly, but not exclusively, with reference to branding (Birtwistle & Freathy, 1998). Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), amongst others, have recently studied consumer responses to the fast fashion sector, and have discovered significant issues where its development is concerned. They assert that the fashion clothing industry has evolved significantly, principally during the last two decades (*ibid.*). Christopher, Lowson, and Peck (2004) identified problems with the ways in which fashion is consumed, and they note issues concerning quality and innovation, with the market becoming ever more demanding. This becomes evident in the demand for greater variety and more informed styles, which are more economically priced than ever before (Fernie, Maniatakis, &

Moore, 2009). Further, Doyle, Moore, and Morgan (2006) and Mollá-Descals, Frasquet-Deltoro, and Ruiz-Molina (2011) note the changes to the dynamics and increasing complexity of the fashion industry. Characteristic of such changes is a reduction in requirements for manufacturers of large quantities, and a larger number of fashion 'seasons'. Other features include improved organisation of supply chains, leading businesses to opt for models that can be delivered flexibly and quickly and produced at lower cost.

The internal and global importance of the UK fashion industry is underlined by London, which is amongst the top four world fashion centres along with Paris, New York and Milan (BBC News, 2018; Ayertey & Ozuem, 2018). Jackson and Shaw (2006) particularly commented on London's and Birmingham's fundamental creativity and keenness in pursuing the latest trends. They note that these cities are centres of luxury and fashion, attracting extensive traditional and virtual mass media, keen-eyed followers, enthusiasts and professionals. London Fashion Week, which takes place in February and September, is an example, as is the existence of the London College of Fashion. The show is a city-wide celebration of fashion with Alexander McQueen, Marks & Spencer and Topman among the major British brands and designers. With rising figures each year, media coverage at London Fashion Week alone equals or exceeds major news and international sporting events. In 2018, Instagram stories on the official London Fashion Week account received 871,648 views. In addition, to gain inspiration for looks they can themselves create or purchase, 45 per cent of users of Instagram in Britain say they follow at least one fashion account. The fashion and textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world. Overall, the consumption of apparel will increase by 63 per cent, from 62 million tons today to 102 million tons in 2030 – an equivalent of more than 500 billion T-shirts, if the global population increases as projected to 8.5 billion people by 2030, according to the Global Fashion Agenda and The Boston Consulting Group, Inc. (2018). There is a growing awareness among young people that the constant consumption of clothing affects the environment. For instance, after transport, housing, and food industries, in the UK the clothing industry ranks fourth in terms of its impact on the environment, according to a report by WRAP (2017).

In terms of business, the fashion industry represents an important part of the national economy. According to data from Oxford Economics (2018) the fashion industry contributed £32.3 billion to the UK economy in 2017, a 5.4 per cent increase over 2016, with the average adult in the UK spending over £1,000 a year on clothes (Bentley, 2018). This growth is significantly far higher than the figure for the overall UK economy.

Although Brexit is causing uncertainty for the UK fashion industry, according to Mintel (2018) the women's wear clothing market is forecast to grow by 14 per cent between 2018 and 2022 to reach £33.5 billion. Mintel (2015) further predicted that the UK online fashion market would grow to £19 billion by 2019. Oxford Economics (2016) published data produced by the British Fashion Council showing significant increases in the UK fashion industry's contribution to the United Kingdom economy, rising by 22 per cent from £21 billion in 2009 to £26 billion in 2014. High street retailers such as New Look and Next and online shops such as ASOS are among the many prominent brands that have value on the UK market. Internet sales in recent years have been significantly high, with 56 percent of people buying clothes online in 2017. In spite of this growing trend, many consumers still prefer to buy clothing in physical stores while offline purchases are expected to remain accountable for around 71.2 per cent of sales by 2020 (Statista, 2017).

By definition, 'experience' goods, for example clothing and footwear, are characterised by intangibility (Hassanein & Head, 2005; Sender, 2014) as well as difficulty in establishing the characteristics of the product (e.g. quality or price) until it has in fact been sold (Weathers, Sharma, & Wood, 2007). The absence of sales staff in online sales further complicates online service experiences, increasing the scope for service failures. Further important factors in this sense are the wide variety of merchandising mechanisms and demands by customers for online interactive assistance (which may also be psychological) from staff (Kunz, 2005). Yet the wide range of communication mechanisms and technology used by online marketers is required to stimulate clientele to buy before they make their own individual evaluation of the product. Customers can, indeed, go to a physical store, a bricks-and-mortar establishment, to review products for quality, size and fit, particularly if the retailer is a large global concern. However, for pure-play fashion sellers this is not possible – the situation is not the same and represents a serious disadvantage. Marketing visually is very difficult to achieve, and there is no direct contact with store staff. What this means is that, in order to compete with physical stores, pure-play online merchants must evolve perfect presentations of their products for their potential customers. In other words, a clear and thorough understanding of how different media affect customers' shopping experiences is essential.

Yang and Young (2009) affirm that purchasers of fashion are firmly convinced that the only way to buy is in a physical store, since their inspiration is a response to their senses (Sender, 2017). Yang and Young (2009) also assert that, increasingly, fashion e-businesses perceive the necessity of developing features for the online customer to interrelate with the product, thus attempting to remove or reduce the risks associated with purchasing fashion online. Cho and Workman (2011) note that among the aspects that concern online customers are the appearance of the fashion item when worn, including with other items, and a range of information regarding the appeal of the item, as well as the need to appeal to the customers' senses. With only 15 per cent of online shoppers ordering all their fashion items online, the vast majority also shop for shoes and clothes in-store, emphasising the significance of combined shopping (Sender, 2017). These imponderables are the root of concerns about the ability of retailers to be able to sell clothes online. A BBC report (2016) affirms that most online clothes shoppers send something back, thus suggesting that individuals like to feel and see garments before purchasing.

In spite of 'self-service' when shopping online, a company is, in actual fact, responsible for shifting the customer back to the satisfied state. The reception of prompt recovery is thus crucial in reducing the level of stress experienced by the consumer after discontent when shopping online. Overall, three-quarters (73 per cent) of online fashion shoppers want more return options such as collection from home or drop-off at numerous places (Sender, 2017). The World Wide Web is a valuable tool in communicating service and value to consumers, but it also operates in a highly competitive environment. Customers' decisions about entering into and maintaining a long-term relationship with a company are largely driven by their assessment of the core service they will receive (Ozuem & Lancaster, 2014).

Additionally, through the growth of pressure groups, service failure without recovery can be broadcast through social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The online community is well informed about company activities (Kerr *et al.,* 2012). Therefore, failing to recover from customer dissatisfaction may lead to potential customers choosing other competitors. Service recovery after failure may be seen as one of the most essential strategies in ensuring sound company reputation, encouraging consumers to communicate positive feelings about a company (Ringberg, Odekerker-Schroder, & Christensen, 2007; Hui *et al.,* 2011).

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The highly personal and interactive nature of service makes it very susceptible to failures (Hoffman *et al.,* 2016). A review of the literature provides divergent meanings or interpretations of what service failure is

(Bitner *et al.,* 1994; Palmer, 2014; Obeidat *et al.,* 2017). When service is not fulfilled, is delayed, or fails to reach the expected standard, Bitner *et al.* (1994) suggested a service failure has occurred. The authors further proposed four causes or service failure types such as: (a) an improper service provider response to a service delivery failure, (b) an ineffective response of the service provider to customer requests and needs, (c) unwanted service provider actions, and finally (d) inappropriate customer behaviour. Hence as argued by Kelley and Davis (1994) service failure may be different in frequency, severity and time. Lin (2006) also defines service failure as a condition in which a business, i.e. a service provider, fails to meet the customer's expectations regarding its products, or if the customer finds the mode of service unacceptable.

Accordingly, the last definition itself suggests that there are two categories of service encounter failures: outcome-oriented and process-oriented (Chuang *et al.,* 2012; Obeidat *et al.,* 2017). The outcome dimension of a service encounter involves what customers actually receive from the service, whereas the process dimension involves the manner in which service providers handle a service failure during the course of service recovery (i.e. how service is delivered) (Yang & Mattila, 2012). In an outcome failure, the organisation does not fulfil the basic service need or perform the core service. In contrast, where a service process failure occurs, the delivery of the core service is flawed or deficient in some way that is directly derivable from the behaviour of service employees. Four types of service failures in self-service technologies were proposed by Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree, and Bitner (2000, p. 57) as follows:

(1) Technical failures (for example, if the website is temporarily not working)

(2) Process failures (where the goods the customer ordered online fail to reach him/her)

(3) Poor design (customers have difficulty finding their way through web pages), and

(4) Failures that are customer-originated (such as when login is not successful because a customer forgets to use his/her password).

Technology, employees and even customers themselves are among factors that contribute to service failures (Michel, 2001). Service failures are caused by several factors, not just one cause. For example, a more recent study by Frearson (2016) examined problems customers have when shopping online. The most common service failures ranged from late deliveries, missed deliveries and damaged items; more than half of customers in the UK experience such issues, which reveals how likely service failures are to happen and the vulnerabilities in e-commerce activities.

As a result, it becomes essential to have a strategy for how to recover from such failures, and not just recover but also bounce back when a failure occurs as the image of a firm can be affected overall (Swanson & Hsu, 2011) and customers experience a range of emotions after failure (Tombs *et al.,* 2014). Apologies or compensation to the customer have been presented as recovery strategies after a service failure (Gelbrich, Gäthke, & Grégoire, 2016; Sengupta, Ray, Trendel, & Vaerenbergh, 2018). Additionally, a phenomenon which was first discussed by Etzel and Silverman (1981), branded as the service recovery paradox (Ding, Ho, & Lii, 2015), proposed that remarkably strong attempts at recovery can lead to client evaluations higher than transactions with no supposed failure of any kind. However, studies by Knox and Van Oest (2014) contest its existence, whilst studies by Schminke *et al.* (2014) find evidence of the service recovery paradox.

Zemke and Schaaf (1989) applied the term 'recovery' to service settings, along with Lord Marshall who instigated a pioneering programme in British Airways called the 'Putting People First' campaign. Service recovery becomes absolutely essential when a service failure occurs. Recovery is essentially an effort to increase customer satisfaction. Service recovery is growing in importance, partly because of increasing customer expectations and tougher competition among businesses trying to exceed the expectations of their customers. Studies of service management have hitherto been notably based upon investigating the component measures that comprise service recovery. Cheung and To (2016) reveal that a co-created recovery positively influences perceived justice and customer satisfaction with service recovery.

Miller, Craighead, and Karwan, (2000) identify recovery as an attempt to solve problems and pacify upset clients, and to retain the customer base. This is, in a way, a form of exchange, whereby the customer feels they have suffered a loss (a service failure), and the business attempts to recompense the customer for an incurred loss with service recovery (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). Fan, Wu, and Wu (2010) and Crisafulli and Singh (2017) suggest that direct human interaction has been substituted by technology in online environments, but researchers have contended that the use of technology can improve the efficiency of recovery services (Ayertey & Ozuem, 2018; Ding & Lii, 2016). Service failures and recovery in traditional services are distinct from online service failures and recovery. Meanwhile, recovery actions that have been identified in research include apologising, following-up, offering compensation, rapid responses to service failure, favourable employee behaviour and causality acknowledging (Gelbrich, Gäthke, & Grégoire, 2015; Goode, Höehle, Venkatesh, & Brown, 2017). Managers should have available a list of possible recovery strategies or techniques to choose from in the case of needing to rectify a service failure. Studies including those of Bradley and Sparks (2012) and Choi and Choi (2014) show that in altering consumer displeasure, high recovery is more effective and emotion following service failure is more positive. Hence, evidence in the existing literature is inconsistent (Chen, Ma, Bian, Zheng, & Devlin, 2018). Miller *et al.* (2000) were amongst the first to underline the importance of analysing recovery strategies from the perspective of operations management, and they called for further analysis of recovery strategies in operations research. They developed a detailed framework in the domain of elements (i.e. the core elements: service recovery expectations, service recovery types, and follow-up service recovery outcome) compiled within the context of a failed service. They classified prior prototypes of findings as follows: if an appropriate recovery strategy is promptly provided, customers will return even when severe failures are experienced (p. 397). Additional findings show the influence of types of recovery strategies on customers. Kuo and Wu (2012) divided recovery strategies into two distinct groups: psychological strategies and tangible strategies. Miller *et al.* (2000) and Kozub, O'Neill, and Palmer (2014) added that tangible recovery strategies offer compensation for actual and perceived costs, such as free services, refunds, gifts, discounts, and coupons to reduce or mitigate practical losses (Kuo & Wu, 2012; Jung & Seock, 2017). Psychological techniques have been acknowledged as useful where the aim is to pacify the customer by showing concern for their needs. Examples include offering an explanation for service failure, acknowledging mistakes, and expressing regret for errors in a polite, empathetic, and considerate way (Chang & Wang, 2012). The essence of the findings in the context of recovery types suggests that the provision of blended recovery strategies is useful, yet an apology alone will not be enough for the customer. Furthermore, customer perceptions of justice influence their satisfaction after recovery, and ultimately word-of-mouth intentions are improved through customer satisfaction (Jung & Seock, 2017). Meanwhile, any extra compensation can enhance customer perceptions of justice. For instance, Mostafa, Lages, Shabbir, and Thwaites (2015) identify that consumers typically recognise the tangible and monetary compensations and endeavours of employees in addressing problems associated with distributive justice, particularly when attempting to address failures. Timely consideration of service failure is often associated with procedural justice. Courtesy and explanations offered by employees are examples of interpersonal justice. Clients who suffer outcome-related service failures respond favourably to tangible recovery, in contrast to those who have experienced process-related service failures. The latter are typically more satisfied with psychological recovery efforts (Chuang, Cheng, Chang, & Yang, 2012). A considerable amount of research supports the idea that customers who receive an apology following a service failure are more satisfied than customers who receive no apology (Roschk & Kaiser, 2013). At the same time, the authors provided empirical evidence to suggest that the presence or absence of an apology is just as important as how an apology is given, and this is crucial for enhancing customer satisfaction. They argue that the more empathetic and strong an apology is in its delivery, the more pacified the customers will be.

In another study by Mattila, Cho, and Ro (2011), it is suggested that human involvement (such as interacting with frontline staff) is more effective when the failure was caused by a human being rather than by a machine. In comparison, human involvement was less effective when a failure was caused by self-service technology. This is because consumers who choose to use self-service technologies to interact with service providers seek to avoid customer–employee interactions. A more recent study by Collier, Breazeale, and White (2017) also found that clients want employees to support a transaction after a breakdown if it occurs in isolation. When other customers are present, customers prefer it when employees resolve the issue and allow them to finish the transaction. In terms of online shopping service failure, previous studies have widely discussed recovery strategies. Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis (1993) explain that the 12 recovery strategies they identified fall into two categories – those that are successful, resulting in increased customer satisfaction, and those that are not. They argue that the severity of the failure should determine the nature of the recovery. Miller *et al.* (2000) contend that their framework shows a clear link between a successful recovery and customer loyalty, satisfaction and retention. Forbes *et al.* (2005) conclude from their survey that the kind of service failure experienced by online clients differs from that experienced by clients in traditional situations. They also affirm that e-tail organisations utilise a different series of recovery strategies to those employed in traditional settings. Despite successful recovery, switching after failure recovery can occur frequently among e-customers. Chang and Wang (2012) note that the most significant beneficial features of service recovery are compensation, the speed with which their service failure was attended to, the nature of the apology, and contact channels. Kuo and Wu's (2012) study concentrated on the effects of recovery strategies in terms of online service failure, using perceived justice theory, in line with Holloway and Beauty (2003) and McCollough, Berry, and Yadav (2000) who also underscored the effectiveness of recovery strategies for dealing with online service failures.

However, instances of repeat purchases remain very rare, regardless of the service recovery strategy used to remedy service failure. Failures are unavoidable, whatever steps a firm may take to prevent mistakes when a service is rendered. As Boshoff (1997, p. 110) asserts: 'Mistakes are an unavoidable feature of all human endeavour and thus also of service delivery'. Therefore, service failure seems to be inevitable, particularly in the fashion industry because of the difficulty of translating the in-store experience into the online environment. In addition, because of the intangibility of service, service failure is difficult to resolve when it occurs.

In the online fashion industry context, the problem associated with the intangibility of services is magnified because consumers cannot directly interact with service personnel. Instead, consumers have to interact with web interfaces, which requires competent management of the technology. Clothing is considered to be a high involvement product category, related to personal ego and products that need to be seen, felt, touched (Ioniţă, 2017; Spence & Gallace, 2011), and tried on because they are difficult to evaluate (Sender, 2014). Chahal and Devi (2015) state that service failure occurs when the expectations of the customer are not met through the initial delivery. Subsequently, a customer may be lost, and may not return to a particular company (Piha & Avlonitis, 2015). Negative word-of-mouth can also lead to dissatisfaction and defection, as suggested by Crisafulli and Singh (2017) and Helm, Moulard, and Richins, (2015). Researchers such as Fatma, Khan, and Rahman (2016) define service failure as a condition in which a business, i.e. a service provider, fails to live up to the customer's expectations regarding its products. Service failure also occurs if the customer finds the mode of service unacceptable. In addition, service failure is the service provider's failure to meet a customer's expectations, as identified by Hoffman, Kelley, and Rotalsky, (2016). For that reason, it is also suggested by Hoffman *et al.* (2016) and Keaveney (1995) that service failures can be separated into two categories: outcome-oriented and process-oriented. The former includes the product customers receive from the business. Process-oriented failure is concerned with the method of provision of the service. Furthermore, Smith *et al.* (1999) and Fu, Wu, Huang, Song, and Gong (2015) argue that outcome-orientated service failures occur when the most important or core services ordered from the company are not delivered. Process-oriented service failures, however, can be defined as the way in which the core service process is undertaken by the provider. This can include errors in specific areas, such as rude or unresponsive employees. By applying these terms in the context of the online fashion industry, an example of a process failure would be a scenario in which technical problems arise when ordering products online, while an outcome failure could occur in the event of failure of a core services such as the incorrect size of a delivered dress that had been purchased online (Ayertey, 2018). Keaveney (1995) and Ghatak and Pal (2016) found that core service failures, which include errors in billing, are amongst the major reasons why customers defect. Therefore, in the case of core service failures customers expect the provider of the service in question to put the matter right (Shin, Ellinger, Mothersbaugh, & Reynolds, 2017). Conversely, Smith *et al.* (1999) and Vakeel, Sivakumar, Jayasimha, and Dey (2018) showed that process failures have a greater impact on dissatisfaction than product failures. As confirmed by Israeli, Lee, and Karpinski (2017), clients are less understanding when the service failure has occurred as a result of process dimensions. Duffy, Miller, and Bexley (2006) and Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen (2007) argue that the customer's primary concern is the outcome aspect of service recovery, while the service recovery process is internal to the customer, who is not interested in it as such. It is further argued that Outcome-Related Service Failure (ORSF) is associated with an economic loss and Process-Related Service Failure (PRSF) causes social or psychological loss for the customer (Smith *et al.,* 1999; Cheng, Chang, Chuang, & Liao, 2015). Thus, ORSF typically involves a utilitarian exchange which includes money, goods and time, while PRSF involves symbolic exchanges which include status, esteem, respect, sympathy and empathy, amongst others (Hur & Jang, 2016). Therefore, a requirement of service recovery is a high level of communication between the provider and its customer in order to deliver an appropriate response to the disappointed, dissatisfied customer (Meyer, Gremler, & Hogreve, 2014). Hoffman *et al.* (2016) underscored the frequently critical importance of employees in the provision of an effective service recovery. Considering that a 100 per cent satisfaction guarantee promises total customer satisfaction, this would suggest that a high quality service will be delivered (Meyer *et al.,* 2014). According to McColl-Kennedy and Sparks (2003), given that service failures are common in the service industry, and that customers may experience dissatisfaction following such failure, it is important that firms attempt to recover dissatisfied customers through an appropriate set of actions known as 'the customer recovery process'. Learning from service failure, therefore, depends to a considerable extent on establishing the main cause(s) and identifying the fundamental processes that have contributed to the issue, with the aim of finding effective solutions to the client's problems.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The success of an online recovery strategy is largely attributed to the provider's response speed (Pang, Hasan, & Chong, 2014). Essentially, engagement in conversation with the customer immediately after he/she uploads the complaint shortens the pre-recovery phase. Service firms expect complaints from consumers when a service failure occurs. Therefore, companies should prepare strategies for the process of service recovery to deal with difficulties. As BBC Business Editor, Weber (2010) presciently noted serious consequences of negative opinions expressed on the Internet: 'These days, one witty tweet, one clever blog post, one devastating video forwarded to hundreds of friends at the click of a mouse can snowball and kill a product or damage a company's share price'. Of course, positive reactions on the Internet can also have dramatic consequences and social media has enormous influence. If certain businesses are not interested in identifying strategies or devoting time, energy, staff and financial resources to engage effectively with social media, they may well be ignoring or misusing favourable opportunities. They might be failing to deal with negativity amongst the customers upon whom their existence depends. The powerful effects of negative eWOM can affect a firm's performance. Kim and Lee (2015), Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) and Park and Lee (2009), among others, have all acknowledged the power of negative eWOM on the performance of firms in their research, asserting that negative eWOM is much more effective than positive eWOM. Consumers share negative experiences for three key reasons (Verhagen, Nauta, & Feldberg, 2013). Firstly, sharing negative experiences can serve to mitigate frustration and reduce the anxiety associated with the event. Secondly, negative experiences are shared to warn and prevent others from enduring similar events. Thirdly, consumers can share their negative experiences in order to help companies improve their practices. In sum, eWOM is more often negative than positive (Hornik, Satchi, Cesareo, & Pastore, 2015). Social media has empowered consumers to voice negative experiences and opinions about products or services with reduced physical and psychological costs (Istanbulluoglu, 2017).

As consumers desire experiences in the 21st century, online retailers will also need to elevate the online shopping experience and make it more enjoyable through the use of technology, such as live video on social media platforms, virtual reality and personalised customer service.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Customer Satisfaction: Signifies clients' happiness with a product or service based on the difference between the expected and perceived performance of the product or service.

Fashion: The expression of social status, lifestyle and taste through the use of objects by individuals.

Information and Communication Technologies: These include everyday usage of digital technology such as mobile phones, or tablets, and browsing the Internet, which enables easy communication among its users.

Justice Theory: A leading theoretical framework from academia to service recovery in the service marketing literature based on the theory in social and organizational psychology.

Recovery Strategy: The actions taken by firms or service suppliers to overcome occurrences with standards that fall below the needs and expectations of the customer are described as recovery strategies in the service marketing literature.

Service Failure: When a firm or service supplier fails to meet customer anticipations resulting in displeasure during service delivery.

Service Recovery Paradox: A phenomenon that suggests that remarkably strong attempts at recovery can lead to client evaluations higher than transactions with no supposed failure of any kind.

Chapter 9
User-Generated Content and Consumer Brand Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Debates on the importance of user-generated content (UGC) and consumer brand engagement have increasingly gained attention amongst researchers, practitioners, marketing managers, and business leaders. UGC is a concept popularized in the 21st century with the advent and rise of Web 2.0 technology. Web 2.0 has gained recognition due to its novel features that include openness, participation, and the facilitation of the creation and sharing of content. It revolutionized interactions amongst people, and users are now able to share and create personalized content on the internet instead of merely using the content available. The primary objective of this chapter is to evaluate the influence of UGC on consumer brand engagement and discuss its impact on customers and organizational marketing practices.

INTRODUCTION

User Generated Content (henceforth UGC) which is alternatively known as 'user created content' is content published by users on various online platforms (Shneiderman, Preece & Pirolli, 2011). UGC has been described as content created by a consortium or an individual and published through diverse online platforms (McNally et al., 2012). Leung (2009) notes that UGC is any form of content that is developed by users of a service or system and published openly on an associated online platform or system. Most traditional UGC definitions describe the importance of online platforms and technologies that support the generation of such content. These online platforms and technologies are forms of social media, social computing, Web 2.0, collective action tools, social Web, read/write Web, consumer-generated media, virtual communities, computer-mediated communication, online communities, and socio-technical systems (Shneiderman, Preece & Pirolli, 2011). However, prior research presents a clear restriction upon the definition of UGC: when any user copies any content and uploads or posts it on a social media

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch009

application then he/she is not creating new content or fulfilling the criteria for UGC. UGC is something which generates the content with transformativity or originality or a combination of both (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Other researchers have highlighted the fact that UGC became popular in 2005. UGC comprises various forms of media content that should meet three conditions. The content must be published on any social networking sites or website; it must be created outside professional practices and routines and it needs to highlight some unique or creative effort (Kumar et al., 2016). However, most social media applications are used with the purpose of forwarding the copied content of others. All types of social media have their own culture, norms, architectures and unique features. Users visit social media sites with different intentions and interact in diverse ways. McNally et al. (2012) describe the various forms of UGC such as audio, multimedia productions, individual texts, images, and videos. These are distributed through Flickr, Facebook, YouTube, and personal blogs. They are also distributed across software applications or modifications that are generated to operate within hardware platforms or in existing databases (e.g. game or virtual world modifications, iPhone apps, and utilities that influence publicly available databases); and informal or formal groups that generate and disseminate UGC (such as Linex or Apache, open source software, and Wikipedia).

It has become necessary for nations to make a policy framework in order to create and distribute UGC because these contents can bring creative expressions, innovation, and economic growth (Tang, Fang & Wang, 2014). In certain situations, UGC can bring revenue for its creators though voluntary donations, direct payments, content licensed to third parties and advertising revenues. About 80.7 percent of US internet users are seriously consider product reviews before making a purchase decision (eMarketer, 2016). Marketing communication using social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Flicker has increasingly gained the attention of many fashion brands, service providers and consumers.

The recent past has witnessed the advent of a new capability acquired by humans. The internet has become omnipresent, enabling users to share newly generated content with other users by delineating their buying intentions, product, and transaction-based experiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Ozuem, 2016). Content generated by users can be accessed via applications (‘apps’) or websites viewed by visitors with an internet connection. Such content can include textual comments, video, images, profiles, votes, usernames, ‘hearts’ and likes and other media (Ryan & Jones, 2012). Adverts however are not considered to be examples of the type of User Generated Content (UGC) seen on social media platforms (Ryan, 2014). Voluntary contributors contribute UGC to increase numbers and support each other, generating new content that involves a wide range of creative media. Other users co-create such content beyond the prevailing professional traditional environments. UGC as a concept was popularised in the early 21st century with the advent of “Web 2.0” (Charlesworth, 2014).

Web 2.0 has brought about dramatic changes, often characterised by participation, openness, and sharing. This has revolutionised interactions amongst people and users are now able to share and create personalised content on the internet instead of simply using content already available (Weiger et al., 2011). UGC has rapidly evolved as a result of Web 2.0 and has also increased the participation of users in creating such content (Wan & Ren, 2017; Ozuem et al., 2016). Its popularity is increasing because users can create audio, video, text, and other files on the internet and share content with each other on platforms like YouTube, Blogs, Twitter and Facebook, amongst others (Goh et al., 2013). Due to the growth in popularity of sophisticated mobile phone cameras, the creation of video content on the internet has increased exponentially (Kim et al. 2010; Ozuem & Mulloo, 2016).

UGC in the context of social media can be defined as the sum of all ways of supporting the sharing of unique content by using social media applications (Kumar et al., 2016; Kim & Johnson, 2016).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have highlighted the importance of social media for UGC, noting that ten hours of content is uploaded on YouTube every minute. Social media and UGC are closely related and complement each other. Various types of UGC exist on online platforms such as on Twitter, YouTube, Flicker, Wikipedia, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, google+, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Instagram. UGC is generated by many online communities on platforms such as google business TripAdvisor and Zagat, Yelp, and OpenTable, and is also generated by corporate websites such as eBay, and Amazon (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Shneiderman, Preece & Pirolli, 2011), according to whom the nature of UGC can vary based on the diverse online applications. UGC can also appeal to corporations who integrate it into their websites and third party selling websites. Less attractive to the commercial world are cross-platform applications such as Viber, WhatsApp, WeChat, Imo, and Tango.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

UGC is content published on social media or is publicly accessible via networking websites and is created exclusively through amateur practices and routines. It therefore depends on creative effort to some extent (Evans, 2012). UGC in marketing refers to brand-related content created by anyone who does not officially represent the business at issue. UGC can take many forms including podcasts, videos, reviews or social networking updates (Thomsett-Scott, 2014; Ozuem et al., 2016). Barefoot & Szabo, (2010) identify UGC across different media formats including digital video, question-answer debates, wikis, blogging, forums, podcasting social networking, review sites, mobile-phone photography and social media. Content-based sharing sites like Buzzfeed are popular UGC formats.

Any kind of content can be regarded as UGC provided three criteria are met. First, content must have been published, otherwise it cannot be regarded as UGC. (Willis & Wang, 2016) Secondly, the content created must be original; i.e. it must be the work of the content creator (Jiao et al., 2018). Thirdly, content must be created without reward, i.e. it must not be paid content. It must be created by the user voluntarily (Chari et al., 2016). Moreover, Smith & Chaffey (2012), indicate that online communities provide a platform of communication to internet users to enable people to interact with friends and family and discuss a wide array of topics. They exchange pictures, videos, texts, and other materials which are called UGC, which also includes content generated by consumers with respect to their shopping experiences, and is therefore content which consumers share with each other online (Kumar et al., 2016; Jin & Phua, 2016).

UGC can be produced and then shared by an end user of any website or online service (Sterne, 2010). It includes content produced or shared by users who are subscribers or members of an online service rather than produced and shared by the online service or website itself (Herrero et al., 2015; Ozuem & Lancaster, 2014). Other common alternative terms used in place of UGC are conversational media or Consumer Generated Media (CGM) (Stareva, 2014; Ryan & Jones, 2014; Ozuem & Lancaster, 2015). Typically, UGC is created online as it can be easily uploaded and shared with family and friends through social media websites (Brown, 2012). In other words, content that is produced and shared by fans or unpaid contributors qualifies as UGC. Many of these posts, videos and photos are part of what can be termed UGC (Odden, 2012). UGC is a source of that content created by consumers, influencers, social media followers or fans that follow and support various brands (Carvão, 2010; Akehurst, 2009; Tirunillai & Tellis, 2012). Such content, whether in the form of a blog, Wiki, podcast, social image, video or social media post created by a third-party user is then used by businesses on their social media networking or websites for the promotion of their brand(s) (Powell et al., 2011). Such content typically acts as a free source of advertising because it comes at no, or little cost (Cha et al., 2009). Simply put, UGC is content that is not produced by the company itself but by consumers or users (Scott, 2015). Although there exists no single universally accepted definition of UGC, the OECD (2006) defines UGC as having three distinct characteristics: "*i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort., and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices*" (OECD, 2007, p. 4). If these characteristics are present, the content qualifies as UGC. First, the content must be published online. If it is not published online, then it does not qualify as UGC. Secondly, the content must be innovative in nature. Lastly, it must be a personal creation rather than a professional creation.

UGC came into being as a result of content contributed by consumers in the form of audio, video, digital images, blogs, and arguments extracted from posts and other media contributions across the spectrum of social media. Content that is contributed by voluntary donators posted in the form of posts, podcasts, wikis, tweets, pics, videos or audio files or images, blog posts and testimonials is created with the aim of promoting brands that consumers follow on social media (Rodgers & Thorson, 2017). In other words, third party users create the content. UGC offers the option to share content with other networks posted by users in relation to a brand (Dodson, 2016).

At present, the most popular UGC content is available in the form of videos and photos, to the extent that some 44% of adult internet users generate such content (Ryan, 2014). According to Statista, (2017) millennials quite commonly create photos as a form of UGC. Product reviews are also popular, constituting some 29% of UGC content on the web. The new options generated in relation to media drive, more through consumer-created content in the online world, and less through publishers, are called 'user-generated content (UGC)' (Dodson, 2016). UGC is defined as media that is produced as a result of a contribution made through Web 2.0 online technologies. The content is created by the user instead of by professionals receiving regular funding (Smith & Chaffey, 2012). From this definition, it is evident that it is the general public that creates UGC. However, there has been some debate about the uses of UGC in business. In the field of marketing for example, UGC is taken to be content that has an 'unofficial' capacity (Mathieson, 2010) and is created in relation to a brand. This content may take the form of reviews, social media posts, podcasts and videos amongst others. A brand is considered to be based on content generated by a user if followers, associates or colleagues have not had a hand in creating it. UGC refers to media contributed and shared by people online. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) suggests UGC must have the capacity to engage people and to cultivate conversation. Since marketing now implicates people as users, UGC has given rise to terms like "peer-created content" and "Consumer-Generated Content" (CGC) quite outside of traditional industrial classifications (Schaffer et al., 2013).

Any matter that is selected, prepared and distributed in written and graphical form constitutes publishing activity. Matter is available in the form of magazines, books and newspapers, although UGC content does not come under this purview (Martínez-Navarro & Bigné, 2017). Research has identified that UGC is bound within groups as well as in media, whereas published books are not. (Sheldrake et al., 2011). Traditionally, publishing is intended for published material. However, books available electronically and newspapers available online are considered as examples of publishing, therefore printing does not necessarily require publishing (Evans, 2012). Roberts et al., (2016) following a history of two published editions in about two hundred and forty years is now solely available online. However digital publishing has made its way into the sphere of printed publishing and so the definition of publishing has increasingly blurred boundaries. Technological innovations, in particular, have altered ideas about publishing.

There is now a need to review the concept of publishing in the context of new conditions that have emerged with the dawn of social media. In this context, publishing refers to the dissemination of information to the public (Mahoney & Tang, 2016). However, the public exists at a number of different levels, and in order to understand this, the concept above needs to be examined in closer detail. “General public” indicates that a contributing user does not specify any particular receiver (Agresta et al., 2011). Online content is accessible by a vast and unlimited audience. Limited public access indicates that the contributing user does not specify explicitly a particular receiver but addresses a limited audience. Platforms establish limitations that need e-registration before accessing the reading (Brake, 2014). For instance, if the content is offered to registered users only but registration is open for everyone, the audience will remain confined to users who are already registered. This limited public is bifurcated into “known limited public” and “unknown limited public” (Thomsett-Scott, 2014). The “known limited public” has no particular specified receiver despite the fact the audience is limited to known people. One example of this is the sharing of content between friends as a group on social networks. This is evidence of similarity of ‘known-limited public’ with private platforms (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010).

The “unknown limited” public denotes an audience that is not limited to known people. The sharing of content within a close community of friends in social networks is a pertinent example of this. If specified receivers are taken to be a limited audience, this is referred to as **private**. In the light of the above, private communication does not fall within the purview of UGC that encompasses the transmission of messages on an individual or group basis on platforms like WhatsApp, email, Viber, WeChat and Imo. This suggests that messages transmitted through email and SMS as well as instantaneous messages, faxes, written letters and telephone calls fall beyond the jurisdiction of UGC (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). However, communication that takes place at a private level is considered an element akin to activity on social media platforms. For example, social networks enable the general public to create and publish content. They allow private messages to be shared between a limited public. One thing peculiar to social media is that users who develop and contribute content are not bound to delineate their audience except by limiting it (Smith & Zook, 2011).

Reach indicates the tally of individuals that receive a message. When a contributor limits the audience to a lesser extent, the message will likely gain the maximum potential to reach the audience. With lemmatising the audience, the extent of increased intimacy is expected to grow (Evan, 2012). Features are highlighted with reference to the varying degrees of intimacy and reach. This phenomenon of content generated by the general public can be adapted to replace the age-old conception of sender-receiver at contributor and audience levels. Based on such a connection, a user that publishes a message is regarded as a contributor. It is not imperative that contributors are involved in the creation of content. Whether a contributor is involved in content creation or not, in social media, a contributor is seen in the capacity of author and is denoted as such (Evan, 2012).

UGC refers to content that users publish online using an online platform such as social media that contains content generated by users who are not required to possess any specialised programming skills. A company contributes content on a platform like social media encompassing the category of user. Generally, a ‘user’ refers to a social media user (Brown, 2012). When companies contribute content to a platform like social media this is called UGC (Odden, 2012). A user may be an individual, either skilled or unskilled and is not necessarily acting in a professional or corporate capacity. In this context, a company that contributes content to social media is not considered to be developing UGC. This suggests that an individual who utilises a social media platform is called a user (Powell et al., 2011).

A URL is used as an identifier on search engines to conduct a search of web pages rather than specific content. This does not resonate with the concept of UGC. A single web page carries a single URL but also carries a number of entries from social media contributed by diverse authors (Scott, 2015). In terms of social media, UGC is the smallest unit of contribution made by a single author at a specific time. Content created on the basis of collaboration is generally contributed by many authors (Brown, 2012).

Volunteers regularly contribute content in the form of information, data or media on the web in a presentable, meaningful form. Examples are wikis, restaurant ratings and videos (Kim & Lee, 2017). Moreover, Simon, (2016) noted that when it comes to finding a product rating or a service, customer views make voluntary entries difficult. Recent research found that business-generated content is brand-related quite contrary to user-generated (Schulz et al., 2013). Furthermore, Smith et al., (2012) added that UGC is the outcome of professional work carried out behind the scenes. Such content is inexpensive and has generally undergone development, and users provide it without any charge. The phenomenon of supplying content proves rewarding when it is recognised (Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2016). Content that has the capacity to entertain or inform, gives the impression of real data contributed by others without influence from other media channels (Susarla et al., 2012).

A content unit generated by a user comprises staple data along with metadata. Core data provides staple data information as the content. Metadata is based on information in relation to a core area (Chung, Han & Koo, 2015). Metadata involves the publication date, author ranking in society and expert opinions while still constituting UGC. This work includes expressions obtained through one click as UGC. Examples include 'likes' recorded on Facebook, thumbs up comments on YouTube and 'plus one' ratings on Google. Other users' score ratings based on content units generated by users are called peer ratings (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Social media as well as UGC features represent "Web 2.0" which is also called the "participative web". Web 2.0 is not a new web era. Rather, it is viewed as a leaning propensity trend (Wilson et al., 2012).

The influx of blogs in the contemporary online world as well as videos from YouTube, podcasts and comments on blogs or news articles highlights this dimension (Zhan et al., 2017). Anyone can create content on the internet provided s/he is computer-literate and has access to the internet. Many years ago, corporations and individuals with technical know-how tended to create web content in subjective areas online (Flanagin et al., 2014). Different web forums, chat rooms (Internet Relay Chat), online games and multi-user domains were developed as examples (Fox et al., 2012). Many users have subsequently come to realise that participatory facets pertain to the web. Users are free to make and rate comments while viewing the news, although most encounter an overlap of comments from communities watching on- and offline on social digital networks such as Facebook (Kim, 2012).

UGC is any type of media crafted by consumers or end users that is made publicly available to other users via industry databases and websites or via social media (Roberts et al., 2016). It can include written materials such as forum posts, blog entries and reviews or audio-visual or image-based files (photographs, video clips, audio recordings or GIFs). UGC is essentially any material created outside professional marketing practices and publicised online (Adler & Sillars, 2011). It takes various forms but most relevant and common are consumer-produced recommendations and reviews (Sheldrake & Sheldrake, 2011). Webster et al. (2014), make a comparison between UGC and marketer-generated content. Consumers have become pivotal authors of brand stories since content is easily shared on the social media network and is dynamic (Seadle & Greifender, 2014). Every type of UGC has a different impact on the minds of consumers, so gaining a better understanding of the taxonomy of UGC is essential (Pan & Zhang, 2011). UGC may also be regarded as User Created Content (UCC). However, there does not exist any universal definition of UGC. Research into UGC is ongoing and is considered a growth area in marketing academia (Davis, 2015).

Three characteristics are the subject of debate amongst various scholars. Li et al. (2016), observed that UGC represents the experience and comments of consumers in relation to the products and services delivered to them by brands or companies. Moreover, Granitz, N. & Forman, (2015) observed that UGC represents any content which the public creates online. It is a personal form of content and not a professional one. Heba et al., (2018) indicates that the main feature of UGC is that it is generated voluntarily and by amateurs who are not generating content professionally online. Moreover, Chow & Shi, (2015) observed that self-creation is the most central feature of UGC. It is created without any external or professional help. Xie & Lee, (2015) observed that due to sophisticated online platforms, it is now increasingly difficult to distinguish between UGC and professional content. Bao (2017) argued that many professionals have taken to the internet to generate content which looks like UGC. Such content is used for product reviews and personal experiences about products, but there is a recognised need to develop a classification of UGC that might make it easier for marketers to use it in their marketing activities (Chaffey et al., 2016; Ryan & Jones, 2012; Charlesworth, 2014). Therefore, the ensuing discussion will review the overall taxonomy of UGC and how it relates to marketing objectives.

Switching Focus: Traditional Media to Online Social Media

Nowadays, businesses are switching their focus from traditional media to online social media and they are using sources such as blogs, social networking websites, viral marketing and wikis (Ozuem & Azemi, 2017; Hutton and Fosdick, 2011). Due to this advancement in technology many opportunities have been created for businesses (Ozuem & Lancaster, 2012; Ozuem et al., 2018). For instance, customer communication can be achieved through these media and relationships between businesses and consumers have been strengthened (Abed et al., 2015a, b; Ozuem, 2004). Social media is essentially an internet-enabled platform facilitating a flow of information in the form of decentralised user content through public memberships (Abrahams et al., 2012). In other words, social media can be defined as a group of applications that are based on internet, building on foundations such as the ideology and technology of Web 2.0. This allows the creation and exchange of content that is generated by users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Social media is also referred to as a content-generating network. This involves reviewing content online, obtaining real-time feedback, building customer relationships and facilitating discussions (Rodriguez et al., 2012). In addition, user networks and communities can also increase their presence on social media networking sites (Curran and Lennon, 2011). Abrahams et al. (2012), explain that through social media networking sites, propagating information is easier and has led to decentralised levels of content amongst users. However, there are many other networks that provide the opportunity for users to share their views on products. There is therefore a need to discuss the similarities and differences between social media and other UGC networks.

UGC and social media share the same strong relationship (Rodgers & Thorson, 2017). When they are combined, something magical is created based on the individual strength of each element. Marketers can build strong customer relationships and can strengthen their brands by executing UGC campaigns on social media. The concept of UGC is not new; it was introduced several years ago. However, this phenomenon has recently gained momentum because of the rapid growth of the internet and the easy accessibility this provides, based on instant connectivity and intelligent software (Clark et al., 2017; Hansen & Lee, 2013). Since the internet and technology are at everyone's fingertips, consumers have been granted new powers to make themselves heard and to influence ideas such as sales and marketing

(Hansen & Lee, 2013; Ozuem & Azemi, 2018). Three types of UGC exist in the online environment. First, social media UGC can be found on social media websites such as Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, Reddit, google+ and LinkedIn. Secondly, UGC is created by online communities that rate and review products. Such online communities include Yelp, OpenTable, google business, Zagat and Trip Advisor. Thirdly UGC can be created on corporate websites and third-party sales websites such as Amazon and eBay. Online review websites like Zagat, Trip Advisor, OpenTable and Yelp are common platforms for consumers to express opinions and share experiences about purchasing products and services (Leibtag, 2014).

Users consider UGC information to be more trustworthy and relatable compared to information generated by marketers (Seadle & Greifender, 2014). However, it is necessary to understand the difference between the nature UGC among different networks because the nature of UGC is quite different on company own website, third party selling websites (eBay, Amazon) and on instant messages networks (WhatsApp, Viber, WeChat, Imo etc). To address this issue, a definition of social media should be considered. Charlesworth, (2015;1) stated that "*what is understood by social media is still open to some debate",* furthermore defining (2015;1) social media as a *"collective term for the various social network and community sites including such online application as blogs, podcasts, reviews and wikis"*. According to this definition, both online communities and social media websites are examples of social media networks. Regarding the use of both kinds of online network, it is obvious that social media networking is not only used for rating and reviewing products (Rossmann et al., 2018) but also to socialise with friends and family. However, online communities such as Zagat, Trip Advisor, OpenTable and Yelp are used particularly to review and rate products. Based on this observation, community websites and social media sites are quite different.

Brands' own websites and third party selling websites such as Amazon and eBay are other sources that amass UGC (Chen & Lurie, 2013). Once again, the question arises as to whether or not to consider UGC created by brands and third-party websites as examples of UGC and social media. Any website where users can add content but cannot control the site is defined as a social media site (Han, 2018). Based on this definition of social media, community websites, third-party selling websites and social media sites are very similar, and differences are difficult to highlight. However, it can be argued that all media can be considered as qualifying as social media, so there is need to more strictly define social media and UGC for the purposes of this research.

From the above definitions of social media, it can be concluded that it existed long before the digital revolution (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). In the early days, social media was used as source of connection among communities of like-minded people who used to share views on all issues from politics and the latest trends to the best way to cultivate tomatoes (Charlesworth, 2015). However, these connections were strongly limited by location and by the available communications technology of the past (Ryan, 2017; Ozuem et al., 2008). If users at that time wanted to discuss a brand, organisation or product they could do so only with close associates, family or friends (Ryan, 2017; Estrella-Ramón & Ellis-Chadwick, 2017). The digital generation has removed these restrictions (Charlesworth, 2014). In the digital world people can spread UGC across the globe instantly via hand-held devices, tablets, watches, wearables, PCs and laptops (Dodson, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016; Davis, 2015). The above definition of a social circle suggests that UGC created in the form of product ratings on review websites (community websites) and on corporate websites cannot be considered examples of social media enabled UGC. According to Tirunillai & Tellis, (2012), a discussion about conventional social circles is not restricted to any specific topic. However, people cannot communicate easily on Amazon, eBay, Yelp, Zagat, and Trip

Advisor because community websites and third party selling websites like eBay or Amazon only allow product ratings to be generated. Community websites, selling websites and corporate websites cannot therefore be considered as examples of social media for the purposes of this research. Estrella-Ramón & Ellis-Chadwick, (2017) indicate that people can freely communicate and share their views about anything on social media networks such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. This research therefore only looks at UGC created on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, but it will nonetheless take a detailed look at the nature of UGC on social media sites.

Definitions of social media offer mixed perceptions regarding the difference between UGC on social media and UGC on corporate and community websites. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) associate social media sites with digital technology by describing social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the technological and ideological foundation of Web 2.0. These applications facilitate the exchange and creation of UGC. Furthermore, social media is defined by Gensler et al., (2013) as Web 2.0 which is the sum of open-sourced user-controlled, and interactive online applications used to expand the knowledge, market power and experience of users as participants in social and business processes. These Web 2.0 applications support the creation of networked informal users and they facilitate a flow of knowledge and ideas by allowing the efficient generation, sharing, editing, refining and dissemination of informational content (Evans, 2012; Zhang et al., 2016; Schaffer et al., 2014; Agresta et al., 2011). Based on this definition it is clear that corporate websites, social media sites and third-party selling websites all are considered as examples of UGC. The argument here is that company websites, third-party selling websites (eBay, Amazon) and community website cannot be considered examples of UGC. Therefore, community websites such as Zagat, TripAdvisor, OpenTable, Yelp and third party selling websites such as Amazon and eBay are not considered to be examples of social media sites. Moreover, Statista statistics (2018) suggest the penetration of social media in the UK has taken place on social websites only (see Chart 2.1 below). Therefore, due to the restrictions placed on discussion types on third party websites (e.g. eBay, Amazon), corporate websites and community networks (e.g. Trip Advisor, Yelp) these can be rejected as examples of social media UGC (see Figure 2-2 of the Pyramid of UGC Sources). This study specifically considers social media networks as examples of UGC. Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook are amongst the most high-profile examples of social media, and they operate, and work entirely or mostly based on UGC. Moreover, online forums, product reviews and rating websites as well as classified websites also depend on UGC, but these should not be considered as forms of social media UGC. UGC includes blog posts, tweets, testimonials, videos, pictures and everything in between. Peer-reviewed endorsements of brands rather than brand-endorsed messages count as UGC.

Brand-Related User-Generated Content (UGC)

Brand-oriented UGC represents content which is created with reference to a brand and is intended to be brought to the notice of other users as well (Tang et al. 2014). It provides useful information to consumers who are in the process of arriving at a decision about buying products or services (Yadav et al., 2016). eMarketer (2016) report highlighted that 80.7% of internet users in the US regard product reviews by other consumers as influential factors for arriving at a purchasing decision. The importance, relevance and influence of UGC related to brands is increasingly enabling potential customers to make decisions about brands (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013)

Positive responses from consumers can be generated by brand-oriented UGC which includes favourable attitudes with respect to a brand if the brand-oriented UGC is in favour of the brand (Ryan, 2014). It is also important to note that the influence of UGC also depends on the person who generates it. Social media has enabled users to generate and share content with each other. Among those who are in the social circle of consumers it is easier to get within the reach of UGC (Ransbotham et al., 2012). This is also referred to as creating eWOM and brings people together who share the interests of those within their personal network (Yadav et al., 2016). Consumers are also increasingly being exposed to UGC shared by celebrities on their social media pages. Twitter is increasingly becoming a source for politicians and celebrities to share information about what they like or dislike (Ransbotham et al., 2012; Munar, A.M. & Jacobsen, 2013). Existing research has shown that posts by celebrities can influence followers, even if the content is brand-related (Schultz, 2017). However, the extent to which such posts influence consumers who are making a buying decision and the extent to which brand perceptions are affected are not clear. In this, study the relative effectiveness of celebrities and friend posts on social media in relation to brands is examined (Ransbotham et al., 2012). Furthermore, with regard to the fact that brand-related UGC influences other consumers (such as observed by Lu et al. 2014), it is worth noting the nature of responses from recipients of UGC towards these two constructs (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

Sources of Brand-Oriented UGC

Information is an important feature of social media, as everyone is informed about others due to social media (Shao, 2009). The UGC which users usually encounter is the one shared by their friends. Friends represent the major social circle of a person present on social media. People have brought real-life friendships and relationships online (Liu et al., 2011).

Existing research shows that the buying decisions of people are influenced by views shared by their friends. This is called referent power and describes a situation in which people like to identify with popular views held by their friends (Williams et al., 2010). It is supplemented by reward power whereby people believe that by sharing popular views they are rewarding each other. Further, coercive power also underpins this idea in the sense that people believe they are rendered socially isolated if they go against the popular view (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). Apart from the venues of traditional marketing, the factor which most influences people is that of friendship affecting the decisions of people through the power of social media (Zeng et al., 2016). Nearly 60% of consumers note their buying decisions were influenced by friends' posts on social media (Diffley et al., 2018).

However, it is important to distinguish between casual friends and close friends. Close friends enjoy influential power with respect to each other. They also interact with each other more frequently than with casual friends and have reciprocal relationships with each other (Malthouse et al., 2016). They are likely to share their feelings and experiences more closely, and more openly and frequently with each other (Merrilees, 2016). Close friends are also likely to share promotional messages with each other. The intensity of relationships is higher and better in close friendships, which is why people attach importance to information passed on by close friends (Kamboj & Sarmah, 2018).

The variations in UGC types are endless. Some major examples include Podcasts, Forums, user-created blog posts, user-created videos, reviews, Facebook posts or comments and blog comments (Dempster & Lee, 2015; Weber & Henderson, 2014; Statista, 2018). Customer feedback is an open-ended type of feedback that comes in the form of FAQs, Q&As or any other direct feedback that directs a brand social media team (Armstrong et al., 2017). Certain platforms that not only allow customers to ask questions, but also to answer them, providing additional integrity to responses because they are produced by the end users of products. Reviews and ratings are comparatively straightforward and include the number of 'likes' on a product Facebook page (Brake, 2014). This is a clear example of UGC as it allows consumers to create direct feedback about products depending on the system being used. Nielsen (2017), showed that peer reviews are long-lasting and durable. The sites on which they appear are highly credible and feature reviews from other customers. The filter options that are a feature of some systems ensure that only verified customers can review, while others are open-ended platforms (Chaffey, 2006; Schultz, 2016). Marketers can enhance current levels of transparency and trust in brands by allowing user-generated images. Beyond fashion, it is exciting for customers to receive mail about a new product and to see others unboxing products (Zahay, 2015). However, the authenticity of UGC does not rely only on the fact that it is user-generated. More crucial is that UGC is unpaid and also serves the purposes of marketing brands (King et al., 2014; Weber & Henderson, 2014). This renders UGC a version of online WOM marketing, although the content is not necessarily generated with the intention of promotion, particularly because modern users are cautious about marketing messages (Armstrong & Kotler, 2014). For example, a satisfied consumer at a restaurant or Samsung/Apple service centre can generate voluntary posts about their experience, on, for example, Instagram – which of course counts as UGC. However, the brand can take advantage of this activity, but it remains necessary for the brand to be aware of response strategies to address both positive and negative customer feedback. Thus, the next section explores how UGC stimulates customer behaviour in diverse ways.

UGC and Consumer Behaviour

The nature of interactions between people is increasingly changing due to the enhanced democratisation of content available online (Scott, 2015). The focus of companies is shifting from influencing the consumers to playing the role of mediator between consumers for the content they are generating (Wen, 2009). Nevertheless, UGC is a legitimate source of feedback from consumers. Consumers provide opinions and feedback as a result of UGC that can help business in terms of customer relationship management and product development (Gu, Tang & Whinston, 2013). This can occur in both a structured and an unstructured manner. This has resulted in the expansion of consumer-oriented intelligence online. The advent of the internet enabled people to discuss their experiences with industry or companies (Stoel & Muhanna, 2016). They became able to interact with countless numbers of other consumers and able to highlight their personal experiences with the brand, bringing into the limelight their experience before other consumers (Chern et al., 2015). UGC is also becoming an addiction that gives users a sense of recognition and status. When they are appreciated, or their views are welcomed on the basis of their experience they feel a sense of recognition within their circle. That is why UGC is increasingly becoming a source of eWOM (Estrella-Ramón et al., 2017) and positive eWOM has a direct positive influence on customer relationships and buying behaviour (Luo et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2013; Chern et al., 2015; Gu, Tang & Whinston, 2013)

Nevertheless, consumers are increasingly empowered by the internet, particularly in light of Web 2.0 and they can create content and influence brands and other consumer opinions with the content they are creating. Consumers are not passive anymore; they are becoming increasingly active. The internet has also facilitated two-way communication between consumers and brands. Therefore, UGC has the effect of influencing brand loyalty (Kizgin et al., 2018; Ozuem & Thomas, 2015). Previously, business marketers were able to influence the opinions of consumers (Viswanathan et al., 2018). Today, this is achieved by consumers as they can interact without the constraints of geographical boundaries, and they can influence opinion, which is considered a form of UGC. They can opine freely about the products and services they consume from various brands (Kao et al., 2016; Roberts & Kraynak, 2008). With the help of social media, consumers are able to generate, create, exchange, and edit information online and they can support or critique a particular brand overtly via UGC on social media (Du Plessis, 2017). Peer review feedback is regarded as a more reliable source of marketing as compared to online marketing campaigns (Kao et al., 2016; Hautz et al., 2014). This has the effect of driving brand loyalty amongst customers (Ozuem et al., 2016). The profitability of business is also notably influenced by UGC (Akar & Topcu, 2011; Hautz et al., 2014).

Customer satisfaction increases in line with the quality of customer online reviews and this ultimately leads to higher customer purchasing intentions since positive discussion about brands improves customer confidence because they feel they are dealing with a reliable brand (Yadav et al., 2016). As online reviews are easily understandable and objective in nature, they strongly influence the intentions of customers based on reviews that are subjective and emotive (Leibtag, 2014). Detailed videos and written content provide information to people on various products and in imaginative ways (Goodman et al., 2013). The impact of online reviews on consumer behaviour has become an interesting topic for both practitioners and researchers (Ozuem & O'Keeffe, 2015; Seadle & Greifender, 2014). Online stores and brands publish rich information (Yeh, 2015; Prendergast et al., 2010) that has made it easy for customers to access multiple sources of information about brands and products. This is particularly the case in terms of customer reviews about online shopping on social media (Chakravarty et al., 2010). Although positive reviews are generally appreciated, negative reviews cannot be ignored (Feng & Liu, 2018). Regardless of whether the product or brand is of a supreme quality, an unsatisfied customer will post negative reviews that might have a negative impact on the brand and might influence new customers. These negative reviews can influence other consumers to perceive that the product is of lower quality, thus damaging buying intentions and brand trust (Lee & Choeh, 2018). All types of UGC on social media sites impact on customer trust, which will be discussed in the next section.

Customer Trust

Online reviews of consumers on social media in relation to products or services can be highly influential. A number of studies suggest that online reviews strongly influence product choices and risk perception (Sparks et al., 2016: Palmer, 2009; Matzat & Snijders, 2012). Although all consumer reviews are not equally valued, reviews by family members and close friends on social media are highly influential in terms of driving purchase decisions (Wen, 2009; Hsu et al., 2013; Lee, 2017). The value of UGC as feedback can be measured on the basis of the extent to which it is influential and useful. In terms of the usefulness of UGC, negative feedback has a great impact on brand trust amongst new customers and existing customers (Yan & Du, 2016) since it damages perceptions of trustworthiness (Kandampully et al., 2015). For sellers it is very important to understand how to react to negative reviews. The next section will discuss this aspect in detail. However, it should be acknowledged that if a business attracts only positive reviews this attracts suspicion. Brands, however, cannot satisfy everyone (Liang & Corkindale, 2016; Lee & Wu, 2015; Zhou & Duan, 2015). Negative reviews suggest that brands hide nothing, and positive reviews create high trust relationships with customers (Zhang et al., 2015). Online feedback can benefit brands as they add elements of transparency and truth to the brand image that eventually lead to customer trust (Sun, 2013; Wang & Li, 2016; Munar & Jacobsen, 2013).

Moreover, online reviews on social media are considered new forms of recommendations similar to traditional communications by means of word of mouth (Zheng et al., 2015). Customers who contribute content to social media reviews tend to be previous customers who intend to remain anonymous, whereas sources of traditional WOM are generally known and therefore not anonymous (Ryan & Jones, 2012). The number of customer reviews is another concern in terms of online customer reviews as it is useful for identifying reputation. It also holds clues as to the market performance of specific products or services (Mayzlin and Chevalier, 2006; Ozuem et al., 2017). Moreover, Charlesworth, (2014) suggests that the quantity of online reviews also acts as a reference point in winning the confidence of online customers. These ideas will be discussed in future sections of this chapter.

Customers form expectations about a specific product or service on the basis of multiple sources of information such as the brand name and the price of products or services (Mathieson, 2010). Previous experiences of products also have a bearing (Mayzlin et al., 2016). Moreover, Kaur et al., (2018) focused on determining how consumer social media reviews post-purchase can determine levels of both expectations and uncertainty. Customers form pre-purchase expectations about products partly based on online reviews which influence their later buying decisions. Online consumer reviews are generally characterised by volume, variance and valence (Homburg et al., 2015; Richard & Habibi, 2016). Numerous studies have explored how social media consumer reviews influence customer buying decisions. According to recent meta-analysis, the volume and valence of reviews positively influences customer trust and this in turn impacts on buying decisions (Saboo et al., 2016; Floyd et al., 2014). Following a purchase, expectation-confirmation leads to high levels of the post-purchase satisfaction and reduces return probabilities. Similarly, review volumes mitigate return probabilities ((Seadle & Greifender, 2014). This suggests that positive social media reviews also impact on customer buying return decisions.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is evident from previous studies that UGC is dynamic and complex, as is the impact of UGC on other consumers (Nielsen Company, 2014; Ayeh et al. 2013). Moreover, Tafesse, (2016) observed that consumer choice is influenced by UGC that consumers encounter on social media because people are more influenced by their friends and family. Furthermore, he observed that UGC is more effective in terms of influencing consumer decision making as compared to media campaigns and advertisements, because customers place more trust in their friends than in marketers. Furthermore, Herrero et al., (2015) observed that the product ratings provided on social media are regarded as more reliable by other consumers; certainly, more so than the ratings provided by industry experts. Moreover, Kamboj et al., (2018) observed that negative UGC is more influential than positive UGC because it consists of in-depth information about products. As such, negative comments are the principal reason why customers switch brands in certain circumstances. However, UGC is keenly followed in some industries such as in the travel industry which is heavily influenced by customer reviews and ratings (Ayeh et al. 2013). Moreover, Ye et al., (2010), observed that where UGC acts in support of a particular travel company and increases by 10%, subsequent bookings increased by 5%. Moreover, Yang et al., (2017) observed that UGC provides weak brands with a stronger position in the market. UGC is also regarded by various researchers as a source of eWOM. However, eWOM might be positive or negative (Renton & Simmonds, 2017; Sabate et al., 2014; Pfeffer et al., 2014). These ideas will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter.

There are two-fold repercussions of the new environments that have supported the growth in social media (Hu et al. 2014). Consumer behaviour is highly influenced by UGC as it amounts to eWOM for other consumers (Ring et al. 2016). This has the effect of influencing buying decisions. Hong et al.

(2017), observed that social media UGC is increasingly becoming a prominent source of influencing the decisions of consumers to transact with a particular brand. Gao (et al. 2015) observed that UGC might take the form of a negative or positive comment about a product or service. These comments are made through social media channels. There are different manners and forms of UGC such as those generated in discussion forums online. Examples include blogs, Tweets and Facebook pages. This content has the effect of influencing buying decisions online and offline (Hong et al. 2017). UGC can also amount to a boycott of a brand or company whereby other consumers realise that their fellow consumers were severely affected by the brand's policies or products and services (Fay & Larkin, 2017). UGC can also take the form of mailbags, personal emails, electronic mailings, blog posts, comments on social media, instant messaging, and social media reviews (Gao et al., 2015). However, this research considers social media UGC only. An important feature of UGC is that it is generated by consumers and is not therefore created professionally. Further, UGC on social media is often regarded as more trustworthy by consumers compared with the narratives they find on other media platforms. This is perhaps because people trust their friends and families over marketers (Fay & Larkin, 2017). Sandars and Walsh (2009) observed that since UGC is generated by consumers it is considered reliable and trustworthy by other consumers. Smith (et al. 2012) observed that UGC is equivalent to eWOM and is thus considered reliable by both brands and consumers. Floyd et al. (2014), observed that social influence is a crucial factor behind purchasing decisions and that is why UGC is influential in purchases made by other consumers. The results of research conducted by Geissinger & Laurell, (2016) showed that 70% of consumers looked for consumer reviews before making a buying decision. They typically carried out a search on social media beforehand. Besides, Labrecque, (2014) observed that 78% of consumers believe in the content that is shared by other consumers and value this over industry data. Moreover, Breitsohl et al., (2015) observed that 60% of consumers trust posts by other consumers when it comes to products or services. Some 49% of consumers shape their buying behaviour in the light of such content. Additionally, Breitsohl et al., (2015) observed that those consumers who employed social media platforms arrived at better decisions in terms of product purchases compared with those who did not rely on such a platform. This suggests that UGC on social media impacts customer behaviour in many ways.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Brand-Oriented UGC: Brand-oriented UGC is any content related to a brand and created by a user with the purpose of sharing content with others using social media tools.

Consumer Buying Behavior: The total buying behavior of the ultimate consumer when purchasing a product or service.

Consumer Engagement: Consumer engagement is an action-oriented relationship and commitment that extends beyond purchasing.

Customer Trust: A belief in the given content of a social commerce organisation that enhances e-word-of-mouth and the purchase intentions of customers. Customers are more likely to buy from people they trust or purchase a product or service that performs what it claims.

E-Word-of-Mouth: E-word-of-mouth can be described as a deliberate influencer of customer-to-customer interactions using online social networking tools. Consumers can generate online content and share such content with their online networks with the purpose of creating word-of-mouth reviews for brands.

Social Media Networks/Platforms: Groups of internet-based applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of personal information or contents or participating in a social networking User-Generated Content

User-Generated Content: UGC is any form of digital content users generated and shared online with other users. These contents produced can be viewed and shared by other users of the service or websites.

Chapter 10
The Impacts of Omni-Channel Purchasing Behavior on Service Quality

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ABSTRACT

In omni-channel retailing, the combination of different retail channels along the different customer touchpoints has become the predominant purchasing pattern for customers. The consumers´ purchasing behavior has changed tremendously with the development of e-commerce. The so-called omni-channel customers tend to switch retail channels during their purchasing process. In order to address changing consumer behavior, omni-channel fashion retailing companies still need to learn how to be able to provide an excellent service to these customers. This chapter aims to investigate this phenomenon from the perspective of omni-channel customers.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing has changed fundamentally during the last decade (Neslin et al., 2006; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). This development was mainly driven by technological and societal factors (Emrich, 2011; Hsieh & Tseng, 2018). In this context, the Internet was probably the most important technological invention (Patten & Rashid, 2015).

Several different kinds of leisure activities nowadays take place in the Internet. The use of social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, has become an important activity of everyday life (Stokinger & Ozuem, 2015). The permanent usage of mobile devices together with the dominance of Social Media has created the situation, that customers virtually bring their whole social network to a store (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). The borders between offline and online activities are blurred, and retailers use Social Media as an important instrument of communication (Ozuem, Helal, Howell and Lancaster, 2018).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch010

The result is that retailers are continuing to develop their online shops. Over the past few years, several different online retailing business models have developed in the market (for a review, see Bächle & Lehmann, 2010). During the initial phase, 'pure online players,' such as Amazon and eBay, launched their online shops. In the next phase, 'shopping comparison' websites appeared on the market. These players allowed customers to compare products on a single page and to read recommendations and critiques written by previous users. The 'optimization and scale-up' phase, which started from 2005, offered new system solutions and service providers. Since 2008, many brick-and-mortar retailers have been launching online shops as an addition to their offline channels and so have become multichannel retailers (Heinemann, 2013). Then, these retailers focussed on the integration of the different retail channels and offered 'cross-channel'- services, such as 'click and collect', the ability to order and return or exchange goods in-store, ordering while in-store, using own mobile device or self-service technology provided by the retailer (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). Ultimately, 'clicks and mortar' retailers aim to offer fully integrated channels to become omni-channel retailers (Saghiri, Wilding, Mena, & Bourlakis, 2017; Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). This chapter will focus on omni-channel retailing. It will, therefore, aim to investigate the concept of integration in omni-channel retailing by considering the different elements of the retail mix. Furthermore, it will elaborate the key drivers of perceived omni-channel service quality.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT: THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

Research about omni-channel retailing embraces the concept of "integration" of the different operated channels within an organization (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017). Channel integration initially meant that a retailer should provide a 'seamless' customer experience between stores and online shops; customers should be able to easily switch channels during their interaction with the retailer (Goersch, 2002; Seck, 2013). However, important questions remain unanswered yet: Does a seamless customer experience automatically mean a full integration? In other words, does it mean the more integrated the better? For retailers, the level of integration is a difficult managerial decision. They face various challenges since channels might be different regarding purposes and features, cost structure and competitors (Berry et al., 2010). Studies have investigated the optimal level of integration in certain areas. Related literature has devoted to several aspects of the retail-mix. Mainly, a special focus has been set on integration of assortment (Emrich, Paul, & Rudolph, 2015; Mantrala et al., 2009), pricing and promotions (Vogel & Paul, 2015; Wolk & Ebling, 2010), fulfilment (Agatz, Fleischmann, & Van Nunen, 2008; Lang & Bressolles, 2013; Wolk & Ebling, 2010; Xing, Grant, McKinnon, & Fernie, 2010), and web- and store design integration (Emrich & Verhoef, 2015). However, none of the aforementioned areas have been completely resolved yet. Quite the contrary, there are still several areas for further investigation (Verhoef et al., 2015).

With regard to the assortment strategy of a retailer, it is deemed necessary to overcome the complex duty to offer an attractive assortment on the one hand side but avoid choice difficulty on the other hand side (Mantrala et al., 2009). There is a controversy in the reviewed literature about the degree of assortment integration in omni-channel retailing. Some researchers argue, that the assortment does not necessarily need to be integrated, when the target customer of the two channels is different (Berry et al., 2010; Neslin & Shankar, 2009). This is not the case for omni-channel customers, who switch retail channels during their purchases. However, other researchers argue that product consistency is crucial to provide a seamless shopping experience for the customer (Berman & Thelen, 2004). In practice, most of ‘clicks and mortar’ retailers nowadays apply an asymmetrical assortment strategy, which means, that they offer a larger assortment online than offline (Emrich et al., 2015). Emrich et al. (2015) investigated the impact of assortment integration on underlying assortment relations. They classified three different assortment relations. Either, assortments are substitutive (for instance, when a retailer sells two different kinds of similar shoes), or complementary (shoes and shoe crème), or independent (shoes and sun lotion). Emrich et al. found out that in any of the three assortment structures no integration of assortment is detrimental. However, they argued, that for an omni-channel retailer with a substitutive assortment, the perceived variety is lower when the assortment strategy is asymmetrical, because customers tend to disesteem the decreased channel choice and autonomy.

Regarding pricing and promotions, ‘clicks and mortar’ retailers often need to find a way out of a dilemma: Generally, customers expect products online to be equally or even less expensive than in-store (Zhang et al., 2010). But at the same time, customers expect integrated channels with a consistence pricing strategy among channels (Seck, 2013). How can retailers overcome this dilemma without loosing market share and unsatisfied customers? In practise, retailers mostly tend towards a partial integration of their pricing (Wolk & Ebling, 2010). They charge the same-posted prices among their different channels, because they fear that different prices might lead to customers’ confusion and resentment. But, at the same time many retailers apply channel specific price promotions or charging handling and shipping costs (Neslin et al., 2006). In the reviewed literature, most of the researchers argue in favour of a consisting pricing strategy for all channels of a retailer (Berman & Thelen, 2004; Vogel & Paul, 2015; Wolk & Ebling, 2010).

Wolk and Ebling (2010) developed a conceptual framework on the factors, which might influence a pricing strategy across channels, namely competition, offline reach, online reach, number of distribution channels, size of company, product type, and brand power. They argued, that the lower the level of competition in one segment is, the higher the extent of price differentiation is. Thus, market power has an impact on price differentiation. For Wolk and Ebling, physical distance is a criterion, which determines if customers have an easy access to a product or if they need to spend high transaction costs to get access. For retailers that operate multiple channels this means, that if he operates just few stores and apart from that sells his products online, the retailer will be able to operate both channels more separable. As a consequence, this retailer is more in a position that he can apply price differentiation online and offline. The increasing number of customers who buy online and furthermore use different channels of one retailer during their purchase process leads customers to easily have access to a retailer’s overall offer. This will lead retailers to offer the same prices among their different retail channels. Regarding the number of distribution channels, the two researchers argue, that a customized operation of each channel means an increase of transaction costs and effort for the retailer. Concluding, the more channels a retailer operates, the less channel-based price differentiation he will apply. The size of company is therefore pivotal, that retailers, which face lower cost when engaging in price differentiation, will apply it more often. Normally big companies can leverage on strategic advantages such as an efficient organization, cheaper purchases or superior technologies. Thus, bigger retailing companies will more likely apply channel-based price differentiation. For certain product types, customers prefer one channel over another. For instance, customers prefer to buy clothing in-store, since they want to try it on and physically see and touch the item. So, if one channel is superior for the customer than another, it is more likely that customers will accept channel-based price differentiation and pay a higher price in that channel, which they prefer. Generally, branding decreases the customer’s price sensitivity. But channel-based price differentiation might lead also to confusion and in turn decreases brand power (Wolk & Ebling, 2010).

Wolk and Ebling`s conceptual framework gives a valuable contribution to the debate of channel-based price differentiation. It is the first framework to conceptualize the different influencing factors considering customer (market), retailer and product characteristics.

However, channel-based price differentiation has certain positive and negative impacts on customer satisfaction: It positively affects their perceptions of value, increases relationship quality, and enhances repurchase intentions, but it also leads to perceptions of price unfairness and limits customer self-determination, which negatively affect retention outcomes (Vogel & Paul, 2015). It remains questionable, which of the mentioned criteria affect more the final choice of shopping location and furthermore the long-term relationship with the retailer: Would customers rather buy at a retailer with a higher perception of value or would they tend to buy at a competitor, where they find the pricing fairer?

A possible pricing strategy for omni-channel retailers, which embraces both- a high perception of value and price fairness, is considered as "self-matching pricing" (Kireyev, Kumar, & Ofek, 2015): Here, the retailer can set different prices across channels, but he will offer the lower price to the customer when he can supply evidence. Thus, 'self-matching policies, by design, offer retailers the flexibility of setting different prices across channels, while affording consumers the possibility of a consistent experience, presumably in line with the omni-channel philosophy' (Kireyev et al., 2015, p. 29).

Price promotions at omni-channel retailers have several within and across channel implications: Offline price promotions can reduce category sales online during the promotion period; furthermore, online promotions can reduce category sales offline during the promotion period; negative cross-channel effects are higher for loyal customers than for opportunists; and, the impact of online promotions on offline sales within the promoted category is higher than vice versa (Breugelmans & Campo, 2016).

One can conclude, that a successful management of pricing and promotions is a complex field in omni-channel retailing. It is deemed necessary to consider effects within and across channels and set a coherent pricing and promotion strategy.

Regarding fulfilment, a coherent omni-channel strategy should concern both the marketing mix and operations management (Agatz et al., 2008). In this respect fulfilment is an important component of a retailer's operations strategy. According to the reviewed fulfilment literature, omni-channel e-fulfilment can be considered as fulfilling online or in-store orders including warehousing, picking and order preparation, distribution, purchasing, delivery and returns (Agatz et al., 2008; Lang & Bressolles, 2013). For omni-channel customers, four dimensions of fulfilment can be considered as predominantly important, namely timeliness, availability, condition and return (Xing & Grant, 2006; Xing et al., 2010). Timeliness refers to several aspects, such as speed of delivery, choice of delivery date, or delivery within a certain time slot. Availability refers to the confirmation of availability, order tracking, or waiting time. Condition refers to order accuracy, order completeness, or order damage. Return refers to return policies, such as ease of return and return channel options, the promptness of collection and of replacement (Lang & Bressolles, 2013). For omni-channel retailers this means, that their supply chain management needs to be adapted to these specific customer needs. This has several impacts: (1) an online channel not only provides a physical product but also several related services, most notably delivery. The delivery service may range from making the product available for pick-up to time-specific home delivery. The management of this service component of e-fulfilment gives rise to novel planning issues. (2) The flexibility of an omni-channel retailer with respect to order promising and pricing, makes it necessary to imply an appropriate strategy. (3) The integration of different channels raises issues in inventory deployment, since different channels may require different service levels (Agatz et al., 2008). (4) E-fulfilment requirements are different across different product categories (Hu, Kumar, & Sumit, 2014).

THE OMNI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER JOURNEY

In omni-channel retailing, the combination of different retail channels along the different customer touchpoints has become the predominant purchasing pattern for customers (Mahrdt, Lessing, Wagner, & Geissler, 2013; Neslin et al., 2006).

The so-called ‘research-shopper’ phenomenon is described as a common tendency among customers to use one channel for search and another for purchase (Verhoef, Neslin, & Vroomen, 2007).

Shankar (2011) and Heinemann (2013) call the switch between different channels ‘ropo’, which basically has two meanings:

1. ‘Research online and purchase offline’ means that Internet users research online before making any purchase decision. They compare prices online, obtain information from the producer’s webpage or read comments of other users of the same product. This trend is called “web-rooming”, a wordplay of “show-rooming”, where customers shop online, but use the store before they physically interact with the product (Verhoef et al., 2015). This purchase pattern has an important impact on the overall purchase process: In the past, a customer first decided about the retailer and then decided about the product that he wanted to buy from this retailer. Then, he went to the store to get information about different products in the assortment of this retailer. Most probably, he also frequented other retailers in order to compare the offer and afterwards made their purchase decision. Nowadays, the customer primarily decides about the product and then chooses an adequate retailer. Thus, when the customer—after the initial phase of product decision— frequents a retail store, he has already collected several information, such as product features, prices, online availability and opinions from other users (Verhoef et al., 2007). The ‘point of decision’ is nowadays often relocated to the Internet, while the store is only perceived as the ‘point of sale’ (Heinemann, 2013; Shankar, 2011). The customer increasingly trusts the opinions of other product users more than the recommendations made by in-store sales people or advertisements. When the customer enters a retail store, he already possesses high knowledge about products and feature. Hence, the customer nowadays has high expectations regarding product availability, immediate accessibility to information, products and service delivery.
2. Customers can also ‘research offline and purchase online’. In this context, the store can be seen as a ‘show-room’, where customers can physically touch their product, interact with sales people, gather information and enjoy a shopping experience (Verhoef et al., 2015). A survey reveals that over 50% of non-food online customers use stores as the pre-purchase channel. Customers try a product in-store, especially when high ‘mispurchase risks’ are associated with buying the product (Heinemann, 2013).

Verhoef et al. (2007) explain that there are three reasons for this phenomenon: First, customers prefer the channel that offers them the most advantages in each part of the purchase process- and they switch among channels during the purchase process if another channel offers more advantages (“Attribute-based decision-making). Second, it is seen as unlikely that customers generally purchase via the channel with the most research advantages (“Lack of channel lock-in”). Third, customers carry out research shopping when a channel switch increases their overall shopping experience (“Cross-channel synergy”).

Another study focussed on retention and free-riding behaviour: Customers search at one channel from a certain retailer and buy at a different channel but stay with the same retailer (“cross-channel retention”) or they search at a channel at one retailer, but then purchase at a different channel of another retailer ("cross-channel free-riding") (Heitz-Spahn, 2013). Chiu et al. (2011) identified two major reasons for cross-channel free riding: Customers who have a high level of self-efficacy tend to switch channels and retailers during their purchasing process. Second, customers will buy at the retailer who offers good quality and a low risk. Furthermore they investigated, that within-firm lock-in decreases cross-channel free-riding. This means, that retailers can install switching barriers, which reduce the customers' intention to switch channels. Heitz-Spahn (2013) however elaborated shopping convenience, flexibility and price comparisons as the three major cross-channel free-riding motives. It is arguable, if these motives are similar in any industry or if there are major differences regarding the purchasing pattern. Regarding that, Heitz-Spahn (2013) argued, that for products, which customers buy in a low frequency but have a high financial value, cross-channel free-riding behaviour is more likely than for other product categories. Kushwaha and Shankar (2013) also found out, that customer behaviour is different among product categories. They clustered these different product categories in hedonic and utilitarian ones. Kushwaha and Shankar investigated, that customers of hedonic products, such as apparel, tend more towards impulse purchase and variety-seeking behaviour and switch the channel more often than customers of utilitarian products (Kushwaha & Shankar, 2013). Besides a different purchasing behaviour across product categories, the degree of maturity plays an important role in omni-channel purchasing behaviour: Melis et al. (2015) conducted research in the UK grocery omni-channel market. They found out, that at the beginning of purchasing online, customers tend to buy at the retailer first, which they prefer when purchasing offline. When they become more convenient with purchasing online, they start switching channels (Melis, 2015).

PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY IN OMNI-CHANNEL RETAILING

In the context of omni-channel retailing, the evaluation and understanding of service quality has become a topic of major interest both for academics and practitioners (Badrinarayanan, Becerra, & Madhavaram, 2014; Banerjee, 2014; Seck & Philippe, 2013; Swaid & Wigand, 2012; Van Birgelen, De Jong, & Ruyter, 2006). "Owing to the intangible, heterogeneous and inseparable nature of services" (Martinez & Martinez, 2010, p. 30), several definitions of service quality have been built over the years. Zeithaml (1988), for instance, sees service quality as "…the consumer´s judgment about a product´s overall excellence or superiority" (Zeithaml, 1988, p.3), Bitner and Hubbert (1994) view service quality as "…the consumer´s overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services" (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994, p.77). The academic debate about how to evaluate service quality has developed extensively since the 1980. In essence, the service quality literature can be divided into two streams: Some researchers use a performance-only approach to evaluate service quality (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Teas, 1993). In contrast, the majority of researchers evaluate service quality based on the disconfirmation paradigm as a gap between expected service and perceived service (Carr, 2007; Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). These studies draw extensively on the work of Oliver (1990). Oliver sees himself in the tradition of Sherif´s and Hovland´s "assimilation theory" (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) and Festinger´s "dissonance theory" (Festinger, 1957), whereby "customers are posited to perceptually distort expectation- discrepant performance so as to coincide with their prior expectation level" and "post exposure ratings are primarily a function of the expectation level because the task of recognizing disconfirmation is believed to be psychologically uncomfortable" (Oliver, 1980, p. 460).

Several different service quality gap models, such as "The Service Quality Model" (Grönroos, 1984), "SERVQUAL" (Parasuraman et al., 1988), "E-SQUAL" (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhorta, 2005) or "WEBQUAL" (Loiacono, Watson, & Goodhue, 2002) have been developed to conceptualize service quality and consumers' perception of it. But most of the approaches tend to take a single-channel perspective and do not consider omni-channel settings (Seck & Philippe, 2013; Sousa & Voss, 2012). But, it is deemed necessary to view omni-channel service quality from a different perspective than traditional (for instance retail stores) and electronic (for instance the Internet) service settings, since perceived service quality results from all moments of contact between a retailer and its customers- across all channels (Sousa & Voss, 2006).

Regarding a **conceptual framework** for omni-channel service quality, Sousa and Voss (2006) were the first researchers to develop framework that did not take a single channel approach. In their 'Service Delivery System (SDS)', they aim to consider all moments of contact between a firm and its customers. Sousa and Voss distinguish between a physical and a virtual component of service delivery. In the physical component non-automated operations take place and humans are directly involved. In the virtual component, operations are automated and humans do not play an active role. Sousa and Voss also distinguish between back office and front office operations. Back office operations are not directly visible to the customer whilst front office operations are visible. The researchers argue that existing service quality research has a single channel, which is a front office process. In their framework, the physical and the virtual service components (front office and back office) are linked with each other by integration mechanisms. These mechanisms function to integrate 'the several service components and associated parts of the SDS' (Sousa & Voss, 2006, p. 359). According to Sousa and Voss, all front and back office physical and virtual operations enriched with integration mechanisms lead to overall perceived service quality. Sousa and Voss argue for a separate examination of physical, virtual and integration quality: First of all they emphasize the different nature of the three quality dimensions. Second, they forecast a rapid technological development for the virtual dimension and they see advantages in examining it separately from the other two, more constant dimensions of physical and integration quality.

Service quality attributes, the so-called **'dimensions'** play a predominant role in service quality research, as perceived service quality is a function of different dimensions (Zeithaml & Berry, 1990). In the reviewed literature there is agreement that the key distinction between omni-channel and single channel service quality conceptualizations is the 'integration quality' dimension.

In their 'Multichannel Service Delivery System (SDS)' framework Sousa and Voss established the integration quality dimension. They defined integration quality as providing a "seamless service experience across channels" (Sousa & Voss, 2006, p. 359). Sousa and Voss surmised that in a omni-channel service system, even when the service quality of each channel is very high, the overall perception of service could be very low when the integration quality is perceived as low. Sousa and Voss presented two sub dimensions for integration quality: "Channel-service configuration" and "integrated interactions": Channel-service configuration is the degree of choice a customer has regarding a service offer in each of the channel ('service breadth'). When introducing integrated interactions Sousa and Voss refer to "the consistency of interactions across channels" (Sousa & Voss, 2006, p. 366). The researchers emphasize two aspects of integrated interactions: Content and process consistency. Content consistency means that customers receive the same information from the company when communicating through different channels. Process consistency means that customers expect the same handling of comparable processes.

Banerjee (2014) built up on Sousa and Voss´s framework and extended their findings about the integration quality dimensions into a new concept, consisting of three additional sub-dimensions. First, “the appropriateness of channel service configuration” refers to the degree to which a channel is suitable for different functions as a sub- dimension of channel-service configuration. Second, “transaction data and interaction data integration” refers to the degree to which customer transaction information and inbound and outbound interaction information are synthesized within and across channels. Third, “within channel and across channel integration” refers to the degree to which content and process information is integrated within parts of a channel and across channels (Sousa & Voss, 2006, p. 359).

Swaid and Wigand added “integrated pick-up” as another omni-channel service quality sub-dimenison, which means “the extend of smooth and easy pickup of products purchased online using a physical outlet/touchpoint” (Swaid & Wigand, 2012, p. 306). Swaid and Wigand concluded that integrated pick-up is one of the key dimensions of omni-channel service quality.

Next to integration quality, Sousa and Voss (2006) investigated virtual and physical quality as two other primary dimensions of omni-channel service quality (Sousa & Voss, 2006). The definition of virtual quality can be considered as the equivalent of electronic service quality based on single channel conceptualizations (for a review, see Ladhari, 2010). In an electronic setting, service quality means general perceived service in the virtual marketplace- with human intervention and without (Santos, 2003).

Furthermore, physical service quality can be considered as equivalent of traditional service quality based on single channel conceptualizations (for a review, see Martinez & Martinez, 2010).

Thus, from the reviewed literature, the extant knowledge about service quality dimensions can be synthesized as follows:

- Omni-channel service quality is a multidimensional construct, which consists of primary dimensions and corresponding sub dimensions.
- There is evidence in the reviewed literature that the existing dimensions have not fully grasped the customer´s perception of omni-channel service quality yet since studies consistently investigate new dimensions.
- Omni-channel service quality consists of the quality that each channel can provide for the customer. However, omni-channel service quality is not a simple summation between service quality perceptions in each channel. Even when physical and electronic qualities are very high, the overall service quality perception from the customer can be very low when the integration of each service channel is missing. Thus, the service quality dimensions that are experienced in any channel during the purchase process should be congruent on and offline and should provide a seamless shopping experience for the customer.
- The key distinction between omni-channel and single channel service systems is the integration quality dimension. The integration quality dimension has the purpose to provide a “seamless service experience across channels” (Sousa & Voss, 2006, p. 359).

Regarding different **methods**, the research of service quality in omni-channel settings is still in its early stages and few studies have examined service quality in a omni-channel context. The reviewed omni-channel service quality studies applied different methods including a literature review (Sousa & Voss, 2006), qualitative methods (Banerjee, 2014) and mixed methods (Swaid & Wigand, 2012) (Seck

& Philippe, 2013). There are several implications of method choices: With their literature review, Sousa and Voss set the foundation for developing a framework of service quality in omni-channel services. At the time of their research, there was an absence of a sound conceptual foundation for the research topic called omni-channel service quality. Sousa and Voss's study aimed to develop the theory (Sousa & Voss, 2006). Banerjee (2014) selected qualitative methods and conducted in-depth interviews in order to develop a service quality conceptualization and to gain an in-depth understanding of the omni-channel service quality phenomenon. Generally, the qualitative research method has a non-numeric manner and helps to observe a phenomenon in depth (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). It provides answers to 'how' and 'why' questions. In contrast, the quantitative method embraces a positivistic research paradigm and is applied either to analyse covariance or to test whether hypotheses are wrong or right (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the field of omni-channel service quality research, some researchers have applied mixed methods. They developed their theories applying a qualitative approach first before testing them in a quantitative manner.

Basically, there are two different **perspectives** regarding omni-channel service quality, namely the organizational and the customer ones. The perspective in the reviewed service quality literature is the customer´s perspective. Grönroos argued that it is particularly important to understand how the customer evaluates service, because "if we know this and the components of service quality, we will be able to develop service-oriented concepts and models more successfully" (Grönroos, 1984, p. 36). Impacts related to high service quality can be considered as customer satisfaction (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994), customer loyalty (Grönroos, 1984, p. 37), purchase intention (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Bressolles, Durrieu, & Senecal, 2014; Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996), profitability (Collier & Bienstock, 2006; Cox & Dale, 2001; Cristobal, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2007; Gummerus, Liljander, Pura, & Van Riel, 2004; Ozuem et al 2018), and purchase retention (Cai & Jun, 2003; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml, 2000). One can conclude from this, that studies with a customer perspective help retailers improve their service strategy and the performance of their service offer (Cristobal et al., 2007; Fassnacht & Köse, 2007; Zeithaml, 2000).

In the reviewed literature, three different **industry** contexts of service quality can be identified: 'pure' service industries (such as banking), the retail industry (such as clothing stores) and a mix of pure service and retail industries. The distinction between pure service and retail industries is that the pure service industry is an industry, where service is the actual 'product', and the retail industry is an industry, in which stores offer a mix of merchandise and service (Dabholkar et al., 1996; Kaynama, Black, & Keesling, 2000). The early service quality models were researched in the pure service industry (Kaynama et al., 2000). Later, researchers argued for a distinction to be made between different industries as in, for instance, retail shopping which accounts for unique aspects of service. These aspects include store image (Thang & Tan, 2003), store environment (Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994; Dabholkar et al., 1996), in-store experiences (Dabholkar et al., 1996) and experiences related to the merchandise (Dabholkar et al., 1996) (Bishop Gagliano & Hathcote, 1994). Mostly, these criteria can be translated to the online world (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Even though online and offline shopping provides for a different shopping experience: Online customers pay more attention to privacy/ security; they appreciate some distinctive online capabilities such as interactivity, community, content, personalized experiences, increased product selection and information (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). Offline customers however value the personal contact with sales people in- store and the physical interaction with merchandise (Dabholkar et al., 1996).

AN OMNI-CHANNEL RETAILING SERVICE QUALITY CONCEPTUALIZATION

This paper builds on extant literature regarding omni-channel retailing and perceived service quality. It suggests that omni-channel service quality conceptualization consists of different ingredients. It is an interplay between omni-channel customer interaction with the retailer and the omni-channel retailer`s integration of assortment, pricing & promotions, fulfilment and web & store design. Ultimately, omni-channel service quality involves three dimensions, namely physical, electronic and integration quality. Or, as an equation: Omni-channel service quality = Integration quality – (physical channels quality + electronic channels service quality).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a number of managerial implications. Nowadays, customers use the Internet for many cultural activities everyday. The borders between activities like socializing, communicating and purchasing get blurred. That is why it is important for omni-channel retailers to set up coherent and integrated sales and communication strategies across channels. Omni-channel customers expect a seamless shopping experience. Against this background, it is a strategic managerial decision for omni-channel retailers to find the 'right' level of integration regarding assortment, pricing and promotions, fulfilment, and web and store design. Omni-channel customers expect a high degree of product availability, immediate accessibility to information, products and service delivery. They will choose the channel and retailer who is able to provide him the best solutions.

Omni-channel retailers need to be aware of the fact that the customer's journey has changed fundamentally in the context of omni-channel retailing. Basically, two different phenomena emerged, namely 'web-rooming' and 'show-rooming'. It is crucial for omni-channel retailers to adequately respond to the new customer purchasing behaviour. First and foremost they need to train their sales force to be more competent than their customers in every respect. Otherwise they lose an important competitive advantage. Customers then rather stay online and buy on the Internet, or buy at someone else's store. Whichever journey customers choose, managers of omni-channel retailers should find ways to avoid 'cross-channel free-riding' behaviour, which means that customers do not just switch the channel, but also the retailer. It might be necessary to install switching barriers. For instance, customers might find it costly when they need to provide their information again or when it is laborious to express their concerns every time they switch between retailers. Furthermore omni-channel retailers need to train the empathy of their sales force. Nowadays it is crucial that sales people have a feeling of what the each customer actually expects. Does this customer at all wish consultancy? Does this customer already have some knowledge about the product he requires? How can the sales person support customer loyalty at this client? Sales force is supposed to address to the various requests of an individualistic buyership.

Thus, the changed behaviour of omni-channel customers makes it necessary to elaborate a new approach towards service quality. At present, omni-channel retailers still take a single-channel approach, and do not consider the distinctive requirements of multiple-channel systems. Here, it is important to bear in mind that even when the service quality of each channel is very high, the overall perception of service could be very low when the integration quality is perceived as low. So, managers of omni-channel retailers should not only put their emphasis on enhancing and improving physical and/or electronic service quality, but also shift towards the integration of both channels` service offers. The overall purchasing experience needs to be consistent for the customer at all moments of contact between the retailer and him/her in order to receive a seamlessly perceived service quality. Then, omni-channel customers can take advantage of both online and offline channels and experience a congruent shopping experience across channels.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cross-Channel Free Riding: A customer first selects one retail channel to search for information about a product and then switches the retailer and the channel to purchase it.

Cross-Channel Retailing: A multichannel retailing system with a given degree of channel integration and customer interaction across different retail channels.

Integration Quality: The distinctive dimension of service quality in a multichannel system, which provides a seamless service experience for multichannel customers.

Multichannel Service Quality: A construct, which consists of the three dimensions physical, electronic and integration quality.

Omni-Channel Retailing: A multichannel retailing system with full channel integration and/or customer interaction across different retail channels.

Show-Rooming: Customers use an offline-mediated environment to gather information about a product, physically touch and see it, but then purchase it in an online-mediated environment.

Web-Rooming: Customers use an online-mediated environment to gather information about products, but then purchase it in an offline-mediated environment.

Chapter 11
Smartphones:
Resource Dimensions and Uses

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the adoption of technologies is crucial for researchers and practitioners, as identifying key factors helps to predict and explain users' attitude towards adopting or rejecting technology. However, as smartphones are well-diffused technologies, there is contention that research efforts shift to understanding their usage comprehensively. As personal technologies that users make meaning of, smartphone usage is assumed to be more comprehensive than that of previous generation mobile phones. This chapter examines how the usage of smartphones is redefining and increasingly adding value to consumer consumption processes.

INTRODUCTION

The continually evolving usage of smartphones suggests that they are both consumer and prosumer devices used for both personal and business purposes. Individuals pursue goals with their smartphones and construct meaning regarding their devices, hence the smartphone as an extension of self (Arbore, Graziani, & Venturini, 2014; Jung, 2014). However, while a significant body of work informs on the personal use of smartphones globally, the business orientation of smartphone use is lacking from an individualistic standpoint. Value and use are complementaries; perception of smartphone value influences adoption and experiential value is resultant of usage. The proliferation of smartphones comes with dependency, as people increasingly hinge on smartphones for varying reasons. One of such reasons appears to be the ability of the smartphone to serve as a business administration resource, wherein it is used to mediate business activities and processes.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch011

This occurrence is evident in the United Kingdom (UK). A 2013 study reports that 85 per cent of the adult population would not leave home without smartphones; and smartphone penetration is projected to be at 90 per cent of the population by 2020 (Deloitte, 2017; Google Confidential and Proprietary, 2013). Another recent nationwide study by the country's telecom regulator, Ofcom (2016), which aimed to investigate how heavy reliance on a smartphone could affect digital behaviour and media literacy, found interestingly that micro-business owners choose to use the smartphone to run their businesses. This suggests that the business use of smartphones transcends the organisational context in which it has been predominantly studied. Considering the rising trend of entrepreneurialism in the country, as a result of people valuing autonomy and creativity over linear career progressions, rather than a response to a recent recession or a waning job market (Yoshioka, 2016), it is surprising that smartphones are still generally viewed as technological products users consume, rather than resources used to facilitate business administration. In fact, there is a consensus amongst market experts that smartphone use for leisure and enjoyment is likely to exceed its use for productivity purposes (Yang & Kim, 2012). The adoption of workflow apps, when compared to communication apps, was found to be modest among UK workers in a recent survey (Deloitte, 2017).

To advance understanding with respect to the usage and the resource dimension of smartphones in the *adoption of technologies context*, this enquiry utilises the concept of the business actor. In the context of this study, business actors are individuals involved in business activities who use their smartphones actively for business administration. Hence their use is assumed to be different from both the broad consumer archetype and business users within the enterprise. Research shows that these users are likely to be 'digital daters' (Forbes, 2010); i.e. they own and use more than one mobile device. It is of theoretical importance to gain more insights into the deployment of smartphones specifically for business purposes. The variety of technological platforms, multiple operating systems and therefore different application designs are the most significant drawbacks to ensuring the future success of m-business (Burger, 2007). In the case of these business actors, what rationales guide the use of a smartphone for business purposes? What impedes smartphone usage in this context? What unique values does smartphone use offer in this context? What influences the preference of smartphones amongst other available mobile devices?

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Physically, the smartphone is a technological convergence that can be understood objectively through device specifications; the effect of human interaction facilitates values that are intrinsic and individualistic. The subjective view of smartphones regards them as an extension of self (Arbore *et al.*, 2014; Jung, 2014). Analysis of the definitions provided by publications since 2007, when the iPhone changed the paradigm of the platform (Sarwar & Rahim Soomro, 2013), indicates that smartphones are defined by what they are physically, and the potential and implications of their application through human interaction.

There is agreement that smartphones are mobile devices: a categorisation of mobile technologies (which include a network infrastructure that facilitates connectivity) and Information Systems (IS) scholars have contended that smartphone technology deserves investigation in its own right (Chen & Park, 2007; Y. M. Kang, Lee, & Lee, 2014); yet the term lacks a standard definition in the literature (Kim, Chun, & Lee, 2014). Cumulatively, smartphone definitions include 'technicality', 'socio-technicality', or 'contradiction'-oriented approaches within two broad perspectives of 'user/personal/consumer' and 'business/enterprise' vantage points.

Within the literature, the dominant view in describing smartphones focuses on the object itself: the artefact and the technological innovation. Hence, technicality has been a route to defining smartphones. Technicality defines the degree to which the perception of a mobile service is technologically excellent in the process of providing services; users' perceptions of ease of use, system reliability, connectivity and efficiency determine it (Kim *et al.*, 2007; Verkasalo, López-Nicolás, Molina-Castillo, & Bouwman, 2010). From this standpoint, the smartphone is a 'convergence of PDA and mobile phone technologies, with multiple capabilities akin to computerlike functionality' (Chen & Park, 2007; Gill, Kamath, & Gill, 2012; Kang, Cho, & Lee, 2011; Kang, Lee, & Lee, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2014; Putzer & Park, 2010). Publications concurrently describe the smartphone as an enterprise- or prosumer-focused device that incorporates an operating system capable of enterprise applications such as mobile e-mail, Personal Information Management (PIM) synchronisation, security and device management features (Beurer-Zuellig & Meckel, 2008); suggesting they are potential business resources.

Cumulatively, the technical-oriented definitions indicate that smartphones differ not only from static Information Technology (IT) but also from the previous generation of telephony: mobile (feature) phones (Calvosa, 2015; Y. M. Kang *et al*., 2011, 2014). Beyond being mobile, smartphones can multi-task as they run advanced mobile operating systems. Additionally, smartphones can run apps, and provide the user with the ability to personalise the device (Jung, 2014). The technical-centric approach to defining the smartphone as being mainly artefact/architecture-oriented accommodates a passivity towards the application and implications of the technology.

The socio-technicality viewpoint partially addresses this limitation about the implications of smartphone technology; thus, it is defined beyond mere technical architecture. For instance, Yang and Kim (2012) define smartphones as programmable phones that provide their users with advanced capabilities and features to enhance their daily work and personal lives, insinuating that smartphones are user-empowering information technology (IT) (Jung, 2014).

While this view embraces the implication of applying the technology, its shortcoming lies in its optimism. In other words, it downplays the less desirable consequences of usage, such as addiction (Ahn, Wijaya, & Esmero, 2014), distraction-related concerns (Gill *et al*., 2012), and younger generation social disorders that affect broader society, such as phubbing and nomophobia (Anshari *et al*., 2016), which have resulted from smartphone dependency. Phubbing is a term that refers to people snubbing others around them as they concentrate on their phones. Nomophobia is a common social phobia that may develop if an individual is obsessed with their smartphone and begins to show uncomfortable behaviour when faced with a situation where they have no access to their phone (Anshari *et al*., 2016).

In agreement with Feenberg (2002) that 'a complete definition must show how the orientation toward reality characteristic of technology is combined with the realisation of technology in the social world' (p. 175), in the reviewed literature, Deloitte's (2017) report on the 'state of the smart', presents the most robust description of the smartphone:

… a multi-purpose device the likes of which has never existed before. It is a digital Swiss army knife with a set of tools that is millions of apps deep. It can be a powerful productivity tool, which can also goad users into obsessing over inbox size, rather than effective communication. It can be used to work when away from the office, and not to work while in it (p. 8).

This approach to viewing the smartphone is a critical evaluation of the socio-technical perspective, as it accounts for technicality and both ends of the implication spectrum. The device can hence be a blessing or curse; research indeed shows that smartphone use involves numerous paradoxes (Bruzzi & Joia, 2015; Lipman, 2013). The consumerisation of IT shows the appeal of personal device use for work purposes. The descriptions of the smartphone above indicate both 'product' and 'resource' orientations of the technology within society.

SMARTPHONE USE

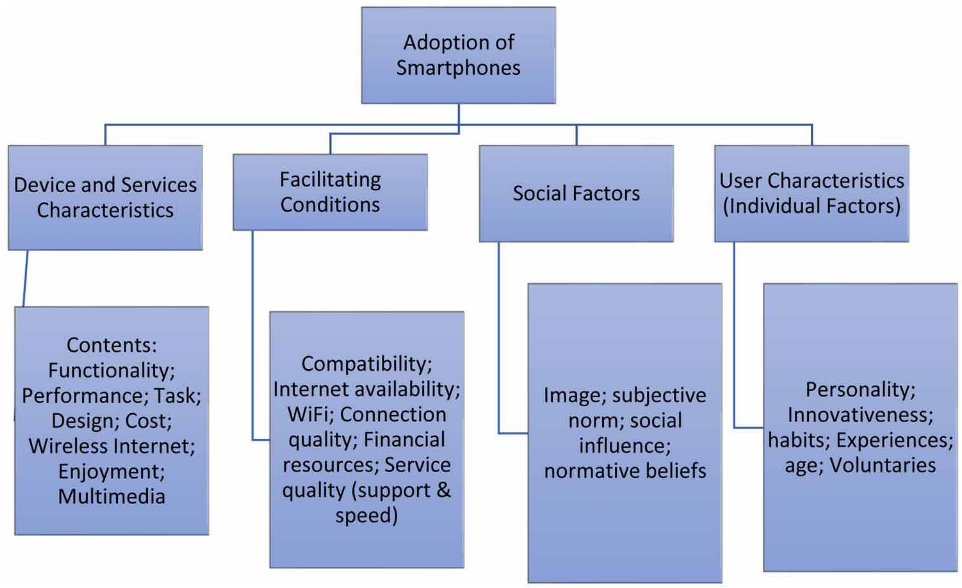
In exploring the business use of smartphones, understanding smartphone use entailment is crucial, as it links back to 'system use', which IS scholars have understood traditionally as the frequency of using a system (DeLone & McLean, 2003; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). Indicative of the existing IS literature, the 'adoption' and 'use' of the smartphone are complementary research areas. The latter mainly concerns the post-adoption stage, wherein successful adoption has taken place as resistance is overcome (Choi & Yoo, 2015; M.-K. Kim, Chang, Wong, & Park, 2013). Concerning smartphone value, two distinct dimensions provide an explanation for values users derive and those they perceive, which influence adoption. Experiential values have been demonstrated to be the outcome of using smartphones, from the user standpoint (referred to as user values) (Bødker, Gimpel, & Hedman, 2009, 2014; Jung, 2014) – which can lead to broader life values (Park & Han, 2013).

However, studies have mainly focused on the general consumer standpoint and thus limit the extent to which they inform on the business usage (and associated value) of the smartphone. Aldhaban (2012) found that smartphone studies relating to business and marketing are lacking compared to those on adoption and software/security issues. The consumer-centric orientation of smartphone issues might be a reason for the relatively low interest from scholarship regarding the business use. Being personal devices, studying the typical use of the consumer would hardly reveal the resource dimension of smartphones; mundane usage makes up a significant amount of the average users' smartphone usage (Ahn *et al*., 2014; Meeker & Wu, 2013). Employing the distinction of 'time-in' and 'time-out' usage, Bødker, Gimpel, and Hedman (2010; 2014) demonstrate how technology use evolves over time and provide theoretical explanation of this change[1]; they show how smartphones go from having 'representative meaning that was greater than functional value to being merited according to the ability to blend in with other activities' (p. 11).

Understanding the adoption of technologies is becoming crucial for researchers and practitioners, as identifying key factors helps to predict and explain users' attitude towards adopting or rejecting technology (Aldhaban, 2012; Davis, 1989; Venkatesh, 2000). However, as smartphones are well-diffused technologies, there is contention that research efforts shift to understanding its usage comprehensively – being personal technologies that users make meaning of, smartphone usage is assumed to be more comprehensive than previous generation mobile phones (Jung, 2014; Tossell, Kortum, Shepard, Rahmati, & Zhong, 2012). IS Scholars have detailed some factors that influence individuals' adoption of smartphones, albeit mainly from a consumer standpoint. Aldhaban (2012) proposes a taxonomy of smartphone adoption factors to identify and explain key factors influencing the adoption of smartphones. Each main factor has sub-factors that contribute to its influence on adoption (see Figure 1).

In the existing literature, the adoption process suggests two perspectives of the adopter: a passive responder to technology or an active agent in the adoption process.

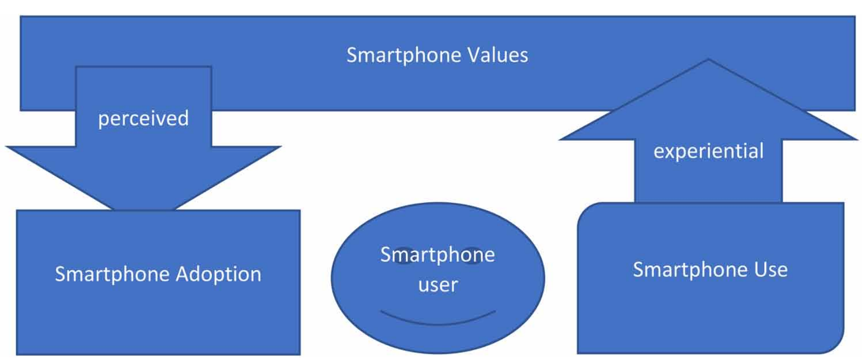
Figure 1. Taxonomy and critical factors of smartphone adoption (Adapted from Aldhaban, 2012)



Smartphone Value: Perceived and Experiential

Smartphone use is indicated to be the result of adoption and results in values for the smartphone user – these can be both positive and negative. From an adoption standpoint, the perceived values of the technology, which are judged by the potential adopter, influence the adoption or rejection of the technology. For instance, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which is arguably the most influential IS theory, regards two key variables – perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) – as central to individuals' decision to adopt a given technology (Davis, 1989; Li, 2010). The value-oriented approach challenges this, contending that the presumptions of the model consider the potential adopter a passive responder to technology, as opposed to an active agent in the adoption process (Bagozzi, 2007; Jung, 2014; Lamb & Kling, 2003). Consequently, studies have investigated the experiential values users pursue and achieve by using smartphones (Bødker *et al*., 2009; Jung, 2014), as they are experiential computers.

Figure 2. Smartphone use entailment: adoption, use, user and values relations of smartphones



The Disparity Between Consumer and Business Perspectives

The notion of the smartphone user is crucial in the smartphone usage framework, as the user is the agent who adopts and uses, pursues and derives value from the technology. Segmenting technology users has provided insights into the nuances of technology value and has been a means of approaching smartphone adoption and usage studies. One means of segmenting considers the disparity between users and non-users of the technology. Alternatively, segmenting can be based solely on different kinds of smartphone users. Kang *et al*.'s (2014) study is an exemplar of the first route and reports that service-oriented functional attributes – *'wireless Internet'* and *'mobile applications*' – are consistent with the adoption of smartphones, regardless of user. However, mobile apps are more important to smartphone users, while the availability of the wireless Internet is more critical for feature phone users. Kim *et al*. (2013) examined the perceived risks and switching barriers on non-adopters' intention to use smartphones, arguing that consumer perception of usefulness does not always translate into actual adoption. The study suggests that *perceived usefulness, financial risk and cost-effectiveness* generally influence the intention to use smartphones. Put differently, those who choose to avoid smartphones have additional concerns about the non-attractiveness of other service providers (Kim *et al*., 2013).

Based on the alternative segmenting approach, Canio *et al*. (2016) segment smartphone consumers using activities they perform on personal mobile devices; identifying users regarding *demographics, smartphone owned, hours of usage, and reason to use*. Five main profiles of users emerge from their study: *utility users, gamers, unfriendly users, moderator users, and supersmartphoners*. Using similar segmenting tactics, Arbore *et al*. (2014) focused on multifaceted motives for adopting personal technologies, providing an analysis of the drivers of overall perceptions and the role of individual differences among potential users in forming these attitudes. The research identifies three smartphone user types: *pragmatic segment* – driven by expected functional value; *symbolic segment* – driven mainly by symbolic value; and *IT worried* – which represents individuals concerned with the hedonic value of technology. Their study result indicates that *value drivers*, *control beliefs*, and *normative beliefs* play different roles in determining smartphone acceptance depending on three individual characteristics: *playfulness, public self-consciousness, and innovativeness*. An earlier study on the impact of personality traits on smartphone ownership and used by Lane and Manner (2011), applied logistic regression and hierarchical linear regression to analyse results from 312 participants. The study found that extraverted individuals were more likely to own a smartphone and reported greater importance for the texting function of the device.

Cumulatively, these studies provide insights into smartphone use, as they demonstrate nuances of 'collective' usage. They also present a shift from what makes users adopt the technology, to what ownership usage reflects. However, while smartphone studies have providing insights about smartphone users, they mainly centre on the archetypical consumer, who might consider smartphones as mainly a product.

From a Business Perspective

Existing IS literature indicates two broad categorisations of smartphone users; within these categorisations, some delineations exist. Broadly, smartphone business users include organisational and non-organisational users. Organisational users include individuals such as employees who work within a firm; these could be mobile or non-mobile workers (e.g. Bao, Pierce, Whittaker, & Zhai, 2011; Beurer-Zuellig & Meckel, 2008). The consumerisation of IT has made studying such users paramount.

Non-organisational users include business actors like micro-business administrators, proprietors, entrepreneurs and knowledge workers. These business actors use smartphones for work but do not function within an organisational setting; rather, the business in this context operates within a dynamic 'service system' (Maglio & Spohrer, 2007). Between the two broad categorisations of business users, nuances exist in their adoption and usage of smartphones for business. For one, the organisational user is mainly an acceptor of technology, i.e. passive in the adoption process. Mostly these users have their smartphones handed down by the employer. Where such is not the case, there are still organisational boundaries that limit the usage of smartphone for such users, such as IT policies that limit how, when and where these users utilise these devices for work. Additionally, device affordances and environmental context can serve as constraints to business use of smartphones (Bao *et al*., 2011). [1]

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 'use' construct links back to the notion of system use, which has traditionally been assessed based on the frequency of using a technological system within the organisational context. Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) define 'system use' as the frequency, duration, and intensity of an employee's interactions with a particular system. This viewpoint considers use regarding an acceptor, within an adopting organisation. Moreover, scholars have critiqued the construct of 'use' as being too simplistic and needing further development to include both the 'extent' (i.e. used features) and 'nature' (mechanism of used features) (Bødker *et al*., 2009; DeLone & McLean, 2003). Smartphone use is assumed to be more comprehensive than the previous generation static IT (Jung, 2014; Tossell *et al*., 2012). The descriptions of the smartphone suggest dual perspectives of 'product' and 'resource'. While they are platforms for consuming services, they equally are platforms for rendering service. The resource dimension is evident in one such practitioner view of the smartphone:

A smartphone is a mobile communications device that uses an identifiable open OS ... Third-party applications can be installed and removed, and they can be created for the device's OS and application programming interfaces (APIs) … The OS must support a multitasking environment and user interface that can handle multiple applications simultaneously … (Gartner, 2018).

Such portrayal of a smartphone, significantly based on its technicality, suggests that the multi-tasking ability and availability of apps are critical for smartphone use. However, the transformational abilities of mobile applications are not comprehensive enough (Pratap & Srivastava, 2013). While apps are becoming strategic and marketing tools for companies, individuals' usage suggests a mainly regular use for activities such as media consumption, browsing and social networking.

Following the dual perspectives of smartphones, business use mainly reflects the resource dimension. However, this dimension is understood mainly in organisational terms. IT business value, particularly concerning m-business usage of IT and research concerning the consumerisation of IT and concurrent trend of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) enrich this use dimension. Smartphone use from a business perspective indicates various values including collaboration, efficiency, cost reductions and productivity gains (Bao, Pierce, Whittaker, & Zhai, 2011).

In this context, Beurer-Zuellig and Meckel's (2008) is a seminal study on the resource usage of smartphones to meet the need of workforce mobilisation. The study elicits the influence of e-mail on work processes and communication amongst sixteen German companies and finds that smartphones have the potential to improve and accelerate work processes through timely provision of information, enhanced reachability and the simplification of coordination processes. In an organisational context as well, Chen, Yen, and Chen (2009) provide empirical evidence on the possible influences of attitude towards smartphone use, including organisational culture, policy and the external environment. Context is shown to be impactful on smartphone use in different ways (Chow & Ma, 2017; Müller, Gove, Webb, & Cheang, 2015; Tri Do, Blom, & Gatica-Perez, 2011).

Within the organisational setting, nuances exist when juxtaposing mobile and non-mobile workers' use of smartphones. Bao, Pierce, Whittaker, and Zhai's (2011) study provides a snapshot of smartphone use which helps explain why even highly capable phones are not yet substitutable for computers, concerning non-mobile workers. Implicitly, the scholars' conclusions bolster the 'conditional value' of smartphones (cf. Bødker *et al*., 2009; Ofcom, 2016). When compared to other mobile devices, usage of the smartphone is demonstrated to be more varied than tablets. Therefore, it is increasingly important to investigate how smartphone usage unfolds concerning different types of context. The disparity of mobile device use is unique in different contexts, hence the need for different design solutions (Müller *et al*., 2015).

Generally, the outcomes of using IT have been traditionally examined through approaches limited mainly to the context of system use itself (e.g. system satisfaction, usage intention, and intention to return) (Jung, Pawlowski, & Kim, 2017). This study differentiates from previous studies in the way it approaches context, i.e. it is sensitive to the context in which the system is used, not solely the context of system use itself. While we know that people pursue goals with smartphones (Jung, 2014), it is unclear how the smartphone facilitates the business goals of individuals and the challenges associated with the materialisation. Moreover, user values of the smartphone (Bødker *et al*., 2009; Jung, 2014) alone do not fully explain the impact and potential business value of the technology.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Business Actor: Individuals who actively carry out business administration functions with the aid of personally owned mobile devices.

Digital Daters: Individuals (mainly business actors) who own and use more than one personal mobile computer for varying purposes.

Product (Use): An experiential good manufactured to meet market needs. Hence smartphone as a product reflects a category which encompasses an ecosystem of manufacturers, app developers, suppliers and users. From a service reference point, product-use emphasizes the consumption of services on smartphones.

Resource (Use): Assets that possess unique capabilities, hence can be employed to reach individuals' goals. From a service perspective, resource-use hence emphasizes the smartphone as a service rendering device; a crucial aspect of work, and user empowering technologies.

Smartphone: A product-service system used by individuals for service consuming and service rendering purposes.

Chapter 12
Online Service Failure:
Understanding the Building Blocks of Effective Recovery Strategy

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ABSTRACT

Digital media literature suggests that social media has eased the process of conceptualizing the customer, inclusive of their perception of fairness in the recovery provision. This is because individuals in social media reveal personal information and engage in online conversation and online communities. However, the inherited risk in social media such as the rapid spread of online negative word-of-mouth and the ease of switching behavior to other online providers no longer permits superficial understanding of customers' perception of failure-recovery experiences. Drawing on extant conceptual theories, the current chapter examines online failure and recovery strategies and argues that effective recovery strategies not only enhance the development of marketing communication programs but act as an effective tool for customer retention.

INTRODUCTION

The online environment has revealed the advantages of mass marketing, permitting extended customer targeting (Poddar et al., 2009; Azemi & Ozuem, 2016). While a growing number of businesses are adopting e-tailing to expand beyond isolated markets, luxury businesses are still debating over a brick-and-mortar versus online approach (Gu & Ye, 2014; Felix et al., 2016; Ozuem & Azemi, 2018). Quach and Thaichon (2018) describe luxury brands across four resources (love, status, information, services), highlighting customers' affection (i.e., love) for the product and the prestige (i.e., status) they gain from luxury product ownership as two main resources to evaluate customers' satisfaction. They define information and services as means to support the customers' buying process. Online provider-customer

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch012

collaboration acknowledges a human-free interaction, recognizing customers' structured online purchasing behavior (Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2017). This conveys skepticism that e-tailing could serve an environment that reaches affection and love. It implies an increased risk of dissatisfaction among online luxury customers, defined by services marketing scholars as the service failure phenomenon (Choi & Mattila, 2008; Chuang et al., 2012). While there is an established conceptual clarification of the recovery strategy types applicable to service failures, a favorable application of recovery strategies seems yet to be recognized (Hess et al., 2003; Ringberg et al., 2007). As Hazée et al. (2017) argue, 'the literature seems to have taken for granted that organizations could apply the same recovery options' (pp. 101-102). This leads to the double deviation scenario, which represents customers' extended dissatisfaction with the company after the recovery strategy is experienced (Casado-Diaz & Nicolau-Gonzalbez, 2009). Luxury companies' efforts to alter customer dissatisfaction into the service recovery paradox (i.e.,customers' increased satisfaction with the company after the recovery rather than prior to the failure) seem evident (Matos et al., 2007). However, driven by the high product quality and impulsive purchasing novelties, the detriments of online service failure in online luxury businesses seem to foster the awakening of a double deviation scenario over the service recovery paradox. That being said, online luxury customers have higher recovery expectations, calling for providers to maximize the recovery effort.

Recently, Azemi et al. (2018) posited the reasoning of customer expectation to be customers' necessity for online banking. They described occupation status as the source of the online banking need, utilizing it as the mediator to a threefold customer typology, i.e., exigent customers, solutionist customers, and impulsive customers. Exigent customers posit online banking as the origin of their jobs' functioning, whereas solutionist customers use online banking in an effort to facilitate the operation of their jobs. Impulsive customers capture online banking as a function independent of their job-related usage, employing online banking for their personal purposes. For exigent customers a service recovery paradox is identified with prompt compensation, co-creation, and customer recovery strategy. They appreciate a prompt apology, whereas explanation and downward social comparison result in a double deviation scenario. With a lower perceived risk from the failure, solutionist customers are satisfied with an apology and explanation, and a prompt compensation maximizes their happiness. If granted the recovery responsibility (i.e., customer recovery strategy), solutionist customers' aggressiveness increases, leading to the double deviation scenario. Being labeled with the trait of patience, the service recovery paradox among impulsive customers is constructed if explanation is used jointly with any of the following recovery strategies: downward social comparison, apology, and empathy. Although this study provides no evidence of a double deviation scenario, impulsive customers are prone to switching to other brands if advised by family and friends. The study does not optimize conceptualization of online failure-recovery among online luxury brands, yet it serves to prove heterogeneity among online luxury customers.

Focusing on emerging markets, Azemi et al.'s (2018) study maximizes understanding of customers with a higher degree of sensitivity towards the provider. This is in line with luxury customers, who essentially allocate responsibility for the selling-buying encounter and the recovery to the provider. Additional supporting evidence to reinforce the existence of such customers is found in Schoefer and Diamantapolous' (2009) study. They present the 'negativists' group of customers for whom providers are antagonists that use profit generation as the determinant of the success of customer-provider collaboration. This contradicts the relational customer-provider marketing philosophy, which sets the customer at the core of the transaction the outcome of which is a long-lasting customer-provider relationship (Farrell & Hartline, 2014). That being said, luxury e-tailing and e-tailing activities that emphasize a sales marketing approach lead to service failures. While this section has revealed the sensitivity of online luxury consumers, emphasizing the necessity to further decipher the online luxury failure-recovery phenomenon as a paradox that is yet to be conceptualized, the following section provides conceptual explanation of online service failure and recovery strategy types as proof of a mutually satisfactory experience among the luxury e-tailers and consumers.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT: SERVICE FAILURES AND ONLINE SERVICE FAILURES

A chronological reflection of the extant literature provides some elucidation of types of service failures. In the context of self-service technologies (SST), and incorporating to some degree online services, subject to an analysis of customer dissatisfaction, Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree & Bitner (2000) introduced the four-grounded service failure typology. The model is related to the virtual provider-customer encounter, and it includes the following types of service failures: *(1) technology failure, (2) process failure, (3) poor design, and (4) customer-driven failure* (p. 57). These authors suggested delineations with examples of each failure type as follows (see page 57): (1) Technology failure—the interface of the medium fails to work and obstructs the use of services (for example, ‘a broken ATM’). (2) Process failure—a failure that emerges after the customer has completed an interaction with a technological service medium. Most likely the customer will recognize the failure after some time has passed (for example, a customer has ordered and paid online for a product but has not received it). (3) Poor design—a technological failure occurs (for example, on a website or with an ATM) because there is a lack of clarity in terms of how to use it, and there is a service design problem with the service itself, rather than with the medium (for example, a prolonged period is required for the money to be transferred from an ATM to a customer’s account). (4) Customer-driven failure—failures can occur when the customer is ‘at fault’ (for example, a customer does not recall the personal identification number required to make an online transaction) (see page 57). The study identifies the first failure type (i.e., technology failure) as the most frequent kind, although it suggests that they all represent customers’ perceptions of self-service technology incidents. Further, it emphasizes the lack of recoveries in self-services (i.e., online services), implying an increased risk from encountering failures (Meuter et al. 2000). Based on these ideas, customers are strict observers of online providers, and the provider must understand how customers assign meaning to service failures to develop effective online recovery strategies.

An additional construct that categorizes online service failures is the six-fold typology advanced by Holloway & Beatty (2003). The authors reviewed the first two types of failure in parallel with the process, technology, and poor design failures of Meuter et al. (2000). They tackled the issue of online versus traditional service encounters and suggested that service failures also differ within these encounters. The failure typology suggested by them incorporates the following: *(1) delivery, (2) website design, (3) payment, (4) security, (5) product quality, and (6) customer service problems* (p. 95). This hierarchy of failure types has been set based on the frequency of occurrence—from the most frequent to the least frequent failure type. In analyzing these failure types, the delivery problems that the authors emphasized include complaints such as ‘the product arrived later than promised, the wrong product was delivered, and merchandise was delivered to the wrong address’ (p. 95). Website design problems include the following: the website did not open, the content was not user-friendly, and the website was only available in one language (see p. 96). Payment problems refer to customer perceptions of paying more than they have gain from the service (see p. 96). Security problems include fraud issues (see p. 96). Problems with product quality are associated with customers' perception that they have received a quality lower than they have thought they would get (see p. 96), and customer service problems occur because the provider does not respond to customer requests (see p. 96). The authors considered the behavior of customers after online failure and suggested that they did not seem to be happy with the online recovery. Further, they emphasize customers' perception of being unfairly treated by the provider. This delineation, besides enriching the theoretical background of online research, provides an informative guide for the provider to identify their fallacies and a source to provide meaning to customer expectations. Additionally, to be able to perceive as much information as possible from the customer, the authors accentuate the importance of providing both online and offline means of customer-provider interaction such as 'toll-free numbers, e-mail addresses, and real-time chat rooms' (Holloway & Beatty, 2003, p. 102).

JUSTICE THEORY: THE MEDIATOR OF THE LUXURY BRANDING PROVIDER-CUSTOMER INTERACTION

Failure-recovery literature has traditionally identified customer satisfaction as being his/her perception fairly recovered (Smith & Bolton, 2002; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Wang et al. 2011). Justice theory, inclusive of its three components (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) dominates the theoretical background to explain such phenomena. Smith et al. (1999) defined distributive justice as customers' evaluation of recovery fairness on grounds of 'the perceived outcome of exchange', and procedural justice in terms of the evaluation of the fairness of procedures/strategies that the provider uses to deal with the failure-recovery experience (p. 357). Wirtz & Mattila (2004) identify interactional justice with customer judgment of the fair recovery of an employee's behavior, largely defined in terms of the 'apology, perceived helpfulness, courtesy, and empathy' (p. 151). The literature in the justice theory and services recovery reveals contradictory findings. This is also evident for the online luxury brands. For example, Wirtz & Mattila (2004) suggest that all three justice dimensions (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional) have impact on generating satisfaction in the recovery. However, customers are more satisfied with an immediate response and apology (i.e., with procedural and interactional justice) than with compensation (i.e., distributive justice). Yet the latter seems to generate satisfaction when the provider is ineffective in meeting customers' expectations in one of the former two (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Kau & Loh (2006) dispute the work of Wirtz & Mattila (2004) and suggest that rather than procedural and interactional justice, distributive justice is the main attributor of customer satisfaction. Later, Rio-Lanza et al. (2009) proclaimed that procedural justice is the justice dimension with the greatest influence in generating customer satisfaction. Both Kau & Loh (2006) and Rio-Lanza et al. (2009) consider mobile phone services. The very different outcomes suggested by these studies with the same research focus (the same industry used) raise the question of why these different findings have occurred. The uniqueness within the study of Rio-Lanza et al. (2009) is that of examining emotions as an element that mediates customers' perception of justice. Following this, one may argue that emotion is a key factor justifying the findings.

Having stated that customers of online luxury branding are more emotionally than rationally driven (Heine, 2009; Okonkwo, 2010), one might suggest that Rio-Lanza et al.'s (2009) work represents the reality of luxury customers' perception of fairness in the failure-recovery experience. This is in line with Ozuem & Lancaster (2014) who state that prompt recoveries make luxury fashion customers believe that the provider dealt fairly with the customer. Later, Ozuem et al. (2017) argued that customers are happy if the provider apologizes for the failure. Both these studies were conducted in United Kingdom. The variation across findings implies customers' heterogeneity in assigning meaning. Subsequently, Ozuem et al. (2017) called for personalized recovery strategies, suggesting that structured recovery platforms might undermine customers' specific recovery requests.

Piff et al. (2010) support this, arguing that the wealth positioning of an individual describes his/her stance towards others. Yet luxury customers who are not millionaires might be happier with the distributive (i.e., compensatory) rather than procedural or interactional justice. Herrmann, Xia, Monroe & Huber (2007) argue that customers of top automobile companies (i.e., luxury ones) evaluate the encounter on grounds of the price (i.e., distributive justice). If these customers (who are not necessarily millionaires) are happy with the compensation, the procedures of the encounter and the employee behavior are of a lower importance. Cultural background seems to be another factor to determine customers' recovery requests. Bian & Forsythe (2012) explain how Chinese customers' purchase of luxury products is driven by the purpose of being socially accepted. In contrast, consumers in the United States seem to buy luxury products as a means to feel unique (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Bian & Forsythe (2012) did not examine the cultural background of luxury customers in terms of justice theory. However, their findings imply the influence of others or personal individuality traits to evaluate one justice dimension over the other.

Digital media literature suggests that social media has eased the process of conceptualizing the customer (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Gruber et al. 2015; Rauschnabel et al. 2016), inclusive of their perception of fairness in the recovery provision. This is because individuals in social media reveal personal information and engage in online conversation and online communities (Brogi et al. 2013; Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2016). However, the inherited risk in social media such as the rapid spread of online negative word of mouth, and the ease of switching behavior to other online providers, no longer permits superficial understanding of customers' perception of failure-recovery experiences (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Gu & Ye, 2014). Consequently, both academics and practitioners seek understanding and effective use of social media throughout the failure-recovery experience. The difficulty of achieving this seems to be greater in the luxury industry due to customers being emotionally rather than rationally driven. The following section provides theoretical explanation and conceptual cases to illustrate luxury branding customer-provider interaction in social media in cases of failure-recovery encounters.

SOCIAL MEDIA: THE MEDIUM OF THE FAILURE-RECOVERY ENCOUNTER

Customers of luxury fashion products appear to use Twitter over the other social media platforms to approach brands (Opitz, 2016). According to Opitz (2016) Twitter is followed by Instagram, and the latter is particularly powerful if luxury fashion influencers reveal the message to the audience. The author discusses the cases of two leading luxury fashion brands, Gucci and Prada, that have used fashionista public figures to reach audiences. The former used Chiara Ferragni and the latter used Arielle Noa Charnas, through whom Gucci and Prada reached thousands of engagement (Opitz, 2016). This suggests that influencers should be used as a means of online recovery strategies. Facebook is another social media platform to mediate provider-customer communication throughout the luxury branding failure-recovery process. In this context, digital marketing literature identifies social media with different platforms, which inclusively permit simultaneous failure and recovery experiences (Kuo et al. 2011; Gu & Ye, 2014).

In social media, the provider might deliver the recovery in the form of the *comment*, as a response to a customer's online complaint. Secondly, the provider might approach the complainant with *personal* *messages*, turning the communication and recovery provision from a community one into a provider-complainant experience. Thirdly, providers could go to *live streaming* in developing a realistic recovery provision. The advantage here is that the host in real time might read customer comments, identify possible criticisms (i.e., failure), and provide an immediate response (i.e., deliver a recovery). Live streaming is also used by Armani, which has organized online interviews with leading people in fashion brands (Stocker, 2012). This again suggests that in cases of customer dissatisfaction, live streaming interviews with knowledgeable people on the issue could be used as form of explanation recovery strategy. The failure-recovery literature has traditionally identified explanation with a satisfactory recovery strategy (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Pang et al. 2014), in particular when the customer believes that the person involved possesses adequate information.

According to Andjelic (2015), the majority of luxury brands are utilizing contemporary digital marketing strategies (including live streaming); however, they are failing to reveal the original message of the luxury product. From this viewpoint, live streaming would be an unsuccessful recovery strategy if the authentic message of the luxury brand were not revealed. A recent example of a successful use of the live streaming is the Balmain luxury fashion company (Andjelic, 2015). The host in the live streaming was the designer of Balmain products, Oliver Rousteing. In this example, the host was the one to develop the message of the brand, and subsequently it was not difficult for the customer to conceptualize its authenticity (Andjelic, 2015).

Both live streaming (such as the case of Armani, and Balmain) and use of public figures as means to communicate with customers (e.g., Gucci and Prada) are effective recovery strategies if a sincere message is revealed. If customers interpret an online message as one that does not present the reality, a minor failure turns into a major one (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Xia, 2013). In such a situation, customers feel that the company is trying to take advantage of them (Ringberg et al. 2007). Regardless of the means of online delivery of the message, its inappropriate content might lead to the double deviation scenario. Jin (2012) suggests that dissatisfaction with the content of a Facebook page not only reduces customers' online repurchase tendency but also leads to customers' complete ignorance of luxury brands' Facebook pages. The author used Louis Vuitton, which is one of the leading luxury brands, as a case study to understand this phenomenon and found that regardless of how well a brand is positioned, a customer's discontent experience with the Facebook page leads to switching behavior and loyalty reduction. The author suggests that such an outcome is evident across both hedonic and utilitarian customer types, although the risk seems to be greater within the former group. Further, customers whose purchasing decision is motivated by others rather than by personal desire seem to be stricter in evaluating the company through Facebook lenses (Jin, 2012). Additionally, the content of the message should be relevant to the targeted customers. For example, Coach, which is a U.S. luxury brand, used public figures from China as a means to facilitate online communication with Chinese customers (Ng, 2014). The risk of failure to provide a satisfactory online experience in general and a recovery strategy in particular does not seem to be isolated to the online means of customer-provider interaction. An unsatisfactory online experience with a provider seems to lead to reduction of offline purchases too (Piercy & Archer-Brown, 2014).

Further, the failure-recovery process in the offline environment might require one or more steps, each step consisting of a face-to-face employee-customer interaction. The time gap between steps prolongs the recovery completion, increasing the risk of dissatisfaction. Customer-provider online interaction is a twenty-four hour communication process. Even if the provider does not complete the recovery provision at once, the provider's online presence controls the customer. This does not mean that the provider should ignore the customer request (Azemi & Ozuem, 2016). Indeed, in such cases the online customer feels that he/she was not treated fairly, spreading negative word-of-mouth and harming the company respectively (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Xia, 2013; Brogi et al. 2013). However, it is recommended that the provider uses numerous media platforms simultaneously to communicate messages to the audience. In this way, the customer would consider that the provider has not reneged on its responsibilities. Rather, he/she would acknowledge the provider's continued online relationship as its strategic approach.

Harris et al. (2006) suggest that online customers are more tolerant of failures compared to offline ones. In contrast, social media literature (Kuo et al. 2011; Gruber et al. 2015) emphasizes customers' firm stance of revenge in cases of failure experience. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in particular are used to spread online negative word-of-mouth (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Gregoire et al. 2015). The risk embedded in online negative WOM is explained on two grounds. First, other customers become aware that a company has failed to provide a satisfactory experience. Second, competitors make use of the unsatisfactory experience to increase their target groups. In the latter context, Gregoire et al. (2015) talk about the '*feeding the vultures*' (p. 175), which refers to competitors' engagement with online complaints about other providers.

Negative online word-of-mouth is of a greater risk if the complaint triggers online conversation (Xia, 2013; Brogi et al. 2013). Gu & Ye (2014) suggest that almost half of customers consider other complaints before communicating their own or becoming engaged in online negative word-of-mouth. The risk seems higher within the luxury branding industry. Zheng et al. (2009) suggest that 55 per cent of luxury branding customers consider other customers' reviews (p. 724). The authors argue that luxury companies ignore online comments, emphasizing that such a strategy leads to customers' perception of injustice in their recovery approach. This calls for recovery platforms that treat the customers inclusively. Such platforms should be customized to individual recovery requests (Ozuem et al. 2017) as a means to enhance satisfaction in general and to trigger positive word of mouth. Similarly to offline customers and those of other industries, luxury customers that are satisfied with the recovery have a low tendency to spread positive word of mouth (Zheng et al. 2009). However, if they do, they enhance other customers' trust towards the provider (Brogi et al. 2013).

Prada has also used customization as a means to enhance customer satisfaction, developing apps that could be used by customers to customize their preferred products (Stocker, 2012). A recent study to consider such contexts is that of Yoo & Park (2016). These authors propose that customization generates credibility for luxury customers in a four-fold scheme of values. This typology includes 'hedonic, utilitarian, social, and creative achievement value' (p. 4) and is defined respectively as follows: the product has made the customer satisfied, the product met the customer's need, the customer has received what other individuals value, and the product that the customer has received makes him/her feel worthy (p. 2). The authors further suggest that mass customization generates loyalty.

In the broadest terms, in the context of recovery strategy, customization might help the provider in a two-fold continuum: (1) providers would be able understand customer recovery requests better, and (2) a customized product could be used as a replacement for the one that generated the failure. That is, such a digital marketing strategy might assist in meeting customer expectations and in overcoming service failures, respectively (Stocker, 2012). For example, Christian Louboutin developed apps to facilitate customer online store visits and purchases (Stocker, 2012). The customer-app interaction might be identified with the co-creation recovery strategy. As Roggeveen et al. (2012) explain, co-creation might have the same impact as financial recovery strategies in generating customer satisfaction. On the other side, Hermès has developed an app that teaches customers 'how to tie their scarves' (Heine & Berghaus, 2014, p. 230). Customers might use such an informative online section when not happy with their Hermès scarf due to lack of knowledge on tying it.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Following Kim & Ko's (2012) suggestion, providers could overcome online service failures if the following two are achieved: (1) *brand equity,* and (2) *relationship equity*. Brand equity refers to the influence that social media has on constructing a luxury brand that stands out from others in the market. This could be accomplished through successfully revealing the authentic message inherited in the brand. This additionally helps towards reaching the stance presented by the second concept, relationship equity, which is identified with the impact that the online interaction has in triggering a long-lasting relationship (see Kim and Ko, 2012, p. 1481). The latter concept is supported by numerous services marketing scholars (Hess et al. 2003; Hui et al. 2011) who suggest that if customers were happy with the prior long relationship they would be less strict in judging the service failure experience. However, as Finocchiaro (2010) suggests, online luxury brands should acknowledge the risk of online failure. This is in line with services marketing literature, which has traditionally emphasized that service failures are inevitable (Smith et al. 1999; Craighead et al. 2004; Ringberg et al. 2007). This implies the urge of online luxury branding to go online.

Guillory's, (2016) two-fold failure typology proposes that luxury-branding providers could avoid failure on grounds of (1) *failure in ordering* (i.e., issues with the website) and (2) *failure in shipping* (issues with the delivery). According to Riley and Lacroix (2003), luxury branding is identified with the 'spontaneity of shopping', which is generated by the perceived 'pleasure of touching and feeling' the product (p. 103). This does not seem to restrict Guillory' s, (2016) *failure in ordering* to the technical aspect of the website. Indeed, it suggests that providers should develop websites that visually stand out, rather than merely presenting informative content. It is recommended that prior to creating websites and social media content, a provider's marketing representatives should develop focus groups of luxury branding customers asking them about the features that would trigger emotional linkage with these platforms. The foundation to such a suggestion lies in the work of Ridgway & Myers (2014), who examined customers' perception of the quality of fashion products on grounds of the color of the logo. The authors suggest that blue, green, and purple colors represent *competence*, *ruggedness*, and *sophistication* respectively. This implies that any deviation from such linkage between the color and customer's perception of the quality lead to luxury-branding service failure.

However, the challenge remains of how to develop recovery platforms that generate customer satisfaction in general and service recovery in particular (e.g., Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Matos et al. 2007) even after technical issues such as the aforementioned happen. Academics and practitioners highlight that customers are heterogeneous in their perception of service failure and recovery strategy experiences (Ringberg et al. 2007; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2009). To our greatest knowledge, there is no luxury branding customer typology that would guide recovery provision. However the extant empirical evidence explains how customers in general develop failure-recovery perception. Such information should lay the foundation for the providers to develop recovery strategies and utilize them, respectively. For example, Kim et al. (2016) reveal a seven-fold typology of attributes that customers use to evaluate a luxury product. This includes: (1) 'status aspiration', (2) 'romance and seduction', (3) 'involvement with a fantasy world or adventure', (4) 'other-directedness', (5) 'self-esteem, power and success', (6) 'sensory world of beauty, nature, body and feelings', and (7) 'activation' (p. 308). In the broadest terms, they are identified with the feelings of being emotionally well, powerful, and well positioned in the society, since customers subjectively evaluate luxury products. As qualitative scholars explain, subjectivity leads to multiple realities (Saunders et al. 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Ozuem, Thomas & Lancaster 2016). This again emphasizes the importance of developing multiple recovery programs. Thus providers should utilize strategies that can be customized to meet the requests of every customer.

It is suggested that luxury brands should be part of social media to be able to understand and evaluate customers' very personal failure-recovery requests (Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2016). Their social media presence is greatly identified with customer-provider communication through messages such as those on Facebook or Twitter. The consensus remains that customers' online messages reveal a lot about them (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Gregoire et al. 2015). That is, social media overcomes the main challenge that marketers have in providing a successful recovery (i.e., understanding of customers' failure-recovery requirements). To take advantage of such benefits, luxury companies should have digital marketing representatives that continually follow customer messages, for if a message took the form of a complaint or online negative word-of-mouth. Stokinger & Ozuem (2015) emphasize that communication through social media generates trust among luxury customers. Further, social media permits a prompt recovery. Customers who receive prompt recoveries seem to believe that the provider was fair throughout the recovery process (e.g., Smith et al. 1999).

Further, it is important that providers become part of online communities. Online communities seem to generate more information than personal messages. Members of online communities share the same interests, implying a tendency to generate more talk. One's talk seems to 'provide value to [other] members' (Schau et al., 2009, p. 30). Schau et al. (2009) explain the close relationship of online community members with the concept of '*social network*', inclusive of the following: '(1) welcoming, (2) empathizing, and (3) governing' (p. 34). In the broadest terms, these elements are defined as members' support of each other both psychologically and from a decision-making perspective. Subsequently, customers seem to stick to such communities for a long period of time. Schau et al. (2009) illustrate such a stance with the online community of BMW Minis, which are considered luxury cars. Moreover, rather than customers alone, providers themselves should initiate online communities. Heine & Berghaus (2014) use the Lancome Rose Beauty Community as an example of a success story. Lancome opened and named this online community after a very satisfied customer (see p. 232). This illustrates the will of the company to appreciate its customers. Under such circumstances, there is a greater tendency of customers to engage in online communities. It is recommended that luxury companies have specialists who know how to collect and analyze data from communities regardless of its origin. Additionally, digital marketing experts must be able to use the data as a means to develop recovery programs and generate customer satisfaction.

Regardless of the emphasis in customizing recovery approaches, there is a set of golden recovery rules applicable to all types of customers. These include: (1) apology (Bell & Zemke, 1987; Kuo et al. 2011), (2) acknowledgement, and (3) provision of a sincere explanation of the issue (Barwise & Meehan, 2010). Jones (2015) provides examples of luxury companies including Saint Laurent and Tom Ford that have used advertisements that do not adequately present females. In these cases, the golden recovery rules might have controlled customer dissatisfaction. Additionally, to overcome the risk of an escalation of online negative word-of-mouth, it is recommended that luxury companies transfer the recovery process to the offline environment. This is essential in two scenarios: first, if a major failure occurs, second, if the recovery process does not end with the golden recovery rules. Further, providers should develop digital marketing strategies that include multiple social media platforms (Heine and Berghaus, 2014). Approaching the dissatisfied customer as a follow- up to the recovery on numerous platforms could enhance his/her trust in the provider, particularly if the recovery was successful, thus illuminating the service recovery paradox. However, as Okonkwo (2009) proposes, the overall luxury branding strategy should embed policies on the use of online media. This would enhance the coordination between a luxury brand's online business and other departments within the company, which in turn would generate a better use of recovery strategies and satisfactory customer recovery experiences.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The online competition and the enhanced customer power (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) have directed luxury brands towards social media (Kim & Ko, 2012; Stocker, 2012). However, luxury brands seem to have engaged in e-commerce at a slower pace compared to other industries (Meuter et al. 2000; Harris et al. 2006). The increased risk that the provider would not be able to develop an emotional link with the customer, thus generating failure, justifies the luxury brand's skepticism. The digital environment in general and social media in particular have turned failure-recovery into a co-created experience between the provider and the customer (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Gregoire et al. 2015; Gruber et al. 2015). The advantages inherent in social media such as the ease of conceptualizing customers' failure-recovery perception have overcome the main challenge to providing a just recovery (Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2016). However, it is suggested that the majority of recovery attempts in a brick-and-mortar context lead to customer irritation (Casado-Diaz & Nicolau-Gonzalbez, 2009). The risk seems to be greater in online services, where the ease to spreading negative word-of-mouth and switching are 'one second' activities. Indeed, this sensitivity is more acute in the luxury branding industry, where the customer is greatly influenced by emotional linkage with the product (Okonkwo, 2010; Ozuem & Lancaster, 2014).

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Double Deviation Scenario: Customer dissatisfaction with the company is greater after the recovery experience than prior to it.

Luxury Product: A high-priced product with specific attributes that trigger customers' emotions and emotional purchase respectively.

Online Recovery Strategy: The activity or activities that the provider utilizes online to make the customer satisfied after a service failure experience.

Online Service Failure: If the customer's expectation from the online purchase is not met, an online service failure occurs.

Service Failure Recovery Paradox: The customer's satisfaction with the company is greater after the recovery than prior to the service failure.

Socially Constructed Online Experience: An experience that is developed by more than one party, inclusive of the context, with the online failure recovery strategy seen as a three-fold construct of (1) customer, (2) provider, and (3) online platform.

Section 3

Opportunities and Challenges in Designing Computer-Mediated Marketing Strategies

Chapter 13
Competing Through Online Service Failures and Recovery Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The ideas of service failure and recovery strategies have been transformed, due to the internet environment, from a consumer-provider perspective to a multifaceted web quality activity. The research on service failure and recovery strategies has been well-developed in terms of the consumer's viewpoint of service as well as the responsibility for recovery conventionally expected to be allotted to the marketer. On the contrary, existing research indicates that there is a limited range of understanding of consumer-website interactivity relating to online service failure and recovery strategies as well as less understanding of the highly diverse characteristics of computer-mediated marketing environments (CMMEs). The perspectives of CMMEs relate to online customer behavior as distinct from conventional behavior. In fact, providers are involved in intense activity in the online environment in terms of market competition, as customers are positioned just a click away from switching providers in the case of service failure.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The literature on service failures and recovery strategies is focussed on understanding the perspectives of customers' explanations viewed from the provider's viewpoint (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005; Zhu *et al.*, 2013). The provider's outlook appears to have been anticipated, being mainly approached as two different performers, in order to excel consumer's explanations (Grewal *et al.*, 2008; Huang *et al.*, 2013). Consumers have been conceptualised as experiencing entirely the same treatment with service failures and recovery strategies, with limited exceptions affecting the subjective view of the occurrence (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). A review of the literature describes the experience of service failure-recovery

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch013

as a five-stage procedure: a service failure occurs, recovery expectations arise, recovery strategies are provided, and recovery and post-recovery behaviour is evaluated. Conversely, forming an understanding of the consumer is predominantly related to particular processes, affecting explanations succeeded to the missing stage (Mohr *et al.*, 2006). Accordingly, consumer experience accounts for particular backgrounds which exceed the possibility of further descriptive factors (Rio-Lanza et al., 2009; Mattila Choi, 2008). Much of io-Lanza et al., 2009; Mattila & Choi, 2008). Much of the relevant literature has been developed using context-free methods and positivist ontological views and consumers responses are typically concentrated and organised. This would suggest that service failure and recovery strategies are related as iterative experiences. Moreover, the customer's experience is anticipated during service failure-recovery. Consequently, Miller *et al.* (2000) demonstrated that the literature on service failure and recovery strategies is recognised through the attempts of academics to assign customer perceptions in service failures and recovery to objective facts.

Nevertheless, the literature underscores a number of contrasting and contradictory outcomes. It advises that consumers are heterogeneous and need to be managed subjectively (Diaz-Martin *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2011; Azemi & Ozuem, 2016). The existing literature on service failures and recovery strategies resonates significantly with the perceived advantages of service recovery which have been the subject of research. However, Rust & Oliver (2000) described the suggestive outcomes as affirming that acceptable recoveries might be harmful to the service provider. This indicates how distinctive the consumers are in reality and advises a contextual method for handling service failures and recovery strategies phenomena in general and consumers in a specific context. The literature in electronic media is highly reinforced by an espistemological orientation (McCarthy *et al.*, 2011). Electronic media literature appears to have established the underpinnings to research into service failures and recovery strategies while the onset of the internet has exposed offline service failures and recovery strategies as distinct from traditional offline practice traits (Salle *et al.*, 2015; Ozuem, Thomas and Lancaster, 2016). It is suggested that computer-mediated marketing environments (CMMEs) have become empowered, allowing consumers to develop insights and act on means of highly individual orientation (Ellis-Chadwick & Chaffey, 2012). It underlines the subjectivity of consumers' insights and relates the service failures and recovery strategies occurrences to experience with uncertain resultsrategies occurrences to experience. Moreover, vendor observation of consumers is highlighted, relating the service failures-recovery occurrence to a combined experience between the customer and the provider.

Research appears to have established the foundation of a comprehensive framework on the literature of service failures and recovery strategy (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). Scholars perceive consumers as heterogeneous on the basis of positioning existing positivist ontological literature and advise that consumers' perceptions cause personalised, unique service failures and recovery strategies stem from their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, in order to develop the empirical data considering cultural backgrounds, customers' perspectives have been subject to attention. According to Howell (2012), the distinction between 'real' and 'ideal', as stated by Arthur Schopenhauer, has not been isolated. Academics have explained that the 'real' (considered as consumer behaviour and perception) is a reflection of the 'ideal' (considered as consumer's inherited cultural backgrounds). This type of epistemological orientation supported scholars in conceptualising their interpretation of customers' perceptions towards service failure perspectives, recovery expectancy and appraisal as well as after-recovery action (Schwandt, 2000). The reactions of consumers do not restrict the failure-recovery experience to specific antecedents and particular processes. They realised that service failure-recovery has the five phases and provides a unique experience after its occurrence. Developing the study of Ringberg *et al.* (2007), inherited cultural features identify likenesses within heterogeneous social actors and scholars have categorised consumers as falling into three groups: (a) an opposition cultural framework which considers consumers who ally in their contentions with the provider and wish to profited from them, (b) a rational cultural framework which considers consumers who are involved in a good association with the provider, despite failures, and (c) a utilitarian cultural framework which considers consumers who calculate the losses of the service failures against any remuneration from the recovery.

Ringberg *et al.*'s study (2007) advises that service failures and recovery strategies can be described more precisely when the mental states of the social actors are comprehended. Moreover, it claims that the mental states of the customers are formulated to include the mutual culture. It shows that this study supports the the ontological orientation and contradicts the epistemological position. It further affirms that Ringberg *et al.* (2007) have attempted the cultural background in an apparent method. They have provided no description in its regard by defining the cultural context very simply. Their descriptions on service failure perspectives, recovery expectations and appraisal are limited to utility and emotion theory. The present study relates to the epistemological position of Ringberg *et al.* (2007). Interpretivism pursues theorising one's subjective (experience???) to the occurrence (Schwandt, 2000). Scholars have termed qualities in one's perception as 'permanent' and 'learned in a single trial', Lincoln & Denzin (2000) stated that their position appears to mislead at the start, with indistinct phases of qualitative research. Positivism highlighted the fact that academics' orientations to one's own perception was in process and the limitations on the contextual method were visible. Brown (1954) stated that these limitations had been interrogated in the context of culture since the 90s because of the association of culture with learning theory. Learning is related to the collaboration of other social actors and occurrences as well as taking place in order to adjust to social occurrence and increasing satisfaction. Academics associate the above-mentioned qualitative methodology with social constructivism (Collins & Young, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2007; Cunliffe, 2008).

Ozuem & Lancaster (2013) presented the service failure-recovery experience as interaction of the consumers with others by commencing with social constructivitism in the literature of service failures and recovery strategies. The present study focuses on the service failures perspective, recovery expectancy and appraisal as well as after-recovery action, formed by the interaction between consumers and the provider. It means the perception of individuals constantly accepts the latest information that matches and substitutes inherited characteristics. It is divergent from Ringberg *et al.*'s study (2007), as present research does not segregate descriptions of customers' perceptions and inherited characteristics before service failures. This present study will integrate service failures and recovery strategies as a combined experience between the providers and consumers. It will evaluate the service failure-recovery from the perspectives of both customers and providers in order to enrich understanding on the topic. It seeeks to allow a contextual and inclusive conceptualisation of consumers during the service failure-recovery procedure. The reseacher is not isolated from the research context because of implementation of social constructivism. Instead, Strauss (1988) stated that it links data enrichment to the researcher's empirical data. Maxwell (2012) illustrated the point that empirical data indicates the personal and professional experience of the researcher with the studied phenomenon. Personal, professional experiences and background of the researcher have directed the present study in Nepal, relating to online service failures and recovery strategies in the banking sector. Since Nepal is a developing nation and Ringberg *et al.*'s study is limited to only the developed nations, investigating online service failures and recovery strategies in the Nepalese banking industry reveals an inadequacy in the existing literature.

Defining Failure and Online Failure

Scholars have provided definitions and concepts of service in various contexts. Most of the scholars have considered services as actions, events and interactions (Lovelock, 1991; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Zeithaml *et al.*, 2012). It can be defined as a change in the condition of a customer or of a good position in some financial unit, that is carried out as an outcome of an action of another financial unit, after prior negotiation with the customer or financial unit (Hill, 1977). A service is defined as a procedure or performance, for instance: banking, accounting, or hospitality activities are considered service-based (Lovelock, 1991). Services are the series of activities that usually have an intangible character. They do not essentially occur in interaction between the consumer and service provider or goods or physical resources that are provided as a solution to the consumer's difficulties (Grönroos, 2016). Similarly, Timm (2011, p. 13) believed that *"Business benefits from good service, service skills are crucial for success at all organisational levels. A commitment to using customer service skills ignites a growth process."*

Customers purchase a product which provides services rather than goods or services for creating value (Barrows *et al.*, 2011). Service is the activity of the business and its performance from the customers' perspective. In addition, services are considered as economic activities which create "added value" as well as providing advantages to cutomers or businesses (Gilmore, 2003). Furthermore, most scholars have cited the characteristics of service: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability, that significantly affect its delivery and marketing (Kotler, 2009). What service provides to consumers and what they receive, it can be illustrated from a consumer's perspective regarding service and its concept (Gummesson, 2002). The service provider needs to develop a uniform system of associated activities which provides the solution to consumer problems or offers exclusive experiences. Moreover, it underlines the consumers' perspective that service activities can assist the consumer in resolving their problems (Johnson & Gustafsson, 2003).

Service as an institution is the entire business or non-profitable organisation that belongs within the service industry such as a financial institute or a charity (Gilmore, 2003). Service as a main product is the trading outputs of service enterprises, like insurance policies or bank accounts. Service as product development is an outlying activity proposed to augment the delivery of a main product such as a loyalty program or complimentary drinks in a restaurant. Service as product support is consumer-oriented activity which occurs after the delivery of a product such as updating services or repair facilities.

The service industry comprises various sectors like hospitality, finance and tourism. Most of the sectors include various sub-sectors such as the tourism sector, which involves a range of enterprises from large hotels and airline companies to small restaurants, cabs and local travel agents. It can be said that the service sector occupies a diverse field with various enterprises in distinct frameworks (Gilmore, 2003).

Acoording to Vargo & Lusch (2004, p. 2), an alternative method to define the service is *"the application of specialised competences through deeds, processes and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself"*. The authors consider that this definition covers a fundamental function of entire businesses and organisations. The definition of the term service has various interpretations. The meanings of processes, activites, performance, solutions and experiences are not clearly linked by researchers to customers' problems. It is essential that more specific perspectives and definitions from the customers' point of view be developed as research development into service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

The definition of service as act-based is that acts are implemented after confirming a deal between traders and customers. Acts are implemented by traders or their negotiators and are objective in nature (Kayastha, 2011). Traders allow access to their acts or they undertake performances to transform customers' products or they undertake performances and transfer ownership of products to customers in negotiations such as insurance, leasing, or lending. Service can be defined as marketing transactions *"where the object of the market transaction is other than the transfer of ownership of a tangible commodity"* (Judd, 1964 p. 58). This definition categorises all act-based exchanges in the form of services, except where traders transfer ownership of tangible products to the customers. Moreover, it also categorises various sorts of exchanges as services, where traders do not perfrom acts such as insurance, licensing and sales of intangible products, or leasing. Services are also recognised from their characteristics which are considered exceptional in services (Moeller, 2010; Zeithaml, 2014). Intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability are generally considered exceptional characteristics of services. These four characteristics, which do not occur simultaneously are not present in many services such as manufacture and utilisation of repair services. Consumers can utilise the machines and equipment when it is delivered after repair.

Conventionally, the definition of services focuses on the distinctions between services and products. The notion of services is described as "IHIP" as intangible, heterogeneous, inseparable and perishable (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2012). Even so, online services are generally patterned, tangible, non-heterogeneous, and advanced, independent of their utilisation. They are also non-perishable (Tate & Evermann, 2010). Therefore, a novel concept and definition is necessary. Online services are defined as *"services delivered via information and communication technologies where the customer interacts solely with an appropriate user interface in order to retrieve desired benefit"* (Fassnacht & Koese, 2006, p. 23). As a result, according to DeLone & McLean (2004), e-commerce events are also incorporated in online services and are defined as constituting usage of the internet in order to enable, execute as well as process, commercial transactions.

Online services are different from conventional services because of technology mediation creating a novel concept in terms of online experience and an information service:

1. **Online experience:** Online experience is considered a self-service experience (Zhu *et al.*, 2002). It is also conceptualised as *"a customer's experience that results from purchase through or engagement with information technology mediated service delivery"* (Rowley, 2006, p. 342);
2. **Information service:** Online service is described as an information service when the primary value exchanges information between the service provider and the consumer (Rust & Lemon, 2001).

A comprehensive definition is needed to cover the entire range of prompts and encounters which occur before, during and after the delivery of online service (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005; Bauer *et al.*, 2006). Online service is defined as delivering an excellent experience to customers as regards the interactive course of knowledge (Rust & Lemon, 2001). The delivery of effective online services needs to be scheduled and implemented carefully to make online services more strategic and valuable channels (Boyer *et al.*, 2002). Deliberately, the service provider ought to attempt to involve the consumer in designing the complete online process which implements certain aspects of online operations. Moreover, a service provider needs to be familiar with the requirements of the consumer until s/he receives responses from them after delivery of the service to accomplish the necessary amendments to the processes of the online services. Some scholars suggest that online services ought to be delivered over an electronic means and acknowledge that the web should be the channel for an online service network system (Rust & Lemon, 2001; Voss, 2003). The online service encounter can be described as *"the initial landing on the home page until the requested service has been completed or the final product has been delivered and is fit for use"* (Boyer et al., 2002, p. 178). It leads to a novel idea termed 'virtual operations' in the field of operations management, described as online opreations which frequently involve commercial transactions by the use of the internet. Even so, not only the internet is an electronic network for online services (Madu & Madu, 2002).

The definition of online services can be extended to encompass all the characteristics of online networks. Therefore, online service can be defined as delivering the service through ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in which the consumer interacts individually with an apprpriate user interface to access preferred advantages such as websites and Automated Teller Machines (Fassnacht & Koese, 2006). Accordingly, a comprehensive definition of the online service is: the delivery of service via interactive networks by means of computers, mobile phones, the internet between the consumer's databank and the service provider to access essential information as well as to perform the relevant tasks at any place and at any time when required. Resources such as computers, mobile phones and internet access are accessible to the consumer who are prepared to use them.

The Concept of Service Failures and Online Service Failures

Service failures take place whenever the consumer's perceptions drop below their expectations in the performance of initial service delivery (Holloway & Beatty, 2005; Zeithaml, 2014). It is virtually impossible for organisations to avoid service failures, which could conceivably result from human error while the service is being delivered as well as from inherent general features of the service (Brown *et al.*, 1994).

Most companies emphasise consumer satisfaction with the delivery of high quality service. However mistakes occur in all service systems as service failures are unavoidable(Hart *et al.*, 1990; Schneider & Bowen, 1999). In addition, some scholars affirm that *"even the companies with the strategic plans and the tightest quality control procedures cannot avoid mistakes in all interactions with customers"* (Webster & Sundaram, 1998, p. 153, cited in Bradley & Sparks, 2009).

Service failures can be defined as a faulty result which reflects a breakdown in consistency (Berry & Parasuraman, 1992). Similarly, it is defined as *"service performances that fall below customer expectation"* (Hoffman & Bateson, 2010, p. 327). It is also described as any service-associated calamities, or real as well as alleged troubles which occur during the consumer's experience with a company (Maxham J., 2001). In the view of some researchers, it could be expensive if the service provider does not manage the service failures expeditiously, which could also lead to consumer refusal (Liu *et al.*, 2000; Maxham, 2001; Kotler & Keller, 2011). Service failures can occur due to the distinctive characteristics of the services (Lewis & Spyrakopoulos, 2001). Moreover, service failures transpire while service is unable to meet the expectation of the consumer due to a fault in any of the steps during the delivery of the services (Sparks & Fredline, 2007). Similarly, service failures occur when the consumer is not pleased with his/her service experience from the service provider (Liao H., 2007). In addition, other scholars believe that service failures can be caused by consumer behaviour while delivering the service (Armistead *et al.*, 1995).

Researchers need to focus on service failure, as the outcome can be a loss in profitability and/or of the consumer (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991; Bejou & Palmer, 1998). Similarly, service failure can lead to a decrease in consumer confidence, accompanied by adverse word-of-mouth marketing, in addiotion to the direct expense of redelivering the service (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). In addition, the effect of service failure and consumer repurchasing behaviour has been investigated in order to reflect the importance service quality in airline service industry. The research revealed that service failure had an adverse influence on consumer repurchasing behaviour (Petrick *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, similar research examining baking services showed that service failure had an adverse impact on consumer loyalty, repurchasing behaviours and intentions (Jones & Farquhar, 2007; Kalamas *et al.*, 2008; Sousa & Voss, 2009).

Earlier studies indicated that the severity of the failure and critical failure had a substantial effect on consumer satisfaction, adverse word-of-mouth messages and consumer loyalty. Jones *et al.*'s study, (2004), investigated the effect of severe service failure on trust, loyalty, consumer satisfaction and adverse word-of-mouth messaging, and established that it had a substantial effect on consumer trust, loyalty and adverse word-of-mouth message. Likewise, Kim & Ulgado's study, (2012) investigated consumer perspectives on service failure severity, repurchasing behaviour and recovery satisfaction in hospitality services. They similarly discovered that service failure severity had a substantial adverse effect on consumer repurchasing behaviour.

It is argued that only a small range, from 5% to 10% of disappointed consumers, want to complain to the firms when they experience service failures. (Tax & Brown, 1998). In fact, an average of eleven customers out of hundred complain to their service provider when experiencing service failures whereas an average of praise their service provider for a good service experience (Hart *et al.*, 1990). Thus, service providers may perceive that only a limited number of the consumer complain directly to the firm regarding their bad experience of the service failure. However, it is essential for them to be aware that these consumer recommendations or complaints to their family and friends can significantly influence their impressions when they have adverse service experiences. The idea of online service failures is based on ECT (Expectation Confirmation Theory) and can be defined on the basis of the conventional "gap" framework of service quality (Oliver, 1980; Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Online service failure is defined as *"the gap that occurs when customers' perceived quality of service delivery does not match their service expectations"* (Tate *et al.*, 2014. p. 2). E-tail consumers experience various online service failures as compared with their conventional retail counterparts (Kelley *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, novel failure recovery strategies are essential in order to deal with online service failures.

Online service failures can lead to an adverse effect on profitability despite both online and offline service failures being inevitable incidents in the service industry. However, consumers complain online more about online service failures as compared with offline. It is because customers have a platform of internet where they can complain easily but effectively and can be reached by geographically disseminated spectators (Holloway & Beatty, 2005). It is easier to switch the service provider online compared with offline, since consumers can find alternative providers with just a click. Therefore, managing online service failures efficiently is crucial for companies operating online to succeed.

Types of Online Service Failures

Relevant current literature provides illustrations of the types of online service failures. Meuter *et al.* (2000, p. 57) presented four types of service failures in terms of SST (Self-service Technologies), account to an analysis of consumer discontent, including to some extent of online services. The framework is associated with virtual provider-consumer encounters that comprise the subsequent forms of online service failures:

1. **Technology Failure:** It is the failures of the interface of the channel that obstruct consumers from exploiting service such as a website if it is not functioning correctly or not available, or a faulty ATM;

2. **Process Failure:** It is a failure that occurs after the completion of the consumer's interaction with a technological service channel such as a website by obstructing the accomplishment of the current service. For instance: a consumer places an order and pays for an item online but never receives it. However, the consumer would find the failure most likely after concluding the order;
3. **Poor Design:** This failure occurs because of technology design problems due to the lack of clarity regarding its use for instance, difficulty in navigating the website and service design problems which are beyond the users' interface. For instance, a long time is needed to transfer money from an ATM to the consumer's account;
4. **Consumer-driven Failure:** This failure occurs when a consumer makes 'a mistake'. For instance, consumers cannot recall their passwords or private identification numbers in order to conclude the online transaction and/or access the service.

This study has determined that technology failure occurs frequently. However it represents the perceptions of the consumers in self-service technology events (Meuter *et al.*, 2000). Moreover, it focuses the lack of recoveries in online services by indicating an increased threat resulting from failures encountered. Consumers are critical spectators of online service providers, based on these ideas. Therefore, a service provider needs to comprehend why consumers take the trouble to indicate online service failures, in order to improve the efficiency of recovery strategies.

Accordingly, Holloway & Beatty, (2005, p. 95) categorised online service failures into a six-fold typology. These service failures were reviewed in parallel with the failures advanced by Meuter *et al.* (2000) and the following types of failures by undertaking the issues between traditional against online service events were suggested (Ozuem & Azemi, 2017, p. 111):

1. **Delivery:** This problem involves complaints, such as 'the items arrived late', 'incorrect items were delivered' or 'the items were delivered to the incorrect address';
2. **Website design:** This problem involves website content that is not user-friendly, or the website fauils to open, and/or is not available in other languages;
3. **Payment:** It refers to the consumer's insights regarding paying more as compared with what was received from the service;
4. **Security:** This problem involves issues regarding fraud;
5. **Product quality:** It is also associated with the consumer's impression that s/he has received a lower quality product than expected;
6. **Customer service:** This problem occurs when service providers do not respond to requests sent by customers.

Customers may not seem delighted with the service recovery after online failures. In addition, their perception may not be treated fairly by the service provider. Besides underpinning the theoretical context of online service, this description delivers a useful guide for the service provider in order to recognise their misconceptions and a source for offering value to consumer anticipation (Holloway & Beatty, 2005). Moreover, it is essential to provide both offline and online routes of consumer-provider communication; for instance, real-time chat, emails and toll-free telephone numbers in order to receive more information from the consumers.

A conception of the types of online service failures introduced by Meuter et al. (2000) and Holloway & Beatty (2005) is illustrated in Figure 1 below, created by the author. Sets A and set B indicate the types of online service failures developed by Meuter *et al.* (2000) and Holloway & Beatty (2005) respectively. The two sets provided signify types of online service failures. The intersection of Set A and Set B indicates the components of the two types of online service failures which are similar to one another. The intersected segment indicates the most frequent service failures documented by both research sources and provides suitable guidelines that might improve online services (Holloway & Beatty 2005, p. 101).

Online Service Failures in Banking Sector

A research on online service failures in the banking sector reveals a three types failures- (a) Functional failures, (b) Informational failures and (c) System failures (Tan et al., 2011). The types of online service failures developed by Meuter et al. (2000) and Holloway & Beatty (2005) are indicated as an intersected section (Figure 1). System failures appear to be recognised with technology failure, poor design and website design problems. Functional failures refer to the process failure (Figure 2). The author described that online service failures in the banking sector dominate the offline because consumers are transferring their banking activities to online.

When the types of online service failures are evaluated on a macro level, service failures researched by the scholars can be merged to a large extent and interconnected to online services and online banking services. Service failures are considered as a 'triangle' which comprises the interruption of service, service encounter and the deviance from consumer expectations (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Vazquez-Casielles et al., 2008). The construction of categories looks easier based on equivalence of service and service encounter interruptions compared to simply concentrating on consumer expectations. The insights of consumer anticipation become more difficult while contemplating ideas relevant to recovery service failure.

Recovery Strategies

According to Grönroos (2007, p. 13), "*service recovery refers to the actions a service provider takes in response to service failures*." This typical definition encompasses the concept that creating gratitude

Figure 1. Types of online service failures
Source: Meuter et al. (2000) & Holloway & Beatty (2005)

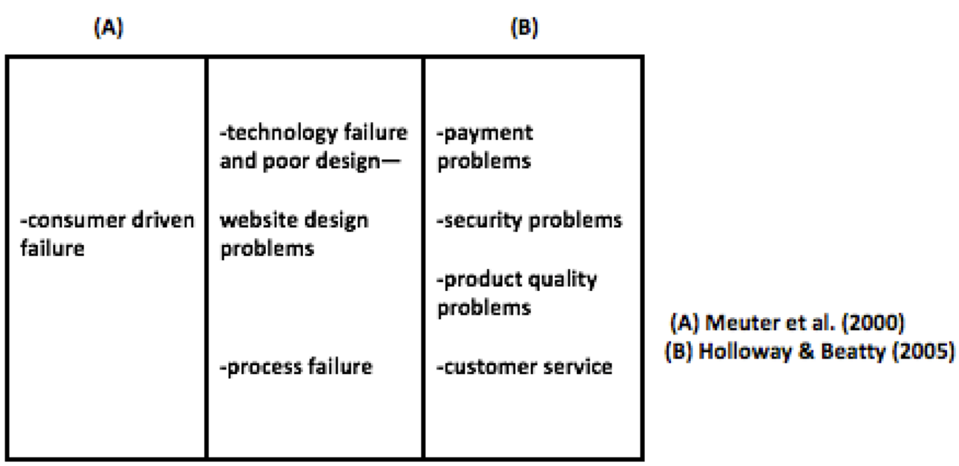
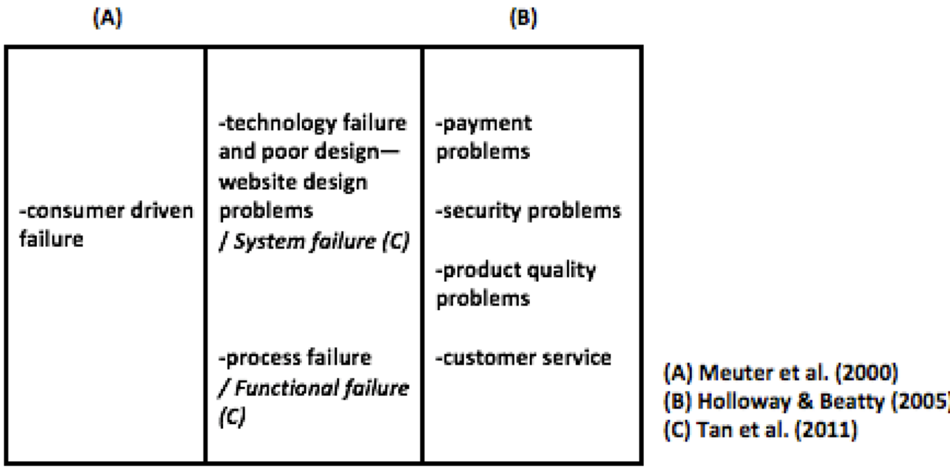


Figure 2. Types of online service failures online banking system
Sources: Meuter et al. (2000), Holloway & Beatty (2005) & Tan et al. (2011)



for. and understanding of, service recovery is crucial, as firms must endeavour to discover methods to recover from service failures. A service recovery should be able to eliminate or minimise the negative feelings of disappointed consumers (Hart *et al.*, 1990; Bowen & Johnston, 2009). Thus, effective implementation of a service recovery strategy can be anticipated as good, compared with managing consumer complaints since an appropriate recovery strategy aims to solve a consumer's troubles in order to prevent disappointment, while handling complaints with a view to upgrading systems (Lewis & Spyrakopoulos, 2001). Therefore, it can be anticipated that service providers can create brand equity in consumers by implementing appropriate recovery strategies (Chandrashekaran *et al.*, 2007).

Hocutt *et al.* (2007) recommend that compensation and an apology can be crucial elements for a service recovery. The eight recovery measures proposed by Gremler *et al.*, (2014) for treating every consumer fairly, involve management having to provide explanations after the occurrence of failures, punctuality, encouraging complaints to discover customers' adverse feelings, receiving information from the experienced consumers, opposing of failures and learning from recovery experiences by creating and retaining relationships with consumers. Service recovery is crucial after the occurrence of service failures in order to increase consumer satisfaction. It has been growing due to higher customer expectations and tougher rivalry among companies attempting to exceed their consumers' expectations. Service recovery is identified as efforts to resolve problems, to calm disappointed customers and hopefully to retain them as the firm's customers (Miller *et al.*, 2000). Similarly, it is a mode of exchange, as consumers feel they have suffered a loss due to the service failures and firms attempt to compensate customers' losses with service recovery (Smith *et al.*, 1999).

Apologising, recompense, confirming a speedy response to the consumers and following-up have been acknowledged as recovery actions in research (Smith *et al.*, 1999; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). Businesses should have possible recovery strategies that they may implement in order to resolve service failures. The impact of recovery strategies on the revenue of the firm can be important and maintaining decent relationships with existing customers is a crucial strategy (Ozuem *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, it highlights the importance of evaluating the recovery strategies at the beginning from the operation management's perception (Miller *et al.*, 2000). They introduced a comprehensive framework in the domain of components, such as core components, follow-up, service recovery types, expectations and results collated within the outline of the service failures. The framework categorises earlier patterns of findings as: "*if an appropriate recovery strategy is promptly provided, customers will return even when severe failures are experienced*" (Miller *et al.* 2000; p. 397). Other findings illustrate the impact of kinds of recovery strategies on consumers.

Recovery strategies can be categorised into two groups: tangible recovery strategies and psychological recovery strategies (Kuo & Wu, 2012). In addition, tangible recovery strategies provide recompense for real and perceived expenses like refunds, free services, discounts, gifts and vouchers in order to reduce losses. On the other hand, psychological recovery strategies attempt to calm the consumers by showing concern for their requirements, for example explaining details after a failure, confessing to a mistake and expressing disappointment for a fault in a polite, compassionate and concerned manner (Chang & Wang, 2012). The provision of mixed recovery strategies is beneficial in terms of recovery types as an apology itself is not enough for the consumer. At the same time, any additional recompense can increase the consumer's perception of justice. Customers who experience outcome-oriented service failures react satisfactorily to tangible recovery, while those clients who experience process-oriented service failures are happier with psychological recovery efforts (Cheng *et al.*, 2012).

A substantial number of studies indicates that clients who receive an apology after the occurrence of service failures are more satisfied than those who do not receive an apology from the service providers (Roschk & Gelbrich, 2014). Meanwhile, this study (??) proposes that the absence or presence of the apologies is just as essential as the way they are given and it is important to increase consumer satisfaction. More customers are satisfied with the delivery of a more sympathetic, convincing apology (Ayertey & Ozuem, 2018). It is advised that human participation is more effective after the occurrence of failures caused by human beings rather than by machines, for instance, interaction with frontline employees. In comparison human participation is less effective when the failures are caused by self-service technology. It is because a customer who prefers to use self-service technology to cooperate with service providers is attempting to avoid interaction between employees and consumers (Mattila *et al.*, 2011).

Earlier studies have extensively reviewed recovery strategies in the context of online service failures. Kelley *et al.* (2005) described twelve recovery strategies, categorised into two groups - one those that are successful with greater consumer satisfaction and others that are not. The nature of the recovery should be decided by the seriousness of the failures. Worth highlighting is the fact that the framework indicates a connection between an effective recovery and consumer satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Miller *et al.*, 2000). A survey conducted by Kelley *et al.* (2005) concluded that the type of service failures experienced by offline customers varies from the online environment. Moreover, online-based firms implement different sets of recovery strategies as compared with those engaged in offline settings. However, switching to another service provider can take place often among those customers who are based online despite successful failure recovery.

Compensation and apology are considered as the most important beneficial characters of service recovery after the occurrence of service failures (Chang & Wang, 2012). The study conducted by Kuo & Wu (2012) focussed on the impact of recovery strategies in the context of online service failures by implementing the apparent justice theory as proposed by McCollough *et al.* (2000). Holloway & Beatty (2005) highlighted the significance of recovery strategies in order to deal with online service failures. Repurchasing, however, would be exceptional despite the service recovery strategy implemented to rectify service failures. Whatever steps an organisations may take in order to prevent failures while service is concentrated, failures are inevitable. "*Mistakes are an unaviodable feature of all human endeavour* *and thus also of service delivery*" (Boshoff, 1997, p. 110). Thus, service failures appears to be inescapable, especially in the banking sector due to the difficulty of rendering face-to-face service experience in an online context. Moreover, service failures are difficult to rectify after their occurrence due to the intangible nature of the service.

Discussion has focussed on the primary concern of consumers being result-oriented service recovery whereas process-oriented service recovery is internal for consumers who are not very interested (Duffy *et al.*, 2006; Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). It is further claimed that outcome-oriented service failures are related to financial loss while process-oriented service failures create psychological loss (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011) for consumers. Therefore, outcome-oriented service failures usually include a utilitarian strategy that involves possessions, time and money whereas process-oriented service recovery includes a symbolic strategy that involves respect, prestige, sympathy and appreciation (Smith *et al.*, 1999). Thus, a high level of interaction is essential for service recovery between a customer and his/her service provider regarding delivery of an appropriate response to dissatisfied, unhappy consumers (Casado-Díaz & Nicolau-Gonzálbez, 2009). The often critical significance of workforces in the provision of a successful service recovery is highlighted. Furthermore, service failure is usual and consumers may experience disappointments in the service industry after failure occurs. It is essential that orgnisations attempt to respond to disappointed consumers with a suitable series of actions called "the customer recovery process" (Sparks *et al.*, 2003). Achieving success from service failure relies to a substantial extent on determining the key causes and recognising the basic processes that have led to the problem.

Some studies argue that an optimum recovery strategy can be based on the synthesis of the consumer assessments and cost structures of an organisation, whereas several scholars agree with the perception of matching service failures with recovery strategies (Smith *et al.*, 1999; McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003; Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Different organisations can have different cost structures that lead them to select different results or methods for recovery strategies. In such cases, the matching recovery strategy might not be a consistent optimum for all organisations (Zhu *et al.*, 2013). The integration of the three dimensions of justice supports resolving criticism of the general insights of justice and their successive behaviours (Blodgett *et al.*, 1997). Similarly, organisations can implement both recovery strategies concurrently to alter service failures encounters. This two-fold approach is commonly termed a 'mixed strategy'. When organisations implement mixed strategies, it is an indication of willingness to put extra effort into recovery for a failure instead of using the matching strategy (Zhu *et al.*, 2013).

When outcome failures occur (for example, service providers deliver the wrong product to a customer), a utilitarian strategy is implemented (for example, replacing the product) with an additional strategy (for example, an apology or the offer of a guarantee). Such service providers implement a mixed strategy rather than just one, similar to the research by Blodgett *et al.* (1997) illustrating maximum levels of interactional and procedural justice can equalise minimum levels of distributive justice. Similarly, while process failures take place (for example, front-line staff are unkind to a consumer), service providers would implement a symbolic strategy (for example, an apology) with a utilitarian strategy (for example, compensation). The effective recovery must concentrate more on outcome failures in the retail sector rather than process failures (Lockshin & McDougall, 1998; Bienstock *et al.*, 2008). This study is further reinforced by Yanamandram & White (2006) who stipulated that the firm's identification of the trouble and reassurance that it would not occur again have higher significance in business-to-business services than apologising. Service providers must recover outcome failures employing greater effort since they often involve core services and have a crucial effect on a specific transaction (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005; Gronroos, 2007).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Online service failure and service recovery strategies have only recently come into focus in service management literature. (Boroumand *et al.*, 2008; Fan *et al.*, 2010). Academics have derived research orientations to transfer the complications and conflicts from offline failure recovery literature to online (2014). Descriptions of service failures and recovery strategies emerge as they affect the risks and opportunities accredited to the multifaceted nature of digital backgrounds (Piercy & Archer-Brown, 2014). The existing literature on service failure and recovery strategies shows that understanding consumers is important and requires further examination by academics and specialists (Netemeyer & Maxham, 2002; Lo & Wu, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2013). This indicates that comprehending service failures and recovery experience from an online perspective is essential to positive recovery platforms. The discussion above emphasises the need to comprehend and relate the service failure-recovery to hypothetical explanations, leading the present study to explore the phenomenon on a broad spectrum.

The current study offers significants pointers for managers in the services sector. The findings suggest that service providers benefit from having a set of service recovery strategies in place to deploy when failures occur. One effective recovery strategy indicated in the literature is offering compensation to customers following a failure (Grewal et al., 2008; Crisafulli & Singh, 2017). Findings from this study indicates that compensation is an effective recovery strategy; however, this strategy is most effective if the compensation is perceived by customers as being benevolently offered, hence, managers should train frontline employees to offer customers recovery compensation in a manner that demonstrates sincere regret for the service failure (Lastner et al, 2016).

Another practical implication, emerging from this study have in response to service failures is the use of apologies, which are not just expected by affected customers, but are also beneficial in restoring organizational reputation especially in the context of service failure. On a long term, such an appreciation may enrich and facilitate the process of managerial decisionmaking involving communication choices aimed at repairing or fortifying relationships with customers (Salvador et al., 2012).

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Online Service Failure: Online service failure is a break that appears when the quality of service delivered is not what customers expected in the internet platform.

Recovery Strategy: Recovery strategy refers to the provision of recompense in the forms of real and perceived expenses, both tangible and psychological.

Service Failure: Service failure occurs when the perceptions of the customer fall below their expectations in the delivery of service.

Service Recovery: Service recovery is used to define the activities taken by service providers in order to recover the service failure.

Chapter 14
Calculation of Facebook Marketing Effectiveness in Terms of ROI

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ABSTRACT

This chapter demonstrates how to assess the performance of organic and sponsored activities on Facebook using the data available in Facebook Ads Manager, Facebook Page Insights, and Google Analytics. The main aim of the proposed ROI calculation model is to connect common social media marketing objectives with the analytical information available. The main emphasis is put on the technical aspect of ad performance assessment. The authors explain how the Facebook attribution system and post-impression algorithm work, describe the relation between advertising goals and metrics displayed as achieved campaign results, and demonstrate how to derive ROI indexes from different Facebook conversions. The chapter also includes a practical example how to calculate current and future value of ongoing ads.

INTRODUCTION

The digital advertising has become a key instrument for reaching marketing and business goals of many companies. This sector is rapidly growing reaching 281.407 billion USD in 2018. Even though the Search advertising still represents the largest segment with a market volume of 127.546 billion USD, Social media advertising is not far behind. With the annual growth of 10.5% this segment is expected to reach a market volume of 76.561 billion USD in 2022 (Statista, 2018a). Ad revenues of Facebook, the leading company on the field of social media advertising, stood at more than 39.9 billion USD in 2017 which is almost a 22 billion increase in comparison to 2015. In addition, the current statistics imply another potential for expansion for mobile advertising. According to Statista (2018b), mobile advertising seems to be the most promising form of revenue generation for the company. It is expected that Facebook mobile advertising revenues will reach 60.68 billion USD in 2021.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch014

The growing importance of social advertising in terms of online marketing activities is undoubtable. Big brands such as Samsung, Proter&Gambler, Coca Cola or Oreo embraced Facebook advertising as a key part of their marketing strategies. Samsung, who is one the Facebook biggest clients, spent 10 million USD in three weeks on Facebook just to launch its Galaxy S III phone. Also, Procter & Gamble, the world's largest advertiser, has a massive presence on Facebook and spends yearly about 60 million USD on sponsored posts. Brand´s Facebook influence does not have to be expressed only by the amount spent on online advertising. For instance, Coca-Cola has 76 million fans on Facebook, making it the most-liked brand on the planet, while Starbucks with 37 million fans occupies the fourth rank (Business Insider, 2018).

It can thus be assumed that greater effectiveness of online advertising contributes to improving business activities of companies that use it. Current studies show that online advertising, by making use of proper expertise and technologies, may help to change customer buying behavior (Abayi & Khoshtinat, 2016). Results of the previous surveys and studies supported the assumption that Facebook seems to be an effective medium for customer relationship management and the promotion of new products. Businesses are very keen to harvest all the benefits offered by this network. Facebook activities help to build awareness, inform, promote the brand and its product consistently with the business goals. However, understanding the targeted group of customers and the technical and contextual characteristics of the online media in use represent a crucial prerequisite for achieving all the online marketing objectives. Companies need to understand what are the correlations between their social media activities, online advertising and the benefits gained from such efforts (Ertugan, 2017).

One of the biggest issues in terms of assessing the effectiveness of Facebook marketing efforts is the quantification of the achieved results. Only some of the advertising efforts may be directly expressed as revenues. The remaining processes such as raising awareness and community building,contribute to the generation of profit indirectly. However, companies invest significant amounts of money in order to expand their fan bases, promote their company culture or engage in communication with their current customers. All of these partial steps contribute to creating the brand´s image and finally selling the promoted products. These activities, in particular, are causing considerable problems when it comes to calculating their contribution to the final revenues. Nevertheless, knowing the performance of all the marketing efforts on Facebook helps to effectively allocate the marketing ressources.

In this chapter, the researchers are going to focus on the calculation of return on Facebook marketing investments, hereinafter referred to as ROI-FM, including the proposition of Facebook advertising effectiveness evaluation models for individual goals reachable via this network. Thanks to the sophisticated tracking systems offered by Facebook and their connection to website analytical applications such as Google Analytics, the companies have numerous possibilities how to monitor the impact of their Facebook (and other) advertisements. It is important to understand the advertising system and the metrics related to it. Choosing the right metrics and interpreting them correctly with regards to the marketing goals is the only way how to assess the effectiveness of Facebook activities and optimize the settlement of online advertisements.

The following paragraphs are going to explain how Facebook attribution system and post impression algorithm work, describe the relation between advertising goals and metrics displayed as achieved campaign results, and demonstrate how to derive ROI-FM indexes from different Facebook conversions. Aim of this chapter is to connect common social media marketing objectives with analytical information available in Facebook Insights and Facebook Ads Manager. The authors believe that the proposed perspective could help the marketers to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by this networking platform.

FACEBOOK POST AND AD PERFORMANCE

Corvi and Bonera (2010) define advertising effectiveness as the extent to which advertising brings the desired effects. The authors also add that this effectiveness is not easy to measure due to its connection to marketing, financial, environmental, competition and other variables and that cannot always be expressed with quantitative measures. Aslam & Karjaluoto (2017) made a synthesis of previous papers discussing the topic of online advertising. In their paper they make difference between paid advertising and online marketing since the last one may include organic elements such as friend referrals or search engine optimization. The effectiveness assessment thus should not be restricted only to sponsored posts but also to other Facebook activities with organic (unpaid) reach and with other objectives than just increasing the number of product orders. Accordingly, the activities may be generalized by dividing them into two groups: customer relationship management and product promotion.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is generally defined as the relationship users have with the brand, advertisement or post (Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015). However, universal definition of this concept is still missing. Engagement is in terms of social networks expressed as a range of metrics while contextual relevance remains a critical aspect. According to a survey organized by Deloitte (2015), consumers do not use Facebook to look for new products or to engage with brands. Their primary motivation is to look for social information and entertainment.

Brands should therefore go beyond evelatuating just the purchases, but also examine other engagement parameters such as consumer's comments (Fulgoni, 2016). Research results presented by Brettel et al. (2015) indicate that in long term customers that like the brand page and interact with it (liking posts, commenting) are more likely to bring sales benefits.

However, many companies tend to misinterpret the achieved results and overestimate the effects of their Facebook activities. According to Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011), 38% of consumers feel social media interactions with a brand will not increase their loyalty to a brand. In addition, not all interactions may be considered as having the same value since for instance liking a brand page can occur for utilitarian reasons such as winning in a competition or getting a discount (Wallace et al., 2014).

The relevancy of shared content influences the way how consumers perceive marketing communication of the brand. Individual features that have the most significant impact on the consumer's perception are described by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This model covers also disruptive effects that may result in negative attitudes toward the post or advertisement and as consequence in lower engagement rate (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Heinonen (2011) suggested that consumer´s behavior is not influenced by a single motivation but rather by a variety of factors. He also adds that due to the growing portion of user generated content, traditional marketing strategies are less effective. Consumers are becoming active producers of business values.

User experience may be viewed as a composite variable consisting of extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors are connected to utilitarian value which describes the level of satisfaction with the information gained on products, specific problems or areas of interest. Whereas intrinsic factors correspond to hedonic value. Hedonic factors represent entertainment, fun, and sensory stimulation (Gutiérrez-Cillán et al., 2017). The main objective of social media marketers should thus be to satisfy both extrinsic and intrinsc factors. Whereas the primary impuls of the brand´s pages would be to focus on supplying required information on the products they sell, they should not neglect the intrinsic experience the users of social networks are looking for. The level of satisfaction with the dimensions described above conditions consumer´s motivation to stay in the community and possibly becoming a more active member (Bicen et al., 2011).

Zhou et al. (2013) studied the predeterminants of successful conversion from visitors to active members in online brand communities. They came to conclusion, that if the user by viewing the branded posts perceives them as having satisfactory informational value and realizes the benefits of belonging to this particular community his intention to participate will grow stronger.

Dehghani & Tumer (2015) studied the link between brand image, brand equity and purchase intention. They found high correlations between the examined factors and confirmed that Facebook may enhance brand image and brand equity leading to increased purchase intention.The authors describe a new phenomenon they refer to as trust advertising. Trust advertising is based on such features as participation, realization, personalization and feedback that should be developed all along the entire purchase cycle. Harris and Dennis (2011) in their paper studied factors influencing customer trust and engagement when it comes to Facebook branded content. They found out that social network users have a hierarchy of trust that goes as follows in the descending order Facebook friends, expert blogs, independent review sites and lastly celebrities and e-retailer sites.

Dehghani & Tumer (2015) also suggest that user´s willingness to purchase products increases with the growing number of "like"s and "share"s that possibly reflect the reputability of the brand in the eyes of the consumer. LaPointe (2012) came to different conclusions. He thinks that the membership of branded pages on Facebook and likelihood to click on advertising are not necessarily correlated. Banelis et al. (2013) argue that many buyers that frequently purchase goods from one category probably have larger brand repertoires and they are more likely to be 'fans' of multiple Facebook pages from this category.

In their experiment, Beukeboom et al. (2015) proved that there is a positive relationship between brand equity, purchase intention, brand attitudes and becoming a fan of a brand page. In a one month period the authors observed how engagement parameters changed for the users that became followers of a selected brand.The parameters increased in all the observed cases.

Many brands assume, that sharing large amounts of branded content will lead to the growth in sales and increased fan commitment and content sharing. However, only small fraction of the branded content is shared by the fans. Yuki (2015) claims that only 7% of the brand's activites are forwarded. Even Facebook´s own statistics support the assumption that posting too much branded content and pushing the fans to interact with it may chase them away and negatively react to advertised content (Brettel et al., 2015). There is also no significant correlation between the People Talking About This (PTAT) metric and brand´s sales of profit (Smallwood, 2016).

Some studies suggest that the strength of the fan base influence may differ across the product categories. For instance, fashion products content has a bigger potential to be shared by the social network users rather then financial services. Promoting products may therefore be slightly problematic for some categories that offer rather professional services. Facebook marketing is best suited for the promotion of consumer goods and products that are connected with entertainment and lifestyle. Even though, despite these barriers, neglecting company presence on Facebook may lead to missed opportunities to gain new customers. Companies thus should not abandon social networks but actively communicate with their potential customers, assess the impact of their activities and carefully consider the investments in Facebook advertising. For some categories, Facebook may be only used just as an indirect marketing support channel. Being able to measure the performance of individual media used, and understand them correctly represent a building stone of an effective social media marketing. Based on the results described in the Harvard Business Review study of 2100 companies, only 7% of the respondents were able to fully embrace the potential of social networks and were trying to understand the effectiveness of their advertising and marketing activities (Kohli et al., 2015).

When it comes to assessing the effectiveness of Facebook content, it is necessary to make a distinction between „brand posts“ and „user posts“. Through branded posts companies try to influence the experience of their followers. However, not all posts have the same impact and not all post generate the same value. Since Facebook posts are designed to allow the sharing of many types of content and to trigger various responses, measuring the user experience and reaction is very difficult due to the high number of possible permutations (Gutiérrez-Cillán et al., 2017).

Advertising Performance

Thanks to the personal details on all their users that Facebook and other social media store, they represent a superior channel to other advertising media since they allow the marketers to use this information to reach their target audiences (Curran et al., 2011). Advertising on Facebook is specific in that the advertiser may choose what advertising model he wants use and what metrics will be calculated to measure the performance of the advertisement. However, Facebook does not use the Flat Fee (FF) model. The advertising costs depend on the engagement rate, which measures how much the ads are relevant for the target audiences. The bigger the engagement is, the lower the costs will decrease (Tikno, 2017).

In the FF model, the marketing costs depend on the advertisement size and the impression time. In this advertising model, the advertiser pays for the time his advertising unit is being displayed regardless of the number of conversions generated during that period. While the CPM (from Latin Cost Per Mille), also known as the CPT (Cost Per Thousand) model is based on the calculation of the cost needed to pay by the advertiser to reach 1000 recipients. Just as the FF, neither the CPM model takes into account the number of actions (website visits, purchases made in the eshop, etc.) gained thanks to the advertisement. An other model that is used by Facebook advertising system is the CPC model (Cost per Click). Unlike the previous two models, CPC is based on the number of interactions with the ad. The advertiser is charged an exact sum that is determined as the number of actual clicks leading the advertisers website multiplied by the CPC index which determines the cost per click on an advertisement unit. Advertisers ordering campaigns in this model assess the effectiveness of their ads using the CTR index (click through rate) that indicates what percentage of the impressions resulted in the user interaction with the ad. Similar principle is used in the CPA model (Cost Per Action) where the advertiser pays not just for a click and a lead to his website, but rather for any action that is relevant to him. Advertising costs are drawn only when the action defined by the advertiser occurs such as filling the order form, providing contact details etc. The effectiveness of the CPA model is usually assessed via the conversion rate that stands for the percentage of users reacting to the advertisement performed the desired action.

In her paper, Magdalena Rzemieniak (2015) assessed the effectiveness and frequency of use of three types of online campaign settlements models: impression models, effectiveness models and hybrid models. Her survey comprising 50 entrepreneurs revealed that 80% of the respondents use the CPC model for most of their ads that over 60% of them also consider the most effective.

All of these advertising models have in common the need to captivate the viewer's attention and induce his interaction with the post. The marketers thus need to learn how to earn higher engagement rates. Tikno (2017) investigated the performance of different media types used on Facebook. The author used as control variables the gender, age and product type to define the interest group. The results showed that video based posts lead to higher engagement compared to images.

Dehghani and Tumer (2015) studied on the sample of 100 student from Cypriot universities the students´perception of branded content on Facebook. Their results indicate that in order to achieve a high level of effectiveness, the ads should include features such as personalization, participation and realization.

Despite all the undeniable benefits of sponsored content, users do not come to Facebook to browse through the advertisements. Ad placements are therefore susceptible to avoidance and may easily be ignored. Van den Broeck et al. (2018) analyzed the level of avoidance for the newsfeed and for the right sidebar. The avoidance level for the newsfeed was significantly higher. The authors also find out that product involvement and right audience targeting had positive moderating effect on intention to skip advertisements.

Research presented by Bang and Lee (2016) suggests that ad avoidance is more related to the habitual appearance than information processing. These results are in compliance with findings presented by Van den Broeck et al. (2018). Visual characteristics, timing, placement and audience targeting have been found to be key determinants of user interaction with the ad. According to Fan et al. (2017), placement is not a sufficient reason to ad avoidance. If the content of the ad is consistent with the interests of the user and fits within the social media context, the advertisement may actually provide positive experience to the user and lead to desired interaction.

The term "ad placement" is used to describe all advertising spaces provided by Facebook such as the newsfeed, righ side bar, Instagram, Audience Network, instream videos or messenger. The individual placements have different potential for reaching the Facebook users and perform differently when comes to the type of content chosen for the advertisement. Facebook newsfeed (with the possibility of distinction for desktop and mobile devices) represents the most popular placement on Facebook (Campbell and Marks, 2015). Thanks to their resemblance to the user generated content, sponsored posts provide a consistent reading experience (eMarketer, 2016).

Research related to the effectiveness of ad placements on social networks is very limited (Bang and Lee, 2016; Van den Broeck et al., 2017). The scarceness of information may be caused by the lack of nonexperimental data collected from real life campaigns and web traffic. Nevertheless, the evidence for website ad placements suggests that user´s reaction in terms of ad processing, attention, attitudes and clicks depend very strongly on the chosen ad placement (Mulhern, 2013). Feeling of intrusiveness is one of the other frequently mentioned causes of ad avoidance (Ying et al., 2009). Sponsored content is often perceived by the users as obstructing since it intervenes with the browsing goals of the consumers. Van den Broeck et al. (2017) presumes that newsfeed ads are more likely to be ignored than ads placed in the right column. Moreover, statistics report that there is also a different cost per conversion for different placements on Facebook. This only confirms the assumption of distinct effectiveness levels for advertising spaces (Loomer, 2013). In addition, the conversion cost and final campaign results are also determined by the price and optimization models.

Many researchers agree that advertising blindness may be avoided by achieving higher product involvement (Cho, 2003; Rejón-Guardia and Martínez-López, 2014; Kelly et al., 2010). The term product involvement is defined as "[…] perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). Becker-Olsen (2003) found that adjusting the ad content to match the interests of the target audience may lead to higher effectiveness of newsfeed ads over the right column placements. The author argues that thanks to the better fit of the ad with the audience the cognitive effort increases leading to a greater engagement. Cowley and Barron (2008) came to similar conclusions. They believe that the persuasion ability of the advertisements is related to the context where the ad is placed. If the post is not consistent with the expected content in the newsfeed, the users find it less entertaining, brand attitude decreases and ad avoidance increases.

Bleier et al. (2015), Chi (2011) and Taylor et al. (2011) believe that the motivation to use Facebook may as well influence the attitudes toward online advertising. Smock et al. (2011) identified nine user motivations to be part of Facebook community: Habitual pass time, Relaxing entertainment, Expressive information sharing, Escapism, Cool new trend, Companionship, Professional advancement, Social interaction, To meet new people. All these motives may be divided into two categories: goal-oriented search motives and playful surfing motives. For search tasks online ads are perceived as irritating and lead to lower attitude towards the ad (Duff and Faber, 2011).

Some authors emphasize the need to assess the effectiveness of advertising more systematically. According to Knoll (2015), there is no systematic empirical overview setting the guidelines on how to measure the performance of social media campaigns. Many research studies tend to focus on the identification of the relation between attitudes, perception and online advertising, but they provide no practical insights for advertisers.

COLLECTING PERFORMANCE DATA

The benefits of advertising in an online environment include large array of benefits. In addition to easy targeting of selected customer groups and flexible communication with potential customers, easy traceability of user´s actions represents the key prerequisite to accurately measure the performance of Facebook marketing activities. Conveniently, Facebook has its own tracking system that is able to evaluate user behavior, divide users into customer segments based on multiple selection criteria and precisely measure the level of user engagement with the post in the form of likes, shares, clicks and other metrics. The assesssment of ad / post effectiveness and the calculation of ROI-FM strongly depend on the quality of available data. Based on the previously described findings, ad effectiveness assessment requires information about the target audience, user engagement and interaction with the post, user behavior and attitudes toward the ad. In order to calculate the return of marketing investements, the company also needs to keep track of its advertising and ad processing expenses.

Advertising Costs

Companies of all sizes resort to social media as to a less expensive option compared to offline advertisement media. Facebook advertising is suitable even for restricted budgets. Advertisers decide how much they want to spend per each campaign. Whether the ad will be shown to a user from a target group depends on the evaluation of the two objectives that Facebook defines as its priority in terms of sponsored content. Firstly, Facebook’s efforts to help advertisers reach the target audience and reach marketing goals. Secondly, the company strives to create for the people who use its applications and services a positive and relevant environment. For this reason, ads are delivered based on an auction that takes into account the interests of both advertisers and users. The aim of these auctions is to offer the right person the right ad at the right time. The winner of the auction is not the highest bid, but the ad with the highest total value.

The total value is calculated as a combination of three factors: the advertiser's bid, the estimated response rate, the quality and relevance of the ad. An advertiser's bid is the amount he is willing to pay for displaying his ads to the target audience. The estimated response rate is calculated by Facebook based on the previous responses of the audience the advertiser is trying to reach, taking into account the type of reaction the ad is optimized for. This estimated response rate includes also the historical effectiveness of your ad. The quality and relevance of the sponsored content is judged by the actual user response. If the advertised post does not generate any clicks or if it receives negative reactions, the quality and thus the total value may decrease. On the other hand, in the case of positive reactions, the quality and relevance score of the ad is growing. Relevance score for each ad is always displayed in the Ads Manager. This score ranges from 1-10 points, 10 representing the highest quality ranking.

During every auction, these three factors are recalculated in relation to the goals of the ad optimization. An ad with a higher total value wins and is finally displayed to the user. Thanks to the combination of multiple factors, better advertising can defeat an advertiser with a higher bid. The advertiser pays only when a conversion action for which he is optimizing the ad occurs. For example, the compan´s goal is to make the customers visit the company´s website, the conversion action will be a click on the web. This is the so-called PPC (pay-per-click, pay-per-click) system. The amount that Facebook will charge the advertisers is the minimum amount he neededs to win the auction.

The costs of Facebook advertising may vary considerably depending on the industry and the target group the company wants to offer their product. The total budget spend on a campaign is determined by the advertiser. This amount may range from 5 USD a week to 500 USD a day. The ad and campaign investment is not limited. It is up to the advertiser to decide how much money from the corporate budget he wants to spend on advertising. For advanced ad types, there is a minimum amount set to ensure their functionality.

Based on the budget, the bid, and targeting parameters, Facebook estimates the number of people the ad may potentially reach and who represent the target group corresponding the best to your advertising objectives.

Profiling the Target Audience

All the ads a company may order on Facebook always have the same structure, regardeless the advertising objectives. A Facebook advertising order consists of a campaign, a set of ads, and the ad itself. Different parameters are set for each of these levels. By structuring the campaign, companies may gain a better insight into the promotions that are currently running. Also all of these steps are part of the target group definition process and help to collect detailed information about the ad performance.

At the campaign level the advertiser selects the appropriate goal / purpose of the ads. In this step, there is a limited number of options the advertiser may choose from. The most frequently selected campaign goals include, for example, earning more fans for the company page, getting reactions for the posts, or achieving a higher website traffic. The advertiser should select such campaign goals that correspond the best the marketing objectives of the company. Campaign goal selection is important for Facebook optimization. Based on the chosen purpose, the algorithm selects the group of users that is most likely to perform the desired action.

On the ad set level, the exact requirements for the target audience are specified. These include geographic, demographic and interest parameters. Next, the budget, the way of drawing it, the start and duration of the campaign, the placement of the ads, and the type of connection to Facebook company page are specified. Within a single campaign, it is possible to have multiple sets that differ from each other in terms of targeting parameters. For example, if the company wants to target women aged 18-24 and 40-54 it has to address each of these two segments differently (different slogan, creative). It is thus best for the advertiser to set up two ad sets.

The final element of the advertising Facebook structure are the ads. This last step consists in setting the visual parameters and the content of the advertisement. At this point, the advertiser is choosing whether the company should present itself through an image or video, or what text to add to make the most of the sponsored post.

Choosing the wrong campaign goal may negatively affect the performance of the advertisement. Based on the various Facebook marketing activities, the campaign goals and targeting strategies may be divided into three groups: Awareness, Consideration and Conversion (Table 1). These three groups describe the main stages of the new customer acquisition. Structuring marketing efforts in accordance with the acquisition stages may contribute to easier estimation of the value assigned to individual conversions (likes, shares, clicks, etc.).

If the advertiser´s goal is to let people know about the existence of the company and what its value lies in, the best option is to optimize the ads for raising awareness. Imagine promoting a small craft firm specializing in the production of wooden fashion accessories such as brooches, wooden business card cases or wooden bowties. In the ads, you want to emphasize that all goods are handcrafted and that you put a lot of care in every single piece you made. By emphasizing these qualities of your products, you will help your customers better understand why this company stands out over competition. In this case, it is the best to optimize the campaign for reach. When selecting as campaign goal the reach, Facebook will strive to show the ad to as many people as possible, but it will not consider whether these users will click on your ads or not.

When selecting a targeting category Consideration, the ads are primarily served to users who are likely to make a response (click, page markup as I like it, video viewing, etc.). The first goal in this group is “Traffic”. The Traffic destination is selected by the advertiser. It depends on whether he want the users to visit the website, app or messenger. Campaign goal “Engagement” helps to increase the user interaction with the post, event or the number of followers of the company page. Another interesting targeting goal in this category is “Lead generation”. This option serves to collect information about the potential customers. With this type of advertising, you can offer customers, for example, a newsletter registration, a discount on selected goods, or the possibility of early registration at your event.

Table 1. Facebook targeting strategies

<table>
<tr><td>Awareness
Objectives that generate interest in your product or service:
• Brand awareness
• Reach</td><td rowspan="2">Consideration
Objectives that get people to start thinking about your business and look for more information about it:
• Traffic
• App instals
• Engagement
• Video views
• Lead generation
• Messages</td></tr>
<tr><td>Conversion
Objectives that encourage people interested in your business to purchase or use your product or service:
• Conversions
• Catalog sales
• Store visits</td></tr>
</table>

Source: (the authors)

Conversion targeting is meant to reach a narrower set of users who are most likely to perform the desired action (for example, buying goods). Facebook includes into this target audience users who have already reacted in a similar way to other ads. With the help of the ads from this category the advertiser may also create so-called dynamic ads. Dynamic ads allow to automatically promote products from the selected catalog. Catalog products are displayed to those users who have visited the company website at least once. If the user has viewed a particular product on the website, he will see an ad containing the image of this particular product or of a product from a similar category. The product catalog combined with dynamic ads is the most powerful remarketing tool.

Another category of advertising objectives is represented by "Store visits". This kind of ad is suitable for companies with multiple stores. Similarly to products, the advertiser may create dynamic ads for the company stores locations. These ads are delivered based on the geographic location of the user. If the user is in a location near your local store, you'll see a relevant ad.

Tracking User Behavior

Just prior to ordering Facebook advertisements, the advertiser should consider what are the business goals of the company. Depending on these goals, the company should choose appropriate tracking tools to help evaluate the performance of the advertising campaigns. If one of the goals is to redirect potential customers to the website, the company will need to integrate Facebook pixel to optimize its ads. Additionally, if the advertiser seeks more accurate monitoring of your customers' behavior, it is required to install analytical software such as Google Analytics on the company website and use UTM links.

Facebook pixel represents a specific Facebook-generated fraction of code that is created specifically for the company advertising account. After uploading this code to the website, Facebook is able to monitor whether the customer has made the requested actions. A properly installed Facebook allows not only to track conversion events, but also to optimize the ads, and to use remarketing. Remarketing tools are used to reach all the users that visited the company website, or just those customer segments that have visited specific pages, products, or made specific actions, but have not completed them (for example, saving goods into a shopping cart but not making a purchase). With the pixel, it is possible to track specific conversions across devices that the user owns, search for new customers and create remarketing ads.

One of the key steps leading to effective measurement of website traffic is to add UTM parameters to the links shared on social networks and other online spaces. However, this tool will not bring any results if the company does not use any analytical software on the web. UTM parameters are text fragments that are attached in the specified format to the web link. Attaching these textual segments does not change anything about the landing page but it will allow the analytical software to exactly identify from what source, campaign, or advertisement the users come to the website. UTM parameters represent a way of communicating between the web and the analytical web application.

UTM parameters generally contain the following 5 elements:

utm_source = source name (the name of the linked site)

utm_medium = media name = type of marketing channel (cpc = paid search, organic = unpaid search, referral = link, etc.)

utm_campaign = campaign = campaign name (for example, in Sklie) or other modulation (eg Facebook date or newsletter)

utm_content = ad name = another sub-level, for example, the name of the ad group in the PPC ad

utm_term = keyword = another sub-level, for example, keyword in PPC ad

Advertisers should mark using the UTM parameters all links uploaded as posts, as well as advertisements. This marking system significantly contributes to better segmentation of website traffic and helps to predict the behavior of visitors coming from different online sources (Direct, Social, Organic search, and Refferal).

Facebook Metrics

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, one of the big advantages of online marketing tools lies in the possibility to precisely measure the impact and performance of individual ads. However, evaluating the return of your marketing investments (ROI) may not be an easy task. In the online environment and specifically on Facebook, you will find a great deal of data (metrics), whose value may be judged differently depending on your marketing goals. In addition, in the online environment, there are two types of content: organic and sponsored. Organic reach includes all the results achieved without having to use facebook advertising. Even though these posts do not require funds for advertising they still generate marketing costs in the form of content production expenses. Evaluating the performance of the Facebook activities contributes to the increase of ROI-FM, and helps identify new customer groups, test creatives, and optimize the marketing strategies.

Facebook provides several applications through which the advertiser may access the collected data. Administrators of Facebook company pages can get the general review of posts organic and paid performance through the Insights tab. If the company manages ads directly from the Facebook page,advertising results will appear under the Promotion tab. However, the most comprehensive set of reporting tools is offered by the Ad Manager and Business Manager.

The Business Manager provides multiple reporting features, such as Ads Manager; Testing and Learning tool; Facebook Analytics; Pixel, Offline events, Application events, and Conversion managers. From the point of view of advertising effectiveness, the first three of the above, are the most relevant.

When seeing the Facebook ads in Newsfeed, Instagram, or Audience Network, the user can do several actions, including giving likes, sharing, viewing videos, visiting the website, or purchasing a product. All of these actions are recorded and displayed in the reporting columns for each ad in the Ads Manager. Hovewer, not all conversions are recorded and displayed instantly. Conversions made on the web are attributed to the ads when they occur, which may be within a few days. For example, When browsing Facebook, thanks to a sponsored post, the user gets interested in a new mobile phone. Through the ad, he is redirected to the dealer's website and puts the phone in the shopping cart, but he does not complete the purchase. After three days of thinking he decides that he will buy the mobile phone. Even though he reacted to the ad earlier, the measurable result happened after three days. This action can be reflected as two different metrics in the Ads Manager, both as impression attribution and click attribution. Impression attribution means that the user saw your ad and subsequently made a purchase without clicking on that ad. Click attribution refers to the situation where the click was made directly from the ad.

Nevertheless, the number of interactions with the post cannot be confused with the advertising results. The results column only records the values that match the campaign target. Generally, every advertisement gets more reactions than results. If the objective of the ad is to gain more web traffic, ale click leading on the website will be recorded as results and all the likes, shares and comments will be registered as interactions. In detailed ad reports, these events are held in separate columns. Tracking the interactions, not just the results, provides additional insights into the ad's performance. It is possible that the ad received only 10 results (e.g. web clicks) but it could have contributed to 50 new followers of the company Facebook page.

Due to the growing number of channels and devices used by individual users, Facebook is gradually introducing new attribution models and switching from cookie-based to person-based monitoring. Currently, two types of attribution models can be distinguished, taking into account user behavior across devices: Last used channel model and Touch point model.

Facebook currently (May 2018) uses the model of the last channel when assigning ad conversions. Conversion then attributes the last ad the user has clicked on. If he does not click on any ad, the conversion is credited to the last displayed ad. The default conversion count is set to 28 days. Conversion events outside of this conversion window are not counted. In the near future, Facebook is getting ready to move to the Touch Point Model. This approach to monitoring divides the final value of the conversion and assigns it to the individual channels and ads that contributed throughout the process (Figure 1).

The result metrics depend on the selected Facebook campaign goals and include the following variables: reach, engagement, link click, mobile app install, 3s video views, potential customers on the web, shopping on the web, and the value of site purchase conversion.

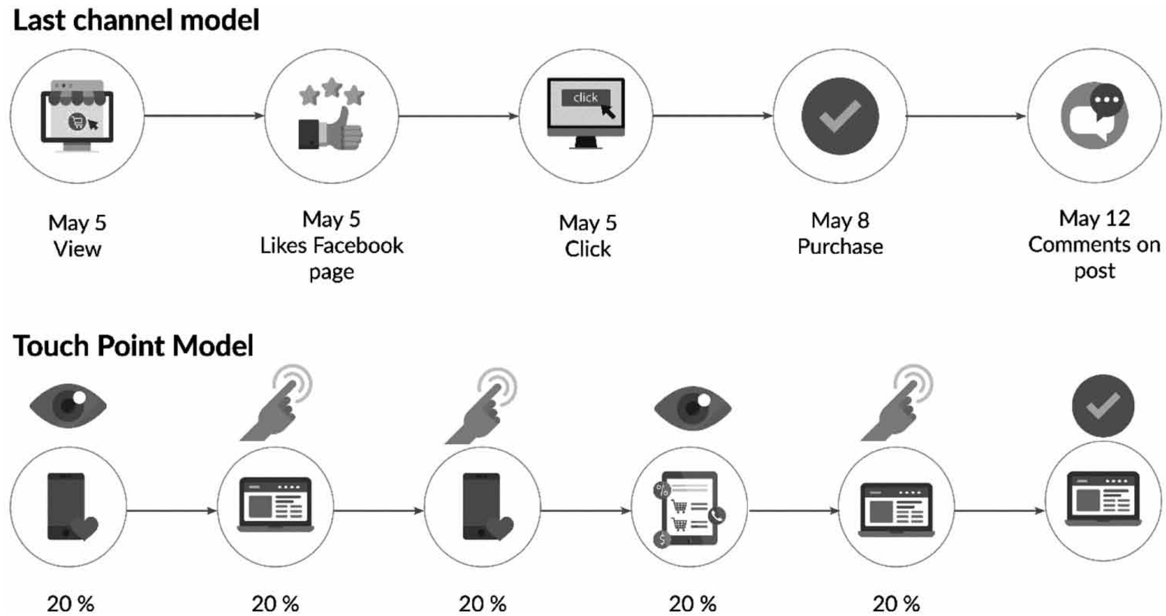
The first of the metrics is reach. Reach describes the size of the audience the post was displayed to. After defining demographic and geographic data for the advertisement targeting, Facebook estimates the daily reach based on the information about the active users who use Facebook daily. However, this estimated reach is also affected by the placement, budget, and campaign goal. For example, if the advertiser decides to remove the right column placement, the reach will decrease due to the loss of potential views in this part of interface on desktop computers and laptops. The overall reach of the campaign is expressed as the number of unique users who saw the campaign. One user can see the ad multiple times, but nothing changes in reach. The "reach optimization" goal allows the advertiser to control the frequency of viewing the same ad by one user.

There are two types of "click" metrics in Facebook reports: link-click metric and an all-clicks metric. The all-clicks metric encompasses all clicks on the ad and its parts including the likes, shares, comments, or the clicks to view a full screen image or video. While link-click counts only the clicks on links leading to external websites or other parts of Facebook. Based on these two metrics, Facebook calculates other derived metrics: CPC (all), CPC (link clicks), CTR (all), and CTR (link clicks). CPC represents the average cost per click, while the CTR indicates the average clickthrough rate. CPC is expressed as the total campaign costs divided by the number of clicks. CTR refers to the number of times people clicked on the link in the ad compared to how many times they saw the ad.

Engagement reflect whether the ads are interesting (relevant) for the target audience the advertiser choose. The higher the relevance, the higher the chance that the target audience will take action. Engagement is calculated as the sum of all actions performed in connection with the ad. The average cost per engagement is calculated as the ratio of the amount issued and the level of engagement.

In the Ads manager and in the page Insights it is possible to find another metric describing all video views longer than 3 seconds. In Facebook reports, you may also find 10s video views and viewing the

Figure 1. Facebook attribution models
Source: (the authors)



entire video metrics. However, the issue of video metrics is that about 90% of videos are triggered automatically and only 10% is played by the user. A similar situation concerns the impressions of the video. If the user views one video multiple times, each of these views is counted as one impression. For this reason, additional video metrics, such as the percentage of the video viewed (how many percent of the video the users saw) and the number of unique impressions, are worth evaluating. Impression provides an overview of how many times the advertisement has been displayed on Facebook. However, impression does not represent a unique view. That is way along with impressions the Facebook reports also the Frequency indicator that indicates how many times the average user has already seen the ad, and the CPM index describing the average cost per 1000 impressions.

The advertiser has a plethora of variables to evaluate the individual campaigns and advertisements. Facebook offers over 50 different metrics with varying levels of detail that help to shed some light on the effectiveness of posts and ads. Nevertheless, not all metrics are suitable for all purposes and advertising goals. The advertiser must choose which indexes are relevant for his ads and which are redundant since they offer unnecessarily detailed information.

The Costs of the Content Processing

In addition to the price payed for the advertising space and the impressions of the ads, the companies should also consider the expenses needed for the creation of the marketing content. Now, Facebook supports the distribution of almost all type of multimedia including photo, gif files, videos, photo presentations and 3D product models. The audience at social networks has quite high expectations when it comes to the content they usually engage with. Due to the increasing number of brands and advertisers who compete to gain the users attention, the quality of the sponsored content is growing, turning Facebook advertising into highly competitive environment. However, creating quality content requires time, skill and a good technical background. At this point, it is necessary to decide whether the advertiser is able to produce such a content with the company resources or whether he should use the services of a digital agency. The advertiser may choose both. Many of the big brands have their own creative departments that take care of the visual design of the regular posts but for bigger campaigns they resort to professional assistance. It is not possible to objectively demonstrate which of the options is more profitable. The realization of the benefits is strongly individual and depends on many internal characteristics of the company such as the frequency with which the company produces creative content, available equipment and human resources.

The price of the creative content cannot be neglected since it generally represents significant percentage of the company´s marketing budget. Each of the online and offline communication channels has different requirements on size, format, resolution and sound the processing of sound elements that are an integral part of multimedia advertisements. When creating promotional material, these aspects must be taken into account to ensure that the resulting material can be distributed without any problems to the end-viewer. Notwithstanding, the calculation of the content processing costs is not the main objective of this chapters, the authors believe that understanding the creative design process will help to clarify the economic demands on online advertising.

The graphic designer works with graphical software editors to process vector and bitmap graphics. He often needs to use paid graphical elements from photo stocks, illustrative images, vector graphics, and / or icons, sounds and pythographs. Another distinctive graphic element is the typography used. The fonts used often provide the graphs with a certain mood and atmosphere and should of course always be selected with regard to the target audience of the advertiser and to the need for text readability on various devices. One design is generally used for many advertising formats (flyer, poster, banners, slideshow, newsletter graphics). The graphic designer must re-lay the required formats, modify them, and eventually export them to suitable output variants (pdf, jpeg, esp, png, gif). All of these steps require investments. The price of content varies of course depending on the required quality. Thanks to the technological development of media content processing, the technological level is rising even for low end devices. The development of both audio and video recorders has progressed considerably, and over the past decade, high-quality audiovisual material can be created with relatively cheap technical tools. The following list of equipment is divided into 3 price ranges for each area (graphics, audio, video) - from the cheapest possible equipment, through the middle quality class to the professional equipment (Table 2). The price range is only indicative. Obviously, equipment is not replaced after every campaign made but nevertheless there is 2 to 3 years amortization for most of the technological devices.

It is difficult generalize the time needed for the creation of an advertisement. The time allowance is very fluctuating and may, of course, vary according to the complexity of the project. Also, an experienced worker who can efficiently and appropriately use modern technological processes and software tools can produce the resulting product in less time than an employee with less practical experience. A web banner can take about 5 hours to create. Making an audio record composed of an actor's commentary along with audiobook and FX sound effects can take a range of 3 to 20 hours. It is thus up to each advertiser to estimate these costs for his advertisements and product promotion. Generally, the company use two ways how to express the content processing costs – as the part of marketing costs or as the part of the product costs. Before starting to track the ROI of Facebook advertisements it is crucial to decide what is the costs structure. For the purposes of further calculations described in this chapter, the authors include content production costs in the product costs as a flat rate.

Table 2. Average content processing costs

Quality Category	Informative Price of the Devices	Price Range
Graphics Processing - Image Recording		
Low end	Smartphone with Camera application	100 - 300 €
Middle class	Compact camera (500 €)	400 - 600 €
Profi class	DSLR Cameras - body (2.000 €) + lenses (2.0000 €) + accessories - flash lights, stands, filters (1.500 €)	5.000 - 10.000 €
Graphics processing - postproduction		
Low end	Filters in the Camera application on the smartphone	100 - 300 €
Middle class	Freeware + free plugins	400 - 600 €
Profi class	Software tools for the processing of raster and vector graphics (1.000 €), graphical interface - tablet (1.000 €)	1.500 - 5.000 €
Sound processing - recording		
Quality category	**Informative price of the devices**	**Price range**
Low end	Smartphone with sound recording application	100 - 300 €
Middle class	Condenser microphone (150 €), sound card (300 €)	300 - 600 €
Profi class	Stereo pair of condenser microphones (1.000 €) + microphone preamp (1.5000 €) + AD/DA convertor (1.500 €) + accessories (500 €)	4.000 - 6.000 €
Sound processing - postproduction		
Low end	Mobile application on the smartphone	0 €
Middle class	Freeware + free plugins	0 €
Profi class	Software tools (1.000 € + professional postproduction plugins (3.000 €) + hardware - compressors, EQ, mastering chain (20.000 €)	20.000 - 50.000 €
Video processing - recording		
Quality category	**Informative price of the devices**	**Price range**
Low end	Smartphone with Camera application	100 - 300 €
Middle class	Handheld video camera (400 €)	300 - 600 €
Profi class	Professional video camera (10.000 €), lenses (2.000 €), accessories (1.000 €)	12.000 - 50.000 €
Video processing - postproduction		
Low end	Smartphone video editor	0 €
Middle class	Freware + free plugins	0 €
Profi class	Software tools for video data editation (1.500 €), hardware for color correction (10.000), HW work station (4.000 €)	15.00 - 50.000 €

Source: (the authors)

ROI-FM DETERMINATION MODEL

The effectiveness of Facebook ads is generaly measured by the level of user engagement. According to Tikno (2017) the engagement rate represents … *the proportion of action taken by the Facebook user to displaying ads with how many times the ads is showed*:

$$E = A / R \tag{1}$$

which:

E = Engagement Rate

A = Action taken (Amount of People who liked, commented, shared, or clicked on the ad)

R = Reach (Amount of People who saw the ad)

This formula allows to measure the post performance and compare posts (both organic and sponsored) between each other and to monitor the development of the relative Facebook marketing effectiveness over time. Nevertheless, this formula does not reflect the financial aspects of the marketing activities and thus does not provide complete information in terms of marketing investments. Eventhough, marketing costs may seem irrelevant for organic (unpaid) posts, there are still costs associated with the creation of the visual content. Moreover even the organic posts may generate financial value. For this reason, financial variables should be incorporated in the effectiveness assessment model.

The definition of this model will partly depend on the goals the company is trying to achieve. Are the company's objectives to increase the brand awareness, revenues, customer satisfaction, or other? Let's start with a simple ROI calculation model modified for the social media purposes. In broader sense, the return on investment in social media represents the sum of all social media actions that create value taking into account all the resources invested in their implementation. This simplified formula would look like this:

Simple ROI Calculation = ((Total revenue - Marketing investment) / Marketing ivestment) * 100   (2)

However, this formula is very simplified, since it only operates with revenue from sales rather than actual profits. To accurately measure the ROI, it is desirable to know the cost of the goods sold:

ROI Calculation for direct activities = ((Total revenue - Total COGS - Marketing Investment) / Marketing investment) * 100   (3)

where:

Total revenue = sales generated by the marketing campaign such as ecommerce transactions

Total COGS = cost of goods sold

The problem with this formula is that for many Facebook activities the contribution to the revenu is indirect. Only data available for these activities are Facebook metrics such as the reach, the number of interactions, page view, etc. The effectiveness model should thus also reflect this reality. Therefore:

ROI Calculation for Indirect Contribution = ((Total value of the actions taken - Total COGS - Marketing Investment) / Marketing investment) * 100   (4)

The most difficult step consists in the calculation of the Total value of the actions taken. Not all interactions have the same value and except for the posts / ads optimized for purchases it is not possible to directlly measure the revenue generated by the advertisement. Taking into consideration the Facebook attribution models described above, all of the conversions contribute to the final result. The revenues coming from purchases should thus be distributed between the others conversions with appropriates weights. If the advertisers desires to assess the effectiveness of individual ads, they need to know what these bring them in terms of likes, shares, clicks etc.The average revenue contribution of the conversions may be calculated based on the historical data the company managed to collect and should reflect the targetting characteristics of the audience. It is likely that different customer segments will have different average revenues since some target groups require more marketing effort and respond to ads more conservatively. Before calculation the average revenu contibution per conversion, the advertiser should firstly analyze data available in the GA and find out what is the conversion rate per visitor and what actions lead to the final purchases. Combining these data with the post information provided by Facebook is the only way to get the entire profile of user behavior and estimate the real value of each conversion.

Looking back the attribution model described in the section 2.4, the conversion process goes from the less engaging actions such as likes, comments and shares to the actions that require more cognitive effort from the consumer. Generally, there is decreasing tendency along the conversion processes. This tendency is being referred to as marketing funnel. The stages customer usually travel through are post views, reactions (likes, comments, shares), click on the link and web visit, registration to the newsletter, purchase. There maybe other stages included depending on the business model the company applies. Due to the marketing funnel the contribution of the conversion to the revenue increases toward the and of the buying process. Therefore, the revenu contribution per metric may be expressed as:

$$ARMS = (P/M) * TR \tag{5}$$

where:

ARMS = Average revenue per metric per customer segment

P = Number of purchases per segment for a monitored period of time

M = Number of the metrics conversions per segment for a monitored period of time

TR = Total revenue

The adjusted formula for the individual advertisements is thus defined as follows:

$$\text{ROI Calculation for individual advertisements} = \left(\left\{\left[\left(n_{WCK}*AR_{WCK} + n_{RE}*AR_{RE} + n_{AD}*AR_{AD} + n_{LCS}*AR_{LCS} + n_{F}*AR_{F} + n_{VW}*AR_{VW} + n_{M}*_{ARM} + TPC\right) - \text{Total COGS} - \text{Advertisement costs}\right]\right\} / \text{Advertisement costs}\right) * 100 \tag{6}$$

where:

- **AR_{WCK}:** Average revenue of website clicks per customer segment;

- **AR_{RE}:** Average revenue of registration per customer segment;
- **AR_{AD}:** Average revenue of application download per customer segment;
- **AR_{LCS}:** Average revenue of reactions (likes, comments, shares) per customer segment;
- **AR_{F}:** Average value of fans per customer segment;
- **AR_{VW}:** Average value of video views per customer segment;
- **AR_{M}:** Average value of other metric per customer segment chosen by the company;
- **TPC:** Total purchase value per campaign - calculated based on the acctual data related to the specific campaign retrieved from the website analytical software;
- **nM:** Number of conversions for the observed metric.

In the formula above, it is possible to replace the observed metrics or to ad others such as video views, reach, etc. The average values expressed in the aformentionned relationship represent future value of the campaign, not the current value which is expressed by the revenu generated by the purchases. The authors believe that this model could help to improve the evaluation of the indirect activities that are more difficult to judge since they not produce enough instant revenue but could lead to purchases in the future.

To properly estimate the profit from certain consumer actions (purchase, page views, app downloads, newsletter registration, etc.), setting up the tracking systems described above (Google Analytics, Facebook pixel, etc.) to identify which conversions can be assigned to Facebook campaigns is crucial. Because of the short life cycle of social networking campaigns, unsuccessful campaigns should be optimized or turned off as soon as possible. Understanding the available metrics and what value they represent is the only way how to judge Facebook effectiveness properly.

Interpreting the Advertising Results

In the following paragraphs, the authors are going to demonstrate how to use the aformentionned formula with the organic and advertising results. Data presented in this chapter was collected by a Czech company selling home accessories and interior decorations. In the course of the two weeks, the company ran eight advertisements and published three posts from which one were sponsored. Each of the posts was sponsored for three days. For all the posts and ads, the company kept track of these variables if they were relevant: number of web clicks, reactions (likes and comments), purchases, newsletter registration, and campaign costs. The final data was exported from Facebook Ads Manager and completed with data collected via Google Analytics and UTM enhanced web filtering (Tables 3 and 4).

Based on the historical data collected for this customer segment, the company estimated the average value for each of the monitored metric. From Google Analytics, the company extracted the revenues generated by the purchases by the Facebook campaigns, and estimated the total costs of the goods sold. Ad effectiveness was then calculated using the ROI formula for individual marketing campaigns (Tables 5 and 6).

Looking more closely on the previous results it is possible to see that the campaign value significantly increased for the majority of ads. This increased value represents current revenue and the value that the ads / posts could bring in the future. However, these results cannot be used for reporting purposes, they better describe the performance of the ads. If the ad performance would be judged just based on the number of purchases, most of the posts would be described as ineffective. On the other hand, assum-

Table 3. Advertising results

Advertisements							
Campaign Name	**Optimization Goals**	**Type of the Content**	**Website Clicks**	**Reactions**	**Number of Purchases**	**Newsletter Registration**	**Campaign Costs**
Campaign 1	Engagement: fans	Photo	28	382	2	15	63 USD
Campaign 2	Engagement: fans	Video	48	647	9	27	77 USD
Campaign 3	Lead generation	Photo	215	93	82	29	35 USD
Campaign 4	Lead generation	Video	301	124	151	14	48 USD
Campaign 5	Conversions	Product carousel	355	82	263	27	54 USD
Campaign 6	Conversions	Photo	276	133	189	42	39 USD
Campaign 7	Catalog sales	Photo	115	25	97	34	22 USD
Campaign 8	Catalog sales	Product carousel	184	18	164	58	28 USD

Source: (the authors)

Table 4. Results for the posts on the company page

Posts on the Company Page							
Campaign Name	**Optimization Goals**	**Type of the Content**	**Website Clicks**	**Reactions**	**Number of Purchases**	**Newsletter Registration**	**Campaign Costs**
Post 1 organic	not defined	Photo	2	21	0	0	0
Post 2 organic	not defined	Video	1	39	0	0	0
Post 3 organic	not defined	Video	3	52	0	0	0
Post 3 sponsored	Engagement	Video	29	631	4	0	61 USD

Source: (the authors)

Table 5. ROI and average revenues for the advertisements

Advertisements						
Campaign Name	**AR_{WCK} (USD)**	**AR_{LCS} (USD)**	**AR_{RE} (USD)**	**TPC (USD)**	**42% COGS (USD)**	**Campaign ROI**
Campaign 1	0,6	0,1	0,8	85	35,7	145,24
Campaign 2	0,6	0,1	0,8	382	160,44	421,25
Campaign 3	0,6	0,1	0,8	3432	1441,4	6075,43
Campaign 4	0,6	0,1	0,8	6127	2573,3	7754,79
Campaign 5	0,6	0,1	0,8	10522	4419,24	11666,22
Campaign 6	0,6	0,1	0,8	7638	3207,96	11838,05
Campaign 7	0,6	0,1	0,8	3751	1575,4	10249,09
Campaign 8	0,6	0,1	0,8	6493	2727,1	13922,5

Source: (the authors)

Table 6. ROI and average revenues for page posts

Posts on the Company Page						
Campaign Name	**AR_{WCK} (USD)**	**AR_{LCS} (USD)**	**AR_{RE} (USD)**	**TPC (USD)**	**42% COGS (USD)**	**Campaign ROI**
Post 1 organic	0,6	0,1	0,8	0	0	5,4
Post 2 organic	0,6	0,1	0,8	0	0	8.4
Post 3 organic	0,6	0,1	0,8	0	0	12,2
Post 3 sponsored	0,6	0,1	0,8	0	0	135,4098361

Source: (the authors)

ing that the ad that is having the highest number of reactions is more successful than the ads that has only few is equally as misleading. Tracking the conversions all along the buying process is necessary to understand the ad effectiveness and the behavior of the consumers.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of Facebook advertisements in terms of reaching marketing goals of the company have been proven by many researchers and practitioners (Abayi et al., 2016; Bang et al., 2016; Dehghani et al., 2015). However, the effects of the activities on social networks may have both positive and negative impacts on consumer behavior (Ertugan, 2017; Taylor, 2011). Current literature does not provide enough evidence about the relationship between Facebook advertising, brand awareness and customer attitudes toward the brand. Research suggests that there might be significant differences in ad effectiveness when it comes to contextual setting and industrial orientation of the company (Kohli et al., 2015). Despite the inability to directly quantify the effectiveness of Facebook activities, scientists and practitioners agree that companies should not abandonne this social network and rather focus on testing which activities are suitable for their objectives.

Thanks to the tracking possibilities provided by Facebook advertising systems and website analytical software, the companies have a great opportunity to observe almost instantly what is the impact of their marketing efforts. Regular assessment of Facebook and website metrics may contribute to identification of types of content and posting strategies work with the targeted audience. It is important to keep in mind that the success of a company post or sponsored advertising depends on many factors. These factors include visual processing, post type, content, and targeting parameters. All of the aforementioned variables require testing and adjustments over time.

The calculation of ROI for Facebook marketing activities represents a continuous process whose accuracy depends on the quality of the available data. In addition to ad performance data, ROI calculation requires also the information about the costs incurred to create the visual content of the ad and the costs needed to produce the goods and services offered by the company.

Although the revenue component of the ROI formula may seem easy to extract from the company system, there are many Facebook activities that generate revenues indirectly such as building online community or motivating the followers to engage more with the content shared by the company. This indirect value is generally calculated based on the historic data the company managed to collect during a certain time period. In order to obtain a solid ROI estimate that could be used as the basis for further marketing decision-making, marketers need to carefully select the advertising metrics that will be used for the effectiveness assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by the Technical University of Liberec [project SGS-EF-3320-21230 Impact of technical and aesthetic parameters of web design on user satisfaction and online shopping behavior of the customer].

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Ad Placement: All the advertising spaces, mostly payed, offered by online publishers, websites and social networks to advertisers to display their advertisements. The individual placements have different potential for reaching the users and perform differently when comes to the type of content chosen for the advertisement.

Ad Targeting: Selection of potential customer groups to which an advertisement is going to be displayed. This specification of the ad´s audience is done via targeting parameters including demographic and geographic information, interests, or device preferences.

Conversion: Desired action performed by a consumer as a reaction to an advertisement or other marketing effort. The desired action can take many forms including the purchases, membership registrations, newsletter subscriptions, application downloads, etc.

Facebook Ads Manager: Tool developed by Facebook to manage advertisements on this social network, Instagram and ads displayed in the Audience network. This application allows the advertiser to create and target the ads, set campaign budget, view history, and collect data about previous and ongoing ads.

Marketing Funnel: Set of actions a consumer, website visitor, needs to go through before he makes the desired conversion (usually purchase). The actions customer usually travel through are post views, reactions (likes, comments, shares), click on the link and web visit, registration to the newsletter, purchase. Since the conversion process goes from the less engaging actions such as likes, comments and shares to the actions that require more cognitive effort from the consumer, the number of users willing to do the actions decreases.

Organic Reach: Number of people who viewed unpaid content on their screen. Generally, this term is used in association with social networks. Inversely, sponsored reach describes the number of people who viewed a paid advertisement.

UTM Parameters: Text fragments that are attached in the specified format to the web link. Attaching these textual segments allows the analytical software to exactly identify from what source, campaign, or advertisement the users come to the website. UTM parameters generally contain the following five elements: utm_source, utm_medium, utm_campaign, utm_content, utm_term.

Chapter 15
E-WOM:
The New Consumer Megaphone – Underlying Reasons and Related Factors

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ABSTRACT

Together with the internet, social networking sites provide the consumers and the companies with a new marketing channel. In these online platforms, people make groups and come together for specific purposes. This new vivid and productive environment attracts the consumers seeking for product information and the companies trying to be in close contact with the customers. So the traditional WOM (word of mouth) has gained a new momentum and transformed into a new form in this online environment, called e-WOM (electronic word of mouth). Setting out from this recent fact, the chapter aims to give a general review of word of mouth communication starting with the traditional word of mouth and then elaborating e-WOM. It tries to tell about what e-WOM is and how it functions in online environments. As well as the definitions and the explanations of e-WOM, the chapter also aims to give the underlying reasons and the related factors during the process of e-WOM communication, thus putting a general framework for the companies and brands about this new marketing communication.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, consumers face an excessive amount of message from the brands and companies and they are fed up with all this mess. So the consumers are seeking ways to save time during their purchase process. At that point word of mouth, WOM, is regarded as the ultimate and effective solution for the consumers. Thanks to the internet, millions of people from different parts of the world are engaged in the conversations about the brands and companies. These informal conversations between consumers allow them to get the right product information from the right people such as the experienced customers, opinion leaders and market mavens.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch015

The growth of internet as a large scale information database allows people to participate in online communications for an exchange of information beyond time and space (Bechina & Husta, 2011:82). Especially because of its potential to remove the time and space limitations, this extraordinary communication opportunity has had a profound impact on many scientific communication-based fields. Like many other fields, marketing has also been affected deeply from both the content and the strategic importance of these new communication platforms.

Together with the internet, social networking sites are coming to the fore more and more. The social networking sites, getting rid of the apathy of technology, create a similar effect in online environments just as the traditional face-to-face communications do in real environments. Internet users and consumers are increasingly participating in and adopting social networking sites because these sites allow consumers to be engaged in personal connections in a cooperation-based structure, thus leading to common and widespread social networks (Akar, 2010:108). These platforms provide the consumers and the companies with a new marketing channel. In these online platforms, people make groups and come together for specific purposes. This vivid and efficient environment also attracts the consumers seeking for product information and the companies trying to be in close contact with the customers. So the traditional WOM has gained a new form in this online environment, called e-WOM.

Social media is regarded as the most popular media of communication today, so people use social media platforms widely in our century. Especially because of the lack of time people suffer in modern world, social media functions as a bridge to connect people to each other. Millions of people use social media to be in contact with their peers and acquaintances and also to share about their lives and opinions as well as collecting information about others. These social media users, at the same time a consumer each, attract companies and brands. So, many brands and companies are in an effort to be able to use social media effectively to develop an understanding of these new platforms in order to answer the needs of consumers (He et al.,2013).

This chapter has been prepared to give a general review of traditional WOM and its online counterpart, e-WOM. The chapter also aims at the underlying reasons, the potential impact, the measurement and the basic factors affecting word of mouth in online environments.

WOM AND E-WOM

In our increasingly competitive environment, though it is possible to reach each individual through electronic communication devices, the significance WOM, known as word of mouth, has remained the same over the years and it has gained a new importance together with the introduction of internet and Web 2.0 technology. Today businesses need to know and benefit from the potential of word of mouth communications and prepare strategical plans in accordance with this new version of word of mouth communication.

The concept WOM is a far older concept than the marketing itself. From the beginning of civilization on, people have taken advice from other people as regards many different things in their daily lives. Even, it is known that early people took advice from each other about foods and commodities informally (Arora, 2007:52).

In the early 1950s, B.E Asch mentioned 'crowd physchology' in his work, and then in 1957 Jr.Brooks and C.Roberts published an article in the *Journal of Marketing*. This article is regarded as the first study emphasizing the significance of WOM in the introduction of new products (Kanning, 2008:62).

Even if WOM has been attracting researchers for a few decades, the founder of the earliest WOM theories is known to belong to Arndt (1967). According to Arndt, WOM is an interpersonal communication about the goods and services without any commercial aim. Another researcher, Dichter (1966) elaborated the issue and mentioned four motivation factors for communicators. These factors are the stimulants about the products, the communicator, the message and others. Of these four, the stimulants about the message are still of great importance. Again, in those years, some significant interpersonal factors about WOM such as tie strength, perceived risk and homophily are known to have been discussed (Kanning, 2008:62).

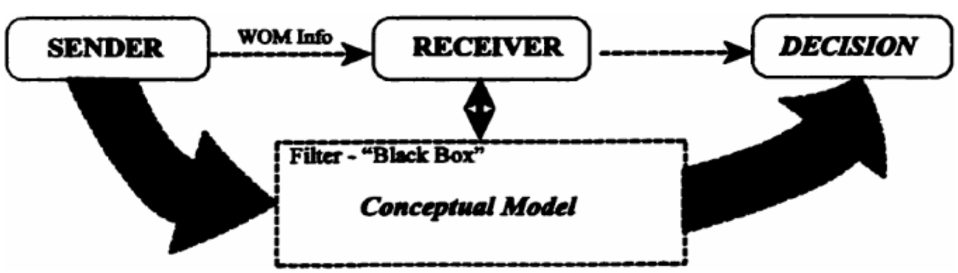
According to Kanning, (2008) WOM is known as two-way communication created by the individual or the group about the products, services or the organizations. Known also as 'zero-media', this kind of marketing communication has a potential to reduce the cost to the minimum. WOM communication occurs as an information flow between the sender and the receiver, the main actors of communication. So, during the process of WOM, the reciprocity of these main actors is needed. As shown in Figure 1, the flow of the WOM messages is conducted from the sender to the receiver, and then the purchase decision, as buying or giving up buying, is made. During this purchase decision process, there occurs a filtering in a black box and certain factors affect the filtering in this box (Voyer, 1999:6).

As WOM is a communicational process, all the factors affecting communication also affect the WOM itself. For example, the problems related with nuisance, encoding and decoding will be able to contribute to different and sometimes problematic evaluations of WOM messages (Tax et al.,1993:75).

Together with the advance in technology and internet, a new breakthrough has been started and the e-WOM in online environments- has come into being in an unexpected speed. Consumers today use internet to share experience and opinions, and also they have a valuable opportunity to to follow other consumers' product evaluations through social networks, blogs, consumer review websites (Lee & Koo, 2012:1974). This unexpected breakthrough has caught the marketing environments unprepared and therefore the theoretical studies have gained an urgent importance and need.

The related literature mentions a communication of consumers via internet, which occurs as a result of the demand for the information about the products or services, and this kind of online consumer communication is regarded as e-WOM. Some researchers deal with e-WOM in terms of relationship marketing, and while doing that they discuss the opportunities and threats resulting from the increase in online consumer behaviours. Such kinds of research lines also mention an internet consumer communication and they handle this kind of communication in terms of traditional WOM. According to the definition given by Hennig-Thurau (2004),e-WOM is the positive or negative reviews of the former or

Figure 1. Communication model of WOM
Source: Duncan and Moriarty 1998 modified by Voyer, 1999:6



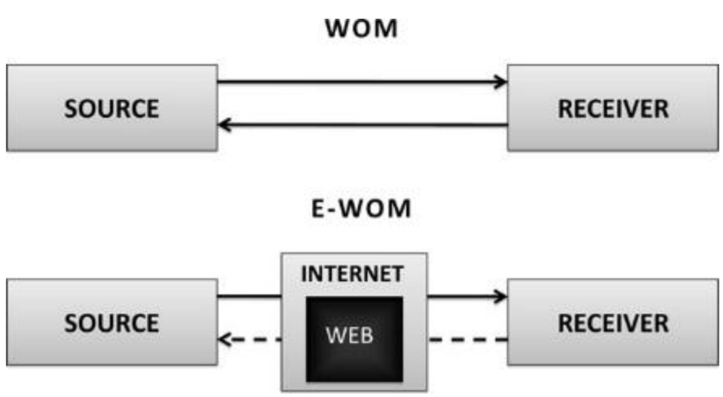
actual consumers about the product or company, which has the potential to reach too many people via internet (p.39).

Bickart and Schindler (2001) previously stated that, whereas typical WOM communication consists of exchange of oral words between friends or acquaintances, online WOM (e-WOM) are made up of ideas and experiences shared through written words in online environments. The advantage of written words is that they allow people to follow the information within their own pace. The written language also transmits the information more precisely and put it in a more formal way (Sun et al., 2006:1107). Marshall McLuhan states that written communication is a more logical way as the letters and words follow each other in a linear model. In recent days, Lopez and Sicilia (2014) also had a research about the difference between WOM e-WOM. As seen in Figure 2, the authors focus on the dissimilarity between these two channels. Whereas the traditional WOM has as a simultaneous and bidirectional characteristic, e-WOM doesn't necessarily occur simultaneously and bidirectionally. The messages written by the source has a characteristic to stay there for a long time. This difference enables the consumers searching for information to reach the former messages as well as the new ones, thus making the communication moe effective (p.30).

The fact that e-WOM messages are independent of company or brands and they are based upon the experiences of consumers themselves puts e-WOM messages in a different place. As seen in a lot of research, the credibility of e-WOM messages is higher than several other advertisement methods, leading trust to develop and consumer decisions to be affected. Another important factor that makes e-WOM messages valuable is that these messages are not limited to the time they were written, and at the same time they have a potential to reach many people many times. Yet another important point is that the intonations, body language, physical environment in which the communication occurs and many other perceptual factors are reduced to minimum in written communication. This difference can also help e-WOM messages be perceived as unbiased.

e-WOM has a long life span because of the fact that it is stored on net and so is always available when needed. While in real life people can get information only their friends and acquaintances, e-WOM in online environments can give the consumers an opportunity to reach thousands of opinions from many other consumers.

Figure 2. WOM and e-WOM communication
Source: Lopez & Sicilia (2014)



As the significance of creating information grows, the information itself becomes a valuable product and service. In modern world, companies and brands not only need to acquire the right information, but they also need to transmit the information about themselves to the target consumer rightly. e-WOM, at that point, is useful for the companies and brands as well as the consumers themselves (Xiuqing & Haiqing, 2007:77).

WHY DO THE CONSUMERS PARTICIPATE IN WORD OF MOUTH?

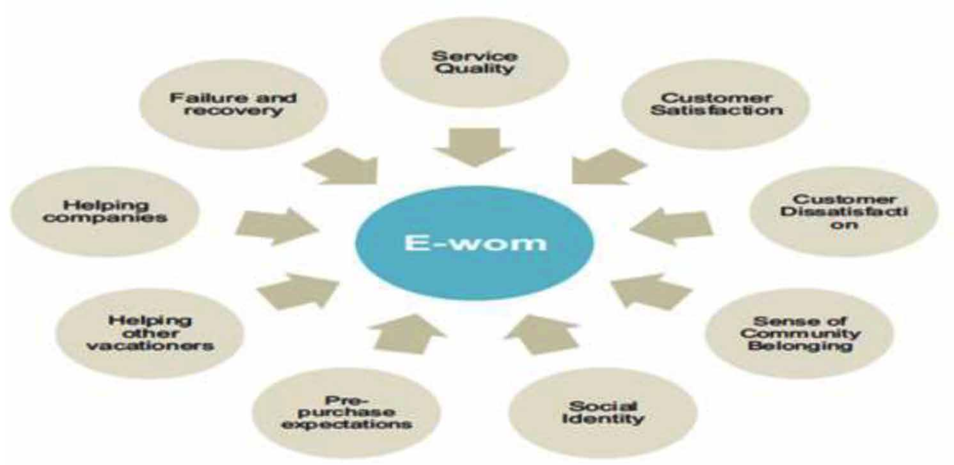
There are many underlying motives to participate in e-WOM communication. Studying these motives and underlying reasons, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) have put some reasons forward. These are reducing risk, saving time, learning about how to use a product, reducing cognitive dissonance, making up for the dissonance among online people, searching for new products and increasing social status. Of all these factors put forward by the researchers, reducing risk and saving time are regarded as the most efficient ones.

Cantallops and Salvi (2014) has done research about the underyling reasons of customers and put nine basic reasons forward. These are given in Figure 3 as service quality, failure and recovery, helping companies, helping other vacationers, pre-purchase expectations, social identity, sense of community belonging, customer dissatisfaction and satisfaction.

On the other hand, some research about wom communication indicate that WOM is performed in the following conditions:

1. The conditions in which the consumer feels themselves insufficient about the knowledge needed for a reasonable decision;
2. The conditions in which the product is a complex one and evaluations by using objective criteria are difficult (In such sitıations, the experiences of others function as experience by observation);

Figure 3. Main review-generating factors
Source: Cantallops & Salvi (2014)



3. The conditions in which the consumer lacks the ability to evaluate the product or service;
4. The conditions in which the credibility of other sources are perceived as low;
5. The conditions in which reaching opinion leaders are easier than reaching other sources, thus helping the consumer save time;
6. The conditions in which there are strong social ties between the receiver and the source;
7. The conditions in which the individuals' need of social approval is high.

As seen above, the factors such as credibility, trust and interpersonal relationships play determinant roles in applying to WOM communication. In addition to the factors mentioned, the self perception of the individual and his/her social environments is of valuable importance for participating in WOM communication.

Mowen (1990:551) and Fill (2001:53) also give some underlying reasons for WOM communication. These are shown below.

Product Involvement

When the consumers are highly involved in a purchase decision, they tend to do a detailed research about the product or the service. Some parts of this research can be done through listening to the opinions and experiences of the friends and the mavens. In such cases with high involvement, personal effect can have a higher frequency than usual. Further, consumers have a higher tendency to talk about the high level satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These kinds of conversations allow the consumers to have more experiences in a short time.

Showing Themselves

This factor points to an adoption of product or service, gaining prestige, and the status level of the consumer. More importantly, as the consumer is seeking for a guarantee about the purchase decision, the dissonance can be reduced by this way.

Other Necessities

Products can help to utter the emotions of love, friendship and interest, and so sharing experiences about the products through WOM can help the consumers spread the benefits of the products.

Message Content

Another factor to motivate the conversation about the products are, according to Dichter, the messages surrounding the product itself. The advertisements messages, the seminars triggering sharing and WOM, exhibitions and commercial publishings can be mentioned in this group. The people identifying themselves with the product strongly, called brand advocates, participate in WOM communications commonly. The brand advocacy can be exhibited not only by WOM but by wearing and using the the products of the brand, as well.

THE ELEMENTS HAVING IMPACT ON WORD OF MOUTH

Whether they are in real or online environments, word of mouth communications are affected by some factors. When the related literature is reviewed, seven basic factors are mentioned as the factors having a potential impact on word of mouth communications, and these are tie-strength, homophily, trust, interpersonal communication and personal effect, source credibility, expertise, and perceived risk. Bewaring of these factors would be beneficial for the companies to use WOM as a competitive advantage.

Tie Strength

The features of the ties between the couple of communicators independent of certain contents are of critical importance for understanding of WOM process (Brown & Reingen, 1987:351). All WOM communications take place in a social relationship. This relationship can be categorized according to the the intimacy between the receiver and the source. This structural intimacy can be represented by 'tie strength'. This concept points to the quality of the ties between the members of a network (Brown & Reingen, 1987:352). Tie strength is a multidimensional structure closely related with the strength of the interpersonal relationship in a social network environment (Money et al., 1998:79). When it comes to the fact that communication is a social phenomenon and in the center of sociability are the interpersonal relationship, tie strength which represents the strength of these relationships comes to the fore as an efficient element in social relationships.

Social ties can be classified as strong and weak. The strong ties such as families and friends make up of the strong and closer relationship in the personal network of the individual, and provide them with emotional support. On the other hand, weak ties are generally the relationships consisting of a larger group such as acquaintances and colleagues. This kind of relationship is the one having a facilitating effect during the information search for different subjects (Granovetter, 1973:1363). In their study, Brown and Reingen (1987) showed that weak ties function as a vital bridge which allows the information to spread among distinctive groups. But in micro level (between the individuals and small groups), strong ties are more likely to function in referral behaviour.

Some research shows that tie strength has an impact on information flow and transmission. When compared to the individuals with weak tie strength, the individuals with strong tie strength communicate more often and exhibit a more often information exchange (Brown & Reingen, 1987:357).

Through the personal networks available in social networking sites, the product choices of consumers are affected both by the strong ties and by the weak ties. Whereas the strong ties are more effective on the communications between individuals and in small group levels, the weak ties have a more widespread effect as the social networking sites have no time restrictions and are more attractive. Social networking sites achieve this impact by opening the personal networks of the individuals to the groups and communities outside. Such an enlargement accelerates e-WOM in large scale networks because the tie strength perception encourages the communication and information flow between the consumers (Chu & Kim, 2011:54). Through a literature review, it can be seen that in this information flow, strength ties and some other times weak ties sometimes come one step forward. So it wouldn't be wise to regard one of them superior to the other.

Homophily

Source similarity or homophily refers to the similarity levels of the individuals in terms of certain shared traits (Rogers, 1983:274). The social comparison theory (1954) offers a mechanism to explain how homophily affects the persuasion. This theory suggests that individuals tend to compare their attitude and abilities with others. The tendency of an individual to compare himself/herself increases as the compared one is seen as similar. Because, according to Festinger, individuals have an assumption that similar people have similar preferences, a source perceived similar by the receiver may have a stronger persuasion impact on the receiver (Festinger, 1954 cited by Prendergast et al., 2010:690).

The similarity in homophily gains function through strong tie strength. According to the findings, people have a tendency to look for advice from the the people such as friends and other people with close relationship with themselves (Brown & Reingen, 1987:356), so the stronger the ties are, the more likely it would be to start the e-WOM communication (Armelini, 2011:207).

When it comes to the application of homophily factor to the e-WOM platforms, the people with similar interest come together in online environments, and even in the same online groups, some individuals with more similar interests tend to have a closer relationship, which is regarded as a function of homophily in online environments. These kinds of similarities and thus close relationships in online environments may have an effect to increase the likelihood of individuals to persuade each other about the goods and services.

Trust

The sum of one's expectations that other(s) will behave in a proper way is termed as trust (Farrel & Knight, 2003:541). The term trust that represents this sum of expectations is regarded as an invaluable factor that determines the structure of the relationship between the people both in real and online environments.

The main point that determines the relationship between social media and opinion receivers and followers is the benefits of web 2.0 and the trust towards them. All online opinion receivers (users) are aware of the basic benefits of the online applications such as social networks. About seventy percent of these people believe that social media is effective in being in relation with friends and acquaintances, and thus being aware of the new products. But the factor that inhibits all these potential benefits is the trust factor, and thus this factor always occupies the minds of the users of web 2.0 (Yao, 2011:62).

Trust, known as being willing to get support from a communication partner, is directly related to e-WOM behaviour. Trust is an important element to be taken into consideration in the conceptualization of involving in e-WOM in social networking sites (Moorman et al., 1993:82). When the anonymity of virtual environments is taken into consideration, the significance of trust can be seen more precisely. In the e-WOM communication largely consisting of the communication between the people not knowing each other, trust shouldn't be neglected while trying to determine the effect of e-WOM messages. According to the recent research, consumers regard social media as a more reliable source than the content created by the marketers (Mangold & Fauld, 2009:360).

When compared to the reviews shared by anonymous sources through other e-WOM channels (consumer review websites, forums and etc.,), the connections in social networking sites are closely interrelated with the actual networks of the consumers. As a result of this close interrelationship, social connections in online networks are more trustworthy than other sources such as advertisers or other anonymous sources. Furthermore, social networking websites facilitate the information exchange with the real world by supporting these real world relationship, and trust in real environments is transmitted to the online environments. This kind of transmitted trust affects the willingness of the consumers to be involved in e-WOM communications (Chu & Kim, 2011:56).

Interpersonal Communication and Personal Effect

The research having been done about traditional shopping and buying behaviour demonstrates that consumers are affected and directed by the people they interact. The impact of personal information sources on consumer choice is another well-established fact (King & Summers, 1970:43).

One of the most powerful categories of personal effect in the market is e-WOM. The power of e-WOM to motivate the attitude and behaviours is widely appreciated among academicians and the practitioners. The research by Richins (1983) on e-WOM, for example, points out that sixty percent of the dissatisfied customers share their dissatisfaction with a friend or an acquaintance (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002:312). Accordingly, the sensitivity of consumers to interpersonal effect is regarded as a valuable structure to explain the effect of e-WOM in online environments as well as in offline ones.

In online social networks, both the normative and informative effects are able to direct the behaviours of the consumers. The consumers exposed to informative effect exhibit a need to get information and guidance, which facililates the participation in e-WOM communications. On the other hand, the consumers exposed to normative effect are more likely to behave in accordance with the expectations of the people they respect. Because these individuals are in dire need of social approval through using the products approved by the people they respect, they actively search for information from the online sources (Chu & Kim, 2011:56).

Source Credibility

The most important determinant regarding the effect of the source who is communicated is the credibility of this source. The credibility here refers to the trust for the source about his or her unbiased information and also seeing the source as an expert and experienced one (Belch & Belch, 2003:168). As seen here, source credibility has got two dimensions, trust and expertise. The qualifications such as knowledge, skill, ability, intelligence and social status provide the source with expertise. An information source with high expertise can be more persuasive than the one with less expertise, but expertise is not sufficient alone and needs to be accompanied by trustworthiness and reliability (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002:314).

Crebility has a significant effect on the reception and decoding of the message. The perceived integrity and impartiality of the message source are of great importance for the way the receiver is affected by the message. The credibility of the message will likely be higher when the receiver respects and is of high opinion about source (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 2000:281).

Online communications about the products are largely based on the independent sources such as the experienced and unbiased consumers, so the credibility of these sources especially when they are opinion leaders and mavens will be higher than usual. e-WOM messages, due to the impartial sources sharing reviews, are likely to have a stronger persuasive power on consumers.

Expertise

Another important factor in e-WOM is the expertise. When it comes to expertise in e-WOM communication, opinion leaders and market mavens whose opinions are more effective than other consumers will come to the fore (Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988:32). The potential receivers in e-WOM communications ask an expert when they need information or review about the products or services.

Here, when the expert is the receiver, the expertise level can affect not only the purchase decision but also the perceived risk (Armelini, 2011:208). According to the findings of a lot of research, when the receiver is completely ignorant or expert, the likelihood of searching for information will be lower than usual. The fact behind these findings are that experts decide about the products or services on their own because they have an adequate knowledge and experience to overcome the risk in purchase decision. As for the completely ignorant individuals, they don't ignore the advice and suggestions, because they don't have adequate knowledge or experience to make a comparison and so they buy the product without thinking when they have the opportunity (Voyer, 1999:63-64). The individuals with the ability and interest to arrange the information are the ones who have the potential to start e-WOM process (Armelini, 2011:208).

Perceived Risk

Perceived risk is essentially a concept of physchology which is introduced into marketing by Bauer in 1960s. Consumers, especially because of the lack of direct contact in online environments, have a potential risk about the qualifications of the product. According to research by Arndt, the people with high risk perception are more likely to take place in an information search than the ones with lower perceptions Murray (1991). Word of mouth is an important information source which reduces the risk and allows the consumers to give feedback, so it has a larger effect on consumers than many other sources (Zhenquan & Xueyin, 2009:2034).

Risk perception can be divided into two categories as social risk and financial risk. Social risk refers to negative outputs likely to come from the consumers'social environment while financial risk refers to the financial loss experienced after a dissatisfying purchase. Both of these risks are the results of normative and informative effect. The former occurs when the individuals try to behave in accordance with the expectations of others, and the latter results from the fact the consumers regard the information as a medium to enrich their knowledge about the product, and this in turn will determine from whom they will get advice (Wangenheim & Bayón 2004 cited by Armelini, 2011:208). In this context, it can be easily said that perceived risk is of a complex structure and even of importance for determining the information sources.

THE POTENTIAL POWER AND THE MEASUREMENT OF WOM

In today's world in which the effectiveness of advertisement diminishes, and people get more advice from their friends and acquaintances, it has become significant that to what extent e-WOM has an effect on the productivity of marketing (Armelini, 2011:206).

WOM has a great potential to have an effect on consumers thanks to some of its characteristics. First, it has a high credibility and this credibility is the most essential characteristics underlying its power.

Next, the flow of WOM information occurs in two-way flow rather than one way. That is, consumer is able to ask questions at every point in the communication process and get the required information. Further, WOM has a dynamic structure to allow the consumers to remember their experiences more easily. Finally, when compared to other marketing communication types, WOM is a marketing strategy with lower cost, larger outputs, higher efficiency and lower risk (Xiuqing & Haiqing, 2007:76).

A lot of research shows that personal effect is a more determining factor than advertisement or other sources. The high perceived credibility here is the most striking element, because there is a general tendency to believe that the consumers sharing information in the process of WOM have no commercial aims (Engel et al., 2005:731). This general tendency not only causes these messages to be more valuable on the eyes of consumers but offers significant opportunities for the companies trying to take advantage of WOM, as well. In the research done by Local Review Survey, as in Figure 4, only seven percent of the consumers are not interested in online communications, and the larger ninety three percent usually have a look at online messages in different platforms.

The value of WOM as a marketing communication is increasing every other day because of two basic reasons. First, consumers have lost their interest towards the advertisement and traditional media. Second, the information and telecommunication technologies are causing the effect of WOM to increase. For example, Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, says 'we don't advertise on TV and transfer all the money -we would otherwise spend on TV commercials- to the shipping system we call 'supersaver shipping'. Our customers talk to each other about this free shipping system and we earn more. WOM is really a very efficient communication method, I believe' (Armelini, 2011:205).

As regards the effects on consumer purchase decision, the power of WOM is well-established in marketing literature (Gilly et al., 1998:83). WOM is known as the exchange of marketing information by the consumers, and plays a vital role in changing attitudes towards the products and services. WOM messages are created by a more reliable information source than the messages of the companies, and thus consumers largely prefer WOM to get information about their potential purchase (Feick & Price, 1987 cited by Chua & Kim, 2011:48). Regarding these preferences, Marketing Charts (2017) offers some figures as in Figure 5.

Figure 4. Trust and influence on online reviews
Source: Local Consumer Survey (2017)

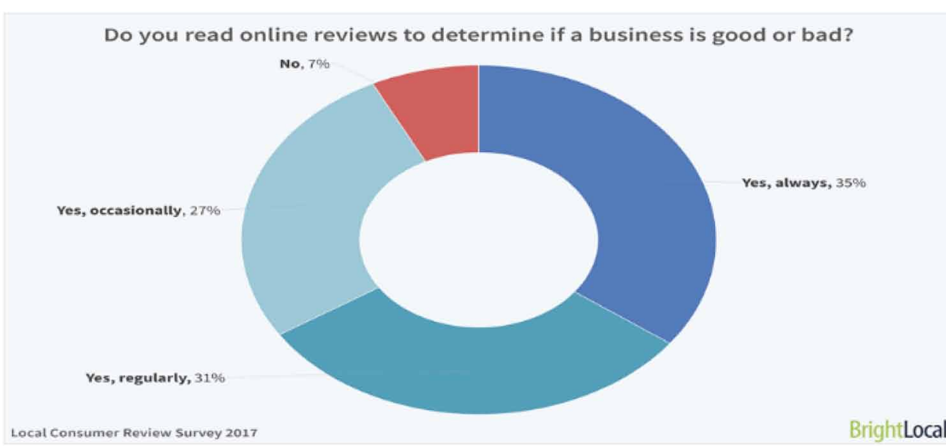
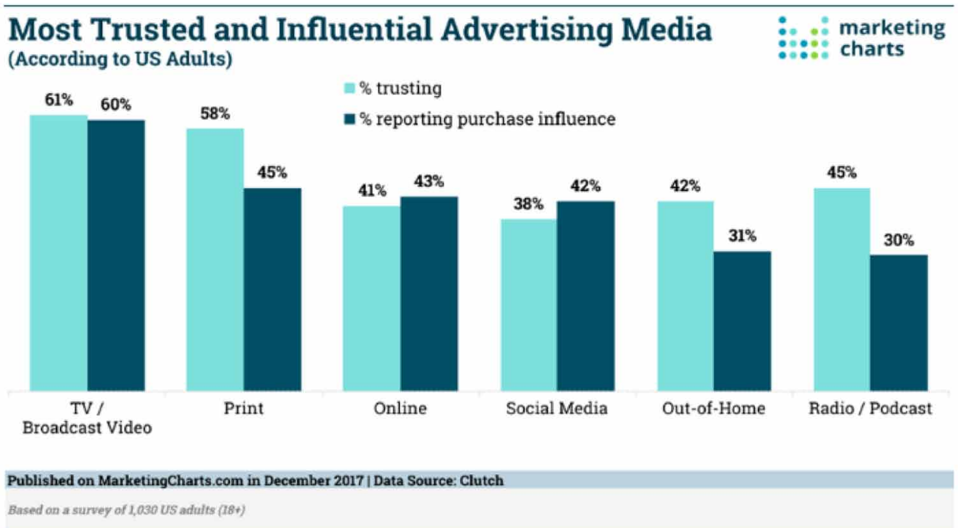


Figure 5. Most trusted ınfluential advertising media
Source: Marketing Charts.com (2017)



An important factor to make WOM communication more valuable is that WOM has an interpersonal nature. This communication often occurs between the individuals who have already had a social relationship other than sharing marketing experiences. This former relationship may affect the perception of the receiver about the similarity, motivation, credibility and reliability of the source, thus enriching these kinds of communications (Jun et al., 2011:264).

WOM messages in consumer review websites sometimes take over more important marketing roles than other product reviews in different platforms. So marketers need to develop strategic reactions in accordance with WOM messages especially shared in independent consumer review platforms. Marketers need to adopt a proactive strategy to apply just before the WOM communications in these environments. They also need to take the expertise power of their target consumers into consideration while deciding to create suitable platforms for the consumers to share their experiences. Because the expertise of the target consumers in brand controlled environments may have an unwanted damage on the brand (Chen & Xie, 2008:488-489).

Word of mouth can have an ability to affect the customers more than any other promotion effort. It can change the opinions of the customers and the new beliefs it created can be more permanent and strong in the mind of the customers. Mentioned as the ‘two-edged sword’, WOM is regarded as a means of communication having a power to increase the profitability of the company but at the same time having an incredible power to damage the financial conditions of the companies (Richins, 1983:68).

To be able to control and not to get harm from this two-edged sword,, companies are seeking ways to measure it. Being able to measure WOM communications will provide an important market advantage for the companies. When looked into the literature, it can be said that there are not enough studies about the measurement of WOM. Although WOM has been around for long years, the academicians focus more on the detemining role of WOM in consumer behaviour and less on the measurement of this communication (Goyette et al., 2010:9).

There are several factors that limit to reach the former experience or information in the memory. The three basic factors to understand the measurement of WOM are the length of time that has passed since the last experience (Brown & Beltramini, 1989:9); the amount of the material in the same common content group (Feldman & Lynch, 1988:421); the special characteristics of the information itself such as vividness (Herr et al., 1991:454). These three factors may allow the researchers to reach the information in the consumer's mind. As you can easily see in the advertisements, the main efforts named as repetition, intensity and frequency and originality are directly related to the above mentioned three factors.

Because of the fact that WOM can be measured through the purchase intention or just after the purchase, the chance of some factors known as belief, attitude, intention and behaviour to direct WOM communciations will be likely to increase (Tax et al., 1993:76).

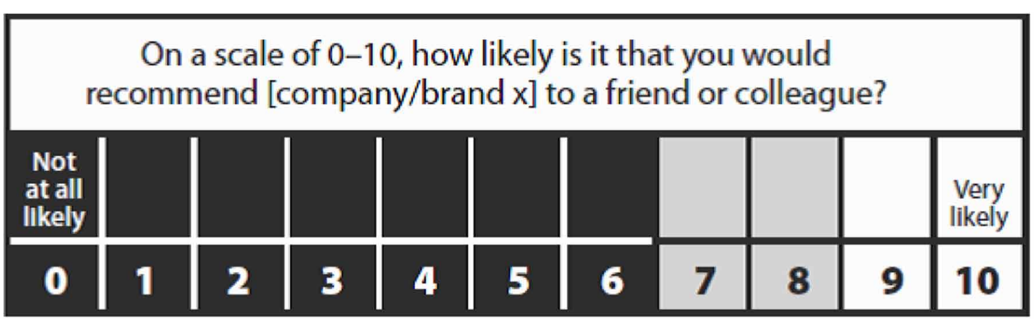
An important point in the measurement of WOM is that many studies focus on only one dimension of WOM and doesn't determine in what dimension the mesasurement is done (Goyette et al., 2010:9). As WOM communications consist of many various factors and elements, and the one dimensional studies will cause a lack of comprehensiveness, the multidimensional scales will surely increase the reliability and validity of the measurement.

The most popular method to measure WOM communications in literature is the questionnaire method. In the research done by many researchers, such as Bowman and Narayandas (2001), Brown and Reingen (1987), the researchers ask a direct and one dimensional question to the participants: Have you ever told anything to anyone about the product X? (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004:548).

Another scale used to measure word of mouth communications is the Net Promoter Score (Scale) by Reicheld (2003) as seen in Figure 6. This scale has been designed to measure the number of the people who like or dislike about the brand. Many companies and brands these days use this scale to measure the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers.

NPS is one of the most widely used scales in the consumer relationship management and marketing research (Reichheld, 2003:53). This scale is of a simple structure to get an understanding about the consumers. Contrary to the market conditions, NPS measures the conditions the companies can change. The consumer is given a scale based the values between 0 and 1, and is asked about the likelihood of recommendation about the product or the service (Samson, 2006:648).

Figure 6. The net promoter score scale
Source: Reicheld (2003)



CONCLUSION

Together with the rapid transformation in internet and information technologies, consumers have experienced a transformation from a passive information receivers to active seekers and providers. Such an evolution has caused the effect of traditional advertisement to start to be questioned as the individuals are searching for product information from either their environments or social media platforms that are gainining popularity rapidly these days.

This increasing popularity of social media and the enourmous information exchange in these platforms have caused the traditional WOM to gain a new and faster dimension. This new concept that points out to the marketing communication between the consumers and comes true via the social media tools is called as e-WOM. This new concept requires many related traditional phenomena ranging from tie strength to opinion leaders to be revisited.

The individuals now socialize through social media platforms such as blogs, consumer websites and social networks, thus shaping their purchase decisions. The consumers in these platforms are involved in the communications sometimes as an opinion leader and some other times as just a follower, and spread negative or positive messages about products or services. In other words, the communications with high persuasive power in social media platforms between millions of people are sometimes positive and sometimes negative and damaging. At that point, companies need to benefit from the power of social media and use it for their own advantage. The companies which succeed in using these platforms effectively have a greater advantage over their competitors. So the marketing communicators should analyze these communications meticulously. What is important here is to perform a good analysis and understand the e-WOM communication process in social media platforms.

To sum up, to analyse word of communications and how it functions especially in online environments is extremely important for the companies seeking ways to be in contact with their customers. So, companies or brands need to know about the transformation process from WOM to e-WOM, the underlying reasons of these online communications, all the related factors ranging from tie-strength to perceived risk, and also the measurements of these communications. This profound awareness will provide the companies with efficient stretagies in their marketing activities.

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Chapter 16
The Challenges of Nation Branding in the Digital Age:
Case of Spain's Nation Branding Project, Marca España

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ABSTRACT

The concept of nation branding, the origins of the term, and how brand management is applied to obtain the expected results are investigated. Governments are driving nation branding projects, but some, like in the case of the Spanish project Marca España (ME), fail in detailing their objectives. Even when the objectives are weak, it is necessary to evaluate the performance of these projects. This is why some studies and indexes have been created. The indexes distinguish how a country ranks in various areas of study (economic, social, cultural, etc.), and the results are used to measure the efficiency of nation branding. Certain methodologies are used in this study together with various sets of data: from economic indicators and reputation indexes to the digital relevance of Spain.

INTRODUCTION

Nation branding (NB) is alive. On November 7th, 2017 an article was published in The Guardian titled "How to sell a country: the booming business of nation branding". It has been over twenty years now that the concept of NB started being studied through different disciplines: from marketing to political science. One of the consequences of its' multidisciplinary approaches is that there is no unanimous

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch016

consensus about a unique definition of NB. This paper wants to review the different definitions of NB and deepen into the concepts that converged to make it possible: the country of origin effect (COO), place branding and public diplomacy.

It is widely accepted that without globalization NB would have never existed. According to Dinnie the "challenge of distinguishing their product offerings from those of the competition has assumed critical importance for nations competing for both domestic and foreign consumers" (2007). NB was born to brand countries so they would acquire a competitive advantage respect its' competitors. Establishing a link between countries and brands brought scepticism to the concept. Many of the authors reviewed are perfectly aware of the differences between a brand and a nation (Anholt 2007, Olins 2005, Fan 2006). However, they agree that countries can adopt marketing techniques to brand themselves and improve or enhance their image and reputation. Through NB they expect to achieve economic and/or political outcomes. Porter (1990) first wrote about the competitive advantage of certain products or services based on the country that produced them. A good country image is the ticket to business and political influence. Most governments know that and have decided to start NB projects. To coordinate all the actors involved (ministries, agencies, tourism boards...) they have relied on marketing agencies or consultants like Simon Anholt.

Yet, many NB projects fail, and it can happen for multiple reasons: from a weak coordination of its' participants to a poor branding strategy or the rejection of its citizens because of its' exclusiveness, as Fan claims happened with Cool Britannia´s failure (2006). Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that some of the NB strategies work. Spain is cited multiple times as a country with a solid brand due to a good branding strategy since Franco's death (Anholt, 2008, Gilmore, 2002). This chapter focus on the (possible) effects of Spain's branding project Marca España (ME) since 2012, when the country's image was seriously damaged after the banking crisis and the spread of corruption cases.

Even if NB can work, it is difficult to quantify the success of a NB project. Is it possible to quantify the impact of NB when attracting tourists, foreign direct investment, talent, increasing exports or having a more influential role in the international scene due to NB? This research wants to study the plausible effect of ME in these years, focusing on tourism. In the last decade some indices have been ranking nations after considering various areas of study, one of them being tourism. The aim is to analyse if there are any patterns which indicate that Marca España has succeeded enhancing Spain's image or reputation according to the different Indices. Has the position of Spain in the Indices improved while Marca España has taken place? Is there a correlation between ME and some of Spain´s economic indicators?

All big countries in the world need to be very active digitally if they want to try to influence, like USA and UK which both have a strong public diplomacy (PD) or to improve or maintain their reputation. What about Spain? Does the country have a strong presence in the internet? Is it among the highest searches? The research will have a deep look at the Digital Country Index, a study of countries' worldwide searches which can help to determine the strengths and weaknesses of Spain in the internet.

Nation Branding

Since the first time that the term "nation branding" was used, the concept has been the object of multiple studies and research. However, according to Fan (2006), the efforts of theorizing what NB is have not produced a commonly accepted single definition of the notion because of "concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image" (2006). One of the reasons which has been strongly pointed out as the cause of the scepticism around the theory of NB is the inclusion of the term "brand". As Dinnie (2007) claims, if instead of the word "brand", "reputation" would have been used, there would not have been such a controversy. Some academics argue that NB is just a semantic evolution of what has been known for decades as the country of origin (COO) effect, while for others it is just place branding. Instead, there are those who believe in NB as a developed and coordinated strategy to enhance a country´s image and reputation (Fan, 2006). Despite the different criteria everyone must agree that a country's image and reputation affect not only economically but also in terms of influence, the base of a country's soft power. The economic consequences for a country with bad image can be devastating and as Kotler and Gertner, (2002) claims "confronting a negative image can be an arduous challenge" because being able to change a country image or even a stereotype takes a long time.

Origins and Country of Origin Effect

Simon Anholt allegedly coined the term "nation branding" in 1996 but, however, in 2007, when Anholt first approached the idea of treating a nation as a brand he was associating NB to the concept of COO (2007). According to Dinnie (2007) COO is the effect, positive or negative, produced by the image of the country of origin of a product or service. Authors Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) would rather call it country image effect (CIE). The perception of the COO on the consumer can lead to purchasing an item or service just because the country has a positive reputation in that field. If a consumer is offered a TV produced in Japan or the same model produced in Morocco it is highly probable that the consumer will end up purchasing the Japanese television, due to the association of Japan with high-quality technology. The same could happen with Scotch whisky, German cars or Italian fashion. For the O'Shaughnessy brothers, the effect can be extended not only to products belonging to the same field but it "becomes a factor in the image of any product from that country" (2000). However, as Anholt (2007) suggests it is almost impossible that a country, even a rich one, can set the highest standard of quality to all the products or services they offer. So even if a consumer has the COO perception in his mind and purchases partly because of the good reputation it does not mean that the product acquired is the best.

So, the COO theory reveals few paradoxes. First, in a globalized world where companies outsource to other companies in different countries part of the work, and the shareholders might belong to different countries. Therefore, is the consumer aware of the real origin of what is being purchased? Second, if the COO has such an impact, then how to explain that it is possible to have a negative country image whereas having an excellent product brand image. Fan (2006) claims that such is the case of Chinese consumers when facing Japanese products. Even if Japan still carries a negative image among Chinese people, they admire their high-quality products and brands. Despite the paradoxes, many studies have proved that COO influences the consumer and so trade authorities admit that "their country's reputation constitutes an important asset to be managed" (Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

Country as Brand

Despite some criticisms, the association between countries and brands crystallized in the first years of the 21st century. The publication of the Journal Brand Management dedicated to NB for the first time increased the interest in this theory. In fact, by then, as Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) stated most marketers, economists and politicians were already aware that nations behaved similarly to brands and understood its importance. One of the first researches about NB placed Spain as a good example. By publishing "A country –can it be repositioned? Spain –the successful story of country branding" (2002)

Gilmore attempted to prove the fact that NB existed and could work. She claimed that a coordinated nation brand strategy had increased Spain´s image and reputation, from a poor and isolated country to a modern and opened one, therefore enhancing its' economic indicators (argued as "exaggerated" by Fan in 2007). So, the perception that a country's branding strategy could pay satisfactory results enforced many governments to plan strategies, successfully or not. That helped to deepen the research of the links between countries and brands, although the scepticism continued. Olins' (2002) research defended that there was awareness of the big differences between branding a country or a product, but the link between them was the use of similar marketing techniques. Fan (2007) also highlighted the differences but reached a similar conclusion: marketing techniques could help a country to "sell" goods and places as well as to identify target audiences.

Yet, Anholt suggests that brand management could provide a strong means to improve a country's competitiveness. For that, Anholt (2007) redefined the concept as Competitive Identity, which as used to "describe the synthesis of brand management (BM) with public diplomacy, trade, investment, tourism and export promotion" (2007). Competitive identity is the way Anholt describes how a country forges its' reputation through six different channels, Tourism, Brand, Policy, Investment, Culture, People.

Place Branding

The evolution of NB cannot be understood without the concept of place branding. According to Moilanen (2009) place branding implies applying marketing techniques to places, no matter if it is a country, region or city being branded. Since NB was coined it has been debated whether NB was in the end just place branding (Jaffe, 2001) or place branding a form of NB (Fan, 2006). Place branding means the promotion of a nation, or a city or region in the country, as a tourist destination according to Fan (2006). Yet, it is a too simple approach because, as it happens to a country, regions and cities compete not only to attract tourists but also FDI, talent, the hosting of major events etc.

Brand Management

Doyle defines brand management as "a range of marketing disciplines focused on treating the brand as a managed asset" (2011). In NB the brand would be the country and the techniques implemented should enhance the brand's image among the consumers. Every brand needs a sustained BM not only to achieve positive outcomes but also to survive in such a competitive market. Moreover, BM can be helpful after unexpected situations happen. For instance, like recently in UK or Spain, a country (brand) will have to find how to maintain its' reputation after a terrorist attack. BM can keep the unity of the country by sending a positive message in and out of its' borders. In a tourist destination like Spain, BM can also help to fix a tourism strategy for the country. Through the opening of new resorts or high-standard establishments, BM can help a country to make a qualitative step. Those are few reasons why BM is so relevant to NB. Moreover, due to the analogy between countries and brands, the theory of NB has adapted some of the terminology used in branding.

Brand Identity

Nandan, 2005 explain that brand identity "originates from the company" and is the way a company wants to identify itself. Through branding, a company will display its' identity while differentiating its' product from others. Anholt (2011) describes brand identity as perceptible through the senses. Nation-brand identity, what the country wants to be identified for, can include a logo, an anthem or a slogan and is based on history, folklore, language, art. However, as Dinnie (2007) explains, a nation's identity will never be able to include the vast variety of elements forming the national identity of a country. That could be the case of Spain and Catalonia or UK and Scotland, because a nation is not a unitary entity in which all members think, feel and act as one. That is the reason why it is difficult that the brand identity of Spain or UK can reflect the national identity of Catalonia or Scotland. In that case, the feeling of not being included can produce rejection for Spain's NB project, as will be confirmed in this research.

Brand Image

The brand image is a set of principles about a certain brand, in other words, the perceptions that a consumer has of a brand. Similarly, for Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) a nation´s image is made of perceptions that any individual has of a country's products or brands. Nevertheless, hardly anyone has an unclouded vision of all the countries in the world or even, many countries have negative images in the eyes of many consumers. On many occasions a country's image can be just formed of stereotypes and it is commonly accepted that it takes a long time to change that. For Anholt (2011) these clichés, no matter if positive or not, if true or untrue, condition everyone´s attitude towards places, products or brands. So, can the stereotypes of a nation be changed through NB? Depending on the source the answer could either be positive (Gilmore, 2002), negative (Anholt, 2008) or unclear (Fan, 2007). Dinnie reflects the conceptual model which goes from nation-brand identity to nation- brand image, and defines who the communicators of the nation-brand identity are.

The process pursues that both internal and external audiences, enhance or even improve their perception of the country. A key role is that of the communicators because they are the ones spreading a nation-brand's identity. In the case of Spain some of them have been: As brand ambassadors the tennis-player Rafael Nadal in 2011 or actor Antonio Banderas in 2013 but also sporting achievements like the World Cup championship in 2010. Sport can make an impact on a country's image and so must be strategically used in NB projects.

Brand Equity

Doyle (2011) describes Brand equity as the additional value of a variety of products and services that is higher than the net book value of a company, which implies that a high brand equity can make the company value much more than what the book accounts reflect. Regarding a nation's brand equity Papadopoulos defines it as the "value of perceptions embedded by various target markets about the country" (2002). The concept is clear but, is a nation brand equity measurable? Since the term NB appeared there have been few attempts to rank a country's image and reputation or even quantify a nation brand's equity, one of them the "Nation Brands" index from Brand Finance. However, assigning monetary value to a country using marketing equity instruments has been extendedly criticized. Rasmussen and Merkelsen (2012) explain that the validity is questionable" (2012). The extent to which a nations brand even should be measured in monetary terms is a subject of some debate.

THE IMPACT OF NATION BRANDING

The competition between nations to acquire a competitive advantage has generated a momentum and motivation for many governments to devote resources to develop NB. Kotler and Gertner, (2002) points out why governments should manage and supervise their branding: it is the urge for tourists, FDI, factories, exports, talented individuals and foreign markets that makes them use marketing techniques to fulfil the objectives. However, as later developed, it is not only the economic benefits that matter. This is the case of soft power, defined by Pamment (2014) as the power of attract and influence to favour collaboration standing "from the attractiveness of a nation's values, culture, and policies".

Economic Factors

Tourism

Tourism is considered one of the major benefits of a good nation-brand strategy as it plays a huge role, as an economic objective (rising the quantity and quality of tourists visiting) and also as the communicator of the nation´s brand because, as Anholt claims "it has permission to brand the country directly" (2007) through its' tourism boards and actors. A good image as a tourist destination can also boost exports or FDI with a good NB strategy and the correct use of data and Business Intelligence.

According to Dinnie (2007) the fact that many countries compete as tourist destinations urges them to create a unique "product" and look for a niche which makes them more attractive than their competitors. Countries like Croatia, Greece or Spain have succeeded in branding themselves and acquiring a competitive advantage to become top holiday destinations. However, as Kotler and Gertner, (2002) points out tourism is not the panacea: despite being a major income source a country might need to solve their problems first to manage to attract tourists and income. The image of a country does not change in short-term from negative to positive so even if a nation's tourist promotion image is seducing, if it does not match reality will not be successful.

One of the risks for some countries is that they fall into the traditional holiday field, just offering "sun and sea" which in the end can attract many low-spender tourists by forcing tourism actors to lower their prices. As Olins (2005) states, a country will differentiate from others by promoting the art, culture, history, architecture and other unique features to attract tourists looking for something else rather than beach vacations, and who will probably spend more. This has been one of the objectives of the Spanish governments and all the tourism actors. ME has tried to promote more than just sun and sand but also the culture, heritage, gastronomy and drinks to attract specific tourists and not just low-spender holiday-goers. The results of this research will try to find out if it has been achieved or not.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

The total amount of FDI in the world ascended to $1.8 trillion (UNCTAD, 2015) so there is little doubt that there is a fierce rivalry between countries to receive the investments and therefore, jobs and new opportunities. However, despite being present in all NB studies and with the vast amount of literature about FDI, Papadopoulos et al (2016) claims that there has not been much research about NB from an FDI approach. Dinnie (2007) categorized four major features that are valued by those companies eager to invest overseas: a stable economic and political environment, skilled workforce, streamlined administrative procedures and infrastructure. The better a country scores in those aspects, the highest options to be allocated the resources. The launch of "Creative France" in 2015 aimed, among others, to increase FDI in the country by highlighting its' positive features and fight against the perception of being a "more complicated country" according to François Hollande, (2014) than others. However, in 2016 FDI inflows in France decreased 39% (UNCTAD).

Exports

Like nation-branding with FDI purposes, the objective in this case is to increase the country's export power and maintain or gain a reputation for its' products and services. Partly due to the COO effect some "Made in.." labels are much more successful than others even if the latter offer better goods. Anholt states that a nation's export brands "act as powerful ambassadors of each country's image abroad, but only where their country of origin is explicit" (2007). The COO effect may not produce results if a product has been made in various countries or even, if a consumer is not able to associate a powerful brand to its' COO. Some brands prefer having the appeal of a different COO and so name their products in other languages, for example Japanese car manufacturer Toyota naming its cars under Italian names because they sound more attractive. Olins (2005) also reinforces this view by saying that having a powerful COO effect in one field can eclipse the attempts of products from other sectors, as happens with German fashion.

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

As opposed to hard power, which implies coercion, soft power is a country's ability to overcome objectives by influencing and persuading, rather than threatening or imposing. Soft power as an influence tool is compulsory in the IT era and as Melissen (2005) states, due to the existence of strong transnational connections, a decrease in soft power can carry consequences. Through NB a country will try to enhance its' image and reputation to gain influence (soft power) and one of the tools used will be public diplomacy (PD). Rasmussen affirms that it is commonly agreed that PD is "a strategic communication instrument aimed at foreign publics" (2012). PD will use communication as a mean to influence others through "communicative practices such as culture, advocacy and branding" (Pamment, 2014). Complementing the traditional diplomacy, more based in relations between states, PD focuses on "non-official groups, organizations and individuals" (Melissen, 2005). And for Zaharna (2016) PD might be facing a new impulse, the second after the 9/11 attacks, when PD was used to influence foreign audiences to favour USA's policies and decisions. The new call for PD has been made by the globalization of the internet and the growth of social media and the term has evolved into what has been called "Public Diplomacy 2.0".

Public Diplomacy (PD) 2.0

Such is the importance given to the new PD that authors like Mytko (2012) highlight the enormous disadvantage for those states which do not recognize the value of PD 2.0. Other authors like Iosifidis and Wheeler (2016) claim that the evolution of the IT age has urged many nations (including USA and UK) to use digital instruments to receive positive opinion in the international scene. In their words "digital communication has revolutionized the practice of public diplomacy" (2016). According to Melissen (2011) countries realized that the one-way communication to foreign audiences had ended with the development of new technologies and the new PD. It is no more a one-way dialogue and hierarchy is substituted for a more horizontal approach. Iosifidis and Wheeler define the new PD as the "construction of horizontal webs to engage the public, NSA and civil society organizations that are relevant for foreign policy objectives" (2016). PD tries to use well-known and influential organizations, individuals and NGO's so that they give support to the country and its' policies. However, as Dinnie (2007) claims, these kinds of touchpoints between a brand/country and an audience are not controllable so, even if unintentionally, something positive could turn into negative and spread like a virus.

The Power of Social Media

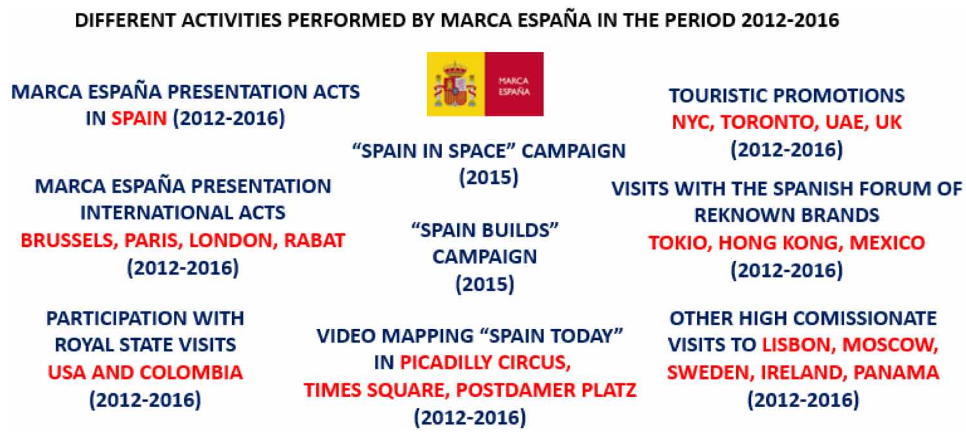
Our global societies are eager to be informed and communicate, through many different channels, and the number of social media users increases daily due to the incorporation of less developed countries. Harris (2013) claims that social media "are effective for conveying any message to a given public, whether it is from a corporation, a public figure, or a government". Governments understood that they could not miss the chance given by social media to reach their target audiences and one of the first exploiting it was President Obama in his 2008 campaign. Since his election the use of social media boosted to engage audiences and improve the country's image after Bush's presidency. With the use of social media and fake news, governments like Russia have tried to influence in foreign affairs such as the Catalan separatist movement, Brexit or Trump's election. The power that social media offer is being used by governments and organizations to try to influence. Also, governments, diplomats, Royal Houses and other governmental actors embrace social media to send their messages but also listen and interact with the audiences. It is a way of branding the nation no matter the distance, as in the case of UK with some of the members of the Commonwealth. NB projects rely on the use of social media to reach and engage audiences around the world. The question is whether they succeed or not.

MARCA ESPAÑA (ME)

The NB project Marca España was born in 2012 and it defines itself as a long-term governmental policy developed to enhance the country's image inside and outside its' borders. Marca España Council unites all the actors who take part in the project, ranging from several official agencies to tourism boards, local and regional governments or Spanish public television RTVE. The Council works in different workshops, depending on the field (PD, Economic diplomacy, Sport diplomacy, regional and local administrations…).

The first plan was implemented in 2013 and it established the general priorities of the project. Geographical priorities, as 15 countries were targeted, sectorial priorities like tourism, renewable energies, sport, biotechnology among others, as well as the horizontal priorities, focused on employment, increase of exports, FDI or the promotion of the Spanish language. After defining its' general purposes (although never in detail) the second plan focused on communication and some economic features (internationalization of companies, FDI, etc). The 2015 plan aimed at improving coordination and established ways to communicate the distinctive characteristics (history, culture, food, sports.etc). Finally, in 2016 the plan was dedicated to critically analyse the actions in the 2012-2015 period and evaluate the results. It has been the duty of Real Instituto El Cano, with its' annual Barometer of Spain's image to study the country's perception. A summary of the different activities developed by ME can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Marca España activities in the period 2012-2016. Data source from Marca España, un proyecto hecho realidad (2012/2016).



One of the countries in the world which academics cite as an example of having performed a successful NB is Spain (Anholt, 1998; Gilmore, 2002; Olins, 2005). Yet, this success in rebranding a nation with a turbulent history has been the result of decades of NB's implementation.

Olins (2005) described Spain before Franco's death as an "isolated, autarkic, poverty-stricken, authoritarian anachronism, hardly part of modern Europe at all". Those were the consequences of a 40-year dictatorship which deepened the stereotypes that the country already had gained through history: an ultra-catholic, savage and obscure country, home-born of the Spanish Inquisition. So how could Spain change its image and become a respected country in the international arena?

After Franco's death, Spain was merely seen as an affordable place for holidays, "a poverty-stricken country of no cultural or commercial influence" (Olins, 2005). However, during the 1980s and 1990s Spain invested in a NB strategy, one of its' symbols being Joan Miro's sun drawing (Moilanen, 2009). As Gilmore points out, the sun "graphically unified a myriad of activities, publicity events and ads" (2002). These campaigns were implemented in a context of modernization and aperture to the world which lead to the acceptance in the European Economic Community in 1986. During the 1990s the privatization and globalization of Spanish multinationals in Latin America (Repsol, Telefonica, BBVA…) contributed to enhance Spain´s image as a modern country with economic opportunities and brands which could compete internationally. Other events such as the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games helped to put Spain on the map. Additionally, as Olins states "the reality has changed but so have perceptions" (2005).

So why NB in Spain can be considered a success according to most academics in the field? No matter how much a country invests in NB, if the image trying to project on their audiences does not correspond with reality the project will fail. As Gilmore (2002) states, what is being branded must be an intensification of what is there already, not an invention, and Spain has successfully done it by capturing its' people spirit.

While the number of tourists grew exponentially there was the risk that Spain was still seen as a cheap holiday destination for low-spenders. As Olins (2005) suggests, to differentiate itself to other similar competitors a country must emphasize other features like culture, gastronomy or nature "through sophisticated imagery" as a way to attract less tourists but who will spend more. The growth, even if slow, of other non-beach destinations in Spain and the fact that Spain has good positions in the cultural aspects of the different Indices (Figure 2) are a positive sign but everyone should admit that Spain is still too associated to low-cost holidays.

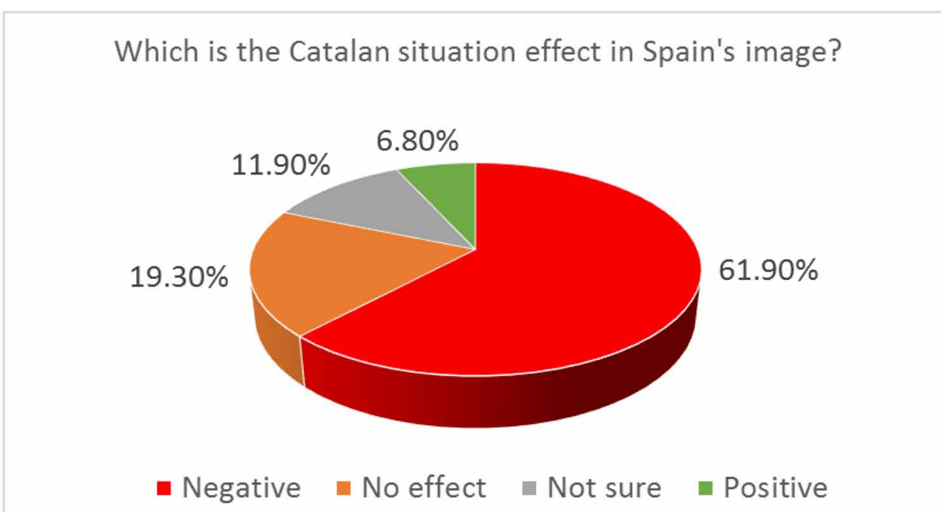
However, Spain's NB faces other challenges, like being considered more than just a tourist powerful brand or the recent decrease of its' image due to the separatist tensions in the region of Catalonia, as can be seen in a recent study (Figure 3).

In different rankings and Indices studied Spain usually hits the top-10 in tourism and culture, while in those aspects related to business, the digital economy or the best places to work in, the country usually

Figure 2. Spain's cultural position in different Indices. Data sources from Digital country index, Reputation Institute, 2017and Soft power 30 (2017).

SPAIN'S CULTURAL POSITION IN THE INDEXES	
THE SOFT POWER 30 (2017)	6
THE SOFT POWER 30 (2015)	5
DIGITAL COUNTRY INDEX (2017)	8
COUNTRY REP TRACK (2013)	8
COUNTRY REP TRACK (2011)	8

Figure 3. How the Catalan separatist movement affects Spain's image. Data source from a Report on the Spain brand reputation in the European context by Reputation Institute (2017).



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does not stand out. As the academics state, all the citizens should know and identify themselves with the project and the national identity projected. Yet, according to the research by Rius and Zamorano (2014) about Marca España, the project tends to focus on the Spanish nation, a Spanish identity which is not inclusive with other nationalities in Spain, like the Catalan or the Basque, (The Real Instituto Elcano, 2017). They criticize the use of ME to project a uniformed image of Spanish culture, without considering the different regions. Melissen (2011) claims that some regions in contemporary cracked countries like Belgium or Spain "have been practising their own assertive public diplomacy". So, if ME is not able to engage all Spanish citizens and many do not feel identified with it, it will hardly achieve its' objectives.

Spain's Indicators

One of the objectives of ME is not only receiving more international visitors annually but also receiving visitors looking for more than cheap sun and sea holidays. Analysing the number of tourists and linking it on the income spent in Spain will give a clue on the performance of Spanish tourism. As can be seen in figures 4 and 5, the number of international tourists has increased during the period 2012-2016.

Figure 4. Spain indicators 2012- 2016. Data source from the World Bank 2017.

YEAR	Population (M)	GDP (current Billion US$)	International tourism, number of arrivals (M)	GDP Growth	GDP per capita €	Unemploy-ment rate	Exports of goods and services (M US$)	FDI Outflows (M US$)	FDI Inflows (M US$)	High Education Students
2012	46,818,216	$1.30	57.5	-2.9%	24,100	25.77%	214,094,097	-2,479	24,667	72,488
2013	46,727,890	$1.36	60.6	-1.7%	23,300	25.73%	253,799,183	12,823	37,436	73,639
2014	46,512,199	$1.37	64.9	1.4%	22,780	23,70%	243,659,858	36,325	25,655	71,533
2015	46,449,565	$1.19	68.2	3.4%	22,518	20.90%	238,752,264	44,489	11,910	76,057
2016	46,440,099	$1.23	75.3	3.3%	22,562	18.63%	229,374,120	41,789	18,659	N/A
AVERAGE (2012-2016)	**46,589,594**	**$1.29**	**65**	**0.70%**	**23,052**	**22.76%**	**235,935,904**	**26,589**	**23,665**	**73,429**

**For a more accurate representation see the electronic version.*

Figure 5. Number of international tourists to Spain, 2012-2016. Data source from the World Bank 2017.

Yet, this research cannot establish a direct link between the increase in the number of tourists and the influence of ME campaigns. However, the positive trend does not discard a possible impact of Spanish tourist campaigns under the project ME. In figure 6, the expenditure per visitor is shown and it has not improved in the period 2013-2016. In this case, the objective of ME for attracting visitors who would spend more during their visit has not been successful.

Another of the main objectives of a NB project is to increase the amount of FDI in the country. Figure (7) shows the amount of FDI outflows and inflows: while the outflows show a very positive trend, the inflows seem to decrease since they peaked in 2013.

The results reveal that if ME was trying to increase the FDI inflows, the strategy has not yet worked out. However, data from 2017 would help to determine if the trend continues being negative or not.

Image and Reputation Indices and Rankings

As mentioned before, governments tend to use the results in the reputation rankings to accept or reject the success of a NB project. When trying to determine if ME has succeeded in improving the country' s

Figure 6. Expenditure per visitor in Spain. Data source from Bank of Spain (2017).

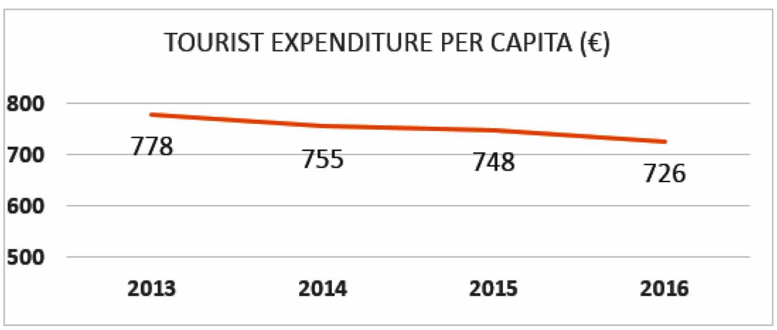

Figure 7. Amount of foreign direct investment, outflows and inflows, 2012-2016. Data source from UNCTAD, 2017.

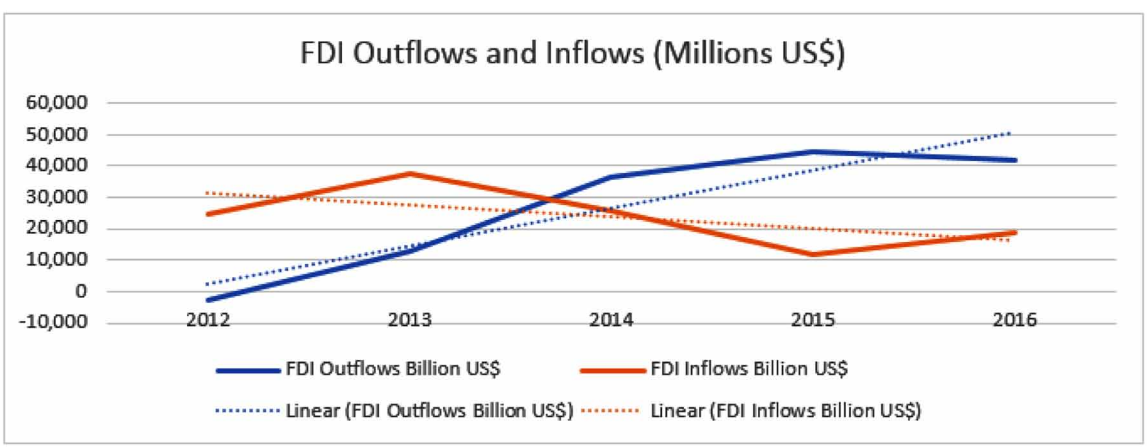

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image it is compulsory to observe the position of Spain in those indices in the period 2012-2017. A positive trend could confirm that ME has had a role on the improvement of Spain´s image. On the contrary, a negative result would instantly undermine the capacity of ME to achieve its purposes.

The position of Spain in the different Indices is shown in figure 8. Information from six indices has been gathered. It is important to note that not all Indices are published annually.

In three out of six indices (Nation Brand, Digital Country Index and Country RepTrack) the position of Spain has improved in the period going from 2012 to 2016. Meanwhile, in other two the position of Spain has remained the same (Anholt-GFK) or has improved one position (Good Country Index). The only ranking in which Spain has lost positions is in the Soft Power 30 index, from the 14th position in 2014 to the 15th in 2017.

All in all, it can be confirmed that the image of Spain, according to the Indices, has improved in the period when ME has taken place. The Spanish government has published the results of some Indices in Marca España's annual reports and has used the positive results to strongly support the continuity of the project.

This research has also look at the position of Spain in the "Tourism" aspect of the Indices. The ranking was compared to the classification of two other major competitor countries: France and Italy. This should provide a more accurate approach to the performance and attractiveness of Spain as a tourist destination, in comparison to France, the country with more visitors in the world and one of the highest in expenditure per tourist, Figure 9.

The missing data has not been collected because the Indices are not published annually. Examining the table, the three countries are top-ranked, being Spain the 1st positioned in the Digital Country Index while Italy is the 1st ranked in the Anholt-GFK. France obtains the 3d position in the Soft Power 30, while Spain is 6th. In the Country Brand ranking dedicated to Tourism Spain achieved the 3rd place, although fell from the 2nd in 2014. The three countries have comparable results in the Indices and the position of Spain remains very stable in all of them, with no changes at all in some cases. Spain should

Figure 8. The position of Spain in the reputation Indices. Data sources are from - NBI Anholt-GFK Index, Brand Finance Nation Brands, Digital Country Index (Bloom Consulting), Country RepTrack (reputation Institute), The Soft Power 30 (Portland Communications) and The Good Country Index (Anholt).

	ANHOLT- GFK	NATION BRANDS	DIGITAL COUNTRY INDEX	COUNTRY REP TRACK	SOFT POWER 30	GOOD COUNTRY INDEX	
2012		13		16			15
2013	11	18		18			16
2014	12	18		18		19	17
2015	12	16	15	17	14		15
2016	11	14	9	17	12	21	14
2017		12	7	13	15	18	13
	12	15	10	17	14	19	

**For a more accurate representation see the electronic version.*

Figure 9. The position of France, Spain and Italy in the "Tourism" area of the Indices. Data sources from Anholt- GFK NBI, digital country index, country brand tourism ranking, Country RepTrack and Soft Power 30.

YEAR	ANHOLT-GFK NATION BRANDS INDEX			DIGITAL COUNTRY INDEX			COUNTRY BRAND RANKING TOURISM			COUNTRY REP TRACK			SOFT POWER 30		
	FR	SP	ITA	FR	SP	ITA	FR	SP	ITA	FR	SP	ITA	FR	SP	ITA
2012							3	2	12						
2013		5					4	2	7		8	2			
2014		5					5	2	10	10		3			
2015				4	1	2					9	2	3	6	8
2016				4	1	2						4	3	6	7
2017	2	4	1	3	1	2	6	3	10		10	5	3	6	7

take into consideration the results from France in some indices to develop ideas to help increase the quality of its' visitors.

With these results it is difficult to accept or discard the relevance of ME because a clear results and solid conclusions cannot be extracted.

Digital Performance (PD) of Spain

Today, every country intending to have a reputation in the world must have a digital strategy, as the internet is one of the most influencing tools nowadays. A country with a poor image abroad or even, almost no image at all, will not achieve many search results in Google while countries which are also strong brands will achieve high amount of results. The Digital Country Index is a study based on the online searches (social media is being excluded) according to five parameters: tourism, talent, investment, exports and national prominence. This was published in 2015 and 2017 by Bloom Consulting. and its' results gives an idea of how Spain is performing in the digital world, Figure 10.

According to the Index (figure 11), Spain has improved its' results in 2017, comparing to 2015. In 2015 Spain was ranked in 19th position in "Exports", while in 2017 it escalated to the 10th position. It means that there has been a major increase in the searches for Spain exports. In "Investment" where keywords like "stock exchange" or "invest in Spain" are searched, the rank also improved, from the 15th to the 11th position in just 2 years. For the areas of "talent" and "prominence" Spain won one position in 2017.

Looking more in detail the results in the different areas (figure 12) indicate that the importance of arts, culture and sports in the searches too. Those aspects are major assets to increase the interest of potential consumers/visitors. The "export from Spain" accounted 48% of the searches related to exports.

The most positive figure would be the one related to "Tourism" where Spain maintains the 1st position in the ranking, meaning that it is the country with more online searches. The researcher has found more details of the 2015 Index: Spain ranked 2nd in the world when the searches were related to visiting

Figure 10. Digital performance of Spain. Data source from digital country index by Bloom Consulting, 2015 and 2017.

	GOOGLE SEARCHES (M)	GOOGLE SEARCH TOURISM (M)	GOOGLE SEARCH CULTURE	GOOGLE SEARCH REPUTATION	TRIPADVISOR TOTAL SEARCH RESULTS	TRIPADVISOR LOCATIONS SEARCH	TRIPADVISOR ATTRACTIONS SEARCH	GOVERNMENT'S FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS	
FRANCE	1,120	23.1	29	53	340,546	20,468	41,868	FRANCE	411,488
GREECE	170	6.17	359	4	85,886	3,132	10,154	GREECE	8,140
ITALY	537	11.8	31	36	520,540	12,103	80,344	ITALY	32,150
SPAIN	340	10.1	80	28	318,757	9,085	38,013	**SPAIN**	21,524
TURKEY	252	6.08	14	15	79,749	893	8,743	TURKEY	62,516
UK	1,300	24.7	21	6	362,191	11,148	58,571	UK	479,437
USA	1,490	11.8	27	14	1,328,972	33,609	198,774	USA	8,530,419
	744	13	80	22	433,806	12,920	62,352		

**For a more accurate representation see the electronic version.*

Figure 11. Spain's position in the five parameters of digital country index. Data source from digital country index by Bloom Consulting.

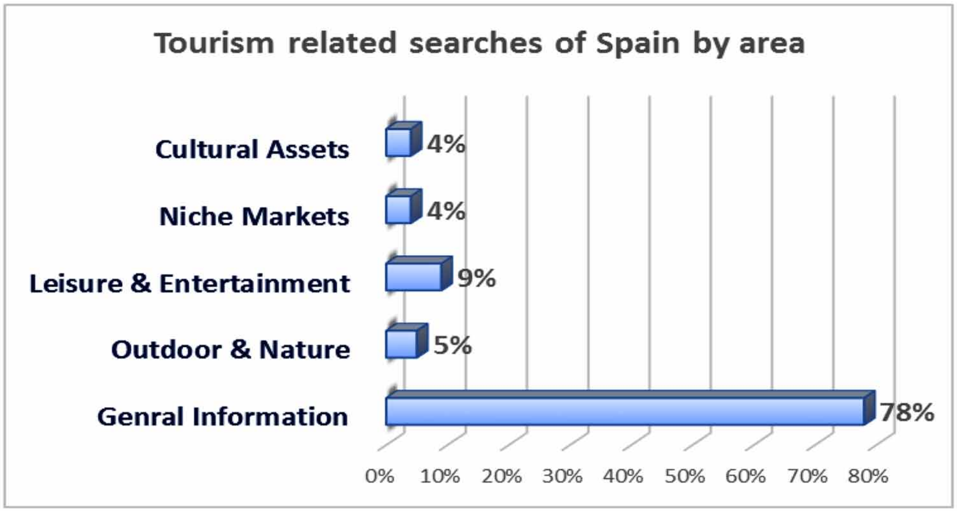
	DIGITAL COUNTRY INDEX				
	EXPORTS	**INVESTMENT**	**TOURISM**	**TALENT**	**PROMINENCE**
2015	19	15	1	8	9
2017	10	11	1	7	8

Figure 12. Percentages of searches of the different sub-aspects in the digital country index 2017. Data source Bloom Consulting.

the country, 3rd in searches for cultural assets (after Italy and France), 6th in nature and 7th in leisure and entertainment. The combination of the scores gave Spain the 1st position in "Tourism".

However, even if Spain is ranked first, in 2017 the searches for general information took 78% of the total searches, while "outdoor & nature" (5%) or "cultural assets" (4%) were minority. Online searches on these aspects must improve if Spain want to receive visitors who are not just looking for low-cost holidays.

Figure 13. Percentage of searches regarding Spain's "Tourism" in the digital country index 2017. Data source from Bloom Consulting.



To enhance its' PD, all governments, ministries, agencies, tourism boards have social media accounts. It is a way to maintain interest from the audience (possible customers). The Figure 14 shows the number of followers of different state governments.

However, in light of the Facebook and Cambridge analytica where large scale information harvesting was exercised, many researches are now asking for data regulations because there is concern about the ethics and the privacy implications where companies and may be some governments use private data/ information in order to plan strategic future direction, (Seargeant and Tagg, 2018).

By comparing the number of followers of the Spanish government with those of other countries, it is obvious that Spain is not performing in that front. With just 21,500 followers, it seems not to be generating enthusiasm, while French government is 20 times higher and USA, with 8.5 million followers dominates the list.

Figure 14. Number of followers of different state accounts. Data source from Facebook, 2017.

GOVERNMENT'S FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS	
FRANCE	411,488
GREECE	8,140
ITALY	32,150
SPAIN	21,524
TURKEY	62,516
UK	479,437
USA	8,530,419

CRITICAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of NB is to improve a country´s image and reputation. By doing so, some results are expected, becoming more influential (soft power) and an increase in economic indicators such as exports, visitors and FDI. This research aimed at identifying whether NB has achieved its' objectives in the case of Spain or not. ME is a NB project started in 2012 to mitigate the loss of reputation after the banking crisis. However, the opacity of the Spanish government regarding the project is major. There are general information but not many details about the specific activities, budget or implementation. The activities developed can be found in the internet, but without much content. No information can be found regarding the budget of the project and without knowing the expenditure of each activity it is difficult to measure its' impact. Furthermore, ME has not specified specifically the objectives that the project is seeking. There are no figures available on explicit targets, just general statements, which makes it easier for the government to defend the impact of ME. For all these reasons being able to evaluate the performance of ME is an almost impossible task.

In 2012 the Real Instituto El Cano, a Spanish institution specialized in sociological studies, started the annual Barometer of the image of Spain. One of the main reasons for its' creation was to evaluate the performance of ME. By analysing annually the image of Spain and its' different aspects (culture, goods, sport, governance…) the government not only wanted to know lean and know the country image but also try to establish the weaknesses, and reverse them, figure 15. Spain aimed at collecting primary data about many distinctive features to extract conclusions and work on them. The initiative is positive because having that kind of data, if analysed correctly, can help to establish strengths and weaknesses and implement measures to improve results. Nevertheless, Spain could work much more with first hand data to improve the results in some areas such as exports. The use of Business Intelligence is a must in a country receiving 80 million visitors in 2017. Each visitor in Spain produces a big amount of data which should be thoroughly analysed to understand what the tourist seeks, their expectations, where

Figure 15. Spain's image. Data source from the Real Instituto El Cano, 2017.

BAROMETER SPAIN'S IMAGE BY REAL INSTITUTO EL CANO								
YEAR	GLOBAL VALUE (0/10)	ECONOMY	CULTURE/ CULTURAL PRODUCTION	GOVERNANCE	SOCIETY/ CITIZENS	SPANISH COMPANIES ABROAD	SPAIN, COUNTRY TO INVEST	SPORT
2012	6.5	5	7.3	5.2	6.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
2013	6.7	5.7	7.6	5.9	7	N/A	N/A	7.8
2015	6.9	5.9	6.9	6.2	7.2	6.3	6.3	7.5
2016	7.2	5.8	6.8	6.1	7	6.2	6.1	7.2
2017	7.1	5.7	6.6	6.1	6.9	6	5.9	7
AVERAGE	6.9	5.6	7.0	5.9	7.0	6.2	6.1	7.4

**For a more accurate representation see the electronic version.*

they go, their favourite attractions or the products they buy. If one of the objectives of NB is the export of goods, why not analysing the best-selling products among tourists? Knowing the specific brands or the origin of the wine and oil that tourists buy could help target countries for Spanish products. For a country like Spain, tourism is a major source of income and the more visitors spend during their stay, the better for the economy, for example creating more jobs. However, the “sun and sea” tourism is not giving Spain an added value.

As seen in Figures 5 and 6 the number of tourists visiting Spain has gradually increase in the period 2012-2016. However, the expenditure per visitor has dropped. With such a fierce competition on low-cost holidays from countries like Greece, Portugal or Turkey, Spain needs to offer the customers much more. The aim is to target countries with big-spender tourists (Russia, Asia, USA, Middle East) and, after analysing the behaviour of visitors from those countries with the data that they have produced, try to offer potential customers the holidays they desire. Word of mouth is still vital in tourism because visitors will talk about the stay, the attractions and the products to their friends and families, creating new potential visitors. This is of course a very important factor in the digital age as visitors not only provide real time information about their stay through social medias, but also their blugs written after their stay can reach many million other potential visitors. Obviously, the process that leads to the final decisions is not easy because storing data from 80 million customers will require a huge budget, as well as professionals capable of analysing and transforming the data to be understandable to those making decisions, from a senior management level to lower management level.

A national brand project can only be successful if achieves the purposes for which it was created. However, evaluating the impact of a NB project in some indicators is virtually impossible, especially in the case of ME. Proving that the campaigns have resulted in an increase of exports or FDI seems impossible without having detailed data from the campaigns ME executed (budget, target countries etc.). Therefore, a positive trend could not be confirmed that ME has worked. Instead, if the indicators have had a negative trend, it should confirm that the project has not accomplished its’ purposes. This research has taken some of Spain’s indicators in the period 2012-2016 to determine if they had a positive or negative tendency. The tourist indicator, even if positive, reflected less expenditure from visitors, which is one of the objectives of Spanish tourism. The FDI graph has showed that FDI outflows have boosted, while FDI inflows have even descended in the period 2012-2016. The number of exports of goods and services do show a slight rise in the figures, although it is decreasing since 2014. These two indicators are critical for a NB project as they are two of the objectives that every academic cites (Anholt, 2008; Dinnie, 2011). In the case of Spain, the figures show quite a positive trend, but no research will be able to confirm that ME had influence on them. Carrying out a comprehensive regular survey through questionnaires would result in valuable data and would help Spain to identify channels to influence decision.

The development of NB created the need to quantify a country’ s image and reputation. That is why some Indices were created with the purpose to rank the countries according to different parameters. The Spanish government publishes some of the results to evaluate ME and that is why this research has collected data from some Indices and compared the trend in the period 2012-2016. A decrease in Spain’s position in the rankings would not be positive for ME, while having better results could be used by the government to defend the influence of ME. After analysing the positions in the rankings, it can be confirmed that the trend is positive, because in five out of six indices Spain gained positions or remained the same. So even if the impact of NB is not measurable, it is valid to say that the image of Spain slightly improved between 2012 and 2016.

This research does not doubt neither the objectivity of the results nor the methodology used and in fact, Spain's position in the rankings is quite similar, usually being in the top 20. Yet, how objective are these results? Quantifying the image of a nation according to some parameters does not seem an easy task. Most of the studies publish the methodology used, as well as the percentage of each parameter and sub-parameter but who determines what the percentage of each aspect should be? Some indices give parameters such as tourism or environment (which helps to increase Spain's position) more weight than the economy.

The Good Country Index, created by Simon Anholt, is believed to be one of the most complete rankings and one with respect to this research in which Spain could see in detail which aspects could give the country a better position. This Index gives a country a position based on areas such as contribution to science, peace order, climate change combat, world order etc. giving this Index a different approach than other indices. Those states with an image of being open-minded, pacifist, green and solidary usually top many of the reputation indices. Countries like Switzerland, Sweden or Iceland frequently obtain high positions. Spain should also play the card of the environment and market nature as one of the most important assets in the country. With 48 biosphere reserves accredited by UNESCO in 2017, the same as USA, Spain tops the rank in that area. However, the image of Spain is much more related to words like "sun" and "beach". Marketing nature could attract many different kind of tourists, from ski-goers to sports looking for a place to train. The same happens with cultural holidays or religious stays.

Another aspect in which Spain had a very good score in 2012 was sport with 7.8/10. However, the score has been descending and it was 7/10 in 2017. Sport can become the best of the promotions for a country, as it happened when Spain won the football World Cup in 2010. The repercussion of events like that one is not measurable. Including top ranked athletes can promote the image of a country in such a way that Spain designated some well-known athletes as ambassadors of ME. Football player from FC Barcelona Andres Iniesta became a ME ambassador, opening the door to rising the promotion of Spain in Asia, where FCB and Real Madrid are followed enthusiastically.

The Digital Country Index of 2015 and 2017, analyses the interest of worldwide searches for all countries in the world, detailing several aspects. The results are very positive in the five areas considered. It confirms the interest of digital users in Spain. However, the government should exploit the data to turn these results into economic advantages by implementing measures and making information in the web more available. Also, the tourism detailed results show that the government and tourism agencies should apply their own BI system to identify tourists looking for something different than sun holidays.

NB and PD are two concepts related to each other. This research also looked at the impact of digital performace and after analysing the number of followers of the Spanish government in Facebook as well as other data such as the social media followers of ME, the views of ME videos in YouTube this research concludes that its' performance is very low. For example, compared to other governments the Spanish has a small number of followers, and the same happens to ME. With hardly 2,400 subscribers in YouTube and the same number in Facebook it does not look like the project ME has digital relevance. One of the promotional videos in YouTube reached 150,000 views, yet the rest have been watched 3,000 times on average. Not very satisfactory results, especially when some videos have millions of viewers.

All in all, the analysis of the different areas (economic, Indices, Image Barometer, Digital Spain) throw different results and it is not possible to conclude that ME had an impact on Spain's image or on consumers. Similarly, this researcher doubts that NB campaigns can be adequately evaluated.

CONCLUSION

This research started by questioning if the expected effects of a nation branding campaign are measurable. Through a set of objectives and methodologies the aim was to conclude if, in the case of Spain, the nation branding project Marca España has had an impact in the country' s image and has influenced some indicators. Even if confirming the hypothesis is not possible due to many limitations, nation branding in Spain and other countries will continue because the quest for a good country image is vital in a globalized world with so many competitors.

A quick search for "nation branding" in Google produces 14 million results and "public diplomacy" achieves 17 million. It cannot be denied that have awakened the interest of different audiences, from academics to governments and marketing agencies or consultants. Countries like France, Poland, Switzerland, Belgium and many others have undertaken NB projects, not all of them being successful. Yet, who determines if a NB project is successful or not? What kind of evaluations take place?

Many Indices have been published since the boom of NB to measure a country's image as a way of analysing the performance of a NB project. Since NB was coined by Anholt in 1997, other institutions and consultancy agencies have now started creating their own rankings and nowadays some of the studies have been available for a decade. As NB does not pay results in the short-term, being able to analyse the trends during a considerable period of time can help to increase the trust in NB.

The digital area has been analysed through the study of Spain's results in the Digital Country Index. Spain has been able to improve its' position and data shows that in non-economic aspects (like tourism) the country is very attractive for the internet users. Despite that, the Spanish government should start using the data from the visitors to enhance other indicators, like exports.

New consumers of Spanish high-quality products would open new markets. Public diplomacy 2.0 also needs a bigger push, with the Ministries, regional governments, tourism agencies, diplomats playing a more active role and adopting strategies to target better audiences or, in other words, a better marketing.

Offering a critical vision of NB, it seems that every country needs to have NB but no one is able to scientifically prove its' success. However, failure is easier to prove. If a country is losing position in the indices and the economic indicators have a negative trend the project will have failed without doubt.

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Chapter 17
Disruptive Technology in the Smartphones Industry:
Identity Theory Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The impact of identity on brand loyalty has taken precedence as an area of focus in recent marketing research. This has occurred in an era defined by technological revolution, which has created market disruptions, and there are implications for customer-brand relationships. Nonetheless, existing research has failed to acknowledge the impact of socio-psychological attributes and functional utility maximization. Knowledge that illuminates how firms can reposition themselves to sustain brand loyalty when disruptions occur in today's complex and globalized business environment is also required. The chapter presents an empirical investigation into the phenomenon of brand switching behavior among consumers in a specific competitive market, particularly in the smartphone industry. It explores how resistance could be built from an identity theory perspective, as emphasis has historically been placed on the functional utility of products at the expense of social meanings. This chapter provides consideration for market disruptions in the smartphone industry. It confirms that the literature does not capture other non-utilitarian factors such as socio-psychological benefits; hence, there are underlying factors that motivate consumers to continue buying brands they buy.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch017

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The plethora of research on brand switching covers customer motivations to review available alternatives due to changes in competitive activities as a means to maximise the functional utility of product attributes and the marketing mix (Guadagni & Little, 1983; Seiders & Tigerts, 1997). Nonetheless, extant literature in this stream of research fails to acknowledge the impact of socio-psychological attributes besides functional utility maximisation. This chapter presents an empirical investigation into the phenomenon of brand switching behaviour of consumers in a competitive market, with implications for how resistance can be built from an identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Swait & Erdem 2007; Lam *et al*., 2013; Hsu & Liou, 2017; Appiah & Ozuem, 2017).

Much emphasis has been placed on the functional utility of products at the expense of social meanings. With the exceptions of product function, insufficient attention has been paid to socio-psychological attributes and personal and social meanings of brands. The assumption is that people are continually involved in social interactions and interpreting their constantly changing world. This chapter deviates from the conventional economic perspective of treating brand switching as functional utility maximisation (Guadagni & Little, 1983; Seiders & Tigerts, 1997), to treating brand switching as a consequence of social mobility between brand identities amongst consumers (Lam *et al*., 2013). The chapter seeks to investigate consumer identification with brands in the Smartphone industry across the United Kingdom. The Smartphone industry was chosen as the product category for this chapter because it represents a context in which brand switching is most likely to occur due to multiple alternatives and short inter-purchase frequencies (Campo *et al*., 2000; Goldsmith, 2000). Notably, the market for Smartphones is exceptionally dynamic, considering the degree and rate of change in technology. The extent of product innovation disrupting the Smartphone market is staggering (Azize Sahin *et al*., 2013; Cecere *et al*., 2015).

Existing literature on brand loyalty and identity theory is explored to examine the effects of identity on customer loyalty. Despite extensive studies on brand loyalty (Ozuem, Thomas & Lancaster, 2016; Appiah, Ozuem, & Howell, 2016; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018), there has been little research on how market disruptions affect customer–brand relationships and how firms can reposition themselves to sustain brand loyalty when disruptions occur in today's complex and globalised business environment (Lam *et al*., 2010; Appiah & Ozuem, 2017). Although loyalty literature provides rich and useful insight into customer–brand relationships, two limitations warrant further investigation:

1. Sustainability of brand loyalty predictors refers to resisting both time and market disruptions (*ibid.*). However, brand loyalty literature has mainly focused on how brands perform under normal market conditions (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Yet, as the business environment grows more complex and globalised, market disruptions become more prevalent;
2. Another limitation arises when we consider the perceived value of brands when conceptualised and operationalised as functional utilitarian values. This is prevalent in brand loyalty literature, which does not capture other non-utilitarian factors such as socio-psychological benefits that might motivate customers to continue buying (Holbrook & Corfman, 1985; Richins, 1994; Sheth *et al*., 1991; Lam *et al*, 2013; Hsu & Liou, 2017).

The chapter considers identified limitations to propose and develop a conceptual customer–brand identity (CBI) model framework to examine the issue of brand switching in a specific market disruption, namely the introduction of a radically new brand due to innovation in the Smartphone industry, and to support the antecedents of consumer identification at a more matured and competitive stage. This sector was selected as the product category because it represents a context in which brand switching is most likely to occur due to multiple alternatives and short inter-purchase frequencies (Campo *et al*., 2000; Goldsmith, 2000; Appiah, 2014; Jung, Hun, & Oh, 2017).

Little research has been conducted to explore further the phenomenon of brand switching from an identity theory perspective that utilises grounded theory methodology. This could provide useful insights and serve as a basis for future research, as well as benefiting practitioners, especially brand and customer relationship managers who must devise customer relationship strategies to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Sirgy, 1982; Lam *et al*., 2010; Appiah, Ozuem, & Howell, 2017)

Overview of the Smartphones Industry

There has been massive escalation in the number of Smartphone users recently as it is widely used as a communication tool that connects users through voice calls, text messages, emails and social networking sites for entertainments (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2014; Tan, Hsiao, Tseng, & Chang, 2017). The Smartphone is a multi-functional device which apart from its telephone functionalities has a wide range of applications such as email, Internet, calendar, notepads and in-built cameras (Norazah, 2013; Wang *et al*., 2014; Jeong, Kim, Yum, & Hwang, 2016). The Smartphone is a significant shift from the traditional mobile phone and a major difference between the two is that various applications can be added after the purchase of the Smartphone device, whereas the same cannot be said of the mobile phone. Hence Smartphones are considered radically innovative products due their additional features which are similar to computers.

The evolution of the Smartphone has significantly impacted consumer behaviour and choice. Mobile phone technology was initially used only for communication purposes but has recently advanced to include additional features that have created a greater market and altered the purchase behaviour of the consumers (Slawsby *et al*., 2003; Appiah & Ayertey, 2018; Dwivedi, 2015). In this modern era of technological advancement, users of mobile phones expect other features such as media support, Internet connectivity and special applications (Jones, 2002; Hansen, 2003; Norazah, 2013; Jeong *et al*., 2016; Tan *et al*., 2017).

There is the need to emphasise that recently, Smartphones have attracted the attention of all age groups from teenagers to the older generation, and special features in terms of both hardware and software have largely contributed to the impact on customer choice and purchase intentions (Tussyadiah, 2015), enabling manufacturers to innovate new services that have created a competitive environment.

The dramatic growth in the usage of Smartphones has attracted researchers and academics (Park & Yang, 2006; Wang *et al*., 2014; Kim *et al*., 2016; Jeong *et al*., 2016; Tan *et al*., 2017), and special features in Smartphones have created greater perception and expectations (Aaker, 1997; Dickinson, Ghali, Cherret, Speed, Davis, & Norgate, 2014; Wang *et al*., 2014; Tan *et al*., 2017). The significant component of the Smartphone that drives demand and helps manufacturers maintain a strong influence in the Smartphone market is the operating system (OS). There are major software operating systems such as iOS (Apple), Android (Google), Windows (Microsoft), Symbian (Nokia), and RIM (Blackberry). Innovations in hardware and software have triggered enormous growth in the Smartphone market, since the multi-functional operations in these devices generate the trust in technology that consumers expect. Trust in Smartphone devices and their features ultimately adds brand recognition and this is the primary factor that affects intentions to purchase (Nah *et al*., 2003; Tussyadiah, 2015).

Smartphones Market Structure

The Smartphone market has experienced sturdy growth in recent years mainly due to technological advancement in the industry (Kim *et al*., 2016; Tan *et al*., 2017; Jeong *et al*., 2016). A MarketLine (2017) report confirmed an impressive volume of 1,349.6 million sales of Smartphone units in 2016, which according to the report represents 92.7 per cent of the market's overall volume in the mobile phone industry as compared to ordinary mobile devices with a sales volume of 106.3 million units, which constituted 7.3 per cent of the market total in the same year.

The current global Smartphone market continues to be dominated by a small number of large technology firms such as Apple, Samsung and Huawei. Apple's Smartphone market share continues to grow across the globe, after consumers increasingly turn their backs on competing Android devices. It realised $215,639 million in revenue in 2016. Samsung, in particular, has seen its market share dropping across the world, retaining revenues of $172,840 million in the year 2015, a decrease of 2.7 per cent compared to fiscal 2014. Huawei's consumer business segment develops, manufactures and sells a range of Smartphone devices, with the company recording $59,453 million revenue in 2015 (MarketLine, 2017).

In spite of the significant growth in the industry (Kim, Nam, Oh, & Kan, 2016), the Smartphone market is changing with severe threats facing the industry (Felix, 2015; Tan *et al*., 2017). Manufacturers with high demand leverage their competitive advantage to enable them to maintain their position in the market and a positive brand image, to explore new revenue streams and most importantly achieve a sustainable product differentiation to drive sales (Gartner, 2016; Jeong *et al*., 2016).

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Switching Behaviour

Switching occurs when a customer is motivated to review available alternatives in a marketplace due to a change in competitive activity in the marketplace (Seiders & Tigert, 1997; Appiah, Ozuem, & Howell, 2017). Similarly, Hogan and Armstrong (2001) posited that brand switching is about replacing an incumbent resource with a more valuable one to achieve competitive advantage. Sathish, Kumar, Naveen, & Jeevanantham (2011) indicated that brand switching is a consumer behaviour that sees the behaviour of consumers differ based on the satisfaction level of consumers with providers or companies. Hence brand switching can be defined as the process of being loyal to one product or service, and switching to another, due to dissatisfaction or any other problems. They further argue that even if a consumer is loyal to a particular brand, if the brand does not satisfy his/her needs the consumer may switch to a competing brand. Therefore, management needs to constantly evaluate and redirect its resources and capabilities in order to maintain a strong position relative to competitors (Itami & Roehl, 1987).

Product characteristics are likely to affect exploratory tendencies such as brand switching proponents (BSP) and innovation in product contexts with a large number of available alternatives and a short inter-purchase frequency (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984). These characteristics include product involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, perceived brand differentiation/similarity, hedonism (or pleasure) and strength of preference (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984; Van Trijp, Hoyer, & Inman, 1996). When individuals are highly involved with a product and loyal to a brand, their propensity to switch is likely to be lower (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984; Sloot, Verhoef, & Franses, 2005).

Individuals who are involved with a product have 'a narrow latitude acceptance' (Sherif & Sherif, 1967); thus, they are unlikely to be persuaded to switch. Similarly, according to Sloot *et al*. (2005), loyal consumers are less likely to switch to another brand. Persuasion to switch may be manifested in the form of sales promotions such as offers and discounts, which have been found to encourage switching across various product contexts (Kahn & Louie, 1990).

Further, high perceived risk indicates that individuals are concerned with losses resulting from their purchases (Mitchell, 1999). High perceived risk leads to avoidance tendencies and behaviours (e.g. commitment to a brand, repeat purchase behaviour) as consumers are 'more often motivated to avoid mistakes than to maximise utility in purchasing' (Mitchell, 1999, p. 163). Moreover, perceived similarity between brands within a product class indicates that individuals are likely to exhibit switching tendencies, such as alternating among familiar brands within a product class (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984).

Hedonism may also encourage switching within specific categories of products (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984; Van Trijp *et al*., 1996). Hedonism is associated with enjoyment or pleasure that an individual derives from specific products (Griffin, Babin, & Modianos, 2000). Consumers are more intrinsically motivated with products that are associated with affective (hedonic) sensations (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982); thus the repeated consumption of such products is likely to elicit switching tendencies (Van Trijp *et al*., 1996).

Market disruptions are the major cause of brand switching. Market disruptions are major events occurring in a market that threaten customer–brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Stern, Thompson, & Arnould, 1998; Appiah, Ozuem, & Howell, 2016). Disruption is defined as a situation where markets cease to function in a regular manner, typically characterised by rapid and large market declines. For instance, disruptions in the financial markets are caused by a glut of sellers willing to trade at any price, combined with the near or total absence of buyers at a particular time. In these circumstances, prices can decline precipitously (Shapiro, 2010).

In the financial market, disruptions can result from both physical threats to the stock exchange or unusual trading. According to a report by Shapiro (2010), concerns over the financial situation in Greece and uncertainty concerning elections in the United Kingdom, among other things, constrained the financial market of that time with implications for trading.

Innovations and Disruptions in Brand Switching

The ultimate causes of brand switching are market disruptions. Market disruptions are key happenings in a market which more often than not impede customer–brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Christensen, 2013; Jung *et al*., 2017). Disruption is therefore a state where markets cease to operate in their usual routine, characteristically by steep and huge market declines.

This chapter focuses on disruptions that occur within product markets. As noted by McGrath (2011), the concept of 'market disruption' that occurs in a product market directly harkens to research in two significant areas (technology and innovation), which in recent time have attracted significant attention and development by firms placed in the Smartphone industry. Disruptions displace and alter how we think, behave, transact business, learn and go about our daily undertakings. This is echoed by Christensen (2013), who states that disruptions displace existing markets, industries and technology that develop something unique, more efficient and more worthwhile.

The theory of disruptive innovation introduced by Christensen (2013) provides clarification for the displacement of industry giants by lesser competitors, opening a channel for new entrants (Bower &

Christensen, 1995; Christensen, 2013; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018). Disruptive innovation creates a new market, apart from disrupting existing ones. The term is used in business and technology literature to describe innovations that improve products or services in ways that markets do not expect; first by generating a different set of consumers in the new market (Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008; Christensen, 2013; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018), and later by lowering prices in the existing market.

According to McGrath (2011), the concept's explanatory power is derived from the belief that industry incumbents and new entrants rely on technological trajectories. Industry front-runners tend to lay more emphasis on and invest in sustaining innovations that constantly improve their leading products and increase their overall performance in attributes that are perceived as being important for their existing customer base. Over time, the performance increase achieved through sustaining innovations begins to overshoot the needs of the best customers who pay the most, whereas the new entrants' disruptive products become good enough to meet the needs of the dominant incumbents' customers.

Christensen (2013) identified a number of industries in which the pattern of disruption closely fits with his theory. These include retail, computers, hospitals and automobiles but there has been little research into how these disruptions impact upon and affect the perceived value of brands in disruptive times. There are different factors and determinants which affect consumers in switching from one product to another. The next section looks at two main switching behaviours for the purpose of this chapter.

The function of identity in loyalty literature and its causal effects on brand switching proponents (BSP) in the context of Smartphone purchases is considered in this section. Contextually, the Smartphone was utilised as a relevant product category mainly because it denotes an industry within which brand switching is expected due to the multiple alternatives and short inter-purchase frequency that define the setting for innovative disruptions (Campo *et al*., 2000; Goldsmith, 2000; Jung *et al*., 2017).

Switching is likely to happen at any time a customer is motivated to review available alternatives of the same product within the same marketplace due to variations in competitive activity (Seiders & Tigert, 1997; Jung *et al*., 2017). Similarly, Hogan and Armstrong (2001) insisted that brand switching is the act of replacing an incumbent brand with a favoured one from the same category in order to achieve satisfaction. Sathish *et al.* (2011) indicated that brand switching is a consumer behaviour that depicts differences centred on consumers' satisfaction levels. Hence, brand switching is the process of being loyal to one product or service for a period of time but deciding to swap for another, due to dissatisfaction or a change in preferences. They further suggest that even if a consumer is loyal to a selected brand but subsequently establishes dissatisfaction, he/she may switch to a competing brand. Therefore, brand managers must consistently evaluate and redirect resources and capabilities into a product to ensure a strong position (Itami & Roehl, 1987; Appiah & Ozuem, 2018).

Losing a consumer is a serious setback for a firm as it can have severe implications both financially and for its market position. Reinvesting resources in attracting new consumers can have huge costs in advertising and promotions. Peters (1987) confirms that it may cost a firm five times more to obtain fresh customers than to keep present ones.

Product features may likely affect exploratory behaviours such as BSPs and innovation in product contexts with a wider options and a short inter-purchase frequency (Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984). The characteristics named above may comprise perceived risk, brand loyalty, perceived brand differentiation/similarity, hedonism (desire) and strength of preference (Van Trijp *et al*., 1996; Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984). Consumers who become extremely engaged with a brand are less likely to switch (Sloot *et al*., 2005; Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984).

Consumers with high involvement with a product have slim latitude of acceptance (Sherif & Sherif, 1967; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018); they remain doubtful to be persuaded to other alternatives, and on the same issue Sloot *et al*. (2005) agree that loyal customers may be highly unlikely to switch to an alternative. Activities to persuade consumers to switch are usually demonstrated as sales promotions, typically as offers and discounts that most often encourage switching across numerous product categories (Kahn & Louie, 1990).

Perceived risk is an indicator that consumers are worried about potential losses as a result of their purchases (Mitchell, 1999; Jung *et al*., 2017). High perceived risk creates avoidance behaviours such as commitment and repeat buying, as consumers are usually motivated not to commit mistakes instead of to maximise utility in purchase activity (Mitchell, 1999). Perceived similarity amongst brands in the product category also reflects a high tendency of consumers to possibly switch.

Hedonism encourages switching in certain product categories (Van Trijp *et al*., 1996; Hoyer & Ridgway, 1984). Hedonism is related to the pleasure that a consumer gains from a selected product (Griffin *et al*., 2000), as consumers are innately inspired by products that provide (hedonic) feelings (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018) and are consequently expected to trigger repeat purchase intentions and elicit switching inclinations (Van Trijp *et al*., 1996).

Embodied Practices: Identity Theory and Brand Switching

Identity theory is principally a micro-sociological theory that sets out to explain individual role-related behaviour. The theory places major theoretical emphasis on a multifaceted and dynamic self that mediates the relationship between social structure and individual behaviour.

Identity theory (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Burke, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Yeh *et al*., 2016) explains social behaviour in terms of the reciprocal relations between self and society. Turner (2007) posits that identity theory seeks to explain why, where choice is possible, one role-related behavioural choice is consistently made rather than another (Yeh *et al*., 2016; Da Silveira, 2013; He *et al*., 2012).

Brand switching occurs when a customer is motivated to review their available alternatives in the marketplace due to a change in competitive activities in the market (Seiders & Tigerts, 1997). Socially, switching occurs when a customer's belief in a brand is externally influenced within the social setting (Appiah & Ozuem, 2018). The customer's belief then impacts his or her attitude towards using a particular brand, which leads to changes in the purchase intention (Li, 2013).

Identity theory (Stryker, 1968) lays emphasis on the social roles of individuals in several social settings. Hence, marketing research based on identity theory concentrates on how consumers perceive a brand as 'me' or 'not me' (Kliene *et al*., 1995) and how they behave in agreement with the most salient identity (Arnet, German, & Hunt, 2003; Bolton & Americus, 2004; Oyserman, 2009).

Burke and Stets (2009) affirm that one of the early views of identity that grew out of the symbolic interaction framework, with its emphasis on symbols and meanings, is that identities provide 'meaning' for individuals' lives. They stress that a life without meaning has no purpose, no structure, and no framework. Consistent with this view, Thoits (1986) suggests that identities provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life, defining who we are, as well as why we behave in specified ways in society, integrating us with the actions and expectations of others. Identities thus increase self-esteem and reduce depression and anxiety (Thoits, 1986).

Consumer research from an identity point of view has recognised for some time that people consume in many ways that are consistent with their sense of self (Sirgy, 1982). Academics agree that successful brands are designed to satisfy not only the functional needs of consumers but also their symbolic needs (Kapferer, 1997; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Da Silveira, 2013; He *et al*., 2012; O'Keeffe, Ozuem, & Lancaster, 2016; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018).

Consumers often use the 'self' as a reference category for understanding their surroundings (Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977; He *et al*., 2012), especially when they judge other people. Customers can develop strong relationships with the unique identities of brands for their own unique identity (Fournier, 1998; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012; Da Silveira, 2013; He *et al*., 2012; Ozuem, Thomas, & Lancaster, 2016; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018). In support of Fournier's view, Tian *et al.* (2001) insist that individuals have different levels of motivation and needs for distinctiveness in their identities (Yeh *et al*., 2016).

Identity theory is closely linked to the self-concept; both examine the interrelation between the self and social entities (Belk, 1988, Sirgy, 1982; He *et al*., 2012). These theories have many similar concepts that have been introduced into the marketing literature. Hence this chapter draws from such theory to conceptualise CBI (Yeh *et al*., 2016; Lam *et al*., 2013), and in doing so, a brand is perceived as a relationship partner that is significant to the private self. Thus the individual customer uses the brand to define who they are (including the social self), such that these customers consider themselves to be part of a group of customers who identify with a particular brand.

Drawing from the above, it can be said that shoppers re-purchase specific brands that carry meanings for them, as opposed to just offering product utility. Hence, it can be argued that particular brands that possess distinctive identities have the potential to win the attention of consumers and, ultimately, their loyalty. For that reason, brand managers need to create and sustain a clearer and consistent identity, to ensure brands serve stable references for consumers (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2008; Chaplin & Roedder, 2005; O'Keeffe *et al*., 2016). This supports a widely-held belief that a stable brand identity may assist firms to adapt to market variations (Collins & Porras, 1994). Practically, and consistent with this principle, firms strive to stabilise the identity of their brands over a long term.

Resistance Through Consumer–Brand Identification (CBI)

Although it is only in recent years that the concept of CBI has gained momentum within the marketing literature, the idea that consumers may identify with companies has earlier origins. The notion of company identification has since transferred to the brand domain. In Bhattacharya and Sanker (2003) seminal work, the authors suggest that customers may have their self-definitional needs partially satisfied by companies and thus they identify with the company (O'Keeffe *et al*., 2016).

Ahearne *et al*. (2005) elaborate upon earlier ideas in suggesting that customers identify with companies and that identification has an impact on both in-role and extra-role behaviour. More specifically, consumers who identify with a company exhibit greater product utilisation, which in itself serves as an act of self-expression. Consumers also exhibit stronger extra-role behaviours such as positive word-of-mouth when they identify with the company. In accordance with Bhattacharya and Sanker (2003), brands may be meaningful social categories for consumers to identify with where identification is defined as a dynamic, selective and volitional act driven by satisfaction of one or more self-definitional needs.

Similarly, social identification theory suggests that the more consumers identify with brands, the more likely they are to engage in brand-supportive behaviours such as brand reputation protection and brand loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sanker, 2003; Ahearne *et al*., 2005). Bhattacharya and Sanker (2003) suggest that when a consumer identifies with a company they receive more than typically thought-of utilitarian benefits such as product value, consistency and convenience. Additionally, they receive company-based value at a higher level in the form of social identities which help consumers satisfy specific self-definitional needs. Brands as 'concrete actualisations' of firms represent social categories with which consumers are able to identify, since meaning may be transferred between brands and the self (Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; McCracken, 1986).

In their conceptualisation of CBI, Lam *et al*. (2010) suggest that the brand serves as a relationship partner to both the 'private self' (i.e. such that individuals use the brand to define who they are) and the 'social self', such that individuals consider themselves part of an in-group identifying with the brand. CBI is a psychological state that goes beyond just the cognitive overlap between the brand and the self; it also includes the affective and evaluative facets of psychological oneness with the brand. It can be argued that CBI is at a higher level of abstraction than the less abstract concept of self–brand congruity (Lam *et al*., 2012). More specifically, CBI is the customers' psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing their belongingness with a particular brand, which thus illuminates CBI as a formative construct consisting of three dimensions, namely the cognitive, emotional and evaluative dimensions.

Belongingness refers to the psychological oneness resulting from an actual membership of a brand community. In accordance with Stokburger-Sauer *et al.* (2012) who support the use of the three aforementioned components, CBI may be more extensively defined as the extent to which the brand is incorporated into one's self-concept through the development of cognitive connection with the brand, valuing this connection with the brand, and the emotional attachment to the brand (Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012; Da Silveira *et al*., 2013). As a result of self-categorisation a cognitive connection is formed between the individual and the brand. The evaluative component is the degree to which consumers value their connection with the brand and the value placed on this connection by others. It describes the consumer's feelings towards the brand and towards others' evaluations of the brand. The emotional component is the emotional attachment to the group and to the evaluations associated with the group.

CBI suggests that the consumption domain identification is driven by the need for self-continuity or self-verification, self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement (Bhattacharya & Sanker, 2003; Chernev *et al*., 2011; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012; Da Silveira *et al*., 2013). Thus, identification with a brand is likely to be related to the extent to which a person perceives the brand: 1) to have a personality that is similar to his or her own, 2) to be distinctive, and 3) to be prestigious. Specifically, CBI identifies the extent to which consumers: 1) feel that their interactions with a brand help them connect with important others, 2) perceive a brand in warm, emotional terms rather than cold and rational ones, and 3) have fond memories of brand consumption experiences. Our need for self-continuity goes hand in hand with our need for self-enhancement, which encompasses the maintenance and affirmation of positive self-views that subsequently lead to greater self-esteem (Da Silveira *et al*., 2013). Such identity-related needs are also met through identification with prestigious entities such as brands (Thomson *et al*., 2005; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012).

Hughes and Ahearne (2010) define brand identification as the degree to which a person defines his or her self by the same attributes as he or she believes define a brand. The authors expand on this definition to include the concept of the integration of brand identity with self-identity, describing brand identity as 'the set of brand associations from which a person derives functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits'. Other authors highlight how CBI is distinct from other constructs in the branding literature, describing CBI as distinct from the emotional bond that is central to concepts of emotional brand attachment (Malär *et al*., 2011) and distinct from brand love (Batra *et al*., 2012).

The extent to which the brand expresses and enhances one's identity is determined by the level of brand identification and this has a positive effect on word-of-mouth reports (Kim *et al*., 2001). Identification is often linked to the causes and aims of the organisation; in instances where the organisation is known to stand for a particular cause, consumers are likely to identify with the mission of the company and furthermore to demonstrate loyalty to its products (Bhattacharya *et al*., 1995; O'Keeffe *et al*., 2016). Findings support this idea and illustrate how consumers of a brand are more likely to identify with the brand and be loyal to the brand when it is perceived to be a socially responsible brand (Du *et al*., 2007). Furthermore, social identity with a brand community impacts the consumer's brand identification, where brand identification describes the 'extent to which the consumer sees his or her own self-image as overlapping with the brand's image'. The consumer's social identity with the brand community strengthens through greater involvement in the community that subsequently promotes the assimilation of the brand image into the consumer's identity (He *et al*., 2012; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012; Da Silveira *et al*., 2013).

Bhattacharya and Sanker (2003) suggest that self–brand congruity is an antecedent of CBI. Since self–brand congruity captures only a symbolic driver of CBI, it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for developing CBI. Functional drivers also play an important role in CBI formation (Lam *et al*., 2012). Ahearne *et al*. (2005) posit that as an extension of the identification occurring within the context of formal memberships (such as those of academic institution alumni and members of museums), identification does necessarily occur in the consumer-company relationship. In particular, their empirical evidence points towards outcomes of identification in the form of in-role behaviours such as product utilisation and extra-role behaviours such as positive word-of-mouth.

Functional congruity between the brand and the expectations of the consumer leads to clearer identification with a brand. Homburg *et al*. (2009) report a strong influence of customer-company identification on customer loyalty. Park *et al*. (2013) propose that the more the brand is incorporated into the self, the more likely consumers are to expend social, financial and time resources on the brand to maintain the brand relationship. For example, consumers are more likely to support the brand with which they identify by repurchasing associated products and services, thereby exhibiting a long-term preference for the brand and a willingness to pay a price premium. Lam *et al*. (2010) claimed that CBI inhibits consumers from switching brands. CBI produces brand advocacy in the form of positively promoting the brand to social others. CBI is positively related to brand advocacy, that is, positive word-of-mouth and recommendation behaviour (Ahearne *et al*., 2005). A number of positive outcomes of identification have been empirically identified, such as loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sanker, 2003), commitment (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) and brand advocacy (Badrinarayanan & Laverie, 2011).

According to Badrinarayanan and Laverie (2011), when individuals identify with a brand they form a psychological relationship with it, and consequently demonstrate favouritism and work to the benefit of the brand. Consumer–brand identification is positively associated with consumer–brand relationship quality. People who identify with a particular brand experience a positive psychological outcome in the form of enhanced self-esteem, and they engage in positive action strategies towards the brand (Donavan *et al*., 2006). As mentioned previously, identification is driven by the need for self-continuity, self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement. The necessity for self-continuity suggests that to try to understand themselves and their social worlds, people are motivated to maintain a consistent sense of self (Bhattacharya & Sanker, 2003; He *et al*., 2012; Yeh *et al*., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer *et al*., 2012; Da Silveira *et al*., 2013; O'Keeffe *et al*., 2016). Consumers are therefore expected to consume and identify with those brands which match their own sense of which they are, and in so doing, satisfy their need for self-expression.

Brand Loyalty

Imperatively, firms focus much attention and investment to develop stronger brands (He *et al*., 2012). A much stronger brand in today's competitive market is inevitably influential in establishing a sustainable competitive advantage (Bhattacharya & Lordish, 2000; Aaker, 1995; Mizerski & Soh, 2012). The shift to a relationship marketing paradigm positions brand loyalty at a relational focal point (Oliver, 1999; He *et al*., 2012; Ozuem *et al*, 2016; Giovanisa & Athanasopouloub, 2018). Brand loyalty has conventionally been regarded as a behavioural construct linking to repeat purchase intentions (Nam *et al*., 2011).

Brand loyalty has been defined as an extreme commitment to repurchase or re-patronise a particular product or service on a consistent basis, triggering repetitive same-brand purchases, irrespective of other influence and marketing efforts aiming to cause switching (Oliver, 1999). Similarly, Dimitriades (2006) shares this view and specifies that satisfied consumers are less sensitive to changes in prices, less persuaded by competitor attacks, and most importantly loyal to a particular brand or firm for longer than dissatisfied ones.

In line with Dimitriades (2006) and Oliver (1999) above, loyalty to a brand is expressed with a positive attitude, which motivates a consumer to repetitively demand goods or services of a certain brand over a considerable period of time (Dwivedi, 2015; Liu *et al*, 2012). Those with the same viewpoint insist that consumers might have a strong attitude that potentially has an effect on their behaviour towards a specific brand. This phenomenon is denoted as brand insistence (Copeland, 1923; Leckie *et al*., 2016). Brand insistence is further described in terms of recognition, preference and insistence.

Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Customer satisfaction refers to the psychological state ensuing when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is combined with the consumer's prior feelings about the brand experience (Oliver, 1981). Consistent with this view, Shankar *et al.* (2003) define satisfaction as the perception of a service or product providing pleasurable fulfilment.

Elaborating on the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty discussed by Shankar *et al.* (2003), Taylor and Baker (1994) also confirm that customer satisfaction is widely recognised as a key influence in the formation of consumers' future purchase intentions. Similarly, satisfied customers are more likely to tell others of their favourable experience and thus engage in positive word-of-mouth advertising (Badrinarayanan & Laverie, 2011; He *et al*., 2012; Yeh *et al*., 2016).

Rodriguez del Bosque and San Martin (2008) are of the view that consumer satisfaction is not only cognitive but also emotional. Consumers show satisfaction with a brand when brand identification augments their positive image within a social group, or when a sense of belonging to that social group is achieved (Kim *et al*., 2001; He *et al*., 2012). Brand identification encourages symbolic interaction, emotional bonding and brand loyalty. As indicated by Peter and Olson (1993), 94 per cent of Harley-Davidson buyers are emotionally attached to the brand. They not only enjoy the quality of the motorbikes but also enjoy the experience of being part of the brand community, and so they remain loyal. From this notion the current chapter proposes that stronger consumer identification with a brand translates into consumer satisfaction.

Satisfaction is theoretically referred to as an affective-oriented assessment of the services provided and as such is the emotive aspect of loyalty (Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Oliver, 1999). When deciding whether to switch to a competing retailer, customers are often guided by their feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the retailer (He *et al*., 2012; Yeh *et al*., 2016).

Solomon (2002) suggests that lifestyles comprise shared values, tastes and consumption patterns. Hence he perceives brands and brand settings as a communication of lifestyles. The more a brand image fits a consumer's lifestyle, the higher the level of satisfaction with the brand experience. Therefore, marketers ensure they are able to develop consumer satisfaction with brands by creating a brand which equals the identified lifestyle (Badrinarayanan & Laverie, 2011; He *et al*., 2012; Solomon, 2002; Yeh *et al*., 2016).

There is positive relationship between consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty (e.g. Back & Parks, 2003) and this is supported by Rust and Zahorik (1993), when they demonstrated a connection between consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty. McDougall and Levesque (1994) show that customer satisfaction impacts positively on brand loyalty. Hence, consumer satisfaction with brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty (Badrinarayanan & Laverie, 2011).

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In the marketing context, the narrative analysis of marketing relationships by Stern, Thomson & Arnold (1998) implies that customers may switch to a brand they used to dislike by revising their view of the brand's identity and reference group. Research into cultural assimilation also reports that immigrants swap their cultural identities in consumption as they assimilate into the mainstream culture (Oswald, 1999). Similarly, Chaplin and Roedder (2005) suggest that as children mature into adolescents, their self-concept becomes more sophisticated and so do their connections with brands. When the boundary between the in-group and the out-group is impermeable and changing group membership is not realistic, social mobility is not a viable strategy to cope with identity threats. For example, people rarely change their political affiliation, as social identity theory suggests that under such circumstances people will engage in social creativity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 43) posit that social creativity can take multiple forms, such as (1) comparing the in-group with the out-group based on some new dimensions, (2) changing the values assigned to the attributes of the group such that previously negative comparisons are now cast in a positive light, and (3) avoiding using the high-status out-group as a comparative frame of reference. In other words, social creativity is a form of identity-based comparison that is based on in-group biases, and defined as a strong belief in the superiority of the group with which a person identifies. It is a form of prejudice against the non-identified group. Brewer (1979) posits that such in-group biases are both cognitive and motivational because these biases motivate in-group members (e.g. brand identifiers) to attend only to elements that the in-group will evaluate more positively than the out-group.

Managerial implications based on findings indicate that innovative brands, such as Smartphones, are susceptible to disruption in their initial stages. This drives huge interest that may interrupt consumer–brand relationships, yet with time this interest may become fragile (Fournier, 1998). Brand managers must allocate investment to build stronger customer–brand identification/relationship at the maturity stage of the product life cycle to resist switching during disruptions. First, in order to extend the maturity stage of a brand, brand managers should invest in activities that enhance consumers' perceived quality and self–brand congruity. Smartphone manufacturers must commit investment to symbolic drivers such as self–brand congruity at maturity stages of the brand life cycle rather than instrumental drivers such as quality (functional utility). This strategy is effective as brand loyalty and resilience to market disruptions are sustained.

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