AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTENT MARKETING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FITNESS INDUSTRY IN IRELAND

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DECLARATION

I, AADARSH PATARIA, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: AADARSH PATARIA

Date: _______________________________
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I am grateful to my family who supported and trusted me throughout this process.

I dedicate this paper to my mother, Alka Pataria, who is my greatest strength.
ABSTRACT

Marketers today place a significant amount of trust on social media, around 92% marketers indicate that social media is good for their businesses. With the growth of technology most Irish companies are employing some form of social media marketing through many different channels. Marketing through social media has added benefits of tracking the user response and behavior, with features like ‘Facebook Insights’ and ‘Google Analytics’. The latest trend in online marketing is ‘Content marketing’, refers to communicating with the potential and target customers by providing them engaging and relevant content as a way to market themselves. This paper focuses on content marketing through social media channels for fitness industries in Ireland. It focuses on what type of contents will strengthen customer engagement on social media.

This study explores the various effects of content marketing on online consumers. The Study also focuses on what are the benefits associated with actively engaging with customer and how brands can leverage it. This study will also look into what type of contents do users share amongst their friends and peers. Then finally, this study will talk about brand advocates and the effects of E-WOM (electronic word of mouth).

In-order to test the hypotheses that was developed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the researcher surveyed over 107 respondents. The findings indicated that almost all the respondents were regularly active on social media, with majority (77%) respondents visiting Facebook daily. The findings also suggested that active engagement by fitness brands with their consumers on social media will have positive effect on trust and loyalty. Informative content was found to generate maximum engagement. This study also found that respondents mainly share video content on social media platforms with their friends. The findings also highlighted the benefits of user generated content and electronic word of mouth.

The paper also mentions certain areas for future research. Investigating the effects of a content that is perceived negatively by the users.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic capabilities of a firm are associated with the learning capabilities of the firm and how quickly can the firm adapt to the changing marketing trends (Rathi, 2014). Internet has revolutionized the marketing world. Globalization is made possible due to internet which enables a customer to reach its buyer without the boundary of locations, throughout the planet. Today, the web has created ample opportunities for businesses around the globe to effective utilize the ingenious features of Web 2.0 applications to advertise their organizations. With internet infiltrating every aspect of our lives, potential consumers are often discovered through electronic media such as social networking platforms, discussion forums (Cheung, et al., 2008).

Now, when people come online on any form of media, they are not merely looking to make a purchase or avail any offer but they are also surfing for any source of information that can help them make a decision (Scott, 2013). According to (Gagnon, 2014), content is defined as a base of substantive, reasonably objective information, developed by or for a particular company.

“Businesses will live or die on original content, if you are creating truly useful content for customers, you’re going to be seen in a great light and with a great spirit” says Jim Peterson, President of the Concrete Networks (Scott, 2013).

1.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is about connecting with people, having regular interactions and providing meaningful stories that add value and have a positive outcome (Macy & Thompson, 2010). Social media is characterized to be relatively inexpensive. Any individual on internet is allowed to publish and access information on social media. It could be widely accessible through number of electronic devices. According to ‘The Pew Research Institute’ January 2014 report, more than one billion people share their interests and personal information on Facebook. The most obvious choice of content marketers to publish and display the data is social media (Vanauken, 2014). According to (Stelzner, 2014), at least 50%
of marketers that were studied, reported in improved sales, who’ve been using social media for 3 years or more. Social media marketing generates exposure for a brand.

1.1.1  MARKETING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

With the new role of social media as a marketing tool, industries large or small are employing their resources towards social media campaigns. It is crucial for industries to stand apart from their rivals. Social media involves connection through shares and clicks (MARKETO, 2013). Web 2.0 has provided marketers with incredible opportunities to come closer to their niche buyers (Scott, 2013). The brands are now able to reach their target audience at just the precise moment when they are surfing for information. Facebook has recently launched a new feature which promotes businesses by allowing direct sale through the website. This feature is called ‘Buy Button’ (Mintel, 2015). Today, the internet marketing is dominated by a pull marketing environment (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), brands are effectively utilizing the power of social media and other online marketing tools like Search engine optimization to pull customers to buy, subscribe, comment, apply or donate (Scott, 2013). It is interesting to note that, from a study by (Stelzner, 2014), 19% of marketers that took part, revealed that they spend 20 hours or more each week on social media in order to promote their business to the target audience.
Marketing in Social media is quite cheap and easily accessible. The top benefit of employing social media marketing, is increase in exposure followed by increase in traffic. One of the top most reason of using social media as a form to promote business is developing regular engagement with potential customers and to gain their trust. According to a study (Stelzner, 2014), amongst the marketers that took part, 72% are using social media to produce loyal fans and gain niche market insights.

1.2 CONTENT MARKETING

As mentioned by (Pulizzi, 2012), “according to Google Trends, the fastest growing search term being adopted by marketing professionals across the world, is content marketing”. Content marketing can be defined as the creation and distribution of highly valuable, fascinating and informative web content by the brand within the target business scope, in order to generate a positive customer action. According to (Scott, 2013), earlier websites were designed in a way which projected them as mere nameless, faceless organization. (Chaffey & Smith, 2008) Observed that in-order for an organization to meet its marketing goals it is significant for the website to meet the intended user commitment first. The
contents of the website should be developed anticipating user requirements and should be user-centered.

Figure 2 Most commercially important digital marketing trend for 2015? (smartinsights.com)

Through this research, the researcher intends to discover how companies can utilize this latest marketing tool, “CONTENT MARKETING” for communicating to their audience and in-turn highlighting the degree of customer engagement and involvement on social media channels, by applying appropriate marketing strategies. Content marketing refers to communicating with the potential and target customers by providing them engaging and relevant content as a way to market themselves (Csordás & Gati, 2014). According to (Gagnon, 2014), content is defined as a base of substantive, reasonably objective information, developed by or for a particular company. Content marketing deals with
educating the audience and the results yielded are for long term. Dynamic capabilities of a firm are associated with the learning capabilities of the firm and how quickly can the firm adapt to the changing marketing trends (Rathi, 2014). According to a survey by smart insights, the most important digital marketing trend for 2015 is “CONTENT MARKETING” (SmartInsights, 2015). Social sites engage more than 74% of adults though their contents (Vanauken, 2014).

1.3 FITNESS INDUSTRY

A question may arise as to “What is Fitness Industry”? So the researcher would like to mention that a diverse scope of organizations fall into the classification of fitness industries since the distinctive routines by which individuals train for fitness has expanded throughout the span of decades. Any entity, be it person or company, if the main spotlight is on exercise, health and general well-being of the body, it lies within fitness industry. The primary objective of fitness industry is to service the customer with products and services that promote health. The most appreciated members of fitness industries include gyms and fitness centers (Kratzman & Stamford, 2002) which will be the focus of this research.

The success and failures of fitness industries depends upon the strategies implied by marketing operators to not only attract new customers but also retain them. Content marketing strategies create variety of opportunities for companies to influence, attract and engage existing and new customers. A long term theoretical framework which should enable health and fitness industry to enjoy long term repeat purchase business requires a high degree of customer involvement (Hurley, 2004). The rationale for choosing fitness industry is the simple that it provides new market arena in which research can be applied since not much have been done in this context on this particular industry.

Through this research, the researcher aims to provide a clear perspective of online consumers towards content marketing structure for fitness industries in Ireland, which can then be practically applied by in order to alter their marketing budgets so as fit “Content Marketing” within their desired marketing campaign. Through this research the researcher will provide sufficient data, which will enable the fitness industries to reconsider their online marketing strategy with respect to content marketing specifically.
1.4 TOPIC - CONTENT MARKETING ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FITNESS INDUSTRIES (IRELAND)

Social sites engage more than 74% of adults though their contents (Vanauken, 2014). A strong content strategy is required for fitness industries in order to keep the customers engaged and well informed. In recent times, Social media content seems to be the best medium for digital marketers to engage with their target customers.

The most popular content marketing tactics are shown in figure:-

![Figure 3: Most popular content marketing tactics (smartrinsights.com)](image)

This study will focus on whether content marketing will unambiguously shape in maintaining loyalty of online customers through engaging them with exclusive contents. The researcher will also speculate on the types of content Customer promotes on social media. The effect of online ‘Word of Mouth’ (E-WOM). The rationale for choosing fitness industry is the simple that it provides new market arena in which research can be applied since not much have been done in this context on this particular industry.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The researcher seek to determine the influence of different types of web content posted on social media platforms by fitness industries, on consumer behavior and attitude, through this dissertation. The
The author will also look to discover the importance of user generated content in online marketing. The researcher will examine what types of content generates profitable user action and how successful is the electronic word of mouth in between online consumers. The author will look to deduce hypothesis based on the data provided in the literature review. This will give the researcher the findings he needs to answer the following research questions and objectives:

**1.5.1 RESEARCH QUESTION**

As social media is one of the most important source to spread content among the online customers, this primary research question has been formulated to be the foundation of this study:

“How can content marketing be used on social media, to strengthen the level of customer engagement, for fitness industries in Ireland?“.

**1.5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The author has recognized some key research objectives that will be necessary in order to successfully answer the research question. In order to achieve the desired aim for this study, the researcher has put forth the following objectives:

- To study effective use of content marketing for creating customer engagement for fitness industries in Ireland.
- To examine if active engagement on social media by fitness industries will lead to user trust.
- To investigate customer behavior on particular types of content, on social media channels.
- To highlight if content marketing is effective for building awareness for fitness industries in Ireland.
- To investigate what makes customers become brand advocates.

**1.6 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE OVERVIEW**
This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The researcher maintained logical consistence by organizing these chapters into paragraphs.

The first Chapter includes the background of the dissertation topic, what is the reason that the researcher chose to pursue this topic. The researcher justifies the use of social media marketing, content marketing specifically as the latest trend in which marketers are investing heavily to adopt it as their marketing strategy. The research question and the objectives have been laid forward to get a better understanding of the main facets of this research paper.

In Chapter Two, the researcher will justify his topic with respect to previous studies in and around the same theme. The author will look into the available research around the main concepts of this dissertation and identify the core facets of online customer behavior on social media regarding the different type contents posted by industries as per their marketing strategies. In literature review, the researcher will identify the definition of social media and what makes it spread so rapidly, like wild fire. Finally this chapter will look at the current marketing trends in fitness industries overall, the fitness industry in Ireland and its social media presence.

Chapter three will describe the methodologies and approaches taken by the researcher to collect and analyze data. In this chapter the researcher will look into the philosophy adopted by the author to pursue with his dissertation. The research approach taken in order for the researcher to meet with the secondary objectives. This chapter will also include topics such as the research choice, data collection methods and data analysis methods, ethical issues faced during the research and limitations of this research.

In chapter four, the author will simply interpret the result from the survey. The researcher will provide statistical data and the views of his analysis regarding the hypothesis that has been presented in the earlier chapters. The researcher will present the findings of his survey without trying to draw any conclusions. The data collected from quantitative research and the interpretation of the data. The author employed various statistical techniques to present data that will further help analyze and examine the research question.

Chapter five will answer the main question regarding this research. In this chapter the researcher will review his work and make discussions based on findings in the precious chapter. This chapter answers the research question and discussing the implications of the findings. The researcher will mention how
the results derived in this section will provide further contribution to the particular topic. Finally, the researcher will mention the limitations associated with the research.

Sixth Chapter is for conclusion that will be drawn from the previous chapters regarding this dissertation. This chapter will look to summarize the findings and draw general conclusions and the potential use of the findings to integrate with the theories and concept to check whether the objective was achieved. The chapter will look to provide suggestions for future research.

The last and final chapter of this dissertation is the self-reflection chapter which will give an overview of author’s learning journey, writing experience, performance and development overall. In this the writer will look to mention the different skills acquired during this masters course.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

As the purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the effect of content marketing on consumer behavior and the impact of effectively utilizing the web content posted by the brands in order to generate engagement for the online consumers, the author will study and research about both in books, articles, websites and journals. Due to research and time limitations, this research focusses on a small sample size which was chosen through self-selection non-probability sampling. The author will conduct a survey considering the web-contents specific to the fitness industry.

The major limitation with respect to this dissertation will be, since social media is a very vast concept, the researcher will have to primarily focus on the most recognizable platforms of social media as they would be most preferred in Ireland. Although this study is believed to create a good understanding of the effects of content marketing, due to small nonprobability sample size, the findings cannot be generalized. Although the main motive behind this study was to not generalize but rather seek the understanding of the customer behavioral on web contents. The main limitations encountered were

- The research focuses on strategies that involve high degree of customer involvement.
- Time constraints
- Limited academic critique on the following fitness industry
- Sample size
1.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study aims at targeting fitness freaks looking for information on product or services and who are active on social media platforms. The internet has become the primary source of quality knowledge, facts and advice. This study will benefit the fitness industry by providing it with customer’s perception regarding their choice and preference of the posts and articles which help them make decisions, which they actively seek online. So that, these could be targeted at them, to engage them which will ultimate lead to profitable actions. When people are online surfing for a product, they are looking for not merely interested in purchasing a product, they are in-fact seeking information which will help them make a decision regarding the product (Scott, 2013).
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of literature review will address the academic theories by previous scholars in order to formulate the research question and objectives. Since this is a comparatively modern area with very few defined theory on this concept. So in-order to get a credible outline of the topic, many sources have been used in this literature review. This chapter is further divided into four sections. The first section addresses the growing emergence of social media as a marketing tool and the latest trends of social media marketing including content marketing. The second chapter focuses entirely on content marketing and how it differentiates itself from ordinary social media marketing. The third chapter plays a fundamental part in perceiving the behavior of online consumer to social media marketing. The last chapter is dedicated to fitness industries and the scope of social media marketing in fitness industries.

2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

2.1.1 DEFINITION

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has been defined as, “a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

According to (Patino, et al., 2012), consumers have embraced the social media, a collection of online communication channels, with both hands. Before the advent of social media, there were limited
resources for a brand or industry to communicate or interact and build a relationship with its customers (Vanauken, 2014). In the simplest of terms social media can be defined as a source of media that is being created, shared and published by somebody with an access to the internet. This media can be in the form of text, images, audios or videos (Halpin, 2013). The independent feature of social media which provides the consumers the option to connect when they feel like and to disconnect when they feel like, thus satisfying an impulse (Patino, et al., 2012). According to Business Week (2005), “Social Media is the biggest change since industrial revolution” (Phillips, 2013). Social media can be defined in its broadest term as an online service which can be utilized by the users to create and share various types of content (Bolton, et al., 2013).

**SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Marketers today place a significant amount of trust on social media, around 92% marketers indicate that social media is good for their businesses (Stelzner, 2014). According to (Baird & Parasnis, 2011), any form of marketing that involves promotion through social media websites in-order to generate profit, gain new followers or fans and spread their brand awareness through the internet is termed as social media marketing. Over the past few years, a substantial number of brands, operating in numerous different sectors of industries, have been investing in social media marketing, and an increase in revenue being generate from online customers. This revolution has been made possible due to the increasing internet communications and latest developments associated with social media marketing platforms. The advent of social media has provided marketer with increasing number of platforms to interact with potential customers (Lili, et al., 2013). With the new technologies available for digital marketers, they are able to target niche customers through the medium of social media platforms, very cheaply (Li, et al., 2013). The salient features of social media marketing includes establishing a two-sided communication with customers. This helps a brand to engage its customer and receive a direct feedback without any delay of time. Marketers are regularly provided with latest analytical tools such as Facebook analytics, through which, brands are able to determine how many customers have visited their company page. Organically, a brand can in-fact find out how many customers saw their adverts or posts and how many likes and shares were made, simultaneously, and all for free (Phillips, 2013).

The advertising investments are being moved by organization to the social media platforms that have the most significance and relevance to target buyers and sellers, and from where the companies can expect significant return on investments (Scott, 2013). According to (Whiting & Williams, 2013), social media platforms are being used by 88% of the brands who are annually spending around $60 billion on
social media advertising. (Sashi, 2012) Observes that as the web is the providing ample opportunities for brands to make their presence worldwide, the customer expects to discover brands on social media. The social media marketers are carefully deciding on which channel to invest so as to reach maximum target audience (Halpin, 2013) According to (Phillips, 2013), to enjoy the monetary benefits from social media, marketers need to achieve a high level of customer interaction.

2.1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CHANNELS

With the growth of internet (Cummins, et al., 2014) 90% of all companies employ some form of social media marketing through many different channels. A few examples of micro-blogging platforms on social media include, social networking sites like ‘Facebook’ and ‘twitter’, photo sharing sites like ‘Instagram’, video sharing sites include ‘YouTube’ etc. and business networking site include LinkedIn. These are some of the basic social networking channels that business practitioners utilize to promote their brands and engage with their customers (Whiting & Williams, 2013). To attract large number of followers and fans in the virtual world, companies have created communities in social media platforms like ‘Facebook’ and ‘Twitter’ (Gummerus, et al., 2012). The internet has primarily become the trusted authority for facts and news regarding any product or service (Whiting & Williams, 2013). (Stelzner, 2014) Study surveyed the weekly time committed for social media marketing by the marketers. The study showed that around 64% of the marketers are employing 6 hours or more towards social media. 37% marketers use social media for at least 11 hours each week.

FACEBOOK

According to (Mintel, 2015), there is a new feature in Facebook than enables direct purchase and payment of goods from social media site. Since the advent of social media platforms, like Facebook, practitioners and marketers have found a new way to tackle with the consumer issues. These platforms maintain a real time two way communication (Colnaghi, 2013). Facebook has been the first choice of businesses that are looking to utilize social network platform to promote their brand. It offers organizations tools needed to increase their fan base and the salient feature of Facebook enables an analysis statistics tool, which was found quite useful for analyzing the progress of a campaign. From a
business perspective, Facebook and LinkedIn are the two most valuable social networking sites for marketers in recent times. (Stelzner, 2014) Study found out that if they were asked to choose one platform, 54% of marketers selected Facebook while only 17% selected LinkedIn.

2.1.3 LATEST STRATEGIC TRENDS (SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING)

CONTENT MARKETING

According to (Scott, 2013), content marketing is publishing valuable data on the web that consumers are eager to tend to. The information that is hard enough to neglect and thereby engaging them. The key objectives for content marketing as identified by (Pulizzi, 2012):

- Customer perspective reinforcement;
- Sales and lead generation;
- Consumer Engagement;
- Brand awareness;
- Customer upsell
- Enthusiastic Followers, fans and subscribers

2.1.4 INDUSTRY REVIEW – SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN IRELAND

Social media marketing is an emerging sector not only in Ireland but around the planet. According to the statistics from eightytwenty (2013), 51% of Irish consumers talk to brands on social media. Out of those 51%, 44% seek advice (Phillips, 2013). According to a study by (Phillips, 2013), there are 900mn Facebook pages out of which over 2mn are Irish. It was noted that, according to a survey by IAB Ireland and PwC(2011), 95% of respondents that took part in the survey described value for money as ‘very important’ or ‘important’ as the reason for using social media for promoting the business, customer engagement was the second reason.
Latest data from (Mintel, 2015), suggest that Irish consumers are less affected by these social media marketing strategies. A total of 35% of Irish consumers have agreed that social networks are not influential on the products they purchase. This suggests that social network ads and campaigns are not quite as effective on Irish consumers as one might have hoped.

2.2 INSIGHTS INTO CONTENT MARKETING

The estimated value of the content marketing projects to be somewhere in between $28bn to $55bn (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008). This is expected to grow at a tremendous rate of +20% every year. According to Jim Peterson, President of the Concrete Networks, “Every organization small or big can provide with any form of information that can contribute to the education of the market place. The question every brand need to ask is, how to get information out there to the target audience” (Scott, 2013).

2.2.1 DEFINITION

According to (Gagnon, 2014), content is defined as a base of substantive, reasonably objective information, developed by or for a particular company. Global recruitment company, Kelly Services now employs 60% of its overall marketing budget on creating delightful content and distributing it through various mediums (Pulizzi, 2012).

TYPE OF CONTENT

The Chief Marketing Officer of Visa, Kevin Burke says that “in order to execute media’s goal of generating massive involvement of customer, it is necessary to create irresistible exclusive content” (Light, 2014). The customers want to read content that talks about their needs and that speaks directly to them in a way that discovers their unsolved problems. And knowing that content will give the company an advantage in the eyes of the consumers (Copyblogger, 2013).
Points out that web content can be effectively utilized in both contextual and non-contextual nature—including photos, audio feeds, video clips, cartoons, charts and graphs—to educate and captivate consumers. Today, web content is created in many different forms including (Pulizzi, 2012)

- Print media, which includes Corporate Magazines, Newsletters, and white paper series.
- Online Media, which includes E-books, Business Blogs, Video series, Podcasts, E-newsletters and even fully functioning web-sites.
- In-person, which includes Roadshow, Executive roundtable.

Informative and Interactive content engages the visitor with a chance to progress through the sales consideration cycle to the point where they are more likely to purchase the product or service (Scott, 2013). The content should be so valuable that a reader shares it with his peers and friends online and offline, responds to brand’s emails, in fact it should be so beneficial for consumer that they are even wanting to pay for it. Across a study of 800 video campaigns that has been studied, 65% of campaigns notice an increase in customer interest. The users tend to be more receptive and hence share more among their friends and peers (Mooney & Johnsmeyer, 2015). On an average Irish consumers share over 103,000 videos per month (Phillips, 2013).

*Figure 4 commonly used content in social media marketing (Social media marketing report 2014)*
2.2.2 SCOPE

Web 2.0 has provided a terrific platform for smaller and less famous industries to showcase their expertise with fraction of a cost, otherwise which they would have had to invest in big-budget advertising campaigns. According to (Scott, 2013), due to the unlimited access of internet around the globe, enabled smaller organizations to present an interesting story directly to their targeted audiences. There is much scope for businesses to learn this fine art, (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008) argues that not many organizations have mastered the art of creating content-rich editorial product regularly. Consumers expect corporations to market in a digital platform. The ‘Always-On’ customer will probably be seeking, enquiring, interacting, lamenting, purchasing and selling products through internet (David, et al., 2014). Digital Marketer, In order to change the future of their social media strategies are planning on increasing use of blogging. From the study (Stelzner, 2014), it was noted that 68% of marketers that took part in the survey, planned on increasing activity in the use of blogging.

2.2.3 USER GENERATED CONTENT

In a social media setting, the audiences interact, engage and become an active part of content creation, this content is termed as User generated content, is not created for commercial purpose (Huotari, et al., 2015). User generated content is noted to have a major influence a brand reputation, formation of virtual brand communities and co-creation of influential content (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

Observed by (Hsu, et al., 2013) that customers constantly blog their reviews and experiences after using a product or services. It was noted that around 900,000 new articles were posted on blogs each and every day.

In order to inform and entertain customers that visit the brand online through social media, previous user testimonials are presented. The profits of a company can have massive effects by building strong connections with customers, turning them into brand advocates, who will provide a strong positive word of mouth or recommendation to a potential customer (Hur, et al., 2011). In order for brand consumers to become brand advocated, consistent supply of quality content has to be maintained. A recent survey
(Cheung, et al., 2008) found out that most consumers consider the online opinions and reviews on products by other previous users to be as trustworthy as the brand web sites.

Brand advocates can be simply defined as explicit, unconditional admirers of the brand (Wirtz, et al., 2013).

### 2.2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING VS CONTENT MARKETING

The question may arise in readers mind regarding the differentiation between the two components. So in this section, author will point out the difference of the two types of online marketing, according to the literature. People tend to get confused between the two, as social media is massively involved in both. Content marketing is done on social media but the content that is created is being published and distributed by social media marketers. Even though both the terms are closely placed in online marketing but there are a few overlapping difference between the two. The following points might help understand both the concepts better.

**Focus**

In social media marketing, the focus of core marketing activity is carefully situated in the media platforms, according to (Stelzner, 2014). The content that is developed is shared inside Facebook or Twitter or any other social networks

In case of content marketing, it is generally a brand’s official website, which is carefully placed in social media sites by the distributors that link back to the brand’s official website. The networking sites may not always contain the content (Pulizzi, 2012).

**Type of content**

Different social media platforms provide marketer with different types of contents to be posted. Every social site has certain limitations and restrictions regarding the format of the content. Twitter only allows 140 characters messages to be posted. Instagram has limitation to photo sizes and shapes. Videos cannot last for a period longer than 15 seconds (Stelzner, 2014).
Content marketing gives marketer a little more freedom when it comes to type of content that can be posted on a website. Brands are able to focus on the quality by posting longer forms of content like blogs or videos (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008).

**Objectives**

Social media marketing focuses on brand awareness. Brand is promoted by surrounding it with user engaging actions. Customer retention and satisfaction are the primary objectives of any social media campaign (Stelzner, 2014).

Content marketing deals with generating leads, quality of website content can attract potential customers to nurture them closer towards purchase decision (Pulizzi, 2012).

**ATTRACT, CONVERT AND TRANSFORM PROCESS**

(Scott, 2013) Social media works best in attracting customers. Through social media companies are able to get the attention of potential customers. However,

Content marketing works great throughout the entire ACT process. It is known to be more successful in converting strangers directly to buyers (Scott, 2013).

**CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion it is evident that social media marketing is about promotion of content to attract customers, whereas content marketing is about creation. These forms of online marketing can generate terrific results if the two are synchronized accurately in the marketing strategy. In order to promote a brand or a website, content marketing should be employed in the earlier stages of marketing campaigns followed by social media marketing.
2.3 ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

According to survey by (Chaffey & Smith, 2008), the online customer have become less tolerant to a poor service, with 80% of consumers agreeing not to go back to a brand, after a bad experience. In today’s market, practitioners are devoting maximum time and resources to understand the attitude and behavior of virtual shoppers. What will make them click (Constantinides, 2004). As pointed out by (Chaffey & Smith, 2008) the behavior and attitude of online customer has changed, not only are they talking back but are in fact shouting back if the brand breaks their promise. If a customer is loyal for a particular brand or company, the customer actively cooperates and does not give heed to competitors which results in increased profits (Hur, et al., 2011)

According to Google’s latest research project ‘Zero Moment Of Truth’, consumers are engaging in twice the size of web data every year leading to a purchase decision (Pulizzi, 2012). In the simplest of language the concept of content marketing has been explained through customer’s perspective by (Scott, 2013), the consumers are specifically interested in understanding what specific problems are solved by the product, and they want proof that it works.

2.3.1 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

If a brand is not sharing its message with the online customers, it’s not engaging them. Brand need to engage in order to retain old customers and gain new ones. Engagement is when a customer starts actively discussing or participating on a specific topic related to brand (Colnaghi, 2013). The report by (Stelzner, 2014) on a survey of 2800 marketers reveal that around 89% of the marketers wanted the trick to figuring out the best way to connect with people. As the number businesses become socially active, the ones that engages their audiences successfully will strive forward.

As per (Scott, 2013), organizations are losing potential customers if they are not present and engaged at the time when their buyers are looking for or searching for information. Marketers are realizing and putting major emphasis on engaging consumers rather than preaching to consumers (Light, 2014). Web content is terrific data which utilized efficiently can result in viral marketing for an industry (Scott, 2013).
The first objective of digital marketers should be engaging customers. Brands need to engage customers so that they ultimately become brand advocates. The online customer needs to be engaged by the brand so they keep on sharing their message in order to get new customers (Colnaghi, 2013). The engagement is where customer is curious and wants to enquire, purchase or recommend a product. Active participation by consumer to create discussion about a specific product or service. Engagement is defined as the “Act of Sharing” (Colnaghi, 2013).

Customer engagement is when a company tries to communicate with their niche audience regarding their product and services so as to build a bond and relationship, while simultaneously, they are providing the customers with enough reasons to purchase their product. Engagement is achieved by providing useful information on an emotional level so as to distance themselves from the corporate status (Halpin, 2013).

2.3.2 CONSUMER PERCEPTION

The more vigorously committed brands are in making customer win big in the long run rather than just focus on their immediate demands, brands will be able to generate fervent commitment from the consumers (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008). According to (Wu, 2003), Consumer attitude, motivation and consumer perception “are not apparent from clicks on banners or online purchases but are the primary factors that determine the success or failure of online marketing strategies’.

The Senior Vice President of Best Buy, marketing, Barry Judge explains that their organization believes that in today’s customer dominated environment, it is necessary to invest in customers before expecting them to invest in the product. In order to educate customers with relevant content which shares the company’s passion about how technology enhances customer’s life, they publish best Magazine. They believe a trusted rather than transactional relationship with customers will benefit the organization (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008).

Customer Perception is what leads to online customer loyalty. There are three components (Colnaghi, 2013) that will lead to better perception of the product. The three constructs to better brand perception by the online consumer are:-

- Perceived information quality
- Perceived entertainment
2.3.3 CONSUMER LOYALTY

By creating and sharing valuable content, companies are able to build loyalty and credibility with the consumers. Great content calls for action – to buy, subscribe, apply or donate. And great content implies that interested consumers will return again and again (Scott, 2013). Customer satisfaction will inevitably result in brand loyalty and awareness which in turn creates a broader impact on the overall profit of the business organization. The concept of customer retention is enclosed with the concept of customer loyalty (Ferrand, et al., 2010).

(Hur, et al., 2011), describes that loyal customer will not only result in profitable action such as repurchase but also advocate positive word of mouth to leverage the brand from the competitors. According to (Ferrand, et al., 2010), the previous literature on brand loyalty examines that, the customer becomes more loyal to a company as they get to learn more and more about company and with positive experiences. Further (Ferrand, et al., 2010) also mentions “in order to further enhance the brand loyalty, brands actively communicate with the customers”.

Brand Loyalty is the degree of attachment that a consumer places on a brand overall. It’s also defined as consistent buying of a same product or service due to a positive attitude towards the brand.

2.3.4 E-WOM AND BRAND ADVOCATES

E-WOM communication is defined as a type of statement, which can be either positive or negative, made by a potential, recent or present buyer with respect to the product or service of a brand, available to different people and institutions through the internet (Cheung, et al., 2008). In a recent study by Mintel, of online retailing in UK (2015), found that around 73% of the recipients who had obtained goods from online shopping claim that, customer reviews and comments on a particular product, comforted them and helped them in deciding to make the purchase or not (Mintel, 2015) According to the CMO of the MindJet Corporations, Lisa Arthur, “Their marketing campaigns are devised adopting content marketing as a corner stone. Their corporation believe that it is about relevance. If a company is able to deliver relevant content to the consumer community, it will amplify the word of mouth severely”
(Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008). In a recent study, it was noted that online consumers put more than 2 times the trust in peers’ opinion than in brand advertisements and other brand initiated sources (Ludwig, et al., 2013). From a marketing perspective, it was evident that blogging is the latest form of electronic Word-of-Mouth (Hsu, et al., 2013). According to (Mintel, 2015), 21% of Irish consumers on social media have had a positive impact of a review given by peers for a particular product. The Consumers seem to consider what a friend has to say about a product on the various social networks.

A recent market survey showed that around 80% of online b2c retail sites had limited or no understanding behind the reason of consumer leaving without making a purchase (Ludwig, et al., 2013). The longer customer stays with an organization the Customer is more likely to exercise organization’s products and services (Ferrand, et al., 2010).
2.4 FITNESS INDUSTRY

Despite being a significantly prominent in their niche, the fitness industry has received relatively little research attention (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2007). The brand perception of Fitness industry worldwide is that it promotes active lifestyles which is the solution to all sorts of public health issues. For years, Fitness experts have been stating the changes in the nature of industry is quicker than anyone could possibly imagine. The experts claim that five years from now the industry will be un-recognizable, with new unexpected trends and fads coming and going. The way fitness consumers try respond to a query have changed. They are constantly going online to try and find answers that help reach their goals. Today, a typically, a consumer looking for weight loss, will first start out the journey with a search query. According to a survey conducted by Google, with research firm The Modellers, around 80% of consumers now rate search as a first and extremely critical step to make their decisions regarding a purchase of fitness product or service (Rosenthal, 2014). The success and failures of fitness industries depends upon the strategies implied by marketing operators to not only attract new customers but also retain them. Content marketing strategies create variety of opportunities for companies to influence, attract and engage existing and new customers.

2.4.1 SCOPE

Despite the continuous economic distress over the past decade, the fitness industry has continued to attract members. The few have left and new members have joined the gym and health clubs routinely, depending upon their goals and ages. According to Irish sports monitor (2011), Health Club membership has increased from 32% to 38%. With the newest members that join the gym are mostly under the age of 25 (The Irish Sports Council, 2011).

Fitness industries are harnessing the power of web to target their niche directly with web contents relating to health and fitness. (Kratzman & Stamford, 2002) Notice, the most interesting relation between technology and fitness industry was that, fitness industries were actually the early adapters of
computer technology. Although they didn’t maintain the same pace in updating it. During the last few decades, gym and fitness centers have developed into a global corporation. According to a report by International Health, Racquet & Sports club association (IHRSA), a total of $75.7bn revenue was generated by health and fitness clubs in 2012. The data was gathered from over 153,000 health & fitness clubs, serving over 131.7mn club members. According to Jerome Brandon, Ph.D., FACSM, at College of Education, Atlanta, “Due to significant rise in obese individuals in the last decade, the rise of fitness industry is natural” (Thompson, 2015). Fitness industries are providing an environment for people to indulge in physical activity and enjoy social interactions necessary for both individual and society wellbeing. According to (Rosenthal, 2014), there are more than 13000 diets and fitness apps available in the App-store of Apple and Google Play Market. A massive 857,000 channels on Youtube are dedicated to health and fitness. These are available free of cost to the consumers. This strategy is based on the idea of “Try before you buy” (Rosenthal, 2014).

Given the operating nature of fitness industries, customer loyalty is of prime essence (Ferrand, et al., 2010). According to (Kratzman & Stamford, 2002) Health and fitness clubs have successfully utilized internet services. The clubs are quickly adapting this media tool in order to provide members, features such as extension of services, modules to classes, fitness educational programs, pre and post recovery videos and blogs, two way communication with fitness trainers and regular monitoring of health. By providing these extensive features, the physical boundaries of the health clubs have been extended through the medium of internet. Consumers are constantly adapting technology in order to make information and knowledge more accessible to them.

2.4.2 INDUSTRY REVIEW - IRELAND

Currently, Ireland is considered to be the third wealthiest nation in Europe (Euromonitor, 2015). Gyms and fitness industries have grown in large numbers in Ireland in the recent years. According to the report by Philip Lee (2014), Irish consumers were spending around €2.4bn a year on health and fitness related activities. He was quoted as saying, “Consumers in Ireland are almost spending €450mn on sports clothing, footwear and equipment. An estimated figure of €225mn is being spent on sports and fitness club memberships every year”. From a population of 4.6mn of Ireland, 850,000 adults were found to be members of a gym (Euromonitor, 2015). The survey also included that women accounted for almost 66% of the total gym members in Ireland. Irish Independent newspaper defined crossfit as
"the latest Workout taking Ireland by Storm “ (Euromonitor, 2015). According to a report by World Health Organization (Murtagh, et al., 2015), older adults in Ireland should engage in 150 minutes of some form of fitness activity per week.
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

According to (Saunders, et al., 2009), “methodology is the theory of how research should be undertaken including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted”.

This chapter will focus on the stages followed by the researcher in order to prepare, conduct and accomplish his research. This chapter will look into the process of collection of useful data leading up to the research objectives. The researcher will broadly focus his research on the growing trends of social media marketing, particularly ‘content marketing’. For this, the author completed his research through Primary and Secondary methods. Later in this chapter, the researcher will present the research model followed by the philosophy and approach adapted for this research. This chapter will also aim to highlight the different methods included for data collection.

3.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM AREA

This research is based on exploring the new trend in online marketing which can be effectively utilized by fitness professionals and industries. The researcher examines that this research is more about finding out the content marketing structure for fitness industries and its impact on consumers, to monitor their behavior and adapt accordingly. The way consumers perceive it has a direct link as to how good a content is posted by the industry. So the researcher is going to analyze the significance and scope of content marketing among the fitness industry consumers specifically. The research will focus the online customer behavior towards definite contents.
3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question has been determined. The topic revolves around the concept of content marketing and its associated benefits which can be effectively utilized by fitness companies to communicate with their target audience. The dissertation examines whether Content marketing on different forms of social media has significance for fitness industries in Ireland or not. Although, literature highlights the effectiveness of content marketing on engaging customers online, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on the data collected in literature, the key research question which the researcher will focus throughout this study will be:

“How can content marketing be used on social media, to strengthen customer engagement, for fitness industries in Ireland?”

3.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The principle components of any marketing strategy are the message or reach of the program. The objective of this research is examine the concept of content marketing and the related strategies, and whether it is effective enough to be applied by fitness companies to communicate with their target audiences or not. The research objectives sometimes permit answers to components related to the main topic like desired customer audience, main social actors that are most likely to play a role along the processes. According to (Saunders, et al., 2009), research objectives are statements that define the motive behind doing the research. Literature review studied in previous chapter will help derive the objectives. The objectives that could be effectively related to this topic which can help to focus and address out main topic are:

- To study effective use of content marketing for creating customer engagement for fitness industries in Ireland.
- To examine if active engagement on social media by fitness industries will lead to user trust.
- To investigate customer behavior on particular types of content, on social media channels.
- To highlight if content marketing is effective for building awareness for fitness industries in Ireland.
To check whether the customers themselves can become brand advocates.

Through these objectives the researcher intends to address the main question progressively.

3.4 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The hypothesis can be termed as an assumption made by the researcher during the initial phase of the dissertation. This will help the researcher to focus on the research problem. The hypothesis is developed from the literature review. The hypothesis is divided into following sections:

3.4.1 IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMER

According to literature, if a brand is not sharing its message with the online customers, it’s not engaging them. Brand need to engage in order to retain old customers and gain new ones. Engagement is when a customer starts actively discussing or participating on a specific topic related to brand (Colnaghi, 2013). According to (Halpin, 2013) online consumers will trust a brand more if they found out that a particular brand is actively engaging with their fans or followers on a social network. To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

H1: Active engagement by (fitness) brands on social media will strengthen customer trust.

3.4.2 TYPE OF MEDIA CONTENT AND EFFECT

According to (Phillips, 2013), to enjoy the monetary benefits from social media, marketers need to achieve a high level of customer interaction. According to the statistics from eightytwenty (2013), 51% of Irish consumers talk to brands on social media. Out of those 51%, 44% seek advice (Phillips, 2013). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

H2: Posting helpful and informative content will lead to profitable customer action for fitness industries.
By creating and sharing valuable content, companies are able to build loyalty and credibility with the consumers. Great content calls for action – to buy, subscribe, apply or donate. And great content implies that interested consumers will return again and again (Scott, 2013). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H3:** Valuable content will lead to more followers or fans in the virtual world.

The customers want to read content that talks about their needs and that speaks directly to them in a way that discovers their unsolved problems. And knowing that content will give the company an advantage in the eyes of the consumers (Copyblogger, 2013). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H4:** Posting informative content results in better engagement than posting advertisements.

### 3.4.3 WEB-CONTENT GENERATES AWARENESS

Web content is terrific data which utilized efficiently can result in viral marketing for an industry (Scott, 2013). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H5:** Viral content creates awareness.

### 3.4.4 BRAND ADVOCATES & E-WOM IMPACTS

Literature suggests that, social media marketing is an interactive marketing tool. It engages and encourages its customers to actively take part in content creation. In a social media environment, many components play crucial role in creating content. The content can be created by corporate, employee, professional and civilian users (Huotari, et al., 2015). The user generates content by being actively involved in discussion forums expressing their views, sharing knowledge with other customers, creating videos and reviews (Phillips, 2013). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H6:** Promoting User generated content will result in better response from consumers.
Across a study of 800 video campaigns that has been studied, 65% of campaigns notice an increase in customer interest. The users tend to be more receptive and hence share more among their friends and peers (Mooney & Johnsmeyer, 2015). To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H7:** Online consumers are more fascinated by video content.

According to (Mintel, 2015), 21% of Irish consumers on social media have had a positive impact of a review given by peers for a particular product. The Consumers seem to consider what a friend has to say about a product on the various social networks. To test this theory the following hypothesis is deducted.

**H8:** Online consumers are more influenced to try out new products through ‘E-WOM’.

### 3.5 Research Model

This term is explained by (Saunders, et al., 2009) as a term that related to “the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge”.

The researcher expects to develop knowledge on content marketing field through this research. To achieve a desirable result, it is necessary to follow a comprehensive approach to the dissertation. As the nature of this dissertation is descriptive, the researcher is certain on the type of data he wishes to present through statistics. In this section, the researcher describes the specific methods adopted for implementing his research. The Research Design is adopted from (Saunders, et al., 2009), which advice a ‘research onion’ model for to develop an effective research methodology.
The research ‘onion’ provides six stages – Philosophies, Approaches, Strategies, Choices, Time horizons and Techniques and procedures. To develop an effective methodology for this research, the researcher will be using each of these six stages, step-by-step. The first step is for researcher to decide whether to follow a quantitative research, a qualitative research, or both. For this research, quantitative research design is employed. The steps of research ‘onion’ follow, once the research design technique is finalized.

3.6 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This is the first stage of research onion. The research philosophy adopted by the researcher undermines the point of view of the researcher and his way of thinking concerning the given topic. The research philosophy which the researcher intend to adapt determines the research strategy and the methods in which the researcher wishes to carry out the research (Saunders, et al., 2009). The researcher wishes to pursue his dissertation, given the nature of topic and research question, on the philosophy of “Pragmatism”

3.6.1 PRAGMATISM
Given the nature of the topic and my generic approach of the world, Pragmatism philosophy best suited this dissertation. Since the research is mostly exploratory in nature and no particular individual approach was suitable in the particular case. Pragmatism states that the concepts are only validated if they support action. This means for literature and hypothesis to make sense they should be supported by actual results. Pragmatism avoids the researcher getting bogged down in philosophical debate (Saunders, et al., 2009). According to (Saunders, et al., 2009), variations in epistemology, ontology and axiology are quite possible if the research question cannot properly suggest the kind of philosophy to be adapted, either Positivist or Interpretivist. So for this research, researcher has the freedom to use any methods, techniques and procedures that are typically associated with quantitative and qualitative research.

The nature of my research and desired objectives which are associated with the topic, Pragmatism seems to provide the desired philosophy. The quantitative study involving surveys will provide the necessary primary data which will be measured to further contribute towards the development of the results, which can be analyzed statistically. The researcher has statistically analyzed the findings of the surveys with the desired target sample in order to measure the attitudes in a large scale. The researcher likes the way (Saunders, et al., 2009) has put it like the “Nike” slogan: “Just do it”.

### 3.7 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two types of research approaches: deduction and induction. For this research project, the researcher first needed to investigate and analyze the online consumer behavior, content marketing scope and the fitness industries in Ireland, through the secondary research. As the research question has been formulated, the researcher can now aptly choose the methods to collect data and analyze them accordingly. This research will follow a ‘**Deductive Approach**’. For this research, theory has been developed on existing literature. According to the developed theory, hypothesis is deduced. Then this hypothesis is tested based on findings. This approach is quicker to complete and enabled the researcher to collect the data faster. The approach of this nature is as follows:
3.8 RESEARCH STRATEGY

In this section, the researcher adapts a research strategy that answers to the research objectives. Before choosing a strategy it is essential to decide the method for collecting data. There are several types of methods that can be adopted to collect data. This research follows Mono-method. There are number of strategies to choose from. This study will use questionnaires based survey for various reasons defined in the sections to follow. A Quantitative research is generally a comparatively large scale research where lots of respondents and social actors come into play. For this particular research the suitable methods of collecting quantitative research data will be from:

- Surveys
- Questionnaires (Self-administered/internet mediated)

The data emerging from the quantitative research are generic, objective, structural and somewhat agreed-upon. The researcher prepared surveys and questionnaires from the specific website available in the internet i.e. ‘Google Forms’. These questionnaires will then be circulated through internet mediated links which will be circulated on email, “Facebook”, etc to the target audience. The questions
focuses on what sort of content are they likely to engage online? These provide valuable resources for customer attitudes and expectations. Survey was also conducted by various students in Dublin business school enrolled to particular fitness and sports societies. The Survey conducted in Dublin Business School, the respondents included both students and staff. The researcher utilized the information gathered in through the quantitative data to answer the specific research question.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Form of Research Question</th>
<th>Scope of knowledge</th>
<th>Focus on Contemporary Event</th>
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*Figure 8 research strategy*

3.8.1 WHY SURVEY STRATEGY?

According to (Saunders, et al., 2009), “the survey strategy is usually associated with the deductive approach and is mostly utilized for exploratory and descriptive research projects”.

The researcher opted for survey for this dissertation for numerous reasons. Firstly, survey strategy allowed the researcher to statistically analyze quantitative data to test the deduced hypothesis. This gave a generalized view on how the sample population accepts, engages and shares content online. To examine the behavioral characteristics of online consumer, it was necessary to frame specific survey
questions to get different types of information which has allowed for an analogy to be deduced between respondents’ behavioral characteristics. The researcher also found this strategy be economic and time saving. Survey method allowed the researcher to establish a relationship between the data collected, hypothesis and the theory.

3.9 SAMPLING METHOD

According to (Saunders, et al., 2009), a sampling method “reduces the amount of data you need to collect by considering only data from a subgroup rather than all possible cases”.

The data collected by measuring a small target audience, the sampling methods consist to make conclusions. There are five steps for sampling process (Saunders, et al., 2009):

- Defining Target audience
- Determine the sample frame
- Choose a sampling method
- Determine the sample size
- Validation the sample

Due to the nature of this research, the researcher selected self-selection sampling. It is a type of non-probabilistic volunteer sampling. The researcher posted the survey on many social media platforms in order to get as many responses as possible. The respondents were asked to fill in the survey through a web link and it was totally their choice to take part or not. The survey was mostly targeted to fitness and health groups in social media with the respondents asked to specifically mention their age. The researcher is only interested in the opinion of respondents who are above 18 and interested in social media contents related to fitness and health. The survey was provided to respondents through self-administered questionnaires over internet. The researcher provided questionnaires on social media pages specifically associated with fitness like ‘DBS FITNESS AND SPORTS SOCIETY’ to get the responses of adults between the different age groups. The rationale for providing questionnaire on social media platform was simple, as the main players for this research were the fitness enthusiasts present on the social media. The researcher was curious to know their opinion on web contents posted on these social media networks.
3.10 DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS METHODS

The survey was distributed and collected online during the period 3rd August 2015 to 10th August 2015. The questionnaire had been posted on social networks like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. A web-link was provided, with a short message dedicated to nature of the survey and the rationale for this survey. The questionnaire was designed using Google-Forms, as it is very user-friendly and accepts responses over 100 (unlike surveymonkey.com, in which you have to pay for these services). It is quite efficient to export data to SPSS as well. The first page of the survey described the researcher and his intention through this survey with a request to contribute to the survey. It was also made sure that no respondents filled the survey twice by clicking on an option while building the survey. It will not allow the respondents to take part in the survey more than once.

The researcher data collected from the questionnaire will be transferred on to an Excel spreadsheet. They are basically numerical data related to business and management research that help researcher meet objectives (Saunders, et al., 2009). The categorization on Excel spreadsheet will in-turn generate themes from data. The following steps were taken to generate relevant statistics and derive conclusions.

- Prepare, crunch and validate data.
- Generate appropriate tables and diagrams to describe the relationship of primary and secondary data.
- Adopt the most applicable statistics to describe the data.
- To examine the relationships between the data and applying statistics to cross-tabulate the data to draw conclusions.

Results from the sources of secondary research were then cross-referenced with those from the literature to draw the conclusions.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

During every research a researcher is faced with many ethical issues. It is obligatory that the researcher maintains his ethical behavior in completing his study. Ethics relate to appropriateness of one’s behavior
with respect to the rights of respondents of the study and those affected by it (Saunders, et al., 2009). When conducting surveys many ethical situations arise. Conducting a survey is an intrusive process (Saunders, et al., 2009). While collecting data (quantitative) following issues were monitored by the researcher:

- To respect the actual participants and avoid deceiving participants about the purpose of the research
- Respecting the assurance given individuals about their anonymity
- Response bias check
- Nature of the questions in questionnaires
- To keep the surveys less time consuming
- To start questionnaires by thanking the respondents and providing name and rationale for this survey
- To avoid using attachments as they may contain viruses
- Pre-survey contact

One of the main ethical issue that affects the research is obtaining permission of the participant to conduct survey . As the survey was mediated over the internet, privacy and confidentiality of respondents were maintained by not making it compulsory to mention any personal data or email in the survey. The researcher took all measures to maintain no ethical issues arise.

\section*{3.12 CONCLUSION}

Every research has limitations. The limitations regarding this study are discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation. This chapter concludes here. The researcher made every effort to cover the research question, research objectives and hypothesis in research design. The research onion provided the perfect model for this study. The researcher has sincerely made sure that data collected in with this research provides the reader with a clear explanation of research question and objectives.
4. DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the data that was collected post survey. Overall 107 respondents shared their views and opinions regarding social media, content on social media, content marketing by fitness industries and what factors they consider before making a purchase. The researcher made use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software to draw conclusive data from the excel sheets. The questionnaire was built using ‘Google-Forms’. The data was recorded in an excel sheet which was downloaded in a format that supported SPSS(.sav). The researcher found the process easy and error free as the data can be directly imported to SPSS from Google-forms. The resulted data was analyzed with the help of frequency distribution and cross-tabulation. The researcher will only present the analyzed data and does not aim to draw any conclusions or recommendations during this chapter. The Data Analysis chapter is further sub-divided into various sections.

4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

The sample survey consisted of 107 responses. All the participants were assured anonymity. The participants responded via internet. The sample consisted of 62% male and 38% female. A majority of respondents that took the survey were between the age of 18 and 25. 47% of the respondents are in between 18-25. The rest of the respondents majorly belonged to the ages of 26-30. Around 39% of the respondents found to be between the ages of 26 and 30. Almost 10% of response came from the age group 31 to 49. Almost 4% of the sample population was aged 50 or above.
The next set of questions were devised in order to find out the usage of social media by the respondents and which social platform are they most active on. 98% respondents said they are regularly active on social media. Around 2% said otherwise.
This section was kept in order to understand how active each age group on social media, amongst the respondents is. 47% of the age group 18-25 said they were quite active on social media. 39% were between the ages of 26-30. 10% were from 31-49 and 4% from 50 and above age group.

The next question was devised so as to identify which social media platforms engages maximum people from the target sample. The respondents were asked from a list of social network sites such as...
Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn, how often they are they engaging in the following networks. The following results were noted for individual websites:

**FACEBOOK**

The respondents that visited Facebook ‘more than two hours a day’ or ‘ever-day’ were maximum as compared to the rest of the websites. Around 65% of the people said that they are active on Facebook daily. Also it was the second least un-registered website after Youtube.

![Facebook Use Frequency Chart](image)

*Figure 13 how often do you use-Facebook?*

**TWITTER**

Twitter was found to be the most un-registered site amongst the target respondents. Most of the respondents say they visit it less than one time a week. Around 29% said that they are not registered on Twitter.
Instagram was visited by 36% of the respondents on a daily basis, with maximum people saying they visit it only one to four times a week.

YOUTUBE

Almost 50% of the respondents visit Youtube on a daily basis. Youtube was found to be the least unregistered site. With almost 11% people claiming they are active on Youtube more than two hours, daily.
Linkedin

35% of the respondents claim that they visit LinkedIn less than once a week. Almost 20% people saying they visit LinkedIn on a daily basis.

These findings gave researcher ample data to mention in his study which social media platform is most utilized by the respondents. These data can be further cross tabulated by the industries to target theirniche audience in the platform they are most active on.

4.3 Information About Fitness Industry Consumers

In this study, researcher wanted to get an idea, if the respondents were associated with any gym or fitness clubs membership? The researcher was also interested in finding out that, if the respondent was
a member then how did the respondent came to know about the gym club? The next set of questions are targeted to gather these information.

The author found out that around 77% of the respondents were currently a member of any fitness club or gym. Around 23% said they were currently not a member of fitness club or they do it in home.

![Pie Chart](image)

*Figure 18 are you a member of the gym?*

When they were asked the reason, how they found out about the gym? 48% respondents claim that it was suggested to them by a friend. Second-most reason how respondents came to know about the gym was through social media. 23% of respondents came to know about gym through some form of social media. 20% of the respondents say it was not applicable to them as they were not a member currently. 11% of the respondents state that they came to know about that gym through newspaper or radio advertisements, posters or flyers. The purpose behind this question was to know how implemental different forms of marketing are in order to attract fitness industry members.
The purpose of the next question was to gain the insight, whether respondents follow any fitness club online. This question can be directly associated, as the research aims to discover the attitudes of the online customer, that can be targeted by fitness industry through content marketing. The graph shows that 62% of the total respondents were following fitness clubs or gyms online, on social media. 38% of the sample population claimed that they weren’t following any fitness club on social media platforms. Through this question, the researcher wanted to ascertain, if people engage with fitness clubs on social media.

Figure 19: how did you find out about the gym?

Figure 20: Do you follow any fitness club online on social media?
4.4 IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMER

This section will address the importance that is placed on engaging with online customer in the literature. This question was formulated to discover how important is customer engagement and what impact it has on brand trust. In this study, the respondents were provided with a statement and were asked to rate how much they strongly disagree or strongly agree with the statement “I am more likely to trust a brand if I knew they were actively engaging with their fans or followers on social media”? They were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10. (1 being strongly disagree)

48% of the respondents stated that they agree (For better understanding, rating of 7 or more) with the statement. Whereas 32% of the response suggested that the surveyed sample disagrees with the statement. Around 20% of the response suggested they neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement.

Figure 21 do you agree with the statement “I am more likely to trust a brand if I knew they were actively engaging with their fans or followers on social media”? 

![Figure 21](image)
To further get a clear image of the importance of engagement with customer through social media, the responses of the above question will be cross tabulated with the members who go to the gym. According to this cross-tabulation, 19% of the population that are a member of a fitness club strongly agrees with the given statement. Of the total population that strongly agreed (10) to the statement, all were found to be a member of fitness clubs. It was further noted that out of 48% respondents that strongly agreed to the statement earlier, 81% of respondents were member of some fitness club.

![Figure 22 Fitness club member vs. Do you agree with the statement “I am more likely to trust a brand if I knew they were actively engaging with their fans or followers on social media”?](image)

**4.5 TYPES OF MEDIA CONTENT AND EFFECT**

According to literature, to enjoy the monetary benefits from social media, marketers need to achieve a high level of customer interaction by posting valuable, informative content that solves customer’s problem in some way. This section of data analysis will focus on the types of post and how customers respond to them. It was noted that 82% of the respondents founds information content regarding diet and nutrition very engaging. While 5% say it was not engaging.
This study will give an analysis of the results of post shared by a fitness club. It was mentioned in the questionnaire that the participants can tick more than one option if they want to. The graph below suggest that around 32% of the respondents have tried out a new class because of the type of posts that has been shared by fitness clubs on their social media. 28% respondents checked out an event which were mentioned on the posts on social media platforms. Around 20% of the respondents, suggested their friends on some social media platform. Around 12% of the respondent replies stated that they had in-fact tried the product with only 8% people saying they had no effect on the posts shared by a fitness club.
Figure 24 has the post shared by a fitness club ever made you

To further elaborate on this subject the researcher will cross-tabulate between the total members that are part of a gym or fitness club currently versus how they discovered that gym. This question will let the author discover the impact of social media, word of mouth and advertisements on the particular target market. According to literature, it was noted that online consumers put more than 2 times the trust in peers’ opinion than in brand advertisements and other brand initiated sources.

From the figure below it was noted that, 52% of the respondents, that are currently members of gym or fitness club have taken up membership due to a recommendation by a friend. Almost 26% of the respondents were motivated to join gym due to the impact of social media. 12% of the respondents joined the fitness club due to various types of advertisements. Around 10% say they have some other reason.
According to literature, the first objective of digital marketers should be engaging customers in order to make them aware of the presence of the brand. Terrific web-content may have massive impact on brand presence in the niche market. In this Section, the researcher will aim to observe how web-content posted on social can play an important part in customer behavior for fitness industries. Refering to the chart below. Almost 46% of the respondents claim that they were more aware about the services, events and news related to brand. Almost 10% claim that they discovered other fitness centres through the content posted by fitness club on social media. 6.5% respondents agrees that the web posts by their fitness club intrigued them to share and show it with their peers and friends. Around 22% say that it helped them understand the overall functioning of gym better, while around 17% said the question wasn’t applicable to them.

Figure 25: Members of fitness club vs. how they discovered that club

4.6 WEB-CONTENT GENERATES BRAND AWARENESS
To further add to the topic, the author did a cross tabulation between active members of social media versus how engaging do they find a viral video about individual weight transformation. This study shows what social media members think about video content as well. The graph below suggest that a total of 66% respondents think the content to be pretty engaging. Almost 14% respondents suggest that the content is not engaging. Whereas, 20% people remained neutral.
4.7 BRAND ADVOCATES & E-WOM IMPACTS

According to literature, Irish consumers on social media have had a positive impact of a review given by peers, for a particular product. The Consumers seem to consider what a friend has to say about a product on the various social networks. The researcher intends to identify the impact of brand advocates and word of mouth through this section. The graph suggest that 56% of the respondents (7 or above rating) consider this statement to be true. 30% disagrees with the statement (4 & below), whereas 14% are uncertain (5 or 6).

![Graph illustrating the percentage distribution of responses to the statement regarding brand advocates and e-wom impacts.]

The respondents were then asked whether they share any fitness content on social media or not. And if they do share, is it video, image or text? This question will help researcher analyse what content captures user interest, so much that they like to share it with their friends. According to the chart below, 42% respondents share videos related to fitness. Almost 34% of respondents agreed that they would rather share posts which are texts or images. Whereas 24% respondents expressed that they don’t generally share health or fitness posts.
Whenever you share web-posts related to health or fitness, they are generally

To further study this topic, researcher analyzed respondent’s point of view by using cross-tabulation between the social media members amongst the respondents and Contents that they share. 43% of respondents agreed they share video content on social media. Almost 34% agreed that when they post health or fitness posts, they are generally images or texts. 23% said that they don’t share health or fitness posts on social media.
To further analyze the effect of electronic word of mouth, researcher designed the following set of questions. According to literature, 21% of Irish consumers on social media have had a positive impact of a review given by peers for a particular product. The Consumers seem to consider what a friend has to say about a product on the various social networks. To find the effective use of e-WOM, the researcher took a cross-tabulation of members of social media among the respondents versus the response of Do you agree with the statement "I am more inclined to try a new product or service by the posts shared or recommended by my friends or peers, then if I saw the same brand in an advertisement"?

The graph suggest that 56 % of the respondents( 7 or above rating ) consider this statement to be true. 30 % disagrees with the statement ( 4 & below ), whereas 14 % are uncertain( 5 or 6 ). These are active members of social media therefore ewom influence on them should be noted.

Figure 31 members of social media among the respondents versus the response of Do you agree with the statement "I am more inclined to try a new product or service by the posts shared or recommended by my friends or peers, then if I saw the same brand in

To further analyze how much content respondents shared, the researcher took a cross-tabulation between social media members versus how did fitness club members discover that club. This will project an idea as to the effect of how much social media posts or recommendation promotes action.

The respondents were how they found out about the gym, 48 % respondents claim that it was suggested to them by a friend. Second most reason, how respondents came to know about the gym was through
social media. 23% of respondents came to know about gym through some form of social media. 20% of
the respondents say it was not applicable to them as they were not a member. 11% of the respondents
state that they came to know about that gym through newspaper or radio advertisements, posters or
flyers.

4.8 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

In this section, researcher will mention few additional findings that were encountered during the data
analysis stage. There are some noticeable responses that researcher will mention in this section. Out of
the total respondents, 62% were male and 38% were female. Another important factor was to know the
age versus gender ratio among the respondents in order to find out which group of individuals can be
targeted with what content.

FEMALE VS AGE

It was noted that amongst all the female 55% respondents were 18–25. Almost 28% were 26-30. Is was
noted that 15% of the females were of the ages 31-49. And less than 3% were of the age 50 or above.
Out of the number of males that took part in the survey, 42% were found to be of the age group 18-25. The majority of males were found to be 26-30, with as many as 46% respondents. Almost 8% were found to belong to age group 31-49 and 4-5% male respondents belonged to the age group, 50 or above.
FEMALE VS MEMBER OF GYM

The next questions are aimed at finding out, what percent of female respondents are members of a gym and out of the total female population that are members of any fitness club and what age group are they from. This will guide the research in formulating a general opinion. From the graph below it is evident that, 75% of the female respondents are members of a gym or fitness club. It is noted that out of total female respondents, 38% of the respondents who were member of a gym belonged to the ages of 18-25, almost 20% of female population that goto a gym are between the ages of 26-30. 15% of the females that are member of fitness club are between the ages 31-49. 3% of the female respondents who were member of gym were above the age of 50.

Figure 35 Female vs. Member of gym
The next questions are aimed at finding out, what percent of male respondents are members of a gym and out of the total male population that are members of any fitness club and what age group are they from. This will guide the research in formulating a general opinion. From the graph below it is evident that, 73 % of the male respondents are members of a gym or fitness club. It is noted that out of total male respondents, 33% of the respondents who were member of a gym belonged to the ages of 18-25, almost 30% of male population that goto a gym are between the ages of 26-30. 7% of the males that are member of fitness club are between the ages 31-49. 5% of the male respondents who were member of gym were above the age of 50.

Figure 36 Female age vs. Member of gym

**MALE VS MEMBER OF GYM**

The next questions are aimed at finding out, what percent of male respondents are members of a gym and out of the total male population that are members of any fitness club and what age group are they from. This will guide the research in formulating a general opinion. From the graph below it is evident that, 73 % of the male respondents are members of a gym or fitness club. It is noted that out of total male respondents, 33% of the respondents who were member of a gym belonged to the ages of 18-25, almost 30% of male population that goto a gym are between the ages of 26-30. 7% of the males that are member of fitness club are between the ages 31-49. 5% of the male respondents who were member of gym were above the age of 50.
HOW ENGAGING DO YOU FIND THE WEB-PAGE?

The next set of questions will aim at what sort of web-posts do respondents find intriguing. The respondents were asked to rate the following posts according to their interest. The scale was set between quite interesting to not at all interesting. The respondents were asked to give their views regarding the following posts.
FAT LOSS CLASSES

72% respondents found out the web-posts regarding this to be quite engaging. Almost 15% said wasn’t that engaging to them.

![Bar Chart: Fat loss classes](chart1)

Figure 39 How engaging do you find the fitness web-page on ‘fat loss classes’

A CELEBRITY WORKOUT BLOG

From the chart below, 63% respondent find it to engaging where 19% say it is neutral. Almost 17% say it is not engaging to them.

![Bar Chart: A celebrity workout Blog](chart2)

Figure 40 Figure: How engaging do you find the fitness web-page on ‘a celebrity workout blog’

A VIRAL VIDEO ABOUT INDIVIDUAL WEIGHT LOSS TRANSFORMATION
64% of the respondents found this to be engaging. Whereas 13% say it doesn’t appeal to them. 20% remain neutral.

**Figure 41. How engaging would you find post on a fitness web-page - A viral video about individual weight transformation**

**SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP OFFERS**

Almost 70% say that it will be engaging enough for them to check it out. 10% say it’s not engaging to them. Almost 20% remain neutral.

**Figure 42. How engaging would you find post on a fitness web-page - special membership offers**

**DIET AND NUTRITION INFORMATION**
This information was found to be most user engaging by the respondents. In fact almost 50% respondent found it quite engaging and 32% found it at-least engaging. Only 5% said it was not appealing to them, whereas around 12% were neutral to these posts.

![Chart: Engagement on Fitness Web-page]

**Figure 43** How engaging would you find the following post on a fitness web-page - Diets and Nutrition Information

**DO YOU THINK YOUR FITNESS CENTRE PROVIDES YOU WITH ENGAGING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?**

This question was the final question addressed to the respondents in the survey. This question was aimed to check whether fitness industries are providing engaging content to the target audience. 18% of the respondents refused that they were not getting any web content from fitness centres to in-fact get engaged with them. 55% said that the content, fitness industry is providing, is not enough (not often as I would like + Sometimes). 27% said that they were satisfied with the amount of content that fitness industry posted on social media, inorder to actively engage with its customer.
The researcher cross-tabulated the results of above finding with the age group of different respondents in order to get a clearer view of what age-group feel that their fitness industry is engaging them on social media and which target audiences needed to be engaged further.

Only the total respondents, 46% of respondents are between the age group 18-25. Only 10% of the respondents among them feel that their fitness industry engages them regularly on social media. 28% feel that fitness industry should engage them more often on a regular basis. 9% feel that fitness industry does not engage them at all.

Of the 39% respondents that belong to the ages of 26-30, 13% find the content provided by fitness industry to be intriguing. 18% feel that a better job is required from the fitness industry to regularly engage them. 8% feel that they are not at all engaged by the contents provided by fitness industry on social media.

Almost 10% of the total respondents that belong to the age group 31-49. Out of them 3% feel that they are engaged regularly, 7% think the fitness industry need to engage them more often with social media contents.

Out the 5% population of respondents that belong to 50 or above age group. 4% think sometimes fitness industry engages them. 1-2% think they are engaged consistently.
Figure 45 Age vs. Do you think your fitness club provides you with engaging content on social media?
INTRODUCTION

This research was implemented to investigate the impact, content marketing on social media has on customer engagement and customer behavior, with respect to fitness industries in Ireland. This research presents the effect of various types of content on social media channels and the action that they generate from the customers. This chapter will aim to identify how does content marketing on social media will affect customer engagement for fitness industries in Ireland. The researcher will also look to test the conceptual hypotheses drawn from literature review of the existing secondary research. Researcher will also attempt to recognize the key trends in Ireland, drawn from the quantitative study. This chapter will also include, the limitations of this study.

This study will primarily focus on the findings and whether they prove or disprove the conceptual hypothesis. The researcher will then look at some of the additional findings noticed through the research process and the impact of these findings around web contents posted on social media by the fitness clubs on the different age groups, will also be discussed. These findings can be crucial for marketers as they provide a fresh perspective on the array of customers, on which they need to target their content marketing strategy.

5.1 RESEARCH QUESTION—"How can content marketing be used in social media, to strengthen the level of customer engagement, for fitness industries in Ireland?"
For this research, based on the provided literature the main factors that determine, “how content marketing on social media be used, to strengthen the level of customer engagement for fitness industries in Ireland” are: Realizing the importance of actively engaging with customers, posting the types of contents that drives user action, creating brand awareness amongst the consumers and maintaining brand advocates to spread positive word-of-mouth.

5.2 FINDINGS RELATED TO RESPONDENTS

The participants responded via internet. The sample consisted of 62 % male and 38 % female. A majority of respondents that took the survey were between the age of 18 and 25, with almost 47% of the respondents are in between 18-25. This information affix additional sincerity to the dissertation as the according to literature this is the age group associated with maximum fitness concern. Further, this is the age group with maximum presence on social media. Hence, this topic would fit very appropriate to their everyday routine. A very positive result from the survey would be, with 98% respondents replying to be regular active on social media, allows more relevance to the topic, as it is concerned with marketing on social media.

After analyzing data it was noticed that the number of active users in social networking site, Facebook was noted to be maximum, almost 66% of the sample population agreeing to use it every day. Whereas, when the data was compared with twitter, only 16% of the respondents claim to check Twitter daily. As was highlighted in the literature review, significant amount of active users in Ireland, differ in their usage of the two sites. According to literature, even in Ireland, marketers choose Facebook as their favored choice to promote business in social media.

So to conclude from these findings, if fitness industries is to exclusively use a single platform on social media, it should be Facebook. Since maximum percentage of target audience is present on Facebook.

5.3 IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING WITH CUSTOMER

Active engagement by (fitness) brands on social media will strengthen customer trust

The researcher aims to identify how content marketing can be used to strengthen customer engagement, attitudes towards a brand. According to (Colnaghi, 2013). Engagement is achieved by
providing useful information on an emotional level so as to distance organizations from the corporate status (Halpin, 2013). According to (Halpin, 2013) online consumers will trust a brand more if they found out that a particular brand is actively engaging with their fans or followers on a social network. (Hur, et al., 2011), describes that loyal customer will not only result in profitable action such as repurchase but also advocate positive word of mouth to leverage the brand from the competitors. This transparent nature of social media makes it even more significant for brands to ensure that they are ‘Actively Engaging’ with customers. (The researcher would like to mention that by ‘Active Engagement’ on social media, he means that the brands constantly help customers with their issues and in-turn provide them with useful data).

The data from survey was noted. The respondents were asked to rate on a likert scale of 1 to 10 (with one being strongly disagree and ten being strongly agree). It was studied that, rating 10 received the maximum votes, who strongly agree (almost 20%) with the statement, regular engagement with a brand will have some positive effect on brand loyalty. The researcher further wanted to analyze this data by cross-tabulating with the views of respondents who were part of a fitness club. After this cross-tabulation researcher found out that 25% of the population that are a member of a fitness-club agrees (rating of 9 and 10) with the given statement, while only 6% strongly disagrees( rating of 1 or 2). It was further noted that out of 20% respondents that had strongly agreed to the statement earlier, 90% of respondents were member of some fitness club. This finding indicate that respondents who go to fitness club strongly agreed that brands can significantly increase their loyalty by actively engaging with the consumers on social media. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

5.4 TYPES OF MEDIA CONTENT AND EFFECT

In this study, we clearly find that web-content drives people for action and has a strong effect on consumer purchase decision. According to the statistics from eightytwenty (2013), 51% of Irish consumers talk to brands on social media. Out of those 51%, 44% seek advice (Phillips, 2013). According to (Phillips, 2013), to enjoy the monetary benefits from social media, marketers need to achieve a high level of customer interaction with compelling content.

**Posting helpful and informative content will lead to profitable customer action for fitness industries.**
This study was undertaken in order to analyze the responses to the following contents on social media. Almost majority rated diets and nutrition information to be “Quite Engaging”. This study confirms that customers on social media are mostly attracted by useful and informative content.

This section of the study reported that engaging and useful content drove 92% of respondents to perform some purchase of services, related to fitness industry. The researcher also studied that, 25% of respondents that are currently a member of a fitness club discovered it on social media. This is very intriguing from the perspective of a fitness industry, looking to invest in content marketing as it determines the role of content in the return on investment, statistically. This was one of the most effective yet simpler questions aimed at addressing the necessity to produce and distribute great content. It was noted that effective web content facilitate people for action - to buy, subscribe, apply, or donate. Therefore, due to the above mentioned points, H2 is accepted.

**Valuable content will lead to more followers or fans in the virtual world.**

The general aim is, through this study to contribute to theory-building co-related with the usage of web content in online marketing. The new trend in marketing is based on “tell me something I don’t know, please” (Scott, 2013). 22% of the respondents that follow fitness posts, they show and share it with their friends and their contacts what they like. This is a type of consumer to consumer advertising, this is useful information. Fitness brands can facilitate a marketing strategy to analyze what content is shared the most to target this niche. Considering the above statements, H3 is accepted.

**Posting informative content results in better engagement than posting advertisements.**

According to (Rosenthal, 2014), there are more than 13000 diets and fitness apps available in the App store of Apple and Google Play Market. A massive 857,000 channels on Youtube are dedicated to health and fitness. These are available ‘free of cost’ to the consumers.

This results have shown that instead of directly advertising, an informative posts, blogs or video podcast series are way more effective when driving the customer through the purchase cycle. In this section, the researcher took a cross-tabulation between the findings of respondents who go to gym or any fitness club and how did they came to know about the gym or fitness club. Almost 26% of the respondents were motivated to join gym due to due to the impact of social media. 12% of the respondents joined
the fitness club due to various types of advertisements (that included TV or Radio, Newspaper ads, posters and flyers). Taking note of the above results, H4 is accepted.

5.5 WEB-CONTENT GENERATES AWARENESS

This section of the dissertation will look to prove that, excellent web content generates brand awareness. Anything that gets people involved with the content of a site provides a great way to engage visitors, build their interest, and move them through your sales cycle.

Viral content creates awareness.

(Ludwig, et al., 2013) According to literature, the first objective of digital marketers should be engaging customers in order to make them aware of the presence of the brand. The finding in this study suggest that 46% respondents stated that they became more aware of the news and events related to fitness industries by following their posts on social media. This highlight, how very important, content marketing is, during the initial phase of brand promotion. The customer need to be aware of the brand in order to interact with it.

To further check the impact of viral content, the author did a cross tabulation between members of social media versus how do they find a viral video about individual weight transformation. 60% of respondents found it to be engaging. These data are essential and prove that awareness is in fact generated by proper utilization of web content. These findings suggest that hypothesis 5 is accepted.
5.6 BRAND ADVOCATES & E-WOM IMPACTS

This study will guide us with the assumptions related to effectiveness of user generated content and the impact of word of mouth on social networks.

**Promoting User generated content will result in better response from consumers.**

This is a pretty straight forward study, which captures a few exclusive details. 56% are convinced that online reviews and recommendations are a better trusted source of information than traditional advertisements. As mentioned in the literature, in a recent study, it was noted that online consumers put more than 2 times the trust in peers’ opinion than in brand advertisements and other brand initiated sources (Ludwig, et al., 2013). This will be a crucial finding with respect to the strategies that fitness industry marketers need to develop in order to build relationship with its customer to have a positive experience so that they can share it with their friends. (Hur, et al., 2011), describes that loyal customer will not only result in profitable action such as repurchase but also advocate positive word of mouth to give an edge to the brand from the competitors. This theory is supported by statements so H6 is accepted.

**Online consumers are more fascinated by video content.**

The results of this study examines that 42% respondents claim to be more interested in sharing web posts regarding videos. Literature supports the hypothesis. Across a study of 800 video campaigns that has been studied, 65% of campaigns notice an increase in customer interest. The users tend to be more receptive and hence share more among their friends and peers (Mooney & Johnsmeyer, 2015). These statements state that H7 is accepted

**Online consumers are more influenced to try out new products through ‘E-WOM’**

According to literature, 21% of Irish consumers on social media have had a positive impact of a review given by peers for a particular product. The Consumers seem to consider what a friend has to say about a product on the various social networks. The results of this study showed that, A fairly high number of respondents consider, (almost 60%) what are the reviews about the product and what social media has to say on it. This will have more impact on them to make a purchase then any form of traditional
advertisements. This data is compelling when fitness industry considers the amount of resources it employs on traditional form of advertising. This can have an impact on their budgeting structure.

Further, 48% of the respondents that are currently members of a fitness club or gym, were recommended by a friend to join that fitness club. This data is highly influential. Therefore, H8 is accepted.

5.7 ADDITIONAL FINDING

AGE VS SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

The results of this section highlights the usage of social media amongst the different age groups. It was noted that highly active age group in social media was between the ages of 18 and 25. Firstly, it confirms from the literature that people from 18-25 are in fact highly active on social media. An organization looking to target specific group can even focus on what particular channels are they most likely to be active on. According to this study it was found to be Facebook.

So if a fitness brand is looking to leverage social media platform to attract customers, can make use of this theory to apply to their marketing strategy.

GENDER VS MEMBER OF GYM

This section provides another important findings related to age groups. It was noted that young adults are not only most active on social media but most of them are also member of a fitness club. It was duly noted that 3 out of 4 males between the ages of 18-30 were found to be current members of gym or fitness club. 3 out of 5 females between the ages of 18-30 were found to be current members of gym or fitness. These findings suggest that a relatively high number of young individuals take up memberships of fitness clubs. This information is useful and suggest that majority of target customers that are active on social media and members of fitness clubs, are young adults. This defines the target market, if the fitness industry aspires to make use of content marketing on social media to engage with its customer.

HOW ENGAGING DO YOU FIND THE WEB-PAGE?

According to literature, informative and Interactive content engages the visitor with a chance to progress through the sales consideration cycle to the point where they are more likely to purchase the product or service (Scott, 2013). This study was undertaken in order to analyze the responses for the following contents on social media. Almost 83% of respondents rated diets and nutrition information to
be “overall Engaging”. This study confirms that customers on social media are mostly searching for useful and informative content. Another important observation through this section remained that 72% respondents rated Fat-loss Classes as “Overall Engaging”. This information highlights that valuable content drives action. Every other content posted on social media had almost equal response. One particular observation, showed that people are engaged by advertisements but they have to be about discounts or lucrative offers. The industry can make use of this information to target their niche through membership advertisements offers on social media.

On an average Irish consumers share over 103,000 videos per month (Phillips, 2013). So the viral video regarding health transformation was rated as “Overall Engaging” by 66% respondents, implying the benefits of using video content.

**DO YOU THINK YOUR FITNESS CENTRE PROVIDES YOU WITH ENGAGING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?**

This was the last question addressed to respondents regarding ‘content marketing’. Researcher wanted to know if the respondents felt the urge for their fitness club to provide more content on social media. The results of the findings show that 55% respondents said that, the content fitness industry is providing is not enough. While, 18% of the respondents refused that they weren’t getting any web content from fitness centres to get engaged with them. This could suggest that inorder for fitness clubs to satisfy and engage their potential target audiences, they have to apply some resources to developing valuable content for their members and followers.

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This findings of this study are not focussed on when to post a content on social media but answers through the findings ‘what’ content to share on the networking sites. Its focusess on what content engages the target audience and how to generate awareness, loyalty and, finally purchase through informative content strategy. Further, Suggestion is made on which specific social media channel to utilise in order to appeal to the masses. In the end, this study provides fundamental knowledge of how to apply content marketing strategy on social media. Hopefully, this study will expand the existing
literature which is available on content marketing through social media channels and how to affect customer engagement in order to generate sales online and offline.

5.8 LIMITATIONS

The researcher encountered a few limitations during the course of this study and will be explained in detail during this chapter. The first and foremost problem was the fact that, due to the concept of ‘Content Marketing on social media’ being relatively new, there was a lack of fundamental theory. One of the limitations is the size of the sample. The research contained very specific and small-scaled version of the entire population as it would be fairly impractical to study the behavior and attitudes with the available resources. The outcomes is quite difficult to be drawn from such a sample. Therefore, the data gathered from the primary research can only be used a general assumption of the entire population. The results are therefore not practical to be projected on different samples. Although, this study can be considered as an introduction to the future, supportive studies. It would have been an added advantage to interview content marketing professionals in Dublin to know how exactly the strategies are implemented. This information could be then practical for fitness industries to allocate their budget accordingly.

Moreover, due to time constraints and budget restrictions, researcher could not collect enough responses so as to study about the findings of this topic, comprehensively. The main limitations encountered can be generalized as:

- The research focuses on strategies that involve high degree of customer involvement.
- Time constraints
- Limited academic critique on the following fitness industry
- Sample size
6. CONCLUSION/SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Internet marketing is excelling as the major form of marketing industry and content marketing adds as a catalyst. The latest developments in the virtual marketing world and changing behavior of online customer combined with latest technological advancements provide exciting scope for digital marketers to employ maximum profit out of this scenario. This study is built on exclusive literature reviews that are published during the web-marketing era. Content marketing should be regarded as a dynamic and developing subject rather a stable one. This new trend has provided many new and exciting opportunities which will be convenient for both, the buyer and the seller.

In this respect, the researcher aimed at developing a study that depicts the picture of the current trends of web marketing on social media and secondary research provided for it. Social media is effective in attracting large number of followers and fans in the virtual world. Companies have created communities in social media platforms like ‘Facebook ‘and ‘Twitter’ (Gummerus, et al., 2012). Social media is different. It was seen that it provides an exclusive platform for two-way communication, which is highly essential for engaging with customers and delivering useful content to the customer at the exact instance a user needs it.
In the literature review it was noted that before the advent of social media, there were limited resources for a brand or industry to communicate or interact and build a relationship with its customers (Vanauken, 2014). This study investigated that online consumers will trust a brand more if they found out that a particular brand is actively engaging with their fans or followers on a social network. A brand that involves with the customers on a personal and emotional level is able to create a loyal fan base. It was noted that the maximum number of target audiences were frequent users of social media platforms. The rationale for conducting content marketing strategies on social media is that it is fairly practical for practitioners to

In order to test content marketing’s impact on customer engagement with a brand, the author created a set of hypotheses. To test these set of hypotheses researcher applied mono-method approach of quantitative surveying 105 respondents. The sample was chosen through non probability sampling. The set of derived hypotheses helped to generate the questions in the survey. The findings were then analyzed using different analytic tools through which the findings were further investigated to hold true for the hypotheses

As per the literature, with the advent of social media, marketers and practitioners came up with a newer ways to market their brands through the medium of social networking channels. According to literature, 90% of all companies have employed some form of social media marketing through many different channels. The findings suggested that many respondents were actively searching for products and services online. Almost all agreed (92%) that the posts shared by the brands on social media had made them consider or actually purchase the related brand. This data correlates with literature to explain the scope of content marketing within the virtual market.

In the literature review, impact of brands regularly trying to help customers (by providing solutions to their problems) was associated with monetary benefits were described. It was studied that, respondents strongly agreed with the statement, regular engagement with a brand will have some positive effect on brand loyalty. This study stated that by understanding the buyers the need and persona, brands should willingly provide their audiences with useful information required by the user to make a purchase.

The findings stated that, overall impact of content on the consumer is proportional to the information it shares. Today, most people go to internet to learn about a product or service. Different individuals have different preferences over the internet. The findings presented a generalized opinion on informational content though. This type of content was found to be highly engaging with consumers. The brands will
have to focus the informational necessities of consumers first, in order to devise and deliver quality content.

An effective online content strategy, when executed with creativeness and brilliance creates awareness. This theory was tested and the results suggested that primary objective of content was it enlightened them about the proper details of a brands products and services. Due to internet, globalization is made possible which enables a customer to reach its buyer without the boundary of locations, throughout the planet. Today, the web has created ample opportunities for businesses around the globe to effective utilize the ingenious features of Web 2.0 applications to advertise their organizations and generate a fan base.

The results of the study showed that users responded to video posts much better than compared with images or texts. According to literature, the users tend to be more receptive of video content and hence share more among their friends and peers (Mooney & Johnsmeyer, 2015). On an average Irish consumers share over 103,000 videos per month (Phillips, 2013). These data provide insights into the preference of contents that have major impacts on the consumer.

As stated in literature, a study by Mintel, of online retailing in UK (2015), found that around 73% of the recipients who had obtained goods from online shopping claim that, customer reviews and comments on a particular product, comforted them and helped them in deciding to make the purchase or not. The findings proves that brand advocates are necessary for effective promotion of brands. User generated content is seen as a much reliable source of information in the web.

In the end the researcher further added some additional findings for marketers to leverage. It was noted that majority of members who were both, regular active on social media and members of a fitness club were from the age group 18-25. The organizations should constantly develop contents that would attract the desired audience in order to increase their followers online. This should be one of the prime objective of a marketing strategy. Not only will a follower repeatedly purchase from the brand but will in fact promote it through word of mouth. This study proves the effectiveness of word of mouth in today’s environment. For the organization to succeed under the new trend of content marketing, it has to examine the organizational goals and then devote the necessary resources on the buyers first. The findings suggest that the web marketers who wish to contemplate the use of content marketing strategy should have predefined objectives – to sell products, generate leads, secure contributions, and get people to join (Scott, 2013).
This study will be useful when comparing with other studies based on the similar topic. A general viewpoint can be adopted to obtain more distinctive result, as well as to develop in-depth knowledge of the findings, related to this field of study. The author suggests future researchers to examine the overall budget that a fitness industry allocates to marketing and advertising. This should include both online and offline marketing strategies. This might be able to help get an insight of the return on investment through content marketing. The future researches can further look into the professions of samples to target the content as per the audience preference and demand. The author suggests future researches to study the effects of a content, that is perceived negatively by the consumers and what it does to brand loyalty.

Finally the hypothesis that was developed had been tested and these results can be a part of new research on content marketing on social media platform.
7. REFLECTION ON LEARNING

There is a saying which motivates me the most- “Where focus goes energy flows”

In this chapter, the researcher will provide a detailed learning experience that was developed throughout this course. This section provides an analysis of key attributes and methods that were utilized to successfully tackle the various obstacles that were encountered not only during this dissertation but also from the MBA course in Dublin Business School. The researcher will also mention how he wishes to apply the managerial skills obtained to gain expertise in the international market and skillfully equip myself with tools such as skilled entrepreneur, creative thinker, leadership skills, team player, confidence etc.

INTRODUCTION

The researcher wish to begin by sharing to that, it was almost after 4 long years after my graduation had finished that I decided that it was time for me to pursue my post grad in marketing. The concept of skillfully promoting a product or service, to be able to make a delivery of a product through creative advertising, had always intrigued me. The experience of studying in a foreign county was very much fascinating as I had never travelled abroad prior to coming here. Some of the things I gained through this course are extremely practical and relevant in my near future. My entire year was full of ups and downs. During the start of my course, I had to face many challenges, for example contrasting cultural differences, distinct approaches to a particular query. But I had developed meaning relationships with my fellow colleagues and professors at the Dublin business school to guide me whenever I was in need. Throughout the semester I had numerous group projects, respective essays and of-course eventful presentations, which were faced head on and I mostly received concrete feedbacks. The learning process was more practical than theoretical, which was the reason I enrolled in this specific course. The feedbacks seem extremely essential as they not only point out mistakes but also guide me on how to correct them. This is the shortest possible summary of my journey and understandings.

7.1 ACHIEVEMENT
The most significant feeling after the completion of this Masters Course in DBS and the dissertation in particular is knowing that the tough decision I made to travel all the way from India to pursue my post-graduation, was all worth it in the end. I and my family have always put the prime emphasis on quality education. The decision to come here to do my masters will have eventful results for my future career goals, which I have no doubts about.

This program continuously helped me widen my consideration and undo my insular prejudices that might still be prevalent in me. I maintained that, I am particularly satisfied with piece of work. I have invested lot of my time and resources in order to accomplish this dissertation with my capabilities and utilize every opportunity given to me in the best possible ways.

I am also very proud of the numerous presentations and projects that involved a team. This helped me understand solution to different problems from different perspectives. I was lucky enough to get extremely helpful and impressive group project partners. I have learned a lot from each and every one of them and I am immensely thankful.

Then lastly, through the tremendous guidance of my supervisor, I was able to grasp the basic understanding of the format and structure of dissertation. This role was vital in order to invest proper time and resources required to accomplish a fruitful dissertation.

7.2 PERSONAL ETHICS

Ethics are the naturally developed framework according to which an individual operate in normal environment. In the absence of a suitable morals, choices can be made ‘ethically’, but immorally. Things that may be ethical for a person may contradict with the ethical views of others. The key to success is how we behave and how we work together. The personality of an individual or organization is perceived from the ethics that are followed. My personal foremost distress is to keep myself away of easier wrong decisions than tougher right decisions. “Theory of Utilitarianism” focuses on whether the decisions taken by an individual produces a result that is ethically just or not. It states that, depending upon the outcome, the decisions are labelled good or bad. The dilemma in using this theory is not knowing which consequences take priority over others (Hovland & Wolburg, 2010)
7.3 LEARNIN EXPERIENCE – THROUGHOUT THE COURSE

SELF REFLECTION

I have always believed that opportunities are somewhat similar to heartbeats and you can’t bear to miss even one of them. When opportunity knocks on the door, one should better be ready to jump on it. Through this MBA program, I find myself equipped with great confidence and qualities so I can confidently make decisions required from a managerial perspective. I was always dubious in situations that had involvement of money. This course has evolved me to take bold decisions and adopt to situations with a positive frame of mind. All I can think is that I got out of my comfort zone.

During the first semester of this academic year, I had encountered academic issues as it was quite perilous for me to adopt a role of student again after so many years. Although with proper guidance and support I was able to concentrate on my post-graduation program. Throughout both semesters, I was actively involved with projects related to personal and professional developments. I had taken membership in various fitness clubs which generated my interest in this topic altogether.

During both the semesters I had numerous group presentations in which, the members were from different ethnicities and culture. This enlightened me to study in a multi-cultural environment. I learned a lot from people from different background and ethnicities. I learned in this course that within a group, people needed to take up responsibilities individually or divide the work equally to avoid any miscommunications. Few specific modules which had a deep impact professionally and personally were business innovation, IMC, research methods, personal and professional development, etc. They were implemental as I gasped incredible and advanced analytical tools and techniques that will foster my managerial skills.
SKILLS ACQUIRED

Few key analytical tools I have successfully incorporated from this course are as follows, that were requisite for developing my managerial study:-

1) Confidence: This is one thing that will enable me to reach endless success throughout my career by not giving up when facing failure and having the right frame of mind to turn it around in my favor. By confidence I mean taking decisions involving risks and executing them boldly. I would like to thank my personal and professional professor, Gay White for personally assisting me through this concept. I had mailed her regarding an issue I was facing. She showed me how to have the right attitude towards it and which ultimately paid off. I later contacted to her through email and she forwarded me some insightful books which were brilliant and had a positive impact on my overall persona.

2) Leadership: I intend to initiate my own business, then this attribute is imperative. This helps me stand out from a crowd and be successful.

3) People skills: Marketers primary objective is to connect with people. I have always been friendly in nature but that sometimes backfired. So it essential to understand people.

4) Time management: The ability to set goals and make plans for their accomplishments is the master-key for success. This ability is developed through practice and will do more to assure your eventual success.

5) Researching Skills: With both semesters dedicated to research methods module, I developed analytical researching skills which were later very useful during this dissertation.

6) Critical Thinker: This ability will help me to assess my future. This is one thing I wanted accomplish especially before I start my own business.
CHALLENGES FACED

My learning experience was full of ups and downs. During the start of my course, I had to face many challenges, for example contrasting cultural differences, distinct approaches to a particular query. The most difficult aspect during my experience at DBS was time management. Proper time allotment was necessary in order to live a profound life.

After the results were declared of the first semester, I encountered with some technical issues regarding my result. But as the staff is extremely useful it was resolved within few days.

7.4 LEARNING EXPERIENCE - DISSERTATION

The marketing mix is experiencing a fundamental transformation and the catalyst is internet. (Gordon & Turner, 1997) This dissertation had helped me gain insights on the latest trends of internet marketing. The dissertation process started with a positive note when I came across a book by David M. Scott. This book helped me clear major concepts about online marketing, latest trends and customer engagement. So it was due to this book I opted to do my dissertation on content marketing.

SELF REFLECTION

Nothing worth doing is ever easy!! This statement has a futuristic stance. I believe although this dissertation was very laborious, but this will prove as a corner stone in my career. The skills and knowledge developed will be implemental in every aspect of my professional life.

To begin with, I had to put extra effort and had to spend lot of time in libraries to gather as much knowledge as I can. The topic was a fairly new to me.
Thankfully, Professor Chantal Ladias was appointed as my mentor. She cleared my initial doubts and bestowed me with many useful insights, to facilitate the concept of content marketing very intriguing. We met regularly where she monitored our progress and guided us with designing an effective structure for our dissertation. Dr. Chantal suggested books on “trends of social media marketing” which were very practical too. I learned what made Facebook such a powerhouse of innovation. The success stories of Uber and Instagram were quite motivational. I even considered learning it professionally. I even checked out an institute of content marketing. This topic really intrigued me.

This topic was also suggested to me by my flat-mate and I am very thankful to her. The dissertation period started during the end of April. I was thoroughly looking forward to it. This was something that will test my intellectual as well as physical attributes. I had been a regular member of library for the last two months. Reading journal articles, books, magazines and blogs. Anything that mentioned content marketing, I wanted to read to get maximum knowledge out of it. I subscribed to many online forums and channels which mentions the effectiveness of content marketing. I see the completion of this dissertation regarding content marketing on social media for fitness industries as a milestone in my professional life.

**SKILLS ACQUIRED**

In today’s world importance of digital marketing cannot be ignored, this was the primary purpose was choosing topic in the field of study. Since, after intense research, the topic of Content marketing was found to be very optimal for this research.

1) Research Skill: Through conducting primary and secondary researches I gained insight to specific issues related to human behavior. This tool helped me profoundly in the initial phases of my dissertation. I am sure to make use of this in future. Thanks to the immense library resources, I found myself within plenty of useful data necessary for this dissertation. I also like to mention the helpful staff in the library that were always up to help a student.

2) Content marketing scope: To be able to complement my core competencies and equip me to utilize my knowledge and expertise towards building my family business on the management side. I have always emphasized on Clarity of ambition, to know exactly what I want and the abilities/qualities needed to achieve that ambition.
3) Time management: This was one of the most significant factor which helped me to complete my dissertation well within the allotted period. I had allotted time significantly to every chapter in this dissertation progressively. This meant that equal amount of thoughtful time was provided to each chapter. This will help me plan my schedule aptly.

4) Ethics: This dissertation showed me to respect individual views and privacy. I made it sure to cite an author if I referenced his work. Also fair amount of thought was given to make the questionnaires as ethical as possible. This was made sure that no individual or organization was harmed. This is essential attribute for my professional conduct.

5) SPSS: This is an analytical software that was quite helpful in finding results from the questionnaire. It was found to be quite user-friendly. I am certain I will make use of this software in future.

6) Google Forms: This is an inbuilt app in the Google-docs platform. This interface was utilized to generate the questionnaire. This is very versatile and is highly recommended by the author.

CHALLENGES FACED

The first and foremost significant challenge was to decide the topic in which author wished to write the dissertation. I consider this as a corner stone in my life. I needed a topic which I connected personally. I went through numerous topics. During my dissertation period, my laptop crashed and I had to make use of an old and outdated version. Luckily I had always used cloud computing to save my documents. Writing twenty thousand words proved to be a challenge in itself but the journey was very motivating.

To complete my dissertation in 12 weeks was a very short span of time to collect profound data, The researcher had to be very specific and time allotment was a big challenge.

Accessibility of secondary data seemed perilous due to confidentiality issues. Some of the articles were restricted in the college library site. Data became hard to access.
7.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the author would like to thank you for reading this dissertation and for your time. This dissertation, is a study of detailed knowledge about content marketing on social media and its impact on customer engagement, for fitness industries in Ireland.
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