Evaluating the Impact of Social Networking Sites on an Organisations Communication Strategy

The Case Study of Improper Butter

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in (MSc) in Marketing- Digital Media

Grace Peacock
The following Declaration must be included –

Declaration: I, _______________________, 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: ______________________________

Date: ________________________________
Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many different people:

I would like to open this section of acknowledgement with a thought of gratitude to my supervisor Mr. John Staunton. He was a huge part of my support system while undertaking my dissertation. John provided me with confidence in my own academic abilities which I never had before and always provided me with words of encouragement. His advice and guidance during this tortuous dissertation has allowed me to complete my work. He provided me important suggestions, improving the dissertation’s framework with the final aim of delivering a high quality piece of work that I am proud of.

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Abstract

The following is brief abstract of my dissertation:

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of social networking sites on an organisations communication strategy, an Irish Butter company based in Dublin (Improper Butter). The research aims to highlight the potential social media has for the organisation.

**Methodology:** For the purpose of this thesis, a case study methodology was chosen. The data analysis is based on feedback from an in-depth interview with the co-founder of the company and two focus groups with members of the target market. The overall research approach is deductive in nature, as its main aim is to explore the previously researched phenomena’s from a new and a different perspective based on the literature review of this research.

**Results:** The findings of this study show the potential for market growth by implementing a structured communication strategy in order to gain a competitive advantage. This study has shown that social media has a huge impact of the case companies communication strategy. Social media is currently the main method of communication for the company and from this research, it has become evident, that if the company strategically use each platform they can reach a large portion of their target market.
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1. Introduction

This research aims to understand how consumers feel about brand communication online, and to discover how social media is impacting on the organisations current communication strategy. The analysis will be based on relevant framework developed from the analysis of the theories of communication and engagement. The data analysis is based on feedback from qualitative interviews conducted with the organisations co-founder and also two focus groups consisting of members of the target market. The research will be reinforced throughout with the appropriate literature and models.

1.1 Background of the Study

Since its emergence, social media, especially social networking sites, have introduced radically new means of interaction and engagement between customers and brands. This new form of engagement in social media opens up many new opportunities for brands to extract value from existing and potential customers. Even though liking and commenting are two common types of behaviour on social networking sites and are a critical for brands overall social media engagement strategies, academic research on this topic has been quite scarce. According to Campbell et al (2013), the first experience of social networking was My Space in 2003; the users for the first time could fully customize their profile and interact with their friends. However, was Facebook in 2004 that revolutionized the philosophy behind social media, used not only as platforms to know new people but also to create interaction and exchanges of opinions among them. Everyone has a network of people and Facebook allowed, through the creation of a connection with personal or professional contacts on the web, sharing with them different contents (photos, videos, articles, web pages...)

At present there are 7 billion people in the world and 3 billion of those are internet users according to the internet world stats. As of the second quarter of 2016, Facebook had 1.71
billion monthly active users, As of June 2016 the mainly mobile photo sharing network Instagram had reach 500 million monthly active users while as of the second quarter of 2016, the microblogging service Twitter averaged at 313 million monthly active users (statista.com). These statistics demonstrate the importance of social media to marketers and how the future in digital marketing is growing in importance. According to a report conducted by Mintel, Advertisers across the globe are expected to spend up to $23.68 billion (€21.1 billion) on paid media on social networking sites in 2015 with Western Europe accounting for around 20% of worldwide spending.

Customer engagement is defined as “behaviors that go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (van Doorn et al.,2010, p. 254). Since consumer engagement was recognized as a key research priority of the Marketing Science Institute there has been an increasing interest in understanding consumer activity and engagement in social media (Bolton, 2011, p. 272).

Social Networking Sites are able to offer a presence on the internet that is engaging, relevant and behavior oriented, while also transforming online activity from a more individual experience to a more community oriented one (Gironda and Korgaonkar 2014 p.570). Using social media, organizations can forge relationships with existing as well as new customers and form communities that interactively collaborate to identify problems and develop solutions for them. These interactions change the traditional roles of both seller and customer in exchange relationships (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2014 p.329).

**Problem Discussion**

With the use of social media on the rise organizations are interested in understanding consumer behavior on social networking sites. The case company Improper Butter is currently in the start up phase, one of their main objectives is to increase brand aware. This research aimed is to highlight the importance and showcase the benefits of managing social media channels efficiently to the case company
1.2 Research Area, Research Questions and Objectives:

The objective of this study is to analyze the communication strategy applied by the case company, an Irish butter company based in Dublin (Improper Butter). This research aims to evaluate the impact of social networking sites on the organizations communication strategy. The chosen social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Therefore, the research question for this dissertation can be structured as follows:

1. Analyze the traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter
Answering to the above question, allows the researcher to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the current communication strategy of the case company.

2. Evaluate how the stated target market uses the stated Social Networking sites.
The aim of this objective is to discover how the stated social networking sites are being used by the case companies target market, It will be important to understand what activities the user is engaging in.

3. Investigate the users feelings in regards to brands on Social Networking Sites
To gain a better understanding of the user, it is important to try understands the users feelings about brands presence on social networking sites.

4. Research how Improper Butter is managing its social media channels and how the company is engaging with its potential consumers;
It will be necessary to gain an understanding of the use of social media by the case company and how they use different channels to target different users.

1.3 Suitability of the Research:

As stated by Saunders et al (2009), the choice of the dissertation topic has to be taken by someone that is capable to work in the chosen area and is excited to explore this area of study to improve their skills or stimulate their imagination, having at the same time a genuine interest in the topic.
1.3.1 Academic Background

The researcher has studied for the last four years in Dublin Business School and received an honors degree in a BA in Marketing. To further her knowledge in this area, she is attending an MSc course at Dublin Business School. She discovered her strong passion for the marketing and social media field thanks to a previous work experience in the hospitality industry.

1.3.2 Professional Background

My previous role within the hospitality industry allowed me to manage various different Social Media accounts which helped with the main objectives of creating brand awareness. The researcher led the organization to the final of 98fm best of Dublin awards 2015 through various different social media campaigns. This experience enabled me to improve my organizational skills as well as my ability to create social media content.

1.3.3 Contribution of the Research

This research aims to evaluate the impact of social networking sites on the organization’s communication strategy. The research aims to highlight the importance and benefits of managing social media channels efficiently to the case company, Improper Butter a start up located in Dublin City Centre.

The dissertation topic subject is very important for the researcher because she aims to work in the social media sector. Through this dissertation, the researcher intends to create a real value for her curriculum vitae. The researcher will try to put in practice her four years background in marketing to create a dissertation for this master’s degree as relevant and interesting as possible.
1.4 Recipients of the research:

The main recipients for this research include:

Dublin Business School
John Staunton: Thesis supervisor
Grace Peacock: The researcher - Full time MSc student at Dublin Business School.
1.5 Research Design

The framework of the dissertation will be structured as follows

Chapter One – Consists of an overall introduction of the dissertation with a brief background of the research topic. It includes the introduction of the case company. Research area, research objectives and questions will be introduced to the reader.

Chapter Two – Literature review based on communication theories. This section includes theories related to the new role of social media and organisation engagement.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology, in which the research explains how the research will be carried out in order to answer the research questions and satisfy the research objectives

Chapter Four – Data Analysis based on qualitative findings from in-depth interview with the co-founder of the organisation and the two focus groups conducted.

Chapter Five – Discussion of the findings the researcher will go through the data collected for the purpose of this dissertation

Chapter Six – Conclusion and recommendations the researcher will focus on the final recommendations drawing conclusions
2.1 Introduction:

In the following chapter the researcher critically assesses the available literature on and around the research topic along with various studies that have been carried out previously and are relevant to this research. The researcher is presenting an overview of the fundamental changes that is occurring in the communication fields due to the technological revolution that is impacting hugely on traditional marketing. The researcher, in this literature review section, will go through the communication process analyzing its strengths and weaknesses and highlight various different communication models which are now gaining importance to marketers. After that, the researcher will focus the attention on the new link between brand and customer created throughout the social media platforms. This passage is necessary to fully understand the development of the classical communication model to a new a social communication.

2.2 Communication Strategy

2.2.1 Basic Model of Communication

Communication has been defined as the passing of information, the exchange of ideas, or the process of establishing s commonness or oneness of thought between the sender and receiver (Belch and Belch 2014 p.143).
Holm (2006) defines the communication process as intentional; a deliberate effort is made to bring about a response. It is a transaction, and the participants are all involved in a symbolic interaction, in which words, pictures and other stimuli are used to convey thoughts. Belch (2014) goes on to describe the communication process as very complex and success depends on such factors as the nature of the message, the audience interpretation of it, and the environment in which its received.

The marketing communications industry has entered a critical time as a result of rapid changes in the technological and the media landscapes (Kitchen, 2003; Holm, 2004). Over time a basic model of communication has been used to explain how the communication process has evolved. Schramm (1955) developed what is now the accepted as the basic model of mass communications (Fill and Turnbull 2016 p.41.)

![Basic Model of Communication](image)

Kitchen J (1993) notes that the communication process recognizes that business organizations are both senders and receivers of the message. As senders, business organizations attempt to inform, persuade, remind and induce target market(s) to adopt courses of action compatible with an organization’s need to create exchanges that satisfy objectives. Belch (2016) states that the communication process begins when the source selects words, symbols, pictures to represent the message that will be delivered to the
receiver. This process is known as encoding which involves putting thought ideas or information into a symbolic form. The encoding process leads to the development of a message that contains the information or meaning the source hopes to convey. Belch (2016) continues by discussing that as receivers, business organizations attune themselves to target market(s) in order to develop appropriate messages, adapt existing messages to changing environmental circumstances and spot emergent communication opportunities. It is also assumed that it is a transactional exchange of symbolic meaning between two or more parties. This means that all actors in the process must share a common view of what the symbols and signs involved actually mean. Holm (2006) believes that this, in turn, requires that senders’ and receivers’ fields of experience, understanding, and prerequisites for interpretation must overlap to some extent. Danaher and Rossiter (2011) believes that senders of messages, have their own preferences, for channels of communication which they use. Thus communication becomes two-way rather than one-way. Danaher and Rossiter, (2011) have also found that previous research demonstrated, that receivers have distinct preferences for the channels, in which, certain types of messages, differing in their uses, are received, and also, for the ways, in which, they can reply to these messages.

Belch (2016) elaborates on the communication model by mentioning that the channel is the method by which the communication travels from the source to the receiver. Decoding is the process of transforming the sender’s message back into thought. This process is heavily influenced by receiver’s frame of reference which refers to the experiences perceptions, attitudes and values he or she brings to the communication situation. The receivers set of reactions after seeing, hearing or reading the message is known as a response. Receivers responses can range from nonobservant actions such as storing information in memory to immediate action. Feedback is the receiver’s communication back to the source on receipt of the message. The last element noise refers to any extraneous factors in the system that can interfere with the process and work against effective communication.

This basic model of communication is a linear model and its components are straightforward, but it’s the quality of the linkages between the various elements in the process that determine whether a communication event will be successful (Fill and Turnbull 2016 p.41). Kitchen (1993) believes that marketing communications are carried out to try
and establish motivation or movement to stimulate customers or audiences into action or to facilitate more favorable perceptions toward companies or brands. Finne and Strandvik, (2012) argue that the traditional communication perspective, with a sender (company) sending a message and a receiver (customer) receiving it, gives a far too narrow picture of what can occur in a customer relationship in terms of communication. The traditional perspective has been criticized because it sees the customer as a passive object. Ozuem et al (2007) also argue that there is a need for conceptualizing marketing communication in the evolving interactive marketplace with the primal task of facilitating understanding in culturally and socially-constructed environments. Ozuem et al (2007) goes on to state as the emerging interactive market space evolves, companies have tended to focus on technological infrastructure with scant regard to the widening agenda for marketing communications. Marketing communication is in need of “reinvention” in respect of its key concepts, methodologies and prevailing procedures to ensure their appropriateness for the evolving global interactive market space (Ozuem et al 2007 p1079)
2.2.2 Communication Mix

Fill and Turnbull (2016) explain that creating a successful marketing communications involves managing various elements according to the needs of the target audience and the goals the campaign seeks to achieve. Luxton et al (2015) also highlights that one critical aspect of building strong brands is the ability of the firm to devise ongoing effective marketing communication strategies that ensure the market sees and hears the brand, thereby enabling the development and sustenance of long-term brand value.

Keller (2001) says that one of the most important changes for marketers over the past 20 years is the increase in the number and diversity of communication options available to marketers to reach consumers. In recent years, the marketing communication environment has experienced:

- The fragmentation of traditional advertising media
- The emergence of new, non-traditional media, promotion, and other communication alternatives.

The multiplication of ways to reach consumers, through traditional and non-traditional media, have forced organizations to move away from a mass communications model and to cope with an increasing number of marketing communication options (Kotler et al., 2005). Information from different media channels all becomes a part of messages about a company and its product and service for consumers. Conflicting messages from different sources can create confused company images in the consumer’s mind (Gabrielli and Balboni, 2010 p276).

The need for systematic integration and coordination of all the messages and communication channels is not merely a theoretic concern, but has become a fundamental issue for marketers (Keller et al., 1998; Keller, 2001). It is important for marketers to understand the collective contribution of all communication, which depends not only on the “main effect” of each activity but also on the “interaction effects” among communication activities (Keller, 2001).

Fill and Turnbull (2016) mention that originally the elements that made up the marketing communication mix were just the tools or disciplines namely advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling. These were mixed together in
various combinations and different degrees of intensity in order to attempt to communicate meaningfully with a target audience.

Fill and Turnbull (2016) go on to further mention that this mix was used at a time when brands were developed through the use of advertising to generate ‘above the line’ mass communication campaigns. People are now motivated and able to develop their own content, be it through text, music or video and consider topics that they can share with friends on virtual networks. Fill and Turnbull (2016) go on to say that more direct and highly targeted, personalized communication activities using direct marketing and the other tools of the mix now predominate. This indicates that in order to reach audiences successfully it is necessary to combine not just the tools but also the content and the messages. In addition to the five principle marketing communication tools, it is necessary to add the media or the means by which advertising and other marketing communication messages are conveyed.

Luxton et al (2015) goes onto state that integrating marketing communications is evolving as a strategic management process that involves the interweaving of activities and procedures crossing traditional departmental boundaries, employing the knowledge and skills of specialists and no specialists alike to bring together all responsibilities for communication. By coordinating these marketing communication efforts, companies can avoid duplication, take advantage of synergy among promotional tools, and develop more efficient and effective marketing communication programs (Belch and Belch p.11 2015)

The move to integrated marketing also reflects an adaption by marketers to a changing environment, particularly with respect to consumers, technology, and media consumption behavior. Schultz (2006) a proponent of integrated marketing communication (IMC), has pointed out the need to take a new approach in order to recognize the customer’s active role in marketing communication. He points out that it is the customer who integrates communication, not the marketer, and that the customer may integrate any communication about the company, not only the planned marketing communication. Marketing communications now includes creating online communities, generating leads from online environments and collaborating with customers to gain a better understanding of their needs (Karjaluoto et al 2015 p703)
2.2.3 Digital Marketing Communication

DMC refers to the use of new digital communication channels (or technologies/tools) to create an integrated, targeted and measurable communication process that helps companies acquire and retain customers while building a deeper relationship with them (Mulhern, 2009). Both business-to-consumer (B2C) and B2B literature identify four main objectives of digital marketing:

1) It increases efficiency of communications (Sharma, 2002; Walters, 2008);
2) It fosters customer relationship communications and interaction (Berthon et al., 1998; Welling and White, 2006);
3) It creates awareness and helps build brands (Karjaluoto et al 2015 p704)
4) It generates sales leads (Karjaluoto et al 2015 p704)

Currently DMC activities consist primarily of traditional marketing communication actions relocated to an electronic environment (Karjaluoto et al 2015 p706). With digital media, it is possible to see what people were saying and to trace that conversation all the way to a final purchase (Fulgoni, G, & Lipsman, A 2015 p18).

Gurău (2008) highlights that the rapid development of the internet in the last ten years has changed the classical communication procedures, because of three specific and co-existent characteristics that differentiate it from any other communication channel:

**Interactivity** - The internet offers multiple possibilities of interactive communication, acting not only as an interface, but also as a communication agent (allowing a direct interaction between individuals and software applications).

**Transparency** - The information published online can be accessed and viewed by any internet user, unless this information is specifically protected.

**Memory** - The web is a channel not only for transmitting information, but also for storing information – in other words, the information published on the web remains in the memory of the network until it is erased.
Gurău, (2008) goes on to say that in comparison with the traditional customer, the internet user has more control over the communication process, and can adopt a more proactive attitude, expressed by the capacity to:

- Easily search, select and access information (using search and meta-search engines, intelligent agents, etc.);
- Contact online organizations or other individuals (using email, chat or discussion forms); and
- Express their opinions/views in a visible and lasting manner (creating and storing online content).

The introduction of digital channels has brought about change in brand communications strategies. (Săvulescu, R 2011 p.19). Social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have become increasingly important in consumers' lives and influence their communication habits. With consumers deeply engaging in social media, an increasing share of communication is occurring in these new environments (Schivinski et al 2016 p.64). Currently social networking sites offer a range of web 2.0 services which enable users to communicate with others, which results in a new communication process (Sanz-Blas et al 2013 p.362). Kavoura (2014) emphasizes the benefits that Social Networking Sites offers the possibility of communication with a group of participants who are willing to respond in a shared social context which has no geographical limits. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have similar beliefs that among traditional sources of communication, social media have been established as mass phenomena with a wide demographic appeal. Facebook for example, enable marketers of companies to access real-time analytics that measure the effectiveness of their advertisements moment by moment. Leveraging these insights, companies and organizations can make decisions about their communication with the public and the topics discussed online (Kavoura, A 2014 p490)

User-generated social media brand communication has gained popularity among consumers as a result of the growth of online brand communities and SNS (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Fill and Turnbill (2016) note that the communication process was developed at a time when broadcast media dominated commercial communication. It no longer provides an accurate representation of the contemporary communications process and fails to accurately represent all forms of communication. Carlson, A et al (2014) argues that traditional
marketing is unsustainable going forward when considering factors such as social media and the internet. Oviedo-García et al (2014) argues that conventional marketing metrics based on a linear form of communication are not appropriate for the Web 2.0 environment. Measurement of such networks poses significant problems for marketing managers, when demonstrating the results of their expenditure.

Internet users are gradually shaping brand communication that was previously controlled and administered by marketers. The traditional one-way communication is now multi-dimensional, two-way and peer-to-peer communication (Berthon et al., 2008). According to Fill and Turnbull (2016) there are two particular influences on the communication process that need to be considered, the influence of the media and the influence of people.

The influence of the media - the media used to convey information has been fragmented drastically as a raft of new media has occurred.

The influence of people - people influence communication process considerably, either as opinion leaders or formers or as participants in the word of mouth process.
2.2.4 The Influencer Communication model

Fill and Turnbill (2016) discuss the influencer model which depicts information flowing via media channels to particular types of people (Opinion Leaders & Opinion Formers) to whom other members of the audience refer for information and guidance. Oviedo-García et al (2014) also notes that Social Networking Sites are changing existing marketing practices at a fundamental level because people are relying more on the members of their own network when making a decision, instead of solely relying on authority figures, experts, the mainstream media and mass advertising. As consumers are influenced by interpersonal communication, there is reason to expect that online communications will influence consumer decisions, especially for search goods (Sonnier, G, et al 2011 p 701)

With their enormous reach and precise targeting capabilities, digital social media can be used by marketers to reach consumers efficiently and effectively with organic and paid
brand communications that subsequently are amplified by influencers both online and offline (Fulgoni, G, & Lipsman, A 2015 p18). Wallace et al (2014) also believes that Social-tie strength is a source of influence on social network, as strong ties influence the flow of brand information within a group and are perceived to have more influence by the group, as well as greater credibility as information sources. Fill and Turnbull (2016) have also mentioned that through interpersonal networks, opinion leaders not only reach members of the target audience who may not have been exposed to the message but may reinforce the message for those who did receive it. This approach indicates that the mass media doesn't have a direct and all powerful effect over their audience.

The influencer approach can be developed into a multi-step model. It proposes that communication involve interaction among all parties to the communication process. The influencer model attempts to account for an individual’s participation in the communication process. A criticism of these models is that they emphasis individuals behavior but exclude any social behavior implicit on the process.
2.2.5 The Interactional Model of Communications

The interactional model of communications attempts to assimilate the variety of influences acting upon the communication process and account for the responses people give to the messages received from people and machines (Fill and Turnbill 2016 p49). Digital Technology has further enabled this interaction process. Interpersonal communication, or word of mouth, is recognized as an influential source of information for consumers (Sonnier et al 2011 p702).

The influencer model is important because it demonstrates the importance of people in the communication process. Successful communications however are often determined by the level of interactivity the communication encourages (Fill and Turnbill 2016 p50). Belch (2015) states that successful communication is accomplished when the marketer selects an appropriate source, develops an effective message or appeal that is encoded properly, and
then selects the channels or media that will best reach that target market so that the message can be effectively decoded and delivered.

According to Ashley C (2015) brands may utilize social media marketing as an integrated component in a marketing communications campaign, as an ongoing corporate communications channel, and/or as a series of micro-campaigns specifically designed for digital exposure. Parson (2013) highlights the importance of having a communication strategy for each social media tool used, to develop a style, to find a balance between selling and talking, to update content, and to discriminate between what information should appear on the website and what information should appear in social media. Kaplan & Heinlein (2010) recommend that companies should strive to be active, interesting, humble, less formal, and honest in social media. From a corporate perspective, social media presents both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity. Challenges with communicating on social networking sites include getting the consumer involved, giving the consumer a reason to participate, listening to the customer, resisting the temptation to focus primarily on selling, giving up control, and not being afraid to experiment (Parsons, A 2013, p. 29). Social media is not just another channel for distributing corporate information or an add-on to a firm’s current media offerings because it allows consumers to interact and participate with companies and brands and allows them to share their opinions with others which helps to influence corporate reputations (Parsons, A 2013 p.28).
2.3 Engagement

2.3.1 Social Media Engagement

Customer engagement has entered the lexicon of managers in private as well as public sector enterprises in the last few years as a concept that is critical to the success of their organizations. Its rise in the consciousness of managers has paralleled the emergence of new technologies and tools that enable greater interactivity among individuals and organisations (Sashi, 2012 p255).

Customer engagement recognizes that consumers carry out a number of firm-related behaviors of which many did not exist a decade ago and that may have both positive and negative consequences (e.g. positive versus negative reviews) for the firm (Gummerus et al 2012 p.858). Consequences of customers’ engagement that have been proposed are, for example, trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty (Gummerus et al 2012 p.858). Sashi, (2012) mentions similar points to Gummerus (2012) explaining that consumer engagement facilitates the establishment and maintenance of trust and commitment which drives the consumer to stay engaged with a brand or company.

Consumers' interests in brands on the Internet began in the 1990s, when people started using bulletin boards on sites such as Yahoo and AOL to share their preferences for and opinions about products (Schivinski et al 2015 p.65). Consumers increasingly use social media not only to research products and services, but also to engage with the companies they purchase from, as well as other consumers who may have valuable insights about these companies (Garrison, 2008). One of the most popular forums in which customers engage behaviorally with firms is social media, referring to “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

A key aspect of what makes social media marketing different from other forms of traditional advertising is that social media marketing has greater potential to build strong relationships (Carlton, M 2011). Since consumer engagement was recognized as a key research priority of the Marketing Science Institute there has been an increasing interest in understanding consumer activity and engagement in social media (Bolton, 2011, p. 272).
Participation may be passive involving simply consuming the social content or active including such behaviors as submitting consumer-generated stories (Ashley, C 2015 p.17), Ashley (2015) then goes on to state that in order to provide the content that engages consumers online, marketers must understand consumers’ motivations for interacting with brands on Social Networking Sites, 60% of people on social networks sites either write a review or share an existing review with friends. Consumers are using reviews on social media sites to reduce their cognitive costs in purchasing decisions (Taken Smith, K, et al 2015 p.129). In this new environment, achieving consumer engagement is critical for brands to fight against increasing consumer immunity from and skepticism toward traditional commercial media (Kabadayi and Price p.204 2013).Kabadayi and Price (2013) go onto explain that this new form of engagement in social media opens up many new opportunities for brands to extract value from existing and potential consumers. They can now receive feedback and suggestions more easily from their consumers through these social networking sites, allowing them to respond to their consumers, enhance their offerings, handle problems and provide better service. Chen and Xie (2004) argue that online consumer reviews, a type of product information created by users based on personal usage experience, can serve as a new element of marketing communications mix and work as free “sales assistants” to help consumers identify the products that best match their idiosyncratic usage conditions. Chen and Xie (2004) go onto state that consumer-created information is likely to be more credible than seller-created information because credibility of information is often positively related to the trustworthiness of the information source. Consumer-created review information can differ from seller-created information in the degree of relevance to consumers. Consumer-created information is likely to be more relevant to consumers than seller-created information (Bickart and Schindler 2001)

Harris & Rae, (2009) believe that understanding the role of relationships in the social media context is important because the goal of an online social media campaign is to create sustained engagement with the consumer .Logan (2014) highlights that consumers were more likely to engage with organizations and corporations that provided incentives such as discounts or other special offers. Logan (2014) also found that Millennial’s were more likely to engage with organizations and corporations on social media if they were already engaged with the organisation offline.
Social brand engagement is a meaningful connection, creation and communication between one consumer and one or more other consumers (Kozinets, RV 2014 pg. 10). Bunker (2013) explains that in a Facebook setting, people become engaged with companies when they choose to receive updates on their message board, commonly referred to as a "newsfeed." The idea is that as consumers receive these updates, they engage in more elaborate, extensive thoughts about that particular company. The more involved a customer is in regards to product or company, the less the perceived risk when purchasing from that company, and theoretically the more satisfied the customer is with a company or product (Bunker, M 2013 p.24) Oviedo-García et al (2014) believes that interactions are the means to achieve engagement, the outcome of stakeholder participation with products, services and activities (configurations of value) of the firm. Those interactions would not take place, without the existence of client participation and involvement, these interaction strongly influences their consumer purchase decisions, even more so than the advertising of the firm. Sashi (2012) notes that the measurement methods of customer engagement used by companies include sales volume, customer satisfaction and frequency of visits to a website. Pin Luarn Yu-Fan Lin Yu-Ping Chiu, (2015) elaborate on Sashi findings by highlighting that with online platforms, online engagement is quantified using measures such as click-through rates and page views.
2.3.2 The customer engagement cycle

Sashi (2012) has suggested that customer engagement focuses on satisfying customers by providing superior value than competitors to build trust and commitment in long-term relationships. Engaged customers become partners who collaborate with sellers in the value adding process to better satisfy their needs as well as the needs of other customers. Sashi (2012) believes that the interactivity of social media greatly facilitates the process of establishing enduring intimate relationships with trust and commitment between sellers and buyers. Customer engagement is turning on customers by building emotional bonds in relational exchanges with them. The process of building customer engagement constitutes a customer engagement cycle.

Sashi (2012) proposes that the stages of the customer engagement cycle are connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement.

![Customer Engagement Cycle](image-url)
**Connection**

Sashi (2012) describes the connection stage as the prerequisite for establishing relational exchange with emotional bonds is for sellers and customers to connect with each other. The connections may be established using both traditional offline methods like salespersons and new digital online methods like social networking. Sashi (2012) goes onto say that social media greatly facilitate the establishment of connections with a large number and wide variety of individuals and firms. Customers may use existing connections with sellers and other customers to satisfy a need or they may seek new connections with sellers and customers outside their current circle.

**Interaction**

Once connected the customer can interact with seller personnel and other customers. Interactions among sellers and their customers can improve understanding of customer needs, especially changes in these needs over time, and facilitate modifications to existing products or the development of new products to better satisfy these needs (Sashi 2012 p.261). Social interaction in virtual worlds, for example, where users communicate and interact in real time can be used to connect with customers, provide information and experiences, and obtain customer input (Tikkanen et al 2009 p1360). Interaction between seller and customer is becoming the locus of value creation and value extraction (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004 p 7). The internet allows sellers to establish a continuing dialogue with customers, tap into knowledge shared among groups of customers with shared interests, and extend the reach and scope of customer interactions to reach competitors’ or prospective customers (Sawhney et al., 2005)

**Satisfaction**

According to Sashi (2012) only if interactions between a seller and a customer, or among the members of a community including seller and customers result in satisfaction will they stay connected and continue to interact with one another and progress towards engagement. Sashi (2012) then goes on to say that satisfaction with interactions during a purchase process may precede or follow the purchase and dissatisfaction at any stage can disrupt the
process and result in customer exit. Satisfaction, however, may not result in repurchases and a long-term relationship may not ensue.

**Retention**

Customer retention can result from either overall satisfaction over time or highly positive emotions. Overall satisfaction over time emerges as a result of repurchases and implies a long-term relationship between seller and customer but not necessarily highly positive emotions for each other (Sashi 2012 p.262)

**Commitment**

Commitment in a relationship has two major dimensions: affective commitment and calculative commitment (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Calculative commitment is more rational and results from a lack of choice or switching costs. Calculative commitment leads to higher levels of customer loyalty and enduring relationships with sellers. Affective commitment is more emotional and results from the trust and reciprocity in a relationship. Customer loyalty may be considered the result of calculative commitment to a product, brand, or company while customer delight is the result of affective commitment to a product, brand, or company. If customers are loyal as well as delighted, that is, customer commitment to a seller encompasses both calculative and affective commitment, then the customer and seller are in an enduring relational exchange with strong emotional bonds (Sashi 2012 p263).

**Advocacy**

Delighted customers may keep their delight to themselves or in a connected world interact with others in their social networks to spread the word about their positive experiences with a product, brand, or company. Loyal customers lacking an emotional bond to the seller they regularly patronize may not offer unsolicited encomiums about the product, brand, or company to others despite their enduring relationships with the seller or they may offer recommendations when presented with the opportunity to do so on a purely rational basis free of emotional attachment (Sashi 2012 p.264).
Urban (2004) suggests that digital technologies like the internet have shifted the emphasis from relationship marketing with its slogans like “customer care” and “delight your customer” to acting in the customers’ best interests and becoming advocates for them.

**Engagement**
Sashi (2012) mention that when delighted or loyal customers share their delight or loyalty in interactions with others in their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand, or company, the foundation has been laid for proceeding to the next and perhaps most important step in the cycle, customer engagement. Both customer delight and customer loyalty are necessary for customer engagement. Customer engagement expands the role of customers by including them in the value adding process as co-creators of value (Sashi 2012 p 265). The inclusion of customers in the creation of value enhances satisfaction of the needs of customers as well as sellers, especially as these needs change over time.
2.4 Social Media

2.4.1 Social Networking Sites

The rise of social media has not only changed the internet as we know it, but has also dramatically changed the way people communicate and interact (Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014 p571). As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media are “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Communication using social networking has become imperative in marketing with the development and increasing popularity of social media (Carlson, A, & Lee, C 2015 p.82). Marketers have recognized these opportunities and are increasingly engaging this concept as part of their marketing strategy (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2013 p.329). The shift toward social media can be explained by several factors (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2013 p.331):

- Declining response rates. Consumers increasingly ignore conventional online marketing such as banner and e-mail advertisements due to disinterest and spam.
- Technology developments. The developing IT infrastructures, new tools, and an increasing online population contribute to social media attractiveness.
- Demographic shifts. People, especially young individuals, have moved online and the use of traditional media channels has declined.
- Customer preference. Trust is important on the internet and people trust their friends and other internet users more than companies.
- Low cost. A viral campaign can produce many more engaged customers than a television campaign at a much lower cost.

Sävulescu (2011) also argues similar points stating that the growth of social networks has changed consumers because they have been empowered and have become more critical, more skeptical, but at the same time they are eager to receive information and contribute. Straker et al (2015) believes that the increased use of a variety of digital channels has led to customers expecting to being able to interact with a company at all times. These customers are referred to as the always on customer, likely to search, enquire, interact, complain, buy and pay through digital channels.
In recent years, more consumers have been using different types of social media to search for information that influences their purchasing decisions (Look, and Yongjun 2011 p.6) Through social media, people can know about a new product, read different reviews of actual clients but also post different comments, questions and experiences regarding companies and brands (Mamic and Almaraz 2013 p.852). Mamic and Almaraz (2013) go on to mention that companies need to work on their social media presence, but most importantly they need to work on their online communication strategies. Being audience focused can really help to build up a network of friends and followers with whom companies can maintain a real-time contact and create long-term and supportive relationships (Mamic and Almaraz 2013 p.853)

The rise of social-media platforms—including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, LinkedIn, and Pinterest—has created a digitally enabled way for people to share what matters to them (Fulgoni, 2014 p.20). The brands through blogging and social media engage more and more customers by interacting with them in person and sharing content. The content’s optimization of the various brands on social media platforms as highlighted by Lipsman, et al (2012) can be useful to reach consumers in strategic ways. Interacting with brand social content already is mainstream

Social media has its own tiers of engagement. And, sharing a response to brand content—a step up from a simple post level “Likes”—is much harder to elicit from consumers. Though the volume may seem impressive (3.2 billion shares of brand content on Facebook and 1 billion re-Tweets), such activity represented just 7 percent of all social-engagement activity by brands from January to October 2015 (Yuki 2015 p.3).

Yuki (2015) then goes on to say that taking the step up to sharing is highly valued by marketers. It demonstrates additional earned (“free”) impressions on consumers’ own social-network newsfeed. Moreover, it extends the reach of social posts beyond people who already have indicated an interest in the brand. Additionally, many brand stewards place a premium placed on sharing, as it involves a personal “endorsement” or recommendation (Wallace et al 2008 p.128) that can carry far more peer influence than a simply postlevel “Like.” Logan (2014) elaborates on this point by saying that currently social media campaigns are measured on the basis of “likes/pins,” “click-throughs,” “views,” and “shares/reposts. These metrics are analogous to the measures used to assess broadcast media audience size. While measures of site traffic certainly provide a means to compare audience
size across media, they will not provide insight regarding the advantages of social media compared to other, traditional media alternatives in terms of message effectiveness. "People aren't searching for stuff anymore, they're discovering content," Couchman the head of agency relations at Facebook stated. Social media is allowing marketers to uncover deep drivers and customer connections, which allow for greater planning and understanding of their target markets.

Technology, in the form of social media, enables organisations and sales professionals to perform sales-related tasks with increased access to customer information as well as new stakeholders (Rodriguez et al 2016 p.368).

Sashi (2012) highlights a similar point to Alba and Stay (2008) stating that social media with its ability to facilitate relationships may help realise the promise of the marketing concept, market orientation, and relationship marketing by providing the tools to better satisfy customers and build customer engagement. Alba and Stay (2008) have presented several reasons why this specific social network continues to grow in popularity and also becomes extremely interesting for marketers:

1. It possesses a significant user base.
2. Users spend considerable time on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter due to its functionality and entertainment value.
3. It continuously introduces new, enticing features (news feed, platform for developers, applications, mobile products).

According Bruhn et al (2012) consumers now regard social media as a more trustworthy source of information than the traditional instruments of marketing communications used by companies. If marketers can develop a more comprehensive awareness of consumers’ social networking site activity intentions, and behaviours, they may be able to use these insights in the development and implementation of more effective advertisements, business’s SNS pages and other marketing tools in order to better serve, attract and retain customers (Gironda, & Korgaonkar, 2014 p.572)
2.4.2 Facebook

Facebook: an online social networking service. Users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organised by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics (Facebook, 2013). After its launch in 2004 as a site designed to connect students on college campuses, Facebook extended its reach by allowing commercial organisations to create pages. These brand pages allow enterprises and celebrities to interact with community members and thereby enhance the brand visibility to and the loyalty of these people (Pin Luarn Yu-Fan Lin Yu-Ping Chiu, 2015 p.505). Pin Luarn Yu-Fan Lin Yu-Ping Chiu (2015) goes on to mention that information on brand pages is shared in the form of posts and appears in the central part of the page known as the timeline, users who are fans of brand pages can see posts and engage with them by liking, sharing and commenting. Brands constantly seek ways to leverage social media as a channel of communication to reach a large network of consumers (Kabdayi and Price 2013 p.206). Content shared via social media not only connects individuals to other individuals, groups, organizations, and interests, but also creates a platform for all stakeholders to have a business conversation (Rodriguez et al 2016 p.367).

Thus, interest in (or liking of) a product becomes public knowledge (Coulter and Roggeveen 2012 p.879). The image of a firm and its reputation is, at present, formed to a great extent by “likes”, “posts” and “tweets” from individuals connected through social media (Oviedo-García et al 2014 p.328).

Facebook allows marketers to plan and understand their target markets with greater expertise, and possibly uncover markets they didn’t know they could capture. Growth has been accelerated due to the ease of communication on both ends (Alba and Stay 2008). Sashi (2012) highlights a similar point to Alba and Stay (2008) stating that social media with its ability to facilitate relationships may help realise the promise of the marketing concept, market orientation, and relationship marketing by providing the tools to better satisfy customers and build customer engagement.
Gummerus et al., 2012 have noted that Facebook brand pages have become a major channel through which consumers are able to interact with brands in a direct way by liking and/or commenting on brands’ posts and messages. From a brand management perspective, its attraction comes from the fact that Facebook allows companies to create their own brand page where they can post pictures, links and make comments to engage their visitors, including current and potential consumers (Gummerus et al., 2012). In return, consumers respond to these efforts by liking and/or commenting on those posts and messages. These activities strengthen the bonds that consumers have with companies by turning them into engaged fans (Wallace et al., 2012).

Sanz-Bla et al (2014) believes that it is important for companies to pay attention to content, ensuring that it is always of interest, regularly updated and well organised so that users can locate, identify and access the content quickly and easily. It is very important for people to feel comfortable with the information search and exchange and to participate (Sanz-Bla et al p374 2014). SNSs are particularly suited for collecting information/ feedback from customers, due to their non-transactional nature, initiating two-way conversations with customers and developing relationships with customers through communication and interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Companies must keep in mind their strategic goals when making decisions to be establish a presence in social media and avoid creating a Facebook page just because everyone else has one without first determining strategically why these moves might be effective for the organisation and what goals the organisation wants to achieve (Parsons, A 2013 p.29).

Kietzmann et al (2011) developed a framework consisting of seven building blocks, these blocks are constructs designed to enable insight into different levels of social media functionality which in turn can help an organisation develop more effective configurations and use of social media. The blocks consist of identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups.
Figure 5 Kietzmann et al (2011) Building Blocks

Each block allows us to unpack and examine
1. a specific facet of social media user experience,
2. Its implications for firms.

These building blocks are neither mutually exclusive, nor do they all have to be present in a social media activity. Having identified the blocks Kietzmann et al (2011) recommend that
By analysing the seven building blocks–firms can monitor and understand how social media
activities vary in terms of their function and impact, so as to develop a congruent social media strategy based on the appropriate balance of building blocks for their community. Taken Smith K (2015) states that a significant 88% of marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their business. Recently, Facebook implemented policy changes to filter out unpaid promotional material in users’ news feeds that businesses post as status updates. This policy change makes it difficult for businesses to reach their Facebook “fans” with marketing content that is not paid for (Loten, Janofsky, and Albergotti 2014). Earned-media impressions on Facebook have the potential to reach consumers and influence their behaviours (Fulgoni, G, & Lipsman, A p19 2015).

A comprehensive and recent study of the 2,000 most-shared U.S. Facebook posts created by brands and publishers over a 12-month period across several brand categories revealed a number of emerging trends that, Yuki (2015) believes, this study may work to the advantage of marketing practitioners. Among the trends are the following:
Content that makes the sharer “look good” was the strongest driver (52 percent) across all respondents.
Findings from the study revealed that “happiness” is the most significant emotion to evoke when crafting content made for sharing.
Women most likely identified “Usefulness” as a driver in the most-shared content. Among all the examined drivers, content that contained something “useful” or of “practical value—i.e., tips, recipes, discounts, etc.—was identified as being most significant across all posts.
Among 18- to 35-year-old online consumers, Storytelling was not a significant driver, although this attribute did appear for highly shared posts that encouraged audience members to tell their own story rather than pass along a brand story. Storytelling overall became significant among people over the age of 35.
Generally, if users actively support content, by providing their input they indicate high involvement. This is a strong argument for the likelihood of a high level of elaboration and, therefore, a potentially strong impact on short-term sales. Chatterjee (2011) found, for example, that consumers were more likely to respond to brand postings on their friends’ social network sites if the posting was generated by their friend rather than by the brand. People who had not visited the brand page before were more likely to click on the brand link posted on a friend’s site. Therefore, Chatterjee (2011) believes that the friend’s posting
successfully generated brand response among less involved consumers. In an online environment customer loyalty is usually lower than in traditional environments. Individuals have a wide range of fan pages with different information and products/services from which to choose and they can change from one fan page to another with just one click (Sanz-Bla et al 2014 p363)

A further challenge for organisations is to integrate the existing strategies used by the corporation into the communication package. Message consistency across different media used should be high on the agenda (Strategic Direction, Vol. 31 Iss 4). Parsons (2013) also believes that due to Facebook’s interactive nature, opportunities are available for companies to generate feedback from their consumers that can be helpful in product development, advertising campaign development, and marketing research. According to figures from eMarketer, global social network ad revenues are projected to grow by 33.5% with Facebook dominating the market. With the dramatic change in the media landscape in recent years, firms have embraced social media as a means to engage with their customers. (Kumar, A et al 2016 p 7).

Wallace (2014) also goes onto to say that online engagement on Facebook can be measured through clicks, likes, comments and sharing the information. Oviedo-García et al (2014) believes that any measure of engagement in Facebook should take into consideration the actions of individuals that respond to (interact with) the stimuli that are presented to them, through participation, in relation to the total number of users to whom those contents have been displayed. Individuals need to have an interest in some aspect related to the brand, product, service and organisation for that participation to take place and for it to generate interactions.
2.4.3 Instagram

Since launching in 2010, Instagram – a platform for sharing photos and videos – has attracted 200 million monthly active users, alongside catching the eye of Facebook, which acquired the fledgling firm for $1 billion in 2012. Instagram is a photo and video-sharing platform as well as a social networking channel that allows users to take and share photos after applying a choice of digital filters to their pictures via an Instagram smartphone app. The resulting images are easily shared on other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (Guidry et al 2015 p 347). Instagram has been growing rapidly, reaching 150 million monthly active users (Crook, 2013) who are on a daily average posting 55 million photos and contributing 1.2 billion “likes” to the platform (Dora, 2013). Based on a study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2013). According to the study, “Instagram and Twitter have a significantly smaller number of users than Facebook does, but users of these sites also tend to visit them frequently.

In September 2015 Instagram began selling ads to brands of any size in more than 30 countries and has introduced a number of new advertising formats, including ‘marquee’ ads, which offer brands high-profile slots, and landscape photos and videos (Vizard 2016 p8). Vizard (2016) goes on to mention that Instagram, like Facebook and Twitter, still ostensibly pitches itself as a complement to TV, rather than a competitor. Jim Squires, Instagram's director/market operations, told delegates at the Advertising Age Digital Conference 2014 that a characteristic Instagram shares with the most striking television and print ads is its ability to capture the attention of consumers with visuals which encapsulate moments, emotions and powerful messages. Instagram has also become an asset to brands as a research tool, a showcase for their products, and a means to more closely connect with a very visually engaged community of potential customers. Not only is the app providing them with an often very personal glimpse into the lives of customers, but Instagrammers are creating the aspirational, authentic and inspired content that brands now want (Wilson 2014 p.55). Navigator (2013) sees Instagram as an effective way to build brands and increase customer loyalty. Especially the food industry is seen as a sector that can benefit from visual social media messages like Instagram posts. Guidry et al (2015) also mention that visual images tend to be more
engaging than text alone and the food industry is seen as one of the primary industries to benefit from the visual nature of Instagram

Instagram plans to add a Shop Now button on its site, while Facebook, Twitter have offered buy buttons on their networks for some time (Smilansky 2015 p16). Smilansky (2015) goes on the say that embedding buy buttons into these platforms can help companies determine the payoff from investments they make on various social channels. Forrester Research in April 2014 found that Instagram delivered 58 times more engagement to brands per follower than Facebook and 120 times more engagement per follower than Twitter (Klie 2015 p15). Klie (2015) goes on to mention that Instagram is different from other social media sites in several ways. For one, Instagram users tend to be a little more selective in what they post. And because it is entirely visual, Instagram allows brands to do a lot more. “Marketers can use Instagram to publish their own photos and videos, but also to highlight what consumers are doing with their products.”
2.4.4 Twitter

According to Mamic and Almaraz (2013) Twitter is one of the best social tools for empowering brands to connect with customers, since micro-messages are easy to craft and consume. Mamic and Almaraz (2013) go on to describe Twitter as a popular micro-messaging service that was launched in 2006; it allows users to share a message of up to 140 characters. The message is referred to as a ‘tweet’; Twitter prompts users to share tweets by addressing the question ‘What is happening?. A re-Tweet happens when a user decides to republish a message received from either an individual or a company. By republishing the message, the user passes it along to her or his own followers on Twitter (Araujo et al 2015 p285) By following other users, people automatically receive messages on their own Twitter home pages tweeted by those whom they are following. Even though some Twitter accounts are kept private, and some users require that they offer approval to people who wish to follow them, messages exchanged on this microblog are public by default, unlike status updates often restricted on SNSs such as Facebook (Sook and Yongjun 2013 p5).

As a real-time information network, Twitter connects consumers to the latest information about topics they find relevant and interesting (see Twitter.com). The platform seems to be a useful channel through which organisations can prompt dialogue since Twitter gives users the possibility to respond to one another and make the communication roles interchangeable. The structural and interactive features of Twitter, as opposed to those of a traditional corporate website, foster ongoing conversations between marketers and consumers for all three stages of the marketing process: prepurchase (i.e., marketing research), purchase (i.e., sales promotions), and postpurchase (i.e., customer services) (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Heaps (2009) also indicates that distributing information through Twitter can increase traffic to company websites, which eventually allows the companies to "tell their story" better and connect at a deeper level through more detailed content and information about events and alerts.
Logan (2014) mentions another use for twitter as it has the ability to provide users with unprecedented access to influencers across many markets, including celebrities and thought leaders in various industries. Twitter introduced a new feature which allows companies to advertise to consumers based in certain postcodes in order to better cater to their target audience (Mintel 2015).

2.4.5 Comparisons of Social Networking Sites

When comparing determinants of Twitter and Facebook use, Lee and Cho (2011) found that use of Facebook was more influenced by social factors than Twitter. According to Sook and Yongjun (2011) there is one main difference between Facebook and Twitter users. Facebook users connect with their friends and by becoming friends with other users, they gain access to their friends' content and can post information about personal issues, send birthday wishes, or comment on status updates. Twitter users instead share observations on their surroundings, information about an event, or opinions regarding a certain topic. Logan (2014) Twitter was the most likely social media to feature prominent branding but generated less positive content about the brands compared to Facebook. Logan (2014) then goes on to mention industry research indicates that consumers follow brands on Facebook and Twitter in order to receive discounts and promotions.

2.5 Conclusion

After conducting a literature review it is possible to underline the fundamental changes happening in social media marketing due to the technology revolution that is currently happening. The new links created between brands and social media platforms maybe a key to success for organisations who wish to broaden their target market.
3. Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology Introduction

In the following chapter the researcher will describe the structure of the methodology that has been applied for this case study. The researcher will detail the explanation and justification of the research philosophy chosen, the research approach used and the research strategy planned to produce at the end of the study. Furthermore, the researcher will describe the methods chosen to collect data and to analyze the data, the ethical issues that the researcher faced. Finally the end of this chapter will highlight the limitations of this research. In order to follow the most appropriate structure for this research, the researcher has consulted Saunders research onion

Figure 6 Saunders Research Onion
3.2.1 Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al (2012) the layers of research onion consists of three different ways of thinking about the research philosophy. The positivist philosophy, the realist philosophy and the interpretivist philosophy.

The positivist philosophy - can also be called the scientific approach, positivism employs the use of existing theory to develop hypotheses which are then tested and either confirmed or denied. The assumption is that ‘the researcher is value neutral, although absolutist claims that the outcomes totally objective and unquestionable certain are rarely made (Saunders et al 2012 p.135). Positivists believe that the only valid data are quantitative data. A positive research is based on statistics and a structured methodology.

The realist philosophy - this philosophy is a mix between the interpretivism and the positivism philosophy. According to Saunders et al (2012) the essence of realism is that what we sense is reality, that objects have an existence independent of the human mind. Essentially the realist theory shows us that there is a reality beyond the structured thinking of the positivist mind.

The interpretivist philosophy - Recognizes that people are all different and interpret different situations differently. According to Saunders et al (2012) interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors. It emphasizes the difference between conducting research among people rather than about objects such as computers. There is an understanding that the own biases and backgrounds influence their judgment of a person or situation.

The research philosophy I am interested in for this particular research is interpretivism as I am trying to evaluating the impact of social networking sites on the selected case’s communication strategy. Therefore, in this research the qualitative research methodology will be adopted in order to collect primary research data, as qualitative research is generally associated with interpretive philosophy. Qualitative is generally interpretive because the researcher need to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied (Sauders et al p163 2012). Social media is a relatively recent and rapidly developing environment for which both academics and
companies have yet no solid knowledge. For these reasons, qualitative exploratory methodology was used to fulfill the needs of the present study.
3.2.2 Research Approach

Saunders et al (2012) states that there are two central types of research approach:

Deduction theory - The testing theory - The deductive approach involves beginning with a theory, developing hypotheses from that theory, and then collecting and analysing data to test the hypotheses. Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) describes the occurrence of deductive reasoning as when the conclusion is derived logically from a set of premises, the conclusion being true when all the premises are true.

Inductive theory - It involves a researcher starting with a set of observations and then moving from those particular experiences to a more general set of propositions about has anhthe experiences. Saunders et al (2012) discusses inductive reasoning as having a gap in the logical argument between the conclusion and the premises observed, the conclusion being ‘judged’ to be supported by the observations made.

For the purpose of this research proposal, I am choosing the deductive research approach as this study proposes to test the theories that have been identified and developed in the literature review through qualitative research. It is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences. It is important that the research is structured in methodology and most important is reliable.
3.2.3 Research Strategy

As it is possible to observe from Saunders research onion, there are various research strategies that can be selected

- Action research
- Grounded theory
  - Surveys
  - Case study
- Experiments
- Ethnography
- Archival research

The choice of the appropriate research strategy is essential for the researcher to properly address the research questions and objectives stated. The research strategy selected is a case study as the central strategy for this particular study, the use of a case study will then provide answer to the main research question. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Cameron and Price p302 2009). Cameron and Price (2009) believe that a case study approach is directed towards understanding a specific issue, this may mean that the researcher is looking at an issue within a single organization. The use of a case study approach will be useful as this research project requires gathering data from different sources such as the case company and also social media users which will contribute to answering specific research questions in context to the overall research.
3.2.4 Case Selection

The chosen company for this case study is an Irish butter company, Improper Butter. The researcher has chosen Improper Butter as case company for this study as they are currently in the startup phase. The organization is trying to gain market share within the highly competitive butter industry within Ireland. Improper butters unique selling point is there flavored butter range which currently consists of four different flavours with the garlic and herb butter being the best seller. They also have a seasonal range available during the Christmas period. The butter is made by grass-fed cows and is hormone free, the product is made with high quality ingredients by respected dairy farmers in Co.Kilkenny.

For the purpose of this research, it was important to gain an understanding of the consumers perspective in relation to brands communication on different social media platforms. It was essential for the researcher to choose the most relevant social media platforms for the sample chosen. According to a Mintel report published in 2015 Facebook usage dominates the Irish social networking market, with 79% of users in the Republic of Ireland logging in on a weekly basis, while weekly usage of other social networks such as Twitter is still a considerable 22%. For the purpose of this study the research will be evaluating the social networking sites Facebook, Twitter and also Instagram.

After the researcher has ensured the validity of the company for this work, the next step was to assess the availability of the company and the willingness to be a part of this research.
3.2.5 Research Choices

According to Saunders et al. (2012), the researchers has a choice between three research methods – mono-method, multi-method and mixed method.

Mono-method - is a single data collection technique and a corresponding analysis procedure.
Multi-method - is the use of more than one data collection technique and correspondence analysis process to answer the question.
Mixed-method - is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures as well as combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in other phases of the research.

For this research I have used the mono method collection method. In-depth interviews and focus groups have been conducted for the purpose of gathering data. Hence, the research method choice is mono method.
3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The research aims to analyze the impact of social media on an organization’s communication strategy; this applies to the practices to the case company. The analysis will be based on two types of research methods. The first method used for this study is in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews will help to obtain the relevant data by allowing the interviewer to use complex and open-ended questions. In-depth interviews will consist of semi-structured in order to explore the area of the organization’s communication strategy and also the impact of social media.

The second method of data collection will be the use of Focus Groups. Focus groups are important for this study as they will help to uncover the consumer’s motives and needs in regards to social networking sites (Domegan and Fleming 2007, p.161). Focus groups will consist of a mix of semi-structured and unstructured interviews in order to explore the area of the organization’s communication strategy and also the impact of social media.

Objectivity is very important in qualitative research, it is important to note while researching to take great care to avoid self-presence. Personal opinions and viewpoints were not included while conducting in-depth interviews and while analyzing the data collected all personal beliefs and feelings were kept aside.

3.3.1 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most important source of information, through which it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the subject held (Yin, 2008). For this research, the use of interview method will be my primary resource of information for my data collection. The interviews used were semi-structured and were conducted face-to-face. The interview was divided into three separate sections, the first section consisted of questions about the case company’s use of traditional communication methods, the second section consisted of questions about online communication methods and the final section was questions relating to online influencers. One stakeholder of the case company was selected as the main data collector.
source on the communication strategy implemented within the organisation. Thus, for this purpose, the shareholder of the company was interviewed: the founder of Improper Butter. The researcher has chosen this interview model to gain an in depth understanding and allowed for an exploration of the meaning of social media on the case companies communication strategy.

### 3.3.2 Focus Groups

A focus group is composed of a small number of participants facilitated by a moderator in which the topics are defined clearly and precisely and there is a focus on enabling and recording interactive discussions between participants (Saunders et al p 670 2012). In comparison to other types of group interviews, individual group member’s interactions and responses are both encouraged and more closely controlled to maintain the focus. One of the distinct features of focus-group interviews is its group dynamics, hence the type and range of data generated through the social interaction of the group are often deeper and richer than those obtained from one-to-one interviews (Rabiee p63 2004).

The participants of the focus group were chose through non probability sampling. Each focus group consisted of five respondents in order to explore the participant’s views on brands communication on social media. Two separate focus groups were conducted, the first consisted of young professionals which are the main target market for improper butter and the second group consisted of members of the quality families target market. The focus group was divided into three separate sections, the first part was understanding the respondents attitudes towards food as the case company is a butter company. The second section was understanding the respondents feeling about social media, how they use social media and also there feeling about brands on social media. The final part of the focus group was focused on their feeling towards online influencers. The use of focus groups will be beneficial in this study as they provide different perspectives on the subject while also allowing the interviewer to observe the interactions of the group.
3.4 Selecting Respondents

According to Saunders et al (2009), it is impractical collecting data from the entire population, it is important reduce the sample size during a research to the budget and time constraints. For this study to use of non probability sampling will be employed. Following the selecting non-probability sampling techniques, I focused on the importance of case study using typical case sampling. Typical case sampling provides and illustration of what is typical to the reader of research. At present Improper Butter is a startup company with a limited number of employees. The researcher will be interested to speak with the relevant co-founder of the organisation. The co-founders main role within the organization is curating marketing strategies and managing various different social media accounts for the brand. Social media users related to the companies target market will be of interest to the researcher. The interviews were conducted by face-to-face meetings. The data collected were recorded by audio and by notes taking.

For the purpose of focus groups it was important to gain an insight from a consumer’s point of view regarding brands communication on social networking sites. Each focus group will consist of five respondents in order to allow a manageable discussion. The participants will be members of the case companies target market which are defined as

Premium Professionals - this market segment includes young couples or singles with busy lifestyles who like to try new things and treat themselves.

Quality Families -This market segment includes families with both younger and older children who like to provide the best quality food on a daily basis with quality ingredients at the best possible price. They likes to experiment with recipes and ingredients while providing their families with wholesome and healthy meals.

Health and Wellbeing - this market segment includes pre-retired, retired and younger health conscious consumers.
### 3.5 Data Analysis Procedures:

Every study should have a general framework for how data is analyzed (Yin, 2008). The data collected was examined, categorized and reorganized for the purpose of the case study. The analysis is based on feedback from qualitative interviews with the founder of the case company and also with members of Improper Butter target market which were selected through sampling in order to conduct two separate focus groups. Therefore, the research was reinforced throughout by the relevant literature and models. In order to analyze the qualitative findings Date Display and Analysis (DDA) will be implemented. Three important stages will be used during the analysis.

1. Data Reduction – Summarizing and transcribing the data.
2. Data Display – involves categorization and unitization of the transcribed data
3. Drawing and Verification of Conclusion - The previous steps create a data set that is easy to examine and answers the research question.
3.6 Time Horizon

For this study a cross-sectional time horizon was used for the quantitative component of the research. The main aim of cross-sectional research is to capture a snapshot of a certain situation. This type of study uses diverse groups of people who adapt in the variable concerned, but share other characteristics such as social status, economic status, educational background and culture or origin. Due to the fact that the study targets the company case study only in specific period of time without investigating through the time, the selected time horizon is the most suited one.
3.7 Research Ethics

Saunders, et al. (2012) mentions that research ethics concern about how we clarify our research topic, how we want collect and preserve our data, evaluate and write our research in a moral a responsible way. During and after the planned interviews, with the co-founder of the company and numerous different social media users a range of ethical issues were considered, such as:

- Violation of the privacy of possible and actual participants;
- Consent and possible deception of participants
- Maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants
- Reactions of participants to the way in which you seek to collect data, including embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain and harm;

To avoid any ethical issues, and ensure the moral validity of my research, I designed interviews not intrusive, leaving space and freedom to the participants to talk, for this reason I have chosen to use a semi-structured interview model. Furthermore, I ensured the protection and the discretion of the data collected and the conservation of them in a safe place.
3.8 Limitations of the Methodology:

The researcher has faced various different limitations due to the nature of the research methods chosen and the instruments to collect data:

**Sample size:** As the organization is in the introductory stage the sample size available for in-depth interviews are limited, this could potentially affect finding significant data from the findings

**Limitation of the literature review:** This research topic is current so it is important that the sources used as references are be up to date in order to ensure there is relevancy and no error in the findings.

**Time:** Due to the short period of time to conduct this research time is a limitation.

The researcher has committed to overcome all of these limitations, planning the way to reduce at minimum every problem of methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of the thesis.
4. Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction:

The Data Analysis chapter of this thesis is an evaluation of the selected social media channels of the case study company, Improper Butter. The primary research question that will guide the data analysis process is the following:

1. What is the role of the stated social networking sites on the case company’s communication strategy?

In order to answer fully the primary research question, the researcher selected further research objectives to be achieved through the primary research:

1. Analyse the traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter

2. Evaluate how the stated target market uses social media

3. Investigate social media user’s feelings in regards to Brands on social media

4. Research how Improper Butter is managing its social media channels and how the company is engaging with its potential client;

The researcher has used a semi-structured interview and focus groups as main methods of data collection for this study. The co-founder of the case company was selected for in-depth interview and members of Improper Butter target market were used for focus groups. All of the interviews and Focus Groups were held face to face. The researcher has chosen to gain a broad vision of the social media usage and at the same time to collect different opinions about the different content used on Social Networking Sites.

The themes that the researcher has proposed during the interview with the co-founder of the company were different from the focus groups as the aim of the interview was to gain and in-depth understanding of the use of social media while the focus groups were used to explore consumers use of social media and also to understand there under lying feelings about brands on social networking sites.
4.2 Overview of the Case Company

Improper Butter is an Irish butter company founded in 2013 by Hannah O’Reilly and Elaine Lavery. Improper Butter offers a range of flavored butters to be used as ingredients for cooking. At present they have three different flavored butter products of which are: Sea salted butter Real Garlic butter, Garlic Chilli and Basil butter. The butter is made from grass fed cows, their product is hormone free which results in their butter containing essential fats that are necessary for healthy brain development. They use these two factors (Grass-fed and Hormone free) as a unique selling point for their target market who is a health conscious consumer.

The founders of Improper Butter have a real passion for their product, they believe consumers have been misinformed about saturated fats. As a result, Improper Butter have become passionate about educating consumers about the benefits of eating natural fats through their product.

Improper butter is manufactured in Ireland with 80% of their product being made from Irish butter. The product is made from fresh herbs which reduces the shelf life. The average shelf life for the products is between four to six weeks. Using fresh herbs in a product shortens the shelf life but increases the nutritional value, while on the other hand using dried ingredients and preservatives increases a shelf it decrease the nutritional value. Each flavor of Improper butter is sold in a 100g box and is currently priced at €2.49.

Improper Butter is available to consumers in Supervalu’s nationwide as well as being available in selected Tesco’s and independent stores.. The products are also available in John Lewis Food Halls in the UK.
4.2.1 Target Market

Improper butter describe their typical customer as a food-lover, who seeks out great quality and regularly enjoys cooking meals from scratch. The target market can be broken down into three different groups.

Young professionals - They are aged from 25 years old to 35 years old who are actively preparing meals on a daily basis. This consumer is health conscious and also enjoys being active. They like to try different recipes and different ingredients on a regular basis; they are price sensitive but are willing to pay extra for quality goods.

Quality Family - this market segment includes families with both younger and older children who like to provide the best quality food on a daily basis with quality ingredients at the best possible price. They likes to experiment with recipes and ingredients while providing their families with wholesome and healthy meals.

Health and Wellbeing - this market segment includes pre-retired, retired and younger health conscious consumers. This consumer is very active and price is irrelevant once the product meets there guidelines.

The founders of Improper butter describe their product as convenient, they believe that their customers can simply add to their product to their meals to transform their food into something delicious. The product is habitual, it is actively sought out to add taste and quality to the food cooked by the consumer.
4.3 Research objective one: Analyze the traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter

In order to have an overview of the current communication processes used by the case company and understand why each channel was selected it was necessary to speak with the co-founder of Improper Butter.

What would you consider your role to be within the organisation?

“That actually really interesting now with investment coming on board and with the 3 years of really solid graft, the past 3 years have been all theory and just doing. As we get more of a strategy and get what were about. My role is marketing and a little bit of HR its more office based while, Elaine is sales and business development.”

“The social media content is shared a lot between myself and Elaine, I myself am not personally on any social networking sites, we have the same tone of voice so it works”

What are the traditional marketing communication methods used by Improper Butter

“We do a lot of in-store and PR, Social though is a biggest method to date”

“The PR part if difficult for our marketing as it is really difficult to tell the conversion is, are people actually going out and buying it considering it is just a lifestyle piece. We did a piece on Nationwide and seen good life in sales the following week or two after that aired”

“We have also done events such as Bloom as it allows us to meet with the older market segment, who makes up a large part of our target market and who aren’t on Instagram so I guess there is a different strategy for different segments”

“Another way we try to engage is through Price, we are going to take part in various different price promotions in various super value stores, we feel if we want to compete we have to do this”

“It’s interesting with TV now because you can fast forward and ignore the ads, its a difficult one really”
What about product placements on television shows?

“I find placements very interesting and more of those lifestyle pieces like nationwide interesting we don’t have enough of those cooking segments in Ireland. I think the whole brand ambassador idea is just so powerful, there’s a lot of them up and coming. Snapchat has been a massive vehicle for that. But really if you want the ones people are interested in there is a payment there that we just can’t afford right now. The brand ambassador just needs to be such a perfect fit for the brand”

The main methods of communication used by Improper Butter is personal selling, price promotion and public relations

4.4 Focus Group One – Young Professionals
See appendices for details of respondents

4.4.1 Research Objective - Evaluate how the Target Market uses social media

What is your favourite social networking site at the minute?

“Instagram” Respondent Four

“Instagram, actually its between snapchat and Instagram” Respondent One

“Instagram, actually it’s a tie” Respondent Two

“Snapchat is more fun” Respondent One

“Instagram, But i do love snapchat too” Respondent Three

“Instagram” Respondent Five

“Snapchat is more crack with your friends with all the filters and stuff” Respondent Three

“I dont like the new Instagram videos, but id only use Facebook to look at videos” Respondent Four

“I agree, snapchats more with friends while Instagram is more wider span like i follow a ridiculous amount of people i don’t even know” Respondent Two

“Same, I’d use instagram for more like fashion, food and blogs and clothes, while snapchat is purely friends” Respondent Three
“I don’t follow bloggers on Snapchat” Respondent Two

“No I don’t either” Respondent Three

“Because I find them too annoying” Respondent Two

Yeah I find them very annoying Respondent One

Understanding what Social Networking Site Improper Butters target market spend most of their time online is important as it allows the researcher to get a clearer idea of the most appropriate social networking site to target young professionals audience.

How long do you spend on social media on a daily basis?

“Too Long, I’d say about 3/4 hours a day on it” Respondent One

“Like I’d at least say an hour and a half a day, At least cause like morning and night time, Like I go to bed and just sit on my phone and scroll through” Respondent Two

“Yeah, I’d say about an hour” Respondent Three:

“It’s hard to know” Respondent Four

“It varies” Respondent Five

Understanding the amount of time spend on social media on a daily basis allows the researcher to gauge how involved the respondents are with social media on a daily basis.

Are you consciously engaged when you are logged into?

“No I’d say I’m just bored and start looking at it and then I’ll look and see nothing is on it and think what am I doing” Respondent One

“It Depends I’m always on my phone in the evening” Respondent Four

“Say I got a notification on my phone, id have a look at that and then end up being on my phone for an extra 10 minutes without even noticing” Respondent Two

It is important for the researcher to evaluate whether consumers are engaging with the content while on social network or are they passively scrolling through.

What would you say are your main activities on social networking sites are?

“Looking at other peoples pictures, looking at what people are up to, people who you havent spoke to in awhile” Respondent Three
“For stalking people” Respondent Two

“That is what people mainly use it for though, to see what other people are doing” Respondent One

“But then there are stuff like lovin dublin waterford whisperer that out up funny articles that you would look into” Respondent Three

Learning what activities social media users are doing will be useful when trying to create engaging content. It will allow to the research to evaluate the current content on Improper Butters social networking account in relation to the content the users are engaging with.

Has the way you've use social media changed?

“You'd see it every day when you look at the “on this day” app. My status were talking about what i was doing that day, if you put that up today you'd get absolutely ruined” Respondent Four

“Yeah” Respondent Three

“I realised we used to use facebook as a texting service” Respondent One

“Yeah” Respondent Three

“When you look back its so cringey like why did i write this so publicly for everyone to see when i could just text the person “Respondent One

“Like 99% of the reason i use Facebook is to look at videos and tag people in videos” Respondent Four

“Its polarised by people either giving opinions or just watching” Respondent Five

As social networking sites are constantly evolving and updating its important to know how the consumer’s habits are also changing.

What’s your favourite type of content on social media

“Videos” Respondent Four

“Funny Videos” Respondent One

“Short Videos” Respondent Three

“Yeah short video” Respondent Two

“They have to be short but also still interesting” Respondent Five

“if it’s too long i just won’t” Respondent Four
Content is one of the most important elements of social media, so it is crucial to learn what content the target market is interested in.

**How long are you willing to watch the video for?**

“Two minutes is my absolute max” Respondent Four

“I wouldn’t even go that far” Respondent Three

“30 seconds, 30 seconds max, they shouldn’t be longer” Respondent Five

“Do you know the way now if you scroll down and it atomically plays, it literally has 5 seconds to capture my attention to whether I stop or not” Respondent Two

The length of time a user is willing to engage with content is important for the creation of content by the case company.

**If you seen a video you like on SNS how would you engage with it, like tag someone, like the video etc?**

“Tag and like it” Respondent One

“Yeah id do the same, if i watched it and liked it id tag someone in it” Respondent Three

“Id share it to a private group of friends but never publicly. Me and my group of friends have created a page just for us to share videos and stuff on” Respondent One

“I would sometimes just copy the link and send it to my friends” Respondent Two

“Yeah then id send the link through what’s app, not everyone has social media either so you can’t tag them” Respondent Three

“People who continually share things are just annoying” Respondent Five

“Yes” Respondent One

As video content was mentioned as the respondent’s favourite type of content it was interesting for the researcher to see how they are willing to engage with it

**4.4.2 Research Objective Two - Investigate social media users feelings in regards to Brands on social media**

The aim of this objective is to understand how social media users interact with brands on social networking sites. An understanding of this research objective will allow the researcher to learn what type of content users are interested in and also what interactions they are willing to do.
Do you think Brands should be present on Social Networking Sites

*No, actually maybe Instagram* Respondent Four

“Yeah” Respondent Three

“Yeah” Respondent Two

“Yeah” Respondent One

“You know when you go into Instagram and it’s the search page with loads of suggestions photos, I have often went onto that and there would be all different things for example the other day Sprout and Co. came up on my search page because I follow brands like chopped and all those, so then I went into Sprout and Co. page and looked at all their photos and then start following them, so they pop up or like clothes brands” Respondent Two

The researcher is looking to investigate if the respondents think brands should have an official presence on social networking sites

Would you use Facebook to look up brand information?

“No” Respondent Four

“Yeah for information I would” Respondent Three

“I’d usually use it to search for opening hours cause some places don’t have websites, so I’d look at their Facebook page” Respondent Two

“Yeah same actually” Respondent Four

“I don’t really use Facebook for that, I think if you’re looking for say an item of clothing in a sports shop or they might have a picture of it on Facebook but never really any information, they just always link you back to their website” Respondent One

“I look for inspiration, Like I obviously follow Ryanair (Place of work) and I think the Ryanair Instagram is great because it’s all like people sending in amazing pictures of there trips” Respondent three

The researcher is interested in how respondents search for brands on Facebook, this will give an insight on how respondents look for brand information

Which SNS would you find to be a credible source of brand information?

“Facebook” Respondent Three
“Probably the website, I’d look for a website first then I’d look up facebook” Respondent Four

“Id google it and if the website came up first then I’d go into the website before Facebook” Respondent Two

“But at the same time if a website doesn’t come up and only a Facebook page comes up your going to lose credibility in that company because they only have a facebook page” Respondent Five

“Yeah i agree” Respondent Two

“Yeah” Respondent Three

“So i don’t think social media for brand information is a credible source” Respondent Five

“i would find it a bit frustrating because the facebook page is never as good as having a website” Respondent Three

“Sometimes companies will have a Facebook page saying website coming soon if its a new company” Respondent Two

“Unless it’s like an event or a nightclub brands need to have a website” Respondent Five

The researcher was interested in investigating what sources respondents find credible online.

**What would actually make you like a brands page on Facebook?**

“At the moment do you know those like funny sayings or memes or videos stuff like that” Respondent Two

“If there product is good” Respondent One

“If they have good pictures” Respondent Three

“Paddy Power page is really good for that stuff” Respondent One

“Sporting Facebook pages are really good for that stuff” Respondent Three

As the respondents mentioned that how they use social networking sites have changed it was interesting to see if they still like brand pages

**What would make you like the page?**

“Because i wouldn’t want to miss out on some of the updates. During the Euros a thing called fan denial came out and the videos were so funny i liked the page so i wouldn’t miss out on the next video posted” Respondent One
“To be honest I don't really like pages that often unless I'm asked to like it by a friend or something” Respondent Three

Are you familiar with Online Influencer’s?

“Yeah you see them all over the place” Respondent Three

“Yeah” Respondent One

“Yeah” Respondent Two

“The only one I'm familiar with is Joe Wicks (The body coach), he does these 30 minute HITT classes and he's got his lean in 15 cookbook” Respondent Four

The researcher wanted to investigate the theory of the influencer model so it was important that respondents were familiar with the topic.

Can you tell me what an online influencer’s role is?

“So I follow this one Ciara and basically she is known for her style but I think she's just paid by all the brands to wear like Dior dresses, so for me it's like advertising” Respondent Three

“She wouldn't of always been, she would of had to build up credibility first” Respondent Five

“Yeah exactly, but now she's seen as an influencer they all want her to wear her clothes, so whereas I do like her style it's now like she's wearing it because she's paid to” Respondent Three

“Yeah id never buy the stuff it's more to see how it's put together” Respondent Two

“Is that not how they would fade out because she starts out original and then people come to them asking to wear stuff and if they go too far over the edge they lose originality and authenticity and they not being true to themselves then” Respondent Five

“There not wearing their own stuff they are doing what they are told” Respondent One

“it annoys me with all those teas and stuff you see the celebrities flaunting them and have a photo of the tea, you know they just being paid to do that, that annoys me” Respondent Two

“it's like beats headphones in all the music videos” Respondent Five
“I’d rather if someone makes food and does a picture of it and gives the recipe underneath it as opposed to go into my page look at my blog find the recipe then I’ve lost interest” Respondent Two

The researcher wanted to investigate the theory of the influencer model so it was important that respondents were familiar with the role of online influencers.

What platform do you follow influencers on?

‘Instagram’ Respondent Two

“Instagram” Respondent Two

“Snapchat” Respondent One

“Instagram” Respondent Four

“Snapchat” Respondent Five

“Twitter for me is just live sports or news” Respondent Two

“Yeah news” Respondent One

“So if there was something big like the olympics id log on and check the scores i wouldn’t go for food or clothes or make up or anything like that” Respondent Two

“GAA do good stuff on Twitter” Respondent One

“I like twitter for like live tweets on say the x factor to see what other people are saying” Respondent Three

“Yeah like live things going on around the world” Respondent Two

The researcher wanted to investigate the theory of the influencer model so it was important to understand where the respondents follow these online influencers.

4.5 Focus Group 2 Quality Family and Health and wellbeing target market
see appendices for details

Is everyone here on social media??

Group: Yes
4.5.1 Research Objective - Evaluate how the Target Market uses social media

What social media accounts do you have?

“Facebook” Respondent One

“Facebook Instagram, Twitter” Respondent Two

“Facebook, Instagram” Respondent Three

“Facebook I don’t have Twitter I just have Instagram” Respondent Four

“Facebook, Twitter” Respondent Five

“Snapchat is not really one” Respondent Three

“Oh i have snapchat” Respondent Five

“I have snapchat as well” Respondent Two

“I don’t have it anyway” Respondent Four

“It’s very addictive” Respondent Two

So how long do you think you would spend on social media daily?

“About 12 hours (laughs)” Respondent Two

“Its like a constant tip in and out.” Respondent Three

Like unconsciously doing it? like you scroll and be like oh I'm on it again.

“If you have to queue for anything suddenly you are on Facebook” Respondent One

“Or if she is asleep (Points to her new born baby) and I get 5 minutes it’s like my 5 minutes social media gap. So like there would be a half and hour in a day where there is like 5 minutes here and I will only look at what I want to look at. If there are a load of stories I don't want to see its just scroll scroll scroll scroll or if there is somebody life I'm not interested in its just scroll scroll scroll.” Respondent Four

“ha ha why don't you just block that person? “Respondent Five

“Ah no i keep them on incase they have something interesting to say” Respondent Four

“I spend an awful lot of time on it “ Respondent Two

“I find I am on it the moment I wake up which is really bad.” Respondent Three
“Everybody turns it on in the morning and when they go to bed have a quick nosey before they go.” Respondent Four

“I know I’m trying to ban it.” Respondent Three

“But it is where you find out the most information these days.” Respondent Two

(All Agree)

“Do you know when you find when you wake up in the morning?” Respondent Two

“Its someone’s birthday.” Respondent Four

“It is your newspaper really.” Respondent Three

“Well tone honest I wouldn’t turn on the news so yeah” Respondent Four

“People don’t buy newspapers anymore” Respondent Five

“So yea it is mine, I think people don’t really buy magazines anymore and they don’t really buy paper well younger people don’t really buy papers they look up their news they look up their everything through social media.” Respondent Four

“Yeah” Respondent Two

“Do you think people buy them? All those magazines like Heat and all they are still on the shelves?” Respondent Three

“But nobody well older people buy them who is not on, like my mother would buy them because she is not on social media” Respondent Four

“I would buy one if I was getting on a plane” Respondent One

“Maybe but what you are reading in a magazine you have read on social media already.” Respondent Four

(All Agree)

**What is your favourite Social Networking Site?**

“Facebook” Respondent One

“Daily Mail” Respondent Four

“Facebook” Respondent Three

“Oh Facebook It’s the only one I have”. Respondent Four

“Facebook” Respondent Five
“Probably snapchat” Respondent Two

So what would you use for like what is its main purpose

“I would message people who are abroad and I would have a nosey on other peoples life.”
   Respondent Four

“Yes to have a nosey.” Respondent Three

“There are a couple of food sites that I get through Facebook but in general I just use it for stalking” Respondent Five

“See I would find Instagram better for that” Respondent Two

“I can’t figure out how to use Instagram” Respondent Five

“It’s so good for food type things” Respondent Two

“You can’t stalk people on Instagram” Respondent One

“Oh you can, let me tell you.” Respondent Two

What is your favourite content on social media?

“Videos” Respondent Two

“Videos” Respondent One

“Videos” Respondent Three

“Videos like something funny” Respondent Five

“Videos” Respondent Four

What would you do if you like a video?

“Share it, like you have to remember i might have loads of friends but i don't want to put something personal up i just want to put something funny up” Respondent One

“Id only share helpful stuff, like a missing dog but i wouldn't share something” Respondent Five

“Sometimes id share some of those statuses for like cancer, like something that is a good cause i think they increase awareness” Respondent Four

“I’d share Facebook memories; i’d share a lot of those” Respondent Two

“I’m not a sharer or a liker i just like to look” Respondent Five
“i just like to look around more so that sharing and liking” Respondent Two

“I don’t comment that often or really post from my own page” Respondent Three

“I love looking at other peoples photos” Respondent Two

“Yeah if someone got married or had a baby i want to see that information” Respondent Four

4.5.2 Research Objective Two - Investigate social media users feelings in regards to Brands on social media

If a brand page had a high number of likes on their page would that make you believe it’s a credible brand page?

“It doesn’t make a difference to me because it could just be dies people who like anything” Respondent Five

“I try not to get sucked into the Likes” Respondent Three

“Same” Respondent One

“I feel so naive because that would make me think it’s a really great shop” Respondent Two

“i think the same, if i seen 10,000 likes on a brand it would make me consider it” Respondent Four

It makes me think I’m gonna go and buy that” Respondent Two

“I just don’t really trust online Facebook pages” Respondent Three

“the good thing about brands on Facebook is that the reviews are there on the page so you don’t have to go searching for them” Respondent Two

“Yeah i do like that, like they can’t delete bad reviews” Respondent Four

“Im very warey of reviews on Facebook,like you could get one person who’s nasty and makes you rethink your feelings about the brand” Respondent One

So, you don’t trust reviews?

“No,But I’d trust my friends review” Respondent One

“But on facebook its always going to a friend of a friend of a friend reviewing it thats the joy of Facebook” Respondent Five

“I feel like some brands juts get loads of friends to review their pages” Respondent One
What do you think an Online Influencer role is to an organisation is?

“like a brand ambassador, they are used to talk about it” Respondent Five

“I don’t think there credible” Respondent One

“Me either” Respondent Five

“I do think anyone could become an online influencer, I would of bought into all these influencers until someone i knew became one and it made me think about it then” Respondent Four

“I suppose these people are getting products to try and they are just giving their opinions on it and it comes down to if you take their word for face value” Respondent Two

“Yeah i think so” Respondent Four

How do you feel about brand who use online influencers to promote their products?

Like So-sue me, who promotes one of those skinny teas Respondent Four

Oh yeah i know who they are like Respondent Five

“Sometimes i don’t believe them because i wonder how much free product do they get to promote these, Im very wary of some people - how much are they getting to promote these, it’s hard to believe them because you seen English blogger buying million pound houses from their job” Respondent Four

“Yeah that’s hard to believe” Respondent Five

You know the people who use the teeth whitening lamp Respondent Two

Yeah Respondent Five

Yeah - Respondent One

Yeah - Respondent Three

The only people who have it are the people who are being paid to promote it, they defiantly got their teeth whitened in the dentist before - Respondent Two
5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will go through data analysis and review the findings and the implications of the result obtained. This section allows considering and evaluating the answer given by the researcher as the primary research question and the research objectives, outlining how the following study has contributed to the area.

5.2 Evaluation of the Findings:

The findings of this research are linked to the primary research question:

Evaluate the role of social networking sites on an organisations communication strategy

Answering to the above primary question implies the formulation and the solution of different and correlated research objectives that allowed the researcher formulating a comprehensive explanation to the main research question:

1. Analyse the traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter
2. Evaluate how the stated target market uses social media
3. Investigate social media user's feelings in regards to Brands on social media
4. Research how Improper Butter is managing its social media channels and how the company is engaging with its potential client;

Research objectives

5.2.3 Research Objective - Analyze the traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter

The researcher has chosen this research objective in order to have a wide overview of the traditional communication tools used by the case company and understand which tools are adopted to engage with the customers. Therefore, it is essential to company, with one of the main focuses being on the communication strategy of the company and the tools used by the company.
From the interview it has emerged that, Improper butter have used a variety of communication tools but does not have a traditional communication strategy in place. In the past they have used different traditional communication tools but have never fully implemented an integrated communication strategy. Luxton et al (2015) believes that one critical aspect of building strong brands is the ability of the firm to devise ongoing effective marketing communication strategies that ensure the market sees and hears the brand, thereby enabling the development and sustenance of long-term brand value. Belch and Belch (2015) believes that coordinating these marketing communication efforts, companies can avoid duplication, take advantage of synergy among promotional tools, and develop more efficient and effective marketing communication programs. The traditional communication tools used by Improper Butter are Personal Selling, Price Promotion and PR.

Personal selling is used through in store sampling in Supervalu stores around Dublin. In-store sampling has proved useful to the case company as it has allowed interaction between the company and potential customers. Customer feedback from these in store sampling has proven useful as it allows the company to gain a better understanding of the customer perspective in regards to the product and its price point. Personal selling is also very important to the case company as it allows interaction with the portion of their target market that are not online. Schultz (2006), mentions that a proponent of integrated marketing communication (IMC), has pointed out the need to take a new approach in order to recognise the customer’s active role in marketing communication.

With Promotional Pricing companies will temporarily price their products below the list price to create buying excitement and urgency (Kolter and Armstrong 2012 p345). From the interview the case company have been undertaking price promotion in various different Super Value store and also in conjunction with Supervalu promotions such as the wine and steak promotion. These price promotions last between three to four weeks, the main objective is to get new consumers to try the product and turn it into repeat purchase. It has emerged from the interview that Improper Butter believes they need to be participating in price promotion to compete with competitors. Kolter and Armstrong (2012) believe price promotion can have an adverse effect, if used too frequently and copied by competitors.
Price promotion can create a ‘deal-prone’ customer who waits for the brand to go on sale before buying it.

During the interview the case company spoke about different PR lifestyle pieces in both print and television. Public Relations is described by Kotler and Armstrong (2012) as building good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favourable publicity. The co-founder spoke about the difficulty the case company has in measuring the returns of PR. “The PR part is difficult for our marketing as it is really difficult to tell the conversion is, are people actually going out and buying it considering it’s just a lifestyle piece.” The case company have appeared on Dragons Den in a bid to gain financial support from the panel. In the form of print media the case company have featured in a range of newspapers such as The Irish Times and magazines such as the Sunday magazine - the Sunday Times Style. The founders have also appeared on various different radio shows including Newstalk, the objective from both print and television was to increase brand awareness. The main message being presented across the different mediums was the founders background story about how they met in college and created the flavour butter range that is today known as Improper Butter.

During in-store promotions the interviewee mention receiving feedback from consumers about these PR pieces. The case company found that these PR pieces created public awareness which before didn't exist.

5.2.4 Research Objective - Evaluate how the stated target market uses social networking sites

As it has emerged from the feedback collected from the two separate focus groups, the first group consisting of young professionals while the second focus group two consisted of members of the quality family target market described social networking sites as an essential part to their everyday life. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) noted one of the most popular forums in which customers engage behaviourally with firms is social media.

Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) believe that the rise of social media has not only changed the internet as we know it, but has also dramatically changed the way people communicate and interact. Every interviewee in focus group one agreed that the social network of choice
for young professionals is Instagram. While in comparison focus group number two social network of choice was Facebook. Both focus groups have said they check each social network account first thing in the morning and also last thing before they go to bed. When a respondent from focus group one was asked how long they spend on social media everyday the response was “Too Long, I’d say about 3/4 hours a day on it”

The main activity on social networking sites described by both groups is “Looking at other peoples pictures, looking at what people are up to or speaking to people who you haven’t spoke to in awhile” Focus group one mentioned how their activity on social networks have changed over the analyse the company’s current traditional communication strategy. The aim of Improper Butter marketing objective is to create brand awareness and try to create a loyal customer. To investigate in depth in the company’s communication strategy the researcher conducted an in depth interview with the co-founder of the

past few years “I realised we used to use facebook as a texting service” Respondent One. Respondent Four elaborates by saying “You’d see it every day when you look at the “on this day” app. My status were talking about what i was doing that day, if you put that up today you'd get absolutely ruined”.

Guidry et al (2015) mentions that visual images tend to be more engaging than text alone. Both focus groups unanimously agreed that their favourite content on social media is video content. Vizard (2016) goes on to mention that Instagram, like Facebook and Twitter still ostensibly pitches itself as a complement to TV, rather than a competitor.

Participation may be passive involving simply consuming the social content or active including such behaviours as submitting consumer-generated stories (Ashley, C 2015 p.17). Respondent One from focus group one mentioned that most of the time while he is logged to a social network he is not engaging with the content on the screen “No I’d say I'm just bored and start looking at it and then ill look and see nothing is on it and think what am i doing”. Respondent One form focus group two also had a similar thought “If you have to queue for anything suddenly you are on Facebook” Respondent One

Yuki (2015) believes the act of sharing is highly valued by marketers. Respondents in both focus groups are reluctant to share content on there personal social network account. During
focus group number two the interviewees spoke about what content they would be comfortable with sharing “I'd only share helpful stuff, like a missing dog but I wouldn't share something” Respondent Five. While Respondent Four mentions “Sometimes I'd share some of those statuses for like cancer, like something that is a good cause I think they increase awareness”. Marketers place a premium placed on sharing, as it involves a personal “endorsement” or recommendation that can carry far more peer influence than a simply post level “Like.” (Wallace et al 2008 p130). While in comparison respondents in focus group one thought the opposite “People who continually share things are just annoying” Respondent Five with Respondent One agreeing “yes”.

5.2.5 Research Objective - Investigate social media users feelings in regards to Brands on social media

Through social media, people can know about a new product, read different reviews of actual clients but also post different comments, questions and experiences regarding companies and brands (Mamic and Almaraz p852 2013). According Bruhn et al (2012) consumers now regard social media as a more trustworthy source of information than the traditional instruments of marketing communications used by companies. From speaking with members of focus group two they have disagreed with Bruhn’s statement by mentioning that “I’m very wary of reviews on Facebook, like you could get one person who’s nasty and makes you rethink your feelings about the brand” - Respondent One Focus Group Two. Chen and Xie (2004) point out that consumer-created information is likely to be more credible than seller-created information because credibility of information is often positively related to the trustworthiness of the information source. Kabadlayi and Price (2013) believe that brands can now receive feedback and suggestions more easily from their consumers through these social networking sites, Respondent One Focus Group Two highlights Chen and Xie (2004) point about trusting peers on social media “I’d trust my friends review”. Respondent Two mentioned that “the good thing about brands on Facebook is that the reviews are there on the page so you don’t have to go searching for them”. Taken Smith, K, et al 2015 highlights a similar point stating that consumers are using reviews on social media sites to reduce their cognitive costs in purchasing decisions.

Sävulescu (2011) states that the growth of social networks has changed consumers because they have been empowered and have become more critical, more skeptical which is similar
to the point by Respondent Three Focus Group Two. “I just don’t really trust online Facebook pages”. Respondent Five from focus group one states “I don’t think social media for brand information is a credible source”

Focus group one Respondent Two mentioned that social media would not be the first place they would search for brand information “I’d google it and if the website came up first then id go into the website before Facebook”. She then goes on to say “Id usually use it to search for opening hours cause some places don’t have websites, so id look at there Facebook page”.

Respondent three main use for brand pages on social networks is “I look for inspiration, Like i obviously follow Ryanair (Place of work) and i think the Ryanair Instagram is great because its all like people sending in amazing pictures of there trips”. Ashley (2015) states that in order to provide the content that engages consumers’ online, marketers must understand consumers’ motivations for interacting with brands on Social Networking Sites.

Gummerus et al., 2012 have noted that Facebook brand pages have become a major channel through which consumers are able to interact with brands in a direct way by liking and/or commenting on brands’ posts and messages. Respondent One when asked they would like a brands page on social networks “Because i wouldn't want to miss out on some of the updates, during the euros a thing called fan denial came out and the videos were so funny i liked the page so i wouldn't miss out on the next video posted”. While Respondent Three mentioned that the only way she would like a brand page “To be honest i don’t really like pages that often unless I’m asked to like it by a friend or something”. When the respondents were asked about content they enjoyed on social networking sites they engaged with it in different ways “Id share it to a private group of friends but never publicly. Me and my group of friends have created a page just for us to share videos and stuff on” Respondent One. “I would sometimes just copy the link and send it to my friends” Respondent Two “I’d send the link through whats app, not everyone has social media either so you cant tag them” Respondent Three, Respondent Five went on to say that “People who continually share things are just annoying”
5.2.6 Research Objective - Research how Improper Butter is managing its social media channels and how the company is engaging with its potential client;

In order to have a detailed overview of Improper Butter social presence on the social media platforms cited above, the researcher has investigated personally on the company’s social pages, analysing the content posted by the company and the interaction put in place with the company’s network.

The researcher has analysed the social media landscape of Improper Butter. Inside the company through a semi structured interview with the co-founder of the company, and outside the company by conducting two separate focus groups with members of the case companies target marketing. The researcher has looked at the social media accounts from an external point of view, collecting all the information with the analysis of the company’s social media pages. The results have been summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Platform</th>
<th>Number of Followers</th>
<th>Updates per day</th>
<th>Types of content post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>2,209</td>
<td>1 per week</td>
<td>Product Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>4,468</td>
<td>2 per day</td>
<td>Product Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>4,179</td>
<td>1 per day</td>
<td>Customer Image, Retweets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Media platforms have been beneficial to Improper Butter, it has proven to be a cost effective way of online marketing. Communication using social networking has become imperative in marketing with the development and increasing popularity of social media (Carlson, A, & Lee, C 2015 p82). Being audience focused can really help to build up a network of friends and followers with whom companies can maintain a real-time contact and create long-term and supportive relationships (Mamic and Almaraz 2013 p853).
Even thought the case company have a website they are focusing more on the social media aspect. The primary use of the website has been described as “being used for information about the girls”

Currently the case company have three main social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all with their own individual roles.

5.2.6.1 Facebook

![Improper Butter Official Facebook Account](image)

**Figure 7 Improper Butter Official Facebook Account**

Improper Butter has an official presence on Facebook, Alba and Stay (2008) state that Facebook allows marketers to plan and understand their target markets with greater expertise, and possibly uncover markets they didn’t know they could capture. Growth has been accelerated due to the ease of communication on both ends. During the interview that
interviewee explained that the purpose of the Official Facebook page was described as a way “keep the consumer updated on news relating to Improper butter such as product updates, new stockist and also a variety of different competitions”. Bunker (2013) mentions the positive effect updating consumers can have, the idea is that as consumers receive these updates, they engage in more elaborate, extensive thoughts about that particular company. The interviewee described Facebook as “Facebook is our Newsfeed or you could call it our Blog for their company”.

During the interview the co-founder mentioned that Facebook is “where we believe consumers are searching for information regarding the brand”, but after conducting two separate focus groups with the relevant target market it is clear from research objective two that Facebook is not being used to search for brand information. Respondent Five from Focus group one mentioned “I don’t think social media for brand information is a credible source”. Respondent Three from focus group one also mentioned the impact a poor quality company website can have “I would find it a bit frustrating because the Facebook page is never as good as having a website”.

The co-founder also expressed an interest in creating video content showcasing all the different possible uses for flavoured butter. Video content would prove beneficial to Improper Butter as it is the most popular type of content with both Focus Groups. The most commonly mentioned video content was tasty.com which is short instructional recipe videos. The length of the video was important to respondent as they believe they should be “30 seconds, 30 seconds max, they shouldn't be longer” Respondent Five while Respondent Three disagreed by saying “I wouldn't even go that far”.

At present the official Facebook page has 2,203 likes, The image of a firm and its reputation is, at present, formed to a great extent by “likes” and “posts” from individuals connected through social media (Oviedo-García et al 2014 p.328). Gummerus et al (2012) have noted that Facebook brand pages have become a major channel through which consumers are able to interact with brands in a direct way by liking and/or commenting on brands’ posts and messages. In an online environment customer loyalty is usually lower than in traditional environments. Individuals have a wide range of fan pages with different information and
products/services from which to choose and they can change from one fan page to another with just one click (Sanz-Bla et al 2014 p363)

‘The most popular type of engagement on our Facebook page is our story, it receives a lot of attention’. The posts that receive the most engagement by users are pieces related to the founders story of how the company started. The most common type of engagement on these posts are “Likes”. Sashi, (2012) explains that consumer engagement facilitates the establishment and maintenance of trust and commitment which drives the consumer to stay engaged with a brand or company. Sashi (2012) believes that organisations need to acknowledge the stages of the customer engagement cycle such as connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement. In order fully engage the consumer. Generally, if users actively support content, by providing their input they indicate high involvement. Improper Butter has mentioned that they measure engagement through the software provided by Facebook which evaluates through clicks, likes, comments and sharing the information. Oviedo-García et al (2014) believes that any measure of engagement in Facebook should take into consideration the actions of individuals that respond to (interact with) the stimuli that are presented to them, through participation, in relation to the total number of users to whom those contents have been displayed.

On the Facebook page there is currently 35 product reviews with an overall rating of 4.9 out of 5. There are 33 ratings of 5 star, 1 rating of 4 stars and 1 rating of 1 star. The overall theme of the reviews are praise for the product quality and also mentioning the different ways the product was used by that particular consumer. The negative review was described by the consumer “I gave it a rating of two stars because of a misplaced swipe of the thumb on facebook”.
5.2.6.2 Instagram

Figure 8 Improper Butter Official Instagram Account

The official Instagram account of Improper Butters main purpose is to show high quality images that showcase the product in the best possible way. Instagram has also become an asset to brands as a research tool, a showcase for their products, and a means to more closely connect with a very visually engaged community of potential customers (Wilson 2014 p.55).

The co-founder described the images posted on Instagram as having the ability to make the product “look a bit more glossier” “It’s a really cool way to promote butter”. Navigator (2013) sees Instagram as an effective way to build brands and increase customer loyalty. Especially the food industry is seen as a sector that can benefit from visual social media messages like Instagram posts, Improper Butter is trying to capitalise on Navigator idea “We like to use Instagram to showcase some of products use in the kitchen”.

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“These images show some credibility of what can be done with food and the product.” As Instagram is now being used as a video platform Improper Butter are looking to exploit this by creating video content similar to Facebook which will see recipes being created using the product. From conducting focus group one it was evident that young professionals favour Instagram over all other social networking sites. The Interviewee described their target market of young professional on Instagram as being “Highly Engaged, Easily influenced and interested in influencing others”. Instagrammers are creating the aspirational, authentic and inspired content that brands now want (Wilson 2014 p.55)

After analysing the official Instagram account of Improper Butter the page consists of the product strategically placed with beautifully presented dishes. On average new content is posted twice a day. At present the case company has 4,463 followers on the social media platform and have posted content 77 times. Klie (2015) goes on to mention that Instagram is different from other social media sites in several ways, Instagram users tend to be a little more selective in what they post. During the first focus group respondent two spoke about the type of content she likes Instagram “I’d rather if someone makes food and does a picture of it and gives the recipe underneath it as opposed to go into my page look at my blog find the recipe then I’ve lost interest”.

5.2.6.3 Twitter

The case company uses Twitter as a way to engage with consumers. According to Mamic and Almaraz (2013) Twitter is one of the best social tools for empowering brands to connect with customers, since micro-messages are easy to craft and consume. In the interview with the co-founder Twitter was mentioned as “a great way to contact and reach people and it kind of stops there for us”. None of the participant of Focus group two which consisted of Quality families even had a twitter account while the participant of Focus group one had Twitter but rarely used it “Twitter for me is just live sports or news, So if there was something big like the olympics I’d log on and check the scores I wouldn’t go for food or clothes or make up or anything like that” Respondent Two - Focus Group two. “I like twitter for like live tweets on say the x factor to see what other people are saying”
Respondent Three. According to Sook and Yongjun (2011) Twitter users share observations on their surroundings, information about an event, or opinions regarding a certain topic.

Improper Butter have describes themselves more as “reactive rather than proactive, if people get onto us we will respond straight away” when it comes to posting content on Twitter

When asked about how the co-founder felt about Twitter she stated “I think something massive needs to happen with twitter as its gone quite stagnant at the moment”

Currently on Twitter Improper Butter have 4,178 followers, 3,169 likes and have tweeted 3,342 times. From analysing the case company twitter account there is a variety of different content ranging from re-tweeting positive feedback from consumers to re-tweeting consumers using the product in different ways. There is also re-tweeted content from prominent Irish online influencers and various different promotional pieces such as Super Valu in store promotions and magazine lifestyle pieces. Logan (2014) mentions another use for twitter as it has the ability to provide users with unprecedented access to influencers across many markets, including celebrities and thought leaders in various industries.

As social media is constantly growing and evolving this research was conducted at a single point in time
6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The final chapter of the dissertation is focused on conclusions and recommendations about the study conducted. The purpose of this section is to draw a conclusion of the entire project.

6.2 Conclusion

Social media is still a relatively recent and rapidly developing environment for which both academics and companies have yet no solid knowledge. This new marketing scenario, represented by the strong shift from mass consumption marketing to a targeted audience is a strong challenge for the marketers. The digital media introduction in the world of the communications was totally revolutionized.

In this study the researcher focused on the impact of social networking sites on an organisations communication strategy and the activity on social networking sites of the stated target markets of Improper Butter, Young Professional and Quality Families. After analysing the focus groups and In-depth interviews, they have provided some interesting findings.

Firstly, the way in which respondents use each social networking site for different activities was unexpected and has increased the researcher’s awareness of the potential for marketing communication online through various different mediums and also highlighted new potential ways for growth online. The target market for the case company noted the increased popularity of video content across all social networking sites. This will allow the case company to create content which will engage the consumer.

Secondly, although most people don’t seem to be influenced by brands and the content which they post on social media sites, respondents showed trust in content posted by friends compared to content posted by brands. The target market of Quality family seemed easily influenced with social media marketing in comparison to Young Professionals. Respondents seemed reluctant to engage with brands online.
Thirdly, after investigating the Influencer model which was identified through the literature review, the research has found that respondents are not influenced by this method of brand communication. Respondents are most interested in their friend’s reviews than online influencers. With the online influencer trend growing it is interesting to note the lack of trust respondents have in these online influencers

6.3 Recommendations

Due to the nature of this research, the researcher is able to draw some main recommendations for Improper Butter in order to enhance the current communication strategy and also their engagement with their target market

* Adopt a focused marketing strategy, clearly identifying the objectives for the brand.

* Integrate both traditional and online communications in a clear and concise manner.

* Implement the most suitable communication channel such as blog or social media choosing the most appropriate for their target market. The implementation of Kietzmann’s (2011) social media building blocks could help the organisation gain an insight into different levels of social media communications. By analysing the seven building blocks—firms can monitor and understand how social media activities vary in terms of their function and impact, so as to develop a social media strategy based on the appropriate balance of building blocks for their users.

* Define the metrics, evaluating the on-going state of the campaign and at the end of it the results, represent the final steps that the company has to follow. The selection of key performance indicators (KPI) is the metric to evaluate the success of the communication strategy.

These simple recommendations for the case company could allow the creation of an integrated marketing communication plan that could increase their visibility and expand their current market share.
7. Self Reflection

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe and explain the researcher’s personal learning path during this dissertation work. The researcher will go through her own reflection on learning identifying the relevant improvements and achievements.

7.2 Learning Style

Before the start of this dissertation project the researcher was unconscious of her incompetence. She entered in a state of conscious competence throughout the literature research on academic article book and journal.

![Klob Learning Cycle](image)

**Figure 10 Klob Learning Cycle**

According to Kolb’s theory, the experience of learning is a circular process. This process is supported by four main points linked each other. The experience of learning is followed by a stage of reflection that gives a sense for the experience done. Afterwards, there is the conceptualisation of this reflection followed by the experimentation of the concepts so developed, whereby there is the creation of new experience, reflection and again all the steps of the learning circle as shown in fig.
The researcher completed a learning style questionnaire developed by Honey and Mumford. The results from the questionnaire showed that the researcher is a pragmatist. Generally a pragmatist is likely to be experimenters, trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work. They may act quickly and confidently on ideas, getting straight to the point, and may lose patience with lengthy discussions.

7.3 Self Assessment from the Dissertation

During this dissertation the researcher used a range of both personal and technical skills, gradually improving on each skill while working on this dissertation. This research project has helped the researcher to become more confident and skilled in her chosen research field. Listed below are the researcher’s main skills and the improvements made during the process of this thesis:

* Time Management: Organisation and schedule tasks are one of the most important factors when it comes to the success of completing the research on schedule. The Gantt Charts helped the researcher to prioritise tasks and managing time. Thanks to the time management skills the researcher was able to complete the research in time.

• Research Capability: Throughout this dissertation the researcher was able improve the quality of research undertaken. The researcher was supporting her own research with academic materials, learning how to gather information and use it in a proper way for this particular research. A contributing factor to how the researchers skill improved was working with the library staff on a regular basis. Their knowledge particularly helped when Harvard Referencing

• Analytical Skills: The researcher has improved her ability in managing large amounts of information, categorising them and extracting the useful data needed for this dissertation. At the same time the researcher has greatly improved her critical thinking skills, her ability to figure out how to find solutions and the right approach for the problems that she encountered.

* Interpersonal skills: One of the main areas of the dissertation is primary research. When beginning this study the researcher was hesitant to conduct any type of interviews or focus
groups as she felt unconfident in her ability to speak with various different respondents. After completing the methodology chapter it was evident that an in-depth interview and also focus groups were needed. In order to feel more confident in her abilities, she gathered a few friends and conducted a practice focus group in order to prepare herself for what could potentially happen. The researcher to create a script she could refer to if needed during both the focus groups and interviews.

Finally, the most important thing I have learned from this experience is to have more confidence in my own academic abilities. This skill has particularly improved for me during the course of this dissertation. Different assignments throughout the year helped me to realize I should be more confident but working alone has really proved to me my own ability successfully complete a dissertation to a strong standard.

7.4 Conclusion

This section has allowed me to self-reflect on my learning’s and to be honest with myself about the skills I have acquired and the challenges I have faced as a result of completion of this dissertation. Writing this section has made me realize how far I have grown compared to when I started at my MSc. This self-realization was really valuable and much needed. It also made me understand my own skills and the new skills that have gained along the way.
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Appendices

Focus Group One Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Respondent No.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Doyle</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>General Manager of Heights Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie McEvoy</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Haughton</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Hearns</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Business Development Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conor Hogan</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>CRM Analysis</td>
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</table>

Focus Group Two Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Profession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louise Peacock</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Bar Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Hughes</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Beautician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aishling Kelly</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partina Moran</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrie Joyce</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Office Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Group Questions.

1. Is healthy eating important to you?
2. Would you consider your own diet to be healthy?
3. What do you believe to be the components of a healthy diet?
4. Do you think you could make improvements to your diet to make it more healthy?
   a. If so how?
5. What are the main difficulties in changing your current eating habits? E.g. cost, lack of knowledge, time
6. Would you pay more for a product if you knew it had some healthy attributes?
7. What would make you spend more? E.g. packaging
8. What kind of food do you consider unhealthy?
9. What are your feelings about adding fats in your diet?
   a. Do you try including them in your diet?
   b. Do you try avoiding them?
   c. Do you have enough knowledge about them?
10. Do you consider butter to be healthy?
11. What would you typically use butter for? E.g. a spread on butter, cooking ingredient
12. Would you actively try including butter in your diet?
13. Do you think healthy eating has become more popular in the past few years?
   a. Why?
14. What do you think has encouraged this new healthy eating craze?
15. Has it had an effect on you?
   a. How?
16. Are you in charge of the groceries in your home?
17. Do you like to cook?
18. How often do you cook at home?
19. What stores do you shop in?
20. What kind of ingredients do you use? E.g. frozen, pre made, fresh vegetables
21. Have you ever tried cooking with flavoured butters?
   a. Examples if yes
   b. Why not if haven’t
22. What would make you try a new ingredient/food for the first time?
   a. Friends
   b. Advertising
   c. Online influencer

23. What would be your main source of information about food online?
   a. Company websites
   b. Blogs
   c. Social media

24. What sources online do you believe to be creditable?

25. Are you on social media?

26. What social networking sites do you visit most?

27. Would you visit them every day?

28. On average how long do you spend on social media on a daily basis?

29. What do you use them for? E.g. messages

30. What do you like about it?

31. Do you think brand pages on facebook, twitter, and instagram are useful?

32. Any examples of using them?

33. Was it successful?

34. Which source is most creditable for brand information?

35. Is there any brand on social media who has impressed you?
   a. With their content?
   b. With customer service?

36. What is your favourite kind on content on social media? E.g. statuses, pictures, videos or competitions?

37. Why?

38. If yes what kind of posts? E.g. statuses, competitions

39. If you seen a friend liking a page on facebook would that increase the likely hood of you liking that page?

40. If a brand page had high or low number of likes would that impact on your perception of the brand?

41. How do you engage?
a. Like a post  
b. Tag a friend  
c. Share  

42. What reasons would make you want to engage with an organisation online?  
a. Example if you have one  

43. Are you familiar with any online influencers?  

44. What do you consider their roles to be?  
a. Can you give any examples?  

45. What platforms do you follow them on?  

46. Have you ever followed any for food?  
a. What platform?  

47. If you seen a influencer using a new product would you try it?  

48. Have you tried any recipes you’ve seen online?  
a. Example of one  
b. Where did you see it?  

49. Would you try this regularly?  

50. Do you think social media is a relevant place for brands?  

51. Are you familiar with improper butter  

52. If you want to talk to a brand online what would be the best platform?  

53. What makes you like a brand page on facebook?  

54. What does liking a brand mean to you?  

55. Do you like brand pages on a regular basis?  

56. Do you follow bloggers/influencers online?  

57. If a blogger/influencer you follow on social media sites mentions a product would that make you search for the product?  

58. What type of brand posts are you likely to engage with on facebook?  

59. Would you eve comment on brand pages on facebook?  

60. Are brand pages a useful source of information?  

61. Would you truest the information you read?  

62. Do you ever notice any advertisements on facebook?  
a. What type stands out?  
b. What’s your reaction to these forms of advertising?
If you have noticed a friend has like a page would that make you more inclined to like that page?

**In-depth interview questions.**

1. Can you tell me about your background?
   a. What did you study?
   b. Your interests?
   c. What brought you to where you are today?
2. Can you tell me about improper butter?
   a. What is your role?
   b. Company overview?
   c. What is your target audience and why?
3. What tools of communication are used in your current marketing strategy?
   a. Print? What type?
   b. Internet? Where?
   c. Tv? Where?
4. In your marketing strategy would it be common to integrate different tools to get your messages across?
   a. What has been the most beneficial to you?
   b. Has any method of communication been more affective than the other?
5. When it comes to online communications what would be your main method?
   a. Facebook
   b. Instagram
   c. Twitter
   d. Blogs
6. How do you measure if it has been successful?
7. When did you first start improper butters facebook page?
8. Would facebook be an important method of brand communications to you?
9. Why?
10. What would be your main objectives when it comes to your brands page?
   a. Increase awareness
   b. Engagement
11. What do you believe to be the benefits of advertising on Facebook?
12. What are the main types of posts used on Facebook?
   a. Paid or organic?
   b. Why?
13. What posts have been the most successful for you?
14. If you seen the number of likes increasing or decreasing would that have an impact on your strategy?
15. How many likes does your brand page have?
16. What does a like mean to your brand page?
   a. Elaborate on this as much as possible.
   b. Increased awareness.
   c. Brand loyalty
17. Has Facebook as a marketing tool enabled you to identify new product opportunities or new target markets?
18. Have you seen any companies on Facebook that have impressed you as a marketer?
19. What are your opinions about influencer’s roles on social media?
20. Do you think the use of influencers online has been beneficial to improper butter?
21. How do you choose the influencer that suits your organisation the best?
22. How can you measure if the use of an influencer’s has been successful?
23. What’s the most important form of social media engagement to you?
   a. Likes?
   b. Shares?
   c. Comments?
24. How do you measure the level of engagement on social media?
   a. Investigate Facebook
25. Would you monitor engagement on a regular basis?
26. If you notice a cretin post has had a high level of engagement does that impact on your communication strategy?
27. Do you think Facebook is still a relevant platform for business?