ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF PET OWNERS IN IRELAND

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DECLARATION

'I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc in Digital Marketing is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.'

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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing is a process that allows businesses to introduce their products or services to consumers and many companies are looking out for ways to enhance the selling of goods or services. Consumer buying behaviour refers to the actions by the consumers before buying a product or service, understanding the buying behavior of consumers is very important for businesses to promote products and improve sales effectively. This study attempts to assess the impact of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland and to help Irish Pet business to effectively market their products. Primary data was collected by surveying 100 Pet Owners in Ireland. From the quantitative findings, it has been found that social media as a source of information has a positive association with Pet Owners buying behaviour. Recommendations include that companies should provide real-time system displayed through social media so that Pet products and accessories are effectively promoted.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The evolution of the internet from the past 1990s has developed social media and the perception of social media marketing is now a new concept. According to Statista, people use a lot of online activities all over the world, but the most prominent one among them is the usage of Social Media. A report published by Statista in 2020, shows that over 3.5 billion people use social media globally and the number is expected to rise to 4.5 billion people by the end of 2025 (Clement, 2020). In 2019, people engaged in social networks constituted to about 57 per cent in the European Union (Johnson, 2020). Ireland witnessed tremendous growth in the number of Internet users which grew from 40 to 77 per cent within ten years starting from 2009 and the number of active social media users has reached to be 3 million users per month (Johnson, Statista, 2020).

Earlier the consumers used to shop at the physical store but the digital buying behaviour of consumers has decreased the trend of the physical buying and promotes the concept of online shopping (Ali, 2016). In the current digital world, E-commerce has updated and transformed into Social Commerce by creating a new environment for consumers to utilise social media channels in their online shopping process and this process is defined as the electronic process of buying (Sogari, 2017). Consumers enhance the purchasing patterns with the help of different social media platforms especially for buying products and accessories which makes the process of online shopping a common thing (Kumar, 2016). As a result, most of the businesses present on

social media are constantly using online portals to meet the needs of the consumers (Fernando and Fernando, 2019).

Nowadays, each company is engaged in social media marketing which is a form of digital marketing. Social media marketing is expressed as the process that allows businesses to introduce their products or services to the end consumers and most of the people purchase online after careful evaluation of the products (Al-Dhuhli, and Ismael 2013). From the digital marketing point of view, most of the businesses are adopting the online tools to engage with the consumers and various promotional techniques have been developed that influence the consumer purchase. Social media is getting involved in the lives of people and more individuals are becoming dependent on social media channels and social media marketing for buying products (Chitharanjan, 2016).

According to FEDIAF, at least one Pet is owned by about 85 million households in Europe (*Statistics - FEDIAF*, no date). Also, the European Union has witnessed a rise in the multi-billion-euro industry with the trend of Pet-Parenting and Pet-Humanisation. Ireland is truly a Pet loving country with almost 2 million people owning a Pet. The Pet-Parenting phenomenon has accelerated a huge demand for Pet products and it is popular amongst adults living in Ireland who spend around 820 million Euros each year on their Pets (Donoghue, McGarrigle and Anne Kenny, 2019). The Pet industry in Ireland is booming and expected to grow even further.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives

The research focuses on the analysis of the effect of social media marketing in purchasing pattern of Pet Owners in Ireland, therefore the research question is,

What is the impact of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland?

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the study is to analyse the effect of marketing through social media on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland, by analysing and studying the factors that influence Pet Owners purchasing patterns, especially with data, knowledge and relationships within the brand community. The detailed discussion about objectives are given below:

1.2.2 Specific objectives

1. To identify the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland who actively use social media for the exchange of information.

2. To evaluate the impact of positive word of mouth on social media affecting the buying decision of Pet Owners in Ireland.

3. To assess the impact of brand community channels on buying decision of Pet Owners in Ireland.

4. To analyse the impact of factors such as brand community, positive word of mouth, source of information on Pet Owners buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

1.3 Problem Statement

The main aim of this investigation is to evaluate the role of marketing in the domain of social media and to influence Pet Owners in Ireland to purchase attitude regarding buying Pet products. The investigator aims to find the gap stating that social media channels and activities have a great influence in assisting when buying Pet products. Social media significantly impacts the buying behaviour customers on being influenced by social media in making a purchase (Hajli, 2014). The decision regarding buying behaviour is constantly affected by the promotional activities that are carried by the firm's, in this case, product sellers that are affecting their target market and influencing the purchasing decisions of mass people. Creating positive word of mouth impacts on the consumer minds are one of the effective strategies that are created by the sellers. Moreover, internet users are constantly affecting social media users as social media has a large impact on the number of audiences (Memon et al., 2016).

Consumer perception regarding online shopping or buying has a huge impact on the buying and selling trends. As online shopping is becoming easy and common among the consumers and more people are constantly utilising social media, it would be beneficial for the sellers to use these digital platforms to create impact and generate the high need of their respective products. During the last years, the social media channels such as Facebook, are enjoying a large success on social networking website that has reached its active users to the 1.3 billion globally and constantly striving to increase the number up to the maximum (Fotis, 2015). More businesses are developed in the past decades that are dependent on the social media marketing and promoting their products or services via social media channels such as Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram and other social media platforms that are common and having a high number of users.

As a high number of people in Ireland are adopting the trend of Pet-Parenting, Pet Owners are very concerned about buying Pet products and accessories to their beloved Pets. This study extracts the buying Behaviour of Pet Owners that are utilising the social media for buying their Pet products and accessories and how social media marketing is affecting constants buying decisions. Nowadays, people that are born in the 1990s have the high rate and chances of using social media such as Facebook and more people are engaged in the activities that use social media channels to execute their buying process (Lupiáñez et al., 2016). In Ireland, the number of people using Facebook has increased drastically and reached over 3 million people by the end of 2019. In this, over 26 per cent of people belong to the age group of 25 to 34. From this data, we can observe that almost a quarter of the people using Facebook in Ireland are adults (Johnson, Statista, 2020).

Dog products or dog fashion is not a new thing and dogs are considered as a family member and the number of people engaging in buying of dogs and spending on dogs have increased in the last ten years (Melkko, Stenberg, and Harikkala-Laihinen, 2018). Dogs is the pre-dominant Pet in Ireland with almost 35 per cent of households owning a dog as their Pet (Sabanoglu, 2020). The owners not only consider their dogs as just Pets but as their best friend or even a family member which makes them buy good quality products for their Pet's living and comfort. The Pet industry market in Ireland can take this as an advantage and manufacture premium products.

However, no research has been done that primarily focuses on the purchasing behaviour of the segment as chosen in this research, i.e, the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. Therefore, it is implied that there is a gap in the literature and hence there is a necessity to gather and examine data about the influence of marketing through social media on the purchase pattern of Pet Owners in Ireland.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The logical basis of executing this study is that the media influences in terms of social websites to determine the attitude of consumers is not a new concept and various past investigators have produced a critical literature review on this subject. However, the focus is on the entire new subject in this domain and measuring the effects of media marketing via social sites to enhance purchase process of Pet Owners in the region of Ireland. This could be determined by how each Pet owner is perceiving the factors of the social media marketing and how these elements of social media sites are playing a vital role in evaluating the purchase intentions of owners for their Pets. Not many people have researched in these areas and limited research on this domain is available so it is evaluated comprehensively in this study. Social media marketing is influenced by the development of the internet and the advancement in the technologies has created massive attention towards social media by the people (Akar, Yüksel, and Bulut, 2015). More consumers are focusing on buying their required needs and wants online and their buying decisions are constantly getting affected by social media sites.

Social media websites determine the needs of an individual and recognise the purchasing pattern and based on the buying pattern of individual social media targets customers. Evaluation

of purchases was one of the essential and significant tools by the companies that were used constantly and with the assistance of social media websites, the long term commitment towards the products was held to retain customers. Now the paradigm has shifted and the product-oriented goals are transferred to the customer-oriented goals for the company (Karlsson, and M Ekström, 2001). Consumers have changed their buying process in the last few years and most of the people are focused on making their online purchases on buying products. Social media influences decisions made by the consumers regarding the choice of products.

As the high influence of social media has taken place, this study significantly impacts the high rate of social media power on the buying process of the consumers in Ireland. The study also focuses to measure the different factors that are credible in assessing the buying behaviour of consumers and implementing into businesses (Mignon, and He, 2005).

Social networks have increased in the past decades and more social media channels are being developed as it is the most profitable business in the 21st century. Companies allocate different advertising plans and methods to create effective decision-making environment for the large base of customers (Gutiérrez Flórez et al., 2017). The unique segment that is chosen for the research is the most valuable aspect of this study and the specific engagement of the research was done to produce new findings in the domain of the social media marketing impact on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant and influences a high number of people or readers as it discusses the impact of social media marketing and their factors that affect the purchasing behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. It specifically targets the segment of Pet Owners who buy Pet products and accessories online and how social media marketing plays a crucial role in accessing or changing their needs or wants. As given the limited scope of social media marketing in the context of Pet Owners in Ireland, the study is significantly important in carrying out the social media effects and how it shapes the thinking process of the Pet Owners in Ireland when buying Pet products and accessories online (Alves, Fernandes, and Raposo, 2016). The study provides detailed assumptions regarding marketing techniques and its significant factors that are considered in this study such as positive word of mouth, source of information, brand community. These critical factors are important to access the impact and shaping the buying behaviour of Pet Owners. Moreover, this study focuses to measure the different social media aspects that affect human behaviour while buying Pet products or accessories and forms scientific research in the context of promotions through social channels.

1.6 Structure of the Study

This section allows the reader to gain information regarding the structure that is made for the study to conclude findings in a systematic structure. The first chapter provides a detailed overview of the social media background to form an understanding regarding the research subject. The research questions and objectives are also outlined in order to provide direction and to access the critical literature to execute the objective made in this article. The research questions are the basis in order to form the objectives in this study. The problem statement is a

crucial part of each study as it criticizes the earlier study and forms a gap that is the new form in this investigation of variables. The second chapter is a literature review and researcher discusses in detail regarding the elements and factors that are important to understand in this domain. Research method debates on the data collection process and how the primary data was gathered to execute the study. The findings are made based on the data collection technique. The last chapter aims to conclude the summary of findings and a new set of the theoretical invention.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This section discusses the concluding points as the research gap is highlighted comprehensively in the field of promoting products on social platforms and how the chapter aims to state research gap mentioned in the problem statement. The study is based on the 5 chapters such as introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussions and conclusion. Millions of people are available on the social media channels and most of them are constant users of social media websites.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This is the second chapter of the study in which past studies related to the topic have been reviewed and critically analysed (Pütter, 2017). In Ireland, the increased use of social media and the demand of pet industry provides an opportunity for Irish Pet business to sell their products through social media platforms. Due to the lack of data about the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland, it has been generally analysed that consumer behaviour is influenced by social media. Therefore, in the present chapter past studies related to the consumer behaviour are reviewed. For this purpose, the present chapter has been divided into various sections. In the start of the chapter, the concept of social media has been discussed and analysed. Then, the chapter has discussed the significance of social media marketing, in which it has been discussed why social media has great significance in influencing the buying decision of consumers. Afterwards, there are different factors identified in the literature that affect social media marketing.

Furthermore, the behaviour of consumer buying along with the factors that influence the behaviour is also focused in this chapter. Besides, different trends of consumer buying behaviour have also been analysed. Next in line, current trends related to social media marketing are also presented in the literature that creates a hindrance for it in influencing the purchasing decision of consumers. Additionally, social media marketing influence on the consumers buying behaviour is also the consideration of this chapter, and it has been discussed that in what ways the buying decision of consumers is impacted by social media marketing. Apart from this, a theoretical

framework is presented in this chapter in which different theories related to consumers buying behaviour has been discussed. Moreover, a conceptual framework of the research is presented in this chapter in which the relationship between dependent and independent variables has been shown. At the end of the chapter, a summary is provided in which the main aspects of the research have been encapsulated.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

In recent times, the popularity of social media has been increased globally. As shown in Figure 1, from 2004 to 2018 there is a significant increase in the number of people using social media platforms. Currently, Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Instagram and WeChat platforms are very popular with high active users (Koetsier, 2020).

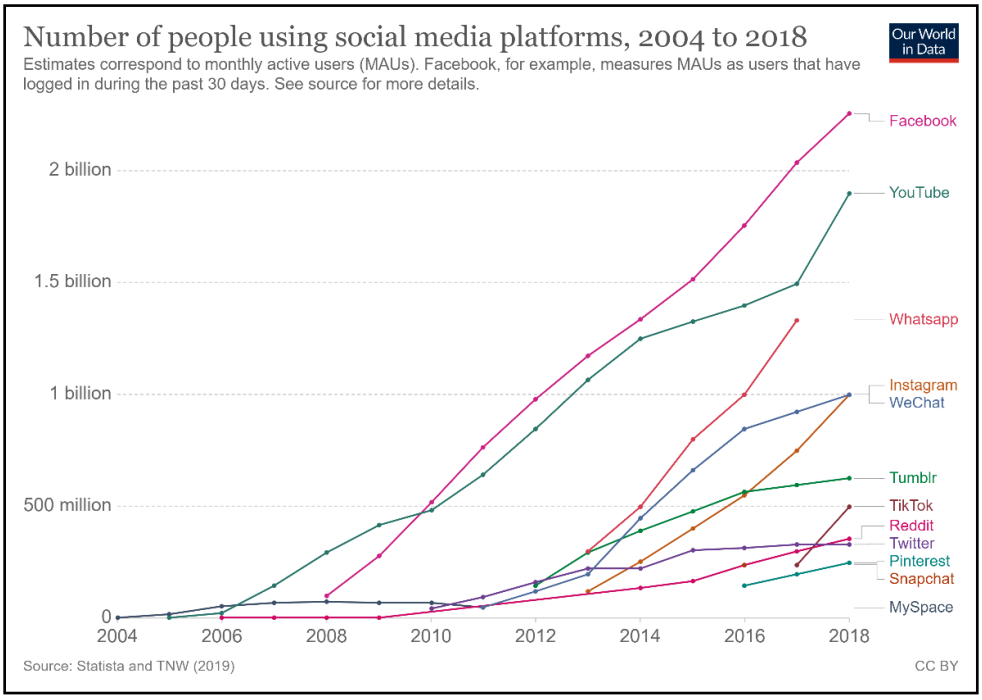

Figure 1: Number of people using Social Media platforms from 2004 to 2018

(Our world in data, 2018)

Furthermore, there is also a huge number of people that use the social platform to build professional and social interaction (Hanaysha, 2017). Businesses are getting help through a range of social media management tools to appear in trending or to reach the maximum number of audience. There is various kind of social media marketing, such as blogs, microblogging, social networking, photo sharing, video sharing, advertising campaigns etc (Pütter, 2017). These all type of social media marketing are considered very important and have a crucial impact on the buying behaviour of consumers.

Social media marketing is considered as an imperative and powerful mean for all sizes of businesses to reach a greater number of audiences, and with the help of it, remarkable success can be brought to the business, which will help to create the brand reputation and generate more sales. Several goals can be achieved with the help of social media marketing, such as raising brand awareness, creating positive brand association, brand identity, building conversation and increasing traffic on websites (Aragoncillo and Orus, 2018). Therefore, more businesses engage in social media marketing, the more its audience are engaged the better a business can shape consumer preferences and propel them to buy products and services.

2.3 Significance of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has great significance in recent times, and no business can get successful and thrive in the contemporary business environment without the use of it. It has been observed that the ability of consumer to make better choices is enhanced by social media marketing as it improves the variety and amount of information available online. The significance of social media marketing has recently been studied by many authors in recent times. It has been

observed that there is immediate access of information provided to customers with the help of social media, and for this benefit and convenience, a lot of people use social platforms (Aragoncillo and Orus, 2018). The significance of social media can be understood in a way that there is a participatory culture created by social media, where an unending loop of sharing information, users connect with other like-minded individuals (Voramontri and Klieb, 2019). The reason is that social media marketing entices the attention of consumers through alluring content on different social media platforms, which helps to shape consumer preferences and influence their purchasing intention.

In comparison to corporate communication and advertisement, it has been observed that social media marketing is considered a trustworthy source of information. Social networking sites are considered as one of the most important sources of social media marketing. Social networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, WhatsApp, Twitter etc. are very popular among people and they provide users with the facility to connect to individuals of same background or interests and it is also considered as one of the most important sources for social media marketing (Lim et al., 2017). There are very interactive profiles created on social networking sites. A catalogue is formed by the sites and the users recommend friends based on their preferences and background (Zafar et al., 2019). Therefore, this is the reason that when it comes to the most recent trends of interacting people, social media is considered one of them. Moreover, among the audience, there is transparency provided by it. The globalisation of the market has greatly been increased in the recent scenario due to social media marketing. Moreover, on social media, a new analysed market has been shaped in which preferable fashion

and loveable trends in buying behaviour of the audience are identified. In addition to this, social networking sites are also considered to be significant for consumer purchase (Lim et al., 2017).

2.4 Consumer Buying Behaviour

The use of internet has increased and with the advancement in internet and technologies, the focus towards social media marketing has also increased. Consumer buying behaviour is now a new concept, but the process of impacting the consumer buying behaviour has changed from time to time. Various people have focused on the impact of the consumer buying behaviour and companies operating globally have shifted its focus towards positively impacting purchasing cognitive actions (Victor et al., 2018). Traditionally, the attitude towards purchases is set out as the fast-growing segments and online selling is getting more attention as compared to the past years. The growing focus of online buying and selling has transformed the process of impacting consumer buying behaviour.

The consumer attraction through the digital platform has increased and also the major focus has shifted towards the consumers perceiving the image of the brand. Compelling consumers mind towards the brand is an essential part of the corporate organisation and more organisation deals to impact the actions or behaviour of consumer based on e-commerce. Social media marketing tools are common and more emphasis has brought up to the purchasing behaviour of people (Ramya, and Ali, 2016). The goal of each organisation is to impact the minds of people and to create an impact to develop brand equity.

There are several approaches to understand the behaviour of consumer. One of the most common and prominent was proposed by the experts from McKinsey and Company in 2009,

which was called the Consumer Decision Journey. This approach used a loop to explain the different stages of consumer buying process. As shown in Figure 2, the consumer purchases products frequently enjoy, advocates and bonds with it and then entered the inner loop, known as the Loyalty Loop. In this stage, the consumers are completely happy with the product and will develop a bond with the product. If the brand is not able to maintain or provide the customer with the same value or does something wrong, then the customer will go out of the inner loop to the broader consideration and evaluation loop. Here, the customer will search for other brands which offers them value and tries to make a bond with the new brand (Maslowska, Malthouse and Collinger, 2017).

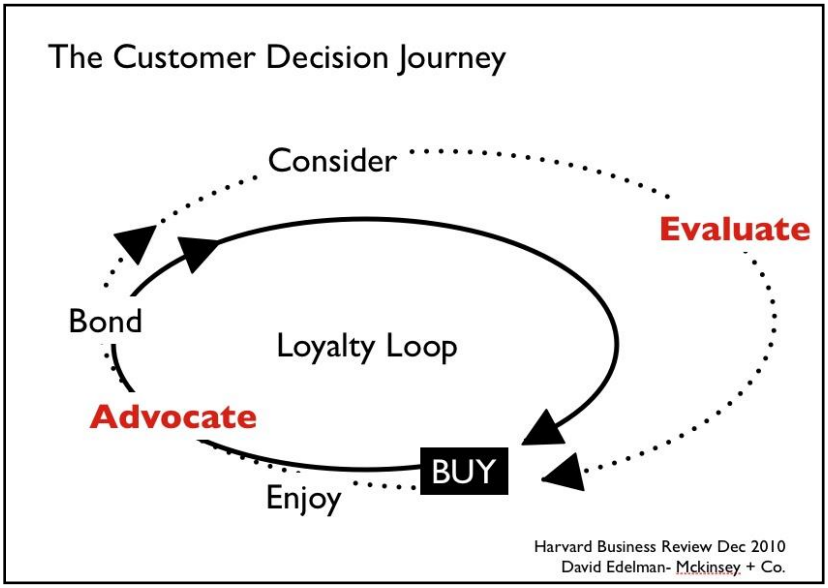

Figure 2: McKinsey Customer Decision Journey (Mckinsey, 2010)

Brand loyalty is one of the factors that are significant in accessing high compelling power towards buying behaviour of customers. Such as dynamic or premium pricing are some of the strategies that are built by the companies to entice cognitive behaviour and psychological state

of the consumer. More people are changing their buying behaviour based on brand communication.

2.5 Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour

This section is an essential part of the literature as it discusses the factors of social media marketing. Following are the factors that are taken in this study.

2.5.1 Social Media as a Source of Information

The source is considered as the authentic and used as the first factor that influences the minds of people which eventually affects consumer buying behaviour. The growth of the internet and technologies has made the social media as a vital source of information regarding products or services. The rising influence of social platforms teaches a large number of Pet Owners to get the useful information regarding the required product. Moreover, it is debated in past studies that more people visit social media platform or any digital platform for getting information regarding desired goods (Bartosik-Purgat, 2016). Effective use of communication has been built that creates an impact of loyalty among consumers to acquire authentic information on the internet or to execute the pre-stage of buying products. Receiving and sharing information is common and more people are trusting the social media sourcing to get useful information on how to acquire the best possible product. Technologies are now used to gain a competitive position; however, companies communicate effective information regarding the products or services they offer (Scheiner, 2014).

2.5.2 Positive word of mouth (WOM)

Positive word of mouth is one of the significant factors that is developed by companies to attract mass customers. Moreover, the online positive word of mouth strategies has been developed by firms that are utilising social media sites as a digital platform to communicate the positive word of the mouth effectively. Social media provides an opportunity to the mass people to gain information likewise, the online positive word of mouth has a critical aspect in analysing the purchase intentions or to attract the customers via social networking (Kimmel, and Kitchen, 2014). Firms utilise the positive words of the loyal customers to gain interest and to attract a large number of potential people to shape their purchasing patterns towards their company to influence its sales performance. More people tend to enhance trust based on the positive words of the other customers as more companies are sustaining the review areas to show the credibility of the product or brand. Social positive word of mouth strategies by brands have been constantly affecting the purchasing behaviour of consumers (Subramanian, 2018).

2.5.3 Brand Community

Brand community is one of the factors that is focused in this report. Most of the brands are focusing to increase reputation via enhancing its social media position in the corporate market. Firms develop effective brand community with the strategies of corporate social responsibilities (CSR) acts and strive to determine its own brand image via putting values into the minds of stakeholders (Hoeffler, and Keller, 2002). Customers are the most important part of the company and the whole performance in terms of sales revenue is dependent on them. Brand community is the major focus of the management in the firms and to develop a sustainable

relationship with the customers through online social media to enhance a sense of trust and loyalty into the minds of the customer, which eventually motivates their buying behaviour.

2.5.4 Buying Behaviour

Buying behaviour is an important concept that social media is reflecting. The end goal of each firm or entity is to develop effective sales via maintaining effective relations with the target market. Strategy building on social media reflects to influence the behaviour of the consumers and their purchasing patterns. Motivation and the participation of the customers in purchasing a specific product is one of the essential goals of businesses to target their consumers and to enhance sales. Respectively, more people are changing their preferences due to the effective involvement with the selling party communications via technologies such as social media.

2.6 Factors Influencing Social Media Marketing

The factors of social media marketing (SMM) have been increasing and a higher influence among the consumers is being created. According to the analysis of Saboo, Kumar and Ramani (2016), it is observed that factors of Social Media Marketing have been creating a major change for the businesses as it creates a higher attraction for the consumers. Additionally, Social Media Marketing factors allow customers to gain much more information about the products that are being offered and sold to the consumers. It was assessed that the consumer belonging to any industry need to be communicated well in terms of having social media marketing that can create higher attraction among the consumers. Some of the major factors influencing social media marketing are provided below:

2.6.1 Social media as a Source of Information

According to the analysis of Putter (2017), the means of social media marketing is essential for conveying the message and spreading the information to the people around the world. It has been observed that the marketers these days opt for the means of marketing using social media that can spread fast and exact information to the consumers for gaining better profitability in this regard that is also applicable within the case of Ireland. The means of information that is spread through social media creates a better response for the consumers as the people these days are highly involved in using the social media according to Lim (2017). Based on the assessment of Duffett (2017), the researchers have carried out the assessment and has found that the means of social media has a higher influence over the consumers as the information can spread fast and in a more effective manner which is being considered as an important aspect for the consumers as well as the businesses.

2.6.2 Positive word of mouth (WOM)

Positive word of mouth is one of the most effective ways of gaining consumer attraction as it creates an increased attraction and satisfies the consumers purchase intensions. According to the assessment of Swani et al (2017), positive WOM is one of the best and highly suitable methods for running and spreading the positive word of business. According to Alalwan (2018), the means of positive WOM is being used by the businesses these days for marketing the products and services to the consumers. It has been observed that products and services can be marketed through social media by providing related information easily. However, the means of positive WOM also creates a positive image of the products and also gives a higher response from the consumers and their friends and families. Therefore, the means of positive WOM is referred

to as the higher influencer of the products that can be used by the businesses to increase consumer attraction and boosting buying behaviour. There are several methods of increasing the WOM within the businesses according to Nofal, Calicioglu and Aljuhmani (2020). One of the most effective methods of increasing positive WOM is through the means of social media by considering the customer service on responding to all the needs and wants of the Pet Owners anytime.

2.6.3 Brand Community

According to the analysis of Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2016) brand community is referred to as the connection which attracts individual identity towards the culture and behaviour of the brand on creating a group of people. It has been observed that the recent development in marketing and research has provided with the evidence that the means of brand communities are developed within the social media that provides relevant information to the consumes regarding the brand according to Sankar (2019). The people belonging to the specific brand communities create the sharing behaviour of system, values and standards for maintaining the recognised bond among each other. The increasing use of social media has been facilitating the means of brand community that can be used by the businesses for increasing consumer attraction as referred to the study of Dwivedi et al (2020). Additionally, the brand communicates formed within the social media platforms creates increased communication among the consumers that facilitates them for purchasing the products and services of the brand.

2.6.4 Buying Behaviour

Buying behaviour of the consumers represents the activities related to the purchase of the particular products and services among the consumers. It has been observed that the consumers buying behaviour shows purchase-related activities of the consumers according to the assessment of Duan et al (2016). Based on the arguments of Lim et al (2017) there is a bunch of activities related to the buying behaviour of the consumers that represents their willingness to purchase a product or service from any company. It has been observed in the study of Saboo, Kumar and Ramani (2016) that the means of social media marketing plays a major role in identifying the target consumers and increasing their interest on purchasing any particular products or service. Likewise, different kinds of buying behaviour can create the means of interest within the consumers for purchasing the products. Kasemsap (2018) has argued that the different kinds of buying behaviour show the need and requirements of the products among the consumers in this regard. According to the analysis of Alalwan (2018), the means of consumer buying behaviour represents the purchase decision of the consumers and allows them to increase the profitability of the business.

2.7 Social Media Marketing Strategies

Based on the arguments of Stephen (2016), social media marketing is one of the most effective and cheapest ways of carrying out the advertisement and marketing among the consumers. This method of marketing is associated with various strategies and provides the cheapest methods for conducting the online marketing activities that can be used by the companies to gain higher consumer attraction. According to the analysis of Godey et al (2016), it has been observed that the organisations that follow strategies of social media marketing can

gain several benefits for conducting the marketing activities on the targeted audience. However, on the other hand, there is a variety of challenges and issues that are present within this type of marketing according to the assessment of Prabhakar and Umair (2020). One of the major important outcomes of strategies is measuring the ROI of the company and the products that are present for selling (Palalic et al., 2020). The researchers have assessed that social media marketing has presented the views and arguments that the issue of time management is present within this scenario as most of the consumers may be willing to purchase the products anytime and anywhere as discussed by Ragab and Ragab (2020). The strategies that are carried out with the help of traditional methods of marketing shows that traditional marketing can be spread in a while and may also take a long time for spreading. However, it gains the accurate response from the consumers in this regard according to Ramanathan, Subramanian and Parrott (2017). On the other hand, the consumers who are attracted to social media marketing techniques can be spread easily and frequently. However, the means of managing audience and analysing social media performance can be really poor. The researchers have also assessed that marketing strategies on social media can be cheap and can also be gained within low prices, however, the consumers can be distracted and may also move towards some other products and businesses offerings according to Dwivedi et al (2020). One of the major strategies for social media marketing is the means of gaining target audience and showing better response towards the consumers in this regard. These are some of the major strategies that have been observed by the researchers for addressing the research phenomenon and gaining an increased amount of respondents with the help of it.

2.8 Current Trends of Pets Market

Buying and selling of Pet products and accessories is a unique method of making a purchase decision and showing a better response from the market in this regard. The researchers based on the means of marketing have also researched the topic of buying patterns of Pet Owners that have characterised as an important feature for presenting their care and affection for their pets according to Fenech (2019). Additionally, it has been observed that the growth in pet retail industry and the trend of online purchasing of products and accessories has been gaining much more attention from the Pet Owners. The research conducted by Swani et al (2017) has highlighted that the pet market within the US has facilitated an account of $11 billion within the sales of pet products and accessories. Shivakumar (2018) has also added that the researchers have addressed the means of marketing of the Pet products and accessories through social media can be represented as highlighting pet owner's likes and dislikes within them and showing a highly remarkable aspect for buying products for their pets. The research conducted by Erkan and Evans (2016) has shown that the owners of cats and dogs have been overwhelming with the pet industry using the social media platforms and the industry that can be effective in terms of determining the historic trends and changing the means of buying and selling of pet products through the internet.

As shown in Figure 3, In Ireland it is estimated that by the end of 2023, the income generated by pet food product manufacturers will reach around 4675 million U.S Dollars which shows a significant effect on the growth of pet market in Ireland (Huhn, 2019).

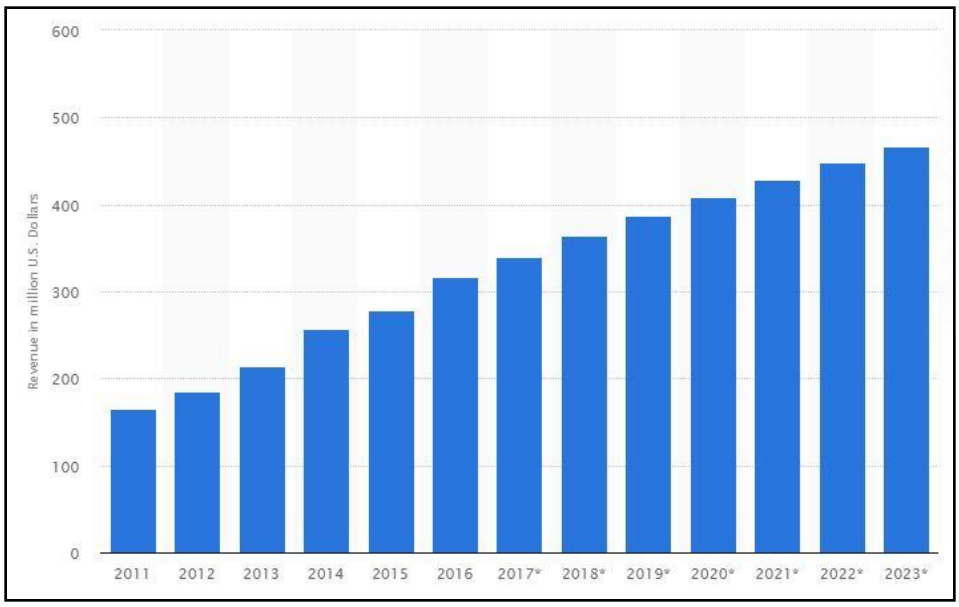

Figure 3: Pet food industry revenue in Ireland from 2011-2023 (Statista, 2019)

Based on the assessment of Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi (2020) the researchers have assessed and have argued in terms of current trends and future directions of market share and variety of aspects showing that most of the Pet Owners belonging to the pet industry can be used for assessing the aspects of local markets that can undertake the use of retailing and marketing through the means of internet and social media. Based on the arguments of Aragoncillo and Orus (2018) the researchers have carried out the analysis using the means of market sizes and structures that can be determined and can be used for estimating the current patterns of pet market.

2.9 Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour

Based on the assessment of Bartosik-Purgat, (2016) the consumer buying behaviour is referred to as the means of buying decisions that can be used as an important aspect for determining and highlighting consumer needs and wants for the purchase. It has been observed

that the consumer are much more attracted to this means of marketing that can be used for altering the attitudes and buying behaviour of the consumers. It has been observed that the study of Shivakumar (2018) has also highlighted the methods of social media marketing and its impact on consumer buying behaviour by showing that the there is need to assess the means of marketing that can be safe and can also provide with the accrete methods and prices for buying the products or accessories. The research conducted by Nofal, Calicioglu and Aljuhmani (2020) has highlighted that the means of marketing through the social media is far better as compared to the traditional means of marketing that can be used by the consumer for determining the aspects and showing better responses from the marketing campaigns in this regard. It has been observed that the consumer who are willing to purchase the products or accessories using the social media can have better consumer buying behaviour as compared to the other traditional methods of marketing and advertisements (Mishra, Maheswarappa and Colby, 2018). In addition to this, the researcher also has assessed for determining the benefits of marketing and highlighting the aspect of buying behaviour of the consumers through social media. According to the analysis of Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi (2020), there are different methods of marketing and advertisement within the social media that creates a variety of attraction for consumers and allows them to assess the aspects of consumer interaction. Social media campaigns influence consumers buying behaviour that creates an effective communication and also communicates the messages effectively for more consumer interaction and better buying behaviour among them as discussed by Ramanathan, Subramanian and Parrott (2017). As referred to the study of Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2016), it has been observed that the social media marketing helps in creating possibilities for the common people who are unable to come personally and get the

sales. Moreover, it has also been observed that social media marketing and advertisement can be useful for creating satisfaction for buying products or accessories after communicating with the sellers in real-time on social media. In addition to this, the researchers have also assessed the factors of different groups and communities that evenly purchase the aspects on social media and also motivates others for buying different products according to Aragoncillo and Orus (2018). The researchers have found that the buying decision is made simpler and more effective that is due to the reason of having social media purchases and showing better behaviour of the people in this regard. The study of Akar, Yüksel, and Bulut (2015) has emphasised on the fact that most of the people look out for social media and visit different pages for getting the information regarding the option of products that are available for them and also provides the positive word of mouth that is created and also presents the feasibility of showing better views and opinions in this regard.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

There is a variety of theories and models that represents the aspects of consumer behaviour and considers the options for facilitating the behaviour and attributes of human beings for considering their buying behaviour and purchase decisions. The benefits of social media are increasing and have been creating a variety of methods for attracting the consumers and showing a positive attitude towards buying according to Akar, Yüksel, and Bulut (2015). The theories and models are also designed for representing the means of buying and showing the attitude of the people towards social media campaigns. According to Duan et al (2016) consumer socialization is a theory that has its implications for assessing the cognitive, behavioural and affective attitudes of human beings for dealing with the human nature and advertisement strategies that are

present within the surrounding. The study of Mishra, Maheswarappa and Colby (2018) has highlighted that the social networking websites present a virtual space and community to the people for playing a vital role within socialisation and considering the means of communication within social media attributes. The study of Aragoncillo and Orus (2018) has highlighted that people communicate through social media that brings about their behaviour and attitudes that can create an agent for consumer socialisation on social media.

Another theory that can be observed within the following factor is Hawkins Stern Impulse Buying that creates the opportunities for impulsive buying behaviour with the behavioural aspects and attitudes of the people according to Gupta (2020).

The researchers have argued that human nature is there for dealing with the personal attitudes and behaviour of human beings for decision making. Similarly, according to Ramanathan, Subramanian and Parrott (2017), the means of the social media marketing that includes promotional strategies, motivation, price, product features and quality of the product or service support in determining the impulsive buying behaviour of the consumers for better options and attributes on having the electronic devices that can be used for planned actions and decision making of the consumers in real-time (Ozer and Gultekin, 2015).

2.11 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework determines the graphical presentation of the factors and variables that are considered for the study and presenting the relationship between the variables in this regard. The researchers have assessed that the topic of social media and social media marketing influences on the consumer buying behaviour, it has been observed that there is a

direct relationship between the variables that are needed to be assessed and formed with better responses of the consumer buying behaviour of products and accessories. Figure 4 represents the framework.

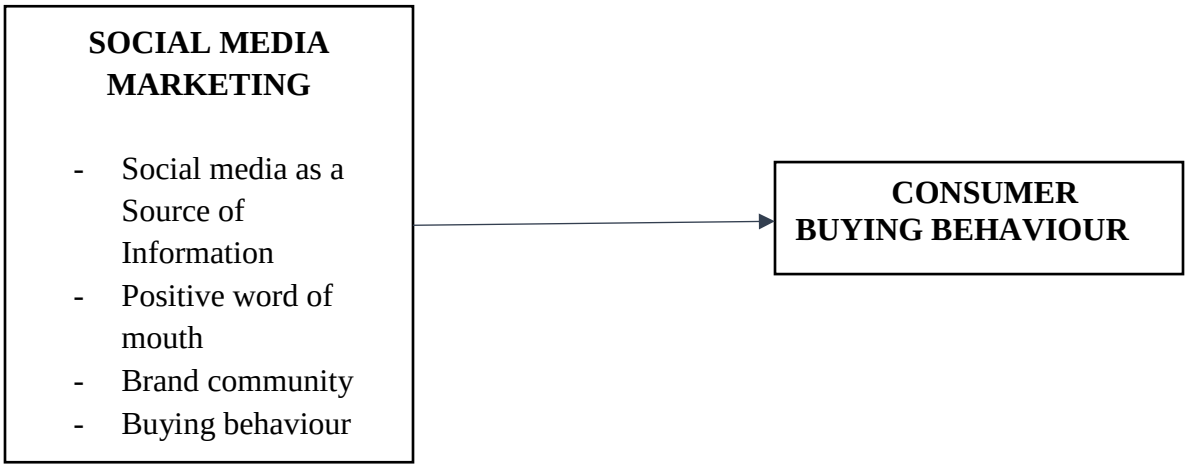

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

As shown in Figure 4, the framework represents the variables like social media a source of information, positive word of mouth, brand community and buying behaviour of the consumer. All of these have been considered as the factors of the social media marketing that is assessed for understanding its impact on the consumer buying behaviour. The model represents a direct relationship between the variables for better assessment and attributes. However, the conceptual framework is also used in this study to understand if the social media marketing factors influence the Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland.

2.12 Literature Summary

The research has provided with the literature review and has highlighted some of the major key points that are gathered within the aspect of consumer buying behaviour and the means of social media. The researchers have found that several factors influence social media marketing and allow them to gain much more information about the products that are being sold and is being offered to the consumers. It has been summarised and concluded that the means of positive WOM also creates a positive image of the products and also gives a higher response from the consumers and their friends and family. Therefore, the means of positive word of mouth is referred to as the higher influencer of the products. It has been found that the people belonging to the specific brand communities creates the sharing behaviour of system, values and standards for maintaining the recognised bond among each other. Moreover, there is a variety of challenges and issues that are present within this means of marketing. Additionally, it has been observed that there has been great importance and attention garnered by unique characteristics of social media in the past few years, a revolution in the practices related to marketing has been brought by social media. Various challenges related to social media marketing are also presented in the literature that creates a hindrance for it in influencing the purchasing decision of consumers which also implies to the Pet Owners in Ireland. Traditionally, the consumer buying behaviour is set out as the fast-growing segments and online selling is getting more attention as compared to the past years. The growing focus of online buying and selling has transformed the process of impacting consumers buying behaviour.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This is the third chapter of the study, there are various sections discussed in this study. By referring to the Research Onion Framework, a discussion about research philosophy has been taken place, in which it has been discussed that what philosophy or belief is used by the researcher to conduct this study. Afterwards, the discussion related to the research approach has been taken place in the study and focused research strategy are discussed and justifications provided that what research strategy is appropriate for the present study. Then, the time horizons, research methods and of materials along with the procedure and techniques have been discussed in the study. Next in line, the chapter has shed light on the discussion related to the data analysis and justification is provided about the use of an appropriate method of data analysis. At the end of the chapter, ethical considerations are provided that are associated with the research.

3.2 Research Onion

In this section, some various strategies and methods are used by the researcher to gather and examine data to solve the research question. Several research methodology frameworks can be used by the researcher to conduct a systematic examination, one of which is Research Onion. The research onion framework guides in making choices for different sections of the methodology like research philosophy, methods and strategies, collecting data, sampling etc. as illustrated in Figure.1 (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2017).

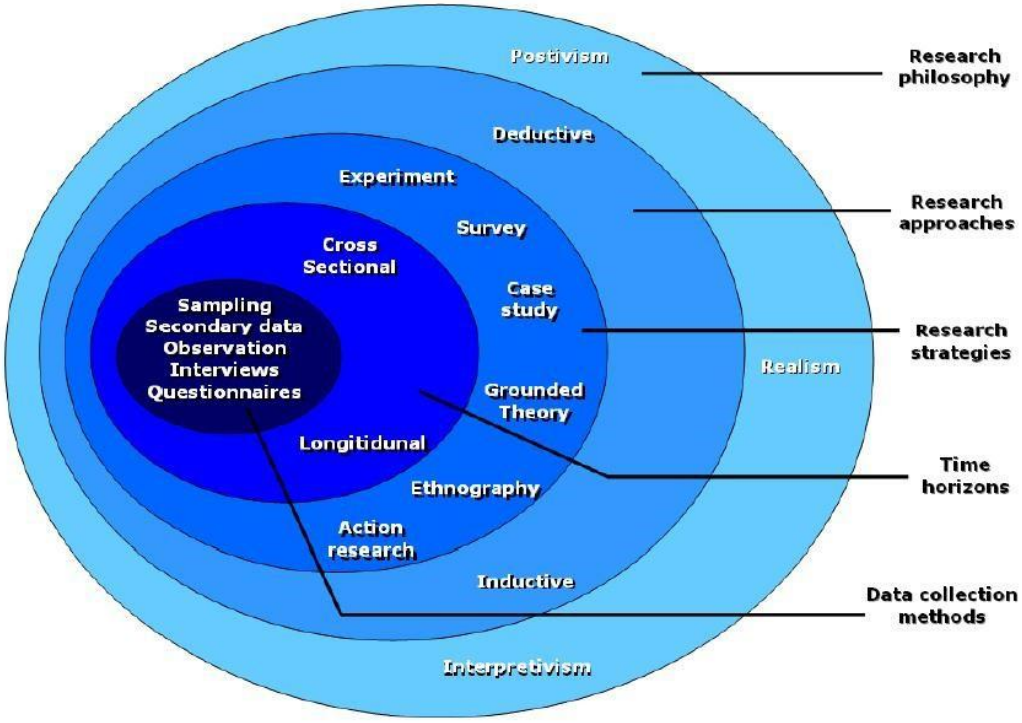

Figure 5: Research Onion Framework (Saunders et.al, 2012)

3.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is considered as a belief that the data about the phenomenon are accumulated. There are various types of research philosophies, such as positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and realism (Prasad, 2017). As the present study is intended to assess the impact of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland, therefore, by considering the nature of the present study, the quantitative research design is appropriate. In the present study, an impact is intended to be assessed, however, this sort of researches are usually based on quantitative design and positivism philosophy greatly relies on quantitative design (Ryan, 2018). Apart from this, the researcher has employed questionnaire to obtain information from Pet Owners in Ireland, therefore, in the information gathered through the questionnaire is based

on numbers and positivism philosophy is the optimal choice for quantitative data. Furthermore, the use of this philosophy will enable the researcher to analyse trends and pattern of buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. Additionally, during studies and discussion, there is a well-defined structure followed in positivism as there are set rules and law followed, which prevents the chances of errors (Zukauskas, Vveinhardt and Andriukaitiene, 2018). Therefore, this is another important motivation behind using this philosophy.

3.4 Research Approach

After the first layer of Research Onion comes the research approach, and according to Saunders et al. (2015), this second layer should be peeled off by a researcher when doing the methodology. He also states that, based on the theory used, the study can take either a deductive approach or an inductive approach.

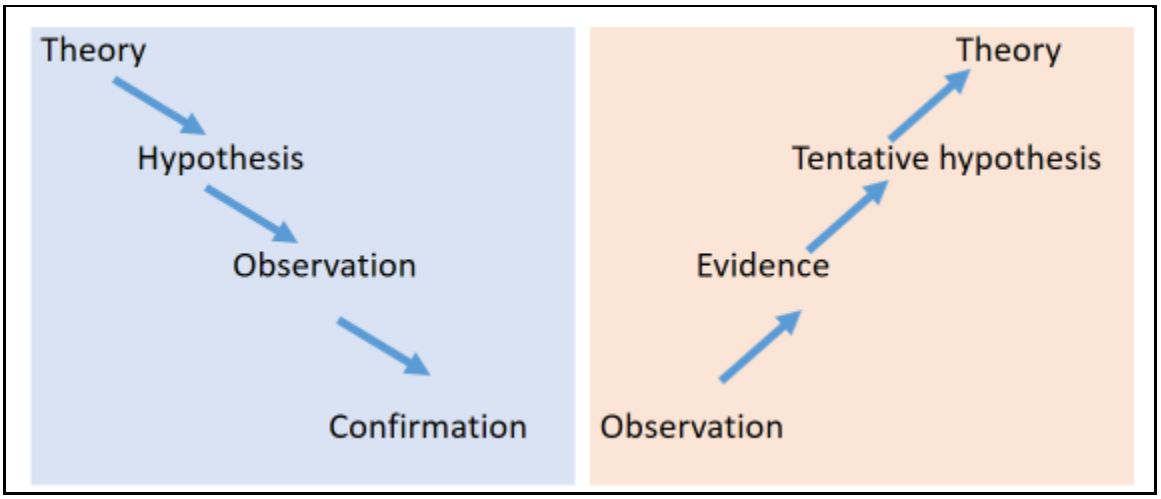

Figure 6: Deductive vs. Inductive approach (Saunders et al. 2009)

As shown in Figure 6, the difference between these two approaches is that the deductive approach connects with positivism while inductive approach connects with interpretive. A

research study that is well started can be considered as a study that is half done (Burney, 2008). This is why focusing on the right approach is important for a researcher as it helps to find a solution to the research problem. Both, deductive and inductive approach can be considered as a tool that helps the Theory Observation Hypothesis Pattern Tentative Hypothesis Observation Theory Confirmation choice of the research approach. In the deductive approach, tests are carried out with numerical observation, to prove the theories or hypothesis to find a solution to the research problem (Burney, 2008). Theory, hypothesis, observation and confirmation are the different stages in the deductive approach. Arguments based on laws, rules and regulations are used to provide reasoning for a specific fact in the deductive approach. The main aim of inductive research approach is to overcome the limitations of the deductive approach. The inductive research approach is defined as the general analysis of more specified concepts (Burney, 2008). In this approach, researchers have more flexibility as it does not depend on a prefixed theory. Observation, pattern, tentative hypothesis and theory are the different stages in the inductive approach. Observing the gathered data is used to make inductive arguments (Creswell, J. 2009; Gill, J. and Johnson, P. 2010). It also helps in getting a clear cut picture of what's going on. The bottom-up approach is the basis of this. To achieve correct and logical answers, a combination of inductive and deductive approach can be used. Several advantages will be available for research when both of these are combined. The Deductive approach provides reasoning that is related to objectives and causation is also taken into account. While reasoning gained through inductive approach is connected with a subjective approach and has a specific meaning. This study makes use of the deductive approach as it suits quantitative research.

3.5 Research Strategy

A plan based on a step by step process through which the guidance to the efforts and thoughts are provided is considered as a research strategy (Bobrovskij, 2018).

As this thesis requires information to be gathered in an arranged manner and from a specific number of population, this thesis makes use of survey research strategy. The questionnaire is the technique used to gather information in this thesis. This method justifies the positivism approach adopted by the researcher and helps in the research being unbiased. It also enables a huge gathering of information and also facilitates easy analysis of information which can lead to making meaningful conclusions (Saunders et al., 2009). There are a lot of advantages as well as some disadvantages to the survey technique. One of the advantages is that with the help of the Internet, data from a huge amount of people can be collected easily, which would have been difficult if the people are from different locations (Wright, 2005). Only less time is required to collect data from a huge amount of people even if they are from faraway places Yun and Trumbo (2000). It also requires only less amount of money Couper and Miller (2008). The researcher can engage in other tasks related to the research even when data is being collected using the Internet survey method Andrew et al., (2003). Respondents will provide honest answers as their identity is not revealed (Fricker and Schonlau, 2002). This is a very crucial factor in positivism approach as if the respondents are contacted through letters or through telephone they might not provide the true data (Ilieva et al., 2002). As the researcher needs to gather the information that should be quantified, the survey strategy best suits the deductive approach (Burns, Veeck, and Bush, 2017, p. 172).

Google forms were used by the researcher to make questionnaires. The questionnaire was sent to the participants (Pet Owners in Ireland) using an online platform known as Facebook Messenger. To get their consent about their participation in the study, the researcher intended to target 100 participants and intended to use the data collected for the study. The employed questionnaire was based on five points Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All the questions in the questionnaire are close-ended and related to social media marketing factors such as information in social media, positive word of mouth, brand community and Pet Owners buying behaviour (in Ireland).

IBM SPSS software was used to do the complex statistical evaluation. Frequency analysis, Correlation analysis and Regression analysis was used to measure the effect of the variables used in the study. The general and specific objectives of the research were answered with the help of the data gathered through the quantitative method.

3.6 Time Horizons

The cross-sectional time horizon will be used in this research as it suits the method of survey strategy. Evidence will be collected at a particular time point from a group of Pet Owners who will serve as the representatives for the chosen segment. When compared to cross-sectional time horizon, the longitudinal time horizon is lengthier and also not cost-efficient (Walliman, 2010).

The fifth stage in recognising research method is the tie horizon as mentioned in the research onion (Saunders et al., 2015). The two ways of doing research are longitudinal and cross-sectional (Saunders and Lewis, 2018, p. 128). Longitudinal applies for research at an extended

period (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). They are also known as ‘movies’ of the population as they repeatedly evaluate the same sample for a long period (Burns et al., 2017, p. 99). Whereas, cross-sectional is used to evaluate the phenomenon at a part-time. Cross-sectional research is adopted when there is limited time. It is known as ‘snapshot’ of the population as information is gathered only at a single period (Burns et al., 2017, p. 99). As this research faces problems with time and access, quantitative data is collected using the survey method and a cross-sectional design.

3.7 Research Methods

Research methods are classified as qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. A quantitative research method is the kind of method that focuses on numbers and statistical information. Therefore, this method is based on the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, explain and predict a phenomenon, while qualitative design involves the study of human behaviour, motivation and themes. However, in mixed research method both qualitative and quantitative aspects are considered (Morgan, 2017). This design is usually used to overcome the weaknesses of both designs.

As in the present study the researcher has intended to collect data from the questionnaire, which is a quantitative instrument, therefore, the research has used a quantitative research method. The other reason to use this method is that the researcher can collect data quickly with the help of it. This method can enable the researcher to collect data in a real-time scenario and conduct statistical analysis quickly (Bloomfield and Fisher, 2019).

Apart from this, as in the present research, the researcher has intended to target 100 participants, therefore, by employing quantitative research design this number of participants

can easily be reached through a questionnaire (Crane et al., 2017). However, if the research had used qualitative methods or design to reach 100 participants through interviews, it would have been quite difficult to reach such number. Thus, the researcher has used a quantitative research method.

3.8 Participants

In the present study 100 is the sample size. All the participants of the study are Pet Owners in Ireland from age group 18 to 45, and the researcher aims to collect data from them with an intent to explain their buying behaviour. The researcher intends to use non-probability convenience sampling to collect the sample. Various reasons propel the researcher to use this sample size. By employing the techniques of convenience sampling, the researcher can collect data as per his convenience (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Besides, as there are limited time and budget possessed by the researcher, therefore, convenience sampling is also appropriate in this case as it is very time saving and involved very little cost (Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz, 2016). Moreover, the process of collecting data from convenience sampling is quite simple, therefore, it can provide ease to the researcher in the process of conducting the research. In addition to this, with the help of convenience sampling, in the short duration of time, data collection can be facilitated.

The research intended to analyse Pet Owners behaviour in Ireland, therefore, the study recruited 100 Pet Owners in Ireland using social media platforms such as Facebook along with different Pet's classified Facebook communities. The researcher could have targeted Pet Owners located in the Pet commodity market, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to elude risk of

spread of the virus, the population was targeted online. The primary target of the research is the location of Ireland, therefore, all the Pet Owners that are living in Ireland were targeted.

3.9 Materials

The two most important types of data collection are Primary data collection and secondary data collection. In the collection of primary data, the data is being accumulated directly from the respondents or first-hand sources. The most common sources that are used to collect data from primary sources are interviews, survey, observations and focused group discussion. On the other hand, in secondary data collection, the data is collected from second-hand sources, such as books, reviews, articles, newspapers and other secondary sources (Heap and Waters, 2019). This is the kind of data that have already been collected before.

By considering the nature of the study, primary data collection is an optimal choice for the researcher to collect data. Therefore, in the present study, the data are obtained from primary sources. The reason to collect data from these sources is that the information collected from primary sources are much more reliable and accurate as compare to the information collected from secondary sources (Johnston, 2017). Given that primary data are collected from first-hand sources, which enables the researcher to obtain the most recent and topic-specific insights. Therefore, topic-specific insight can enable the researcher to resolve topic-specific research issues. Besides, in primary data collection, the researcher is the owner of the information (Clark and Vealé, 2018). Thus, up-to-date information and better accuracy eventually enhance the quality of research. In addition to this, in primary data collection, there is a higher level of control of the researcher over how the information is gathered.

Google forms were used to create the survey. It is a popular tool used for questionnaires and surveys. It is user-friendly as well as results are displayed in an easy to understand manner, making it suitable for this research. To understand the aim and anticipated result, a small description was included in the form. The nature and aim of the study were explained along with the data protection and consent form attached to the questionnaire. The questions were selected after considering the seven types of questions put forward by Saunders and Lewis (2018, p. 140). Five-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used in the questionnaire. Appendix 1 comprises of the complete questionnaire.

The information gathered using a questionnaire gives the anticipated answers to the research questions and the objectives of the research are achieved (Burns, Veeck and Bush, 2017, p. 236). So the questions were prepared in such a way that the respondents understand the questions as intended by the researcher. At most care was taken to ensure that the questionnaire contained only simple words which were understandable to the common man. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way as to provide ample information to the researcher which enables him to fulfil the research objectives and also makes sure that 'content validity' is ensured.

3.10 Procedure

The process of transforming, modelling and cleaning of data is considered as data analysis. With the help of data analysis, useful information is discovered as there is useful information extracted from the data with the help of data analysis. As in the present study the data is collected from a questionnaire, which means data are based on numbers, therefore, the researcher has used a quantitative method of analysis (Ong and Puteh, 2017). Discriptive and

Inferential Statistics was analysed using SPSS software. There are four different ways in which data was analysed.

Firstly, the researcher analysed the data using Reliability testing to know the values of Cronbach's Alpha, which indicates if the data is reliable.

Secondly, the researcher has used SPSS software for frequency analysis to obtained the detailed analysis of the survey response.

Thirdly, the researcher has employed correlation analysis in the study using SPSS. The reason to use correlation analysis is that the researcher can analyse the association between all variables, such as independent variables and dependent variables. Thus, with the help of this analysis, a statistical relationship between independent and dependent variables can be analysed (Schober and Vetter, 2020).

Lastly, the researcher with the help of SPSS has used regression analysis as well. The reason to use regression analysis is that the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables can be estimated and it also enables the researcher to gauge the strength of the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable (Galling et al., 2017). All three types of analysis were applied by the researcher to analyse the data.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

In the present study, no political considerations are associated, but some important ethical considerations are associated with the study. In the process of research, the privacy of all participants is preserved and protected by the researcher. The anonymity of all the participant is maintained in the process of research. All the participants are provided with a brief about the

purpose of the research. Data protection form and consent form is attached before the questionnaire in the survey. In the process of research, all the information of participants is used only for research, and after the completion of research, all data are deleted. Moreover, no participant is forced to participate in the process of research, therefore, there is completely voluntarily participation of them. The researcher has taken their prior consent about their participation in the study and then they are sent a questionnaire.

3.12 Data Analysis

The information received through Google Forms were examined using the analysis program that was embedded in the Google Forms website when the respondents filled the questionnaire. Statistical data analysis were done after downloading the examined data. The primary and secondary data were analysed simultaneously and the outcome from primary data were to be changed into a quantitative form. Advanced examination such as frequency, correlation and regression analysis were done on numerical examination using SPSS. The detailed findings were executed in this chapter and evaluated based on the detail discussion. Data analysis section provides an overview of the findings that have been concluded in this research. Moreover, the discussion of the objectives was carried out in which each objective was taken and examined effectively.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The survey consisted of 16 questions and was created with the help of Google Forms. 100 respondents were expected to be surveyed and this was achieved. The respondents were Pet Owners living in Ireland. The questionnaire was distributed using various online platforms and mainly Facebook Messenger. The respondents were selected from various Facebook groups relating to Pet community in Ireland. Questions were made in such a way as to achieve the objectives of the research. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were analyzed with the help of SPSS. The effect of variables (Pet Owners buying behaviour, source of information, positive word of mouth and brand community) were analysed by conducting frequency, correlation and regression analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.979	16

Table 1 shows the value of Cronbach's Alpha for the 16 variables used in the study. Any value of 0.7 and above is considered reliable and the value obtained here which is 0.979 indicates high reliability.

Table 2: *Item-Total Statistics*

Questions	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	19.36	190.374	0.305	0.985
Q2	19.41	190.547	0.305	0.985
Q3	19.90	173.909	0.942	0.977
Q4	19.68	173.634	0.950	0.977
Q5	19.67	174.526	0.945	0.977
Q6	19.39	173.816	0.889	0.978
Q7	19.80	169.798	0.941	0.977
Q8	19.80	174.747	0.938	0.977
Q9	19.81	174.721	0.952	0.977
Q10	19.89	171.856	0.954	0.977
Q11	19.81	174.620	0.956	0.977
Q12	19.94	174.522	0.950	0.977
Q13	20.17	175.435	0.939	0.977
Q14	20.14	175.435	0.945	0.977
Q15	20.17	175.759	0.937	0.977
Q16	20.16	175.530	0.941	0.977

From Table 2 is it helpful to determine the increase or decrease in the Cronbach's value of a factor if a particular question is deleted. The deletion of Q1 and Q2 is shown to increase the value of the Cronbach's Alpha but, this change is not significant and there is no requirement to remove these variables from the study as the existing values of the Cronbach's Alpha are reliable for the factors forming this study.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Factors*

Variable	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Pet Owners Buying Behaviour	1.5525	0.80348
Source of Information	1.4750	1.00974
Positive word of mouth	1.2775	0.98595
Brand Community	0.9800	0.94860

Table 3 gives the values from the descriptive statistics and we can see here that Pet Owners buying behaviour, source of information, positive word of mouth and brand community have a mean value of 1.5525, 1.4750, 1.2775 and 0.9800 respectively. These values are the average of all the variables forming the respective factor. The table also gives us the values of the standard deviation for the individual factors. These values are usually used to measure the spread of a set of observations. They are 0.80348 for Pet Owners buying behaviour, 1.00974 for the source of information, 0.98595 for positive word of mouth and 0.94860 for the brand community.

4.1.2 Frequency Analysis

Question 1: As a Pet Owner, I find information in social media authentic.

Table 4: *Information on social media is authentic.*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
Agree	27	27.0	27.0	39.0
Neutral	36	36.0	36.0	75.0
Disagree	21	21.0	21.0	96.0
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The purpose of this question was to identify that does Pet Owners find information in social media authentic. As a result, Table 4 shows that 12 per cent of the research participants strongly agree whereas 27 per cent have provided agree as to the response. Whereas, 36 per cent have found to be neutral while 21 per cent have disagreed and 4 per cent of them have given strong disagreement.

Q2: As a Pet Owner, social media advertisements influence my purchase.

Table 5: *Social media advertisements influence purchase*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
Agree	35	35.0	35.0	45.0
Neutral	31	31.0	31.0	76.0
Disagree	20	20.0	20.0	96.0
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question was framed to identify that social media marketing influence purchase-related activities of the Pet Owners. As shown in Table 5, 10 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the statement that whereas 35 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 31 per cent have found to be neutral while 20 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 4 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response.

Q3: As a Pet Owner, positive reviews on social media influence my purchase.

Table 6: *Positive reviews on social media influence purchase*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	28	28.0	28.0	28.0
Agree	34	34.0	34.0	62.0
Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	86.0
Disagree	14	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The purpose of this question was to identify if positive reviews on social media persuade Pet Owners on making purchases. As a result, Table 6 shows that 28 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the statement whereas 34 per cent have provided agreement and 24 per cent have found to be neutral while 14 per cent have disagreed.

Q4: As a Pet Owner, I find social media an effective way of communicating product attributes.

Table 7: *Social media is an effective way of communicating product attributes.*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	17	17.0	17.0	17.0
Agree	39	39.0	39.0	56.0
Neutral	28	28.0	28.0	84.0
Disagree	13	13.0	13.0	97.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify that does social media allows the effective communication of the product attributes amongst Pet Owners. Table 7 shows that 17 per cent of the participants have given strong agreement, 39 per cent agree while 28 per cent are neutral with 13 per cent have found to have disagreed and only 3 per cent have given strong disagreement.

Q5: As a Pet owner, social media information leads me to buy a product online.

Table 8: *Social media information leads to buy a product online*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
Agree	41	41.0	41.0	56.0
Neutral	29	29.0	29.0	85.0
Disagree	12	12.0	12.0	97.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The purpose of this question was to identify that does social media information lead Pet Owners to buy a product online. Table 8 shows that 15 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response that eventually affects Pet Owners buying behaviour while 41 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Besides, 29 per cent have found to be neutral while 12 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 3 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response.

Q6: As a Pet owner, I use social media as my main source of information for Pet Products & Pet Accessories (FA).

Table 9: *Social Media is used as the main source of information for pet products and pet accessories.*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	9	9.0	9.0	9.0
Agree	41	41.0	41.0	50.0
Neutral	21	21.0	21.0	71.0
Disagree	24	24.0	24.0	95.0
Strongly Disagree	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is to identify that if Pet Owners used social media as a main source of information for pet products & pet accessories. Table 9 shows that 9 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the statement that social media is a vital source of information for product or service whereas 41 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 21 per cent have found to be neutral while 24 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 5 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response.

Q7: As a Pet owner, I research authentic information on social media before buying Pet products.

Table 10: *Authentic information is researched on social media before buying Pet products.*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	29	29.0	29.0	29.0
Agree	34	34.0	34.0	63.0
Neutral	14	14.0	14.0	77.0
Disagree	20	20.0	20.0	97.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify that does Pet Owners research information on social media before buying a pet product. Table 10 shows that 29 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the statement that Pet Owners acquire authentic information on social media at the pre-stage of buying products whereas 34 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 14 per cent have found to be neutral while 20 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 3 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response.

Q 8: As a Pet owner, I use social media sources to acquire the best possible product.

Table 11: *Social media sources are useful to acquire the best possible product*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	24	24.0	24.0	24.0
Agree	31	31.0	31.0	55.0
Neutral	32	32.0	32.0	87.0
Disagree	13	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 shows that 24 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the question that Pet Owners are trusting social media sourcing to get useful information on how to acquire the best possible product whereas 31 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 32 per cent have found to be neutral while 13 per cent have disagreed.

Q9: As a Pet owner, reviews influence my online purchase.

Table 12: *Reviews influence online purchase*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	19	19.0	19.0	19.0
Agree	44	44.0	44.0	63.0
Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	87.0
Disagree	11	11.0	11.0	98.0
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 12 shows that 19 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 44 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. 63 per cent of the Pet Owners respond that reviews influence their online purchase. Also, 24 per cent have found to be neutral while 11 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 2 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response which states that positive reviews on social media are attracting a large number of customers towards products.

Q10: As a Pet owner, I trust other Pet Owners experiences shared on social media.

Table 13: *Trusting other Pet Owners experience shared on social media*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	29	29.0	29.0	29.0
Agree	35	35.0	35.0	64.0
Neutral	20	20.0	20.0	84.0
Disagree	14	14.0	14.0	98.0
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question was designed to identify the Pet Owners trust in other Pet Owners experiences shared on social media. Table 13 is showing that 21 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response whereas 39 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 27 per cent have found to be neutral while 12 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 1 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response which

shows that more Pet Owners tend to enhance trust based on the words of the other Pet Owners on social media.

Q11: As a Pet owner, brand matters on social media.

Table 14: *Brand matters on social media*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	21	21.0	21.0	21.0
Agree	39	39.0	39.0	60.0
Neutral	27	27.0	27.0	87.0
Disagree	12	12.0	12.0	99.0
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 shows that 28 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 36 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Whereas, 24 per cent have found to be neutral while 12 per cent have disagreed. This shows that credibility of the brand matters to Pet Owners.

Q12. As a pet owner, I enjoy being an active member of online communities.

Table 15: *Being an active member of online communities is enjoyable*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	28	28.0	28.0	28.0
Agree	36	36.0	36.0	64.0
Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	88.0
Disagree	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify if Pet Owners enjoy being an active member of online communities. Table 15 shows that 29 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement as a response to the question that they enjoy whereas 35 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 20 per cent have found to be neutral while 14 per cent have disagreed. Lastly, 2 per cent of them have given strong disagreement as to their response.

Q13: As a Pet owner, brand communities on social media influence me.

Table 16: *Brand communities on social media influence buying*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	30	30.0	30.0	70.0
Neutral	23	23.0	23.0	93.0
Disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify if brand communities on social media influence Pet Owners. Table 16 shows that 40 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 30 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 23 per cent have found to be neutral while 7 per cent have disagreed. This shows that social media brand communities are influencing the minds of the customers.

Q14: As a Pet owner, I follow brand communities' reviews.

Table 17: *Following Brand communities reviews*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	38	38.0	38.0	38.0
Agree	31	31.0	31.0	69.0
Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	93.0
Disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify if Pet Owners follow brand communities reviews. Table 17 shows that 37 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 32 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 24 per cent have found to be neutral while 7 per cent have disagreed. This shows that reviews shared within similar brand communities have a direct influence on Pet Owners.

Q15: As a pet owner, I find Brand communities enjoyable to develop a relationship with the brand.

Table 18: *Brand communities are enjoyable to develop a relationship with the brand*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	29	29.0	29.0	69.0
Neutral	25	25.0	25.0	94.0
Disagree	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is designed to identify if Pet Owners find brand communities enjoyable to develop a relationship with the brand. Table 18 shows that 41 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 28 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 25 per cent have found to be neutral while 6 per cent have disagreed. Therefore, brand communities develop a sustainable relationship with customers through online social media.

Q16: As a pet owner, I feel more loyal to brands that promote communities.

Table 19: *Feeling more loyal to brands that promote communities*

Response Code	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	39	39.0	39.0	39.0
Agree	31	31.0	31.0	70.0
Neutral	23	23.0	23.0	93.0
Disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This question is to identify the Pet Owners perception of feeling loyal to brands that promote communities. Table 19 shows that 38 per cent of the research participants have given strong agreement whereas 32 per cent have provided agreement as to the response. Also, 23 per cent have found to be neutral while 7 per cent have disagreed. This shows that brand communities enhance a sense of trust and loyalty into the minds of the customer.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

4.2.2 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is the analysis of relationship pertaining amid the variables of the study. It is also referred to as the Pearson correlation which is regarded as the tool providing with the information regarding how the two quantitative variables can have positive association amid them. This tool is highly essential as it signifies the strength of association as well as the scale of the interval between the constructs of the study. Hence, the link between two or more than two quantitative variables is found by the help of correlation analysis. It is also deemed as the analysis

of strength and significance of association along with the linearity of the chosen constructs or the variables. Therefore, if there is a linear association indicated between the constructs, the coefficients of correlation would indicate the strength of association amid the constructs. Following is the correlation analysis conducted to find association amid the variables of the study:

Table 20: *Correlation Analysis of Variables*

Variable	Pet Owners Buying Behaviour	Source of Information	Positive word of mouth	Brand Community
Pet Owners Buying Behaviour	1			
Source of Information	.751	1		
Positive word of mouth	.761	.984	1	
Brand Community	.701	.945	.916	1

Table 20 is associated with the correlations amid the variables of the study. The dependent variable of this research has been Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. On the other hand, the independent variable of this research has been social media marketing which has been divided into three major constructs including a source of information, positive word of mouth and brand community. As per the findings, Pet Owners buying behaviour has a 0.751 or 75.1 per cent correlation with the source of information which is positive and significant. This means that the Pet Owners in Ireland find the source of information on social media as authentic and are inclined towards purchasing Pet products. Bartosik-Purgat (2016) also stated that more people visit social media platform or any digital platform for getting information regarding the

desired product and this information influences their buying behaviour. In this way, unloading and allocating information is mutual and more people trust the social media tracking to get valuable information on how to obtain the best possible product.

Moreover, the correlation amid the variable positive word of mouth and Pet Owners buying behaviour is 0.761 or 76.1 per cent which is also positive and significant. This also indicates positive word of mouth on social media affects the buying behaviour of Pet Owners and they are prone to purchasing Pet related products provided if the other Pet Owners are spreading positive comments about the products. The online positive word of mouth strategies has been developed by the firms that are utilising social media sites as a digital platform to communicate a positive word of the mouth effectively. The means of positive WOM also creates an image of a product and also gives a higher response from the Pet Owners and their friends and families (Alalwan, 2018). Hence, the resources of positive word of mouth are mentioned as the advanced influencer of the products that can be used by the Pet companies for influencing Pet Owners attraction and enhancing their buying behaviour.

In addition to this, the correlation amid brand community and Pet Owners buying behaviour is 0.701 or 70.1 per cent which is also significant and positive. It also signifies that the brand communities on social media comprising of similar likes and dislikes towards Pet products have been influencing Pet Owners buying behaviour. The people being appropriate to the particular brand communities generate the sharing behaviour of system, values and morals for preserving the familiar bond amid one another (Dwivedi et al., 2020). This shared system is also found amongst Pet Owners on social media who have been engaged in sharing information regarding the Pet brands and it has also been influencing their buying behaviour. Hence, the

overall findings from correlation have indicated significant results and positive association amid social media marketing (source of information, positive word of mouth and brand community) and Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. These findings have also been justified by previous studies as well.

4.2.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is considered as the method that is used for analysing the changes that are pertinent in the dependent variable because of the changes in the independent variables. In this way, the regression equation is often found by the Least Square Method. Moreover, regression analysis is applied with the help of SPSS where the influence of the independent variable is found on the dependent variable. This also indicates the model significance and show how the individual variables can or cannot influence the dependent construct of the study. Hence, regression analysis is also applied in this study where the analysis of the main findings is provided below:

Table 21: *Regression Analysis of Variables*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.761[a]	.579	.566	.52937

Table 21 is regarded as a model summary which has been attained from the regression testing conducted with the help of SPSS. This model summary is the indication of three main values that the researcher considers such as R-value, R square and Adjusted R square. In the model summary, it can be seen that there are three main predictors also known as constructs of

social media marketing. The constructs include a source of information, positive word of mouth and brand community. The value of R is noted as 0.761 which means that the impact of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland is positive as well as strong. However, the value of R square which is 0.579 and the value of adjusted R-square which is 0.566 whereas this signifies that after the error has been included from the findings, the influence of social media marketing on Pet Owners buying behaviour has turned into positive and moderate. It is also an indication of the fact that there can be other predictors of social media marketing that can influence the buying behaviour of the Pet Owners in Ireland. Nonetheless, the findings or results from model summary have still provided the strong and significant results signifying that the influence of social media marketing including its predictors such as brand community, positive word of mouth and source of information has a significant and positive influence on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

Table 22: *ANOVA Table*

Model	**Sum of Squares**	***df***	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sigma**
Regression	37.009	3	12.336	44.022	.000[b]
Residual	26.903	96	.280		
Total	63.912	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Pet Owner Buying Behaviour

b. Predictors: (Constants), Brand Community, Positive word of mouth, Source of Information

Table 22 is regarded as the ANOVA table which is attained from the regression test which was conducted on SPSS. This ANOVA table is also regarded as the test of variance along with the

significance of the model utilised in the study. Therefore, the researcher needs to indicate if the outcomes of the study have any chance of error. For indicating if the data does not have any error, the sig value within the ANOVA table has been taken into consideration. In this way, the value must be less than 0.05 for the model to be significant. It can be understood in the table overhead that the sig value is distinguished as 0.000 which is lower than 0.05 and it specifies that the model used in the study has been significant. It also informs that the outcomes of the study have been feasible and reliable and also there has not been any coincidence or error elaborated in the results.

Table 23: *Table of Coefficient*

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.751	.124		6.079	.000
	Source of Information	.055	.370	.070	.150	.881
	Positive word of mouth	.558	.308	.684	1.811	.073
	Brand Community	.007	.177	.009	.041	.967

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour

Table 23 is regarded as the table of coefficients which displays if the interpreters of the independent variable can independently influence the dependent variable. For finding this, the sig value has been considered by the researcher which should be less than 0.05 for the effect to be noteworthy and positive. The sig value for the source of information is found to be 0.881 which is larger than 0.05 which designates that for social media marketing, source of information cannot independently affect Pet Owners buying behaviour. Furthermore, the sig value for positive word of mouth is recorded as 0.073 which is also larger than 0.05; this designates that

for social media marketing to impact Pet Owners buying behaviour, positive word of mouth cannot be independently considered. Finally, the sig value of brand community is established as 0.967 which is also larger than 0.05 and this specifies that for social media marketing brand community cannot independently impact Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. Henceforth, the complete result proposes that independently none of the interpreters of social media marketing has impacted Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. Nonetheless, the model comprising all the constructs of social media marketing such as positive word of mouth, brand community and source of information displays a significant impact on Pet Owners buying behaviour as the sig value in ANOVA table has found to be 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the overall results have shown the significant and positive influence of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. Whereas, findings have been justified for social media marketing impact on Pet Owners buying behaviour by previous studies such as Al-Dhuhli and Ismael (2013), Ali et al. (2016) and Erkan and Evans (2016).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Research Objective 1

To analyse the effect of marketing through social media on Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland.

Survey questionnaire provided separate results for each of the questions that can be analysed based on the number of occurrences of the answer that shows whether the participants agreed to a given statement, disagreed to it, or is of a neutral opinion. This general objective was designed to analyse the impact of social media marketing on the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

The researcher initially had identified that the factors that affected the Pet Owners buying behaviours through social media were social media as the source of information, the positive word of mouth, brand communities, and the attitude and behaviour of the Pet Owners towards the brand in general terms. The research findings that have been analysed through the survey proves that all these factors play a major role in influencing the Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. The survey shows that the majority of participants agreed to the opinions presented in the questionnaire about the influence of all the above-mentioned factors having a positive impact on their buying behaviour.

In the survey, 39 per cent of Pet Owners agreed that they find information in social media authentic, while only 25 per cent of the Pet Owners disagreed. Also, 36 per cent of respondents were neutral. This shows that majority of respondents agreed that information on social media is considered authentic. Also, 55 per cent of participants agreed to the opinion that they make

use of online information while making a product choice. Although 13 per cent of respondents disagreed with this opinion, not even a single participant strongly disagreed on this idea. This shows that the customers are trusting on the social media platform to access information on the process of recognizing in selecting the best brand of a particular product or service. Therefore there is a positive relation between information from social media and Pet Owners buying behaviour. Moreover, the results showed that effective communication among the Pet Owners about the product attributes has a positive effect in Pet Owners attitude towards a particular product, with 56 per cent of the participants acknowledging this opinion and only 16 per cent of them rejecting it. Therefore, Pet Owners on communicating about product attributes on social media influenced their buying intentions.

5.2 Research Objective 2

To identify the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland who actively use social media for the exchange of information.

Majority of Pet Owners in Ireland consider social media information as authentic. This shows that they believe that information and news that are perceived can be a factor in shaping Pet Owners buying and spending patterns. Similar results can be found that informative advertisement via social media influences Pet Owners buying decisions. 55 per cent of Pet Owners agree that social media information leads them to buy a product while only 15 per cent of them disagreed. Half of the participants agreed that they use social media as a main source of information for buying Pet products and accessories. Also, the results from the questionnaire

regarding the relation of information in social media and Pet Owners buying attitude was found to be positive.

In the survey, 55 per cent of Pet Owners agreed that they trust social media source to get useful information on acquiring the best possible product while only 13 per cent of the Pet Owners disagreed and also none of the respondents strongly disagreed. The majority of the research participants agreed that social media information was a major factor that influences Pet Owners buying decisions in Ireland.

Moreover, the results from the questionnaire regarding the relation of information on social media and Pet Owners attitude in Ireland was also found to be positive. 56 per cent of the participants accepted the opinion that the information that is available on social media has an influence on the minds of the Pet Owners and that is reflected in their buying behaviour while only a small chunk of participants did not accept this opinion rather opposed it. Similarly, 59 per cent of the participants agreed that social media has grown to become an important source from where they can get access to useful information, therefore they are of the view that online platforms are excellent mediums from which the Pet Owners can know more details about a particular Pet brand or service. Another question on the survey about information was whether the Pet Owners use social media to get information on the Pet brand before making decisions on buying the Pet product that is in the pre-stage of the purchase. To this statement, 63 per cent of participants shared a similar opinion out of which 29 per cent strongly agreed to it.

5.3 Research Objective 3

To evaluate the impact of positive word of mouth on social media affecting the buying decision of Pet Owners in Ireland.

63 per cent of Pet Owners agreed that reviews influence their online purchase while only 13 per cent of the Pet Owners disagreed which states that positive reviews on social media are attracting a large number of customers towards Pet products.

Positive reviews were also accepted by the majority of Pet Owners to be an encouraging element towards Pet Owners purchase of that Pet brand products. Only thirteen per cent rejected the idea that positive reviews do not play any part in the customer's decision making of a particular Pet brand. The participants agreed to the statements that the positive word of mouth on the social media platforms not only attracts the Pet Owners towards the brand but also inclines and motivates the customers to make a purchase.

The results regarding the survey questions were almost identical proving that positive word of mouth is an important factor for influencing Pet Owners buying process and decisions.

5.4 Research Objective 4

To assess the impact of brand community channels on buying decision of Pet Owners in Ireland.

The survey response showed social media brand communities contributed in influencing the minds of Pet Owners on making a purchase and also accepted the opinion that the reviews that are shared within the same brand communities motivate the potential and existing Pet Owners to make a purchase of the particular brand. Further, the survey also shows that brand

communities have a strong effect on the sense of trust, loyalty, and strong relationship between the brands and the Pet Owners in Ireland through social media platforms.

As per the survey, 70 per cent of Pet Owners agreed that brand communities on social media influence them. 23 per cent of respondents were neutral while only 7 per cent have disagreed and none of the respondents had strongly disagreed to this which shows that more number of Pet Owners in Ireland are influenced by online brand communities. The similar response was given by the Pet Owners on following the brand community reviews. This shows that reviews shared within similar brand communities have a direct influence on Pet Owners purchase.

According to the survey, 64 per cent of Pet Owners agreed that they enjoy being an active member of online communities. 20 per cent of respondents were neutral while 14 per cent disagreed and 2 per cent strongly disagreed which shows that more Pet Owners are active members of online communities and enjoy the experience on being an active member. Also, 69 per cent of Pet Owners agreed to the opinion that brand communities as an enjoyable way to develop a relationship with the brand. Almost three fourth of Pet Owners in Ireland developed a feeling of loyalty towards the brands that promote communities however only a 7 per cent of Pet Owners in Ireland disagreed to this opinion. This shows that brand communities enhance a sense of trust and loyalty into the minds of Pet Owners in Ireland.

5.5 Research Objective 5

To analyse the impact of factors such as brand community, positive word of mouth, Pet Owners buying behaviour, source of information on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

After evaluating all the response individually, correlation analysis was used by the researcher to examine the relation between the two or more quantitative variables used in the survey. The dependent variable, in this case, has been the Pet Owners buying behaviour, and the independent variables that influence the dependent variable have been social media marketing which is divided into three elements; the source of information, positive word of mouth, and brand communities. The analysis has tried to establish the relationship between these variables to examine that to what extent social media marketing can influence Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. The correlation between Pet Owners buying behaviour and source of information has been about 75 per cent which indicates that the Pet Owners trust the information that is available through the social media platforms as being authentic and the information about a particular brand or product found online can influence their decision on whether to purchase a Pet product or not.

Similarly, the correlation between the positive word of mouth and the buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland was found to be 76 per cent which proves that online positive word of mouth is a great motivator for Pet Owners to make up their minds towards a specific brand. Positive word of mouth not only plays a role to bring awareness of a particular brand to the Pet Owners but also acts as a marketing tool to convince the customer to buy the product or avail the service. The third relation in focus is between buying behaviour and the brand communities.

Correlation analysis shows a relation of about 70 per cent between the two variables showing that the brand communities are able to connect the brand with the Pet Owners base and instils in the Pet Owners a sense of trust and loyalty towards the brand that motivates him to incline towards it. Therefore, the correlation analysis also reaches the conclusion that social media is a powerful tool of marketing for Pet products and accessories in Ireland and they can alter and regulate the buying patterns of the Pet Owners.

Moreover, the last analysis tool which was regression analysis derives that the predictors of social media marketing play a positive and strong influence on the buying patterns of Pet Owners in Ireland. The model also provides that predictors of social media other than the three considered; source of information, positive word of mouth and brand communities, should also be considered to provide much better analysis of the Irish Pet markets. After analysing the data collected through questionnaire from Pet Owners in Ireland that made use of any social media platforms, the results found fully supports the objectives developed by the researcher as well as it also confirms with the past literature on social media marketing and Pet Owners buying behaviour.

The researcher concludes his findings from primary and secondary provides that the social media marketing tools have a significant and positive impact on the Pet Owners buying decisions in case of Irish Pet markets and the factors of social media marketing like the brand communities, positive word of mouth and information sources are major contributors to modify and determine buying preferences of Pet Owners in Irish Pet market.

The discussion of findings includes that most of the respondents are in favour that social media buying has increased and more people are dependent on the social media websites to make purchases. More people are engaging in the process of online shopping and shopping virtually is now the new trend. However, there is a big concern that social media sources are relevant and the information from the sources are authentic or not. There is an increased number of respondents that are answering and responding in the neutral that in some case the information which is communicated is right and accurate and in some cases vice versa. The findings reveal that social media marketing has a significant and increased impact over the Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. The purchase related activities are highly dependent on social media marketing and more brands are influencing the customers digitally or virtually. Most of the buyers and Pet Owners are strongly impacted by the social media information and highly rely on social media platforms to guide regarding the suitable purchase that could develop an effective purchasing process. The decisions are more dependent on the communication network and system that enhances the purchase process.

Most of the Pet parents in Ireland are seeking effective counselling that is required while purchasing quality Pet products. Most of the Pet Owners are seeking information regarding the healthy Pet food products and trusting information sources is very useful in purchasing these items. Most of the Pet Owners are seeking effective help and guidance that can be useful in buying Pet related products and to make a purchase of the best possible Pet products, positive word of mouth is one of the critical and significant parts of significance and effective buying. More purchasers are highly dependent on the information that are available on the internet such as social media pages and other websites of the selling brand of Pets. Most of the purchasers are

seeking positive reviews of the product that enhances perception and purchase intention of the mass people. People trusting other positive comments to make a successful purchase. People are reviewing the comment section usually before the making purchase online.

5.6 Summarised Findings

In the modern era, it has been evaluated that the most influential social media platforms are Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. In the literature, it has justified through the study proposed by Aragoncillo and Orus, (2018) that business is also attaining assistance from a range of management of social media in direction to appear in trending or to reach the maximum amount of target market. Thus, all kinds of social media marketing are deliberated as the most significant and crucial role in the purchasing behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. The global popularity and recognition of these social media channels support by companies to handle the marketing operations that lead to the constructive buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland.

On the other side, from the quantitative findings, it has also been analysed that social media as a source of information has a positive association with Pet Owners buying behaviour. Whilst, it has a positive and meaning impact on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. This source is deliberated as most suitable and employed as the first determinant that impacting the minds of customers that ultimately influence the Pet Owners buying behaviour. On the other side, the emergence of innovation and internet facilities has turned the social media as a dynamic source of sharing and getting information linked with the Pet Owners, products and services. In Ireland, through these sources, the awareness of Pet Owners about products and services are also increased because of the marketing of different comPetitive brands via social media

marketing. Conversely, the operative use of communication has been built that originates an effect of trust and loyalty amongst the Pet Owners to attain the suitable information on the internet or to integrate the procedure of pre-stage of purchasing products.

The other objective of the study is related to the examination the factors influencing the buying behaviour of decision making procedure because it has the most important in the process of social media marketing. The identified factors that influence the Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland are a positive word of mouth, brand community and social media as a source of information. It has been evaluated that positive word of mouth has a strong association amongst the buying behaviour of Pet Owners and has a strong and meaningful influence on the buying behaviour of Pet Owners. Companies utilising the words of the loyal Pet Owners to attain the interest and to appeal a greater amount of potential individual to shape their buying pattern towards their company in direction to impact its performance of sales. Majority of people direct to increase trust relied on the words of the other Pet Owners as additional companies are continuing the review areas concerning depicting the credibility of brand or product.

The other measured element of this research is a brand community that is emphasised in this research. From the statistical analysis, it has been analysed that brand community has a positive and important relationship with the Pet Owners buying behaviour. Whereas, the brand community has a positive and meaning impact on the buying behaviour of Pet Owners. The brand community has also a significance in literature in which the majority of the brand are emphasising to enhance recognition through increasing its position related to the social media in the Pet market. Companies create an influential brand community with the approaches of CSR that strive and act to define its image of the brand through integrating values of the brand in the minds of

investors. The influences of social media are not something that can afford to supervise by entrepreneurs. It is been noted that Pet Owners who make usage of social media platforms during their procedure of Pet products shopping are more probably to devote more on purchases in comparison to those who do not spend on shopping. Thus it is an important piece for the brands and their business marketing strategies. Equally, social platforms mentioned above support the Pet business to connect with the most appropriate and targeted Pet Owners, enhance the awareness about the Pet products and services of the brand and resulted in the increased sales.

In comparison to this, the integration of all aforementioned elements related to social media marketing and Pet Owners buying behaviour is one of the cheapest and valuable ways of marketing of products and services amongst the customers. Moreover, the other implication is that this research is specified to the buying behaviour of Pet Owners living in Ireland so the results of this research are only crucial for companies selling their products in Ireland. However, this research could be undertaken on a global perspective so that this can be beneficial for maximum firms.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of the dissertation based on the results of the research on evaluating the influence of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland. Likewise, the conclusion is a part of this research which summarises the outcomes of the study. Based on the conclusion and summarised findings, the strategies to help the organisation is designed in this chapter. The researcher highlights the future implications of gaps in the current study for future research.

6.2 Conclusion

After an entire analysis, it can be concluded that to attain the increasing behaviour of Pet Owners towards the purchasing of Pet products and services through social media marketing channels are most important. The major social media platforms for marketing are Facebook, Instagram and YouTube through which companies can discuss the features, offerings, benefits of products and services and promotions can be communicated with the targeted audience. To attain the best results for social media marketing some important factors are identified which has a direct relation with the buying behaviour of Pet Owners. Such factors are social media as a source of information, positive WOM, brand community and buying behaviour. Likewise, all these factors have a positive, significant and meaningful influence on Pet Owners buying behaviour in Ireland. On the other side, the same factors are also influencing social media marketing differently in relation to the purchasing pattern of Pet's owners in Ireland. Because buying Pet products is an effective technique when it comes to decisions related to purchasing

and depicting improved response from the Pet market. Moreover, the interesting insights are attained via literature that in Ireland the Pet retail sectors and other related animals were also available on online platforms via the internet. Thus, there is increasing attention of Pet Owners in Ireland because purchasing online saves them time and efforts. The aforementioned insight also rationalises the selection of social media a source of information because Pet Owners in Ireland are attaining the information of Pets through online platforms which creates the new market for the Pet companies in Ireland.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations about the research-based on the influence of social media marketing on buying behaviour of the Pet Owners are given as under:

- Concerning buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland, this includes the complexion factor because the sensitivity is involved when it comes to the purchasing of Pet products or services. Hence, Pet companies should provide a real-time system and other facilities through which Pet products and accessories are effectively promoted and displayed via online channels.
- Some Pet care products are quite expensive therefore the multifaceted behaviour would be encountered when customers are purchasing an expensive and rarely bought Pet products.
- The companies should design the proper policies for the customers who are buying the products via online channels as the Pet Owners are very concerned about the quality of the products especially Pet food products.

- The companies should integrate the best social media channels for marketing which have a greater amount of traffic as well as increasing users. In Ireland, Facebook Marketing has a huge scope and more number of active users, as well as specific people, can be targeted.

6.4 Research Limitation

Limitations are axiomatic part of every study, and the researcher always has to go through some limitations. Therefore, this research has also some limitations:

- The first limitation of the study is that there is only quantitative research design used in the study, therefore, the findings of the study are limited to only quantitative findings. However, this limitation can be overcome, if this kind of study is conducted by using a qualitative research design or mixed research design.
- The second limitation of the study is related to time and budget constraints. The reason is that every research needs to be conducted in a set framework of time, therefore, there is always a time pressure on the researcher during the process of conducting the research. Besides, there is a limited budget possessed by the researcher to conduct the study. However, if there had been more time available, the researcher could have approached more participants or used multiple methods to further enhance the findings of the research, while with more budget, it would have been possible to set an award on answering questions, which could entice the attention of participants and further enhance the quality of data.
- The third and last limitation associated with this study is that it has primarily focused on the impact of social media marketing on buying behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland,

therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generally applied to all kind of Pet Owners and location.

6.5 Future Implications

It denotes the outcome that research might have on upcoming studies or the insights related to the similar study (Habtemariam and Belay, 2019). The current research is entirely based on a quantitative research design that can be conducted by utilising mixed research technique to integrate the implications of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Similarly, this can be supported by broad secondary data because this topic has wide-ranging literature to relate the quantitative findings with the secondary information. This study includes the major determinant which is social media marketing therefore the other factors can be integrated such as digital marketing and other influencing factors to strengthen the study. Moreover, these factors can create them distinctiveness in the research.

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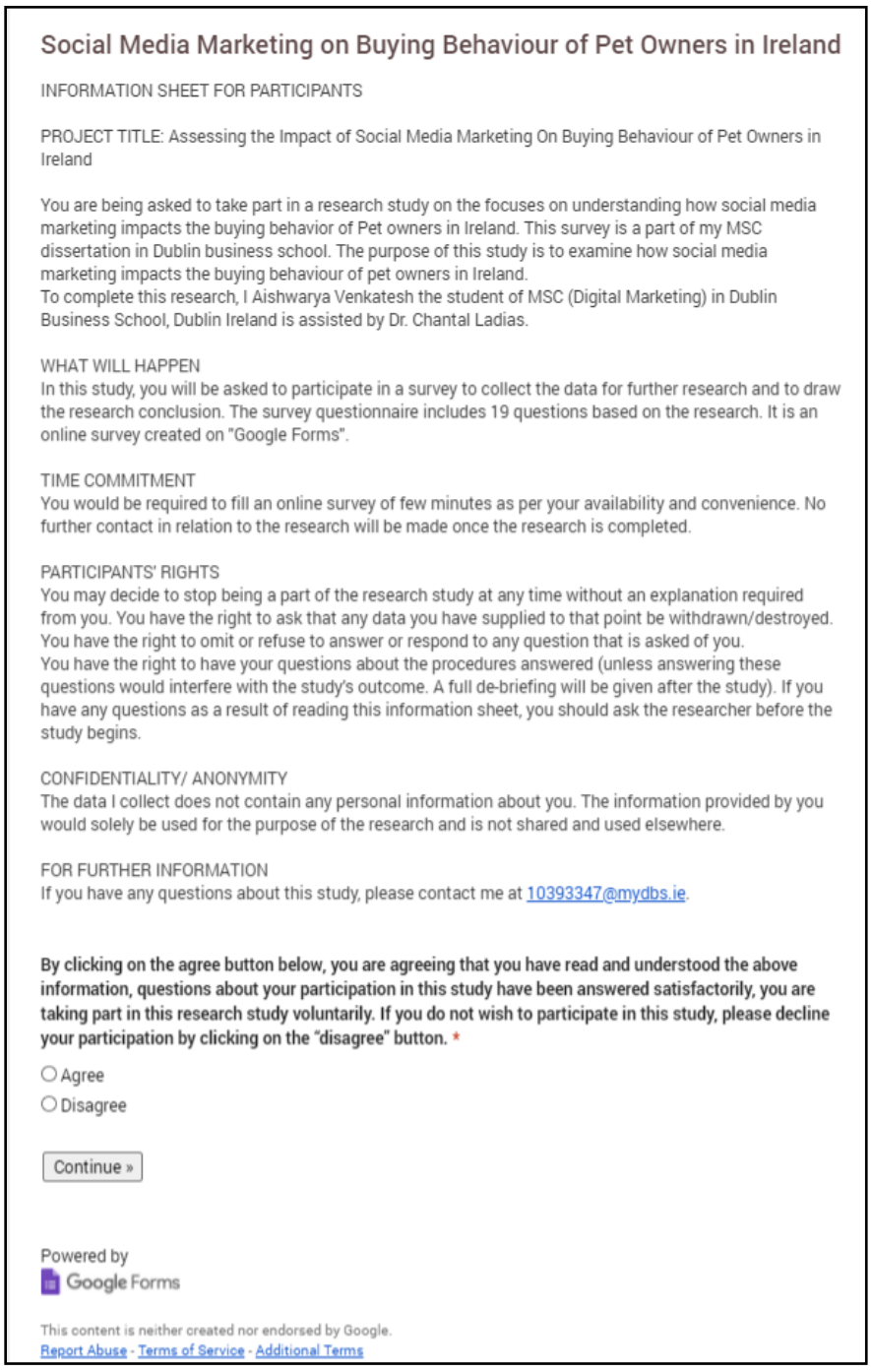
APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

Google Form Link: https://forms.gle/RoeMnxySwHujNpVf6



Social Media Marketing on Buying Behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE: Assessing the Impact of Social Media Marketing On Buying Behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland

You are being asked to take part in a research study on the focuses on understanding how social media marketing impacts the buying behavior of Pet owners in Ireland. This survey is a part of my MSC dissertation in Dublin business school. The purpose of this study is to examine how social media marketing impacts the buying behaviour of pet owners in Ireland.
To complete this research, I Aishwarya Venkatesh the student of MSC (Digital Marketing) in Dublin Business School, Dublin Ireland is assisted by Dr. Chantal Ladias.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
In this study, you will be asked to participate in a survey to collect the data for further research and to draw the research conclusion. The survey questionnaire includes 19 questions based on the research. It is an online survey created on "Google Forms".

TIME COMMITMENT
You would be required to fill an online survey of few minutes as per your availability and convenience. No further contact in relation to the research will be made once the research is completed.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS
You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without an explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed.
You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.
You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ ANONYMITY
The data I collect does not contain any personal information about you. The information provided by you would solely be used for the purpose of the research and is not shared and used elsewhere.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 10393347@mydbs.ie.

By clicking on the agree button below, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the above information, questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, you are taking part in this research study voluntarily. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline your participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. *

○ Agree
○ Disagree

Continue »

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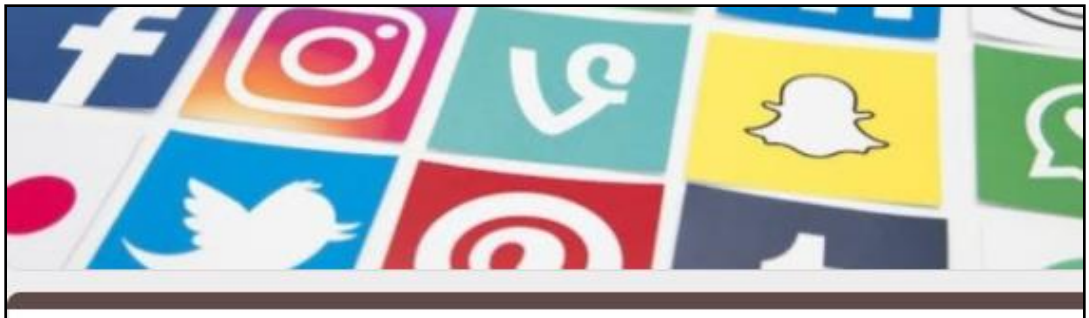

Social Media Marketing on Buying Behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland

*Required

Please select your desired response

To which age bracket do you belong? *

- ○ 18-24 years old
- ○ 25-34 years old
- ○ 35-45 years old

Are you currently living in Ireland?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Do you own a Pet?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Back Next

Social Media Marketing On Buying Behaviour of Pet Owners in Ireland Survey

1. As a Pet Owner, I find information in social media authentic. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

2. As a Pet Owner, social media advertisements influence my purchase. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

3. As a Pet Owner, positive reviews on social media influence my purchase. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

4. As a Pet Owner, I find social media as an effective way of communicating product attributes. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

5. As a pet owner, social media information leads me to buy a pet product online. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

6. As a pet owner, I use social media as my main source of information for pet products & pet accessories. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

7. As a pet owner, I research authentic information on social media before buying pet products. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

8. As a pet owner, I use social media sources to acquire the best possible product. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

9. As a pet owner, reviews influence my online purchase. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

10. As a pet owner, I trust other pet owners' experiences shared on social media. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

11. As a pet owner, brand matters on social media *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

12. As a pet owner, I enjoy being an active member of online communities. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

13. As a pet owner, brand communities on social media influence me. *

Brand Community- A brand community is a community formed on the basis of attachment to the product or brand.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

14. As a pet owner, I follow brand communities' reviews. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. As a pet owner, I find Brand communities enjoyable to develop a relationship with the brand. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. As a pet owner, I feel more loyal to brands that promote communities. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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