A Qualitative Exploration of the Effectiveness of Direct Marketing in the Construction Industry: A study of Small-medium Enterprises in Wales

Kelsie Peach Raynes
ST 20006663
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MBA 10/2015 Cohort
Declaration

This work is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MBA and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Statement 1

This dissertation is the result of my own work and investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

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I acknowledge that the above named student has regularly attended the planned meetings and actively engaged in the dissertation supervision process. They have provided regular timely draft chapters of the dissertation and followed given guidance.

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Abstract

This interprevistic quality study explored the effectiveness of direct marketing (DM) methods within Welsh construction small-medium enterprises (SMEs). The study utilised a dual data set, of SME marketing managers and their customers. The work encompassed 77 participants in total, 7 managers and 70 customers. Data was collected via a sense of semi-structured interviews for the managers and 10 focus groups discussions for customers. The findings revealed that the marketing practices utilised by the marketing managers are not considered to be in line with the modern ethos of marketing. There were continuous gaps between the managers and consumer perspectives on effective marketing practices and the existing literature available. It was found that the consumer should be considered throughout the marketing processes of construction SMEs in Wales. The implications with this study is that it is not geographically expansive, due to it being centralised to Welsh construction companies. The findings are of a thick data set that is highly contextualised due to limited sample being utilised. This thesis to the author’s knowledge, is the first paper to explore the direct marketing methods of SMEs within the Welsh construction industry.
CHAPTER ONE
Introduction
1.0 Introduction

1.0.1 Chapter Overview

The opening chapter presents the research aims and objectives of this study, which explores subjects such as direct marketing (DM) practices, small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and the construction industry (CI). Following that an overview of the the studies research design and continuing chapters will be discussed.

1.1 Research Objectives & Justification

The aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of DM within Welsh construction SMEs. Studies conducted by BIS (2015) and House of Commons (2015) found that of the 5.4 million businesses within the UK, a staggering 99% are SMEs (0-249 employees) and 95% of that figure are Micro businesses (0-9 employees). The report conducted by Our Social Times (2016) also highlighted that 19% of the small to medium businesses do not fully use direct marketing methods. With large economic contributions from SMEs in the UK, there is an underlining question as to why this topic has not been researched before.

The limiting theories of SME marketing suggest that DM is growing among nonprofit and small sized organisations within the business industry, due to its efficiency, low cost communication and use of less resources, (Palmer and Lewis 2009, Arnold and Tapp 2003 & Gilmore et al. 2001). DM can be seen as the smaller organisations marketing practitioner as it allows reach and relationship building with consumers with use of less resources compared to larger companies. Alternative studies argue that the trend within SMEs is not solely due to the lack of resources but more to their organisational structure and time scales, Gamble (2011). Each SME has a unique culture in terms of organisation structure. Recent studies show that complex marketing methods can be tailored to match the SMEs brand and their customers' needs Resnick et al. (2015), although there has been a deficiency of research on the differences between SMEs (Reijonen and Laukkanen 2010). With considering the marketing limitations of SMEs along with the gap within SME marketing research, this study aims to identify how they can market effectively in relation to their organisational characteristics. However, this research does
not focus on SMEs in general, but SMEs within the construction industry (CI), there are limited studies that focus on marketing within construction SMEs, especially within the UK.

This study provides an insight on the organisations that have not been considered for previous research. The studies objectives is to explore how effective direct marketing is within Welsh construction SME’s, based on the available literature, the following broad questioning framework for the managerial interviews was established, predicated on the following; (1) What was their experience and perception of the marketing and DM functions, (2) What aspects of the Direct Marketing they considered to be a valuable strategic tool, (3) How were direct marketing elements administered and what were the metrics for success, (4) What would you consider to be an effective direct marketing process?. The following section will discuss the methodological process of this study.

1.2 Research Approach

Previously, research within this field has been predominantly quantitative but due to the exploratory nature of this research, the findings revealed that the direct marketing methods the managers utilised were not to the standards of modernised marketing mix and numerous gaps between the customer and manager perspectives of what was deemed effective. Within this study, a qualitative method was adopted to establish the effectiveness of construction SMEs utilisation of DM practices. The first method used; semi-structured interviews of marketing managers or persons in charge of the marketing practices within the organisations in question. The research questions for the interviews were founded through reviewing the existing literature on DM practices, functions within SMEs and the construction industry culture. The reasoning behind this approach was to determine if the DM practices that were deemed effective were being utilised to their full ability and in line with the modern ethos of marketing.

The interviewee’s were selected from business lists of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Business Register, Construction Industry Training Board and WAG Business Wales Office. Of the sample contacted, 7 managers were able to take part within the in-
terviews. The interviews were based in Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff, Aberdare and Abertystwyth.

From the findings of the managerial interviews, a questioning framework was created for a customer data set. With both the manager and consumer perspectives being explored, a clearer understanding of the untouched DM practices within Welsh construction SMEs would be discovered. Regarding the customer data set, the sample was chosen from the customer lists provided by the managers questions in the study, of 70 individuals ranging from 18-76 years old based in Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. Focus group discussions were conducted to evaluate the experiences customers had with construction companies and their marketing methods. The focus group sessions allowed the consumer’s needs, wants and desires of construction services to be discussed to identify if they are in line with what the managers believe and the modern marketing functions of 2016.

1.3 Chapter Summary
This chapter has evaluated the justifications and approaches to exploring the effectiveness of the DM methods of Welsh construction SMEs. The following chapter will be a review of the existing literature relevant to this study.
CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review
2.0 Literature Review

2.0.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will explore the available literature of the development of DM over the past half a century, highlighting the conceptual shift within marketing. Secondly an evaluation of the use of DM methods within SME’s and how they are utilised within the CI.

2.1 Direct Marketing Defined

2.1.1 Direct marketing: A Conceptual Overview

Theoretically, perceptions have varied over time regarding the functions of Direct Marketing (DM). Thomas (2007) found that it is an immediate management process providing consumers with understandable and relevant products/services to fit their interests and requirements. Discovering relevancy for the consumers is an outcome of Slater & Narver (1995) work regarding the continuous data collection about customers. Kotler & Armstrong (2013) support the marketing shift towards the consideration of benefits for the customer, defining the process as means "of satisfying customer needs in a way that the products/services could be sold without paying much attention to the selling process" (p.5). The emphasis on the customer has become paramount, with Seitz & Massey (2014) indicating that this shift and direction to the consumer is a valid trend within marketing departments. Continuing to suggest that DM accomplishes the flow of goods from supplier to consumer without channel intermediates and emphasis is placed on media directed toward targeted individuals. Bauer (1987) cited in Seitz & Massey (2014) viewed DM as "direct mail, mail order, telemarketing and direct response" (p. 356). Unfortunately, highlighted by Seitz & Massey (2014) the methods mention by Bauer (1987) are not DM itself but more of the delivery of DM. Despite Bauer (1987) statement it is suggested that DM should allow the customers to be responsive to such methods whilst establishing close relationships from information gathered through market research (Wilkinson et al., 2007, Iyer and Hill 1996 and Brubaker 2007). Fan and Cheng (2009) follows with their definition of DM which "allows marketers to obtain a more direct response from customers and allows customers to browse through a greater selection of products than retail outlets carry" (p.345). Fan and Cheng (2009) definition
highlights the direct approach where the supplier reaches to the customer, providing an easier buying process and experience. To that end, this research utilises Alanen’s (2016, p.20) evaluation that DM is “a database driven marketing method, which relies on communicating with customers”. Alanen (2016) framework and contribution has guided and informed with regard to central objectives and aims of this work that communication is one of the problematic issues within CI SMEs.

2.1.2 Strategic Development

DM has been functional within the business industry for over a century (Fullerton 1988). Reviewing studies from the 1930s, Fullerton (1988) found that the production of goods pre 1930s was central to business, as processes were evaluated a shift towards the sales era began, Fullerton suggested that the “production era was followed in the 1930s by the sales era, in which energetic personal selling was backed by research and advertising, and in 1950 by the marketing era of sophisticated customer orientation” (1988, p.109) Fullerton (1988) study focused on the ‘myth’ of the production era, and due to economic difficulty, states that the marketing era progressed until the 1980s. Consequently DM at this juncture, with aspects of the sales era still existent was seen as a transactional orientated number game, focusing on the reach extremities of methods such as leaflet drops, telesales and mail (Patterson et al., 1997); with this exemplified within the managerial findings of this study. Moving into the modern era, market orientation become paramount and customer king. Stone (1984 as cited in in Thomas, 2007) defined DM as a process “using databases through more than one media” p.10 to sell products and services, becoming in turn a “trusted marketing platform” (Constantindies 2006, p.408). The work of Alanen (2016) that captures the most recent marketing practices stated that DM is all about “engaging the wanted customers by controlling them without the use of an intermediary” (p.6) and that marketing as a whole is the only business function that truly engages with customers.

2.1.3 Concerns Regarding Implementation

Moving towards the millennium, Evans et al. (2001) use of qualitative research that to develop the marketer and consumer relationship, customer control and relevance to the
campaigns should be implemented. Despite data collection they continued stating that:
“Although DM is clearly a convenience to the time-constrained contemporary consumer, it can also be its own worst enemy because the consumer can be bombarded by a mountain of mail with little time to sort it all” (p.11). Evans et al. (2001) work has formed the orientation of this research, with its emphasis on the consumer, consumer response and perhaps the managerial utilisation failing DM.

2.1.4. Geographic Development
While this study is geographically limited, international studies are relevant. When researching DM Iyer and Hill (1996) within the US and its impact throughout Europe, Iyer and Hill (1996) uncovered that experience of DM is greater than the money spent on the methods. They found that although DM ‘boomed’ through the US in the 80s, significant to this study they also stated it grew positively throughout Europe due to factors such as understanding, experiences and not cost (Iyer and Hill 1996). Empirical research, provides an insight as to why mass marketing has devolved, Freedman (2005) when evaluating over 3,000 campaigns, empirically established in the United States constant bombardment created hostility between customers and managers:

“For decades marketers have been spending more and more to try to get their message out -- only to find their pitches drowned out in a sea of noise generated by countless other marketers trying to do the same thing. In effect, companies have been paying big bucks to be ignored. Now, inspired by the Internet's ability to do a better job of targeting prospects and measuring results, advertisers are dreaming up new ways to break through the clutter and connect with potential customers at a lower cost” (p.71)

Freedman (2005) work; has had a significant impact so far as the nature and antecedents of brand hostility have yet to be evaluated in what is a competitive industry in the UK. Continuing this geographical theme, Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) whose study aimed to understand the variety of marketing functions within different industries in Finland. Their data, collected through online surveys took in three distinctive sectors; manufacturing, real estate and other services (hairdressing, dry cleaning and laundry).
Questionnaires were sent to managers of the companies who were thought to have reasonable knowledge on the marketing processes, finding that, “putting more emphasis on these marketing activities SMEs might enhance their business performance” (p.131). Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) also define knowledge as “a mix of experience, values, contextual information and expert insight” (p.117). Furthermore, they found that customer relationship orientated practices differed between the different SMEs and that size “may have a greater influence on the marketing efforts carried out in SMEs” (p.116). Consequently, the work of Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) has informed the questioning framework for the managerial data set. Gok and Hacioglu (2009) discussed further that many “well-understood forces, such as globalisation, technology, fierce competition, and increasing complexity in customer demand, have led to changes in marketing concepts and their related activities in practice” (p.291), and this has certainly been seen internationally.

In Greece, Gounaris and Avionitis (2001) focused on the market orientation (MO) usage of Greek industrial and consumer good companies. Their sample was at random of 444 companies with 40 employees or less (SMEs). Their findings suggested that industrial good companies were more sales orientated by not implementing the market orientation theory by Slater & Narver (1995); a prevalent theme within the semi-structured managerial interviews. Reviewing the geographical studies, it can be suggested that within SMEs there is a great deal of awareness of direct, customer orientated marketing. Unfortunately the methods and processes are not fully utilised. Kritika et al., (2013) found that out of 96 surveys to SMEs within Fiji, that 93.8% were aware of the use of marketing systems with 100% knowing that it would be sufficient to performance, although not utilising it within their organisation. These findings suggest that SMEs have knowledge of marketing processes but choose not to use them to their advantage, a growing problem within SMEs, again Kritika et al., (2013) work relating to the main knowledge and schema of the process like Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) has gone into the questioning framework.

2.1.5 Customer Focus
Reviewing recent studies, the emphasis of customer needs has undoubtedly been central to findings as Alanen (2016, p.11) elaborates that marketing in 2016 has developed to "more than advertising, as it is more about the building of relationships". DM has been faced with many changes resulting to evolving from product to consumer orientation. This replicates the paradigm shift in marketing practice as a whole exemplified by Gummesson (1994). Gummesson (1994) provided his 30 R’s with R1 providing centrality. He suggested that R1 (the Dyadic relationship) is the “parent relationship of marketing, the ultimate exchange of value which constitutes the basis of business” (Gummeson 1994 p12). Gummesson (1994) indicates central to the notion of DM that the relationships between suppliers and consumers are crucial as marketing is seen as “relationships, networks and interactions” (p.5). This is further emphasised by Slater & Narver (1995), who, with their notion of market orientation (MO), emphasised the consumer as a crucial aspect of marketing to understand the true needs and wants of customers. They advocated that that suppliers (construction SME’s) should be “continuously collecting information about target customers” (p.63) to market effectively. This shift is exemplified in the DM literature by Iyer and Hill (1996). Empirically they found that SME or organisations in general should engage more actively with their customers rather than bombarding them with campaigns and that marketers should “get to know their markets they become more flexible possibly to enhance their competitiveness” (p.8), this theme is seen within the findings of this study. Alanen (2016) continues with the aspect of bombardment stating that smaller organisations are forced to market aggressively for large effectiveness. As Alanen (2016) has been a pinnacle contribution to this thesis, they described that within the core: “Marketing bases on the fact that the customer needs and wants need to be understood before any marketing action can be implemented” (p.8). Suggesting the notion of customer orientation (Slater and Narver 1995) is deemed a building block for effective DM in 2016.

2.1.6 Changing Media and the Impact on Direct Marketing

The division between marketers and customers sparked the evolutionary shift to DM in the later years of 90s, which according to Iyer & Hill (1996) grew in Europe due to the lack of media methods. Studies found this shift effective due to marketing method mod-
ification, (Evans et al., 2001) media habit changes (Palmer & Lewis 2009) and more self-orientated consumers (Evans et al. 1995). Evans et al., (2001) qualitative study from the consumer perspective involved in depth, semi structured interviews with 40 consumers that had experienced DM a fortnight prior to the study. They also conducted nine group discussions, basing their sample on gender, age and socioeconomic group. Despite an increase in media, Evans et al., (2001) found that traditional methods such as telemarketing are still utilised moving into the 1990s. This approach has been considered between the customers within their study due to the ability to control their interaction with marketers, without the growing concern breach of privacy.

However, throughout the beginning of the 21st century modernised methods multiplied; with the internet, billboards, radio, TV (Ng 2005), exhibitions, mail & supermarkets (Gurau & Duquesnois 2008) and social media (Palmer and Lewis 2009) which are continuing to dominate the industry. Within the managerial findings it was evident that without any consideration of the existing literature within this field that the marketing managers in question considered their methods and process in DM to be effective. Their emphasis on telemarketing contradicted the latest work of Alanen (2016); “most of today’s marketing efforts are seen from the screens people see throughout the day... TV, phone and computers” (p.11).

2.1.7 Direct Marketing in 2016

The emphasis on customer interaction has become pinnacle in marketing as it cannot be mimicked by competitors compared to products and services highlighted in Groonos (1996) study. Groonos (1996) continues by stating that, “Customers take much more active role than they are normally given” (p.11). The concept of consumers taking control of their interactions with marketers has allowed the effectiveness to be measured, through satisfaction (Thomas, 2007), eliminating hostility, noise and unnecessary interruptions the aim of 2016 direct marketing strategies. The observations of Groonos (1996) led to researcher incorporated a significant customer sample, to understand and explore this notion of an active role.
Merisavo and Raulas (2004) states that the internet as an interactional marketing tool breaks down to other components such as email, allowing regular contact with customers on a personal level, eliminating the automated effect. Interactions with consumers allow them to become proactive Iyer and Hill (1996). Whereas web methods such as social media allows reach through indirect and DM and transforming the behaviour of consumers (Palmer & Lewis 2009, Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Supporting the statement that the internet should be used to retain customers more than attract new (Reichheld & Schefter 2000). Despite the advocacy of the utilisation of new media types in the available literature, interestingly pertinent to the findings of this work, Ng (2005) states that it is “The allure of a mass dispatch of emails, mail or telesales seems hard to resist” (p.629).

2.1.8 DM as a Transformative Strategy
A brief example of DM transforming the functions of business, Keillor (2007) studied the real estate industry in the US focusing on the revolutionary shift of consumers viewing potential properties online. Although this thesis focuses on the construction industry, with broad insights into different industries, it is clear that DM and the conceptual shift is integrating throughout. It was found that direct marketing and the empowerment of online improved the process for customers allowing costs to reduce significantly along with time wastage; creating an efficient experience. He further states, “How much better to do your shopping online from your home or office, and narrow your choices to a few hot prospects” (p.173). Furthermore, there has been a shift within DM and its functions within the consumer and supplier relationship and how the process can be confronted.

2.2 Marketing in SMEs
2.2.1 Utilising Marketing Effectively
Larger companies are expected to be responsible for six roles in marketing; (1) marketing mix management, (2) managing internal relationships network, (3) strategy development and execution, (4) managing external relationships network, (5) data and knowledge management and (6) managing marketing productivity and performance
(Gok & Hacioglu 2009), along with a marketing department filled with practitioners that have the academic definition of marketing embedded into their minds. SMEs are historically not utilising the ‘correct’ meaning of marketing, as it is not appropriate for their functions, (Jonker et al., 2004; Reijonen & Laukkanen, 2010). Their work found that micro sized businesses tend to spend less time on marketing campaigns and work on spur of the moment promotions than strategically planning them. With less time, resources and knowledge on the DM methods a number of SMEs have proceeded to use social media as their communication tool with consumers and customers.

Kotler and Armstrong (2013) state that direct marketers communicate directly with customers, often on a one to one basis, using detailed databases and tailored campaigns. Small Business (2016) stated that companies are viewed more ‘human’ and approachable when utilising social media, than other methods such as noise and bombardment can be controlled more. Garcia-Murillo and Annabi (2001) and Park and Kim (2003) found that social media allows feedback from consumers to be voiced to the companies, allowing clear messages to be projected to consumers for persuasion/decision making along with understanding the customers characteristics. The above work of Garcia-Murillo and Annabi (2001) provided a significant part in the questioning framework of the customer data set, as the possibility of interaction and lease theoretically impacted positively. The functions of the network allows relationships, tactics and strategies to be utilised as effectively and positively as possible; McDaniel (1991). Taiminen and Karjaluto (2015) stated that digitisation is “shaping the traditional ways in which consumers and businesses interact with each other” (p.633). The utilisation within marketing especially within SMEs is critical, Blankson (2006) stated “not practising marketing by the textbook but by strong emphasis on customer care, concern for employees’ welfare, reliance on intuition and awareness of the environment” (p.583), indicating that without the academic definitions surrounding them, marketing managers in SMEs can be successful if they prioritise functions such as market orientation, (Slater & Narver 1995).

2.2.2 The Use of DM in SMEs
This study focuses on the DM methods used within construction SME’s, where literature and research is limited. SME organisations dominate the business industry and unfortunately DM is not utilised to its full capacity, Jonker et al. (2004). Taimenen (2015) found within their study of interviewing 16 managers through 13 semi structured interviews that a low percentage of 5% was invested within the marketing budget for digital marketing. For smaller companies the undertaking of characteristics for the role as a marketer can be complicated (Gamble 2011 & Arnold and Tapp 2003).

2.2.3 Direct Marketing as a Managerial Process

More recent contribution from Perez-Cabanero et al., (2012) suggested that majority of SMEs are family based, resulting in their study focusing on family run SMEs in Spain. Unfortunately, there has been a gap within the research for the ‘backbone’ of the business industry as SMEs are the highest businesses throughout Europe (Perez-Cabanero et al., 2012). Leading to the distribution of questionnaires to 550 companies (391 family based and 159 non family based) they found that 159 non family SMEs engage in a number of traditional approaches of marketing relying heavily on personal contact with clients. This could be due to SMEs having limited understanding of marketing, sales and advertising as their decision making and managerial processes are flexible and unplanned (Blankson et al. 2006).

Continuing from Blankson et al., (2006) statement, a study conducted by Taiminen and Karjaluto (2015) on SMEs found that when interviewing 16 managers, an estimated 46% admitted that they used digital marketing poorly. Their findings highlighted that due to the owners/managers lack of knowledge on the transformation of traditional marketing to use of social media and email, they were kept in the dark on the reach and cost effectiveness of the ‘new’ methods; with this reaching a point of data saturation in the managerial interviews. The figures suggest that SME employees and employers should be educated on the range of marketing methods that are available from traditional to new.

2.2.4. Construction, SMEs & DM
Lack of empirical information on the construction industry, both domestically and internationally indicating a gap within the DM methods used strategically. Not only has DM been untouched but also marketing as a whole concept with less studies conducted in recent years. Authors such as Buckshon (2010) and Newcombe et al., (1993) state that there has been little academic insight of DM in the construction industry (CI) due to tender culture. Bennett (2005) elaborates further on the tender culture discussing that is price orientated to win projects ignoring the important elements of project success for the customer. Referring to Patterson et al., (1997) views on the 1980s transaction orientated marketing the tender culture of the CI is dated and focuses on the short term interaction with customers, Davis and Walker (2003). Research implies that there are two key reasons behind the lack of knowledge and dominance of tender culture. First the misconception of marketing as it is still classed as a ‘new’ concept, being introduced in the 1990s, Morgan and Morgan (1990). The second reason is due to the managerial structures congested by engineers, Ciclmil and Nicholson (1998).

An occurring problem in the industry is that it is a complex, unpredictable industry that cannot simply be planned for strategic marketing due to its nature, Bennett (2005). Many companies can surpass that issue, when they are of a larger scale. When construction companies grow they expand; introducing new departments where they should then be integrated through the organisations. Unfortunately, when departments such as marketing and IT are not utilised to their full capabilities due to not being considered as important as other business elements. This is down to the success of business within the industry measure by the quantity and quality of the companies work, Ciclmil and Nicholson (1998). Alanen (2016) study is centralised on the DM methods that a traditional Finnish construction company uses to attract customers. The findings in the study closes in on the gap of research of construction industries uses of DM methods and its effectiveness providing a framework for investigation of Welsh construction SME’S. Marketing within the construction industry, especially in SMEs has not been extensively researched creating an opportunity for this thesis to broaden the knowledge.

2.3 Chapter Summary
This chapter evaluated and contextualised the existing literature providing contribution in relation to the orientation and questioning framework of this work. The following chapter will discuss the methodological approach to this study.
CHAPTER THREE
Methodology
3.0 Methodology

3.0.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this exploratory research is to evaluate and explore the effectiveness of Direct Marketing in Welsh, Construction SMEs. As outlined in the literature review much of the research on DM in SMEs has been established outside of this domain with theory and empirical contributions differing on what is considered effective. While the extant literature provided substantial empirical evidence to support the emphasis of DM it is somewhat inexistent in the construction field. The topic then becomes the establishment of a broader understanding of the implementation and acceptance of DM in this area. With the broad research question in place this primary research question within this chapter will evaluate and consider the thesis’ methodological choices and justifications. Subsequently the rationale for the qualitative stance is presented and it’s appropriateness for this thesis. As the chapter concludes the materials and methods for data collection are discussed and limitations offered.

3.1 Methodological Choice

As highlighted in the review, a subjective qualitative, approach was chosen. It is considered due to researchers referring to it as a powerful tool extract in-depth understandings of why issues are left unclear, by the gatherings of quantitative research (Moisander & Valtnonen 2006, Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, Carson et al., 2001). Many of the key factors in DM are socially constructed, with individual selection, appreciation and willingness to engage paramount, it was felt that and as a consequence, the works broad method should be constructed from this perspective. However, the researcher does acknowledge the contribution of qualitative contributions to this field. Within the construction industry quantitative research has been in favour for research concerning factors such as site safety. Whereas construction management and its process (including marketing) is better measured by qualitative research, Zou et al., (2014). Given the context and void that this thesis seeks to fill such an approach would have been limiting, and it was felt that the very essence of individual proclamations and experiences would be overlooked. Consequently it is the body of qualitative research in this field that provided the conceptual framework going forward. There are two research domains to con-
sider within marketing; the marketing management and consumers in marketing stated by Carson et al. (2001), the use of this method to evaluate both perspectives of marketers and consumers will provide the ‘middle ground’ to contribute to the depleted research in the field.

3.2 Approach
With regard to an overall approach it was established that the inductive stance was most appropriate for this type of reach undertaking, opposed to the deductive approach that advocates the implementation of preconceived hypothesis and generalisations. This stance has an inherent applicability where research is aimed at the development and furthering of already established theoretical propositions (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2003), The table below adapted from Saunders et al (2003), outlines the main differences between deductive and inductive research approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inductive Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.  Translating theory to data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Need to explain relationships between variables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Quantitative methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  Highly structured approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  Researcher detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Emphasis on definitive conclusions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2003, p.89)

With the inductive approach being considered for this research; all participants from both data sets were contacted via direct emailing. The managerial participants were found through lists and business registers of the Welsh Assembly Government and Construction
3.3 Research Design: Managerial Data Set

3.3.1 Participant Selection/Sample

As outlined in the introduction and abstract a probability sampling method was utilised. Given the strict parameters on this stage of the data collection this was a salient means of establishing the right participants. In selection, relevance and consideration was given to managerial longevity, the actual role occupied company turnover, and type of market within the construction industry. Lists were obtained from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the utilisation of registered companies on the “Business Register” as well as support from WAG’s Business Wales office. Additionally list was obtained from “The Construction Industry Training Board” offices centrally located in Bridgend, South Wales, and the Federation of Mater Builders, Wales (FMB Cymru). With the sample structure in place contact with prospective participants was undertaken via direct emailing. In total 27 managers were contacted with 7 being able to make the scheduled interviews.

**TABLE 2: MANAGERIAL PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Company Size</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Primary Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 Employees</td>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>Electrical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17 Employees</td>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Carpentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26 Employees</td>
<td>Merthyr Tydfil</td>
<td>Building Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>54 Employees</td>
<td>Aberdare</td>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30 Employees</td>
<td>Aberystwyth</td>
<td>Plumbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20 Employees</td>
<td>Merthyr Tydfil</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9 Employees</td>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Plastering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 The Choice of Semi Structured Interviews

The choice of semi structured interviews allowed for researcher contact, a study of managerial experience and insight in a localised, familiar setting to be observed. It is stated that, “Interviewers can, for example, create rapport” (Gruber et al., 2008, p257), during
such individual sessions, with in which both interviewer and interviewee have equal status. With relation to this prospect such an approach was considered ideal to explore personal and professional opinion without intrusion. The use of interviews are utilised to seek why situations occur as they do, based on facts, processes, structures and feelings of respondents (Moisander & Valtnonen 2006 and Fellows & Liu 2008.) Additionally Borch and Arthur (1995) (as cited in O’Donnell and Cummins, 1999, p. 84) “recommend a methodology which will increase contextual insights and will allow for a greater understanding of forces affecting the phenomena in question, through highlighting the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of organisational and individual action”

3.4.1 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted on business properties and time and dates specified by the managers within a context of a 3 week window. The initial interview as considered as a pilot and it was at this juncture that the protocols and questioning were finalised for the remaining managerial interviews. As a clear linear process, the researcher identified themselves, and proceeded to outline the nature and parameters of the research. They were also advised that their specialist knowledge was required and that any and all answers were valid for the study. Also participants were advised that there would be through analysis of the recorded interviews, later transcribed. It was at this point that the questioning began with the introduction of topics in a systematic manner, with a “balance between keeping a focus on the research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher” (Lester, 1999 p. 56).

3.4.2 Questioning Framework

As stated in the literature review, the following authors have contributed to the development of the managerial questioning framework; (1) What was their experience and perception of the marketing and DM functions; (Kritika et al., 2013), (2) What aspects of the Direct Marketing they considered to be a valuable strategic tool; (Alanen 2016 & Evans et al. 2001), (3) How were direct marketing elements administered and what were the metrics for success; (Reijonen and Laukkanen 2010). (4) What would you consider to be an effective direct marketing process? (Slater & Narver 1995 & Alanen 2016).
Each interview lasted for on average 55-60 minutes, with this proving to be more than sufficient. Even with the limited number of interviews undertaken, within several areas a point of saturation was being achieved.

3.4.3 Interview Analysis

All session were recorded with the subsequent generation of several thousand words of transcription. Through this process over 70 codes were derived which in turn were peer verified resulting in 20 codes being authenticated through described analysis, including the following: Lack of Customer Orientation (LOCO), No Real Strategy (NRS), No Grasp of Marketing (NGOM), Responding to Word of Mouth (RTWOM), Strategic Gaps (SG), Customer Bombardment (CB), Missed Opportunity for Direct Feedback (MOFDF) and Not Practicing Marketing by the Text Book (NPMBTT). Saldana (2016) defines coding as a “qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or advocate attribute for a portion of language based or visual data” (p.4). Other authors such as Vogt, Vogt, Gardner and Haelfele (2014) define the coding process as a “researcher-generated construct that symbolises or ‘translates’ data” (p.13).

3.5 Research Design: Customer Data Set

3.5.1 Participant Selection/Sample

Participants for this element of the research were taken from customer list provided by the managerial participants as well as utilising a direct mailing company. The purpose of the customer research is due to the approach is widely utilised within academic research within marketing to study the behaviours, attitudes, needs, perceptions, preferences and choices of the customers (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016); information that is crucial to marketers within the construction industry. As with the managerial elements, an email approach was undertaken inviting individuals to participate in the research process. While response rates are said to be problematic 70 individuals agreed to take part.
5.2 The Choice of Focus Groups

The literature indicates that focus groups are “increasingly used in the field of marketing” Küster and Vila (2011, pg. 113). In addition, and in keeping with the works overall orientation, Kitzinger (1994, p. 103) suggested that, “Focus groups are group discussions organised to explore people’s views and experiences on a specific set of issues. Above all they “seek meaning and are particularly interested in the perspective and standpoint of the people they study”, (Hammersley, 1992, as cited in Gruber at al., 2008,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 18-76</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Male</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality Welsh</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian 13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese 2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group 18-35</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-60 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-76 5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status Single</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married 51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Professional</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Professional</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income £5,000-10,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10,000-20,000 0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000-30,000 24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000-40,000 42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000-50,000 26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000+ 5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3: CUSTOMER PARTICIPANTS
To that end the approach offered a suitable mechanism and means of engaging with the prospective customer base. Given the above the researcher concluded that such an approach would elicit a thick data set, with questions predicated on the managerial answers.

Groups were undertaken in Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Bridgend and Aberystwyth, with 2 taking place in the Cardiff areas. This was a consequence of participant response levels in those areas and a willingness to participate in the prescriptive research period. Dates and times were sent to all individuals who agreed to participate at least seven days in advance to try to ensure participation. To ensure the sessions were maximized a questioning framework, predicated on Sweet’s framework (2001) was implemented.

As outlined this was predicated on the managerial answers as well as the extant literature. The themes explored were: (1) On average how many times do you get called, text, emailed daily? (Ng 2005), (2) What methods were used to contact you? And what would you prefer? (Seitz & Massey 2014), (3) How do you respond to direct mail, emails and telephone calls? (Kotler & Armstrong 2013), (4) How are you kept in contact with companies that you have dealt with? (Evans et al. 2001), (5) Do they contact you regularly or do you receive one off campaigns? (Groonos 1996 and Patterson et al. 1997) and (6) Are there alternatives that could be used to approach you? (Iyer & Hill 1996).

Like the managerial sessions, questions were clustered into significant groups and introduced in a systematic manner, although against the backdrop of trying not to diminish the focus group process of openness and flexibility. Prior to the commencement of the process, each group member was assigned an alpha-numeric tag that included generic biographical details to make memo taking and transcription a more orderly, efficient process.

3.5.3 Focus Group Analysis

The focus group discussions were taped and transcribed. The transcripts were analysed iteratively and coded accordingly. Saldana (2016) states that coding can be used within
transcripts, as it creates trustworthy data through categorising the similarities, frequencies and correspondence of the findings to one element. The transcripts were read repeatedly (Miles and Huberman 1994:8) to understand the meanings and interpretations which the participants brought to their consumption habits in relation to the research orientation. Through the process of reading, re-reading and theme finding over 30 codes were derived which in turn were peer verified resulting in 7 emergent codes being authenticated. Collecting Personal Information (CPI), Direct Marketing Apathy (DMA), Lack of Trust (LOT), Lack of Relevance (LOR), Problematic Platform (PP), Lack of Strategy (LOS), Trust from Third Parties (TFTP) and Lack of CRM (LOCRM)

3.6 Ethics
The ethics process used within this thesis features emails sent to the managerial and consumer samples. Participant consent forms were created to provide evidence of participations understanding and allowing information to be extracted from the data collection of interviews and focus group discussions. Information sheets were also written and provided to the participants to allow familiarisation with the process of the study. Provided within the ethics process was also the questioning framework to provide an insight into the interviews and discussions. The participants within this study are fully aware of the use of data and that their personal details will be kept strictly confidential. The ethics process of this thesis conformed to the Cardiff Metropolitan University protocol.

3.7. Research limitations
3.7.1 Geographical Limitations
The research has been predominantly undertaken in South Wales in terms of the managerial aspect and the customer aspect. A far wider distribution would have been preferable but the research was reliant on respondent willingness and undertaken accordingly. Additionally, many of the participants were in the same age bracket with similar psychographic profiles. And as As intimated within this chapter a wide demographic was sought to ensue validity and to minimize homogeneous groups.
3.8 Chapter Summary
This chapter discussed the methodological approach this study undertook, with regards to the managerial semi-structured interviews and customer focus group discussions. The following chapter will discuss the managerial findings.
CHAPTER FOUR
Findings: Managerial Data Set
4.0: Findings: Managerial Set

4.0.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter represents the data collected from the managerial participants. The findings are presented in themes that symbolise the final, peer reviewed coding system. Each manager was given an alpha numeric tag that represented their interview ranking, company and region i.e. 1ESW. Word count prevents a full exegesis of the thick data set acquired, but what is presented is representative of the major themes located in the seven interviews.

4.1. Marketing Knowledge

4.1.1 Simple Promotion

A salient theme in the managerial interviews was predicated on the initial line of questioning and accounts of their understanding of the marketing process. All managers perceived marketing as a transactional proposition echoing practices of the early 1950s and 1960s. In review this may be due to the size and in all cases a lack of formal training, however, given the relative size and scope of the companies and the fact that they were all competing in the same market this lack of understanding was marked. This is exemplified by participant 3BMMT who, from a building maintenance company based in Merthyr Tydfil in response to be asked what he felt marketing was replied:

“Promote business to people who do not know the company”

When asked within their interview 7PLCA had a similar response using the term ‘show off’ as a form of portraying their company to customers.

“I feel that marketing is a way to show off the company and what our company does”

The construction industry is viewed as a traditional business with a number of trades whilst under the influence of the tender structure, furthermore it is evident to see that there has been no evolving process within their marketing departments.
4.2 What is Direct Marketing?

4.2.1 Atavistic Marketing Practices

The responses above, perhaps unsurprisingly were replicated in direct discussion of DM and its function. Like marketing itself, DM was conceptualised by all managers as essentially a one way process, with the customer simply the recipient of a message delivered via the telephone. Whereas the existing literature, including the work of Alanen (2016) stated that DM is a form of engaging with customers on more than one way systems. While it was not the researcher’s expectation that managers would have a full, theoretical knowledge of DM, it was revelatory that despite being in strategic control of the marketing function, such limitations were in place; particularly practically:

“Direct marketing is cold calling and sending leaflets. That’s the whole point it’s direct”

Even through reviewing the extant literature indicates that DM practice has evolved and has done so theoretically and practically across a number of SME environments. Consequently when reading the text, the notion of something of a cultural agreement was considered, in the context of organisational culture, market culture and geographic culture. There was evidence of what the researcher believed to be resistance to change from the managerial perspective as there was the constant affirmation of:

“We’ve always done it like that and it’s been sort of successful you think; why change?’
And if you can’t come up with a really solid reason for actually changing; you don’t bother. Well, I certainly haven’t, and I’ve yet to be convinced that my customers or new customers want me to change”.

This is again exemplified from a different participant 4CENEW, but again synthesis of this marketing practice and is at least theoretically outdated:

“My customers don’t want me to change as it’s what they’re used to, and if they’re happy I’m happy”.

38
“Um, I really don’t worry too much about that, I sort of just look after what I’ve got, and if somebody new wants me to do something I presume they’ll call me”

Again, with above the lack of strategic relevance to the true impact and scope of direct marketing correctly is missing. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the extract was the fact that new customers or indeed having a market orientation was completely missing from the dialogue. If we evaluate marketing in the modern contact, and particularly the work of Narver and Slater (1995) what we have is a strategic overview that is essentially dying. Interestingly none of the participants alluded to DM being used as a mechanism for growth, within their organisation, but saw it as a tool to maintain some sort of comfort zone which is mentioned within the next section.

4.3 DM as a Maintenance Mechanism

There has been no definition of DM which specifically states that the interactions should be with existing or potential customers. There has been an aspect within the manager’s answers which highlight the ignorance of change in their methods and approaches. When asked if they keep in contact with customers on a regular basis or ‘now and again’, participant 3BMMT mentioned:

“We make sure that we are in constant contact with existing customers, whether it is phone calls, emails or visits from our MD. It is crucial that employees at (company name removed) are on good relationship terms with clients; all about the communication”.

All of the managers had this approach to a continual communication with existing customers, although there seemed to be a gap within the regular contacts with potential. The ‘one off’ approach to potential customers does not allow room for relationship building. Keeping in contact with customers that they have worked for is a pinnacle for after sales and relationship. However, there should be an unequivocal focus on the potential customers that could provide SMEs with growth and development.
4.4 The Danger of Social Media

A theme that was replicated in all of the semi structured interviews was the tendency to avoid or question the use, reach and benefits of social media. This represents a salient theme in the extant literature, and forms the bedrock of DM in 2016. Indeed several research papers that have mapped DM apparently have advocated the use and necessity of embracing technological change and psychographic profiles have evolved. This is exemplified in the extract below provided in the second interview:

“We tend to keep away from social media posts; marketing is more brochures, flyers, telephone, emails”

The above again represents the lack of awareness of current marketing practice, such as ‘screen marketing’ (Alanen, 2016) and indeed the fundamental elements relating to marketing systems such as the E’s And C’s where the emphasis has been placed on Exchange and Communication. Furthermore, a common theme was the notion, without direct qualification that their customer base did not want or use social media due to the fact that as an organisation telemarketing had been the preferred method of communication:

“Because we’ve always done that, and because I’ve not heard any differently, why would I want to change and maybe screw everything up? I mean if that’s what you’re used to and they know that’s how I operate, they’d be concerned or maybe worried that it wasn’t me contacting them; you know like a scam.”

This participate was asked directly if he had actually contacted his customer base to establish if the above was representative. He replied:

“If they wanted change they’d tell me, that’s what marketing is all about. If they want something new they will let me know; right?”
Interestingly the extract does hint at the notion of co-creation, but the ignorance is suggesting that clients would contact him for change is strategically limiting and non-existent, although it would seem that this was acceptable in relation to company performance and developing a stronger market orientation.

4.5 Utilising Success from DM

Each interview revealed that despite the theoretical; position of the use of DM it was used to ostensibly illicit positive feedback, with clients called to leave positive feedback. While obtaining word of mouth (WOM) is a strong feature of current marketing literature cold calling for it represents something abnormal within marketing:

“If a project is ongoing or we receive a testimonial it is more spur of the moment marketing and upload with photos ASAP. However, if we think we need some feedback, I’ll get one of the girls to call and see if we can organise that. I suppose that’s the joy of having a telemarketing approach, as the customer will expect a call and will probably agree to do, even to get us of the phone”.

This was replicated by participant 7PLCA:

“If a jobs gone well, I’ll call them myself to make sure they give me something for the website; a quote I can use to say “we’re happy, we’ll use them again blah, blah, blah”.

4.6 Limited Use of Feedback from Customers

With regard to feedback and the utilisation of customer knowledge to enhance data bases and develop stronger customer profiles, none of the participants discussed or revealed that they had or initiated this type of strategic approach to enhance the effectiveness of their somewhat limited DM approaches:
“I’ll go through the phone book, have a look at people in the immediate areas. I’ll turn that into some sort of list and then someone in the office, or more precisely my wife, will have the pleasure of calling them”.

This then, as with others was replicated and in each interview the researcher asked about a more refined and strategic approach to obtaining and utilising data to be more competitive. The following encapsulated the responses.

“The thing is, is that everybody around here does it that way, so if I suddenly forget about the business and start being a little more scientific, which is bloody time consuming, I might be the one to miss out on that prospective customer whose five minutes down the road”  

The above extracts highlight the lack of ambition of construction industries to develop and grow as businesses or become competitive. Supporting the work of Alanen (2016), that mentioned the: “one purpose of marketing is the competition, especially companies who are competing in the same field of profession. Sometimes companies are forced to pursue marketing, since everyone else is doing it” (p.18)

The tender culture has drown the construction SMEs in Wales in 2016, due to comfortability in their methods and lack of passion to develop.

4.7 Finding New Customers

Given the necessity of being competitor orientated, what was revealed was that the managers felt continually calling the same customers was an essential part of the DM process:

“It doesn’t matter if we’re calling the same people because at some point, one of us is going to get that job, so I’m happy to take a little abuse, because at some point I will get that job”
“That’s the deal. All of us in this industry know that’s the deal, if you’re trying to use databases to find customers, the ones that want the jobs then and know are gone”.

There was also a central theme that the positive feedback from existing customer was the strategic way to get new customers:

“From existing customers we have positive feedback and contact which helps see effectiveness, and then must help, or I think it helps attract new customers”

The process of finding new customers has not been a priority for many of the companies in question, the process of ‘nagging’ customers is seemed appropriate, which in 2016 can cause hostile relationships.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the findings of the managerial interviews, in themes that were drawn from the final peer reviewed coding process. The themes found within the interviews were relatable to the available literature within this field. Unfortunately, the word count of this thesis restricts the full transcripts to be discussed. As stated previously, the managerial findings influenced the questioning framework of the customer focus group discussions; the following chapter will discuss the customer findings.
CHAPTER FIVE
Findings: Customer Data Set
5.0 Findings: Customer’s Data Set

5.0.1 Chapter Overview

Within this chapter, data collected from the consumer focus groups will be represented. The customer focus group discussion findings are responses of the questioning framework derived from existing literature and managerial findings. Similarly to the managerial findings, the information gathered will be presented in themes that represent the final coding analysis that have been peer reviewed. Each participant was given an authentic tag according to their participant number, focus group, sex, age and location e.g P2FG3M35C. Word count prevents full thickness of the data to be examined, major themes found within the six focus group sessions will be presented throughout this chapter.

5.1 DM methods used by CI SMEs

5.1.1 Frequency and Bombardment of DM

The aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of DM within SMEs in the Welsh construction industry. To understand from the customers perspective they were asked what the average times they were contacted by construction companies, it was evident from the managerial findings that telemarketing approaches are used the most. The focus group discussions revealed:

“Mostly at night, mostly on the phone and pretty much for things I don’t want or need”

This was common throughout the focus groups, that customers who worked 9am-5pm received telemarketing campaigns at night when they had finished work. P3FG6F27C, a 27 year old, unemployed female, who had mentioned she had been off work for the past 6 months, stated that she is contacted throughout the day, which a number of participants are unaware of due to work commitments:

“I’m home most of the day. Ummm thinking about it I get about 5-6 a week”
The responses above indicate that DM used by construction companies are constant processes used to approach the customers, emphasising the use of 1980s transactional orientated methods. The manager interviews believed that telemarketing was effective and that their customers approved of their approaches; as they did not ask for change or provide feedback of bombarding behaviour, quite the opposite to literature findings. Throughout the focus group discussions a sense of hostility was portrayed when implying emphasis on the frequency of calls, with 98% of participants stating that a sense of bombardment occurred regularly. The findings of bombardment contradicts both the managerial findings and work of Iyer & Hill (1996). Two of the older generation participants; P8FG4F76M and P2FG5M68B, one retired the other working of the focus groups described their telemarketing interactions:

“It feels like it’s all the bloody time, it’s for the same thing,”

“It’s got to the point where I’ve had to block numbers from all the different calls I have daily.”

The emphasis on not answering the telephone calls indicates a sense of brand resistance and avoidance. However, not all participants gave the telemarketing method any recognition, P7FG2F28C a 28 year old, newly married female based in Cardiff mentioned:

“I don’t even answer my house phone, I don’t think I ever have.”

The straight forward statement indicates that the millennial are not engaging in old fashioned technology as they use mobile phones, social media etc. In comparison with the older generation’s remarks, it is evident to see an evolution in communication methods. Revealing that customers either choose to ignore or learn to deal with the approach of telemarketing rather than provide feedback for change to the companies that call them. Reviewing literature and taking the perspectives of customers suggests construction companies do not contact consumers effectively as they believe. Their approach to DM has led to hostile relationships and ignorance to develop, leading to brand resistance and
avoidance. Seemingly, it would be more acceptable to engage with the customers through telemarketing if it was strategic orientated, based on up to date data and with aspects of relevancy themes discussed in the following section.

5.2 The Importance of Data Collection

5.2.1 Opportunity to Collect Data

Within the managerial findings it was evident that the construction companies had not fulfilled the process of market research and data collection, they aimed their marketing campaigns to everyone and not tailored to specific customer bases. Reviewing Kotler & Armstrong (2013) study, they state that DM should be on a one to one basis with the use of databases to specify campaigns to their customers. With the managers choosing to ignore the utilisation of databases and market research, it lead to the consumers being questioned on the data collection methods of the companies in question. A major theme throughout the discussions was in fact the lack of communication to understand the customers by construction companies. The literature on market research states that market research allows understanding of customers with potential relationships developing.

P1FG6M36S a 36 year old male personal trainer, stated that:

“From the type of companies that were talking about today and I’m pretty sure it’s the same ones calling all the time, but they don’t seem to listen and carry on regardless.”

A trend within the discussions, suggested that marketers do not acknowledge or develop relationships with their customers due to lack of customer orientation, an element of the market orientation theory of Slater and Narver (1995). It is not suggested that marketers should know every detail about consumers but basic information should be considered to work with. An emphasis on the importance of knowing and appealing to the needs and wants of customers is critical to marketing functions. To understand further on how the construction companies interact with their customers, the customers were asked what did the telephone calls consist of and if aspects of data collection existed. P3FG6M31N, a Married Postman who has a child due within the next few months mentioned that the data collection methods were poor. Stating:
“No never, they’ve never asked my age, married, how much I earn. You may be reluctant to say that but I know it’s difficult to get that information calling that late in the night.”

Furthermore, P2FG138S a supermarket assistant discussed her recently moving into a new housing estate, mentioning her conversation with a local construction company who asked if work needed to be done, indicating that not only did the companies lack information on the customer but also the surroundings due to it being a new housing estate, elaborating that:

“My needs are not going to change for a while, the reality is, if they found out who was moving in, who, family size (I assume this info is available) they can probably get their timings right.”

Literature says for construction companies to collect crucial information and data of their customers to market effectively. Without the notion of data collection the telemarketing approach of DM can be pointless. It is evident by reviewing the findings of the manager’s interviews that they tend to ignore the data collecting approach to DM. Building on the managerial findings, the focus group discussions supported the ignorance of the construction companies in question.

5.3 Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM)

5.3.1. Sustainability of DM

The sustainability of DM should allow managers communicate and promote their business through the interactions with their customers. Literature insists that DM should not be used solely for the attraction of new customers but to also keep existing customers in the ‘loop’ and maintaining relationships. Within their interviews the managerial definitions of DM had no evidence of potential or existing customer interactions. It was found that managers had used DM ineffectively when contacting potential customers, however
they highlighted that they are in constant contact with existing customers by keeping them up to date. With establishing this, the focus of the consumer focus group discussions was toward the interactions the customers experienced after receiving services from the companies. When asked how they are kept in contact with construction companies that they have dealt with in the past a Chinese restaurant owner P5FG3M49C contradicted the managerial findings stating that:

“I spent £15,000 with a local company having a garage built, since then I have not heard from them not even thank you. I had an arbitrary request for feedback as soon as the job was complete but I didn’t feel as if that transaction was important to them. I was no longer used to them beyond customer feedback. The work was of a really good standard but the after sales was awful.”

This is contrary to literature that SMEs lack that code of contact with customers and failed to grasp the concept of using DM as a retention tool. This is due to the thought process of 1980s CI, where short term interactions are seen as acceptable in the industry, still nearly 40 years on. Although the statement above suggests that construction companies operate on ‘one off’ interactions with their customers; it is not said that all customers of construction industries will be completely abandoned. Following from that discussion P5FG5M54B a maintenance manager mentions his interaction with Construction Company at his work place a local factory:

“I had a few bits and pieces done in the factory a couple of years back, I have regular emails from the company about updates but its more information on things that are not relevant.”

Although the construction companies are keeping in contact with their existing customers, again as stated above the notion of basic data collection eliminates problematic situations occurring at execution of works. The findings of the managerial interviews revealed that the managers are communicating regularly with their existing customers,
although the customer focus group discussions state that their regular contacts that they
do pursue are not deemed effective.

5.3.2. Trust
With reviewing the limiting literature of construction SMEs, the notion of trust has not
been identified. Throughout the customer findings trust had become a repetitive theme,
towards the approach managers had used. Managers admit they tend to avoid methods
such as social media and over-utilise emails, brochures and phone calls. When discuss-
ing telemarketing and how customers are approached, P4FG1F27S summed up in a
short quotation of the trust within marketing:

“Ringing for me to spend around £15,000 and I need a bit more than just a phone call
for that”

Similarly, participant, P1FG6F31A a police officer based in Aberystwyth states:

“I hear so many stories of these cowboy companies that request the money upfront and
either do an awful job or leave it incomplete. I tend to stay away from companies who
keep calling and acting like they can give me a deal. They just don’t seem legit.”

The above statement, emphasises the minimal trust within the telemarketing interac-
tions, as no data collection is executed prior to the phone calls, leading to the companies
being viewed as strangers. Another increasing issue is distinguishing what is considered
as ‘junk’ and what is considered as relevant, worthy to read emails and mail. It seems
that companies are not trusted or taken seriously by the recipients of their campaigns.
P7FG1M36N suggested an alternative to untrustworthy methods:

“It just seems to come through as junk mail which isn’t given the time of day. Personal
opinion what I would like them to do is create maybe a PDF file and maybe have these
sent through employers, coming through that I would want to have a look and see if it is
relevant."

P8FG4F28A followed with a similar insight into the channels where DM is used:

“I tend to ignore it when it’s in the house, if they sent mail through school, I don’t know how they would do that, but I’d be more inclined to review something coming through that mechanism.”

If the above approaches are adopted by construction companies professionalism and trust would be added to the DM process. Going through employers mail or email channels show a sense of data collection, eliminating the aspect of junk mail and providing trustworthiness which is considered key to DM. Literature on DM has not addressed the notion of trust between the suppliers and consumers although it is something that should be considered within SMEs and the construction industry. A participant based in Aberaeron, P6FG3M48A who owns a pub stated that:

“I had my pub refurbished a couple of years back by a local company, I contacted them due to seeing a post on Facebook. It wasn’t really a recommendation or anything it was just a name. I contacted them they came to see me straight away and gave me a reasonable price and cracked on with the work”

The participant went on to say that:

“I’ll always use them now, because they never harassed me like what the others today have said, if I need bits and pieces I call them up and it’s as if I saw them last week and not a few years back. ”

The dialogue above states that SME marketing does not need to be aggressive (Alanen, 2016) but it can be subtle and effective. However, with the managers admitting they steer from the use of social media, their excuse seems nonexistent. The managers ignore change due to customers not telling them to adapt, which literature further states that
social media is utilised within SMEs due to lack of time, resources and acknowledgment of academic insights to DM; along with being viewed as humanistic approach by consumers (Small Business 2016).

5.4 Brand Equity

5.4.1. Word of Mouth (WOM)

As mentioned previously, the notion of trust is extremely important to the consumer and not considered by the marketing managers. Trust does not only come from the company itself but also other customers that have used their services. WOM was a salient theme throughout the findings, especially as customers were asked to shed the light on the approaches utilised by the managers.

With reviewing literature, during the shift within marketing WOM had become crucial tool for marketers when positive, whereas the negative comments could be problematic. However, there has not been a great amount of literature on the use of WOM in construction SMEs. With regards to the managerial findings the managers utilised cold calling to receive feedback and testimonials about their works completed, potentially allowing control of what is broadcasted. The controlling of WOM and testimonials does not provide valid feedback for the products or services provided for potential customers. P6FG4F31P a 31 year old hairdresser from a village near Merthyr Tydfil stated that she would use the internet for feedback and recommendations of construction companies, which supports the managerial methods:

“I tend to use google, I type in my area and what I want done. As easy as that”

However, other customers within this study who responded, tended to go for the WOM approach from existing customers. P7FG2M44N a bar man based in Newport and P9FG5M60B a 60 year old council foreman based in Bridgend:

“I know a few guys that are trades men so sometimes I ask them for any recommendations
“I would ask around, If I see someone having work done on their property around the neighbourhood I ask who done it and if they’re any good”

The approaches to WOM could be down to the bio-graphics of this sample. Lived experiences of being socially linked with tradesmen or possibly knowing a significant amount about the services could be of an advantage and lead to less internet searches for WOM. It is not suggested that WOM comes from the friends of customers or companies, but also the observations of others having work done which develops awareness, recall and recommendations.

5.5 Chapter Summary
This chapter provided the findings of the customer focus group discussions. The themes found within the interviews were relatable to the available literature within this field, with aspects of contradiction. As stated previously, the word count prevents full discussion of the transcripts.
CHAPTER SIX

Discussion
6.0 Discussion

6.0.1 Chapter Overview

This research attempts to explore the effectiveness of DM in Welsh construction SMEs, the following chapter will discuss the findings of the managerial interviews and customer focus group discussions with existing literature. Despite the findings within this thesis being highly contextualised there is a clear indication that managers responsible for marketing practices within Welsh construction SMEs have limited flexibility with regards to their DM methods.

6.1 Direct Marketing

Studies conducted by Gounaris and Avionitis (2001) and Kritika et al. (2013) found that awareness of DM is evident throughout companies but the way to implement the process effectively is still a question unanswered by the managers of SMEs. The thick data sets provided by this research indicated that there are contradictions and missing links between the managerial and consumer perspectives of effective DM. With reviewing the findings of this study it is evident that the awareness of marketing is present within the construction companies in question, although the meaning and process of DM is that of an outdated version.

The findings provided an insight on how the marketing managers of the construction companies portray their feelings on DM practices. With no planning or research into their campaigns, majority of the companies marketed spontaneously. It could be said that the marketers did not take the functions seriously and it felt that it was not considered a primary function within the organisations. When the customers were asked about the DM methods that they had been approached by telemarketing was witnessed as one of the main practices utilised by the companies in question. The company’s objectives were to promote the business for more sales and company benefits more than considering the customer’s wants and needs. It seemed that the construction company marketing managers were transactional orientated which is considered atavistic interlinking with the work of Bauer (1987) which as a building block to their marketing techniques is
problematic. It had been encapsulated by the customers that their needs and wants were not considered when being communicated through telemarketing.

6.1.1 Managers Definitions of Marketing and DM

With a limited sample, the overall definition of marketing was the promotion of business to people who do not know the company. The findings of the manager’s perceptions of marketing are not in line with the modern conceptualisation of the marketing mix, which is considered the foundation of marketing practices. McCarthy (1964) marketing mix, of product, price, promotion and place sparked a conceptual shift within marketing which has been adopted by majority of managers ever since. However, within the managerial definition the ethos of marketing was nonexistent, which is a cause for concern for the construction companies. With regards to McCarthy (1964) marketing mix, the companies focused mostly on the promotion of the company. Which is evident to see within the findings that it had a negative effect on the experience of the customers. As stated previously, with their focus on the promotion of the companies services, no consideration was made for the customer or the companies they are competing as identified within the gaps between the managerial and consumer perspectives.

As stated above, the contextualised findings within this study do not conform to the existing literature on DM. The lack of the utilisation of the modernised marketing mix could be argued to be down to the practitioner knowledge of the managers responsible for the marketing practices. Authors such as Patterson et al. (1997) found that organisations that focus on leaflet drops and telesales are transaction orientated, which is a major issue for modern DM practices. McCarthy (1964) 4Ps have been the building block for marketers for decades, which could be argued that it is the primary tradition in marketing, which evidently the construction companies have been ignoring. The definitions stated by the managers suggest that from the word go, the marketing practices they utilise are not the standard of 2016 marketing or any marketing standard since the 1980s for that matter. Kotler and Armstrong (2013) study found that marketer’s direct approach to customers should be on one to one basis with use of detail databases to tailor campaigns to their needs and wants. Using database programs to note details from each telephone
discussion or email interaction would be strategically effective for construction companies utilising DM in the industry, with creating importance for the customers.

More recent studies such as Alanen (2016) found that the emphasis on customers is crucial within marketing, earlier stated by Slater and Narver (1995). The concept of customer orientation has been a salient theme throughout this study. Furthermore, the managers focusing on the customers that 'do not know the company' indicates that the construction companies in question have not utilised the modernised marketing mix by focusing on nonexistent customers, suggesting a lack of knowledge and understanding of the processes purpose. With the definition of marketing unrelated to the existing marketing literature, the managers understanding of DM was expectedly similar. The thick data set showed that the managers believed that DM is; “cold calling and sending leaflets”. Similar to the definition by Bauer (1987) suggesting that their perceptions of DM have not developed since the 1980s. In comparison with the modern practices of marketing, there were a number of missing elements to creating a strategic fit within DM. A lack of true MO; consideration for the construction market, competitors and most importantly the customer was found within this study. This is due to the negative experiences portrayed throughout the customer findings, with inconsistent patterns of contact, convenience and relationship building (R1; Gummeson 1994). Later literature views DM as data base driven practices that communicate with customers to satisfy them through providing relevant services to fit their requirements and interests, (Thomas 2007, Kotler & Armstrong 2013 & Alanen 2016) a view that construction companies within 2016 should implement.

6.2 Organisational Culture
Reviewing the findings of the interviews and focus group discussions indicated that although the companies had similar views on DM and its processes their approaches were different. This study focuses on Welsh construction SMEs which could be argued are similar in size and possibly organisational structure. Authors such as Zhang and Liu (2006) state that organisations that are considered similar in both size and structure differ in their approaches to being effective and successful, which has been evident
6.2.1 Family Owned Businesses (FOB)

With regards to the OC of the construction companies in question, each of the managers believe that they market effectively in their own ways which supports the elements of mentioned by Wilson (2001) and Iglesias (2011). This could be argued as a form of naivety, where the companies in question believe that their practices in marketing are the most effective, a theme that has been viewed throughout the findings. There needs to be acknowledgement that marketing is a form of cost, which could lead to hesitation with complying with other marketing practices. Furthermore, Perez-Cabanero et al. (2012) study on SMEs found that 99% of firms within Europe are in fact SMEs, which all have differentiated cultures. Their studies focused on family owned businesses (FOB), where the factors such as ownership, control and management are family run. There is no doubt that each of the construction companies in question have different cultures, the chosen method did not ask if the companies were family run or not. Within the managerial findings there were aspects of family orientation within the dialogue, with one participant mentioning their wife contacting the customers. A problem that may occur with FOBs is that they are very reliant on family styles, as their visions and styles are inward and flexible (Perez-Cabanero et al. 2012).

6.2.2 Tender Culture and Customer Orientation

On re-reading the transcripts and wider literature on the CI, it is evident that tender culture has an effect on how marketing is conducted, secondary review of literature supported by Buckshon (2010) and Newcombe et al. (1993). The tender culture has been brought to light due to the marketing academic deficiency throughout the industry. The emphasis on short term interactions with customers is what became problematic for the
customers. When discussing their interactions with the construction companies they stated that after having work done with the construction companies they were not in contact, this is also the effect of the transactional orientated marketing. It would seem that the marketers within the construction organisations prefer the quantity over quality of work with customers, this brings us back to customer orientation. It was evident when listening back to the interviews that the desire to prioritise and centralise their focus on the customers was problematic. However, authors such as Fellows (2010) found that project orientation also has effect on the construction company’s organisational culture. Although, surely sustainable and long term relationships with its customers should be prioritised as some juncture regardless of project characteristics.

6.2.3 New Paradigms

A key implication with the marketing practices within CI is that DM and marketing itself are considered ‘new’, Morgan and Morgan (1990). With reviewing the managerial interviews it was clear that they felt their methods of DM had worked; their avoidance of change showed anxiety for the ‘new’ practices. This has led to the concept of DM in construction not being fully accepted as a primary factor of the organisation due to the industry flooded with engineers, creating an unaccepting environment for the departments (Ciclml & Nicholson 1998). The attitude that marketing is not suitable for the CI has become one of the main findings within this study, furthermore becoming an obstacle for marketers which improves the understanding of why there has been limited research within this field.

6.3 Strategic DM

6.3.1 Planning

To market effectively it is essential that an aspect of planning to the campaigns should be implemented with considering the following; who to market to, how to market the campaign and what is being marketed. Alanen (2016) stated that the marketing strategy of an organisation should be planned together with the company’s operations, if not done correctly; marketing strategy can be formulated to pursue wrong markets, which was a theme found throughout the findings. In a brief statement, marketing planning is
the planned application of marketing resources to achieve marketing objectives, (McDonald 2007, p.8). However, in a more complex form earlier studies by Pearson and Proctor (1994) and Quain and Jarboe (1993) cited in Dibb et al., (2001) state that marketing planning is a systematic process involving assessing marketing opportunities and resources, determining marketing objectives and developing a plan for implementation and control. The managerial findings of this study indicated that aspects of spontaneous marketing was utilised, where the urge to get testimonials from existing customers and upload the social media post with photographs as soon as possible. Authors such as McDonald (2007) state that the planning of marketing campaigns must reflect the organisation that it is originating from.) The approaches to DM has no consideration for Slater and Narver (1995) MO; the customer, market or competitor within the marketing process, which has been a developing theme throughout the findings.

6.3.2 Ad-hoc Planning

Another routine approach to telemarketing, mentioned was the process of looking through the phone book which lead to creating a list where an employee would contact customers. This approach seems more mass marketing orientated, which contradicts the academic literature of modern marketing methods which should be of a proactive form. Furthermore, Ng (2005) study found that although avoiding mass marketing approaches seem appropriate the urge to dispatch high numbers of emails, mails and phone calls are difficult to control which is also encapsulated by the customer findings. The planning methods of the construction companies within this thesis are linked with the literature findings such as SMEs spend less time on campaigns due to lack of resources, knowledge and time (Jonker et al. 2004, Reijonen & Laukkanen 2010 and Taimenen & Karjalusto 2015). With the opposite form of planning the utilisation of MO, SMEs can market successfully and effectively, Slater and Narver (1995).

However, Bennett (2005) found that the construction industry can be difficult to strategically plan for especially when considering marketing practices as the industry is highly unpredictable and complex. Furthermore, Alanen (2016) stated that “perfect marketing plans does not exist, since the companies and their operations are always
unique” (p.13). It could be argued that the construction SME marketing managers should avoid the reactive approaches and plan strategically with the ability to alter and change campaigns as they please. MO is crucial to the marketing functions of SME’s, to establish effective MO background research needs to be founded, the utilisation and importance of data collection will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

6.3.3. Data Collection

A continuous theme within the findings of both parties was the lack of consideration of the consumer by the marketing manager. It was found within the consumer focus group discussions that the companies that contacted them never utilised or noted the information they provided for them, and continued to contact them suggesting that data bases are not used for telemarketing. Others continued by stating that they received flyers and brochures regarding building maintenance and construction options on the property that they lived in, if the correct data collection had been undertaken by the company they would have been aware of the student accommodation and contacted the landlord not the occupants. With relation to the literature on DM, Iyer and Hill (1996) stated that rather than bombarding customers with campaigns marketers should “get to know their markets they become more flexible possibly to enhance their competitiveness” p.8. This statement provides a strategic alternative to the telemarketing functions integrated throughout the industry. It is not suggesting that telemarketing should be avoided, but through collection of data through communication and interactions between customers and companies would be beneficial.

6.4 Marketing Communication

6.4.1. Communicating with Customers

The concept of customers taking control of their interactions with marketers has allowed the effectiveness of the DM practices to be measured through the satisfaction of the customers, Thomas (2007). As McCarthy (1964) 4Ps is pinnacle to the modernised ethos of marketing, Lauterbourn (1990) advanced the 4 elements with customer, cost, communication and convenience, more so a central focus on the customer. Throughout the findings of this thesis there has undoubtedly been elements of miscommunication
and understanding between the managers and customers in question. Sellahvarsi et al., (2014) stated that companies must measure the means of communication from the perspective of performance cost, with customer awareness and the motivation to purchase (p.1416). Based on what was read when re-reading the consumer findings, it was felt that there was a lack of awareness of the construction companies and also communication with the companies.

Within the managerial set of findings, the utilisation of telemarketing had become a popular method of marketing communication for the construction companies. When asked if they had considered to alter their marketing methods, the managers stated that due to their customers not wanting change and that competitors used the telemarketing method that they chose against it, suggesting that customers rather being contacted by telemarketing. A study conducted by Evans et al. (2001) stated that customers rather being contacted by telemarketing. However, the consumer findings within this study contradicted both the managerial set and the work of Evans et al. (2001). Participants elaborated further that they had blocked the telephone numbers of the companies that regularly call them, and others stated that they do not even answer their home telephone allowing an aspect of control to their communication with construction companies. However, Sellahvarsi et al. (2014) suggest that to communicate and market effectively, the companies should utilise a mixture of communicative tools and not over use one communication tool.

With regards to Sellahvarsi et al. (2014) work, the concept of customer awareness has relevance to the findings in both the interviews and focus group discussions as the consumer’s needs, wants, or details were never taken into account; (Slater & Narver 1995), which has been a major theme throughout the findings. Following from Slater and Narver (1995); the importance of communicating with customers should be emphasised, although this is an element that the construction companies fail to incorporate (Groonos 1996). Thomas (2007) discussed the importance of avoiding mass marketing and bombardment as it alienated the 4C’s, (Lauterbourn 1990). Suggesting that the marketers within the construction industry should steer from self-orientations and more toward
market orientation and most importantly communication (Sellahvari et al., 2014). Comparing the definitions of the managers to the extant literature, the customer control and relevancy to the services they provide were absent, which is a concern for implementation in 2016 (Evans et al., 2001).

6.4.2 Digital Marketing

It has been evident that telemarketing and traditional methods have been used extensively by the construction companies. The purpose of this study as a whole is to explore the effectiveness of direct marketing within Welsh construction SMEs. With regards to 2016 marketing, digital marketing has shaped how businesses and consumers interact with each other (Taiminen & Karjaluto, 2015). Consumers spend hours a day scrolling through digital channels such as email, social media sites and websites, which would be a starting point for managers to communicate with them.

Within their interviews, the managers stated that they tend to keep away from using methods such as social media and focus on more traditional approaches such as phone calls, emails, brochures and flyers. Gilmore (2007, as cited in Taiminen and Karjaluto, 2015) found that SMEs do not utilise digital marketing, which is still the case for the construction companies in question nearly a decade on. However, Taiminen and Karjaluto (2015) study found that SMEs would benefit from utilising these methods as they are deemed effective, although the construction companies within this study have ignored the usage.

With the existing literature suggesting that digital marketing such as social media is considered effective direct marketing, it had to be asked as to why the companies do not use them. A number of managers stated within their interviews that they have chosen not to taken to social media due to their customers not requesting change of methods and also comfortability in their practices. Although, the customer findings state otherwise. Within the focus group discussions the customers mentioned using search engines such as google to source construction companies. Whereas others mentioned that they had seen that majority of the Welsh public spend hours online on their smartphones us-
ing numerous applications and why were the construction companies not utilising more up to date methods.

6.5 Chapter Summary
This chapter discussed the findings of this thesis and how the managers and customers view the marketing methods that are utilised within Welsh construction SMEs, in relation to the extant literature of the field. The following chapter is the recommendations identified throughout analysis of the findings and discussion.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Recommendations
7.0 Recommendations

7.0.1 Chapter Overview
This chapter will consist of the recommendations for marketing practices for managers. A brief discussion will take place due to the word count of this thesis.

7.1 Revision of Marketing Practices for Managers
Throughout this study there were underlying issues that were continuously raised regarding the marketing methods used by managers of Welsh construction SMEs. Both the managerial and customer findings indicated lack of diversity within DM methods, customer orientation and communication methods were utilised by the companies in question.

7.1.1 Mixed Methods of DM
There are a number of methods used to market directly, when asked would they consider changing their methods of direct marketing the managers mentioned that they have no plans to alter their practices. This is due to their existing customers not providing feedback or ideas of changes; “if they want something new they will let me know; right?”. From the consumer perspective, the participants within the focus group discussions have preferred methods to be reached although their critical comments are kept to themselves and they do not contact the companies regarding their approaches. They identify junk mail as being ignored regularly and recommend the use of PDF files sent through the work place. Marketing in 2016 is becoming more digitised as days pass. However there were gaps within the utilisation of digital methods in the both perspectives, with consumers using search engines such as google to find a contractor for works, it suggests that the DM methods used by the companies are not in line with the technological developments of 2016. This supports the work of Sellahvarsi et al. (2012) where marketers should utilise a mix of DM methods, such as social media and digital channels to be considered as up to date.

7.1.2 Interacting with Customers
Within the findings of the consumer focus groups, it was found that the construction marketing managers would have a ‘one off’ interaction approach with their customers. A theme that developed was after the work was completed they had not heard from the company until they needed feedback on the work. With their response it would seem that their relationship with the construction company would not develop and returning to the company for other works seems unlikely. The approach by the construction company within this situation is not rare in the industry.

Work by Gummeson (1994) stated that marketing is the relationships of consumer and supplier through their interactions with them through relevant networks. The construction companies seem to focus on feedback and completing works at the present moment, without considering the benefits after sales and active with customers would have. It could be suggested that if the customers were in regular contact with companies that supply a service to them that they would require regular work.

A company mentioned that communication with customers is crucial to them, stating that they ensure that all their staff and employees have good relationships with clients. They also keep in contact through phone calls, emails and even arranging site meetings with their Managing Director. However, within the customer focus groups a maintenance manager mentioned they are briefly kept in the loop of services and information by a company that has done a number of projects for them over the past few years, although the information was not relevant to what they needed. It could be suggested that this is a SME issue, work by Perez-Cabanero et al., (2012) found that SMEs tend to rely on the use of personal contact with their customers for efficiency. Authors such as Blankson (2006) believed this is down to their limited experiences with marketing effectively, which realistically is a finding.

Building on the works of McCarthy (1964) and Lauterbourn (1990); Featherstonhaugh (2009) altered the 4Cs to the 4Es. (1) Experience; the journey the customer takes throughout the full purchase movement from beginning to end. (2) Everyplace; the en-
gagement with customers through the paths they found themselves without interruption, emphasising the notion of interception and availability anywhere. (3) Exchange; providing value for the precious attention and engagement and permission of the customers in trade for the service/product provided. (4) Evangelism; sharing their enthusiasm of their experiences to their peers/others, interlinking the atavistic method of WOM, social networking and the internet. Featherstonhaugh (2009) framework embraces the consumer within the marketing process, emphasising the journey of the purchasing function. The emphasis on the experience that the customer has on the marketing effectiveness provides a validity to the concept of this study. Both the customer and marketers involvement should be utilised to its fullest, an element that was undoubtedly missing from the findings of this thesis. The lack of the modern ethos of marketing was an increasing concern throughout this study, the utilisation of the P’s, C’s & E’s is crucial when marketing.

7.2 Brand Awareness

7.2.1 Generating Positive Word of Mouth (WOM)

The awareness of a brand or company is crucial to marketing, to develop recall. Baumann et al. (2015) state that “exposure and experiences influences the information that consumers gain about brands thereby influencing consumers feelings about brands” (p. 22). Throughout the findings of this thesis there were no aspects of positive experience, exposure or WOM about the companies. During the modernised shift within marketing, WOM had become crucial tool for marketers as it is the most trusted source of consumer information (Weiss, 2014). Allowing recommendations from customers to be vented, although it can be problematic in terms of negative experiences. The utilisation of WOM has been another salient theme within the findings. It is not suggested that WOM comes from the friends of customers or companies, but also the observations of others having work done which develops awareness and recall. There has undoubtedly been issues due to the lack of academic knowledge of the marketing practices by the companies, the utilisation of brand awareness allows the consumer to do the marketing work for the marketers. Becerra and Badrinyanan (2013) state that evangelism, one of the 4Es is also a form of brand awareness and WOM, being the behavioural and vocal
support of a brand (p.372). The following sections will discuss the methods to generate brand awareness and positive WOM.

7.2.2 Incentives
Incentives are a growing practice in both offline and online markets of offering financial incentives to existing customers to provide WOM referrals (Trusov et al., 2009, p. 98). The inclusion of this method is to influence the consumer to portray the company and brand in a positive form. Within the customer findings, a hint of stimulation towards positive WOM was found, where a brand was recommended to them through a friend to enter a draw for a holiday if they provided personal details. This seems to illicit a more active response to marketing especially when concerning data collection. The insertion of incentives into marketing methods allows the consumer to be taken advantage. Furthermore, notion of trust is embarked between the consumer and company by providing personal details.

7.2.3 Sponsorship
Sponsorship has been viewed as a ‘perceptible experience’ where a brand/company are visually associated with a sporting team or the like (Kapferer 2012, p.138). Within the managerial interviews there were no indications of the construction companies using sponsorship for brand awareness and marketing. A theme developed within the customer findings that local companies had utilised sponsorship methods, through football team kits, trip sponsor and tour clothes. Sponsorship could be utilised by the SMEs as Kapferer (2012) states it is a more cost friendly approach to advertising. They also state that sponsorship is the most ‘opportunistic way of reaching target customers’ (p.139)

7.3 Chapter Summary
This chapter has discussed the recommendations for the marketing managers of the Welsh CI SMEs with regards to marketing practices, methods, interactions with customers and brand awareness. The following chapter will conclude this thesis.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion
8.0 Conclusion

This final chapter will present the salient themes and elements of this study and contribution to the existing literature relating to the effectiveness of DM in Welsh construction SMEs. To conclude, a reflection on the methodological approach, findings and implications and limitations of the thesis. Finally, the concluding chapter will discuss the aspects of future research within this research field.

8.1 Theoretical Contribution

As stated in previous chapters, to the knowledge of the author of this study it is the first to explore the effectiveness of DM methods of Welsh SMEs within the CI. It has been an evident theme throughout the findings that the methods of the marketing managers in the companies in question have not been in line with what is considered as the modern ethos of marketing. In relation to the existing literature, each of the elements of the research will be discussed in terms of their theoretical contributions.

8.1.1 Direct Marketing

Regarding DM as a sole element, there had undoubtably been missing links between the managerial perceptions on what is deemed effective. It has been found that DM within 2016, is database and customer orientated (Alanen, 2016; Kotler & Armstrong 2013; Seitz & Massey 2014). Existing literature; Evans et al., (2001) found within their study from customers perspectives that telemarketing approach was a preferred method of the customers. The customer set finding of this thesis proved otherwise; as it was found that a sense of hostility and bombardment developed from the use of telemarketing, providing new contribution to existing literature. A number of studies have mentioned the ever evolving DM within larger organisations; (Patterson et al., 1997; Evans et al., 2001, Fan and Cheng 2009, Slater and Narver 1995, Seitz and Massey 2014 & Kotler and Armstrong 2013).

However, this study has found that within smaller organisations the desired customer orientated and use of data collection is not being utilised to its fullest in 2016. The emphasis on knowledge and resource development is critical for DM to be effective within
this field; highlighting the necessity of marketing practitioners to be introduced to companies of all sizes.

8.1.2 DM within Construction SMEs

The existing literature has undoubtably stated that larger organisation, marketing managers are responsible for 6 roles independently, with the practitioner knowledge that the SME managers within this study are lacking (Gok & Hacioglu 2009). It has been evident throughout this thesis that spontaneous approaches have been utilised by the managers in question, where as Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) suggests it is down to low resources, knowledge and time. The managerial findings stated that the managers would look through call lists or possibly post campaigns online as soon as possible without strategic plans. The sense of low knowledge and understanding of marketing methods and processes highlights the necessity of utilising marketing practitioners and has become a major theme within the findings. Although the available literature prior to this study has discussed the effectiveness of social media and digital methods, it had not been utilised by the organisations.

With the limited literature present for the effectiveness of DM with Welsh construction SMEs, there has been emphasis on the tender culture and its role within construction companies, (Buckshon 2010 & Newcombe et al., 1993). With considering the influence of the tender culture, the construction companies in question have developed a ‘one off’ approach with their customers, which has not been an effective practice with relation to the customer findings. Authors such as Ciclimil & Nicholson (1998) and Morgan & Morgan (1990); view the CI as filled with engineers that view the marketing as ‘new’. However, the findings within this thesis found that marketing is one of the primitive functions within the business industry, and that SMEs have knowledge of marketing, (Kritika et al. 2013). Furthermore, the ignorance of effective marketing by the construction organisations which was seen as a theme within the managerial findings suggests that marketing practitioners should be present within construction SMEs, to develop the knowledge of effective marketing.
8.2 Research Limitations
This thesis has been centralised to Welsh construction SMEs which provides limitations to the utilisation towards other sized companies, industries and geographical locations. The limited sample, provided limitations to the full exploration of the concept of Welsh construction SMEs as only seven participants have been interviewed for the managerial data set. However, 70 customers were

8.3 Future Research
For future research, studies similar to this thesis could research other countries within the UK for greater insight into the effectiveness of DM practices in construction SMEs, it could be suggested that studies move further afield and possibly study Europe, or stem internationally.

8.4 Chapter Summary
This chapter has concluded the thesis, providing insights into the major findings, implications, limitations and possibility for future research.
References


75


37. Kitzinger, J. (1994), The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. Sociology of Health & Illness, 16: 103–121


50. Ng, I. C. L. (2005) Does direct marketing need to have a direction?. Marketing Intelligence & Planning. Vol. 23 No. 7 pp. 628 - 635


Appendices
When undertaking a research or enterprise project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered.

If the project requires ethics approval from an external agency (e.g., NHS), you will not need to seek additional ethics approval from Cardiff Met. You should however complete Part One of this form and attach a copy of your ethics letter(s) of approval in order that your School has a record of the project.

The document *Ethics application guidance notes* will help you complete this form. It is available from the [Cardiff Met website](https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk). The School or Unit in which you are based may also have produced some guidance documents, please consult your supervisor or School Ethics Coordinator.

Once you have completed the form, sign the declaration and forward to the appropriate person(s) in your School or Unit.

**PLEASE NOTE:**
Participant recruitment or data collection MUST NOT commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

### PART ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of applicant:</th>
<th>Kelsie Peach Raynes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (if student project):</td>
<td>Dr. Robert James Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / Unit:</td>
<td>Cardiff School of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student number (if applicable):</td>
<td>ST 20006663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme enrolled on (if applicable):</td>
<td>MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>A Qualitative Exploration of the Effectiveness of Direct Marketing in the Construction Industry. A study of SME's in Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected start date of data collection:</td>
<td>25/08/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate duration of data collection:</td>
<td>Two weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Body (if applicable):</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other researcher(s) working on the project:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve NHS patients or staff?:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve taking samples of human origin from participants?:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does your project fall entirely within one of the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper based, involving only documents in the public domain</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory based, not involving human participants or human tissue samples</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice based not involving human participants (e.g. curatorial, practice audit)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory projects in professional practice (e.g. Initial Teacher Education)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A project for which external approval has been obtained (e.g., NHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have answered YES to any of these questions, expand on your answer in the non-technical summary. No further information regarding your project is required.

If you have answered NO to all of these questions, you must complete Part 2 of this form.

In no more than 150 words, give a non-technical summary of the project

Click here to enter text.

DECLARATION:

I confirm that this project conforms with the Cardiff Met Research Governance Framework

I confirm that I will abide by the Cardiff Met requirements regarding confidentiality and anonymity when conducting this project.

STUDENTS: I confirm that I will not disseminate any material produced as a result of this project without the prior approval of my supervisor.
PART TWO

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY

Name of supervisor: Dr. Robert Thomas

Signature of supervisor:

Date: 12/08/2016

Decision reached:
- Project approved
- Project approved in principle
- Decision deferred
- Project not approved
- Project rejected

/project reference number/:

Name: Click here to enter text.

Date: Click here to enter a date.

Signature:

Details of any conditions upon which approval is dependant:
Click here to enter text.

A RESEARCH DESIGN

A1 Will you be using an approved protocol in your project? No

A2 If yes, please state the name and code of the approved protocol to be used

Click here to enter text.
A3 Describe the research design to be used in your project
The research will adopt a subjective ontological and epistemological position and incorporate qualitative data collection methods; specifically semi structured interviews for managers and focus groups for customers. This approach, it is felt, will facilitate the collection of rich data on the topic while remaining flexible and participant-guided, making it well suited to exploratory research. Essentially the research design adopts elements from work by Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2007) into SME managerial processes and Pérez-Cabañero et al., (2012) into the marketing function of Spanish SME’s.

Data set 1: Managers

Respondents will be contacted utilising a list of current construction companies in Wales obtained from WAG. Consequently a random sampling technique will be employed to facilitate participants namely those in charge of the marketing function. A strategic email process is to be implemented, with regular follow ups to ensure participation. Eligible participants will then be contacted again where the nature of the study will be further clarified.

Given the nature of the approach, the actual Data collection process will take place at the participant’s convenience, but it is at this juncture that all of the ethics material will be administered. As stated, the process will advocate a face to face semi structured approach, due to the potential for discussing business strategy, personal approaches, and customers and their responses.

An interview schedule (see attached) will be developed based on the existing literature and built around modern conceptualisations of direct marketing and the processes involved. Initially open ended questions will be posited, with these progressively refined during interviews to accommodate emerging ideas. All interviews will be recorded (with consent) and then transcribed verbatim. A simple, but effective content analysis approach will be implemented in keeping with current studies in the field. An in Vivo coding structure will be developed through close reading and re-reading of transcripts to assist with coding refinement. The researcher plans a constant comparative approach to ensure that all data coded under a particular theme reflected the same concept. However, this process will begin with memo writing in the interviews to start the process of collating evolving ideas and themes.

Data set 2: Customers

For a qualitative endeavour, it is “necessary to use multiple sources of evidence (Yin 1989, p. 23) in order to establish a “chain of evidence” (Yin 1989, p. 42). Consequently customers will be used in this research. Respondents will be contacted utilising a list of current customers (both existing and potential) derived from the construction companies themselves. Should this be problematic the services of a direct mailing company will be used to contact potential participants. A Welsh direct mailing company has been contacted in anticipation. Beyond that, a pilot study is envisaged to refine a question schedule derived from the SME managers. It is stated that Focus
When submitting your application you **MUST** attach a copy of the following:
- All information sheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A4 Will the project involve deceptive or covert research?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A5 If yes, give a rationale for the use of deceptive or covert research</td>
<td>Click here to enter text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6 Will the project have security sensitive implications?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7 If yes, please explain what they are and the measures that are proposed to address them</td>
<td>Click here to enter text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE**

B1 What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project do you have?

An undergraduate thesis was completed in 2015 at Cardiff School of Sport

**B2 Student project only**

What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project does your supervisor have?

Msc, PhD, publications

**C POTENTIAL RISKS**

C1 What potential risks do you foresee?

None

C2 How will you deal with the potential risks?

N/A
• Consent/assent form(s)
An exemplar information sheet and participant consent form are available from the Research section of the Cardiff Met website.
Email to Organisation

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently an MBA student at Cardiff Metropolitan University, and I am currently undertaking my final thesis. My thesis evaluates the effectiveness of direct marketing approaches in Welsh, Small Medium Enterprises (SME’S) specifically construction companies.

It is hoped that the project can forward theoretical understanding as well as help develop strategy for companies like yours for the future.

Given your current position within the company a contribution from yourself would be invaluable, and to that end I would like to formally invite you to participate in the above project. Your contribution, should you decide to participate would constitute a formal interview to discuss your experiences, thoughts and strategic evaluation of direct marketing within your company.

All information collected from interviews will be kept entirely confidential with methods advised by the university being strictly adhered to. Should you want to participate, please contact me on the details below and any interview can be scheduled at your convenience.

I look forward to your response and hopefully meeting you in due course.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Kelsie Raynes, BSc (Hons)

Email: st20006663

Tel: 07730392555
Interview 1: Participant 3BMMT

Organisational size, Parameters, Main business areas

How many current employees do you have?

26 employees

What is the main market your in?

Industrial Reactive Maintenance

What are the current trends in that market?

Food Factories

What is your current customer base?

80% Factory, 10% Council and Housing Association & 10% Domestic

How many customers have you done repeat business for?

70% repeat business, once in usually stay.

Personal, Relevant Experience

How long have you been in charge of the marketing function?

2 Years

What do you see as your primary role within the organisation?

Brand awareness and customer attraction

What is your preferred method on engaging with prospective customers?

Phone calls, especially with existing customers. If priced work for before, try to get responsive answers and feedback. Efficient as people in the industry don’t reply to emails. Also, allows understanding of positive and negative feelings.
What do you consider the biggest challenge as the person in charge of finding new customers for the organisation?

What environments do you function in commercial, domestic or both?

**Both**

**Direct Marketing Functions**
What are your perceptions of marketing?
- In your own words could you elaborate more on what do you think direct marketing is?

**Promote business to people who do not know the company. Direct marketing is cold calling and sending leaflets.**

Are your marketing functions interlinked with other processes/departments in your organisation?

**Yes, sales**

What direct marketing methods do you use? Traditional methods, such as telesales, direct mail approaches? Or Keep it simple?

**Generally a mix; cold calls, social media, direct mail/email, merchandise, van logos, uniform, billboards and sponsorships.**

What do you consider as direct marketing methods?

**Cold calling and Twitter, Facebook & Linkedin**

**Telemarketing**
How do you utilise telemarketing within your organisation?

**Cold calls.**

What approach do you use ;Cold calls, existing customer catch ups?
Both, cold calls for potential and non-existent customers and follow up calls for existing.

What are your views on telemarketing?
- Do you believe that Cold calls are beneficial to the marketing department?
  Yes.

Social Media
What do you consider as social media?
Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, Instagram, Internet and Google

What social media networks do you use?
All the above, Yell, Youtube & Google +

How does your organisation market on social media?
Through case studies, posts and new service updates.
What networks would you use for existing and potential customers?
All

Trade Shows
What would you describe as a trade show?
How would your organisation and your marketing campaigns work within trade shows?
Is it something you have been a part of or considered?
They would not be beneficial to us as we are more service orientated than product.

Campaign Design
What planning processes are there to the marketing functions? Would you say that you prepare significantly or have more of a spontaneous approach?
Bit of both to be honest, regular monthly campaigns are sent out that have the same layout, theme and purpose but topics differ monthly. If a project is ongoing or we receive a testimonial it is more spur of the moment marketing and upload with photos asap.
What approaches do you use for your commercial and domestic customers are they the same campaigns or would you say that you tailor it to the companies/customer?

In terms of Commercial, we use B2B and tend to keep away from social media posts, marketing is more brochure, flyers, telephone, emails. In terms of Domestic, social media is fully utilised, even google + for key words, etc.

How do you discuss and receive feedback from other members of the organisation or are you in full control of the marketing processes?

Feedback from commercial industry marketing comes from the managing director and operations manager due to their constant interaction with them. It is shared throughout the organisation.

What is the full marketing process in your organisation? Step by step from idea, implementation to publication?

Ideas spring from ongoing projects, online notices, emails; mostly external sources and current going ons. In terms of implementation, a number of copies and versions are edited of the marketing project that come from the idea, feedback and cost. Presentation requires thought of reach, how it will be released, cost, who, when, where and ensuring that the correct people are receiving the campaign.

How does your organisation focus on retention of existing consumers or are you open to approaching potential customers and clients?

We make sure that we are in constant contact with existing customers, whether it is phone calls, emails or visits from our MD. It is crucial that employees at Kelray are on good relationship terms with clients; all about the communication. Potential customers are reached through time based targets, through cold calling, introductory emails and monthly campaigns.

What customer (existing or potential) or market research do you complete for your campaigns?

Existing databases and google.
If not, do you use databases that provide company names, address, manager names etc?

**ACT! Protel (planning portal for construction companies), Suppliers and Google.**

How do you keep in touch on a regular basis with existing consumers, or are they one off campaigns?

**Follow up emails and calls reminded by ACT!**

**Strategic Implementation**

How does your customer relationships feel, are they friendly and casual or are they completely professional

**Friendly, casual and relaxed approach.**

What are your first initial thoughts when preparing and beginning your companies marketing campaigns?

**Interest, Intriguing content, Images, Positive Impact on the Company and Reach.**

**Performance Metrics**

How would you describe the effectiveness of the choice of marketing approaches you utilise?

**From existing customers we have positive feedback and contact which helps see effectiveness, also when contacted by new customers we ask where did they hear about us?**

How do you measure factors such as reach, response and effectiveness?

**REACH; Monthly KPI, based on sales also through Yell, DM, Recommendations.**

**RESPONSE; Ask when they contact us did they hear through DM.**

What do you consider as up to date with the newest methods of 2016?

**Social media & E marketing campaigns.**
How is your organisation's marketing strategies inline with 2016 marketing?

**Social media, 2 websites and youtube videos**

What do you consider as your best marketing method? Do you stick to one or are there a vast amount to different customers?

**Brochure and marketing materials, sales calls and emails also are good.**

For future preference, what do you think the future of marketing would be?

**Bigger, vital for companies throughout all industries. Social media will bring and develop new DM to businesses and the internet will become the most powerful tool utilised in marketing.**