Social Media Impact on Business Development, Organizational Performance and B2B Relationships

Master of Business Administration

Dissertation

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Acknowledgements

All thanks to almighty God for all the kindness and blessings in my life.

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Abstract
The influence of social media in the life day to day life of people has impacted the way they conduct business these days. This phenomenon has influenced the corporate and business world as well and today there is an increase in the number of organizations joining the social media platforms. Organizations across the world are spending considerable amount of their time, energy and money to build and maintain their social media public pages to improve their standing in the global business space.

Social media being a relatively new occurrence to the global business world hence the studies conducted in this area is limited and a majority of them are based on the individual perspectives. This study investigates the positive impact of social media on business development, organizational performance and its influence on fostering better B2B relationships.

Using both the quantitative and qualitative means, this study strives to find out how social media can benefit organization in optimizing their overall performance through the appropriate usage of this internet phenomenon. However, this study focuses only on the positive aspects of social media and it’s in depth reach with the customers, suppliers, manufacturers and competitors. This research investigates how social media has been beneficial to the case study organization Arki Group which is established in the United Arab Emirates. Through the questionnaires and semi structured interviews conducted with various respondents in the organization we find out how social media has been utilized for fostering better business relationships with customers, suppliers, manufacturers and other organizations while crafting better B2B relationships.

The results obtained through this study show that social media has been able to positively impact the organizations in improving their visibility, enhanced customer service, better relationships within the industry and have overall improved the organizations communication with the international business world.
Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration 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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Date 17th May 2017

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).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Statement 2

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, for deposit in Cardiff Metropolitan University’s e-Repository, and that the title and summary may be available to outside organisations.

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Supervisor Declaration Form

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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.

Signed:

Date:
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview
The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview in to the research topic which is to analyse the impact of social media in business development. This research is also to understand the importance social media plays on organizational performance with specific reference to B2B relationships. This chapter will also give a glimpse in to the background of the research and the subject matter as well as the aims and objectives of the research. While the researcher’s endeavour is to ascertain the importance social media plays in an organizational frame work, a case study of Arki Group has been carried out to determine the impact of the subject matter. The dissertation progresses further in to the next chapter 2 which will have an in depth and critical review of literature pertaining to the topic that has been conducted by eminent researchers in the past. The literature review chapter will also look in to the various aspects of social media influences from an organizational stand point breaking it down to different sub headings. Methodology will be the high light in chapter 3 which will detail how the primary and secondary data was collected and analysed. These analyses will pave way for the next chapter 4 Findings and Analysis which will give the researcher an opportunity to analyse the data received through interviews, questionnaires etc. Finally we will have the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5 wherein the researcher will strive to provide some key recommendations on how social media can be better optimised for business development and also to enhance the B2B relationships.

1.2 Background
Over the past few years social media has gained an enviable position in the life of many people and it has become a topic for discussion across different sections of our society and has gained wide spread acceptance in today’s busy life. The freedom and the level of interaction one can have in the various social media platforms have also influenced the way business is carried out these days. One can safely assume that in many organizations different platforms of social media has been playing a very important role in business development and better performance. There has been a fundamental shift in the strategy of conducting business amongst the ever evolving business community all over the world and the people who have not yet got in to the band wagon are forced to come on board due to the rapid spread and acceptance of social media among the general public and the consumers in particular. As social media has become a part of consumers’
everyday life a lot of organizations have started exploring the positive qualities of internet and have now shifted their attention to e-commerce and online trading.

One of the many advantages of social media is that it allows an organization to communicate closer to their target audience while it enhances the organization to increase its brand visibility. “Many organizations active on the social networking scene have direct links from their corporate websites to their social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter, and use these social media sites to promote brands and support the creation of brand communities” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

A lot of studies and researches (Kaplan, 2012), (Mathew Mount, 2014), (Michaelidou et al., 2011) have been conducted on why and how social media has attained such an importance in consumers mind and the rapid explosion of social media in the global market. These studies have considered various aspects of why consumers consider social media to be so important in their day to day life and what are the factors that drive them to actively engage in online activities. Additionally, other studies (Berthon et al., 2012), (Geehan, 2010), (Jussila et al., 2014), (Kusera, 2012) have explored the tangible and intangible benefits of social media in effective marketing like the influence it has on the consumers decision making process. The topic selected by the researcher is fairly new and the already existing researches are limited and restrcited to a demographic group.

1.3 Rationale
Social media has almost become a companion to many people in general and consumers in particular and this has also emerged as a very powerful medium for consumer communications. Many organizations use this status quo of social media to leverage their business standing in the industry as well as to enhance their organizational visibility. “It is vital to build a viral campaign as well as an online word of mouth marketing (WOM) campaign which can lead to the creation and reinforcement of trust which can overcome any reluctance from the would be consumer” (Miller & Lammas, 2010,p.5). From the time new technologies have emerged in the online communities, many customers have been searching for information about other companies or products in social media rather than in google (Newman, 2013). These days in order to build trust between an organization and their clients, the intrinsic advantage provided by social media over the traditional media is unique and incomparable.
According to Leong & Gligorijevic (2011, p.2) “The social media platform has given credence for consumers to share their experiences in their social networks and also to review the recommendations given by others on products and services” In order to develop trust, elements like proper communication channels and context of messages are very crucial this will enable prospective customer and company relationships (Gligorijevic, 2011).

The topic chosen by the researcher for this dissertation is “To analyze how social media can be used for business development and organizational performance within UAE market, with specific reference to B2B relationships” A case study on Arki Group. The researcher firmly believes that the aforementioned topic has a lot of relevance in today's business proceedings and the way many organizations conduct their business activities. Having been in the interiors industry for around 21 years, Arki Group Design has seen a steady growth while its brand visibility and value has also increased in accordance with its market standings. Arki Group at the moment is looking at ways and means of enhancing its reputation in the industry and also to venture into new products and services focusing on sustainable business development. The next phase of business development will have to be leveraged on social media which can also value and enhance its B2B relationships. Arki Group has opened their new showroom in Abu Dhabi and the event was very well received in the social media circles like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The reviews and feedback we received from the social media has been very positive and encouraging and one can say with a lot of confidence that the age of social media has arrived.

The researcher believes that body of existing academic works accomplished by other researchers of eminence can be further enhanced by this study of social media, its impact on business development, organizational performance and on how it can facilitate better B2B relationships. These days a lot of organizations are using Social Media Applications SMA in order to communicate with their customers and suppliers, to build B2B relationships and trust, to attract prospective trading partners. Organizations also use SMA to promote their brands as well as to create brand communities (Kaplan, 2012). Today it is very much prevalent that many organizations create their business accounts on social media platforms in order to promote their products and services with their targeted customers (Jarvinen, 2016). This researcher being a part of Arki Group management firmly believes that this research on social media will add
tremendous value to Arki as an organization especially at this crucial juncture since Arki is looking to explore hitherto unchartered territories of manufacturing and marketing of various products in the UAE.

1.4 **Research Aim**
The purpose of this research is to ascertain the impact social media has on business development and its effects on organizational performance and how social media can enhance B2B relationships. The researcher aims to accomplish this task through a mixed method approach using both quantitative and qualitative means.

1.5 **Research Questions**
- How social media can be effectively used for business development?
- What are the different ways social media can influence the organizational performance?
- How social media can be positively used for influencing business to business (B2B) relationships?

1.6 **Research Objectives**
To address and accomplish the research aims the following core objectives have been identified:

- To examine the key theories and concepts linked with the development of social media and business
- To explore the impact of social media on business and organizational performance
- To evaluate the impact of social media in business with a particular focus on B2B relationships

1.7 **Research Scope**
The focus of this research is on social media and how it impacts an organizations business development, influence on the organizations performance and on how it can enhance B2B relationships as stated in the objectives. The researcher’s aim is limit the scope to the aforementioned stated objectives and all the research work will be conducted within these precincts. Therefore, the main focus will be to seek answers from within the academic and research communities on how social media has been put to good use in business development, organizational performance and how the B2B relationships can be enhanced.
This research will NOT look at the negative side of social media and its bad influences on people and will not focus on the negative propagandas by vested interest groups or politicians using social media to influence people for winning elections.

The researcher will be focusing on the positive influence of social media in the corporate sector and its positive impacts on better organizational performance in all spheres. The scope of this research will be on the positive side of social media and how it has enhanced the performance of an organization like Arki Group in creating a better space for it in UAE. This study will look at social media from an organizational perspective and how to harness its positive powers for enhancing the performance of Arki Group Design in the days to come.

1.8 Research Approach & Strategy
To conduct this in depth research on social media, the researcher intends to use qualitative research methods like questionnaires and semi structured interviews to gather the required data. Many researchers have already conducted various studies on the positive impacts of social media hence, a deductive approach to analyse the prospects of the theory that already exists through test and analysis may yield good results (Saunders et al., 2009). This research will be focused on the case study of Arki Group and how social media can make positive impacts in areas of business development, better the organizational performance and the focus will be particularly on social media within UAE. Qualitative semi structured interviews which will have the required flexibility to identify patterns and themes on which the researcher can build arguments. Researcher has already identified the respondents for this semi structured interviews who will be managers, senior managers and marketing staff from Arki group as well as from its associated manufacturers and subcontractors who are working closely with Arki Group. A Questionnaire is already prepared in advance and has been pilot tested for its use worthiness and the research approach is based on logic, generalizability, use of data and theory as the research designs.

The data collection for this research is done through two key categories, the primary and secondary data, the primary data collection is done based on the process and procedures aptly suited for the research like the questionnaires and semi structured interviews. The secondary data will come from the verified information that is already existing and used as references. How the
data is collected will depend on the process and approach best suited for the results anticipated (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The data that is verified and valid will become secondary data for future researches. The questionnaire used will be primarily focused on the office staff, estimation, sales & marketing and procurement departments. To get the maximum amount of information and feedback on social media, interviews will be carried out using open ended questions to get the maximum inputs from the respondent.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Literature Review Chapter

Literature review is one of the most important chapters in this dissertation and can be termed as the foundation for establishing the key theories and concepts linked to the research topic which is to analyze how social media can be used for business development and organizational performance within UAE market, with specific reference to B2B relationships. The researcher has made a very conscious effort to review the literature and materials spanning from 2010 onwards to the latest accessible in order to be up to date. Special emphasis is given to the latest literature in the genre pertaining to the research topic and this gives enough confidence to the researcher to build an up to date and latest literature review as possible. This does not exclude the older literature that are relevant to the topic since these ground breaking researches can also help to ascertain how social media has come a long way and attained its current status being the most popular means of communication among consumers. In essence, the researcher is certain that the materials reviewed and recorded for the purpose of this study will have tremendous positive contributions as the research progresses in pursuing the research questions and objectives.

This section of the research will briefly examine background to the company Arki and the growing interest in social media at Arki Group. The company has started implementing a lot of social media initiatives for the past two years which has provided visible and perceptible results to the organization (arkigroup, 2017). Arki has had two events particularly which has been received with a lot of attention and interests in the social media namely the launch of Arki’s Abu Dhabi new showroom and office as well as the recent ‘Sports Day’ which showcased the organizational involvement in the staff wellbeing (arkigroup, 2017). The total profile views went up tremendously on publishing the event pictures in the social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter where the organization is very much active (Linkedln, 2017), (Facebook, 2017), (Instagram, 2017), (Twitter, 2017). Apparently the number of visitors to Arki’s web site also increased tremendously due to specific activities and postings done on the various social media platforms which has undoubtedly showcased the importance social media has acquired in the past few years among the consumers particularly and people in general (arkigroup, 2017). Social Media Apps (SMA) has been extensively used by many organizations
these days to make special announcements, to share images and videos and also to set up groups for communicating with their customers, business associates and suppliers. Organizations, especially in the manufacturing sector can gain a lot of mileage by the subtle usage of social media apps in order to achieve a number of business goals and Arki has been able to harness the positive essence of social media (arkigroup, 2017).

Social media has several functional building blocks that can be exploited to capitalize the visibility on the public space like the identity, communications, sharing, social presence, relationships, reputation of the organization and groups. These social media activities are defined and are focused on some or all of the blocks pertaining to the requirements of the user or the organization. (Kietzmann et al., 2011). To summarize it can be safely assumed that the wise engagements on the social media platforms can bring forth positive changes and add value to the organizational competencies which has been established by the sheer number of various organizations and individuals on social media platforms across the world particularly in UAE (TNS, 2015).

Key Words – Social Media, Business Development, Organizational Performance, B2B Relationships, Social Networks

2.2 Social Media
Boris Loukanov (Marketo, 2010,p.5) has defined social media as “the production, consumption and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms.” Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) in their article Users of the world Unite has defined social media as “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Similarly in sales context with the customers as a key figure for social media usage, Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp (2012, p. 308) in their article a review of social media and implications for the sales process has defined social media as “the technological component of the communication, transaction and relationship building functions of a business which leverages the network of customers and prospects to promote value co-creation”. Social media has also been defined as an internet based applications that is built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 which is fundamentally a platform where the content is constantly produced and developed by various participants continuously and in a collaborative manner (Laroche et al., 2012)
According to Katona and Sarvary (2014), social media has been defined as the way in which people interact to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. In comparison with the traditional media, social media has very high level of efficiency and this has prompted many organizations to get in to the social media platform to be able to take part in the successful online environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The term social media came into relevance only from around 2005 and earlier a more popular term “blog” was widely used for social networking activities. A study by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) finds that the access and availability of high speed internet in developed and developing countries further paved the way for the growing popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram etc which has added to the growing popularity of social media.

Another study by Yanga & Kentb (2014) shows that social media and the visibility is intrinsically intertwined and the very idea of organizations and people to be engaged on this platform is for better visibility. Yanga & Kentb (2014) further states that the visibility on social media can be termed as the public presence of an organization or individual which has an influence on the organizational perceptions on trust, buying preferences and in times of crisis. The visibility on the social media platforms indicate how frequently the social media users discuss about an organization or issues related to it. Those organizations with a strong media or brand presence on the social media platforms are more on the mind of individuals and public in general which can lead to higher levels of organizational visibility, brand presence, organizational trust and product loyalty which can lead to increased business. Yanga & Kentb (2014) argues that the common public assumption is that social media are inherently influential and the organizations should be using them to their benefits. Having a strong presence in social media can greatly assist sales people as this platform engages both the sales people and their customers and develop social capital which can act as an impetus for customers to interact, engage and form relationships with the sales people (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Furthermore, Yanga & Kentb (2014) observes that an assortment of platforms can be utilized from the social media to create a discussion through blog posts OR to start a debate to get customer feedback OR sharing success stories on Facebook in order to demonstrate value propositions. Quintessentially, social media is the product of various internet based applications comprises of text, pictures, videos and networks built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 (Berthon et al., 2012).
Arki Group regularly posts pictures of various products, new product launches, photos and videos of completed projects, work in progress pictures from ongoing project sites and their various networking events. These posts are regularly done on social media applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. By the subtle usage of the popular applications like WhatsApp, Arki is always trying to reinvent various clever ways of amalgamating technology into its day to day activities (arkigroup, 2017).

2.3 Business Development
Organizations have been spending considerable amount of money, time and other resources to garner the positive effects of social media to further their business opportunities both locally and internationally. Kaplan (2012) finds that sustainable growth of social media has been possible due to the widespread awareness and availability of high-speed internet and the reach and popularity of hand held mobile devices among the consumers. Internet and social media has provided enormous opportunities for people around the world to create, share and disseminate contents, search for information on a wide range of subjects and to keep up to date with the latest development in the business world (Öztamura & Karakadilarb, 2014). Many organizations have recognized importance social media plays in business development and have started exploring the unique qualities of the web and have promptly shifted their marketing strategies to e-commerce. Today the web and social media has become a place of prominence for products and services promotion and also to attract their target audience (Öztamura & Karakadilarb, 2014). The ever increasing popularity of social media has seen many organizations increasing their visibility and presence on multiple platforms of social media (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Around 26% of consumers from the US suggest that they are willing to accept social networking advertisements that are based on their profile information provided in their personal profiles on the net (Neilsen, 2012).

Despite all the increasing popularity and perceived value in brand development and organizational visibility, research on social media adoption by B2B organizations are still in its infancy with only a very limited studies exploring social media potential for marketing from an organizational perspectives (emarketer, 2013). Even though there are a few literature elaborating the usage, barriers and metrics of social media marketing and its influence on business
development, there is still very little information on the factors that determine social media adoption by organizations (Michaelidou et al., 2011).

Social media management is a continuous process implemented to market, brand and advertise in order to establish recognition and ‘trustworthiness’ of a business, organization or a person’s reputation on social media platforms (Boyer, 2014). The primary task of social media management is to develop a well laid out plan to research an organization’s target market audience which is about understanding what the organization’s potential customers are interested in rather than the organizations interests. Boyer (2014) further contends that it’s not about the organization but it’s all about the clientele’s interest which will essentially be the driving force for business development. The secondary task of social media management is to plan and schedule thought provoking, educational and inspirational postings on appropriate social networks which will create a buzz around the organization or its products by way of comments and viewpoints that will contribute to an increase in organizational visibility on social networks (Boyer, 2014). Business development through creating a buzz on social media and increasing visibility has become the norm these days and organizations carry out this by seeking viewpoints and providing commentary everyone wants to talk about as ‘social’ is the key word and ‘sharing’ is the point. In order to develop business or to create brand equity for organizations it is imperative that the social media managers are constantly active in dialogue, interaction and in communication to what others say on the net because social media is ‘two-way communication’ Web 2.0 (Grabner, 2015).

Livingston (2016) argues that the organizations across the world will immensely benefit by the clever application of social media which has in turn assisted the firms to expand their reach to new prospects within the respective industries, geographic regions as well as new target markets. Other benefits social media has brought to the table includes a platform to demonstrate the organization’s corporate governance and culture and all these put together can add value to the business’s reputation in the respective circles. Livingston (2016) further states that, unlike in the past the popularity of digital marketing has helped to increase touch points with existing clients and lead generation for further business opportunities.

This study has identified that, on reviewing some of the authoritative works of distinguished authors, great social media marketing goes beyond the big names like Facebook, Twitter,
Instagram and YouTube as there are other equally important platforms like LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Quora, WhatsApp, etc. that can provide the required visibility to an organization and the important aspect is to get the right mix of social networking platforms that are significant to the organization.

2.4 Organizational Performance

Paniagua & Sapena (2014) states that the widespread popularity and increase of social media usage by a large number of consumers have made the corporate world to take note and make it their priority to be active on the networking platform and most of the corporate companies have made their presence on some kind of social media platforms. Only in the recent past the organizations have paused and realized business implications and the nature of this new user generated and user interfacing phenomenon. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) says that while the social media offers unparalleled challenges and opportunities, it also comes along with a significant degree of uncertainty among the corporate stakeholders with regards to the time, effort and budget allocation. Paniagua & Sapena (2014) further states that as a consequence, social media practitioners are often find themselves in quicksand in which they take decisions without comprehending the real effects of social media on organizational performance. One can again consider the view of Paniagua & Sapena (2014) that the broad impact of social media in organizational performance can be seen in various domains such as marketing, finance, operations and corporate social performance since a lot of customer preferences are revealed through social media interfacing but the positive influence of social media on organizational performance can be determined only when the critical threshold of followers on the social networking is reached.

According to Paniagua & Sapena (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014, p.2) “financial performance indicators generally include sales level and growth, profitability, and stock price, whereas operational performance focuses on share position, new product introduction, product quality, operating efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Corporate social performance (CSP) depends largely on the firm’s ability to establish honest relations with society, with special attention to reputation and brand”. Consider the argument of Paniagua & Sapena (2014) that the impact of social media is rampant in organizational performance when it comes to social capital, revealed customer preferences, social marketing and corporate social networking. Many organizations
have now started to build and maintain social media public pages since they have realized the importance of Web 2.0 applications and the very idea is to improve the organizational social network salience, enhance the consumers interest in the organization as well as to build relationships with the online community (Parveen et al., 2015) and this has paved the way for social media growth as an important strategic tool among the organizations. Another distinctive characteristics of social media from the traditional media is that it can be both web based as well as mobile technologies hence it is important for organizations to consider using social media due to its wide and rapid acceptance among the consumers (Moua et al., 2013). The wider acceptance and higher efficiency of social media in comparison with the traditional communication channels have encouraged organizations to make sure that they are on platforms like facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, LinkedIn etc to be successful and make the organizations perform better (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

While examining an employee’s social relationship, social media usage and the job environment, it has been ascertained that there is a positive impact of social media in the task performance of the employee (Parveen et al., 2015).

When the perceived brand value is examined in the context of mobile social networking sites, it has been found that the brand game fit had a positive effect on perceived brand value and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) intention and similarly the social networking sites has a positive effect on the eWOM intention (Okazaki & Yagüe, 2012). Most of the organizations these days use social media for word of mouth marketing and in this context the unique feature of social media enables organizations to attain recommendations from one customer to another. To add more value to this platform social media allows organizational information to be shared with the public as well as to obtain feedback about customers and competitors (Parveen et al., 2015). The wise usage of social media has positively contributed for improved organizational performance like the enhanced customer communication, improved customer service, better brand visibility, wider information sharing, better accessibility of information about the customers and competitors and the organizations have also experienced significant cost reduction in terms of advertising and customer service (Parveen et al., 2015).

The review has also identified that social media applications like Whats App, Facebook and LinkedIn have all contributed for better organizational performance in the case study.
organization Arki Group. For easy sharing of information project teams at Arki will create different WhatsApp group pertaining to different projects with various stakeholders included in it which has contributed for better communication and coordination among the team members (arkigroup, 2017).

2.5 **B2B Relationships**

Social networking has accelerated its level of penetration among the consumers for both personal and business use and this social web has totally transformed the way buyers research and find solutions to their queries as well as find answers to their business challenges (Kusera, 2012). With the advent of faster internet connectivity and the vast availability of options for the consumers have gone from news outlets and vendor websites to Google search, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and many other online forums and this brings the customer to a unique position of information sharing of many products and services available to them (Kusera, 2012). The way social media can be put to use these days have changed the way organizations communicate these days as social media applications can be used to create home page to announce matters of importance, share text, videos, set up groups for better communications with suppliers, customers and business partners (Y.C.Wang et al., 2016). Organizations use social media to directly communicate with their customers and suppliers, for building relationships and trust, and also to identify prospective business partners (Y.C.Wang et al., 2016).

The utilization of social media in enterprises is an up to date and popular research topics for many. With all this popularity of the topic, the research on social media is still in its infancy since the focus is mainly on the B2C domain (Michaelidou et al., 2011). The importance of social media for B2B companies does exist with certain anecdotal evidences available to the discerning researcher (Boyer, 2014), (Jarvinen, 2016) (Kusera, 2012), in comparison with the B2C organizations the adoption and interest of social media for B2B organizations have been slow (Michaelidou et al., 2011). The social media usage in the B2B sector that is in to manufacturing products for other business establishment is not well comprehended (Jussila et al., 2014). Organizations are realizing that if utilized in the right manner social media can assist in identifying new business opportunities, ideas for new products, build better customer relationships and strengthen the collaboration between suppliers and other organizations (Jussila et al., 2014).
Geehan (2010) expresses his observation on social media and how it can assist organizations around the world, that the challenges and positive approaches of social media in B2B is different from B2C organizations. Similarly (Jussila et al., 2014) observes that the challenges and approaches could appear to be similar internally for both B2B and B2C sectors but there are significant differences when it comes to the external use in B2B due to the special characteristics of B2B markets and products which will require particular attention and studies. Once again (Jussila et al., 2014) argues that even though social media was started as a non-commercial public application like Facebook and blogs, it has gained popularity among the business world as well and has been contributing positively ever since and as a concept social media is still evolving and has its novelty which has driven a lot of consumers in to it. Authors like (Wiersema, 2013) believes that B2B marketing is undergoing a tremendous transformation due to the growing pressure from both the customers and competitors and in order to stay ahead of competition B2B marketers are engaging novelty ideas to reach a wider audience and social media is assisting them greatly in this domain.

2.6 Summary

The review of various works by prominent authors like (Boyer, 2014), (Kaplan, 2012), (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and (Grabner, 2015) have shed light on the concept of social media and how it has become an integral part of the common public in general and consumers in particular. Other key figures like (Jussila et al., 2014), (Berthon et al., 2012) and (Laroche et al., 2012) through their studies have shown the extent of influence social media has on the consumer choices on a day to day basis. In the opinion of (Dilhan Öztamura, 2014) that the emergence of internet and the availability of faster net connections have paved the way for the rise of Web 2.0 which has contributed positively for social media to lay its foundations strongly among the masses. Social media or Web 2.0 has become a powerful medium for finding the key consumer influencers as well as engaging them constantly so that they become brand ambassadors of various products and services of the business entities. Miller & Lammas (2010) reiterate that to create an online viral WOM (word of mouth) campaigns, it is fundamental to establish TRUST which can overcome the consumer reluctance in the long run.

Key authors like Dilhan Öztamura (2014) states that one of the salient features of social media which differentiate it with the traditional media is its distinctive advantage of ‘trust building’
between organizations and their customers and this has never been seen earlier with the traditional medias like newspaper, catalogues, radio and television. The importance and relevance of social media is here to stay, and as an online platform which has been growing leaps and bounds, it can be safely stated that the influence it wields on consumers and organizations will only grow in stature.

Through critically reviewing the literature the researcher gets an insight in to relevant previous research and the emerging trends and it also helps the researcher to refine the research questions and the objectives (Saunders et al., 2012). In the next chapter methodology researcher will consider the most appropriate research philosophy and research strategy to critically investigate the key aim and objectives of this research.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview
Having defined the research topic in the introduction chapter and critically reviewed relevant and authoritative studies of similar topics in the literature review chapter, researcher will now proceed further to gather the required data as stipulated earlier. Knowing how to plan is the fundamental step in any research projects since it is very essential to know the route through the subject territory. As stated by Birley & Moreland (2014,p.28) “the mark of a competent researcher is to be able to respond to the data and change direction should the need arise”. It is imperative to note that for any research based project, methodology plays a very vital role since it can provide valuable assistance in identifying the right methods for collecting the primary and secondary data on the research topic. Birley (2011), states that methodology is a collection of agreed processes, methods and tools that are used in order to accomplish an objective.

3.2 Research Philosophy
Saunders (2015) defines research philosophy as a belief or guidelines that a researcher adopts to gather analyze and use the data they obtain. Auguste Comte (1830) coined the term “Positivism” which essentially signifies that all meaningful statements must be either logical inferences or sense descriptions and accentuate on the quantitative methods. Another philosophy that has been used widely for research is “Interpretivism” which is a qualitative research methodology that relies more on the human participation like semi structured interviews. There are other research philosophies like “Ontology” which is more concerned with nature of reality and “Epistemology” which is about what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Saunders et al., 2012). In this research on social media and its influence on the organizational performance, business development and B2B relationships, Positivism and Interpretivism are used as two distinctive philosophies for gathering and analyzing data which is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The positivist and Interpretivist philosophy used by the researcher for this study combines both the deductive and inductive methods as a mixed method approach. The researcher intends to achieve the research objectives with the support of qualitative method of data collection through semi-structured interviews and the quantitative method of data collection through questionnaires. The qualitative method of conducting semi-structured interviews can provide a good amount of
information since semi structured interviews can give the flexibility to the interviewer to formulate questions according to the response from the interviewee and also identify patterns and themes on which the researcher can build the arguments. Saunders (2012, p.137) further states that “Interpretivism makes it necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors and the term social actors attains quite a significance in Interpretivism”. Gill & Johnson (2010) states about positivism that, one will prefer collecting data about an observable reality and search for regularities and casual relationships in the data to create law-like generalizations like those produced by scientists.

### 3.3 Research Approach

The research approach used by the researcher combines both the deductive and inductive methods and approaches the research as mixed method with both the qualitative as well as the quantitative part maintained. Walliman (2011, p.12) supports the mixed method approach and he goes on to state that “when researching the human behaviors and attitudes, a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative data is needed”. Ketoki & Mantere (2010) states that, deductive reasoning occurs when the conclusion is derived logically from a set of premises, the conclusion being true when all the premises are true. Ketoki & Mantere further argues that in inductive reasoning, there is a gap in the logic argument between the conclusion and the premises observed, the conclusion being ‘judged’ to be supported by the observations made. Using the data collected through both the qualitative and quantitative means will stand in good stead to satisfy the inductive approach. Collins (2010) sates that with an emphasis on qualitative data, an inductive approach will enable the researcher to identify a theory, based on data that has been obtained. Similarly, Luton (2010, p.34) also stress that “one of the most basic ways to learn about something, is to talk to someone who has knowledge about it, or is involved in it”. As a result of these aforementioned assertions, it can be safely assumed that making use of the small to medium sized samples as against the larger samples could enable the researcher to have an in depth look at events happening in real time.
3.4 Participants
The researcher is looking at obtaining the quantitative research data through circulating questionnaires to a select mix of managers, senior managers and marketing staff from the case study organization as well as from the associated manufacturers and subcontractors who are working closely with Arki Group. The questionnaire is prepared in advance and pilot tested for its use worthiness and the changes made are elaborated later on. The questionnaires will be primarily focused on the office staff, estimation, sales & marketing and procurement departments and this can provide a heterogeneous feedback. The rationale of choosing people from different departments is to get an assortment of opinions and this will be around 20 people from different departments which can provide diverse perspectives on social media influences.

For the purpose of obtaining the qualitative research data, the researcher is looking at conducting semi structured interviews with various department heads, management staff, marketing heads of associate companies and directors. The style of these interviews will have more of open ended questions to induce the interviewee elaborate his answers so that certain themes and patterns can be obtained and can have the maximum inputs from the respondent. The details of the interview would be written down in order to high light the key patterns and themes that come out of the interviews. The target audience for the interviews would be from a population consisting of management, department heads, managers and team leaders as mentioned earlier. About 360 people make up the total population at the case study organization out of which the target population would be around 90 office staff who is competent enough to comment on the social media influence. For the purpose of interview a total of around 09 people would be selected to represent the target population.

There are two types of sampling techniques used, they are probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2012). Researcher has chosen non-probability sampling for this study and has determined that purposive sampling (otherwise known as judgmental sampling) is best suited in this case considering the constrains at work with regards to time and job schedules. According to Saunders et al (2012,p.287) “with purposive sampling researcher needs to use his judgment to select cases that will best enable him to the research questions and meet the objectives”. This method was chosen since it involved a deliberate choice of participants based on their experience, qualifications and expertise in the relevant field.
The aforesaid procedures would enable the researcher to collect and compare the data collected which can lead to common themes and patterns and build explanations relevant to the topic, aim and objectives of the chosen project.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Some of the notable means of obtaining the primary research data is questionnaires and the interviews. The very reason to conduct the primary research in order to find something can be futile without the collection of new information. Secondary research is done based on the already available information such as summaries, existing findings, authoritative literature in the relevant arena etc. and researcher proposes to use the company records, peer reviewed journals, books and other articles published within the research topic. As reiterated by prominent authors like (Jugenheimer et al., 2010,p.8) “the difference between these research is simple: the primary one involves conducting new research, while the secondary one involves analyzing existing researches”.

As mentioned before, the questionnaires are pilot tested prior to distribution among the participants which has enabled the researcher to identify any flaws and make amendments accordingly and these are discussed in detail in the following chapter. A similar approach is enacted for the interview questions as well and the interview session will be noted down in details for identifying key patterns and themes. The collected data will allow the researcher to summarize and structure the data and this critical element of data processing can enable statistical correlations. Microsoft Excel is used as the tool for the analysis of the data collected through the quantitative and qualitative means which are questionnaires and semi structured interviews respectively. The quantitative inputs are marked through Likert scale and the qualitative inputs are converted in to analytical form and represented in graphs and charts. As mentioned before, key words and common themes are identified from interviews as an inductive method and these findings will be analyzed to draw parallel with the research objectives and findings can be derived from analyzing the factors. Findings can be represented quantitatively by converting them as formulated data in charts and graphs and also classify them in to key themes and present them as findings.
3.6 Reliability & Validity
McBurney & White (2010) defines Validity as an indication of accuracy in terms of the extent to which a research conclusion corresponds to reality. Reliability has been described by Bryman (2012) as the ability of any research study to have internal stability and consistency of approach if the same has to be repeated again in a similar environment. It is in this context that the sources used for collecting the primary research data should be credible and reliable hence the researcher aims to use only experienced and senior staff from the case study organization. These management and senior staff are involved in taking strategic decisions pertaining to their departments and domains hence are well experienced to give considered opinions on the use of social media. Type of questionnaire as defined by Saunders et al.(2012,p.419) “the design of a questionnaire differs according to how it is delivered, returned or collected, and the amount of contact you have with the respondents”. The researcher has adopted the self-completed questionnaire that is hand delivered to each respondents and collected later (delivery and collection questionnaire).

For the secondary research, researcher has used the two premium search engines like the Cardiff Metropolitan’s Moodle search and Google Scholar to access peer reviewed journals, articles and books which are endorsed as reliable academic research. There are other articles and researches published on the net that has done comprehensive studies on social media impact in UAE which will contribute to the body of secondary research.

3.7 Ethics
This study has been approved by Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethics committee with an Ethics Approval No # 2016D0474.

The researcher states that all the candidates participating in this research study is participating voluntarily and there has never been any compulsion. Their approval on the same has been obtained on a Participant Consent Form along with a Participant Information Sheet which informs the participants on all the significant details of the research study. An undertaking will be given to all the participants on the confidentiality of the information and protect their anonymity. The researcher’s contact details would be shared in case participants want to withdraw from this research.
3.8 Summary
Methodology chapter gives a glimpse of the process and procedure followed while conducting the research study and the means used to obtain the required data. The research philosophy and the approach chosen have been elaborated. Similarly the primary research data collection methods like questionnaires and semi structured interviews are detailed in this chapter along with the ethics and the findings will be showcased in the subsequent research chapter. Similarly, the pilot tested questionnaire and the amendments implemented based on the feedback of the same will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Chapter Overview
The findings and discussions chapter will showcase the results of the data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted during the primary research stage. Results of the primary research have been separated as per their research type and the findings of quantitative research data has been highlighted with visual graphs. The focus of the researcher is to find out different perspectives of the questionnaire participants and the patterns and themes emerge out of the semi structured interviews.

4.2 Fundamentals - Quantitative Research – Samples Description
As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter Methodology, the researcher has adopted the self-completed questionnaire that is hand delivered to each respondents and collected later (delivery and collection questionnaire). The completed questionnaires were collected and compiled in order to format the results of the responses in to graphs and charts. The quantitative research undertaken by the researcher in the form of questionnaire resulted in the following representations. The key findings as mentioned below in the form of graphs and charts are deemed as the most significant data to have come out of the questionnaires and the same has been subjected in the discussion as well.

4.2.1 Respondents Position in the Organization

![Figure 1 - Position in the organization](image-url)
The first question in the fundamentals asked the position each respondent held in the case study organization and significantly most of the respondents belonged to a position where they could comment on the various facets of social media in the company. A cumulative figure of 50% respondents belonged to the managerial and head of the department category with another 20% in the executive management category. This graph can also throw light in to the choice of people belonging to different job positions in the organization.

4.2.2 Respondents Age Group

![Fundamentals - Question No. 2](image)

Figure 2 - Age group

A cumulative total of 40% of the respondents belong to the 18-24 and 35 – 49 age group and 50% of the total participants belonged to the age group of 25 – 34 and a minimal 10% belonged to the above 50 age bracket. This graph can be relevant to indicate the preferences of people belonging to different age group in the organization.
4.2.3 Level of Education

A total of 60% of the participants have got their bachelor’s degree while another 20% were educated up to their masters and the balance 20% of the participants have done their diploma in engineering category. This chart is vital to show that the participants of this questionnaire are all educated and well informed to comment about social media.

4.2.4 Years of Experience in Arki Group

A 50% of the employees participated in the questionnaire survey had an experience in the organization between 2-4 years and 35% of the respondents had 5-8 years of experience with another 15% having 8 years and above. This graph provides information on the participants number of years spent at Arki Group which can also give enough relevance to their choice.
4.2.5 Member of any social networking sites?

Apparently all the respondents had the unanimous opinion of being a member of one of the social networking sites. This indicated the popularity and acceptance social media has among the employees and also show their familiarity with the subject matter.

4.2.6 Personal profile in social media

All the participants had their presence in the social media platform with their personal profile opened in more than one social networking platform and Facebook and What’s App dominated the list. It is also interesting to note that the pilot testing had revealed that a number of social media apps like Whatsapp, Pinterest, Quora etc. were used regularly which was not part of the pilot tested questionnaires. The researcher has made amendments to the questionnaire based on
the results of the pilot testing. This included the simplification of certain questions as well as to avoid duplication of questions. Surprisingly WhatApp has been used by all the participants for group activities and easier coordination in the company especially for smooth operations at project sites. Based on the project requirements different groups are created and short videos and pictures are shared along with vital information pertaining to the project which has also enhanced the project teams speed of execution and delivery.

4.2.7 Social media usage in number of years

75% of the respondents have been using social media for more than 5 years and another 15% using it for the past 2-4 years with the remaining 10% using it for a period of 1-2 years. The number of years respondents have been using the social media has relevance in terms of experiencing and witnessing the ever evolving social media platform which gives the respondents a reasonable understanding of the web.
4.2.8 Social Media and its effects on social life

![Pie chart showing the effects of social media on social life.](image)

Most of the respondents answered that social media has an effect on social life and communication as this has replaced the face to face communications in many instances and 75% of the respondents have stated this opinion. 20% of the respondents felt that it may or may not have an effect on face to face communication and 5% felt that social media has no effect on the social life of people.

4.2.9 Are social networks important?

![Pie chart showing the importance of social networks.](image)
Most of the participants strongly agreed that social networks are very important in their personal and professional life with 65% of the people acknowledging the same strongly. 15% of the total participants agreed that social networks are important while 10% was undecided on this aspect. 5% disagreed while another 5% strongly rejected this notion. Sharing various web contents and links on their home page, forwarding vital info to their friends and colleagues, voicing their opinions and concerns etc. can impact the way people and organizations make decisions in their respective fields.

4.3 Questionnaire Findings & Analysis

4.3.1 Social Media impact on Business Development

![Impact of Social Media on Business Development](image)

*Figure 10 - Social media impact on business development*

The above graph indicates the impact social media has on business development and evidently majority of the participants strongly responded that social media has a positive impact on business development in an organization. The following questions further reiterated these findings as shown in the graphs as most of the respondents belonging to different departments and age group have all commonly agreed that the contribution of social media for business development is accepted. Companies in particular look for information and ideas on the social platforms to develop their own business and a substantial amount of time is spent on this exercise show the importance social media has in this regards (Öztamura & Karakadılarb, 2014). Paniagua & Sapena (2014,p.720) echo similar view that “social media has become a high
corporate priority; a vast majority of organizations are actively participating on this social platform to develop their business”.

4.3.1. Q1 Is social media a positive addition to business improvement?

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to Q1](image)

Figure 11 - Is social media a positive addition to business improvement?

This graph shows that 75% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media can be a positive addition to business improvements and another 15% agreed with this assertion. Only 5% disagreed with the question while another 5% strongly disagreeing with the rest. The overall impression out of this question is that a vast majority believes that social media is playing a positive role in business improvement.

4.3.1. Q2 Positioning and better growth opportunities by social media

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to Q2](image)

Figure 12 - Social media positioning and better growth opportunities
A whopping 80% of the respondents felt that social media can provide growth opportunities for organizations by positioning them better on the social networks and another 15% agreeing with this point of view. Only a minor 5% had a difference of opinion which could be based on their individual experience. Overall, the positive impact of social media has been strongly reinforced by a majority of the participants.

4.3.1. Q3 Social media ignites better brand loyalty among customers

![Social Media ignites better brand loyalty among customers - Qs#. 3](image)

Social media assists organizations to build up better brand loyalty among customers has been well endorsed by 60% of the respondents strongly and another 20% agreeing with this opinion. However, 15% of the participants could not agree with this statement and another 5% strongly rejecting this perception. However, a vast majority approaching this concept positively indicates the wider acceptability social media has gained in the corporate circles.

4.3.1. Q4 Positive impact of Social media on organizational visibility

![Social Media has positive impact on organizational visibility - Qs#. 4](image)

Social media has positive impact on organizational visibility - Qs#. 4
55% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media has a positive impact on the organizational visibility in the social networks and another 25% agreed with this statement making it a huge majority of 80% participants supporting this impression and only 20% disagreeing. This can be interpreted as a positive addition for organizations spending time and efforts on the web to improve their wider acceptance among their customers and followers.

4.3.1. Q5 Word Of Mouth (WOM) publicity and business development

![Figure 15-Word of Mouth publicity and business development](image)

A majority of around 85% respondents voted positively for this statement that word of mouth publicity on the net have better impact on the organization in terms of business development through marketing with 45% strongly agreeing and another 40% agreeing with this concept. Only 15% respondents viewed this perception negatively with their disagreement. This majority opinion shows that postings, blogs and sharing the information on the net can have positive impact in the way business is carried out these days. The reach and acceptance of the organization, its products and services have better acceptance especially when it is recommended by a friend or colleague.
4.4.2 Influence of Social Media in Organizational Performance

The above figure illustrates the feedback received from the questionnaire participants and as is evidently shown most of the participants were positive about the influence social media plays in the performance of an organization and majority of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this assertion. Through the feedback received on the social media platforms companies, are able to make amendments in their approach towards their clients and rectify any flaws in their process and procedures (Miller & Lammas, 2010). This view has been supported by the research of Parveen et al. (2015) that social media has been used for market research, to obtain feedback on existing products and services, to gather opinions about upcoming products and also to enhance word of mouth communications.
4.4.2. **Q1 Social Media presence and organizational performance**

The influence of social media has been evident with the positive performance of many organizations and a similar point of view has been voiced by a majority of the respondents with regards to the question of presence in the social media platform and its influence in organizational performance. 40% of the respondents strongly advocated positively to this statement while 50% agreed with this view and there has also been some negative feedback with 5% disagreeing and another 5% strongly disagreeing. This negative outlook could be the result of the respondent’s personal experiences making them look at the influences of social media negatively.
4.4.2. Q2 Social Media presence and better employee loyalty

Social media provides a platform for presenting the organization in good light which is aptly pointed out by a vast majority of the questionnaire participants with 45% strongly agreeing with this opinion while another 45% giving their positive node to the statement. Social media’s positive influence has been negatively mentioned by a minor 10% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Gligorijevic (2011) supports this view that employees working for an organization that instills trust and credibility can reciprocate with better loyalty and enthusiasm in their in work. Similar view has been expressed by Agnihotri et al. (2012) in their research that working with an organization that is highly visible provides the employees a sense of belonging.
4.4.2. Q3 Benefits of Social Media outweighs its ill effects

![Benefits of social media out weighs its ill effects - Qs#. 3](image)

From the graph depicted above a total of 80% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this view (55% and 25% respectively). 15% of the participants responded disagreeing with this point of view and another 5% strongly rejecting this notion. As the graph indicates there are a whole lot of people who believe that social media benefits outweigh the negative side and it is a platform where companies should make their presence felt.

4.4.2. Q4 Social Media applications and better organizational performance

![Various social Media applications can positively influence Organizations to Perform better - Qs#. 4](image)

Various social media applications like LinkedIn, Whats App, Facebook, Instagram etc. have been contributing positively for organizations to optimize their energy. These days LinkedIn assists organizations to find the right talent from the market and has almost done away with the
HR consultants. Similarly, WhatsApp has been positively assisting teams in the organizations to enhance their performance in various fields. 53% strongly agreed with this notion while 37% agreed and 10% of the respondent disagreed with this concept.

4.4.2. Q5 Ignoring Social Media and negative organizational performance

The organizations who have recently joined have realized what they have been missing out earlier. This claim has been positively supported by the respondents with 30% strongly agreeing while 55% agreeing with this notion. 10% of the participants disagreed to this opinion and another 5% strongly disagreeing.

![Chart showing the distribution of responses for Q5](image-url)

**Figure 21**: Ignoring social media and negative organizational performance
4.5.3 Impact of Social Media in enhancing B2B Relationships

The question of social media impact in building and maintaining better business to business relationships have been optimistically answered by the respondents with a majority of them strongly agreeing with the concept. Hitherto, organizations have always opted to build relationships with their customers, suppliers and contractors through various available means like trading events, exhibitions and roadshows and these efforts have contributed positively. With the advent of social media on the global scene it has become even easier for organizations to build on the existing infrastructure to further their cause. The arrival of mobile phones especially the hand held devices, touch screens etc. have made the spread of social media faster and also popular among the masses. It is in this regards we see the relevance of social media and its positive impact on business relationships. Overall B2B companies appreciate the use of social media in enhancing their image, which might suggest that there will be an increase in B2B companies investing in social media (Michaelidou et al., 2011).

Figure 22-Impact of social media in enhancing B2B relationships

The question of social media impact in building and maintaining better business to business relationships have been optimistically answered by the respondents with a majority of them strongly agreeing with the concept. Hitherto, organizations have always opted to build relationships with their customers, suppliers and contractors through various available means like trading events, exhibitions and roadshows and these efforts have contributed positively. With the advent of social media on the global scene it has become even easier for organizations to build on the existing infrastructure to further their cause. The arrival of mobile phones especially the hand held devices, touch screens etc. have made the spread of social media faster and also popular among the masses. It is in this regards we see the relevance of social media and its positive impact on business relationships. Overall B2B companies appreciate the use of social media in enhancing their image, which might suggest that there will be an increase in B2B companies investing in social media (Michaelidou et al., 2011).
4.5.3. Q1 Social Media plays a positive role in fostering better B2B relationship

Among many other positive attributions of social media, enabling business entities to create better partnerships and mutually benefitting business association is another positive addition. This assertion was strongly agreed by 50% of the respondents with another 40% agreeing to this view. Only 5% disagreed and another 5% strongly disagreed. This clearly indicates the general understanding and acceptance of social media among a majority of the participants and their agreement with social media on the positive role it plays in fostering good B2B relationships.

4.5.3. Q2 Increased involvement in social media and better business relationships

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Figure 23-Social media plays a positive role in fostering better B2B relationship

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Figure 24-Increased social media involvement and better business relationships
Organizations are spending a lot of time and efforts in making their presence felt on the social media through which they seek to enlarge their business footprint. Many organizations share contents and links of their partners, suppliers and customers which encourages each other’s to bring out their best. Arki Group shares a lot of contents and product links of their suppliers and manufacturers which increases both the organization’s visibility and followings on the web. 40% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement and 50% agreed to the same while the rest of the 10% has disagreement with this view.

4.5.3. Q3 Social media has changed the way buyers and sellers interact

The very element of immediate customer feedback has brought about a quantum change in the way organizations approach customer service. Customers are able to give their feedback on the organizations home page of social media applications like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. 55% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media has changed the way buyers and sellers interact and 25% agreed with this opinion. 20% of the participants have disagreement with this assertion.
4.5.3. Q4 Social media encourages two way communications between businesses

![Social Media encourages two way communications between business - Qs#. 4](image)

Figure 26-Social media encourages two way communications between businesses

55% of the participants strongly agreed that social media encourages two way communications between business and another 35% agreed with this claim. Here again 10% disagreed with this statement. The very reason social media has gained popularity over the traditional media is due to its ability to provide a platform for bi way and real time communications. This encourages both the service provider and the customer to closely interact and benefit from this close association.

4.5.3. Q5 Social media and organizational marketing strategy

![Social Media should be an integral part of organizational marketing strategy - Qs#. 5](image)

Figure 27-Social media and organizational marketing strategy

Organizations undertake various marketing activities in order to increase the awareness about the company widen its reach with its intended customers, make its products and services recognized in the market place etc. and with the arrival of social media most of these requirements can be
met faster. Marketing products and services through social media also gives the companies opportunity to communicate with their customers directly and also in real time. 65% of the respondents strongly agreed with the notion that social media should be made an integral part of an organization’s marketing strategy. 30% agreed with this idea with a mere 5% disagreeing to this notion.

4.5.3. Q6 Blog posts and its positive impact on business transactions

Writing blogs on various social media platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook have become a trend and this is another way of marketing done for organizations. Blog posts can also influence the opinion of the readers in terms of buying decisions which is amply illustrated in the above graph with 40% respondents strongly agreeing with it while another 45% agreeing to this view. 10% participants disagreed with this view while another 5% totally rejected this statement.

4.6 Qualitative Research – Semi-Structured Interviews – Research Results

4.6.1 Social media experience

“I use Facebook regularly to check on the new products and its feedback on the same from people who are using them before making a purchase decision” (Interviewee 1).

“My experience is that it is very easy to create a page for ourselves on any of the social media platforms and also the updating and postings are just a click away” (Interviewee 5)
“I have always seen that if you post the right pictures and info on the Facebook then the views, likes and the number of shares goes up drastically” (Interviewee 3).

All the interviewees have presence on the web and are also regulars due to the ease of use. They are very much updated with the latest developments in their respective fields due to the humongous amount of information they are able to gather from various platforms.

4.6.2 Social media and its influence on business development
“we get a lot of information on new projects, tenders and new offices moving in to UAE through LinkedIn which is a good source of corporate information” (interviewee 1)

“Content of your post matters a lot, if you have a good content which you post on LinkedIn or Facebook makes other organizations and your competitors to take note and then you are competing on a different level altogether” (interviewee 5).

“Social media is distinctively different from traditional media. It has tremendous ability to reach a huge number of people at much lower cost than traditional media”. (Interviewee 4)

“Social media has drastically reduced our marketing expenses” (interviewee 7)

“one of the most important aspects of social media is that it gives you the opportunity to engage your clients in real time basis which can kick start a better communication about the vision and mission of the organization, its products and services” (interviewee 4).

All the participants felt that social media is an apt platform for business development both with customers and with suppliers & manufacturers. Apps like Pinterest is a very good source of information on new products which enables the company to post lots of pictures while apps like Quora enables participants to partake in debates on various issues which can also validate products and services.

4.6.3 Positive impact of social media in organizational performance
“Image building is the fundamental reason why we should be on social media and this has been proven each time we upload something on our home pages of Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc. and we have seen this happening enough time when we posted our pictures and videos after the inauguration of new our offices in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The recent employment advert we
placed in Linked has given us tremendous response in quick time and was also cost effective” (interviewee 1)

“Our communications with the customers have increased due to the possibility of real time and two way conversation we can have. Today we know what our customers are thinking about our organization” (interviewee 2)

“Platforms like Facebook and Linkedin have helped us to communicate important information to our customers and have enhanced our communication possibilities” (interviewee 8)

“I feel that we can save a lot of money by being active and present on social media since it gives major exposure and brand visibility which can be a cost efficient solution for advertisements. Since the followers of our pages are from similar industries or interested parties it is even more important that we are addressing our target audience” (interviewee 6)

“I remember that we received an important mail from Google lauding us on the record hits we received during the time of our new office inauguration in Dubai which goes on to prove that our visibility has increased tremendously” (interviewee 1)

All the participants suggested that social media is enabling organization to perform better through various means as indicated in their own words.

4.6.4 Social media influence on better B2B relationships

“These days even our customers check our social media pages to evaluate us as an organization and our capabilities. This is very usual with government entities in UAE to make sure that the organization has the capability to execute and deliver within the time schedules. Looking at all these important aspects I think being present and being active can impact our business development as well” (interviewee 3)

“LinkedIn is more professional and corporate hence being on this portal is very important for us. We are able to have a better customer engagement in this site and also a lot of information about our competitors” (interviewee 1)

“We are able to maintain our competitive advantage through the information we obtain on the social media platform about our competitors” (interviewee 9)
“most of our customers try to find us online since that’s one area they will always check to find out information about organizations hence it is important to be on sites like LinkedIn” (interviewee 6)

“Being on the social network has reduced our advertisements drastically. We are able to make a lot of cost savings in this regards” (interviewee 2)

“We get 24/7 customer feedback and suggestions which is making us to perform better” (interviewee 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Key Themes and Patterns</strong></th>
<th><strong>Category / Factor</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced customer service, Enhanced Communication, Enhanced customer engagement, Improve communication with customers, Good relationship with customers, On time response.</td>
<td>Enhanced Customer relationship and customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced the marketing expenses, Social media has reduced the cost of advertising</td>
<td>Cost reduction in Marketing / customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting information about customers and competitors from social media, customer feedback, Information about organization to customers, Informational sharing, Useful information from social media</td>
<td>Improved information sharing and accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved brand positioning, Increased brand visibility, Improve reputation, Improve brand performance, Positive WOM (Word Of Mouth) publicity</td>
<td>Improved brand visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain competitive positions, Gain competitive advantage</td>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 Discussion
The semi-structured interviews conducted with 09 participants in the organization gave a clear indication on their thinking and understanding of social media and its influence in the organization. From the answers received the researcher was able to obtain the required information on how social media impacted the organizations business development, its influence on organizational performance and the positive contributions in fostering better B2B relationships. The interview participants were asked the basic questions to understand their age, designation, department, number of years in the organization, level of education and overall work experience.

Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010) states that key stakeholders in particular the suppliers, buyers and competitors who can create a perceived pressure which make it necessary for organizations to be on social media.

Participants of the semi-structured interviews were asked open ended questions and based on their responses interviewer was able to build on the same to probe further to get the best responses. Some of the questions asked during the interviews were:-

- Interviewees personal experience with social media
- His perceptions about social media and how it can influence business development
- Positive impact of social media in organizational performance
- The interviewees views on influence of social media on B2B relationships
- Interviewees overall take on social media and its positive impact

The key themes and patterns surfaced during the semi structured interviews showed that by using social media organization has improved its visibility, branding, communication and customer service. The study done by Jussila et al. (2014) states that the Web 2.0 as a platform for two way communication has made it possible for organization to talk directly with their customers continuously. Parveen et al. (2015.p.75) states that “organizations use social media for branding and social media is the voice of their brand”.


4.8 Summary
The information gathered from both the quantitative and qualitative means amply illustrate the importance social media plays in an organization. The research objectives of determining social media influence in business development, organizational performance and its ability to foster better B2B relationships is established by the through the case study organization Arki Group. This study cannot be concluded as all inclusive since there are a lot of limitations which shall be discussed in the next chapter Conclusion.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5 Chapter Overview
The purpose of this study was to determine how social media can be used for business development, its positive impact on organizational performance within UAE market with specific reference to its influence on B2B relationships. Researcher will conclude what has been the highlight of this research and will provide suitable recommendations in line with the aims and objectives as stated in the introduction. Researcher believes that these recommendations will add value to the body of research works which can be further enriched by other eminent researchers. This case study was carried out on Arki Group which operates out of UAE and the research has revealed the importance social media has in the organization.

5.1 Conclusion of Study
An in depth review of the relevant literature established that social media has been prevalent from early 2000 onwards Friendster launching in 2002, LinkedIn 2004, Myspace in 2003, Twitter in 2006 and Facebook in 2006 which became a phenomenal hit essentially due to its appeal to all age groups. Social media started gaining popularity and wider acceptance from 2010 onwards and with the advent of smart phones it further established its astronomical status among people of all ages. Today a broad-spectrum of people use social media for various purpose and many organizations have also joined the trend to reap its rich benefits.

The phenomenal influence of social media has impacted the society so deeply that there is a tectonic shift in global communication today. Reviewing various literatures by distinguished authors in chapter two has validated the distinctive benefits social media has presented to the organizations in terms of business development, organizational performance and crafting better B2B relationships. Accordingly, the researcher has also deliberated the significance of social media in shaping organizational strategy and crafting its place on the global platform.
Research Objectives:-

- To examine the key theories and concepts linked with the development of social media and business
- To explore the impact of social media on business and organizational performance
- To evaluate the impact of social media in business with a particular focus on B2B relationships

This study has opened the doors of social media world to the researcher and the immense opportunities it can unwrap for a discerning organization. Expending these resources prudently will facilitate organizations to attain its maximum potential and enable them to achieve the success it deserves. However, the study had also brought up a lot of different perspectives including the undesirable and obnoxious side of social media; the researcher has only focused on the constructive aspects of the social networks. While addressing some of the fundamentals of social media, the findings have demonstrated how organizations around the world explored the social media platforms to accomplish its maximum potential, which also addressed the research objective one social media and its impact on business development in the organization. The findings also highlighted the importance social media plays in bridging relationships with various stakeholders both internal and external like the employees, management, customers, suppliers and competitors which have been amply supported by the literature review.

Another substantial finding of this research was that those organizations with a strong social media or brand presence on the social networking platform are more on the minds of customers, suppliers and public in general which can lead to higher levels of organizational visibility, brand presence, organizational trust and product loyalty and all these aspects can eventually lead to increased business opportunities. Literature review has revealed some of the subtle nuances of social media marketing like WOM (Word Of Mouth marketing) which can considerably increase the trust among the customers and suppliers. The researcher has been successful in addressing the second research objective which is the influence of social media in organizational performance through the empirical findings that social networking applications are developed on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 which is fundamentally a platform where the content is constantly produced and developed by various participants continuously. This very quintessence
of social media empowers the users to have two way communications which can deliver crucial feedback, comments and suggestions to organizations and this can ultimately lead to better organizational performance.

Finally, this study has brought the required attention to the third and final research objective that is, the impact social media has on B2B relationships. Various literature reviews have demonstrated that social media has changed the way organizations communicate these days as social media applications can be used to create home page to announce matters of importance, share text, videos, set up groups for better communications with suppliers, customers and business partners in a very cost effective way.

To summarize the points as per the aforementioned study, the following reflections can be considered:-

Business Development: Results of this study support the concept that internet and social media has been providing platform for people to create, share and disseminate contents, search for information on new products and services and to keep up to date with the latest development in the business world. Growing popularity of social media has made many organizations to increase their presence and visibility on multiple global platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. whereby double their chance in improving their business prospects.

Organizational Performance: This study has demonstrated a favorable setting for improving the performance of organizations by appropriately responding to the feedback that the organizations receive on their pages in different social networking sites. By incorporating the comments of their customers companies can reap rich dividends and improve their performance drastically. Both the primary and secondary research have shown that social media has improved the social relationship of the employees in general and has contributed to the overall improvement of performance among the employees.

B2B relationships: This research has vindicated the belief that B2B relationship is undergoing a tremendous transformation due to the growing pressure from both the customers and competitors and in order to stay ahead of competition B2B organizations are engaging novelty ideas to reach a wider audience and social media is assisting them greatly in this regards.
Findings from the case study organization Arki Group as below;

Through this study researcher was able to determine a lot of important information on how social media has been instrumental in portraying Arki Group on a totally transformational path to the interiors industry in UAE. The image and impression about Arki has changed positively among the customers, suppliers, manufacturing partners and competitors which is apparent from the feedback and optimistic reviews received on Arki’s various social media pages like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and You Tube. Advertising on LinkedIn site for various HR recruitments like Project Manager, Sales Manager, Designers, and Architects etc. has prompted exceptional responses from the job market in UAE which has in effect has considerably reduced the cost of hiring for the organization. Moreover, Arki was able to receive huge number of CVs which enabled them to recruit right talents from the vast options that was available which essentially provided Arki with better talents at lower hiring costs. Arki’s annual sports day events pictures and videos posted on various social media sites have evoked a lot of positive response which also demonstrated the organizations commitment to staff welfare.

With the increased activities on the social media platforms Arki has also improved its relationships with other organizations in the B2B category including the competitors who have also started buying products like Shaw carpet tiles, Polar Moss grass, Berry Alloc flooring products etc. which overall has contributed to considerable business growth.

Inauguration of Arki Group’s new office / showroom in Abu Dhabi and the new corporate headquarters / showroom in Dubai has been a major hit within the office interiors community in UAE and the positive responses from customers, suppliers, contractors and also the competitors has been a tremendous boost to the morale of Arki employees. Google has also send an appreciation mail to Arki congratulating the organization on the maximum number of hits. The feedback and information obtained through the questionnaires and semi structured interviews also contributed to the contention that social media has been positively contributing to the organizations performance, business development and its relationship with customers, suppliers, manufacturers and also the competitors.
5.2 Recommendations
Based on the study and the observations made on social media the researcher recommends the following.

Opportunities - Social media as a great platform for mass engagements can offer unparalleled opportunities to an organization. It is essential for organizations to make their presence on it but it is equally important that the number of postings is done at the right intervals. Too much of posts or too little posts will not have the desired results.

Content matters – In order to portray the right image organizations need to have a clear control over the content of the materials posted on social media. Content matters a lot and can have diverse results depending on the kind of impression organization wants to create in the public space.

Focus – It is very crucial for the organization to determine which social media sites are most popular with its customers. This can be ascertained based on the number of followers, likes, comments, feedback etc. Identifying this will enable the organization to focus all its marketing efforts on just a few of these social networks and this will facilitate the organization to reach the maximum number of potential customers.

Control & Sustain – Organizations must assign key staff to implement social media strategy and also control postings, maintain various social sites and also sustain the tempo so that there is regular activities on the networks which will eventually increase the visibility and brand value of the organization.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research
All academic studies have limitations and scope for improvements similarly; this study also has some limitations. To address the limitation of the smaller sample size used for the qualitative study future researches should focus on larger qualitative evidence from a bigger sample pool which can instil more confidence in the findings.
Another limitation stems from the fact that the respondents and researcher both worked for the same organization and this impacted the views of the participants which could have been more forthright. Future research may include respondents from multiple organizations to overcome this limitation.

Limitation with the survey design and data collection brought larger than required data which was deemed not relevant subsequently omitted from the final discussion. An optimised survey technique and focus on the relevant data is recommended to overcome this limitation.

UAE being relatively a very young country social media and its reach is comparatively limited. Social media itself is a work in progress and research on social media particularly in B2B sector is still in its nascent stage hence further research in this domain is highly recommended.

5.5 Summary
Researcher hopes that this study will positively contribute to the limited research on social media and will add value to the body of academic research. Though the area of research and the content may be limited in its design, this study can still be relevant to organizations that are not yet on the social media platform. This study on social media has been carried out from an organizational level research since similar work in this area has been comparatively limited. Various findings of the research on the influencing factors of social media in organizational performance, business development and B2B relationship can contribute to further research and studies in this domain. In addition, findings of this study can also be used as a guide for those organizations with minimal social media presence at the moment but are looking forward to explore the bigger picture in the days ahead.
References


Appendices

Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Social Media influence on Business Development, organizational performance & B2B relationships

Summary of Project

The purpose of this project is to ascertain the importance social media plays in business development and organizational performance and how this can be used for creating better B2B relations. By your participation I hope to gain data for my analysis as a part of my studies being undertaken at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been chosen to take part in this research, as you have been a part of the organization over 3 years which I have set as the minimum experience require to take part in this study. Other reasons that make you an idea candidate for this research are

- You present yourself as an ideal member of your team and are chosen as one of the target sample among members of other teams or department.
- You have shown knowledge and commitment in the field you work and have showcased pro-active improvement and commitment to growth of yourself and the organization.

During the part of the research, it is advised not to discuss with members outside the focus group as I require your opinion without the influence or suggestion of others. The participation is entirely your choice and you have the ability to withdraw the data at any time.

Project risks

As you participate in this research, you would be asked to complete questionnaires or be a part of an interview which would be recorded for the purpose of the project data analysis. I would like to assure you that no sensitive data will be taken and only information required for the project will be asked.

The project does not pose any significant risk to you or the organization, but if during the interview or questionnaire you feel as though a risk is posed or seen, you are free to notify me on that. If at any point you feel your participation is risky or are not comfortable continuing with the research, you are free to withdraw your participation. No data received from you will be used without prior consent.

How we protect your privacy

The information collected through this research will be held in confidence. Your personal details will be held by me securely through the life of the research and submission. Once the study is completed and the analyzed information has served its purpose the raw data will be destroyed except for the signed consent form which will be held securely for 10 years. The questionnaires and interview recordings will be similarly stored securely for the life of the study and destroyed after 10 years.

YOU WILL BE OFFERED A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET TO KEEP

If you require any further information about this project then please contact:
Appendix B – Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethics Reference Number: 2016D0474

Participant name or Study ID Number:

Title of Project: Influence of social media on business development and organizational performance within UAE market, with specific reference to B2B relationships”. A case study on Arki Group

Name of Researcher: Gopakumar Krishnan Nair

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. [  ]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. [  ]

3. I agree to take part in the above study. [  ]

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being recorded [  ]

5. I agree to take part in the questionnaire as a part of the research [  ]

6. I agree to my quotes being attributed to me ( )

7. I agree to my organisation being named in all publications ( )

_______________________________________   ___________________
Signature of Participant               Date
Appendix C – Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Social Media and its impact on business development, organizational performance and its effects on B2B relationships

Section 1: Fundamentals

1. What is your employment position?
   □ Department Head
   □ Staff
   □ Executive Management
   □ Project Manager
   □ Site Manager

2. Age:
   □ 18 up to 24 □ 25 up to 34 □ 35 up to 49 □ 50 and over

3. Education Level:
   □ High School
   □ Diploma
   □ Bachelors
   □ Masters
4. Years of experience in Arki Group Design:

- □ 2 to 4 years
- □ 5 to 8 years
- □ 8 Years and above

5) Are you a member of any social networking sites?

- □ Yes
- □ No

6. Please select all social networks for which you have created a personal profile (You can choose more than one)

- □ Facebook
- □ Twitter
- □ YouTube
- □ Instagram
- □ LinkedIn
- □ Whats App
- □ Pinterest
- □ Quora
- □ Snapchat

7. How long have you been using social networking sites?

- □ Less than a month
- □ 1 - 2 years
- □ 2-4 years
- □ More than 5 years

8. How does online networking affect your social life?

- □ Does not have an effect on face to face communication
Somewhat has an effect on face to face communication

Replaces most face to face communication

9. Do you think social networks are important?

Strongly agree

Agree

Fair

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Section 2: Impact of Social Media on business development

Please rate the following questions on the basis of the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Do you believe that social media can be a positive addition to business improvement?

2. Do you think that social media can provide growth opportunities to organizations by positioning them better?

3. Do you think that social media ignite better brand loyalty among customers?

4. Will you say that social media has a positive impact on the organizational visibility?

5. Do you believe that Word Of Mouth publicity on social media platforms can have better impact on business development?

Section 3: Influence of Social Media on Organizational Performance
1. Do you think that having a presence in the social media platform can have positive influence in the organizational performance?

2. Do you believe that having a presence in social media can create a better organizational loyalty among employees?

3. Do you think that the benefits of social media outweigh its ill effects?

4. Do you think that various Social Media applications can positively influence organizations to perform better?

5. Do you think that ignoring social media in today’s world will affect the organizations performance negatively?

Section 4: Impact of Social Media on enhancing B2B relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Do you think that social media play a positive role in fostering better B2B relationships?

2. Can increased involvement on social media platforms help organizations to have better business relationships?

3. Do you think that social media has changed the way buyers and sellers interact?

4. Social media encourages two way communications between businesses?

5. Do you think that social media should be an integral part of an organizations marketing strategy?

6. Do you think that blog posts have a positive impact on business transactions these days?
### Appendix D – Semi-Structured Interviews

#### Semi Structured Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of semi-structured interview</th>
<th>Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Ask the respondent for approval to note down the interview session, Ask the participant to sign the participant consent form and acknowledge it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Ask Personal Background Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1) Designation in organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2) Years working for the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3) Education level</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.4) Which department do the employee work for</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5) Total experience of the person in the field he is working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) <strong>Ask the respondent on his/her understanding of social media</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1) His / her personal experience with social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2) Ask the participant on his perceptions about social media and how it can influence business development.

3.3 The participants views on the influence of social media and organizational performance
| 3.4 | Ask the participant on his views about social media and its influence on B2B relationships |
| 3.5 | Ask the respondent on their overall view about social media and its influence |
Total Word Count (From Introduction up to Conclusion and Recommendations) - 13916