

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN
THE PAY TELEVISION INDUSTRY IN IRELAND**

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A Research Dissertation in partial fulfilment for the
Master of Science in Marketing



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Abstract

This research is an exploratory study, which analyses the use of social media by Irish pay-television providers when marketing their services. The main objective of this research is **to determine has the use of social media by Irish pay-television providers changed the marketing of their services.**

Secondary research objectives investigated are: (A) **Identify the various social media platforms that pay-television providers utilise to promote their pay-television service.** (B) **To determine from a customer's perspective if the promotional campaigns ran by the pay-television providers via social media platforms proves more effective as a means of engagement than with traditional marketing methods or is a combination of both methods as effective.**

This research allows a greater understanding of the benefits and importance of social media as a marketing channel when combined with traditional marketing methods of promotion such as print media and television advertising. The study takes a qualitative approach to assess its feasibility as an effective marketing channel for pay-television providers. A participatory action research paradigm is used whereby (a) in-depth interviews were conducted with senior marketing personnel from two of Ireland's prevalent pay-television providers and (b) focus groups were also conducted to ascertain peoples perspectives on social media, their usage of social media in general, why they use social media and their level of awareness and engagement of social media platforms used by Irish pay-television providers.

The findings from this research strongly indicate much potential for social media as an effective marketing channel in order for pay-television to market their service to potential and current customers'. As a result of the focus groups conducted the impact of the use of social media by Irish-pay television providers when marketing their service is not fully apparent. It is evident from the research conducted that there is a lot more Irish-pay television providers need to do in order to heighten the effectiveness and impact of social media through the marketing of their service and their promotional campaigns.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to award of MSc in Marketing is entirely my own work and has not been taken from others, save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of this study.

Signed: *Bernadette Doyle*

Date: 14th September 2017

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List of Abbreviations

HQ – Head Quarters

ICT – Information Communication Technology

Infographic - a visual representation of information or data for example as a chart or diagram

RACE – reach, act, convert, engage

RSS – really simple syndication, a technology for distributing news and blog content around the Web

SEM – search engine marketing

SEO – search engine optimisation

SM – Social Media

SMM – Social Media Marketing

SMO – Social Media Optimisation

SN – Social Network

SOSTAC – situation, objectives, strategy, tactics, action, control

TV – Television

WOM – Word of Mouth

WOMM – Word of Mouth Marketing

WWW – World Wide Web

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Introduction

The overriding purpose of this study is to determine has the use of social media by Irish pay television providers changed the marketing of their services. The concept of social media (SM) and social media marketing (SMM) is analysed, reviewed and evaluated in this study. The various SM platforms used by the chosen pay-TV companies in this study to promote their services are identified. Lastly customer's perspectives in relation to the promotional campaigns ran by the pay-TV companies researched in this study via SM platforms. The purpose of the subsequent research is to ascertain has SMM changed the manner in which these pay TV service providers market their products and services to Irish consumers.

1.2 Rationale

Having worked in the telecommunications industry in Dublin for five years the author has a keen interest and experience in the industry. The author's experience includes customer service, training, base control, network dispatch and regional control centre co-ordinator. As part of the author's undergraduate degree she completed a thesis on the advent of digital television in Ireland and its impending impact. The dawn of digital television began in 1998. A huge transformation occurred from 2001 to the present day, with analogue television switching to digital television in Ireland (UPC website, 2015). Home entertainment is interesting and exciting in terms of contents of channels offered for the paying television customer and the demographic reaches a far and wide audience in Ireland.

The pay television (TV) sector in Ireland operates in a regulated competitive market that provides customers with a wide array of advance digital services. 71% is the proportion of Irish households with a television subscription (Amárach Research & UPC 2014). Ireland's pay TV service providers include Sky, Virgin Media (formerly UPC), Eir, Saorview, Vodafone and Smart Vision. Sky, Virgin Media and Eir are the main players in providing pay television service in Ireland. Virgin Media has approximately 365,500 pay television subscribers (Weckler, 2016), Sky has approximately 800,000 subscribers to a combination of pay television, broadband and landline services (Sky website, 2015). eir Sport has approximately 200,000 pay TV

subscribers (eir website, 2017). This study will research pay TV providers eir sport and Virgin Media, as they have a strong history as dominant telecommunications providers in Ireland.

Ireland's leading pay TV service providers are at the forefront of great change in the Irish digital landscape which has seen a massive transformation in how consumers and businesses engage with digital entertainment, information and technology. As consumers, we want to watch what we want, where we want, when we want.

Increasing levels of digitisation in society can contribute to an overall uplift in GDP including job creation (Amárach Research & UPC, 2014). In terms of size and employment it is an important sector in the Irish economy. The sector accounts for 3.7% of Irish GNP, employing 14, 467 people (IBEC Telecoms Report, 2014).

The growth of competition in the telecommunications market in recent years has reduced the costs of telecommunications services for end-users and increased the level of innovation in the industry (PwC website, 2016). Consumers want to save money on pay television packages they avail of (Amárach, 2016). According to a recent 'Digital Insights' report commissioned by Virgin Media (through Amárach research company) results from an online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 adults show that Irish people use the internet daily, it is an easy venue to access films and television content on streaming services such as Netflix and also the android applications like ShowBox (Virgin Media & Amárach, 2016). People as a result may place less value on the pay TV area and will opt for the cheaper package. Also according to the report as a nation 'Ireland is at a critical juncture in its digital development', (Virgin Media & Amárach, 2016). The report maintains that Irish people already enjoy 'the many of the benefits of a digital economy and society with the vast majority of consumers utilising advanced digital technologies and services in their daily lives at home and at work' (Virgin Media & Amárach, 2016). The main players that will be focused on in this study namely eir Sport & Virgin Media are more than ever reliant on their marketing strategies to convince subscribers that their value proposition is attractive.

Innovations are demanded by consumers today, television has been totally transformed from the box in the corner of the living room to a high definition screen, the smart phone in your pocket or the tablet in your hand. Multi-screening has

transformed the home viewer experience (UPC & Amárach2014). The growth and ever increasing usage of SM by Irish people on a daily basis prompts Irish pay-TV providers to heighten their knowledge in how this phenomenon works and how they can achieve positive results from using it to market their service. How service providers respond to this increased demand for greater personalisation of viewing schedules for example and the need for greater flexibility for subscribers requires careful marketing planning and execution in terms of promoting their service via social media platforms or traditional marketing methods or indeed a combination of both methods.

1.3 Justification for Research

Innovations in telecommunications have the potential to completely change how we live and work. Current pay-TV service providers in Ireland vie to demonstrate the ability to deliver quality services that people want, good customer experiences, as well as innovation, these attributes will more than likely make all the difference to the bottom line. Companies must develop SMM objectives, like increasing awareness of their products and services. Reducing overheads, for example marketing costs, recruitment costs and customer service costs. Improving customer satisfaction. Increasing referrals, leads and sales. Increased organic search engine visibility. Customer feedback, research and insights. Speed in averting or mitigating the extent of a crisis (Krishna, 2012).

The telecommunications industry is open to new innovations every day, telecommunications research, development and innovation is currently being carried out by companies within the industry here in Ireland (Connect, 2016). The internet has advanced the way society communicates daily. In Ireland 36% of Irish people spend more than 20 hours a week online and 33% access the Internet from mobile phones (Edelman Ireland, 2015). The activities Irish people are most likely to participate in online include: 56% watching films and video clips and television programmes, 82% emailing, 70% social networking, 38% listening to music online (Edelman Ireland, 2015) . The statistic that 56% of Irish people watching films and video clips and television programmes online: are the main Irish pay television

service providers Virgin Media and eir Sport aware of this? Competition with the Internet appears to be alive and well. The research in this study will not just explore this statistic but also trends and experiences of customers of both eir Sport and Virgin Media. In addition interviews with senior marketing executives within both eir Sport and Virgin Media exploring brand management strategies, social media strategies and day-to-day promotional activities adopted by both. Social Media is very relevant in today's business world and plays an essential role in the telecommunications industry. It is forever changing the landscape of marketing and questioning service provider's abilities to stay competitive with their product and service offerings.

Are Irish pay TV companies combining both traditional marketing methods as well as SMM methods or just using the basic SMM promotional tools or traditional marketing methods only? What short-term and long-term marketing, promotional and brand strategies are they adopting? Are these strategies and their promotional campaigns effective and delivering positive results? Are they getting their message across to their target markets? Do their customer's remain loyal? Is the quality of service provided of a high standard? Can a link be established between the role of social media marketing in identifying if it is contributing in a positive way to brand awareness? Are Irish pay TV subscribers brand loyal or not? This study envisages exploring answers to all of the latter questions. This study will explore strengths and weaknesses Irish pay TV service providers have in both their social media marketing strategies. Does a void exist, is social media marketing used in an efficient way to increase brand awareness amongst the service provider's subscribers? This research will be of benefit to the two pay TV service providers taking part in the study and consumers alike. Trends within pay TV will be identified and explored to validate the reason for the study as well as an in depth analysis of previous research in the emerging social media marketing area and what problems will arise throughout the course of the research conducted.

Traditional Marketing methods can be categorised into areas such as print, broadcast, advertising, direct mail and telephone. Almost every business selling a product or service uses one or more types of traditional marketing as part of their advertising strategy. This form of advertising depends on the business available marketing

budget. Virgin Media in the UK use direct marketing a lot in promoting the business. According to direct marketing director at Virgin Media:

It is our most efficient acquisition channel and we continue to get good results.

(Bibby, 2012)

However it is a costly method of promotion. Traditional marketing is much more planning and strategy and less on implementation (Marketing-Schools.org website, 2012).

Social Media Marketing has emerged in the last decade as a cost-effective way to drive marketing results. Social Media Marketing can be used to establish a relationship with the consumer that has depth and relevancy. Storytelling is the future SMM. We all know stories capture audiences worldwide (Postcron - Blog, 2015). As we grew up to have our own favourite stories, the art of storytelling remains unchanged. Brands realise this and increasingly including this in their communication and promotion of their products and/or services. Advertising over the last decade is experiencing a huge transformation especially in this digital age. The concept is to connect with customers using stories about them, stories that relate to them and stories that celebrate them (Harvard Business Review website, 2016).

The 2016 Reuters Digital News report launched in June 2016 conveyed Ireland's second year participating in the study with FuJo (Dublin City University Institute for Future Media and Journalism) sponsored by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland conducting detailed analysis of the Irish data. Findings in relation to SM: Over half of Irish consumers (52%) now get their news from social media sites. Internationally, around one in ten (12%) say social media is their primary news source. Facebook is Ireland's most popular social media site with 71% using it regularly and 45% using it as a source of news (Reuters, 2016).

The aforementioned reports validate Irish pay-TV providers to invest, engage and adapt SMM strategies in the marketing of their services. Continuous research is required on both these areas of marketing. The main pay television service providers researched in this study namely Virgin Media & eir Sport must assure that their marketing staff and other relevant staffs within their organisation are highly

knowledgeable of both and qualified in both these methods. It is essential that both service providers keep up with the ever changing marketing and promotional opportunities avenues available for them to utilise to the maximum effectiveness.

1.4 Research Problem and research objectives

Primary Objective:

- *Evaluate has the use of social media by Irish pay-TV providers changed the marketing of their services.*

Secondary Objectives:

- *Identify the various social media platforms that pay-TV providers utilise to promote their pay-TV service.*
- *To determine from a customer’s perspective if the promotional campaigns ran by the pay-TV providers via social media platforms proves more effective as a means of engagement than with traditional marketing methods or is a combination of both methods as effective.*

The advent of Social Media Marketing has advanced the telecommunications industry to a new level of promotional intensity in recent years. Can it be sustained? If it can be what tools do service providers use promoting their service via social media marketing channels?

1.5 List of Definitions

With the intention of fully understanding the study context it is beneficial to provide the following list of definitions as presented in the next table 1.1:

Table 1.1: List of Definitions

List of Definitions	
1. Internet Marketing	4. Social Media
2. Digital Marketing	5. Social Networks
3. Word-of-Mouth Marketing	6. Social Media Marketing

1. Internet Marketing

Internet Marketing, also referred to as online marketing or emarketing, is the marketing of products or services over the Internet (Lluch, 2012). In the Internet era, internet marketing has become very popular as a cost effective tool of promotion. Using a friendly and informative web would be more effective than any other promotional tools (Lluch, 2012). The most prevalent online marketing tools are search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), social media optimisation (SMO), online advertising with display ads, e-crm and lastly permission marketing (Jain, 2010).

2. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is yet another term similar to Internet marketing. It involves applying these technologies which form online channels to market: - web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless and digital TV (Chaffey et al, 2009). To achieve these objectives: support marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers within a multichannel buying process and customer lifecycle. Through using these marketing tactics: recognising the strategic importance of digital technologies and developing a planned approach to reach and migrate customers to online services through e-communications and traditional communications. Retention is achieved through improving our customer knowledge (of their profiles, behaviour, value and loyalty drivers), then delivering integrated, targeted communications and online services that match their individual needs (Chaffey et al, 2009, p.10).

3. Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Sernovitz (2006) defined word of mouth marketing (WOM) in parts a to c. a) giving people a reason to talk about you and b) making it easier for the conversation to happen its c) to c marketing – when a consumer tells a consumer about you. Really, it is b to c to c. When it comes out of the mouth of a marketer, its marketing. When a ‘real’ person repeats it, it is WOM.

4. Social Media

Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow

audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others (Carr & Hayes, 2015). SM is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world (Edosomwan et al, 2011).

5. Social Networks

Boyd and Ellison (2007) offer their definition of social networks as web-based network sites that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

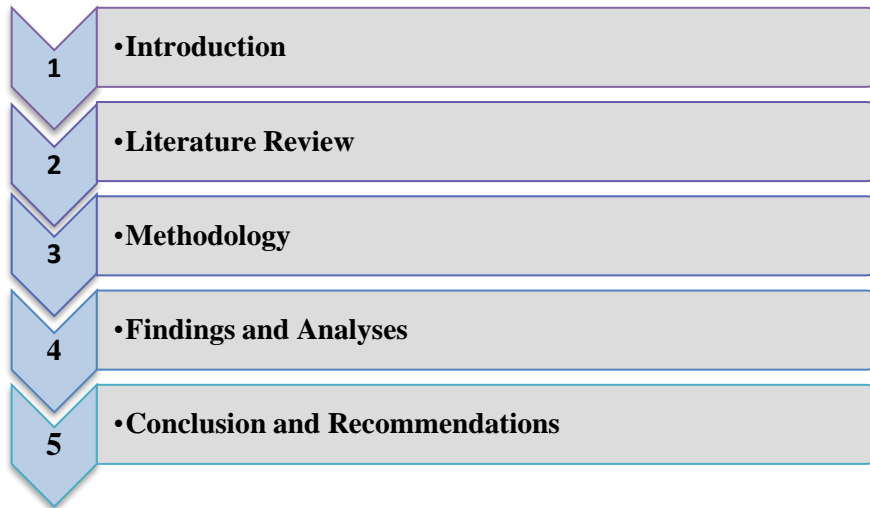
6. Social Media Marketing

Tuten & Solomon (2015) define social media marketing as the utilisation of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have a value for an organisations stakeholders. SMM seeks to engage customers where they naturally spend their time (Evans, 2010).

1.6 Outline Plan and Structure

This study contains five chapters. Detailed in this section is a summary of the complete study along with an outline of the key chapters. Each chapter will focus on an individual area of study as outlined in figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1 Structure of the Study



The layout of the study is as follows: after an introduction to the dissertation in chapter one, the role of the Internet in marketing, Internet marketing, digital marketing and word-of-mouth marketing will be explored as part of an extensive literature review. In addition the concept of social networking, social network platforms and SMM is introduced and expanded upon in chapter two. Previous research in these areas is reviewed for insight into the nature and content of social media marketing. The research methodology used throughout the main investigation is examined in chapter three. Data collection methods will be outlined. The process the researcher undertook while conducting the chosen method of research will also be discussed as well as any ethical issues or limitations found. Following this, findings and analyses will be outlined in chapter four. This will include themes from findings from interviews and focus groups conducted. In chapter five recommendations as a result of the research findings will be outlined and conclusions drawn from the study and future study implications.

1.6.1 Calendar of Dissertation Plan

The submission research problem and establish research week ending 22nd April 2017. Complete chapter one by 6th of May 2017. Complete chapters two and three week ending 17th June 2017. Conduct in-depth interviews with two Irish TV service providers between weeks ending 24th June 2017 and 8th July 2017. Conduct focus groups and collate findings of interviews and focus groups from 15th July 2017 to 22nd July 2017. Complete chapters four and five week ending 26th August 2017. Submit first draft to supervisor 1st September 2017. Receive final feedback from supervisor by 8th September 2017. Final submission of two soft bound copies of dissertation due 15th September 2017. Submission of 2 hard bound copies of dissertation due mid-October.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the fundamentals for this thesis. It introduced the primary and secondary research objectives. It has given a concise account of methodological process used to shed light on the objectives investigated. This chapter has also provided background research and a rationale for conducting the current study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study investigates the use of SM by pay-TV industry in Ireland when marketing their services. This chapter is an inclusive review of all the previous literature available in the area of SMM, SM, Social Networking, Internet Marketing & Digital Marketing. This section then highlights evident gaps in these areas that warrant further investigation. Consequently this chapter broadly presents a review of literature dealing with the theoretical arguments within the aforementioned. A brief synopsis of the role of marketing and the internet is outlined along with internet marketing, digital marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. Following on from this the concept of social networking and social networking platforms will be reviewed. Best practices developed by academia and researchers in this field of marketing for these concepts will be investigated. The concept of social media marketing will then be introduced. Its implications for branding, promotional strategies adopted in line with SMM and current trends in relation to SMM. The following figure 2.1 specifies the topics of importance for this review. This chapter broadly presents a review of literature dealing with the theoretical arguments within the area of social media as an effective marketing tool.

Figure 2.1 Topics to investigate



As a result of the literature review conducted some gaps will be identified when researching the need for the study in the area of SMM. Ratchford (2015) outlines the

need for further research on marketing in the presence of social media, as SMM's implications still remain unclear. Firstly confusion over information of the relatively new area of social media marketing and social networking, information "overload" can be a hindrance and concerning for students and the general public. There are so many "buzz words" for the varying new concepts. Transparency and clarity is essential to guide the latter. These recent developments in marketing in terms of new technology, are unfolding so fast, in so unsettling and complex a manner, that it is very easy to see only thousands of different trees and get thoroughly lost in the wood (Mitchell, 2000). The speed of this change makes discussion around the topic of new technologies difficult as even new technology can become outdated quickly. The internet is also fast evolving. Marketing is no longer one dimensional; it is now a two-way process engaging a brand and an audience (Drury, 2007). Marketing within SM is not just about telling and giving a message, rather it is about receiving and exchanging perceptions and ideas (Drury, 2007).

This emerging new era for marketing enhances marketing's functions excellently; when the new developments are combined with traditional marketing methods and when utilised to their full potential this presents opportunities for businesses. SMM significance is recognised but more needs to be done to develop a clearer and simpler approach to researching this new marketing concept by adopting business and marketing models as was previously developed with Internet and Digital Marketing. Secondly training and constant up-skilling for staff is essential for the Irish pay-TV providers not familiar with how SMM works, expertise in the area must be heightened by these providers and investment in the area of social media marketing will enhance opportunities for these service providers that adopt savvy social media strategies.

2.2 The role of the Internet in Marketing

We have technology, finally, that for the first time in human history allows people to really maintain rich connections with much larger numbers of people

(Pierre Omidyar, founder eBay)

Theoretical research and discussion from early essays on the nature of interactivity in both marketing (Baltberg & Deighton, 1991; Rust & Oliver, 1994) and

communication (Dutton, 1996; Morris & Ogan, 1996; Neuman, 1991; Pavlik, 1996), through ethnographic work which investigates household-technology interactions (Venkatesh et al, 1996) to the work of Hoffman and Novak (1996) – the primary pioneers of Internet research in marketing – who proposed one of the first models of consumer behaviour in computer mediated environments (Barwise et al, 2000). What is apparent is that the Internet joins many of the features of existing media with new means of interactivity and addressability, as well as making it much easier for both companies and individuals to achieve global reach with their ideas and products. Its adaption by North America, Australia and the Nordic countries on a vast extent and its effects will be felt in almost every market and on almost every aspect of marketing (Barwise et al, 2000).

The Internet, as commercial environment, adopts some of the most substantial developments that took place in the marketing landscape of the last 40 years. The virtual marketplace illustrates the evolution process from the mass markets of the 1960s to the increasingly segmented, niche-dominated or even mass-customised, highly interactive and global markets of today (Constantinides 2002, p.59). The effect of these developments is that the focus of marketers has moved towards satisfying individual and personalised rather than collective needs while placing increasing emphasis on customer retention, customer service and relationship marketing. Such modifications follow closely the constant behaviour patterns of new generations of individualistic, better informed, wired and wealthier consumers (Constantinides 2002, p.59). Consumers increasingly demanding more control over the marketing process, value the personalised approach and prefer products and services that can be promptly adapted to their constantly changing needs (Hoffman et al, 2000).

The Internet and other digital media have transformed marketing (Chaffey et al, 2009). For customers, they give a much wider choice of products, services and prices from different suppliers and the means to choose and purchase items more readily (Mayer, 2009). Two primary forces that the Internet brings to marketing is suggested namely the Individual and Interactivity (Mohammed et al, 2003). They can influence key marketing levers and can be leveraged to create powerful relationships with customers.

The focus is on using marketing levers to vary the level of intensity that the consumer has with a website to build a relationship with the customer through four stages:

1. Awareness



2. Exploration/Expansion



3. Commitment



4. Dissolution

(Mohammed et al, 2003)

The advent of the Internet has heightened the capacity of individuals, and likely future customers, to interpersonally connect with one another, thereby making a forceful means through which product information can be quickly spread and products can be more cost-effectively adopted by the market (Trusov et al, 2009). As businesses begin to recognise the value of the Internet as a primary part of their communications platform, they are equally beginning to influence alternative marketing practices that are more cost-effective and more efficient at actively engaging with consumers, than traditional advertising channels (Castronovo and Huang 2012).

2.2.1 Internet Marketing

The Internet has transformed marketing and business since the first website (<http://info.cern.ch>) went live in 1991 (Chaffey et al, 2009, p. 3). Internet marketing, also referred to as online marketing or Emarketing, is the marketing of products or services over the Internet (Lluch, 2012).

Internet Marketing Tree

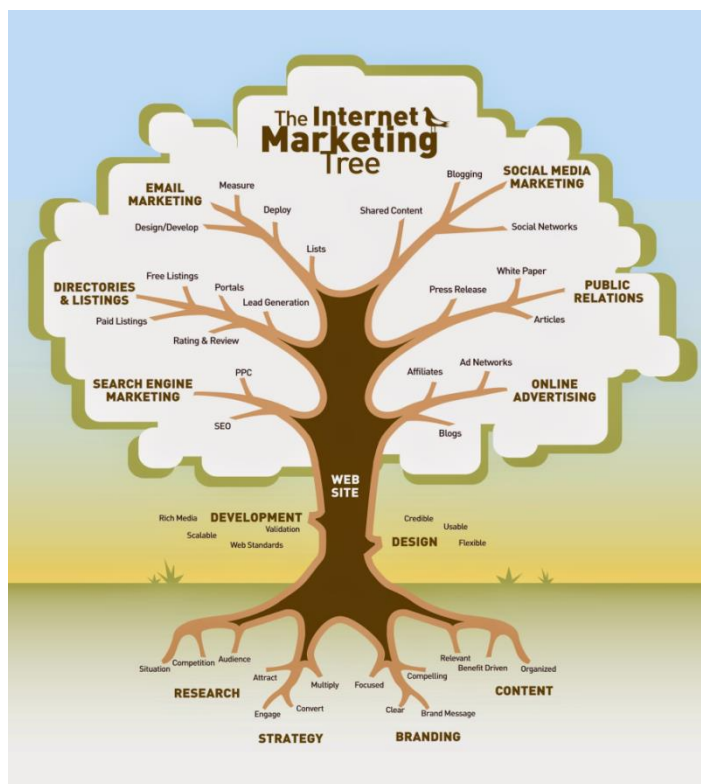
The Internet marketing tree concept created by US web designer and Internet marketing professional Robinson (and one of the founders of mainlinemedia (Philadelphia, United States)) 2009, see figure 2.2. It includes the branches: email marketing, social media marketing, public relations, online advertising, search engine

optimization, directories and listings. Robinson suggests the branches of the tree are a perfect symbol for the tremendous opportunities that exist for you to promote and advertise yourself,

Robinson (2009) goes on describe the concept describing the sturdy trunk is made up of good website development, design, research, strategy, branding and content. As the tree grows bigger and thicker over time, your website and web presence should be set up to do the same. The trunk is the centre of the tree, just like a good website should be at the heart of your company’s marketing (Robinson, 2009). Continuing on from the concept he goes on to say that initially, planting strong, deep roots in the form of research, strategy, branding and content. It is ‘tempting to jump ahead’ to the design and development phases of projects, but like a tree that has a weak root structure, marketing will not stand without a solid foundation to support it. The Internet marketing tree displays the priority and order essential to internet marketing when done correctly (Robinson, 2009).

Figure 2.2 The Internet Marketing Tree

Source: Robinson (2009)



The 4 Ps versus the 7 Ps

Traditional marketing has long considered the marketing mix or the 4 PS (product, price, place, promotion) more so for product type advertising these were first developed back in the 1960s by Jerome McCarthy. The Internet over twenty five years later altered that concept (ExtraDigital website, 2016). The original 4Ps have been since replaced by 7PS of effective digital marketing. These seven p's extend to the current 4Ps to include people, process and physical evidence (marketing-insights website, 2016). Marketing has diversified because audiences have changed. We have access to information now like never before, and for a lot of us, many key activities are conducted online. That's why online marketing has become such a popular topic.

Web- Marketing Mix

Another dimension or mix known as the Web-Marketing Mix (WMM) model 4S was developed by Dr. Efthymios Constantinides (a Dutch Assistant Professor of Digital Marketing in the University of Twente, Enschede, Faculty of Management and Governance/NIKOS Institute in the Netherlands and a researcher of the impact of “the Internet of things and neuromarketing”) in 2002. This model is a framework for the marketing activities management implemented through the Internet, known as Internet marketing (Constantinides, 2002).

Constantinides (2002) reviews the criticism on the traditional marketing management 4Ps mix model and categorises the main objections using the model as the building blocks of physical marketing. It argues that applying the traditional approach, based on the 4Ps concept, is also not a match in the case of virtual marketing and identifies two main confines of the framework in online environments: the hugely diminished function of the Ps and the lack of any strategic elements in the model. Next to identifying the critical factors of “Web marketing”, the paper argues that the basis for successful E-commerce is combining the virtual activities in the company's physical strategy, marketing plan and organisational processes. The four S elements of the Web-Marketing mix framework present a reliable and functional conceptual basis for designing, developing and commercialising the Business-to-Consumer online projects. The model was originally developed for educational purposes and has been tested and refined by means of field projects; two of them are presented as case studies in Constantinides paper.

Constantinides Web-Marketing Mix identifies four online marketing strategic, operational, organisational and technical critical factors: the Scope (strategic issues), the Site (operational issue), the Synergy (integration into the physical processes) and the System (technical issues). See table 2.1. The traditional role of the 4Ps in an online environment is quite different than their role in a physical market setting. The 4Ps are not the critical factors of the virtual marketing process but rather elements of the total Web experience. In this respect the effect of these factors on the consumer's decision making process is much more limited in the virtual environment than in the physical one. The 4Ps are operational parameters. Management of E-commerce activities based only on the 4P framework ignores the vigorous strategic elements of the online marketing process that are extremely important for survival in the volatile and fast-changing virtual markets. As an alternative option the paper proposes the 4S Web-Marketing Mix framework that allows the web marketer to solve the strategic and operational issues of the Internet marketing in a basic and efficient way.

The proposed framework highlights the requirement for a new approach towards online marketing, by fully integrating the virtual activities within the existing company strategy, marketing and operations. The practical objective of the paper is to help established or future E-Businesses to utilise the Internet technology and the online market potential in an efficient way, adding value to the overall company operations (Constantinides, 2002).

The 4 Ss of the Web-Marketing Mix

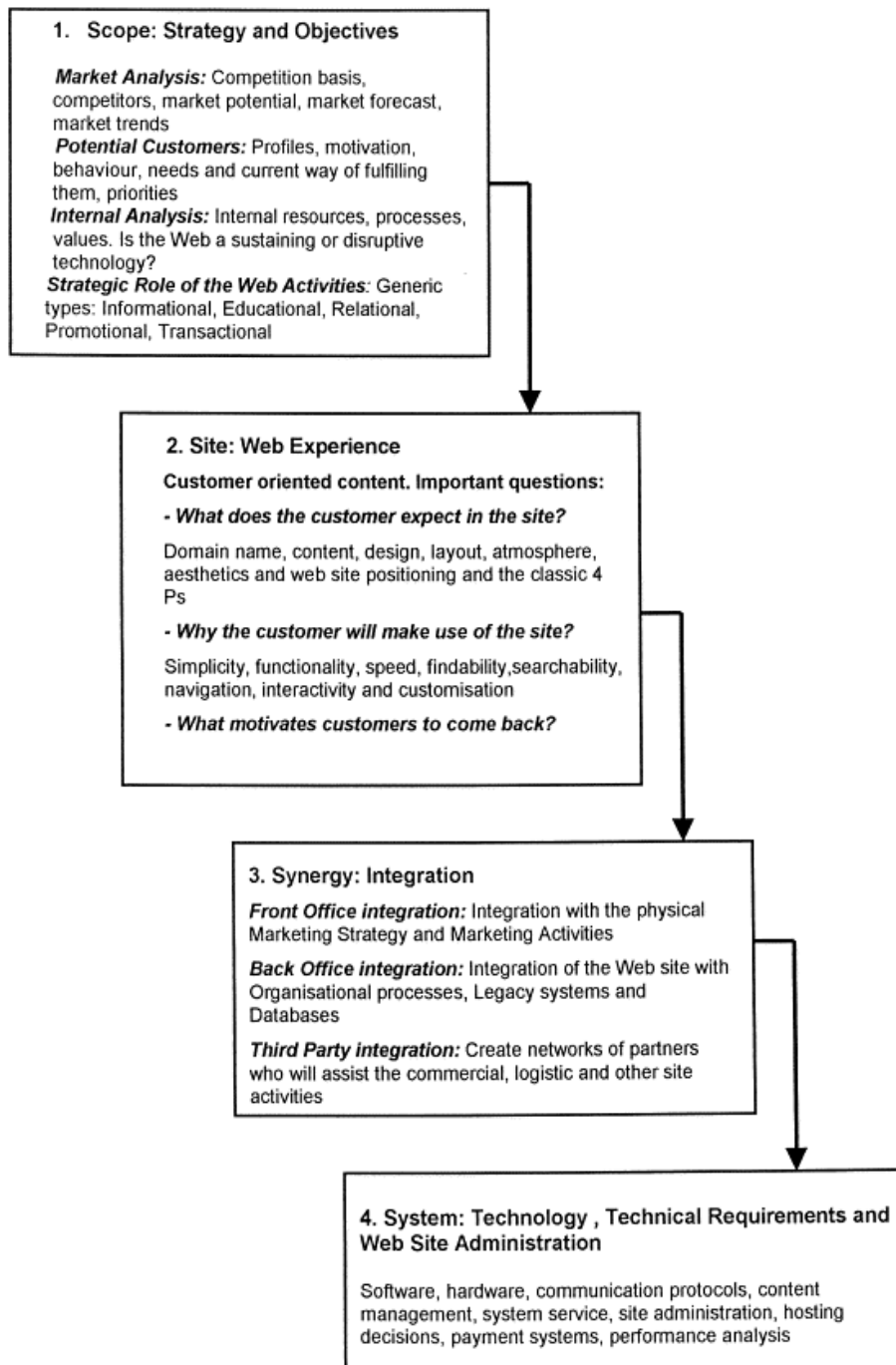


Figure 2.3 The four Ss of the Web-Marketing Mix

Source: Constantinide (2002)

Prevalent Internet marketing methods used by marketers

Search engine marketing: is the practice of promoting or advertising a web site through search engines, like Google, Yahoo. Most people will only search through 2 to 3 pages of search engine results before trying another search. In order to increase your presence on-line you need to firstly register with each search engine. This is free and tells them that you are now up and running. If you don't register they can still find you but it might take a bit longer.

Web 2.0 (Social Media): often referred to as “the second generation of Internet-based applications, in which users control communication and can directly engage consumers in the creative process by both producing and distributing information through collaborative writing, content sharing, social networking, social bookmarking, and syndication” (Thackeray, et al, 2015). Web 2.0 has a significant effect on consumer behaviour and has contributed to an unprecedented customer empowerment (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008)

Online advertising: Most online advertising formats (publishing and broadcasting) are of a display type according to classification presented by the Interactive Advertising Bureau. Expanding on common display ads like buttons, skyscraper and banners, other formats in the category include rich media and digital video (Hanafizadeh & Behboudi, 2012). The aforementioned go on to outline network and affiliation advertising formats, such as hypertexts placed inside the contents of a host website to direct the users toward the advertising website, form the second category. In network and affiliation advertising, a primary site of a networking business model gathers a group of websites that are alike in content and links them together through its exclusive network. The central website receives the ad from the promoter and sends it to the central server. These ads are then redirected to users according to the documented behaviour of the users on the sites which are members of this network.

Promotional email: Online promotions receive a high degree of participation due to the fact that the participants are already engaged in a two-way medium (Carmody, 2004). Email advertisers should strive to generate emails that are perceived useful (Brett et al, 2003). Promotional email is extremely cost-effective, targeted and measureable, it is a powerful marketing tool (Jenkins, 2008). Promotional email is a

way not only to communicate but also to communicate directly with prospective customers (Roberts & Zahay, 2013).

Ecommerce: is a method in which products and services are sold to the consumer directly, without employing any intermediary agency (Daniels, 2013). Generally, ecommerce websites have a typical layout. Ecommerce websites should have a catalogue of the products on their website, with detailed descriptions of all these products. Next they will have a shopping cart. You can select the products and they enter the shopping cart. The shopping cart function is generally used when there is more than one product on the website. When the online shopper is checking out, they are prompted to pay for your purchases through a variety of methods (Daniels, 2013).

Affiliate Marketing: affiliate marketing is not directly selling of any goods or services. All an affiliate marketer does is to promote a particular link to a website, blog or another similar place that they may own on the Internet, and earn through the clicks that they are able to get from visitors (Daniels, 2013).

2.2.2 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing entails applying technologies which form online channels to market, that's Web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless and digital TV. To support marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle (Chaffey, 2005). The Internet – began moving out of the realm of technicians and early adopters to become a valuable business and communication tool for the masses (Ryan and Jones, 2009). The era of digital marketing was born.

A strategic approach is advisable when businesses are devising and adopting a digital marketing strategy. This may be in the form of the SOSTAC (situation analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions and control) a planning framework applied to digital Internet marketing strategy development (Smith and Taylor, 2004). See Figure 2.4 below.

A Strategic Approach

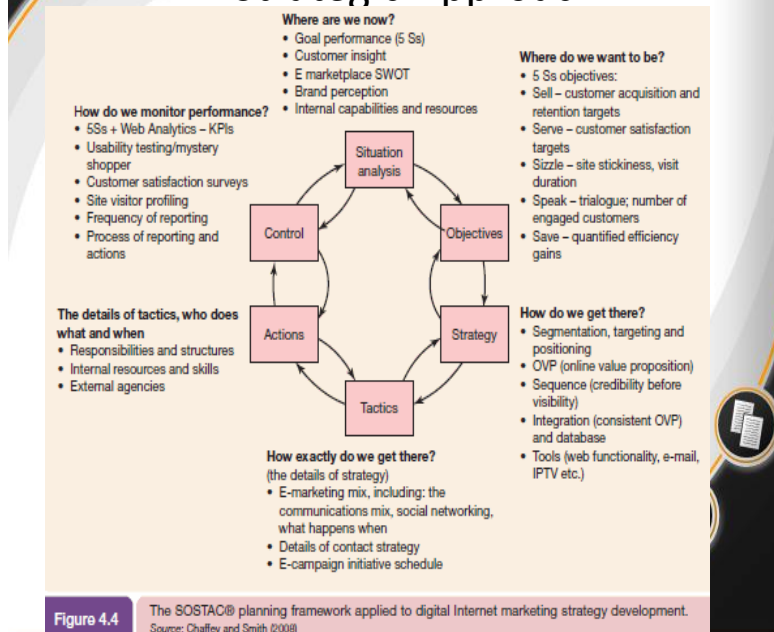


Figure 2.4 SOSTAC planning framework

Source: Smith & Taylor (2004)

The RACE planning system follows on from SOSTAC. See figure 2.5 below.



Figure 2.5 RACE planning system

Source: Thurner & Chaffey (2013)

Other models worth mentioning as well like “Growth strategy mix” created by Ansoff (1960s). This matrix can be used to identify alternative growth strategies Also the recent paper titled “The big five” (Edelman & Heller, 2015). The aforementioned authors identified five attributes of effective marketing operations. These are: 1) Customer insights 2) Customer experience 3) Key performance indicators and measurement 4) Governance and process 5) Marketing technology and infrastructure.

2.2.2.1 Overview of the SOSTAC and RACE models

Both of these planning frameworks applied to digital Internet marketing strategy development are well known and used by companies worldwide (Thurner & Chaffey, 2013). SOSTAC stands for: Situation – where are we now? Objectives – where do we want to be? Strategy – how do we get there? Tactics – how exactly to we get there? Action – what is our plan? Control – how do we get there? Each of these elements will now be outlined in detail.

Situational analysis: most companies begin the planning process by establishing their mission or scope. Attitudes and expectations within the organisation with regard to the business that the organisation is in, or how the organisation scores against competition and how it fits into its environment (O’Malley et al., 1999). The Internet enables the tracking of actual behaviour that has revolutionised customer profiling (Egan, 2011). Analysts have commonly used versions of PESTL (macro-environmental issues: political, economic, sociological, technological, legal) (Aguilar, 1967). SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) (Humphrey, 1960) and competitive market models to develop such analyse

Objectives: Objectives provide direction for an organisation. They are as outlined earlier “where we want to be” of any business. They should be SMART (strategic, measurable, actionable, realistic and timely) (Doran, 1981). Traditionally, marketing objectives are derived business objectives (Keith, 2016). The development of technologies that can interrogate databases and establish objectives from this information has led to the incorporation of this approach to objective setting into the existing model. To ensure that all employees in the organisation are working on the

same agenda, there is a need for them to be aware of top-level and marketing objectives (Egan, 2011).

Strategies: Marketing strategies may include sub-strategies (for example media strategy, creative strategy, promotional strategy). Keep the customer at the core of the planning and avoid strategies that promote behaviours positive from the bottom line but destructive to customer relationships (Young, 2006).

Tactics: refer to the operational element short term. The choice may be between different media (including the Internet) or techniques (for example direct marketing). The Internet in this case is conveyed as a tactical tool. More so for its influence on business habits in general. It may promote different approaches but it is just another media channel. In the same way, direct marketing and customer relationship management are tactical responses to company development (Egan, 2011).

Action: Action plans provide the means by which an organisation's ideas are turned into reality by giving a structure and format through which they can be implemented (O'Malley et al, 1999).

Control: The control part involves setting clear evaluation criteria. It may also involve testing prior to full execution. Testing differs from research in that it is actual response as opposed to forecast response. In this regard technology and the Internet have an important role to play in the control element of any marketing plan (Egan, 2011).

The RACE framework assists marketers in reviewing their key online marketing tactics that need to be covered in order to accomplish a successful plan. RACE covers the whole marketing funnel from plan to reach to act to convert to engage (Chaffey, 2010). In addition it conveys important key performance indicators (KPIs) to help measure strategies. Reach involves awareness and visits to website, unique visitors, searches percentage brand are examples. Act includes interaction and leads involving page views and visits, percentage conversion to lead for example. Convert covers sales and profits in terms of sales value, average order value and percentage conversion to sale. Engage entails loyalty and advocacy - KPIs include percentage of active customers and customer conversion, percentage of existing sale value and brand mentions (Chaffey, 2010).

It is important to understand the aforementioned models discussed focus on all aspects of Digital Marketing. A digital footprint is not just about website engagement. It's also about the footprint on social networks, other media channels and how to manage content (Sotomayor, 2014). The digitised marketplace, the marketing machine must be both strategic and tactical, relying upon the tactical aspects of the marketing mix (4Ps) is insufficient for long-term success (Crittenden, 2005).

2.2.3 Word-of-mouth marketing

'Happy customers are your best advertisers' (Sernovitz 2006, p.5). Sernovitz (2006) defined word of mouth marketing (WOM) in parts a to c. a) giving people a reason to talk about you and b) making it easier for the conversation to happen its c) to c marketing – when a consumer tells a consumer about you. Really, it's b to c to c. When it comes out of the mouth of a marketer, its marketing. When a 'real' person repeats it, its WOM. Consumers have always appreciated valued opinions expressed directly to them. Marketers may spend millions of dollars on highly imaginative advertising campaigns, yet often what really makes up a consumer's mind is not only simple but also free: a word-of mouth recommendation from a trusted source (Sernovitz, 2006). As consumers overwhelmed by product choices tune out the ever-growing bombardment of traditional marketing, WOM cuts through the noise quickly and effectively (Bughin et al, 2010). Due to the mutual and social feature of social media, marketing scholars have recommended further research to explore the potential of social media as an emerging platform for customer-to-customer interaction, generally known as WOM (Ratchford, 2015).

According to Bugin et al (2010) as online communities increase in size, number, and character, marketers have come to recognise WOMs growing importance. However a research article Kimmel and Kitchen (2014) suggests that WOM has become the focus of increased interest among marketing practitioners and consumers. But they argue the promises of WOM marketing are often oversold and a number of allegations about the nature of WOM, its dynamics, antecedents and consequences at times have been misstated in mass-mediated articles and books on the topic.

More recently research by Keller and Fay (2016), studies conducted by Fay in 2006 in the US and the UK in 2011 believe there are some definite and regular findings about influencers. The research conducted proves that 'every-day people' have significant

value to marketers. They should be the primary focus to any influencer marketing programme due to the strength of their relationships among the people they impact upon and because all consumers regardless of age, socio-economic status or other key demographics all know such people and are influenced by their recommendations. Since they are important to consumers, they should be important to marketers also (Keller & Fay, 2016).

2.3 Social Networking

The essence of the current study is an exploration of the various SM platforms that the chosen Irish pay-TV providers researched in the study use to promote their service.

El Ouiridi et al. (2015) describe social media tools as:

Online tools that allow users to share content, collaborate, and build networks and communities, with the possibility of reaching and involving large audiences.

El Ouiridi et al. (2015)

Carr and Hayes (2015) also offer their definition:

Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others.

Carr & Hayes. (2015)

People use social networks to exchange information and ideas and socialise (Solmon et al, 2013). Solmon et al (2013) elaborate on the concept of ‘The digital native: Living a social [media] life’. Solmon et al (2013) reported that the impact of the digital revolution as one of the major influences on consumer behaviour. Through blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, online discussions, social networks, peer review sites and other online media, businesses have the potential to foster a much more productive and meaningful relationship with their customers, to gain powerful insight into their perceptions of businesses products, services and brand, and allow them to contribute and collaborate in businesses in ways that were never possible before (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Boyd and Ellison (2007) explore the term “social networking

sites” as it appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. They chose not to employ the term “networking” for two reasons: emphasis and scope. “Networking” emphasises relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between “latent ties” (Haythornthwaite, 2005) who share some offline connection. On many of the large SNSs, participants are not necessarily “networking” or looking to meet new people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network. To emphasise this articulated social network as a critical organising feature of these sites, Boyd and Ellison (2007) label them “social network sites.”

Marketers use social networking for increasing brand recognition and loyalty (forbes.com website, 2014). Promotional campaigns ran by the pay-TV companies in this study should engage customers. Some of the advantages of social networking include being one of the main ways the world today work; it allows users to share information, photos and videos. It is usually free and it is always low cost. It allows users to express themselves. It also allows users to make and keep connections and contacts (Sharma, 2011). Disadvantages of social networking include: many people put too much personal information on their profiles, it can be dangerous if it is misused, the website often has ownership over everything the user posts. It can become another outlet for harassment and bullying (cyber-bullying) (Wadhvani, 2011).

Social networks are an exciting development for sales reps (Giamanco & Gregoire, 2012). The aforementioned discuss how sales representatives can utilise with little managerial discipline social network platforms to win more business. The authors go on to talk about the power of Twitter as a social network and no aspect of business is

more social than selling. The article highlights that what is surprising is that most sales managers are proving slow to recognise social media's potential

(take into account that this article was published in 2012). Noted in the article a survey of B2B marketers by BtoB magazine, only 5% said that social media marketing was a 'fairly mature and well optimised' as part of their mix. A clear majority (58%) admitted to being 'in early stages', and 17% said they didn't use social media at all.

The authors outline that at the time there are very few sales training courses that cover social media use. Some companies forbid their employees to use social networks on company time. Of course there are risks, but as customers increasingly engage with social media, sitting on the sidelines is the greatest risk of all. The authors go on to say 'and with early adopters beginning to book their wins and take their hits, the way to venture wisely is becoming clear'. Compare these findings to a recent article in BtoB marketing magazine (2016) which finds that social selling is so popular with B2B companies because 90% of decision makers never answer a cold call, rendering the whole process a waste of their time. Yet 75% of B2B buyers use social media in their decision making process – making social media a clear platform for engaging with those hard-to-reach potential customers.

B to B marketing magazine (2016) also reports findings from social selling where most B2B brands go wrong by connecting with their target audience too late in the buying process. It continues to outline that currently business decision makers can be up to 60% along the decision-making journey before engaging a vendor, meaning it's critical for salespeople and brands to make themselves known within the initial part of the process. The 'golden rules' of social selling are: establish a strong professional brand, find the right contacts and pick your moment. The article features Santander as a great example of a company that is social selling really well. Social selling has helped the team work towards a 600% increase in their revenue goals in the past year, seeing a 171X return on investment – demonstrating how much easier it can be to identify and initiate contact with prospective customers through social media than the traditional, ineffective methods of cold-calling or constantly sending unsolicited emails. Trust and goodwill are the basis of social networking these fundamental notions need to be adhered to (Neti, 2011). It is perhaps the only marketing platform

that encourages fool proof communication and accountability among sellers as well as consumers (Neti, 2011).

2.3.1 Social Networking platforms

There are many social networking platforms available, but for the purpose of this study the seven most prevalent will be discussed: Blogs, microblogs: Twitter. Social networks: Facebook and LinkedIn. Media sharing sites: You-Tube, Flickr and Instagram.

Twitter

In 2006, the free social networking site Twitter was founded by Jack Dorsey. Twitter joins short message service (SMS), with a way to create social groups. A person can send information to their followers and receive information from individuals or organizations that person has chosen to follow (Malik, 2009; Dorsey & Enge, 2007). There are more than 100 million registered Twitter users (Rosen, 2010).

Facebook

Facebook.com was founded on February 4, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes (Carlson, 2010). Facebook started as a social network for American universities but in September 2006 the network was extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered email address. The site remains free to join and makes a profit through advertising revenue (Cohen-Almagor, 2011). Facebook users spend more than 500 billion minutes a month on the site, share more than 25 billion pieces of content each month (news stories, blog posts, photos, event sharing), and each of them, on average, creates 70 pieces of content a month (Rosen, 2010; Arthur & Kiss, 2010; Kirkpatrick 2010; Cohen-Almagor, R, 2011). At the end of June 2016 Facebook had 1.71 billion monthly active users (Statista.com website, 2016). According to the Virgin Media Digital Insights Report (2016) 43% of people have posted comment or dialogued on facebook (based on an online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 adults throughout the Republic of Ireland exploring their experiences, behaviours and intentions in relation to the digital future).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking service (LinkedIn website, 2016). It was founded in December 2002, and launched in May 2003, it is mainly used for professional networking (Lops et al, 2011). According to LinkedIn's website it connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. With more than 400 million members worldwide, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the Internet (LinkedIn website, 2016).

You Tube

In 2005, three former employees of Paypal (an American company operating a worldwide online payments system), Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim created a video file sharing website called YouTube (Internet Growth Statistics website, 2016). YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos (YouTube website, 2017). In 2006, Google (American multinational technology company/Internet search engine) bought YouTube for \$1.65 billion (Lidsky, 2010).

Flickr

Flickr was launched in 2004 and acquired by Yahoo (an American multinational technology company) in 2005, it is an online photo management and sharing application (Cha et al, 2009). It allows you to upload, access, organise, edit and share your photos from any device, from anywhere in the world. It boasts almost 90 million users (event planning blog by cvent, 2016).

Instagram

Instagram is the other well known social media channel for posting and accessing photos. By contrast, Instagram is an Android app-based platform on which users tend to capture photos on their smart phones and post them "as is" directly on Instagram. Instagram was launched in 2010 (Hu et al, 2014). The average daily users are 7.3 billion (Expanded Ramblings website, 2016). On average, 60 million photos are posted daily (social pilot blog, 2016). Its main advantage is the ability to snap photos, post them directly on Instagram and immediately share them on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. The disadvantage of Instagram is that it must be

used by downloading the app. through the iTunes store. It can't be accessed directly from a computer desktop (there are some apps. that make this possible) (Instagram website, 2016).

Businesses that choose not to adapt to the new culture of social networking will be at an increasing disadvantage, as their customers slowly build personal relationships with their competitors (Gordhamer, 2009). Currently we are in an age of open communication, engaged dialogue, and transparency, and business success may now have less to do with the size of advertising budgets, but on the quality of interactions with customers (Gordhamer, 2009). Companies like Dell, for example, have fully embraced multiple channels of support. Their community site lists all the ways customers can connect with them through Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, forums, blogs, email, and more. Dell wants people to be able to connect with them through whatever channel is most comfortable. Rather than expect customers to communicate through the companies chosen means, allow them to do so through their chosen means (Gordhamer, 2009).

2.4 Social Media Marketing

Tuten & Solomon (2015) define 'Social media marketing (SMM) is the utilisation of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have a value for an organisations stakeholders'. The goal of SMM is to create content that users will share with their social network to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. One of the key components of SMM is social media optimization (SMO) (Safko, 2010). Social media (SM) have become the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organisations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility' (Russell-Bennett et al, 2015). Social media is a vital element for the online business (Krishnan, 2011).

Global companies are embracing SMM as a potential marketing platform, utilised them with innovations to heighten their advertising campaign with SMM. (Neti,

2011). Like search engine optimization (SEO), SMO is a strategy for drawing new and unique visitors to a website. The SMM infographic (Bosomworth, 2015) depicts what types of social sites businesses should consider. The radar helps focus attention and resources on the sites appearing towards its centre, as these sites are generally agreed on as the most important within business (Bosomworth, 2015). See figure 2.6. The radar helps show businesses the types of social sites they can consider. SMM still represents a key opportunity for most businesses despite the hype that's only been intensifying since 2012 (Bosomworth, 2015).

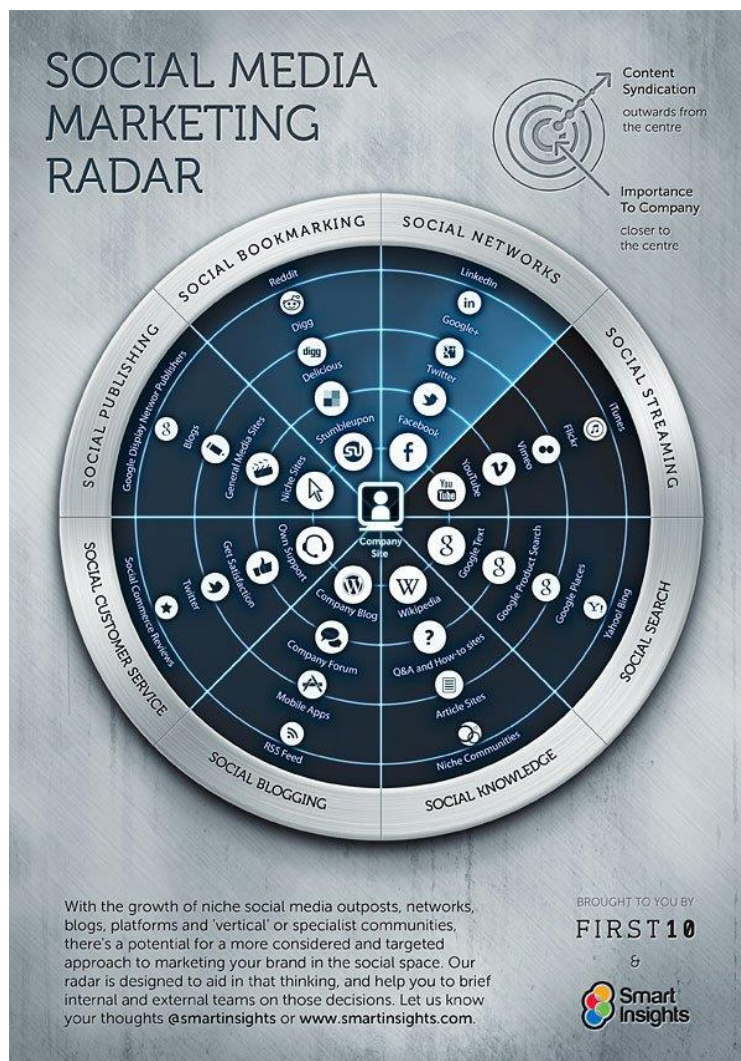


Figure 2.6 SMM infographic

Source: Bosomworth (2015)

2.4.1 Advantages of SMM

The overall impact of engaging, interacting, listening and collaborating with customers as part of the SMM process is to build more foundations and enriched relationships with customers. By creating these relationships with customers, companies can increase loyalty, encourage advocacy and increase sales (Castronovo and Huang, 2012, Eagleman, 2013, Erragcha and Romdhane, 2014). Marketing potential and the impact of social media activities on the customer's decision making process is also largely influenced by the closeness of relationship. Good relationships are essential for successful SMM (Brown et al., 2007). Loyal fans not only become influential customer advocates but also increase sales and improve profitability if used correctly in social media (Verheyden and Goeman, 2013). SM creates an affinity and connection between customers and companies and these connections equate to purchase intention and increased sales (Baer, 2013). SMM is a strategic and methodical process to establish the company's influence, reputation and brand within communities of potential customer's, readers and supporters (Neti, 2011).

SMM provides an opportunity to marketers to not only present products/services to customers but also to listen to customers' grievances and suggestions. It makes it easy for marketers to identify various peer groups or influencers among various groups, who in turn can become brand ambassadors and help in the growth of a brand. It is done at almost zero cost as most social networking sites are free (Neti, 2011). SM is also increasingly becoming an ingrained aspect of political campaigns, public relations and brand management. SM's reach is global. Companies can make their mark if they do it quickly using social networking sites. Consumer satisfaction is also at the heart of SMM, it is no longer about selling but about interacting and learning from the customers. Companies can use social media marketing to identify customers, listen to their feedback and use them to improve and innovate on products and services (Neti, 2011).

Social technologies are being used in many ways see below an infographic below:

Figure 2.7

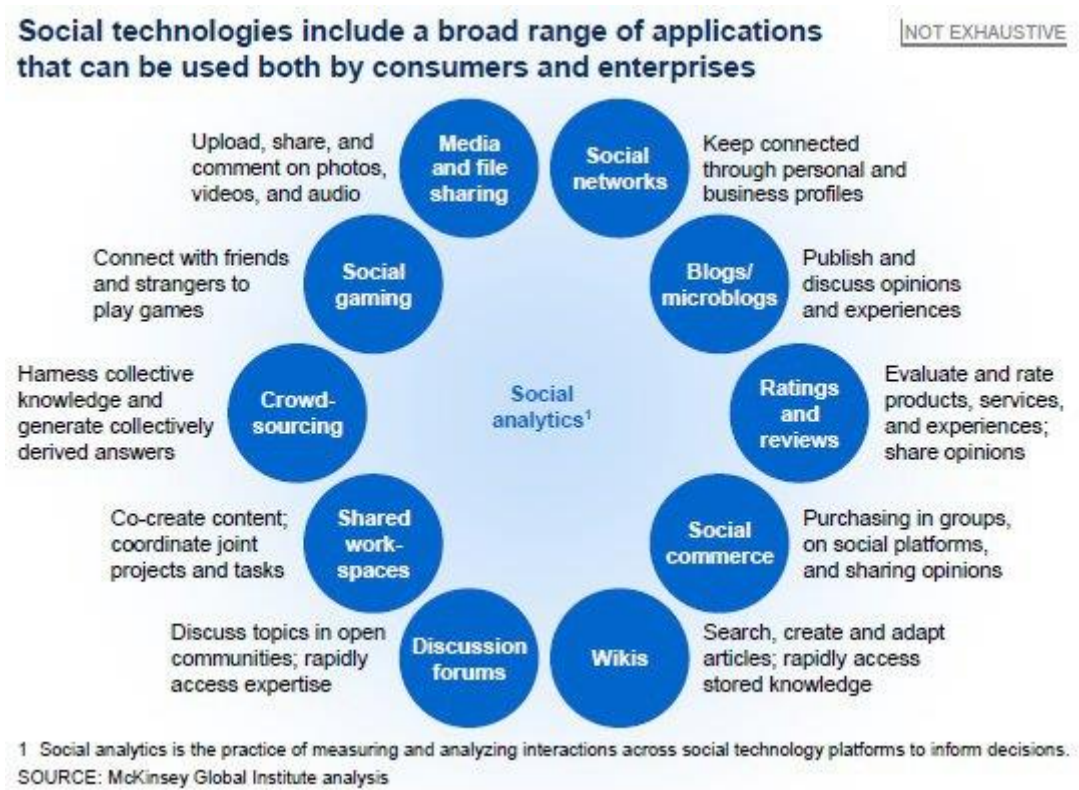


Figure 2.7 Social Technologies infographic **Source: McKinsey (2012)**

In a US report on the social economy ‘social technologies’ are defined as the products and services that enable social interactions in the digital realm and therefore allow people to connect and interact virtually (McKinsey, 2012). These include creating a message to be communicated – a tweet or a blog, adding content to what is already online or adding information about content – ‘liking’ a piece of content (McKinsey, 2012). The Web’s growth in reach and capability and as a channel for interaction set the stage for the explosive growth of social technologies (McKinsey, 2012). Among the key findings of the aforementioned report include the speed and scale of adoption of social technologies by consumers has exceeded that of previous technologies. Several distinct properties of social technologies make them uniquely powerful enablers of value creation. Social technologies can empower individuals to form communities of interest around specific issues or causes, providing societal benefits. This report also identified ten value ‘levers’ or techniques, that enterprises use to generate value from social technologies. These tactics fall into four segments

of the value chain: product development, operations and distribution, marketing and sales and customer service.

2.4.2 SMMs implication's for branding

Consumers create more content about your brand than you ever could (Travis, 2012). Rossiter and Percy (1987) describe brand awareness as being essential for the communications process to occur as it precedes all other steps in the process. Brand attitude can be formed and intention to buy cannot occur unless brand awareness has occurred (Rossiter & Percy 1987; Rossiter et al. 1991). Brands can reach people in three ways on Facebook (GFK, 2012). Number one organic reach – content in news feed or on page. Number two paid reach – ads and sponsored stories. Number three Viral reach – seeing a story about the page from a friend: liking, commenting, sharing. Opportunities for businesses to engage and use Facebook will show success (North & Knable, 2012).

Online brand communities can bring customers closer to a brand, generate “buzz” and enhance brand loyalty (Adjei et al, 2012). The aforementioned writers explored the popularity of online brand communities, post-purchase information and communications through online brand communities. For many businesses, using SM to market their brand has been a challenge (Chatterjee, 2014). Chatterjee (2014) goes on to say in his blog that in recent years the public has not only grown know-how to established marketing techniques employed by companies, but have almost become immune to these tactics. Ads, leaflets, direct mail and email just don't have the same impact as they used to have. He continues to discuss with this awareness increasing amongst target audiences, companies have to come up with new ways to make an impression and differentiate themselves from the competition. By using SM, brands have the chance to create a strong media presence by interacting with customers online. Social tools can also help to strengthen brand perception by communicating core values to a wider audience. As a result of this the opportunity is there to start conversations, grow business partnerships and expand the online community to win new followers and potential customers.

Gronlund (2013) believes we are living in an age of information overload. He goes to elaborate by discussing how new technology has advanced so much that people are

constantly inundated with communication messages wherever they go and the number of options to consider for any purchase decision can be overpowering. Branding is more about the customer and how to develop a meaningful relationship with the customer, and how to develop a meaningful relationship with the customer – what is often called the ‘customer experience’. ‘The purpose of business is not to make money; it is to create a customer and to satisfy that customer’, the famous business philosopher and author named Peter Drucker created this statement.

According to Holt (2016) ‘Brand building has become a vexing challenge’. From the year 2000 onwards most companies were heralding the arrival of a new golden age of branding. Creative agencies were hired and armies of technologists to insert brands throughout the digital universe. However, despite this Holt argues that such efforts have had very little payoff. He continues to discuss the fact that as a central feature of their digital strategy, companies made huge bets on what is often called branded content. He continues to elaborate by explaining that the thinking of companies went like this: social media would allow your company to leapfrog traditional media and forge relationships with them in real time; your brand would become a hub for a community of consumers. He believes businesses have invested billions pursuing this vision yet few brands have generated meaningful consumer interest online. In fact, social media seems to have made brands less significant and he explores the reasons why has this gone wrong.

Holt suggests that brands succeed when they break through in culture. Branding is a set of techniques designed to generate cultural relevance. Digital technologies have not only created potent new social networks but drastically altered how culture works. He explains the rise of crowdculture, digital crowds now serve as very effective and prolific innovators of culture. Crowdculture changes the rules of branding which techniques work and which do not. If Marketing professionals understand crowdculture, then, they can figure out why branded-content strategies have fallen flat and what alternative branding methods are empowered by social media. He continues to elaborate the concept of crowdculture by adding social media binds together communities that once were geographically cut off, greatly increasing the pace and strength of collaboration. As a result of these communities are now more densely networked their cultural influence has become direct and substantial. These new

crowdcultures come in two flavours: subcultures, which develop new ideologies and practices and art worlds which break new ground in entertainment.

A study conducted on SM in Turkey showed that brand loyalty of customers is positively affected when the brand offers advantageous campaigns, offers relevant content and offers popular content (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Brands are at the heart of marketing and business strategy. Brand loyalty is an essential concept of strategic marketing and is generally recognised as an intangible asset (Wernerfelt, 1991, p. 229). ‘Fly fearless’ is the mantra of the marketing team behind Cadbury Dairy Milk and their success is evident in their double-digit growth (O’Toole, 2015). Putting Irish sporting pundits Eamon Dunphy and John Giles as the face of the biggest chocolate brand in Ireland certainly qualifies as fearless – but it absolutely paid off for the company. It generated over 1.5m YouTube views and massive PR, with the TV ad being played in full on national radio stations and getting picked up in the UK by the BBC and the Guardian. As previously stated the brand had double-digit growth over the period.

The next frontier for brands in social media marketing lies in the so-called dark social space. (McGee, 2016). So –called ‘dark social’ platforms like WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Viber and Kwik have marketers excited at the prospect of tapping into what may be the last frontier in the world of social media marketing (McGee, 2016). Dark social refers to the social sharing of content and conversations that occur outside of platforms like Facebook and Twitter. By its very nature, dark social is proving tricky to measure – as every engagement, conversation and piece of content that is shared is done so in private, away from the prying eyes of the wider online community. If brands get it right they could build legions or brand advocates and lay the field work for whole new territory for marketers to explore (McGee, 2016). For it to work, however, consumers will need to opt-in, by allowing a brand be their ‘friend’. Many would argue that there is also something essentially intrusive about this concept. Even as a one-to-one conversation between a brand and a consumer may indeed be the ultimate winning goal for many marketers, is this imminent assault on the dark social space just one step too far? Given the industry’s experience with ad blocking to date, brands need to tread very carefully (McGee, 2016).

2.4.3 SMM versus traditional marketing methods

Whereas marketing with traditional media like newspapers, television and news websites was about delivering a message, marketing with SM is about building a relationship and conversation with your audience (Drury, 2007). SMM helps in generating exposure to businesses, increasing traffic/subscribers, building new business partnerships, rise in search engine rankings, generating qualified leads due to better lead generation efforts, selling more products and services, reduction in overall marketing expenses (Neti, 2011). Marketing as a discipline and management activity has been transformed in the past decade due to factors such as market globalisation, developments in Information Communication Technology (ICT); the internet and SM (McGrath and O'Connor, 2015). SM has perhaps had the most significant impact on marketing practice as it has fundamentally changed how we communicate with each other (Constantinides, 2014).

The first step in getting acquainted in SMM is in learning how to engage with and interact with new and existing customers on every available touch point of social media with the aim of creating communities of like-minded and loyal customers (Taneja and Toombs, 2014). SM have provided marketers tools to reach to their respective targets with new and efficient ways of not only approaching their target markets, but also, to encourage word-mouth communication and support among online communities by increasing consumers' interest in the company (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

Engaging customers today requires commitment from the entire company – and a redefined marketing organisation (French et al. 2011). French et al. (2011) explore how marketing has evolved well over the last decade (from the year 2000). How traditional marketing is losing momentum amongst consumers: more and more consumers are using digital video recorders to fast-forward through TV commercials and are consuming video content on websites such as YouTube and on mobile devices. Billboards alongside train lines and bus routes struggle to capture the attention of people absorbed by the screens of their smartphone. Meanwhile, today's more empowered, critical, demanding, and price-sensitive customers are turning in ever-growing numbers to social networks, blogs, online review forums, and other channels to quench their thirst for objective advice about products and to identify brands that seem to care about forming relationships with them. (French et al, 2011)

In this new era of social media, companies are asked to be increasingly transparent and personal. Of course, traditional advertising and press releases will still have their place, but social sites such as Twitter and Facebook allow a whole new type of communication to take place that has previously been unknown to most businesses (Gordhamer, 2009). Possibly more important for businesses than getting a large number of followers on social media sites, is following through on the opportunity to perhaps build more genuine and direct connections with their customers. The traditional marketing methods that were used to promote a business, launch a new product or target new customers are no longer sustainable today (Geho and Dangelo, 2012). SMM has changed the functions of traditional marketing which has led the need to create new business models (Scheid et al, 2012). Advertising, an essential component in the marketing of any business, has been around for a long time. The 20th century saw the dawn of a new advertising age, with the advent of radio offering a new medium through which advertisers could reach out to prospective clients. Then came television, which shifted the advertising world yet again. The global spend on television advertising is estimated to hit \$200bn this year (Dempsey, 2016).

In 2016 there was a growing debate that was gathering momentum about the effectiveness of print advertising and whether or not it was a lot more effective than people had given it credit for (McGee, 2016). That debate centred on the pace of growth in digital advertising was starting to slow down in many markets where the British multinational advertising and public relations company Wire and Plastic Products operates. There was also a deluge of negative sentiment surrounding ad blocking and ad fraud within the online industry. Rumours of print's demise McGee discusses were slightly over exaggerated and print's effectiveness in delivering sales, brand awareness and engagement for advertisers remains important. Newspaper publishers haven't been very good at communicating this message to the marketing community. This McGee (2016) goes on to say may have to do with their attempts to build an audience around their core digital offering while chasing advocates and readers from social channels. The reality is that the core print product is still the 'bread and butter' of most news organisations and print advertising revenues still account for a share of overall advertising revenues which in 2016 are likely to be in the region of €162m (in Ireland).

New research on print's effectiveness in Ireland called *The Book of Evidence*, was undertaken by Independent News and Media and carried out by Amárach Research and Ignite Research as a part of a two-pronged approach to understand Irish newspaper readers and to assess the effectiveness of newspaper advertising for key sectors. The findings of the research were conveyed as good news for the industry and will surprise many of the digital 'naysayers within adland who have written press advertising off' (McGee, 2016). Over 13,000 face-to-face interviews took place at the point-of-purchase over a twelve month period, making it the biggest survey of its kind ever undertaken in Ireland. Also to the Amárach Research, which focused on those who buy newspapers on a daily or weekly basis, an econometric study, carried out by Ignite Research, dealt with some of the broader issues like the return on investment and the relationship between print and online. Arguably one of the most significant findings contained within *The Book of Evidence*, was that twenty five percent of all sales driven by advertising across other channels are driven by print advertising according to Ignite's econometric research. If ever a figure was needed to demonstrate print's capabilities to brands, this is it (McGee, 2016). The research also found that print advertising was 1.5 times more effective than radio when it came to delivering return on investment for these retailers. This research is both timely and significant but the industry needs to do a lot more according to McGee.

The downward trends in viewed ad spots is in line with recent research from Comreg (Irish statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications sector and the postal sector), which showed that a majority of Netflix subscribers have switched off scheduled television or reduced their viewing (Comreg, 2016).

According to the regulator, 14pc of those who have subscribed to online paid TV services have stopped watching live or scheduled television, while 43pc say that it has caused them to watch less live or scheduled TV. According to the international measurement company Nielsen, YouTube on mobile devices is seen by more 18 to 49-year-olds than any single television service (Weckler, 2016). Nielsen, which also powers Ireland's TAM ratings, has released several pieces of research showing that TV audiences are declining relative to phones, tablets, computers and 'smart' video appliances (Nielsen, 2016). 'But phones are the big draw', according to Ooyala (company that provides online video technology products and services and one of

RTE's video partners). In late 2015, Ooyala (research company, 2015) released figures showing that Ireland has the highest mobile video viewing figures in the world. In addition figures from the Dublin-based analytics firm Statcounter show that Irish people use their smartphones to get content more than almost any other western country, with a third of all web access here now coming from our handsets (Weckler, 2016).

A new PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report in June 2016 said that television advertising in the US is about to be 'overtaken by digital advertising for the first time'. Its five-year outlook report on the entertainment and media sector says that the days of a 'single screen dominating video content are now over' (PWC, 2016). Here in Ireland traditional TV is still a huge draw especially when it comes to the likes of live sports and current affairs (Core Media, 2016). Core Media is one of Ireland's largest media communications report it released its outlook for 2016 report in January 2016 where it found that the average viewer now watches over three-and-a-half hours of content on the 'old school' TV set on a daily basis.

The world dominated by technology, digital marketing and social media is having a significant impact on how we act as a society and how we act as consumers and how we do business. Any business that does not adapt to the new era of marketing and communications is in the danger of losing out (Faulkner, 2013). The benefits of digital marketing versus traditional marketing are well researched by both academic and marketing professionals over the last twenty years. Here is a synopsis of the most commonly documented. At a reduced cost businesses can develop its online marketing strategy for very little cost and can potentially replace costly advertising channels such as yellow pages, television, radio and magazine (Faulkner, 2013). Digital marketing is simple to measure unlike traditional methods you can see in real time what is or is not working for a business online and business can adapt very quickly to improve their results (Ryan and Jones, 2009).

Internet media can support a two-way interaction between website and the users. The visitors can control and influence the manner in which they utilise the site, while traditional marketing is predominantly a one-way system (Chan et al., 2001). With the targeting dimension of marketing in traditional marketing is market segmentation where in social media marketing it identifies and responds to specific customer

behaviours and preferences (Perry and Schneider, 2013). Online social behaviour has transformed how people communicate and interact, creating new opportunities and challenges for businesses (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014). SMM has changed the functions of traditional marketing which has led the need to create new business models (Scheid, Vaillant and De Montaigne, 2012).

2.4.4 Adoption of promotional strategies

In 2011 the reputable brand Coca-Cola announced a new marketing strategy- called Liquid & Linked – with great excitement (Coca Cola, 2011). The company moved its emphasis from “creative excellence” – the old mass media approach to “content excellence” – branded content in social media. Coke’s Jonathan Mildenhall claimed at the time that Coke would continually produce “the world’s most compelling content”, which would portray “a disproportionate share of popular culture”, doubling sales by 2020. The following year, Coca-Cola launched its first big bet, transforming the stagnant corporate website into a digital magazine, Coca-Cola Journey. It runs stories on almost every pop culture topic from sports to food to sustainability and travel. It’s the personification of a branded-content strategy. Journey has now been live for over three years, and it barely registers views. It hasn’t cracked the top 10,000 sites in the United States or the top 20,000 worldwide. Similarly, the company’s YouTube channel (ranked 2,749) has only 676, 000 subscribers. These statistics demonstrate that consumers have little interest in the content that brands churn out. Very few people want it in their feed. Most view it as clutter – as brand spam.

A company called Zappos is an online retailer that sells shoes, clothing and accessories. They’re known for the enormous emphasis they put on creating relationships with their fans and customers (Porterfield, 2011). Their strategy for Facebook is to first ask for the like and then ask their new fans to join their email list. Once you click their like button, the custom tag changes and you see then the opportunity to sign up for their email list and interact with their products. By waiting until after the fan clicks the Like button, Zappos is proving they care about building relationships with their fans first. One of the best engagement strategies see on Facebook is Zappos’s “Fan of the Week” contest. They encourage fans to send in their photos with the Zappos box and other fans get to vote on the best photo of the week. What’s different is that Zappos highlights the fan of the week by putting him

or her in their wall image photo for all to see. This is ultimately putting the customers first (Porterfield, 2011).

2.4.4.1 Promotional Campaigns by popular brands

SM personalises the “brand” and helps companies spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way (Neti, 2011). Pepsi and Nokia are some of the top brands whom have effectively used social media for achieving their business objectives according to Neti. In 2012 both companies rolled out campaigns hoping to strike an emotional chord with the Chinese population in mainland China. These campaigns celebrated The Chinese New Year (a 15-day celebration that runs from January 23rd to February 6th). Nokia’s “Go Home” QQ Train – tapping the insight of the significance for the Chinese to return home to celebrate the Lunar New Year festival, Nokia collaborated with China’s 300 million user micro blog platform QQ to create a virtual train that could carry people’s wishes and homesickness during this period (clickz.com website, 2012). Nokia’s goal was to reinforce its brand preference among female mobile users how are likely to own a local branded phone or win over first-time phone owners. To achieve its goal Nokia co-branded with QQ’s entire brand platform from its website, instant messaging service, micro-blog and video channel. As a result, close to four million people participated in the campaign and created more than 662, 000 virtual coaches that reached out to over 60 million other QQ users. Pepsi’s “Bring Happiness Home” mini-movie reached 100 million views.

Cadbury Dairy Milk is the number one impulse chocolate brand in Ireland, five times bigger than its closest rival, so the natural instinct would be to play safe and not risk losing market share. However, a fearless brand can redefine its target group by changing its strategy opening its vision to anything that shoppers can spend their money on instead of chocolate. This naturally reduces your relative market share, but now provides more opportunities and ample room to grow (O’Toole, 2015). In this new space companies need to speak loud and to more people than before to grow penetration of the category. Traditional media is essential for reach – but companies need to understand all of the connection points that influence shopper’s preferences and find a story for each one. Companies like Cadbury’s focus their creative team on generating content across all demographics and as many media channels as they can support. Focus on every piece of content as though it was the centrepiece of the

whole campaign and ensure each piece links back to the central – concept like #FreeTheJoy did for the Cadbury campaigns. According to a senior brand manager for chocolate at Mondelez International (owners of Cadbury's) the company has a global vision of putting a minimum of twenty percent of its annual budget online – so they work directly to create partnerships with Google, MSN, Facebook, Twitter and the rest, in order to find the most innovatively appropriate way to engage and create content that benefits both the consumer and the brand.

Sky Ireland has always been one of the biggest investors in advertising in the Irish market (McGee, 2016). Its new premium offering, Sky Q, is its biggest ever adopting a high profile campaign promoting the service. In a market that is filled with competition, Sky Ireland is the biggest. Created by UK agency Brothers and Sisters with MediaCom Ireland overseeing the media buying, the company's latest campaign has been rolled out across TV, outdoor, cinema and print, as well as a range of social-media channels, including the first-time use of Facebook canvas ads. First unveiled last November, the company encouraged people to pre-register their interest as the countdown to the launch date began. Sky Q, according to the company “completely reinvents the viewing experience”, giving users the option to pause what they are watching in one room and carry on viewing it in another room.

After the company conducted extensive market research into what customers wanted, the new offering also allows them to take all their recordings with them wherever they go – a first for TV service in Ireland and likely to be popular with those, for whatever reasons, haven't got round to watching the last few episodes of their favourite series they recorded. Sky Ireland's On screen, have delivered something that is truly world-class in terms of creative and production. As the content explodes form screens, viewers will believe it has actually liquefied and that the drops contain real pieces of a movie or TV show. The fluid ethos of Sky Q will be carried over into how we deliver the campaign across multiple traditional, digital and social-media platforms.

(MacKay, 2016). Also with the Sky Ireland service all digital activity is planned in such a way to ensure the messages of the campaign are joined up sequentially to form a “fluid story”. Customers will first be introduced to the product and the concept of Fluid Viewing and then learn over time about specific features across display, mobile and tablet, voice on demand and social formats.

2.4.5 Current trends

SM is helping digital publishers get readers to consume more content (Dempsey, 2016). Three quarters of consumers access more information from publishers who appear on social media. This social content consumption is additive, meaning it has no impact on existing reading habits on sites and apps according to a new study by Digital Content Next, the US cousin of OPA (the Online Publishers Association Europe). It's a trade association for premium publishers ranging from the New York Times and Disney Interactive to Fusion and Atlantic Media. The report also found that brand recall was different depending on editorial output. Readers were more likely to recall the specific publisher if they were reading national news and sports stories. Some 61pc of news and sports readers remembered the publisher. Lifestyle stories, however, came bottom of the pile for brand recall, with only 52pc of readers recalling which publication was behind what they were reading. This was US only research, covering Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram. Those aged 12 to 54 with a home internet connection were surveyed. So there's a chance that this research doesn't adequately reflect the fundamental changes that the shift to mobile is causing.

Dempsey (2016) points out that on initial reading of the 2016 Digital Content Next Distribution Impact Research it would be easy to conclude that the answer for individual media outlets is to concentrate on stronger branding to ensure recognition and recall among an increasingly social and mobile audience. However, pondering more on the report perhaps the report doesn't highlight a branding issue for individual digital news outlets, but a branding issue for digital news media as a whole.

In Ireland traditional TV is still a huge draw especially when it comes to the likes of live sports and current affairs (Core Media, 2016). Core Media is one of Ireland's largest media communications report it released its outlook for 2016 report in January 2016 where it found that the average viewer now watches over three-and-a-half hours of content on the 'old school' TV set on a daily basis. The decoupling of TV from a traditional schedule, the rise of Netflix and the growth in user-generated content means there's a real opportunity to create a unique proposition around advising the audience about what it watches (Dempsey, 2016).

Media consumption patterns are changing dramatically, particularly among young people. This includes the rise of 'on-demand' catch-up services popularised by TV

groups like Sky and Virgin Media, and the growth of Internet-only streaming platforms like Netflix (McCabe, 2016). Research from Irish telecoms regulator Comreg shows already outlined previously show that 14pc of people who have subscribed to online paid TV services in Ireland have stopped watching live or scheduled television, while 43pc say that it has caused them to watch less live or scheduled television. The report says that 9pc of all households use Netflix, rising to 18pc in Dublin. On average, Netflix users spend seven hours per week using the service it says. Irish consumers are attracted to the concept of ‘bundling’ with telecoms providers offerings; however lots of consumers are opting for broadband alone, a low-cost option (McCabe, 2016).

According to the international measurement company Nielsen, YouTube on mobile devices is seen by more 18 to 49-year-olds than any single television service (Weckler, 2016). Nielsen, which also powers Ireland’s TAM ratings, has released several pieces of research showing that TV audiences are declining relative to phones, tablets, computers and ‘smart’ video appliances (Nielsen, 2016). ‘But phones are the big draw’, according to Ooyala. In late 2015, Ooyala released figures showing that Ireland has the highest mobile video viewing figures in the world. In addition figures from the Dublin-based analytics firm Statcounter show that Irish people use their smartphones to get content more than almost any other western country, with a third of all web access here now coming from our handsets (Weckler, 2016).

Sky as a TV broadcaster in the UK has an online-only offering called NowTV. It sells a Roku digital box that can reverse the service back up onto a full-sized television. This service is currently only available in the UK but there are some signs that Sky may be preparing an Irish launch in the future (Weckler, 2016). A recent study surveyed more than 5,000 marketers with the goal of understanding how they’re using social media to grow and promote their businesses. Most participants of the study were based in the US (52%) followed by United Kingdom (8%), Canada (6%) and Australia (4%). Primary findings from the report:

- Video has become essential: A significant 60% of marketers use video in their marketing and 73% plan on increasing their use of video.

- Live video is hot: A significant 50% of marketers plan on using live video services such as Facebook Live and Periscope, and 50% want to learn more about live video.
- Facebook and YouTube hold the top spots for future plans: At least 63% of marketers plan on increasing their use of these social networks.
- Snapchat is on a growth trajectory: Only 5% of marketers are using Snapchat, yet 16% plan on increasing their Snapchat activities and 28% of marketers want to learn more about Snapchat.
- Facebook is the most important social network for marketers by a long shot! When asked to select their most important platform, 55% of marketers chose Facebook, followed by LinkedIn at 18%. Plus, 67% of marketers plan on increasing their Facebook marketing activities. • Many marketers are unsure about their Facebook marketing: A significant 40% of marketers don't know if Facebook traffic has declined in the last 12 months and 35% aren't sure if their Facebook marketing is effective.
- Facebook ads dominate: A surprising 86% of social marketers regularly use Facebook ads, while only 18% use Twitter ads.
- Tactics and engagement are top areas marketers want to master: At least 90% of marketers want to know the most effective social tactics and the best ways to engage their audience with social media.

The 2016 Reuters Digital News report launched in June 2016 conveyed Ireland's second year participating in the study with FuJo (Dublin City University Institute for Future Media and Journalism) sponsored by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland conducting detailed analysis of the Irish data. Major findings of the Irish Report are outlined below:

Social Media: Over half of Irish consumers (52%) now get their news from social media sites. Internationally, around one in ten (12%) say social media is their primary news source. Facebook is Ireland's most popular social media site with 71% using it regularly and 45% using it as a source of news. Participation in online news is also high in Ireland with 72% frequently rating, sharing and commenting on online news stories. However, only 23% of Irish consumers notice the news brands responsible for

content on social media. This is a troublesome finding for news publishers as they are increasingly dependent on social media to distribute content.

Paying for News: As sales of printed newspapers continue to fall, 71% of Irish consumers are unwilling to pay for online news. Among those who do currently pay for news, 49% pay less than €50 a year. The widespread availability of free news in the global English-language market is a notable influence on payment rates. No English-speaking country has a news payment rate of more than 10%.

Ad Blockers: While 42% of consumers say they are willing to view ads in return for free access to news, more than half of Irish consumers (54%) find adverts on news sites intrusive. The popularity of ad blockers presents a serious problem for publishers relying on digital advertising revenue. Among the 26 nations surveyed, Ireland has the fifth highest level of ad blocker use at 30%. More than half of 18-24s use some form of ad blocker.

Trust: Trust in news is highest among over-55s. Half of those surveyed do not trust the news in general. In line with international findings, the Irish trust editors and journalists (37%) less than news organisations (47%).

News Consumption Routines: News consumption is high in Ireland across all demographics, with 84% of people accessing some news every day and 53% accessing news several times a day. Traditional media are still deeply integrated into Irish news consumption routines. TV news remains the most popular platform for accessing news in Ireland at 73%; although this is down three per cent from 2015. Radio remains the first point of daily contact with news for 39% of consumers. However, social media and mobile devices are forming new consumption patterns. Among morning smartphone users (21%), 50% find news on social media sites while 30% go direct to a news app or news website.

Online News Video: Despite industry expectations, video content is not attracting large numbers of news consumers. Only a quarter (24%) of international respondents say they access online news video. The Irish (28%) are more inclined to watch video news than many European peers. However, those who do not regularly watch news video identify technical issues (46%), the convenience of reading (39%), and a dislike of pre-roll adverts (24%) as factors (Reuters 2016).

2.5 Potential of Social Media in marketing Irish pay-TV services

The areas listed below convey the benefits of the potential of the effect social media could have when Irish pay-TV companies use it to market their services as a result of the literature just examined.

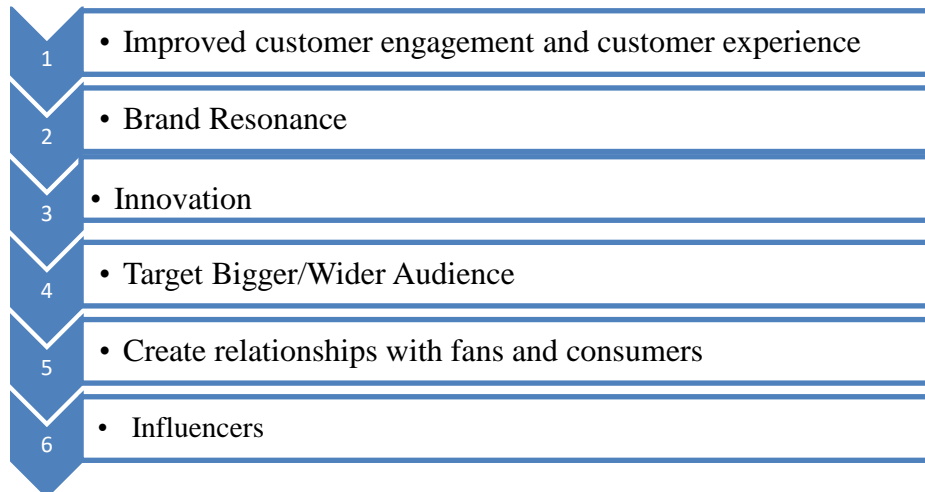


Figure 2.8 List of the benefits of the potential of the effect of SM when Irish pay-TV companies use it to market their services as a result of the literature examined.

2.6 Conclusion

It is strongly implied in the literature reviewed that SM and SMM have vast capabilities when marketing services of Irish pay-TV providers. In addition, enhanced leverage of the latter when used in conjunction with traditional marketing methods.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

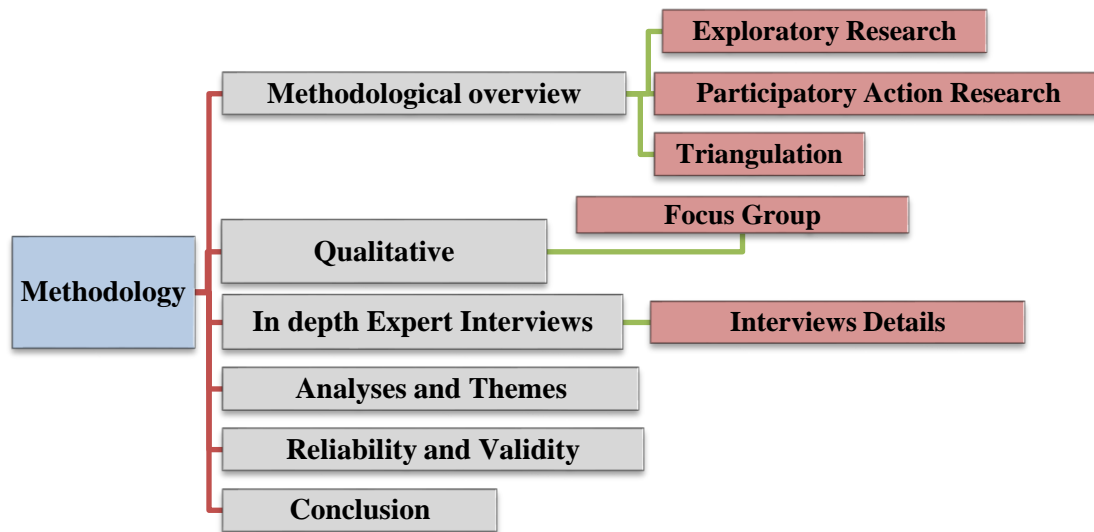
3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research methodology for this study. The methodology selected reflects the research topic. An exploratory study was the preferred approach, using a participatory action research approach to examine several data sources collaborated through data triangulation, to research conclusions directly related to the research objectives. As noted by Mason et al, (2010, p. 432) ‘exploratory studies in the social sciences are being increasingly advocated, particularly in relation to new research themes or when addressing an existing issue from a new perspective’. Malhotra (2007) recognised the ‘use of depth interviews is for exploratory research to gain insights and understanding’ and that in depth interviews were appropriate in ‘..special problem situations such as those requiring...interviews with professional people’.

To begin, the chapter will present an insight into the research design, outlining the decision to use a triangulation approach to address the research objectives. An outline of exploratory research will be discussed as well as triangulation, quantitative and qualitative research. Following on from this, the chapter will review each of the gathering tools used, outlining the strengths and limitations of each method. Subsequently the chapter will outline the research procedures undertaken and how the research will be analysed. Lastly, the chapter will focus on ethical considerations and the limitations of this study.

To determine the most suitable research methodology to use in this study the author was faced with many different approaches and strategies, which have different appropriate uses. There is a long standing argument within the academic field of social sciences as to the correct philosophical viewpoint from which research methods should be devised. This debate centres on two directly opposing schools of thought – positivism (quantitative) and phenomenology (qualitative) (Snape & Spencer, 2003). A synopsis of the methodology is conveyed in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Methodology Overview



3.2 Research Design

This exploratory study seeks to achieve outcomes to the objectives outlined below by investigating the research topic within the concept of participatory action research.

Primary Objective:

- *Evaluate has the use of social media by Irish pay-TV providers changed the marketing of their services.*

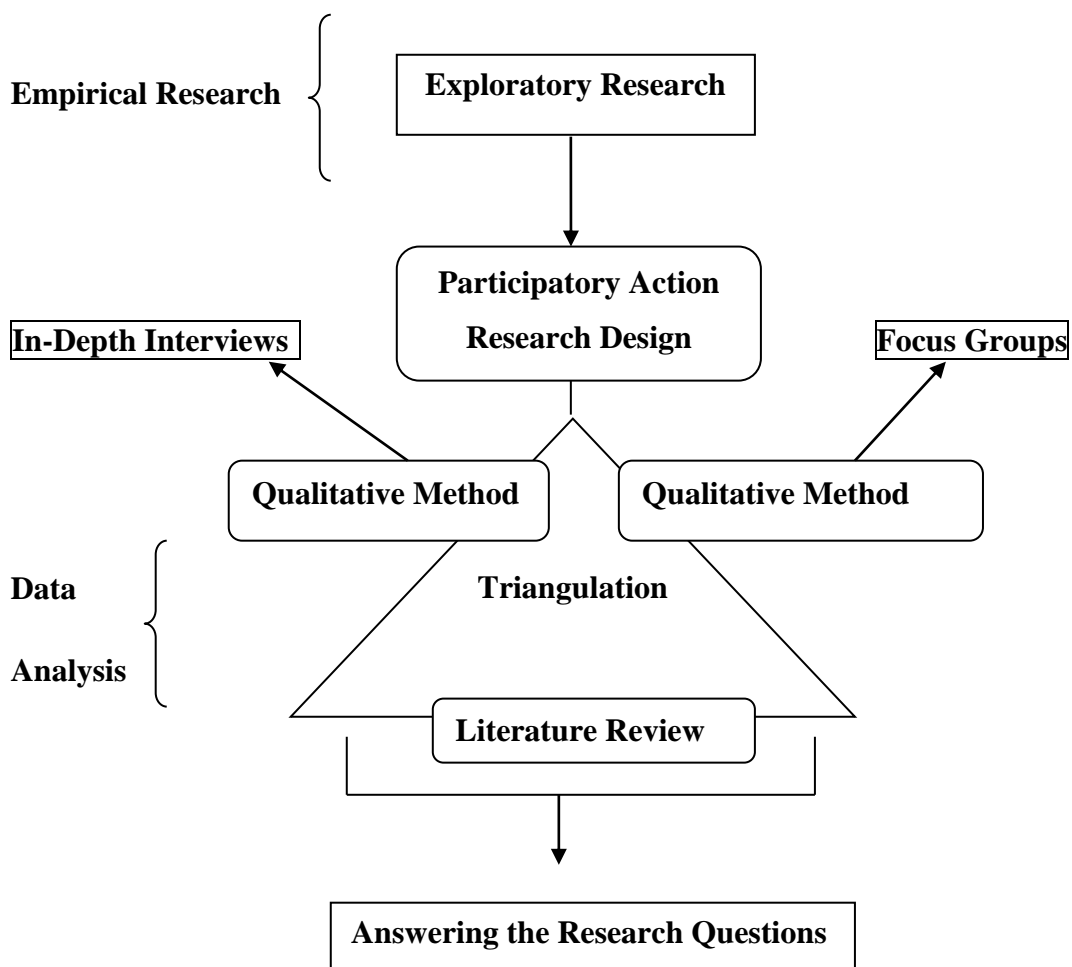
Secondary Objectives:

- *Identify the various social media platforms that pay-TV providers utilise to promote their pay-TV service.*
- *To determine from a customer's perspective if the promotional campaigns ran by the pay-TV providers via social media platforms proves more effective as a means of engagement than with traditional marketing methods or is a combination of both methods as effective.*

The research design provides a framework which structures the plans and decisions made to guide the project. This study will use a triangulation framework. Qualitative research is a form of research especially important in the behavioural sciences where

the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour. Through such research an analysis of the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing (Kothari, 2009). Epistemology in relation to qualitative research for this study is concerned with the questions ‘What do you know’ and ‘How do you know it’ (Vanson, 2014). The epistemology is about the information that counts as acceptable knowledge in SMM and how it should be acquired and interpreted.

Figure 3.2 Research Design



The marketing research process is a set of stages that detail a number or sequence of tasks a researcher undertakes to gather and report valid and reliable information to assist with decision-making (Domegan and Flanagan, 2007, p. 21).

3.2.1 Exploratory Research

This form of research is used when the topic is not well defined or understood, your hypothesis is not well defined, and your knowledge of a topic is vague. In relation to this study evidence suggests little research is conducted by the telecommunications industry in Ireland on the impact and role of social media marketing in the industry, more so in terms of the Irish pay television sector. Exploratory research helps with gaining broad insights, narrow your focus, and learn the basics necessary to go deeper (Byrman & Bell, 2011). Common exploratory research techniques include secondary research, focus groups and interviews. Exploratory research is a qualitative form of research (Domegan and Flanagan, 2007).

3.2.2 Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research is a research design where researchers participate with people in improving and understanding the world by changing it (McTaggart, 1991). Three main characteristics of PAR are suggested by McIntyre (2008, p. 1), namely the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge; the promotion of self- and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective and/or social change; and the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation and dissemination of the research process. The current research uses the latter characteristics to lead the research process to its conclusion. In the action research process, 'engaging practitioners and users in the change process' is pivotal to the eventual conclusions of the research (Gelling, 2011, p. 6). In this study, it is expected that by understanding the research participants views with regard to social networking and social media platforms, that a conclusion can be realised, which will bring beneficial change to those participants.

3.2.3 Triangulation

This study uses more than one method of data collection this multi-method approach is known as triangulation (Laws et al, 2003). Triangulation was identified as an appropriate data collection approach for this study due to meeting the primary and secondary objectives of the research to ascertain, identify and critically examine the varying aspects and role played by social media marketing in the pay television industry in Ireland. Laws et al (2003, p. 281) points out that the key to triangulation is to see the same thing from different perspectives and thus be able to validate or

challenge the findings of one method with those of another (Laws, 2003, p. 281), Laws (2003, p. 281) warns that:

Accounts collected from different perspectives may not match tidily at all. There may be mismatch and even conflict between them. A mismatch does not necessarily mean that the data collection process is flawed - it could be that people just have very different accounts of similar phenomena. You need to critically examine the meaning of any mismatches to make sense of them.

Laws et al (2003, p. 281)

Methodological triangulation has been found to be beneficial in providing confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity and enhanced understanding of the studied phenomenon (Redfern and Norman 1994, Risjord et al 2001, Foss and Ellefsen 2002, Halcomb and Andrews 2005, Casey and Murphy 2009). A distinct advantage with triangulation researchers can use two research methods to decrease the weaknesses of an individual method and strengthen the outcome of the study (Denzin 1978, Sharif and Armitage 2004). There are two types of methodological triangulation: “across method” and “within method”. Across-method studies combine quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques (Boyd 2001, Casey and Murphy 2009). Qualitative methods are explanatory and textual, and include passive observation, participant observation and open-ended interviews (Risjord et al 2001). Within-method studies use two or more data-collection procedures, quantitative or qualitative, but not both as is the approach chosen with this study.

3.2.4 Quantitative Research

Quantitative researchers gather facts and study the relationship of one set of facts to another (Bell, 2010). This research use numerical data and structured and predetermined research questions, conceptual frameworks and designs (Punch, 2005, p 28). Methods that are used in this research are likely to produce quantified and, if possible, generalise conclusions (Bell, 2010).

3.2.5 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides valuable data for use in the design of a product – including data about user needs, behaviour patterns, and use cases (Madrigal &

McClain, 2012). The aforementioned authors elaborate to discuss qualitative research suggesting usually it takes the form of either some form of naturalistic observation such as ethnography or structured interviews. Following data collection, rather than performing a statistical analysis, researchers look for trends in the data. When it comes to identifying trends, researchers look for statements that are identical across different research participants. The rule of thumb is that hearing a statement from just one participant is an anecdote; from two, a coincidence; and hearing it from three makes it a trend. The trends that you identify can then guide product development, business decisions, and marketing strategies. Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisation of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). Due to the well documented researched effectiveness of qualitative research this study chose this approach to reiterate on findings from focus groups and in-depth interviews in order to explore and investigate the objectives of the study.

3.3 Research Paradigm

The sequence of the researchers' strategy is divided into two phases for this study:

Table 3.1: Research paradigm

Phase One	Phase Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three in depth interviews conducted. One with Marketing Director Meadhbh Quinn, Virgin Media. An interview with Ailbhe Reilly, Insight Analyst, Virgin Media. An interview with Nathan Kelly, Social Media Manager, Eir Sport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four focus groups conducted

These methods were deemed to be the most appropriate in achieving triangulation of data so that the researcher could effectively answer the research objectives.

Irish pay TV providers Virgin Media and Eir were chosen for research purpose of this study. As already outlined in chapter one of this study the market for phone, TV and broadband services in Ireland is worth in excess of €3bn annually. 71% is the proportion of Irish households with a television subscription (Amárach Research & UPC, 2014). In-depth interviews were conducted with marketing professionals from the latter companies. The aims of these interviews are to:

- establish what methods both companies adopt on execution of their respective social media marketing promotional campaigns
- what resources they both have in place to drive social media marketing within their organisations as well as other areas surrounding social media marketing's effectiveness as a marketing tool

As a result of the in-depth interviews conducted five themes were recognised.

Four focus groups were conducted. Eight of the same questions were discussed at all four focus group sessions. After the focus groups were conducted four themes were identified. To reiterate the reason qualitative research was chosen is:

- it will assist greatly in investigating in an in depth way consumers attitudes towards SM
- why they choose to use SM
- identify if they are aware of promotional campaigns conducted by these pay TV service providers
- what brands in the pay TV industry do they associate with and what SM platforms do they use
- in addition is SM a positive form of advertising

The aforementioned data collection methods will now be outlined briefly and the role they play in this current research.

3.4 Research procedures

For the purpose of this study four focus groups were conducted and three in-depth interviews with the chosen pay TV providers were conducted. Phase one of the researcher's strategy was conducting these in-depth interviews. Phase two of the researcher's strategy was conducting four focus groups. This allowed the researcher to get a closer understanding of why and how both pay TV companies are using SMM in their promotional strategies. Data was collected from three in-depth interviews with Marketing professionals who have extensive experience working within the area of marketing in the pay TV industry. The interviews took place over the telephone and follow-up conversations via email. The author adopted a semi-structured approach for the in-depth interviews. Nine questions were asked in the in-depth interviews conducted (see Appendix A. 1).

One focus group consisted of eight participant's and the other three focus groups consisted of six participant's. Gender balance was adopted where possible for all four focus groups. All four focus group participants were not aware beforehand of the subject for discussion at their allotted focus group discussion. The same themes were presented at all four focus group discussions. In preparation for conducting the focus groups a well-planned discussion guide was designed in order to assist with the analysis of focus group findings. Questions are asked in the focus groups (see Appendix A.2). After the four focus groups were conducted for this study the author wrote the findings report. The author put together common themes and trends in response patterns by viewing and listening to the audio-visual recordings and referring to any notes taken during the session. Whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should always be examined critically to assess to what extent it is likely to be reliable and valid (Bell, 2010).

3.4.1 Data collection methods

Data collection methods are chosen because they will provide the data you require to produce a complete piece of research (Blaxter et al, 2013). For the purpose of this study data was collected by conducting four focus groups segmented by age category statistics from the Irish census of population in 2011 (CSO, 2013). This categorisation is also based on the premise that different age groups use SNSs for

different reasons, and may behave differently on-site (PwC, 2008a) and as a result may have varying attitudes towards marketing tactics. Exploring an innovative marketing trend like social media through the use of these focus groups is wholly relevant to this research because the group pressure helped to challenge respondents and kept their thinking realistic (McDaniel and Gates, 2010). The marketing research process includes sampling, sampling refers to the techniques and procedures required to collect data to answer the research question and meet the objectives (Green et al., 1993). The data collection methods chosen for the purpose of this study will now be outlined.

3.4.1.1 Focus Group Design

The focus group is a research technique used to collect data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Essentially, it is a group experience (Morgan, 2016). Focus groups have four key characteristics, firstly they actively involve people, and secondly the people have a community of experience. Thirdly they provide in depth qualitative data and fourthly discussion is focused to help us understand what is going on (Morgan, 2016). Focus groups allow businesses to directly engage with their customers. The first step to planning a focus group is to establish the objectives of the marketing research project. Following that, the objectives of the qualitative research should be clearly specified. The research objectives will guide what questions to ask during the focus group (Domegan and Fleming, 2003). It is interesting to note the following especially as the Irish pay TV sector is the subject of this study: NTL's (now Virgin Media) cable customers in Dublin, Galway and Waterford received the Discovery Channel following focus group customer research carried out in Ireland by MRBI (Market Research Bureau of Ireland Ltd.) in 2001, which revealed a strong preference for the Discovery Channel over National Geographic Channel.

Malhotra (2007), presents a procedure for planning and conducting focus groups which was used as a guideline tool for this study.

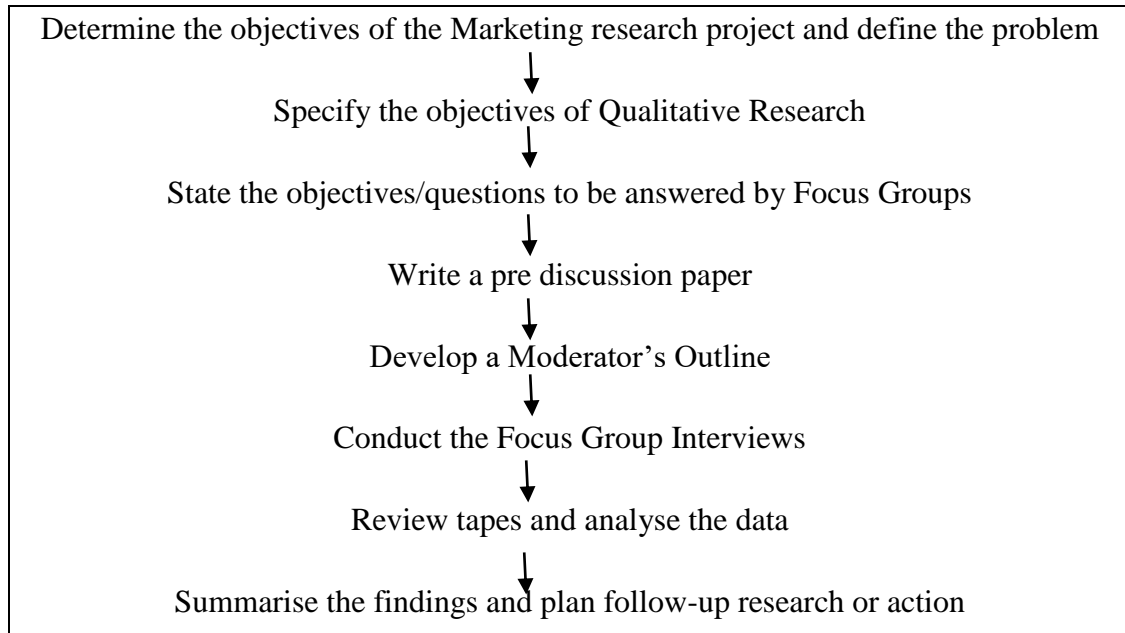


Figure 3.3 Procedure for Planning and Conducting Focus groups

Source: Malhotra (2007)

The number of participants in a typical focus group will consist of eight to twelve people; there is no ideal number of participants. However, groups fewer than eight are unlikely to generate the energy, momentum and group dynamics necessary for a successful session (Collins and Hussey, 2003). The physical setting for the focus group is also important. A relaxed informal atmosphere encourages spontaneous comments. The key figure in the focus group interview is the interviewer, in this case referred to as the moderator. The moderator is a critical factor influencing the effectiveness and usefulness of the focus group. Moderators need to have good interpersonal and communication skills and knowledge of the discussion topic at hand (Domegan and Fleming, 2003). Take personal responsibility for the amount of time allowed for the recruitment, screening and selection of participants. Prepare a detailed moderator guide well in advance of the focus group (Greenbaum, 1991).

For best results, a focus group session should include around five or six questions. It should always include less than ten questions (Marczak & Sewell, 1991). For the purpose of this study eight questions were asked of participants in the four focus groups conducted. The use of open-ended questions and avoid “yes” or “no” questions. “Why” questions are rarely asked in a focus group as they tend to imply a rational answer (Marczak & Sewell, 1991). The final step is to write the actual report. A liberal sprinkling of respondents’ actual remarks (verbatim) can be used in the report to enforce or dramatise findings (Chaney, 1996). The following table displays the schedule for the focus groups carried out in this study.

Table 3.2 Focus Groups Schedule:

Focus Groups	Date	Duration	No. of participants	Venue
A	3 rd May 2017	55 minutes	8	Longford County Council Offices
B	13 th May 2017	40 minutes	6	Moments Cafe
C	20 th May 2017	50 minutes	6	Longford Arms Hotel
D	25 th May 2017	1 hour	6	Longford Community Enterprise Centre

Appendix A. 2 presents the questions asked during all four focus group sessions.

Focus groups have made a huge contribution to the business world as a form of marketing research (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). The qualitative focus group design has its strength in the richness of the data, the skill to understand and explore perceptions, behaviours and motivations. This is one of the main reasons why focus groups were conducted for the purpose of this study. It is not the type of data that looks to control and predict, rather it will provide comprehension and insight, and it is this very feature that gives the focus group its unique position as a research methodology (Hague, 2002).

3.4.1.2 In-depth Expert Interview Design

Also known as individual extended interviews, in-depth interviews are another way of obtaining qualitative data. Like focus groups they are also an unstructured and direct way of obtaining information, and are used primarily for exploratory research. But unlike focus groups, in-depth interviews are conducted on a one-to-one basis. They are mostly appropriate when intensively probing needs behaviour or attitudes, detailing socially acceptable norms, understanding complicated decision-making patterns and interviewing professional people and interviewing competitors who are unlikely to reveal information in a group setting. The technique uses extensive probing in the context of a personal interview to get a single respondent to reveal motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic (Domegan and Fleming, 2003).

In-depth interviews are versatile but they require careful planning, training and preparation (Schmidt & Hollensen, 2006). The main strength of the in-depth interview is in its ability to uncover more complete answers to questions than might be answered at a more superficial level during survey research. The one-to-one in-depth interview also has the advantage of respondents revealing attitudes or motives that they may be reluctant to discuss in a group setting (Domegan & Fleming, 2003). According to Domegan and Fleming in-depth interviews have a number of flaws. Firstly because of the one-to-one nature of the research, sample sizes are small and statistical extrapolation of research findings become a problem. Interpretation of the in-depth interview is subjective and dependent on the interviewer's view of what is said. Another difficulty is the problem of editing, coding and analysing the qualitative results. The following table displays the interview schedule for the in-depth expert interviews conducted.

Table 3.3 Interview Schedule

Interview	Date	Details of Marketing professional interviewed
A	30 th June 2017	Meadbh Quinn, Marketing Director, Virgin Media
B	30 th June 2017	Ailbhe O'Reilly, Insight Analyst, Marketing Department, Virgin Media.
C	18 th July 2017	Nathan Kelly, Social Media Manager, Eir Sport

Appendix A. 1 presents the questions asked during all three in-depth expert interviews. In this exploratory study all of the experts chosen for the interviews are working in marketing departments in the pay-TV industry and are experienced marketing professionals. The selection of in-depth interview members for this study is based on an iterative process referred to by Kuzel (1999) as purposeful sampling that seeks to maximise the depth and richness of data to address the research question. The iterative nature of the qualitative research process in which preliminary data analysis coincides with data collection resulted in altering some questions as the researcher learn more about the subject (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The process of establishing rapport is an essential element of the interview process (Palmer & Douglas 1985).

3.5 Research analysis

The findings from the in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted in phase one and two of the research have been documented, summarised and analysed in terms of the themes explored and detail discussed. The literature review recorded topical issues in relation to the concept of social media marketing, social networking and social media marketing versus traditional marketing methods. The findings are presented using a narrative structuring style (Kvale, 1996), which entails the social organisation of text to bring out its meaning. It centres on the stories told during phase one and two of the research and works out their structure and themes as this reduces the text and allows for expansion on the possible interpretations of those themes and topics discussed during the in-depth expert interviews and focus groups.

The method of analysis used is content analysis. Main ideas from focus groups and interviews are presented with emerging themes and patterns. The data analysed is categorised accordingly in table format. This process was crucial in order that patterns, topics and themes could emerge from the data.

Table 3.4: Emerging Theme Example

Emerging Theme	Interview A	Interview B	Interview C
❖ Customer engagement	<i>SMM tools benefit consumer needs</i>	<i>SM platforms such as facebook and twitter enhance communication and our relationship with our consumers</i>	<i>SMM can target more specifically than traditional marketing through direct response ads on facebook for example</i>

Table 3.5: Emerging Themes and Sub-themes Example

Emerging Theme	Areas
❖ Create general brand awareness	Social Media Platforms Promotional Campaigns

3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability relates to uniformity of results and measurements prepared in the research process (Domegan and Fleming, 2003). Reliability is concerned with “the consistency, accuracy and predictability of the research findings”, (Kinnear and Taylor, 1996, p. 232). ‘Reliability is a concern every time a single observer is the source of the data, because we have no certain guard against the impact of that observer’s subjectivity’ (Babbie, 2010, p. 158). According to Wilson (2010) reliability issues are most of the time closely associated with subjectivity and once a researcher adopts a subjective approach towards the study, then the level of reliability of the work is going to be compromised. The following guidelines were adhered to ensure validity in this study as suggested by McMillian and Schumacher (2006):

Prolonged and persistent fieldwork

Data analysis and data gathering took place over a period of weeks to set aside authentication between findings and participants reality.

Participant language verbatim accounts

Exact statements and quotations are used both in the analysis and in the discussion of this thesis.

Low-inference descriptors

All information was recorded accurately and literally with detailed descriptions conveyed in the findings and appendices sections.

Mechanically recorded data

Recording devices and notebooks were used in the data collection.

Member checking

Participants were asked informally and often during data collection about the accuracy of statements made.

Participant review

Each participant was asked to review the synthesis of their answers after interviews.

Negative data

Negative data was actively searched for and confirmed in the findings section.

Outlying data was assessed to see if it affected emerging themes or altered themes found in data.

3.5.2 Validity

Oliver (2010) considers validity to be a compulsory requirement for all types of studies. There are various forms of research validity and the main ones are outlined by Cohen et al (2007) as content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, concurrent validity and face validity.

Observational research used in this study may have high external validity because it has taken place in the real world. Validity is vital in a research study to ensure that the results obtained can be used effectively and variables that may threaten validity should be controlled as much as possible (Morse et al, 2002). This study has the primary objective of evaluating the use of social media by Irish pay-TV providers

changed the marketing of their services. With the purpose of reaching conclusions, which are valid, this study encompasses triangulation.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Ethics are norms, or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others. The goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities

Cooper and Schindler (2006, p. 116)

Throughout the research process for this study security for the data recorded and collected was secured in a locked cabinet, password-protected files were also in place. After the findings of the in-depth interview and focus groups were conducted there were securely locked away. No personal details of focus group participants or marketing personnel interviewed were disclosed to any third parties. All responses and comments received were strictly private and confidential for the purpose of this research this was outlined to the personnel interviewed and focus group participants. A copy of the completed study will be readily available in mid-October for the personnel interviewed if requested. Once the final hard back copies of the study is submitted in mid-October all material related to the study in paper format will be shredded for example hand written notes on focus group findings and in-depth interviews.

During the course of the research conducted with focus groups and interviews the researcher clarified and discussed the format of the research process, if a participant decided not to take part this was not going to be an issue, the participants could opt to leave the discussion during focus groups conducted if the need arose. An information sheet was provided to each focus group participant and a pre-discussion guide at the beginning of each focus group. Due to the topic of social media some people may not have wished to take part in the study due to cyber bullying elements of social networking and harassment. The author was mindful of this. All data saved on laptop and other devices are stored in a secure password protected file created by the

researcher. All data is published only in anonymised form. At the beginning of the study the researcher has signed a declaration certifying that the material which is submitted for assessment of the allocated programme of study is entirely her own work and has not been taken from others, save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of this study.

3.7 Limitations

The principal limitation encountered in this study was time. When interviewing professionals it is expected that there will be time constraints. All participants dedicated the maximum time available to them during which each topic area was discussed as thoroughly as possible. For the purpose of this study the research relied on information from two Irish pay TV service providers operating in the Irish market namely Virgin Media and Eir Sport. Sky is also a major player in the Irish pay TV – market however the researcher attempted to make contact with marketing personnel on numerous occasions via telephone, mail and even through social media to no avail.

3.8 Conclusion

The research methodology was outlined in this chapter. The procedures followed in collecting the data gathered and how the data is analysed is discussed. Ethical issues were outlined and limitations of the study were also outlined. Personal experience and engagement with the topic studied has assisted in the research methodology process as the author has a keen interest in the pay TV industry after working in the industry for a number of years. The research strategy consisted of phase one and phase two. The justification for using qualitative research techniques is summarised and theories relating to this research technique is analysed reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen research techniques. For the purpose of this research study it was deemed appropriate to use a mixed method approach using a participatory action paradigm.

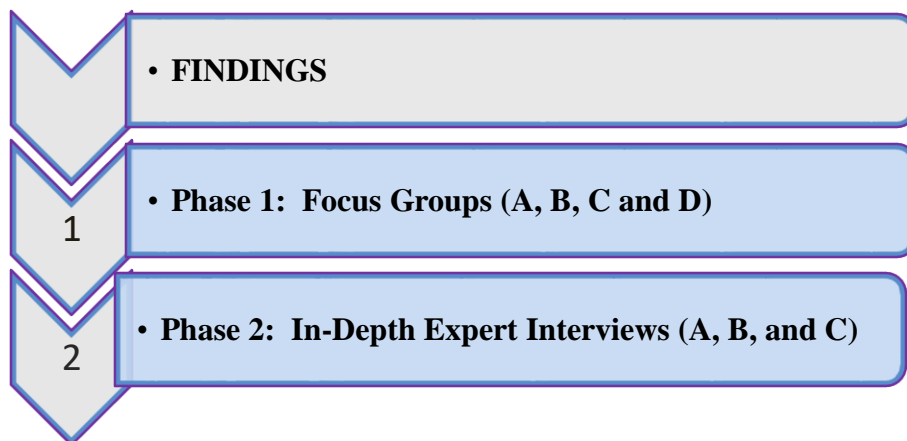
Chapter 4 Findings and Analyses

4.1 Introduction

Following on from the methodology, the data collection is presented. The findings represent data collated from phase 1: four focus groups and phase 2: a total of three in-depth expert interviews. This chapter begins with the focus group findings with meaning and discussion. Focus group findings are based on what the participant's thoughts were on SM, ascertain do they use SM, their SM usage, problems with SM and gauge awareness of promotional campaigns conducted by Irish pay-TV providers via social media platforms. Four themes are identified as a result of focus groups conducted. These themes are discussed and analysed. These are then followed by the presentation of five themes which emerged from the in-depth expert interviews findings. These themes are evaluated and analysed.

The findings are presented objectively in table and pie-chart format. The reason for selecting this format so that the findings are illustrated simply and are not subjectively inclined by the researchers input. The findings are largely qualitative in nature.

Figure 4.1: Findings layout





4.2 Phase 1 - Focus Group Findings

Focus group questions can be found in Appendix A2.



4.2.1 Focus Group A

Findings are presented here from focus group A. Focus group A consisted of eight participants.

Table 4.1: Focus Group A

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Questions  Respondents 	Do you use SM?	When you think about SM what is the first thing that comes to mind?	What are the biggest problems with SM do you think?	Are you aware of any promotional campaigns run by Irish pay-TV providers on SM Platforms? If you are name company and campaign.	If you are a SM user what SM platforms do you use and why?
1	No	Facebook Twitter	It's anti-social Too little control	No	Mobile Phone Texting Not hooked up to SM sites
2	Yes	Facebook Skype	Privacy and control	No	Facebook Internet Explorer Skype Facebook for keeping in touch with people
3	Yes	Making contact	Less contact face	No	Skype Google

		with people Searching for information	to face		Viber Keep in touch with family and friends and for competitions
4	Yes	Facebook Snapchat	Controls Lack of understanding on how to use	Virgin Media campaign with Usain Bolt the athlete	Facebook Twitter For research and keeping up to date with fashion, sport, etc
5	Yes	Facebook Twitter	Responsibility	No	Facebook Political news and general election updaters
6	Yes	Facebook Instagram Whats app	Privacy Trolls	Sky Sports promoting premiership	Facebook Viber Whats App Instagram For keeping in touch with family and friends
7	Yes	Get the message across to the most people in the easiest possible – one click	Cyberbullying Getting into the wrong habits very easy	No	Twitter Facebook Whats app Viber For keeping in touch with clubs messaging clubs re meeting times etc
8	Yes	Facebook	Viruses	Yes Sky	Facebook

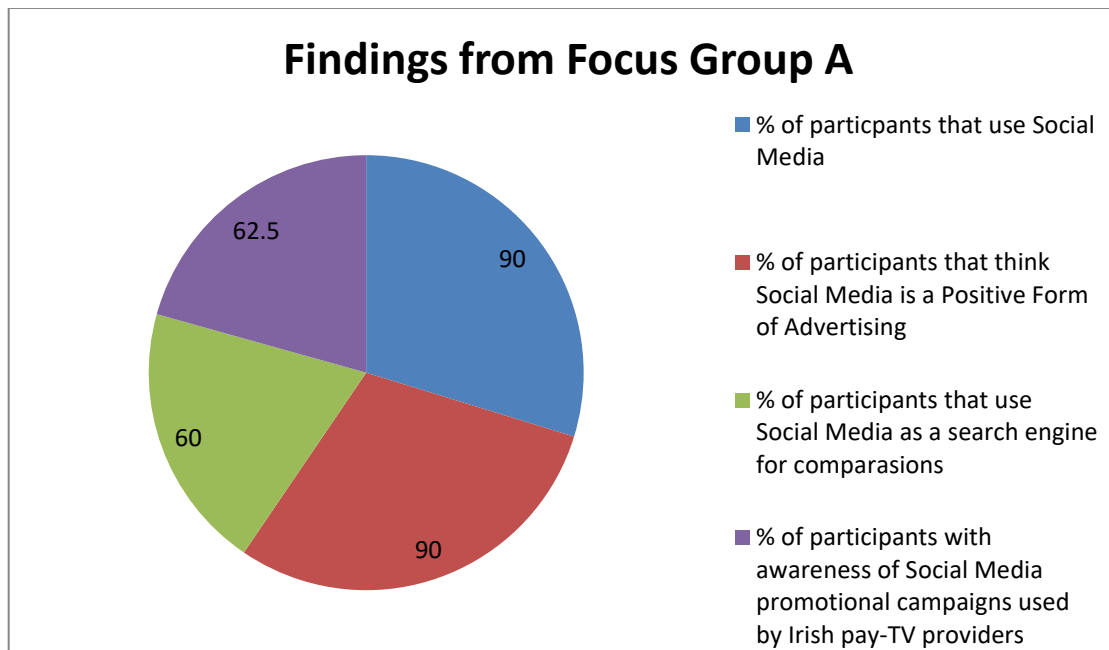
		Instagram Twitter	cyberbullying Incorrect use	Sports promoting premiership	Snapchat Viber Way of communicating with different networks of contacts
	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8		
Questions 	Do you think is SM a positive form of advertising? Elaborate on yes/no answer.	Do you use SM as a search engine for comparisons when you are in the process of deciding what service/product to choose?	Have you ever used SM in the past in deciding what pay-TV service you would purchase?		
Respondents 					
1	No it's misleading	Not really would use google	No		
2	Yes - positive means of communicating information about features of products and services, imagery and content, appealing.	No use search engine online but not SM	No		
3	Yes – but once used properly, on occasion it can interrupt your online presence when you are trying to have conversation with friends/family via facebook for example and offers	Sometimes	No		

	keep appearing on your facebook page.				
4	Yes however don't like online shopping rather go to a shopping centre/retail outlet but when there are competitions and offers or discounts made available online when using SM platform this is very positive!	No	No would use internet		
5	Yes, some companies do it so well like the big corporate companies like Nike & Sketchers when promoting their products via SM	Yes for comments from potential customers or current customers	No would use internet or recommendations from friends and family		
6	Yes, especially if you want to buy fashion accessories online or hotel/accommodation offers, great way of promoting that sort of stuff!	No	Never thought to		
7	Yes its fun and interesting	No never	No		
8	Yes it's all good	Not ever	No		

Findings from focus group A identify that the majority of participants use SM, the first thing that comes to mind when they think of SM is platforms *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The biggest problems with SM appear to be according to the majority of participants are a) incorrect use and b) cyber bullying. Only a small minority of participants from focus group A are aware of promotional campaigns ran by Irish pay-TV providers and the majority of participants have never used SM in the past in deciding what pay-tv service they would purchase. The latter findings indicate that Irish pay-TV providers must strengthen their presence on social networking sites frequented by customers and potential customers. Targeted the appropriate demographic audience for certain promotional campaigns is essential. In the focus group A some discussion centred on asking participants what pay-TV provider do they use, the majority of participants were more aware of traditional methods of marketing used in promotional campaigns by said pay-TV providers. Evidence suggested especially more so through the use of television advertisements and print media for example advertisements in the national newspapers and billboard campaigns. Very little notice was paid to social media promotional campaigns by pay-TV providers as participants didn't think to look on social media platforms for promotional campaigns. Lack of awareness is highlighted as a result of this discussion, engagement with customers and potential customers on social media platforms should be paramount going forward for pay-TV providers.

The majority of participants think that SM is a positive form of advertising. It's fun and interesting. One participant mentions that popular companies use it well in promoting their products with this positive channel of advertising. The majority of participants would not use SM as a search engine to find comparisons when they are in the process of deciding what product/service to use. The most popular SM platform participants use is *Facebook* and the main reason they use it is to keep in touch with family and friends, while others see it as a means of communicating with others as well as family and friends, taking part in competitions, availing of discounts, keeping up to date with the latest fashions, sport and keeping up to date with political news and/or general election updates.

Figure 4.2: Findings from Focus Group A





4.2.2 Focus Group B

Findings are presented here from focus group B. Focus group B consisted of 6 participants.

Table 4.2: Focus Group B

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Questions ➔	Do you use SM?	When you think about SM what is the first thing that comes to mind?	What are the biggest problems with SM do you think?	Are you aware of any promotional campaigns run by Irish pay-TV providers on SM Platforms? If you are name company and campaign.	If you are a SM user what SM platforms do you use and why?
Respondents ⬇					
1	Yes	Facebook Snapchat Viber Whats app	Privacy issues	No	Facebook to upload pictures of events and

					keep in touch with friends and family
2	Yes	Facebook Skype Instagram LinkedIn	Privacy online bullying	No	Facebook Instagram Snapchat Pinterest For photos and keeping in touch with networks of friends and family, looking up videos on pinterest for recipes, how to bake and cook.
3	Yes	Facebook Viber LinkedIn	Online bullying younger people don't interact anymore, anti-social	No	Facebook Twitter Viber Twitter great for updates sports wise local or national events
4	Yes	Twitter Whats app YouTube Facebook	Privacy issues, addictive for teenagers and kids	Sky television promoting sky box sets	Facebook Twitter Google drive For research and keeping up to date with fashion, sport, etc
5	Yes	Facebook Twitter YouTube Pinterest	Online bullying, security issues virus hacking	Sky Sports promoting GAA matches	Viber Whats app Snapchat For photos and keeping in touch

					with friends
6	Yes	Facebook Instagram Whats app Viber YouTube LinkedIn	Privacy Hacking virus cyperattacks	Sky Sports promoting premiership	Reading blogs for various things, facebook, instagram, whats app, for networking and communicating with work colleagues, friends and family members.
	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8		
Questions 	Do you think is SM a positive form of advertising?	Do you use SM as a search engine for comparisons when you are in the process of deciding what service/product to choose?	Have you ever used SM in the past in deciding what pay-TV service you would purchase?		
Respondents 	Elaborate on yes/no answer.				
1	Yes if used properly, can communicate a good image of product or service if promoted correctly	No use the internet as a search engine	No		
2	Yes good for videos online promoting products give	No use the internet as a search engine	No but would consider looking into it as an option		

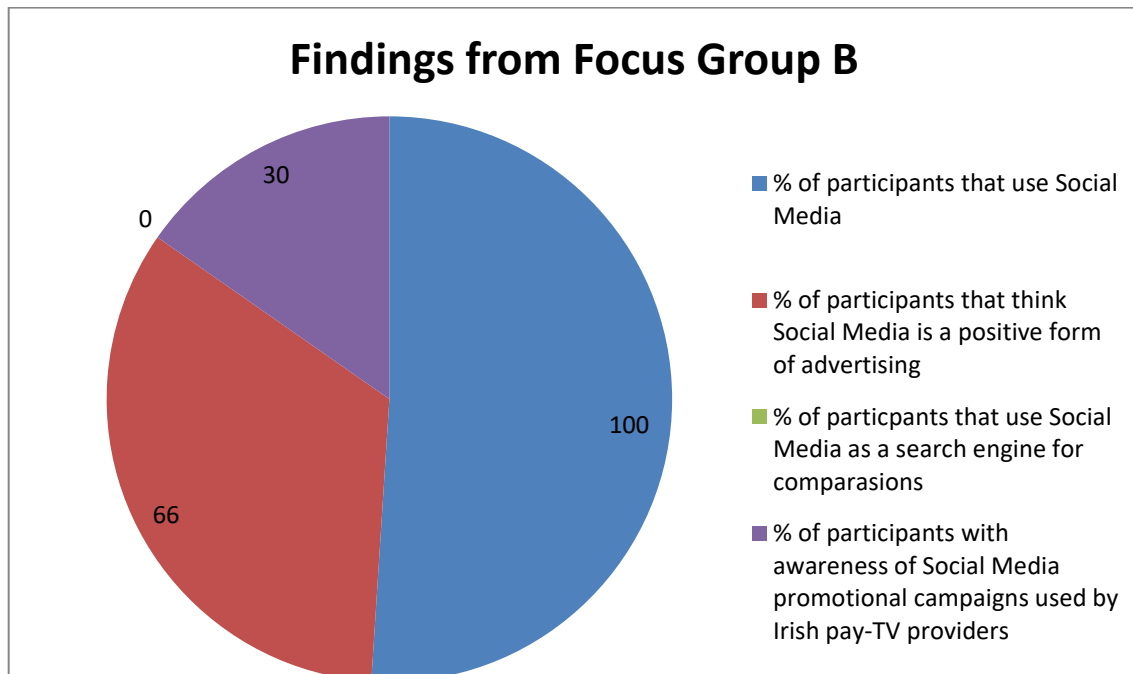
	adequate information				
3	No it can be misleading with special offers discounts, need to read the small print	No get recommendations from friends, work colleagues and family, word of mouth	No but may do in the future		
4	No not everyone uses Social Media you know	No rely on word of mouth	No		
5	Yes it can target different audiences/people for different events with their location through smart phone	No read the newspapers and watch the telly to find out about products/services	No		
6	Yes its fun and exciting	No use the internet or ask friends, relatives, work colleagues.	No but may do in the future		

Findings from focus group B identify that all of the participants use SM, the first thing that comes to mind when they think of SM is platforms *Facebook* and *YouTube*. The biggest problems with SM appear to be according to the majority of participants are a) privacy issues and b) online bullying. Only a small minority of participants from focus group B are aware of promotional campaigns ran by Irish pay-TV providers and the majority of participants have never used SM in the past in deciding what pay-tv service they would purchase but some participants may consider this option in the future.

The majority of participants think that SM is a positive form of advertising. One participant made the point that not everyone uses SM. Another participant mentioned that you have to read the small print in relation to special offers and discounts offered

via SM, it can be misleading. None of participants use SM as a search engine to find comparisons when they are in the process of deciding what product/service to use. They tend to rely on WOM, recommendations from friends, television, newspapers and internet as a search engine. The most popular SM platform participants use is *Facebook* and the main reason they use it is to keep in contact with family, friends and work colleagues. Also for blogs, facebook great for uploading photos, while other SM platforms were mentioned for example *twitter* especially for updates in relation to local and national sports events and *pinterest* for fashion ideas, recipes, baking for example.



Figure 4.3 Findings from Focus Group B





4.2.3 Focus Group C

Focus group findings are presented here from focus group C. Focus group C consisted of 6 participants.

Table 4.3: Focus Group C

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Questions 	Do you use SM?	When you think about SM what is the first thing that comes to mind?	What are the biggest problems with SM do you think?	Are you aware of any promotional campaigns run by Irish pay-TV providers on SM Platforms? If you are name company and campaign.	If you are a SM user what SM platforms do you use and why?
Respondents 					
1	No	Twitter, smart phones, people not making conversations anymore	Privacy issues	No	n/a
2	Yes	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Celebrities online	Data protection Bullying online	No	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Good for keeping in touch with family abroad
3	No	Smart phones no one interested in talking anymore	Virus Bullying Hacking Data protection	No	n/a
4	Yes	Wifi do I have	Viruses	No	Facebook

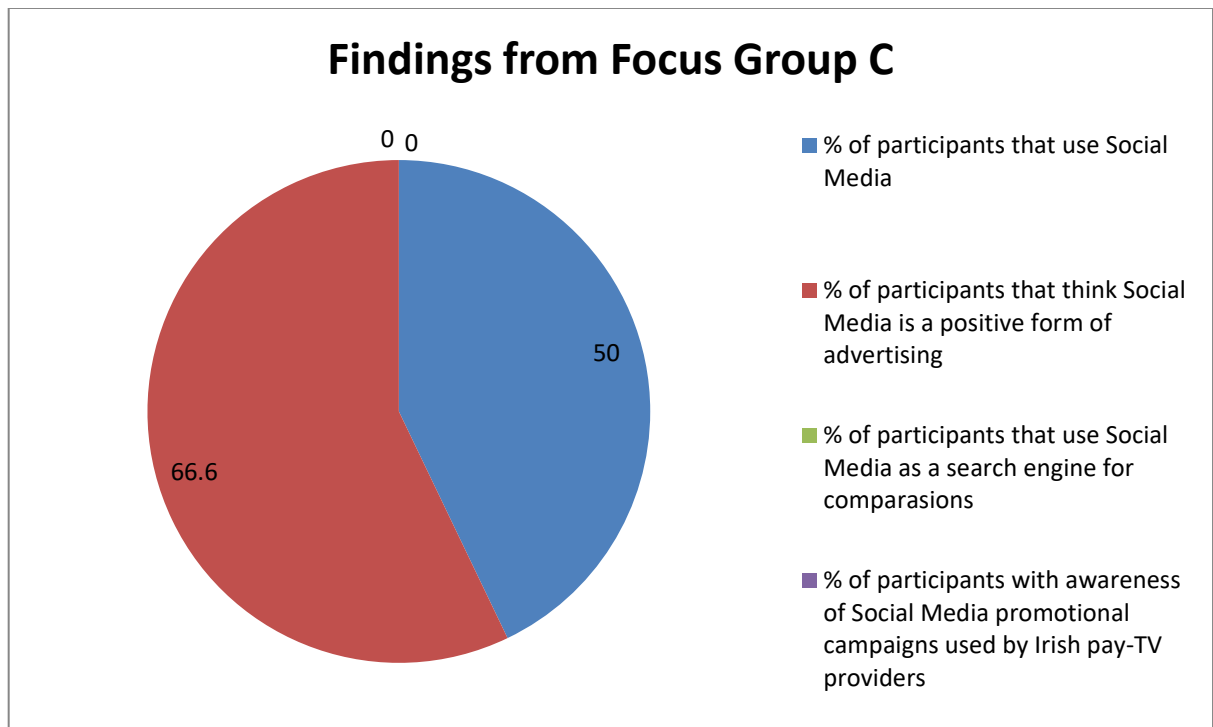
		wifi settings on my smartphone when I go out for a coffee Whats app YouTube Facebook			Snapchat Viber Whats app Pinterest Handy for recipes fashion latest trends and for communicating with friends family abroad
5	Yes	Facebook YouTube Pinterest	Security issues Viruses bullying	Virgin media promoting sporting events	Facebook YouTube Pinterest Interesting items to look up useful for networking
6	No	Tablets, peoples on phones taking selfies, less social interaction	Hacking Bullying online misrepresentation	No	n/a
	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8		
Questions 	Do you think is SM a positive form of advertising? Elaborate on yes/no answer.	Do you use SM as a search engine for comparisons when you are in the process of deciding what service/product to choose?	Have you ever used SM in the past in deciding what pay-TV service you would purchase?		
Respondents 					
1	No	No	No		
2	Yes	No use the internet as a search engine	No		

3	No	No	No but may do in the future		
4	Yes	No recommendations from friends and families	No		
5	Yes	No	No		
6	Yes	Rely on word of mouth	No		

Findings from focus group C identify that only half of the participants use SM, the first thing that comes to mind when they think of SM is platforms *Facebook* and *Pinterest*. The biggest problems with SM appear to be according to the majority of participants are a) data protection and b) online bullying. Almost none bar one of the participants from focus group C are aware of promotional campaigns ran by Irish pay-TV providers and the majority of participants have never used SM in the past in deciding what pay-tv service they would purchase but one participant may consider this option in the future.

The majority of participants think that SM is a positive form of advertising. None of participants use SM as a search engine to find comparisons when they are in the process of deciding what product/service to use. They tend to rely on WOM, recommendations from friends and family and use the internet as a search engine to find out about products or services. The most popular SM platform participants use is *Facebook* and the main reason they use it is to keep in contact with family, family overseas, friends and work colleagues. Some participants use other SM platforms to keep up to date with current trends in fashion and recipes.

Figure 4.4: Findings from Focus Group C





4.2.4 Focus Group D

Focus group findings are presented here from focus group D. Focus group D consisted of 6 participants.

Table 4.4: Focus Group D

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Questions ➔	Do you use SM?	When you think about SM what is the first thing that comes to mind?	What are the biggest problems with SM do you think?	Are you aware of any promotional campaigns run by Irish pay-TV providers on SM Platforms? If you are name company and campaign.	If you are a SM user what SM platforms do you use and why?
Respondents ⬇					
1	Yes	Facebook, twitter, instagram	Cyberbullying hacking viruses	No	Facebook Instagram

					Snapchat Whats app Viber To stay in touch with friends
2	Yes	Facebook, instagram, viber	Online bullying viruses hacking	Sky promotional campaigns for box sets	Facebook Viber Pinterest Whats app Twitter
3	Yes	Facebook, youtube, twitter	Data protection Security	Eir Sport promotional campaigns for premiership	Facebook YouTube Twitter Viber Whats app To stay in touch with friends and family abroad
4	Yes	Twitter, Instagram, viber, whats app, facebook	Hackers, online bullying	Sky promotional campaigns for box sets	YouTube Viber Twitter Facebook To stay up to date with news and current events
5	Yes	Facebook Twitter Pinterest Smart phones Tablets	Security issues Online bullying	Eir Sport promotional campaigns for premiership	Facebook YouTube Pinterest LinkedIn To stay in touch with friends and to find funny and entertaining content
6	Yes	Twitter, smart	Hacking, online	No	YouTube

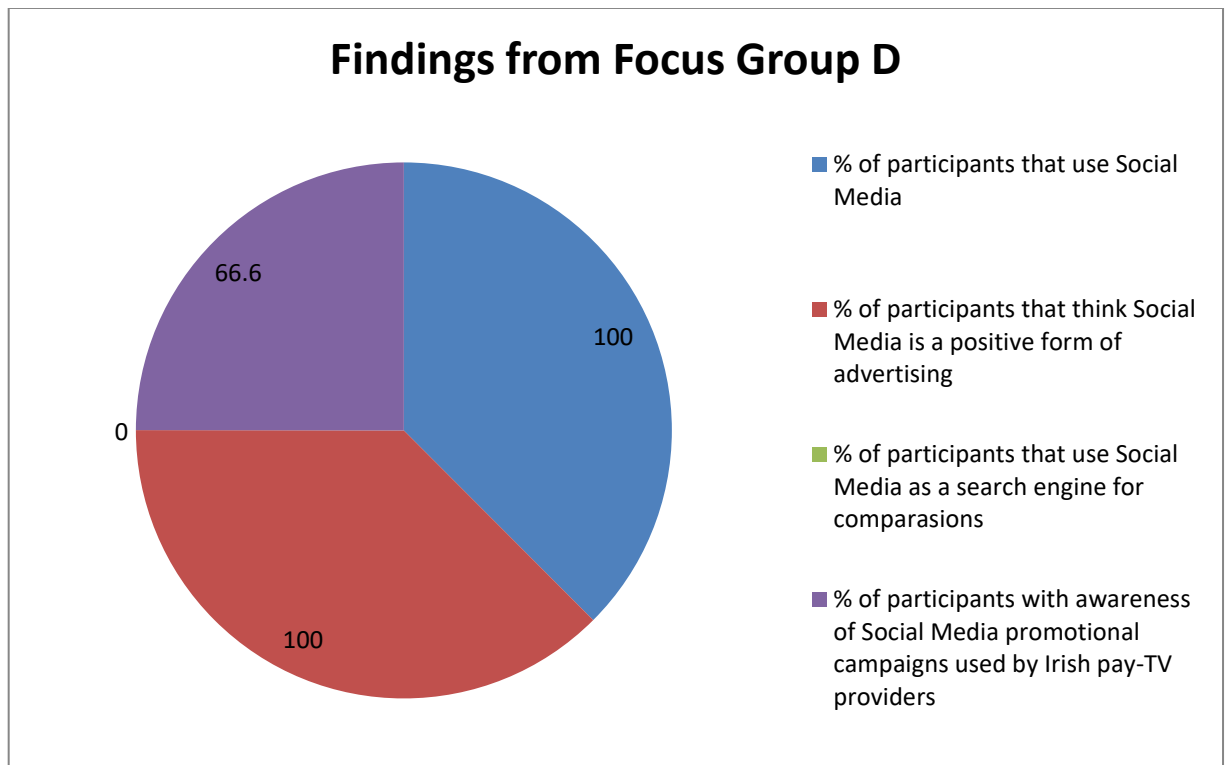
		phones, facebook, instagram	bullying		Viber Twitter Facebook To share opinions, photos or videos with friends and family
	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8		
Questions 	Do you think is SM a positive form of advertising?	Do you use SM as a search engine for comparisons when you are in the process of deciding what service/product to choose?	Have you ever used SM in the past in deciding what pay-TV service you would purchase?		
Respondents 	Elaborate on yes/no answer.				
1	Yes, can target a wider audience and various age groups	Not very often	No		
2	Yes, more engagement with customers and enhances relationship	No	No		
3	Yes	No rely on recommendations from friends and family	No		
4	Yes it can help a brand reach a larger group of people	No depend on WOM and recommendations from family and friends	No		

5	Yes as the majority of people use SM platforms via their smartphones and use it everyday	No would check out an internet search engine	No		
6	Yes	No never considered this	No		

Findings from focus group D identify all participants use SM, the first thing that comes to mind when they think of SM is the platforms *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The biggest problems with SM appear to be according to the majority of participants are a) hacking and b) online bullying. Four out of six of the participants from focus group D are aware of promotional campaigns ran by Irish pay-TV providers and the majority of participants have never used SM in the past in deciding what pay-tv service they would purchase.

The majority of participants think that SM is a positive form of advertising. It can target a wider audience, engage more with the customer and it is used frequently. The majority of participants do not use SM as a search engine to find comparisons when they are in the process of deciding what product/service to use. They tend to rely on WOM, recommendations from friends and family and use the internet as a search engine to find out about products or services. The most popular SM platform participants use is *Facebook* and the main reason they use it is to keep in contact with family, family overseas, friends and work colleagues. Some participants use other SM platforms to keep up to date with news and current events, to find funny and entertaining content and to share opinions, photos and videos.

Figure 4.5: Findings from Focus Group D



4.2.5 Summary of Main Focus Group Findings

See table below for summary of main findings and themes which emerged from all focus groups conducted.

Table 4.5 Summary of Main Findings from Focus Groups A, B, C & D

Focus Group A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Participate actively in SM ❖ Use prevalent SM platforms ❖ SM mainly acts of a means of communication between friends and family. ❖ No awareness of Irish pay-TV companies SM presence ❖ No awareness of promotional campaigns by Irish pay-TV companies ❖ SM is fun, entertaining and interesting
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ SM is not an apparent or obvious avenue to choose when using it for product and services comparisons
<p>Focus Group B</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Participate actively in SM ❖ Use prevalent SM platforms ❖ SM mainly acts of a means of networking between friends and family, looking up videos, fashion trends. ❖ Small level of awareness of Irish pay-TV companies SM presence ❖ General awareness of promotional campaigns by Irish pay-TV companies ❖ SM is good for promoting well-known brands ❖ SM is not an apparent or obvious avenue to choose when using it for product and services comparisons ❖ Not everyone uses SM
<p>Focus Group C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Don't actively participate in SM ❖ Use some prevalent SM platforms ❖ No awareness of Irish pay-TV companies SM presence ❖ Low awareness of promotional campaigns by Irish pay-TV companies ❖ SM is not an apparent or obvious avenue to choose when using it for product and services

	<p>comparisons but may consider it in future</p>
<p>Focus Group D</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Participate actively in SM ❖ Use prevalent SM platforms ❖ SM mainly acts of a means of communication between friends and family, to share opinions, to stay in touch with family abroad, to stay up to date with news and current events and to find funny and entertaining content ❖ No awareness of Irish pay-TV companies SM presence ❖ Awareness of some promotional campaigns by Irish pay-TV companies ❖ SM is fun, entertaining and interesting ❖ SM is not an apparent or obvious avenue to choose when using it for product and services comparisons, rely on recommendations from friends and family and WOM

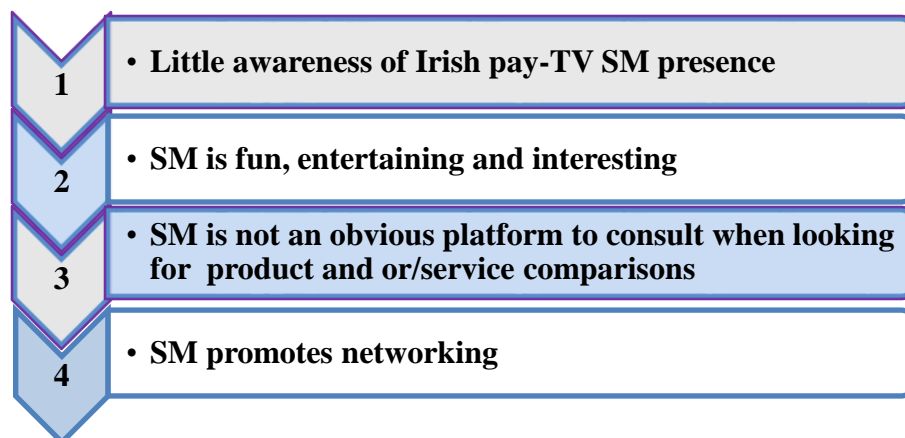
4.3 Discussion and Analyses

This section of the study discusses and analyses the main findings and the emerging four themes which were identified as a result of focus groups conducted.

4.3.1 Four themes emerged from Focus Group Findings

See below figure 4. 6: it displays the four themes which emerged from all four Focus Group Findings.

Figure 4.6 Four themes as a result of Focus Group Findings



4.3.2 Four themes discussed and analysed

The four themes which emerged as a result of the focus group findings are now outlined.

4.3.2.1 Theme 1 – Little awareness of Irish pay-TV SM presence

Following on from all focus groups conducted it is prevalent that there is little awareness of Irish pay-TV providers presence on social media platforms. The focus group participants comprised of both male and female participants from varying age groups. All focus group participants were over the age of 25. This may be a factor contributing to theme 1. A recent market research survey (based on 1,000 Irish people's social media usage) that the largest SM users are in the age category 25-34 year olds (MRBI, 2017). Irish pay-TV providers must enhance marketing their service online to the various age categories using SM, making profiles of their customer's and potential customers.

4.3.2.2 Theme 2 – SM is fun, entertaining and interesting

The author noted when all four focus groups were conducted there was a lot of discussion of the fun and entertainment element that SM brings to people. The author noted this in the notes section transcribed after each focus group was finished. Although this was not one of the questions posed to all four focus groups; participant's reactions to the question posed '*When you think about SM what is the first thing that comes to mind?*' The majority of participants displayed happy faces when talking about news feeds or celebrity gossip that they normally access when on SM. The

aforementioned factors must to be taken into consideration and taken seriously by Irish pay-TV providers when planning their SMM promotional campaigns.

4.3.2.3 Theme 3 – SM is not an obvious platform to consult when looking for product and or/service comparisons

It was evident when the question: *‘Do you use SM as a search engine for comparisons when you are in the process of deciding what service/product to choose?’* The reasoning behind the author asking this question was to ascertain do people generally use SM outlets when looking for product comparisons apart from using it as a social networking or news feed tool. Apparently it is not the case the majority of participants use other mediums to make these choices and comparisons for example television advertisements, newspaper advertisements, word of mouth, recommendations from friends and family.

4.3.2.4 Theme 4 – SM promotes networking

A lot of discussions took place during all four focus groups conducted considered SM an excellent platform for networking whether with family groups, friends or work colleagues. This is a unique trait of SM which Irish pay-TV can use to their advantage when promoting their services online. Comments and blogs may be posted by individuals or groups of people who may influence others in the buying and decision making process.

4.3.3 Summary

The focus group findings in this study, from a sample of twenty six participants may not have demonstrated the overall effectiveness as a result is limited for the scope of this study. This small sample size means the groups might not be a good representation of the larger population. However, findings revealed after good interactive discussions with participants many themes were identified which are all relevant to this study. In addition, for the purpose of this study the approach used is participatory action research.

4.4 Phase 2 - In-Depth Expert Interviews Findings

In-depth expert interview questions can be found in Appendix A.1 In-depth interviewing, also known as unstructured interviewing, is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation (Berry, 1999). The three in-depth expert interviews conducted gathered data from professional people with marketing expertise working in the pay-TV industry. In this section the initial findings from the expert interviews are displayed in the order A, B and C in table format. For this study three professionals were interviewed. The results are then displayed with key topics and five emerging themes are reported on.

Company profiles will be presented for both Virgin Media and Eir for background purposes and before interview results are presented.

4.4.1 Company profile – Virgin Media



Company Logo

Ownership	Liberty Global (US Intl. cable company)
CEO	Tony Hanway
Strengths	Fixed-line broadband speed, company boasts it is Ireland's fastest broadband network.
Number of employees	approximately 800
Number of customers	1.1 million – (311,000 pay-TV customers, 371,000 broadband subscribers, 365,000 landline subscribers, 10,000 mobile phone subscribers)

Services

Broadband Internet, pay digital TV, mobile & landline telephone services.

Background

Virgin Media Ireland previously traded under the branding Chorus NTL until 4 May 2010 and UPC Ireland until 5 October 2015. Liberty Global has invested over €1bn in Ireland over the last decade. It is primarily in competition with Sky Ireland and eir in the Irish pay TV market. While it trails Sky Ireland in the pay-TV market here – Sky Ireland has over 700,000 customers – it is also being chased by the likes of eir and more recently Vodafone. Virgin Media currently has the fastest home broadband on the market and this is an important consideration for many households, where multiple devices could be online at any one time (McGee, 2016).

One of the big successes the company has met with has been the introduction of a mobile service for its customers. Essentially a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) using Three Mobile's network, Virgin Mobile now has over 10,000 customers and the offering will be expanded later this year (2017) to include the retail network. The company conducted two digital index reports in collaboration with Amárach research, these reports identify how Irish people, consumers and businesses use the internet and digital technologies, how they intend using it in the future and how the Irish Internet economy can contribute to overall national competitiveness (Virgin Media website, 2017).

4.4.2 Company profile – eir Sport



Company Logo

Ownership	Subsidiary of telecommunications company Eir
CEO	Richard Moat
Strengths	Eir operates the largest fixed-line telecommunications network in the Republic of Ireland. In December 2015 Eir agreed to pay in excess of €20 million for broadcaster Setanta Sports. In July 2015 it rebranded the channel as Eir Sport and announced it has secured the exclusive Irish rights to the 2019 Rugby World Cup.
Number of employees	3,437
Number of customers	200,000 (apx) eir Sport subscribers
Services	Broadband Internet, pay digital TV, mobile & landline telephone services.

Background

Eir is the principal provider of fixed-line and mobile telecommunications services in Ireland. The company provides a comprehensive range of advanced voice, data, broadband and TV services to the residential, small business, enterprise and government markets. As Bord Telecom Éireann, the company was state-owned until 1999, when it was floated on the Irish and New York Stock Exchanges. In 2016, Eir entered the TV market with the acquisition of Setanta Sport with the subsequent rebranding to eir Sport which they offer as part of enhanced valued bundles to all

broadband customers. eir Sport customers are signed up to the companies seven-channel line-up available across eir Vision TV service, the eir Sport app, Sky and on Vodafone TV. The company has a mobile division operating under the eir Mobile brand. In addition, the company has a wholesale division, Open eir, the largest wholesale operator in Ireland, providing products and services to more than 60 wholesale customers, across a range of regulated and unregulated markets.

Eir have also completed a wholly owned fibre network ring around Northern Ireland and another around Belfast. Eir's mobile divisions, EirMobile and Meteor, provides a full range of mobile communication services throughout the Republic of Ireland.

Revenue for the company for the year ended June 30, 2016 was €1.3 billion.

According to quarterly data published by ComReg (ComReg 16/76), Eir had a market share for the quarter ended June 30, 2016 of 49% of the Irish fixed line market, based on revenue. As at the June 30, 2016 Eir had 1,216, 000 fixed line rental and

wholesale telephone access lines in service, of which 854, 000 (excluding line share) were retail and wholesale broadband customers. According to Brian Quinn

(operations director with responsibility for marketing at eir Sport) the vast majority of sports fans still prefer to watch live content, and social media supports live viewing.

The main ethos of their social media approach is to be there at the key moments to enhance fans' enjoyment of the event.

Interview A: Ms. Meadhbh Quinn, Virgin Media

Table 4.6: Interview A

	Question	Answer
1	What is your role in Virgin Media?	Head of branding and marketing
2	Who is responsible for the SM programme in the company? Is there a dedicated marketing team working on SM platform updates/promotional campaigns?	We have a social media specialist
3	Do you believe SMM is an essential business function? Elaborate on reasons why it is or is not.	Essential – no, does lead to engagement levels with customers but not essential
4	How often is the company website updated?	Constantly, daily.
5	Which methods of internet marketing/and or SM do you feel provide the business with the greatest ROI? Elaborate, provide examples where possible	Difficult to link to specific ROI or ROI as no clear link to direct sales customer retention

6	Do you believe your company is maximising the benefits available to it from the use of SMM? Elaborate provide examples	No, resources and budget required to really deliver across the media however as social is hard to directly link to sales its very hard to argue for additional investment.
7	Do you have a SMM Strategy? Is it linked with your overall Branding Strategy? Do you think SMM is effective?	Yes depending on product offerings Yes. To keep in line with Virgin Media's tone of voice. Effective in delivering engagement, linking to brand affinity, sales, retention is very hard
8	What SM media platforms do you use to promote the company's products and services	Facebook Twitter
9	Why do you use these platforms	Engagement, reach customers, deliver more in depth messaging

Interview B: Ms. Ailbhe O'Reilly, Virgin Media

Table 4.7: Interview B

	Question	Answer
1	What is your role in Virgin Media?	Insight Analyst
2	Is there a dedicated marketing team working on SM platform updates/promotional campaigns?	Yes there is a social media team who handle customer care communication and also a social media specialist who handles the overall strategy for social media and all the updates/promotional campaigns.
3	Do you believe SMM is an essential business function? Elaborate on reasons why it is or is not.	Yes, as we are a customer facing company customers expect to be able to contact us via social media as well as phone. We also use social as a platform to communicate with customers.
4	How often is the company website updated?	Very often as it is a sales channel as well
5	The promotional campaigns conducted are these a combination of both traditional marketing and SMM marketing or just one method i.e. traditional only or SMM only? Do you target a specific audience/market for	Yes we use a mixture of traditional and new media. Yes we do. We are currently targeting students with a 30 day contract campaign.

	promotional campaigns via SM platforms?	
6	Do you believe your company is maximising the benefits available to it from the use of SMM? Elaborate provide examples	No, restrictions with budget.
7	Do you have a SMM Strategy? Do you think SMM is effective?	Yes depending on product offerings Effective in delivering engagement, linking to brand affinity, sales, retention is very hard
8	What SM media platforms do you use to promote the company's products and services	Twitter Facebook
9	Why do you use these platforms?	They are the most common and most important social media platforms

Interview C: Mr, Nathan Kelly, Eir Sport

Table 4.8: Interview C

	Question	Answer
1	What is your role in Eir Sport?	My current role in Eir is Social Media Manager of Eir Sport.
2	What do you see as the key differences between SMM and traditional marketing?	SMM is much more flexible, adaptable, dynamic and more fun than traditional marketing, I feel. As well as that, SMM can target more specifically than traditional. By that I mean, through direct response ads on facebook for example, we can target users who have shown interest in specific pieces of content on our page, or users who don't follow our page, but are a Liverpool fan, living in Galway, aged 25-44, for example. With traditional marketing, a lot of the time you are putting something out there in a broad medium hoping your target audience responds or reacts to it, with SMM you can directly target that audience. Of course, you can go broad through SMM too, if you wanted to create general brand awareness.
3	What Social Networking sites does your company use and why?	At the moment, I control the online presence of eir Sport, eir's 7 channel TV Sports package which includes Eir Sport 1 & 2, BT Sport 1, 2 & 3, BT Sport ESPN and BoxNation. The Social Networking sites we use are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Periscope.
4	How often are your	Twitter – Daily Facebook – Daily

	SM platforms updated?	<p>Instagram – Almost Daily</p> <p>Snapchat – Used at key events, on average 3 times a month</p> <p>You-Tube – Twice a week</p>
5	Do you believe your company is maximising the benefits available to it from the use of SMM? (elaborate provide examples)	<p>I believe eir Sport, as part of eir, are performing well in the area of SM and SMM. The thing about SMM is that it is constantly improving and becoming more detailed, with products and technologies being enhanced all the time. We do have room to improve. There is a lot of data out there available to use from our SM profiles which are yet to tap into and really benefit from, and this is a key objective for us towards the end of 2017.</p> <p>For example we are now monitoring our drop-off rates in our video content much more closely to see where people are dropping off and why. We are looking at the subscription journey on our website to monitor where people are looking to sign up but for some reason, don't at certain stages. We want to know why and also be able to retarget those individuals, potentially with special offers to ensure they go back and complete the journey.</p>
6	Is there a dedicated marketing team working on SM platform updates/promotional campaigns etc?	<p>The eir Sport Marketing Team is currently made up of just 3 full-time people really, a Marketing Manager, a Social Media Manager (myself) and a Social Media & Marketing Executive. Between us, we oversee, creative, copy and messaging on upcoming</p>

	(outline brief description of how many in the team and their roles for example)	<p>campaigns or key fixtures. We also have a Graphic Designer who works with us on creating artwork, as well as Promos Editor who works in our TV Department who provides us with some video content.</p>
7	Do you have a SMM Strategy? (If the answer is yes outline the strategy or outline summary of strategy?)	<p>The overall goal of the eir Sport Marketing Team is to ensure our product, content and offering is as widely known as possible and presented in a creative and appealing manner. There are currently two offerings with the eir Sport pack.</p> <p>(1): You can sign up as a satellite customer and pay a monthly subscription price.</p> <p>(2): You can enjoy the full eir Sport pack for free as an eir Broadband customer.</p> <p>With that said, we must ensure both offerings are being advertised across social, as well as traditional marketing. We do however have a set in stone Social Media Marketing Strategy. As a Sports Station, we are constantly evolving and gaining new content or changing content all the time. We are quite reactive in our approach, which has worked thus far.</p>
8	Promotional campaigns conducted are these a combination of both traditional marketing and SMM methods? Or just one method i.e.	<p>It depends on the campaign really for us. For a big event, such as a Conor McGregor fight which is exclusively live on the eir Sport pack, or an exclusively live Irish international fixture, our Social Media Marketing would be in line with our Traditional, with possibly a couple of extras – video</p>

	<p>traditional marketing only or SMM only? (Outline/elaborate on reasons why)</p>	<p>content etc. For lesser events, we often stick just to SMM, especially if we land content last minute, we can quite quickly have creative make-up and promoted across our platforms.</p>
9	<p>How do you measure Consumers expectations? For example do you rely on topical trends? Elaborate methods used.</p>	<p>As we provide a service to people's homes, we tend to find out quite quickly if we are not measuring expectations. This is simply done through Social Listening, reading what our followers are saying to us on a daily basis and responding to them. We've a good relationship with our online following on the whole, granted these would not all be customers, but we like to treat our followers as people rather than customers and I think this reflects on our business, certainly from the eir Sport side. If there's an issue with our TV feed, or people don't like one of our pundits, they tell us. We don't hide from criticism either. I feel we can't as we are so active in posting. With that said, we don't measure expectations on any chart with figures really, it's more through listening.</p>
10	<p>Do you target a specific audience/market for promotional campaigns via SM platforms? (provide examples why and why not)</p>	<p>Through a couple of tools we use to help us monitor our social presence online, we know our key demographic is Males 25-44. With this in mind, this is our key target when pushing our DR ads or key messaging with paid spend behind it. However, we do change this for certain events. Around our coverage of the Women's</p>

		<p>Rugby World Cup for example, we targeted women who were interested in sport or who have connected with the Irish Rugby page in the past. We've also targeted our followers in Dundalk when promoting Dundalk FC's run in European football last year.</p>
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4.4.3 Key topics and emerging themes from Interview A

Table 4.9

Key Topics	Emerging Themes
Customer Experience	Customer Engagement
Brand resonance	Brand affinity

4.4.4 Key topics and emerging themes from Interview B

Table 4.10

Key Topics	Emerging Themes
Customer Experience	Use SM to communicate with customers
Target Market	Can target various audiences

4.4.5 Key topics and emerging themes from Interview C

Table 4.11

Key Topics	Emerging Themes
SM Content	SM is dynamic, fun and flexible
Customer Experience	Enhance the customer journey
Target Markets	Key demographic, target audience
Keeping online platform content up to date	Frequent updates on SM platforms used

4.4.6 Discussion on key themes from in-depth interviews conducted

- **Customer Experience**

It is apparent after all three interviews conducted that both Virgin Media and eir Sport are keen to ensure that their customer's experience of their products and services on offer is a positive one. The customer 'journey' is highlighted as both service providers provide a service into 'people's homes' they tend to find out quite quickly if the service is not measuring expectations. Customer service tends to be weak in telecommunications companies like Virgin Media and eir Sport however when effort is made to engage with customers via social media channels such as facebook or twitter the 'customer experience' is enhanced. This finding is evident from the marketing personnel interviewed from Virgin Media, also customer loyalty is highlighted as an area that needs improving on.

- **Brand Resonance**

'Sometimes a brand is memorable because of the little things', (Geller, 2012). Brand resonance is paramount for both Virgin Media and eir Sport to be successful. Findings from the interviews carried out suggest brand resonance is an important marketing agenda item for both companies. eir Sport had the distinct advantage of being part of a bigger telecommunications company eir to assist with it's rebranding after the takeover of Setanta Sports. Eir is a recognised brand in the telecommunications industry in Ireland with a long history. People associate with this. Brand affinity is an attribute both

companies want to continue to improve on also. The Virgin group has a strong brand reputation and this helped it when it re-branded the former UPC telecoms operator.

- **Target Market/Audience**

Findings from the interviews conducted demonstrate a good awareness of the companies target markets. In relation to eir Sport there are varying target markets which different sporting events can target different demographic groups. Virgin Media are also fully aware of what target markets they can reach with their various promotional campaigns. Target markets can be advantageous for both companies when launching different promotional campaigns. Knowing their customer's is key to success in winning a comprehensive customer base. Nathan Kelly from eir Sport expresses in his interview that with SMM you can directly target an audience unlike traditional marketing where you are hoping your target audience reacts or responds to it.

- **SM Content**

One of the secondary objectives of this study is to identify the SM platforms Virgin Media and eir Sport use to market their service. Following on from interviews conducted the main SM platforms used are Facebook and Twitter by both companies. eir Sport demonstrate the ability to use other SM platforms Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube. eir Sport appear to have more of a digital presence than Virgin Media this is perhaps due to the nature of their offering i.e. Sport Events. Creativity is key for content and appealing content is a must, this is apparent after interview with Nathan Kelly, eir Sport. Having a graphic designer helps with this as well as a promotions editor who works in the television side of the business whom helps out with some video content. Following on from interviews with Virgin Media marketing personnel proper lines of communication and engagement with customers' via social media channels used should demonstrate accurate content.

- **Frequency of keeping online platforms updated**

Keeping online platform content up to date appears to be an essential factor in the overall marketing and promotional plans within both companies. This appears more so with eir Sport due to the changing dynamic of sporting

events, prevalent SM platforms are updated daily. Both companies have a dedicated SM specialist who updates SM content frequently, which is essential for customer engagement.

4.5 Conclusion

A summary of the key findings from both focus groups and in-depth interviews were presented and discussed. For the purpose of the study two of the secondary objectives were identified and discussed: a) The various social media platforms that pay-TV providers utilise to promote their pay-TV service were identified b) ascertain from a customer's perspective if the promotional campaigns ran by the pay-TV providers via social media platforms proves more effective as a means of engagement than with traditional marketing methods or is a combination of both methods as effective.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings from the primary data and the literature examined. The study aimed to explore the use of SMM in the pay-TV industry in Ireland. The themes from the findings are outlined with recommendations identified for each of the nine themes. The nine themes identified as a result of research conducted are as follows:

1. Little awareness of Irish pay-TV SM presence
2. SM is fun, entertaining and interesting
3. SM is not an obvious platform to consult when looking for product and/or service
4. SM promotes Networking
5. Customer Experience
6. Brand Resonance
7. Target Market/Audience
8. SM Content
9. Frequency of keeping online platforms updated

5.2 Conclusion 1 with Recommendations

'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit' (Aristotle)

More **research** needs to be addressed by both Virgin Media and eir Sport to enhance customer engagement techniques via the social networking platforms they use to market their service. Consulting with outside experts in the area of SMM and SM platforms may be considered as an option to execute this.

Regular **up-skilling** of staff dedicated to SMM within the organisation must be on-going. **Workshops** to assist not only these staff dedicated to SMM within the organisation but to all staff within the organisation as a whole is recommended also. As a result of this **training** more expertise in how to execute SMM campaigns and how to take advantage of SM platforms will improve overall productiveness of SMM promotional campaigns and heighten awareness of its importance. As already outlined in the extensive literature review conducted in this study it is evident that

there is an abundance of research in the area of both SM and SMM, Senior Marketing personnel should present some of this literature readily available to staff to improve their knowledge and skill set when it comes to the areas of SM and SMM.

Industry reports on SM and SMM statistics must be regularly shown to team members involved in marketing within both pay-TV companies. This can be done via email or regular team meetings. Marketing **staff must be encouraged** to attend expos, promotional events and seminars which highlight the importance, trends in and effectiveness of both SM and SMM.

5.3 Conclusion 2 with Recommendations

'An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest' (Benjamin Franklin)

Improving means of engagement with customers and potential customers is essential for the pay-TV providers in this study. Today in the world of marketing the importance of the 'customer journey' is increasingly important. This is especially the case when using platforms like Facebook and Twitter to promote products and services. This is also apparent from the findings of this study especially from the focus group findings. **Updating content, sharing news stories** related to new products and services on offer is essential to reach a far reaching target market/audience. This can be achieved by **regularly listening** to customers', reviewing their comments online, interacting with their views on ways the business can improve their offerings. It is evident from reports reported on in this study people use ever changing updated technology as part of their daily lives from smart phones to tablets. It is important that pay-TV providers tap in to these factors and identify the potential their service and product offerings can have through SM promotion channels.

Story telling via SM platforms may be recommended or considered by Irish pay-TV providers when promoting and marketing their service. Blogs are an ideal tool to utilise for this purpose. But for the purpose of this study and due to the fact that both pay-TV providers use Facebook and Twitter as their main SM platforms consideration should be given to writing an entire story perhaps in a Facebook post or even create a facebook photo album, as well as producing a long Facebook video. In relation to twitter curate news and timely content relevant to pay-TV service into a twitter moment to help keep up the company followers up-to-date with the latest happenings.

As portrayed in the literature review of this study infographics are very effective for visual storytelling. Brainstorming sessions between staff in the marketing team is also essential where ideas can be generated to add value to SMM promotional campaigns.

5.4 Conclusion 3 with Recommendations

'When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. If you listen, you may learn something new' (Dalai Lama)

Identifying customer's needs and wants is essential for Irish pay-TV providers when marketing their service. Due to the popularity of online social media platforms evident in today's society it is recommended that the aforementioned companies should set up an online community where customer's have the option have to input into the design or promotion of a new product or bundle package for example. As a result of the findings reported on in this study it is evident that more people are using modern technology in their daily lives. With this awareness apparent pay-TV providers should consider engaging with a wider audience not just their customers. It is also evident from literature discussed and reported on in chapter 2 of this study around word-of-mouth marketing that WOM communication is a major part of online consumer interactions, particularly within the environment of online communities.

WOM has an influence on evaluation and purchase of a product and/or service. Some evidence researched in the literature review suggest that individuals behave as if websites themselves are primary 'actors' in online social networks and that online communities can act as a social alternative for individual identification. A recommendation for marketing professionals working within the pay-TV companies explored in this study is to investigate the concept of a consumer-website relationship existence. Identifying the needs of the consumer is essential and regular and constant interaction online with consumers can lead to extensive customer satisfaction. Happy employees equal happy customers? This mantra is also recommended. Engagement is key to successful customer experiences. This is also evident from the findings and literature review chapters contained in this study.

5.5 Conclusion 4 with Recommendations

'The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination' (Albert Einstein)

Investing in new technologies to improve customer service and the customer experience is worth investigating in the area of SM and SMM. Correct, efficient and clear business and marketing models should be in place to exploit the positivity of SM platforms.

Recognition of Irish pay-TV brands on SM platforms requires more exposure. As outlined in chapter 2 trends and branding strategies in relation to SM and SMM campaigns engage a far reaching audience. SM contributes to personalisation of a “brand” and helps companies spread the message in a relaxed and conversational way. Brand resonance is a key finding highlighted in phase two of this study. Consumer loyalty is what pay-TV companies strive for, competition from other providers is ever present. In order to combat this pay-TV brands should be knowledgeable of their competitor’s activities. An online interactive presence is essential to fulfil the full potential of engaging with consumers via SM platforms and keeping these platforms constantly updated with fun and entertaining content. This was also a key finding from focus groups conducted in this study: participants demonstrated an appreciated a fun and entertaining element to SM. Also targeting a wider audience through an excellent online presence is recommended. Enhance the tools already used via SM platforms to heighten awareness.

5.6 Future study

As previously outlined empirical research must continue to be conducted in the area of SMM. Focus groups are a great way of conducting this research. Discussions amongst consumers that use the innovative technology are crucial. Engaging with the customer is vital. There are always new ways to advance and expand the knowledge of the workings of new concepts in the area of Marketing. The potential of SMM is realised; this is indeed evident in the findings of this study carried out. A clearer picture and image must be drawn to prove the benefits and importance of SMM as part of the Marketing discipline. Marketing has come a long way in the last forty years. Technology and the Internet challenge marketers, academics, teaching professionals and students to adapt to the new developments. Research is paramount. Further research is critical to this study as a society we are constantly trying new

emerging media platforms, as consumers we need to be know how to use these new technologies associated with the platforms, ascertain criteria for good practice. Marketers as professionals must strive to gain more meaningful insights to the limitations of current research and extend research where possible as there are ever evolving new technologies that can assist in this essential research need. Learn and grow from mistakes made in the past and critically analyse a new way forward.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion the results of the findings conducted clearly demonstrate that the use of SM by Irish pay-TV providers has changed the marketing of their services but they have a lot more to do to ensure it is effective. The various platforms identified highlighted two of the main SM platforms used by the Irish pay-TV providers namely Facebook and Twitter. Evidence collated from the findings of the focus groups conducted show little or no engagement/awareness by participants of an SM presence by Irish-pay TV providers when marketing their service and conducting promotional campaigns. The future for SM and SMM is bright once used in an effective and engaging manner. As a result of this study a combination of both traditional marketing methods and the use of SMM tools by pay-TV companies can help market their service to their full potential. SMM is an excellent new concept that will challenge businesses today but will reap rewards and sustainable success when utilised to its full potential.

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