

# *The International Hospitality and Tourism Student Journal*

## An analysis of the impact of social media on event organisations in Ireland

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### Abstract

Social Media is an emerging medium with many organisations turning to it to advertise the business. Marketers all over the world have noted significant changes with the introduction of digital technologies. The use of these free marketing mediums has greatly impacted on the way organisations advertise their products or services, especially during the economic uncertainty. From provisional research in the area, it was clear that there was an absence of information relating to the impact on event organisations in Ireland. The aim of the study was then developed to analyse the effectiveness of social media on event organisations and delve into the rationale behind the implementation of the social media plan. The research was conducted through the use of primary and secondary research. Firstly, secondary research was executed in the form of a literature review. As the area of social media is very recent, much of the research was located through online journals, articles reports and recently published books. The results of the initial critical review of the literature were utilised further in order to garner primary data. Surveys were distributed to event organisation across the country through email and two interviews were conducted with event professionals to acquire their opinions and experiences of social media in business. It was found that social media has impacted immensely on event organisations in Ireland more so than other businesses as it allows the company to target specific demographics and provides a medium to display their professional work.

*Keywords:* Social media; Digital technologies; Advertising; Social media plan; Ireland

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### 1. Introduction

The emergence of digital technologies has significantly changed the methods of communication and according to Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2013:97) they “...are eroding the boundaries between the message, the media, the channel and the product”. Social media has presented voices to the masses and changed the relationship between consumers and businesses (Preston, 2012). It was clear that further research in the area of social media and event organisations in Ireland was required. In order to develop the research further an aim and a number of objectives were developed. The aim of the following research is to highlight the impact that social media has had on event organisations in Ireland.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1. Theoretical Background

There is significant research and theories relating to social media marketing (Weinberg, 2009; Evans, 2010). However, this review will focus on the movement of social media technology into the working day of small businesses – more

specifically event organisations. Many topics will be covered throughout this review in the hope to investigate what is strategically important to organisations when implementing a social media plan. The topics under discussion include; changes to the traditional marketing process, customer interaction, variety of social media mediums, businesses using social media to develop corporate image, and the increasing usage of social media. Although the literature highlights these subjects in an assortment of perspectives, the central point of this study will be on the application of social media into the event industry.

#### 2.2. Movement of Technology

In recent times, the internet has become progressively more social in comparison to the original offset of the internet being an informational medium (Weinberg, 2009). Internet is the emerging information technology with the credibility of immediacy and speed, thus it brings globalisation in every aspects of communication (Jothi et al, 2011). Weinberg (2009) stresses how the idea behind social media is to market your organisation, product or event in order to influence the public by targeting your chosen demographic.

With the significant hype relating to social media marketing at present Richardson et al (2010) state that marketers working in the marketing industry over that last decade would have seen a gradual transformation in the needs of customers, the ever changing marketplace along with the uncertainty of the economy at present. He declares that one thing is certain – technology has been the source of power behind much of the revolution. The traditional marketing mix has been replaced by the need to develop consumer relationships (Bowdin et al, 2006). Bowdin et al (2006) declare that this has been down to the diversification of technology within the market. Technology has paved the way for just about anyone to share and create content. A tweet, video or blog post can be easily produced and viewed by millions in effect for free. This in turn has led to the reduction of costs for businesses advertising (Zarella, 2010).

A social network is a common term used to describe an internet application that provides a platform for people to create a profile and also encourage users to build relationships with people of similar interests and backgrounds (Weinberg, 2009). Two of the most popular social network sites, at present, are Facebook and LinkedIn. These networks have large numbers of members who share experiences almost instantly to the public network – whether it is positive or negative about a product or service engaged in (Evans, 2010). In accordance with Enterprise Ireland (2012), social media has four main benefits which are;

- To draw attention to new developments of product or services;
- Maintain networks within the industry;
- Expand the number of consumer and/or client relationships;
- Construct a translucent business (Enterprise Ireland, 2012).

All of the aforementioned can be achieved simply and effectively through the use of social media. The uses of digital technologies have become incredibly important for today's business (Brassington & Pettitt, 2013). It does not only provide a means to find, buy and sell products but they have also produced an environment for constructing communities (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013).

### 2.3. Social Media usage in Ireland

Since the introduction of social media sites, there has been a significant movement in the amount of people using the sites each day (Richardson et al, 2010). In spite of the numbers of social networks increasing all the time, the most successful sites include; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Facebook alone possess 800 million users – half of whom log on for daily use (Awareness Inc, 2012). According to a study carried out by Amas in 2011, the following categories use the internet daily:

- 77% of 16-29 year olds;
- 64% of 30-44 year olds;
- 43% of 45-69 year olds;
- 21% of 60-74 year olds.

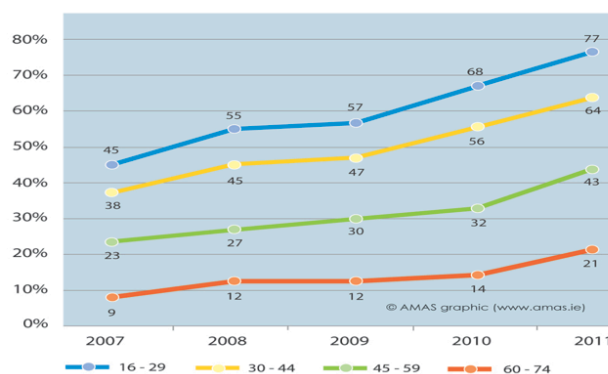


Figure 1: The Daily Internet Usage in Ireland 2012 (Amas1, 2012)

The internet has become a significant tool for communication and has had a considerable impact on the global society which is clearly outlined in Figure 1 (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013).

Research carried out by Ipsos MRBI (2012), a market research company, on social networking usage in Ireland, noted a 5% increase from the months of August to November 2012. This is now at a high of 63% across Ireland. The typical Irish person spends an average of 18 hours and 7 minutes online every month (Ipsos MRBI, 2012). Following research carried out by Social Bakers (2012), it was found that currently 55% (2.3 million) of the population of Ireland have an account on the world number one social network site, Facebook. From this information, it is clear that it is only a matter of time before online marketers sought refuge in the social media haven when the economy flat lined (Richardson et al, 2010).

### 2.4. Social Media on the rise for small businesses in Ireland

Investment in the marketing domain of social media is clearly on the rise (Richardson et al, 2010). Following research carried out by Zanghi (2012), it was found that marketers rate the improved presence throughout the social media stage as still being the priority in their marketing campaigns. During these recessionary times, there are many challenges faced by businesses in Ireland (O'Toole, 2012). In relation to a recent survey carried out by the Marketing Institute of Ireland, research found that 95% of those surveyed rated value for money associated with marketing online as the driving force behind the increased usage (Amas2, 2012). The term "word of mouse" (Wood, 2010:38), in the digital world we live in today, is repeatedly more plausible than paid advertising campaigns. More and more non-profit, service firms and businesses small in size are looking at the preferred outcomes of social media (Wood, 2010). In the past, having a business website was crucial for a prospective future, however, as mentioned by Evans (2010:303) "having a business presence

on personal and professional networks...is now considered entry stakes for most businesses and organisations”.

### 2.5. Return on Investment

Neher (2012) states that even though many businesses today currently have a Twitter, Facebook or even a YouTube channel, most companies are left wondering what their investment of time or money is worth. Nolan (2012) noted that if the new age of marketing is to linger another while yet, there needs to be energy and resources put in place in order to measure the return on investment. Weinberg (2009) outlines that it is difficult for an organisation to determine the return on investment in relation to a social media campaign. However, Weinberg (2009) breaks social media down into five metrics that an organisation can use to estimate the return on investment – reach, frequency and traffic, influence, conversions and transactions and finally sustainability. Following research carried out by McGraw-Hill (1986), those companies who advertised assertively in recessionary times saw an increase in sales of 256% compared to those who cut their advertising budgets (Next Level Strategic Marketing Group, 2008). During a recession, businesses become more sensitive with regards to marketing spend which is why most companies are turning to social media (Amerland, 2011).

### 2.6. Changing Role of the Consumer

As mentioned previously by Richardson et al (2010), the world we live in has changed in a way that anyone can be an influence. The modification for marketers today in social media advertising is essentially socialising – mingling with your potential customers. There are no more specific start or end dates (Biba, 2008). Biba (2008) outlines that marketing of the age we are in is about housing lasting relationships that a business can cultivate ultimately. For many organisations, the prospect of targeting and gaining new customers is to highlight the utilisation of social media (Lewis, 2012). In relation to the event industry, the consumer has always been a means of endorsement (Preston, 2012). The event manager at any gathering is accountable for the consumer's enjoyment (Preston, 2012). The event manager typically passes the task of spreading the communication relating to the event experience to the attendees. In doing so, the event manager transfers the marketing onto the attendees to spread the word to their broad reach of networks online (Preston, 2012).

### 2.7. The Events Industry

The internet presents itself as a prevailing promotional mechanism for an event marketer (Preston, 2012). Social media provides the resource to share opinions, which has always been a facet of customer behaviour according to Preston (2012). As mentioned previously, social media works on the basis of word of mouth or “word of mouse” (Wood, 2010) and event marketers have for a long time understood the effectiveness of this form of marketing communications for events specifically (Preston, 2012).

The pace at which social media progresses and the high level of activity associated with the domain can lead to the expiration of information rapidly (Kaplan and Haelein, 2010). In today's tough economy, big and small organisations, individuals and even major or minor event concepts, place the majority of their efforts into social media advertising in order to be noticed in the competitive market (Zarella, 2010). Whether establishing connections, meeting the objectives of clients or bargaining with contractors, the populace of the event industry are social by character (Eden, 2011). Eden (2011) highlights how social media has had a dramatic impact on the events industry by the changing face of word of mouth marketing. However, according to Smith (2012), event management personnel still highlight the uses of traditional marketing, such as print, email and company websites, as being a necessary tool in marketing events. In addition, social media can add to the experience of an event through the act of generating a buzz and engage attendees and in turn increase the number of attendees while at the same time building relationships (Baer, 2010). As mentioned by Preston (2012), this is where event marketing is moving towards in the years to come.

## 3. Methodology

Primary data was employed to answer the research question relating to the relevance and effectiveness of social media on event companies. In research, the population is the set of individuals the researcher wants to make a conclusion about – in this case, event management organisations in Ireland.

Event marketers often use a combination of research techniques to achieve an insight into customer segmentation and targeting (Bowdin et al, 2006). Intercept surveys are often taken at the entry and exit gates at a festival or event to establish feedback from the attendees (Bowdin et al, 2006). In today's economy, more and more businesses are moving more towards online survey methods (Preston, 2012). More frequently event organisations are integrating a survey into their social media profile to establish all aspects concerning what went right, wrong or what could have been better with their event (Preston, 2012).

### 3.1. Internet Survey

As seen in Table 1, Internet surveys are quick and affordable compared to typical postal surveys, face to face surveys and telephone surveys in relation to data collection (Dillman, 2007). Due to advances in technology, the internet has made it possible for researchers to design, carry out and evaluate their own surveys. While the selection of form is completely up to the researchers' precise goals, internet surveys are a great alternative in many cases (Gingery, 2011). Internet surveys can be conducted in three ways:

- Email survey;
- Survey sent as an email attachment;
- Web based survey

A Comparison of face-to-face, telephone and internet surveys				
	Face-to-Face	Telephone	Mail	Internet
<b>Questionnaire</b>				
Use of open-ended questions	High	Medium	Low	Low
Ability to probe	High	Medium	Low	Low
Use of visual aids	High	Poor	High	High
Sensitive questions	Medium	Low	High	Low
<b>Resources</b>				
Cost	High	Medium	Low	Low
<b>Sampling</b>				
Widely dispersed populations	Low	Medium	High	High
Response Rates	High	Medium	Low	Low
Experimental control	High	Medium	Low	Low
<b>Interviewing</b>				
Control who completes the questionnaire	High	High	Low	Low/High
Interview bias	Possible	Possible	Low	Low

(Jobber &amp; Ellis-Chadwick, 2013:241)

**Table 1:** A Comparison of Face-to-Face, Telephone and Internet Surveys

For the purpose of this research, the survey was sent as an email attachment with a cover letter in the body of the email explaining the objective of the research. There was a disadvantage associated with this format as the respondent needed to open the survey attachment, fill in the answers, save the attachment onto their desktop and then reattach the document to an email to reply.

### 3.2. Survey Design

Several types of questions were utilised throughout the survey design. Closed-ended questions indicate the array of answers that will be recorded. Close-ended questions took many forms in the research survey – such as, dichotomous questions where there is a choice of two answers (e.g. Yes/No) and multiple choice, where there is more than two possible choices (e.g. Before setting up your social media account, from the following list, did you aim to achieve?) (Jobber & Ellis Chadwick, 2013). However, the researcher also used open-ended questions in the survey; the respondent was given the option to comment on some of the questions asked. Scaling was applied in the design of the survey also to allow for the respondent to rate their beliefs and attitudes towards the topic in question. It was important for the researcher not to make the layout of the survey to appear cluttered as it is more likely to lower the response rate (Jobber & Ellis Chadwick, 2013). The final draft of the survey included a total of 12 questions and took the respondent approximately 10 minutes to complete.

### 3.3. The Interview

To develop the depth of research, a semi structured interview approach to data collection was also undertaken to gain specific expertise from key informants. An interview gave the researcher a chance to meet with subjects relating to the investigation for the study (Wisker, 2010). This also allowed for a flow in conversation – opinions, personal experiences and perspectives to be discussed (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). The researcher selected interviewees following completed surveys carried out by those in question to develop the opinions of the respondents. To get the most

out of conducting an interview, questions must be carefully thought out, researched and prepared (Wisker, 2010).

#### 3.3.1 Interview with Sharon Mc Meel, Fusion Events, Limerick

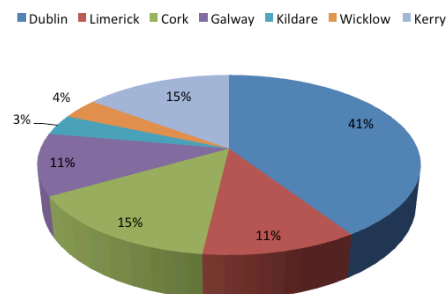
A semi structured interview was conducted with Sharon Mc Meel of Fusion Events which is based in Limerick. The interview took place on the 5th of February 2013 in Ms. Mc Meels office on O'Connell Street. Prior to the interview, a schedule was drawn up with a number of topics and questions that were to be focused on during the meeting. Some of these key subjects were the benefits of social media within her organisation, relevance to the events industry, inputs and outputs and any recommendations for businesses developing a social media presence. The interview lasted just under half an hour and all the issues that were scheduled were examined.

#### 3.3.2. Interview with Anonymous Event Organiser, based in Dublin

A second interview was conducted with an event organiser based in Dublin, who wished to remain anonymous for the purpose of this research document. The interview took place over the phone due to time constraints with regards to travelling to Dublin. It was carried out on the 6th of February 2013. A similar interview schedule to the one used for the previous discussion was drawn. This interview lasted 20 minutes and all the topics that had been outlined on the schedule were discussed.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results of Survey

A survey was distributed to a total of 99 event organisation across Ireland from a list of 130. There was a response rate of 27.3% which is above the average of 4% according to Handford (2009) for the same email attachment survey method. The purpose of this survey was to highlight the relevance of social media for event organisations and whether it is being utilised successfully within these organisations.

**Figure 2:** Where Organisation is Based

It is clear from this chart that the sample used to gather the information was from several different parts of Ireland giving the data a consistent result from across the country. It

comes as no surprise that the majority of the respondents are Dublin based with 41% of the respondents coming from the capital. The second highest response rate is Cork with 15%, followed closely by Limerick and Galway at 11%.

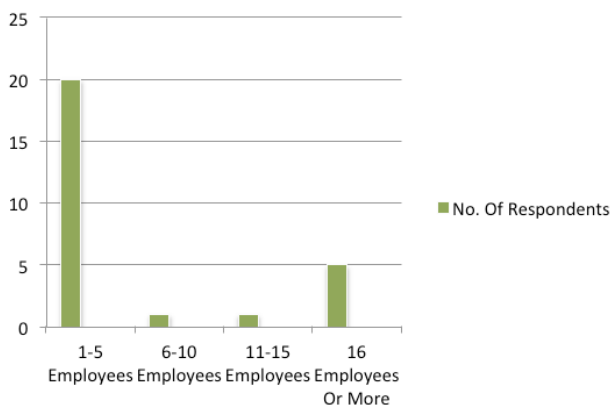


Figure 3: Numbers of Full-Time Employees

From the completed surveys, it is clear that 74% of event organisations examined operate in the lower end of the employment scale with 1-5 employees. Many of event organisations function with as little as one to two employees. Many event organisations are categorised as micro businesses as they have fewer than ten employees (Enterprise Ireland, 2007). The data shows that 18.5% of the event organisations have sixteen employees or more. Finally, there was the same rate of event organisations surveyed with 6-10 employees and 11-15 employees at a rate of 3.7%.

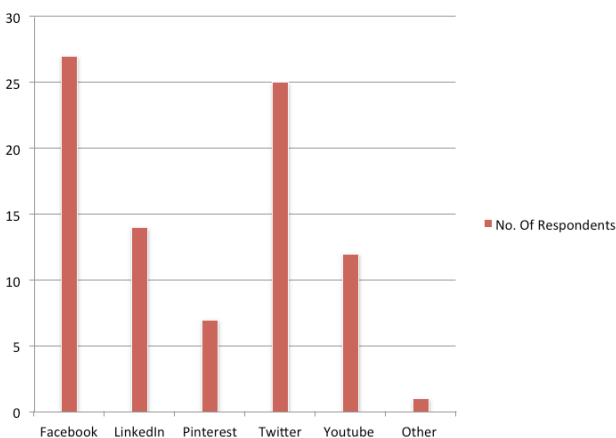


Figure 4: Social Media Profile

From the completed surveys, it is clear that Facebook is the most popular social media network used. Figure 4 illustrates that 100% of the respondents use Facebook to promote their events and business. This comes as no surprise as over 55% of the population of Ireland currently has a Facebook account (Ipsos MRBI, 2012). Some 92.6% of respondents stated that they have an account on the micro-blogging site Twitter for business purposes. This is closely

followed by LinkedIn for business networking. One of the respondents stressed the significance of Pinterest for their business “I have found Pinterest a god send as it allows me to show so many more images from my clients’ weddings and also show people a little of my own style”. This is being utilised by just over 50% of those surveyed. One of the respondents highlighted their use of another social media site called VIMEO – which is similar to YouTube, however, not as widely known.

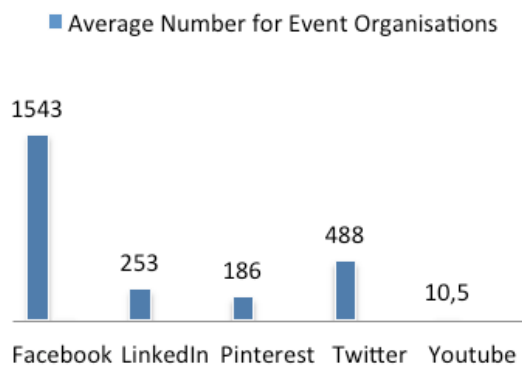


Figure 5: Number of Fans/Followers/Subscriptions or connections

According to the responses received, the average event organisation has just over 1,500 followers on Facebook. This is very much ahead of the rest of the social networking sites as one can see from Figure 5. The popularity of Facebook among users can be seen from research carried out by Social Bakers (2012) and Ipsos MRBI (2012) with over half the population of Ireland currently has an account on the leading social media networking site. According to Jobber & Ellis Chadwick (2013), Facebook has an estimated 800 million users worldwide.

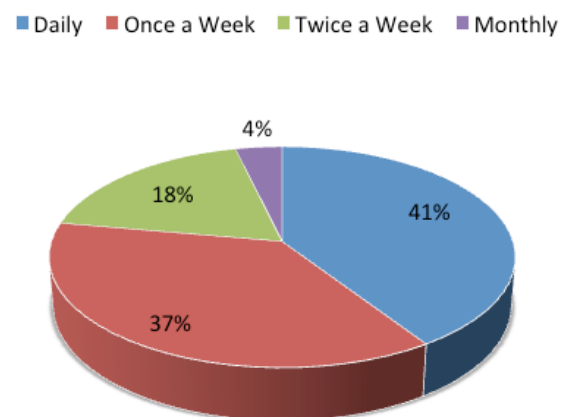


Figure 6: Updating of Social Media Site

This graph illustrates that 41% of event organisations surveyed stated that they update one or more of their social

media sites daily. This is followed closely by 37% of respondents declaring that they update their business profile once a week and 18% doing the same twice a week.

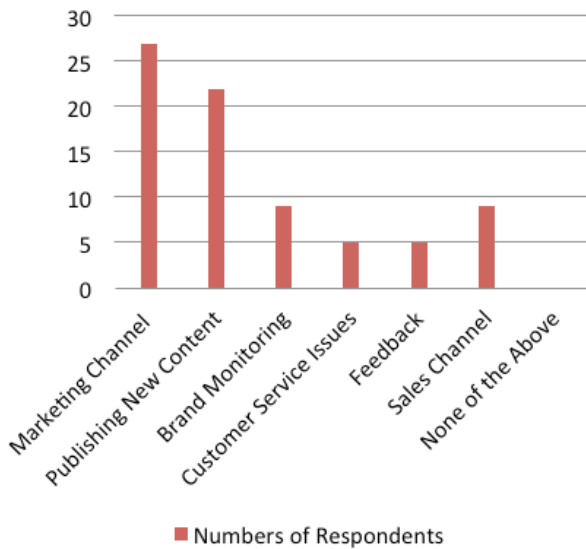


Figure 7: Purpose of Social Media Site

The respondents were questioned about what their organisation was using social media for. From the event professionals surveyed, 100% stated that they were utilising social media as a marketing channel. This data is echoed in recent research carried out by Zanghi (2012) where businesses rate an increased presence throughout social media as being a priority of their marketing plan. With 81.5% of respondents stressing that they use social media for publishing new content – for example videos, images or graphics for upcoming events.

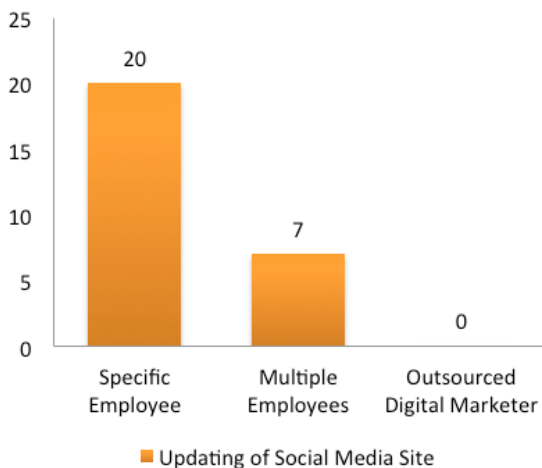


Figure 8: Who Updates the Site

From the data collected it was found that 74% of the respondents have one specific employee that looks after the social media marketing for the event organisation. Some 26%

of the organisations surveyed have multiple employees that look after the social media campaign. Many event organisations have a single employee, most likely the owner. Due to the nature of the organisations being surveyed, majority of event businesses are micro or small enterprises, which have minimal human resources on hand. Event organisations rely on suppliers and contacts to conduct most of their business and therefore do not need many full time members of the organisation. This has been illustrated in Figure 3.

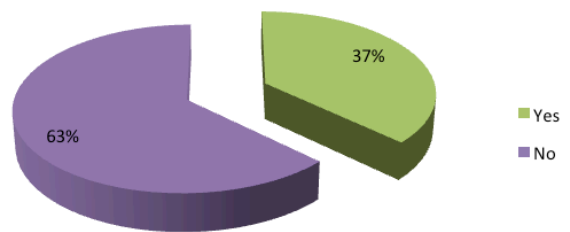


Figure 9: Financial Input

This figure does not come as a surprise with only 37% of those surveyed having any financial input into their social media campaign. In contrast, 63% of respondents did not have any monetary input. This data can be reinforced by a recent survey carried out by the Marketing Institute of Ireland which found that 95% of businesses surveyed stated that the absence of the need for any financial contribution associated with marketing online was the driving force behind the increased usage (Amas1, 2012).

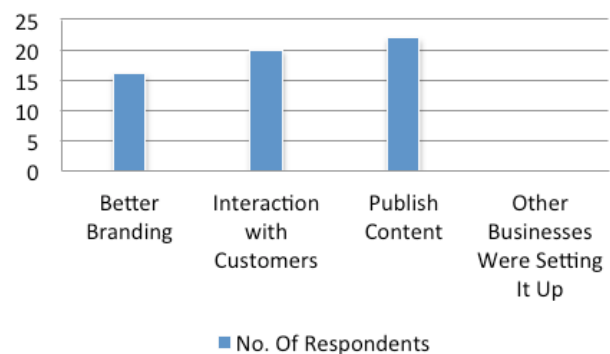


Figure 10: Aim before Setting up Social Media Profile

The event organisations surveyed were asked what they aimed to achieve prior to setting up a social media account for their business. With 81.5% of respondents underlining the ability to publish content (e.g. videos, images) as a main

objective of their social media campaign. This data can be reinforced by Bowdin et al (2006). Bowdin et al (2006) declares that with the movement of technology has led to the ability to publish content online through social media to generate a broad reach. Interaction with customers was an aim of 74% of respondents in order to gather more feedback when setting up the profile online. Of the respondents surveyed, 59% emphasised that they aspired to enhance the brand awareness of the company. None of the respondents stated they only set up the social media account because they felt obliged because other businesses were doing so.

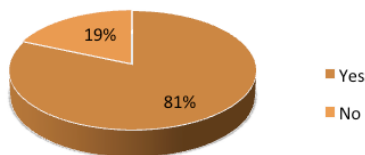


Figure 11: Economic Downturn

The chart above indicates the 81% of event businesses surveyed have turned to social media as a free form of advertising since the downfall of the economy. With only a nominal number of respondents stated that they have not turned to the budget friendly advertising. Moran & Hill (2011) highlight that the recent movement in technologies has paved the way for novel, fresh and notably innovative customer interactive media – without the same cost as traditional advertising mediums. This message is also echoed in research performed by Richardson et al (2010) and Weinberg (2009).

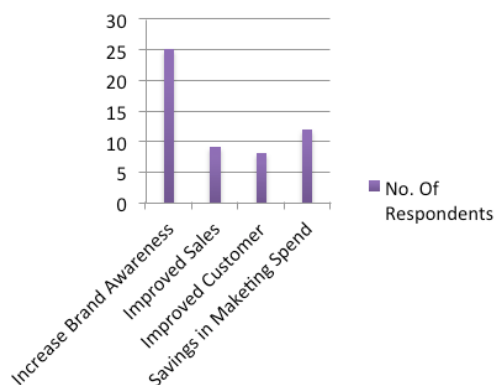


Figure 12: Benefits to Organisation

Based on the responses received from those surveyed, the event organisations have seen many benefits since introducing social media into their marketing strategy. From

the completed surveys, it was found that 93% of respondents emphasised that they have seen an increase in their companies brand awareness. Just over 44% of organisations have seen savings in their marketing spend as they move away from traditional marketing spend. The research indicated that 33% of respondents have seen an increase in sales, however one of the respondents stated - “We don’t ever expect to make a direct sale to a customer through social media. Our business is mostly B-2-B, but the business we do for our clients is B-2-C – that’s where we expect to generate revenue through social media by hitting all of the above targets”. Finally, 29.6% of businesses surveyed say they have improved their customer service capabilities.

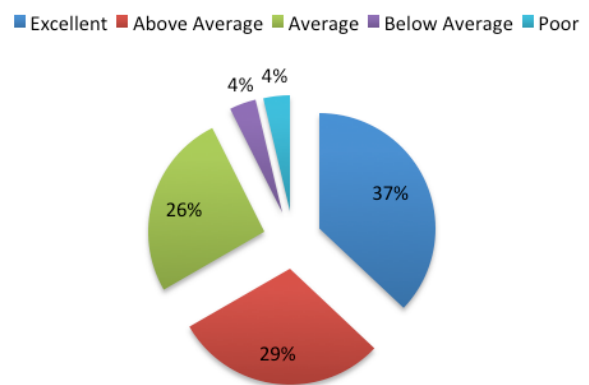


Figure 13: Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing for Event Organisations

Finally, the respondents were asked how effective they believe social media marketing is for the event industry currently. Only 37% of respondents rate social media marketing as an excellent form of advertising. It was found that, 29% of those surveyed feel that social media is above average; while 26% believe it is average within the event industry. There is a noticeable drop with only 4% of respondents rating social media marketing for event organisations as below average and poor. One of the respondents stated that social media has massive potential but is massively underutilised within the events industry at present.

### 5. Emerging Issues from Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Sharon Mc Meel of Sharon Mc Meel Events and a Dublin based event organiser who wished to remain anonymous. Both informants outlined that social media offers a platform for businesses to easily interact with their potential customers and clients. They highlighted the use of the medium to develop relationships and engage with their audience in a free, easily accessible, real-time mode. Both informants emphasised that the movement in technology has been the driving force behind the social media movement. This statement is also resonated in the literature of Richardson et al (2010).

Both interviewees highlighted the ability to target people through social media that they would not necessarily reach before the use of social media. Both event organisers have a different target market – students, brides and grooms, but overall both informants noted Twitter as the social media network they use the most. This is due to the broad reach across the network or communities, as it covers all bases from a variety of organisations, college students, business professionals, charities and even community groups. They also agreed that social media has allowed them to demonstrate different elements of their businesses, along with a variety of styles through images posted up on sites such as Facebook and Pinterest. Social media allows event professionals to enhance their brand awareness while engaging with the SME community across Ireland.

None of those interviewed for the purpose of this research had any financial input into their social media campaigns for their event businesses. One of the informants said it would be something they would consider in the future. However, the other interviewee did not believe it would be beneficial for their organisation as Facebook is not where the majority of their target market is based. Both informants had a good grasp of their target audience and where to target them. Financial input aside, both informants emphasised the importance of updating their social media accounts daily to keep people informed, not to mention keep up to date themselves. Neither informant would leave social media as an afterthought at the end of the day.

Both informants agreed with the statement that “there has been a long understanding of the influence of word of mouth as a result of marketing communications, particularly with events. Social media functions along the lines of word of mouth” (Preston, 2012:115). They both had the same opinion based on social media being the word of mouth of the 21st century - which has been more commonly known as word of mouse in today’s public relations and marketing environment (Wood, 2010). Both informants have used social media to create a buzz about events they were hosting in the past that worked well through social media. They highlighted the use of the visual effect of images or videos in attracting attendees to your events through the social media community.

They all echoed words similar to that of Agresta et al (2010) that engaging in the digital conversation is all part of enhancing the image of the organisation especially in today’s financially strained economy. Equally, the informants suggested that we live in a technological savvy world where the customer has higher expectations. Social media facilitates the platform for event organisers to display their experience and skills through images and videos. Both informants would agree that there has been more interest and interaction on their websites since the implementation of a social media presence. There was a mutual statement between the informants that social media is the marketing tool of the future - once it is used in the correct moderation and not used to bombard individuals with information.

Equally both interviewees stressed that social media is the predominant mode for communication about events and there is no indication that this will fail to continue. They

recognise that as long as individuals carry on networking through their laptops, computers or more commonly today, their smart phones, social media will be the area that the industry will need to utilise to generate interest in events. Both informants emphasise that they believe there will be subtle changes with social media in the next few years but overall it is here to stay for the long haul. They agreed that social media is all about engagement with the target audience and influencing them to benefit your business. Both informants are of the same opinion that event organisations have benefitted greatly in comparison to many other industries through the impact of social media marketing such as the medical or construction sectors.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

This investigation was conducted through critically analysing the appropriate literature within the area. The publications examined focused significantly around the increasing use of the internet in Ireland and then moved onto the increased use of social media for businesses across the country. Richardson et al (2010) noted that marketers have had to adjust how they advertise to their target market as the role of the customer has changed with the movement of social media. For its users, the internet has not only provided the means to find, buy and sell products, but has also created an environment for building communities, where like minded people can network, socialise and be entertained. With the rise of social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, there has been a considerable impact globally (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013). Social media networks have been used to communicate influence politics and governments not to mention promote events (Preston 2012).

From the research accomplished, it was found that the implementation of social media has impacted considerably on event organisations in Ireland. This conclusion was reached through the use of surveys and interviews with key informants outlining the specifics of the marketing medium. Businesses, more specifically event organisations, are turning to social media to market the products or services on offer. From the data examined it is obvious that social media is particularly functional within the events industry as it allows professionals to effectively exhibit their work or style to a broader reach than typical media. The information examined highlighted that of the sample of event businesses surveyed, every company held at least one social media account (Refer to Figure 4), however not every organisation used the medium to its full potential.

It is apparent from this final section that the objective of this study have been answered. In essence, it must be stated that social media has had a major impact on event organisations in Ireland. Even in today’s uncertain economy, businesses have been allowed to maintain a presence in the market through the use of social media without the major price tag of typical marketing. There was a mutual statement across the primary and secondary research conducted - that social media is the marketing tool of the future. Following the



research conducted, the subsequent recommendations have been developed for further research and businesses within the events industry:

- Social media allows for organisations to create greater brand awareness without any financial input through the effective implementation of a social media plan. However, there is the need for greater time commitment to personalise the product or service;
- It is vital that event organisations choose the correct medium for the organisation in order for the business to reach the chosen target market – i.e. Facebook for a younger market or LinkedIn for business professional networking;
- Businesses must monitor and update the accounts on a regular basis and engage with the general public to successfully utilise social media marketing;
- Social media should be exploited for market research purposes in order to understand the evolving marketplace;
- The analysis of publications is ongoing in relation to the topical subject as the mode is constantly progressing and advancements in technology are constant.

To conclude it is worth noting that Jobber & Ellis Chadwick (2013) reveal that developing a social media marketing plan is no different than a typical marketing plan as there is still the necessitate to recognise how the plan is going to be employed, along with the requirements of the chosen target market

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