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AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONGST SMALL-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH WALES

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Declarations

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Nicola, without whom I would never have been able to build the faith and confidence in myself to complete my degree. She has always been my inspiration and her journey in relation to both her career and personal life has always driven me to work to the best of my abilities, despite even the greatest obstacles. My mother has always been my biggest supporter, never losing faith in me even when I had lost faith in myself, and for this I am eternally grateful beyond words.

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Abstract

Marketing is an age-old concept essential to the success of any business. In more recent years, this concept has experienced a major shift with the introduction and rise of digital marketing. With this has come the introduction of social media marketing as a phenomenon. It is now increasingly common for a business to utilise social media within its marketing campaign.

This dissertation utilises existing literature and primary research data to outline the success factors of social media marketing specific to small-medium enterprises in the South Wales area of the UK. It is an exploratory study of how a sample of these businesses utilise social media within their marketing campaigns and the ways in which they find these to be successful.

Primary research has been meticulously planned and carried out with essential elements of research design being taken into account. The interpretivist philosophy behind this research has been outlined with the inductive approach and the strategy used also being explained and justified in full. This mono-method project adopts a cross-sectional time horizon due to the limitations of the project.

This study utilises semi-structured interviews to gain a qualitative insight to social media marketing amongst SMEs in South Wales. In order to carry this out, a purposive sample of SME owners within the South Wales area has been selected with ethical considerations contributing significantly as all key ethical principles have been adhered to. Interviews were carried out until theoretical saturation was met.

Upon the completion of the primary research, it was discovered that SMEs in South Wales adopt a very people-orientated focus when it comes to marketing, with many participants



outlining that the personality of their business being portrayed in a social media marketing campaign is paramount to an increase in engagement. This has been outlined as a key factor as the majority of the sample claimed to value an increase in engagement more than an increase in sales. Other key factors that have been identified and analysed include tone, appearance, consistency, informativity, use of trends, call to action, establishment of relationships and also platform selection.



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1. Introduction

Social media is a growing phenomenon in the world of business and provides many companies with the opportunity to engage with consumers and market their business in a new way. However, since the incorporation of social media into marketing strategies is still a moderately new discovery, many businesses do not know how to get the most out of social media when using it as a marketing tool.

This dissertation-style project will carry out research regarding how small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in South Wales utilise social media within their marketing strategies and will develop this information to materialise a framework of success factors of social media as marketing tool for these businesses.

1.0 Background Literature

Technological developments and the evolution of marketing are indistinguishably intertwined, as technological advances have underpinned major milestones in marketing history. The process of this usually includes the emergence of new technology, the gaining of a firmer foothold by this technology within the market as it becomes more popular, innovative marketers jumping in to explore the ways in which they can exploit the power that comes with this technology to connect with their target audience, and the technology finally migrating to the mainstream and being adopted into standard marketing practice. This process has been repeating itself over time, including with major breakthroughs in technology such as the printing press, radio, television, and the internet (Ryan, 2021).



Sometime between the internet becoming a commercial entity around the mid 1990s and the turn of the current century, the business world has passed what has been referred to as the 'digital revolution'. As a result, social media has provided marketers with a new way to connect with consumers in a way that is both unprecedented and revolutionary. However, the newness of this medium is as challenging as it is exciting, especially to individuals who may not be 'digital natives' (Charlesworth, 2015).

It is estimated that a staggering 3.78 billion individuals now use social media worldwide, with this figure expecting to grow to 4.41 billion by the year 2025 (Statista, 2017). Due to these growing numbers, many brands are now choosing to use social media platforms as a tool for engaging with consumers.

Although there is a plethora of information available regarding the ways in which marketing has changed in recent years, including the introduction of social media, there seems to be a gap in information on how SME's in the UK and South Wales utilise social media within their marketing strategies. This research aims to fill that gap and provide a framework of success factors relating to social media marketing amongst these businesses in order for it to be best exploited as a marketing tool.

1.1 Aim & Objectives

The primary aim of this project is to assemble a framework model that will outline the factors for success for social media marketing amongst SME's in South Wales through the identification of ways in which they are currently using social media marketing campaigns and their characteristics that have proved to make the campaigns successful. This will be completed through the following objectives:



- To compile a comprehensive literature review that encompasses available research surrounding the topics of marketing and social media marketing.
- Develop and carry out primary research through the use of semi-structures interviews in order to identify how SME's in South Wales use social media within their marketing strategies and the ways in which they measure the success of their social media campaigns
- Utilise the information collected to fabricate a framework of success factors for social media marketing amongst SME's in South Wales

1.2 Research Methods

This project will implement a qualitative research approach as opposed to a quantitative approach. Qualitative research may be defined a method which provides understanding and insight of the problem setting and is an unstructured, exploratory method used to analyse phenomena that are difficult to elucidate using quantitative research (Surbhi, 2016). This method of research can be described as an umbrella model that covers interviews (group or individual), participant observation (in person or online), and textual analysis (paper or electronic) (Tracy, 2019).

Quantitative research can be described as a method of quantifying and analysing variables to obtain results, it can include the utilisation and analysis of numerical data using techniques to answer questions such as who, what, where, when, how much, how many and how (Apuke, 2017). Both qualitative and quantitative research are important in the world of research to properly understand marketing communications as a distinct phenomenon and discipline, and its role in society (Daymon and Holloway, 2011).



This project will gather qualitative research through the use of semi-structured interviews containing open-ended questions. Participants will include owners of SMEs in the South Wales area. This allows the project to target a geographical area that correlates with the gap in existing information regarding how social media is used by SMEs in the UK and more specifically, South Wales. These participants have also been chosen as they are accessible to the researcher.

The use of open-ended questions in research can often be criticised due to the possibility of a bias response. In research, bias occurs when systematic error is presented into testing and/or sampling by encouraging a specific outcome or answer over another (Pannucci and Wilkins, 2010). However, the research in this project will be carefully conducted, making sure that any and all questions are balanced in order to avoid any unbiased results. A balanced question can be described as a question that provides the respondent with all sides of an issue (Lavrakas, 2008).

1.3 Resources and Planning

In order for this research project to be carried out, a number of resources will be required. Access to computers and/ or laptops will be necessary to complete the project, at least one of which is accessible only by the researcher in order to store data whilst maintaining anonymity and confidentiality when carrying out primary research. Internet access will also be needed to be able to carry out secondary research to compile a comprehensive literature review surrounding the topic of the research. Similarly, access to basic computer programmes such as Microsoft Office will be required in order to materialise the project and also analyse



and record the information collected, this includes visualising the data in a way that is easy for the reader to understand.

Access to the library services within University of Wales Trinity Saint David will also be required in order to benefit from materials such as books, journals and other academic resources.



2. Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter carries out a comprehensive review of available literature in relation to marketing and its development in recent years, social media marketing and its success factors, small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and their marketing habits, and also the limited information available relating to the marketing success factors for SMEs in the United Kingdom, focusing on the area of South Wales. This literature review aims to achieve the first objective of this dissertation:

To compile a comprehensive literature review that encompasses available research surrounding the topics of marketing and social media marketing.

2.1 What is Marketing?

One working definition of marketing is the term that may be given to activities which occur at the interface between customers and an organisation, originally stemming from the concept of a marketplace whereby both sellers and buyers would come together in order to conduct exchanges or transactions for their mutual benefit (Blythe and Martin, 2019). The term marketing can be split into two sub-categories, business-to-business (B2B) marketing, and business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing, the effects product and brand extensions have on firm profit is likely to differ between these two markets (Liu *et al*, 2018).



There is no singular model that explains how marketing communications work, however, one of the oldest and most prominent models is the AIDA model, as seen in Figure 1. The AIDA model was developed as an early attempt to explain how the target audience of an advertising may pass through several steps (Wood and Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2006).

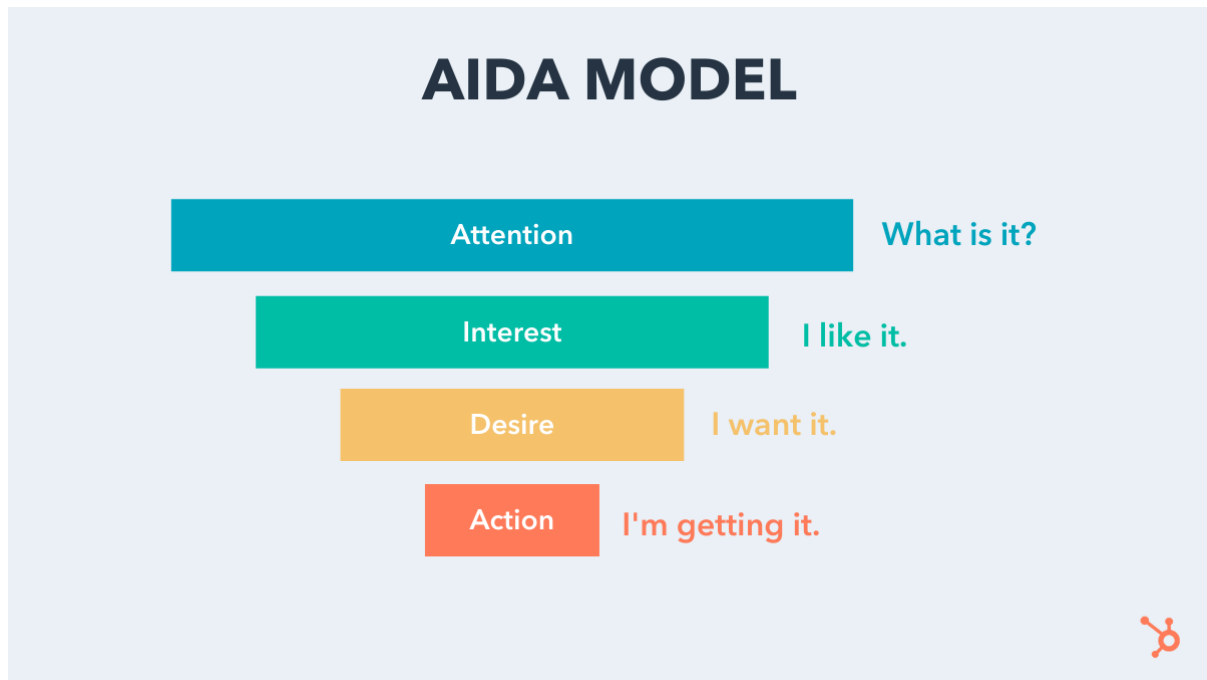


Figure 1 - AIDA model (Sellers, 2021)

The first step in the communication process is attention, whereby the consumer must learn of the existence of a product or service (Hassan, Nadzim and Shiratuddin, 2015). The next step is interest, this refers to the way a consumer feels about a specific service and/ or product (Wijaya, 2012), this stage is entered by the consumer as they have the desire learn the details of the service or product due to developing a vague interest in it (Song, Ruan and Jeon, 2021). The desire step of the AIDA model denotes to an emotion provoked by the interest created in the previous step, it gives the consumer to motivation to acquire and own a product or service, this is the stage within which the marketer knows they have succeeded in creating



the needs of the consumer (Pashootanizadeh and Khalilian, 2018). Finally, the action stage of the model aims to prompt action to purchase (Sapian and Vushnevskaya, 2019).

Despite its criticisms over the years, generalised models such as AIDA continue to be both influential and useful to marketers, advertisers, and educators despite how the marketing world changes with the modern world (Fortenberry and McGoldrick, 2020).

There are a number of success factors that have been established over the years in relation to successful marketing, a primary one of which being the building of a reputable brand. Ascertaining a brand often provides the element of recognition for a brand, this is particularly prominent with big brands such as *Apple* and *Nike*. Branding also often encourages loyalty and preference amongst consumers, due to the fact that frequently, when people do not know what to choose, they will choose a brand they are familiar with (Daly, 2011).

Another important factor of successful marketing is market segmentation. Market segmentation refers to a decision-making tool utilised by marketing managers when carrying out the crucial task of choosing a target market in order to design an appropriate marketing mix (Tynan and Drayton, 1987). The use of market segmentation was first proposed by Smith (1956) who defined market segmentation as a heterogeneous market characterised by divergent demand being viewed as smaller homogenous markets (Dolnicar, Grun and Leisch). Some ways by which markets are typically segmented are:

- Geographic
- Demographic
- Psychographic
- Behavioural (McDonald, 2010).



Market segmentation is thought to be one of the key elements of successful marketing as it is fundamental to the process of matching customers' needs and wants to the supplying organisation's ability to satisfy them (McDonald, Christopher and Bass, 2003).

Moreover, another crucial aspect in the success of marketing is effective market research. The importance-performance analysis model (IPA) (Martilla and James, 1977), as shown in figure 2 below, is also believed to be a useful marketing research tool when it comes to the design of marketing strategies. It involves the analyses of the attitudes of customers regarding prominent product and/ or service characteristics whilst also helping practitioners to place priority upon the improvement opportunities for service/ product attributes and quality-based marketing strategies (Hansen and Bush, 1999). This is a valuable concept for marketers to consider as IPA allows for the identification of the most imperative attributes in the eye of the consumer with the largest impact on customer satisfaction, whilst simultaneously recognising low performance characteristics that require immediate improvement (Wu, Tang and Shyu, 2009).

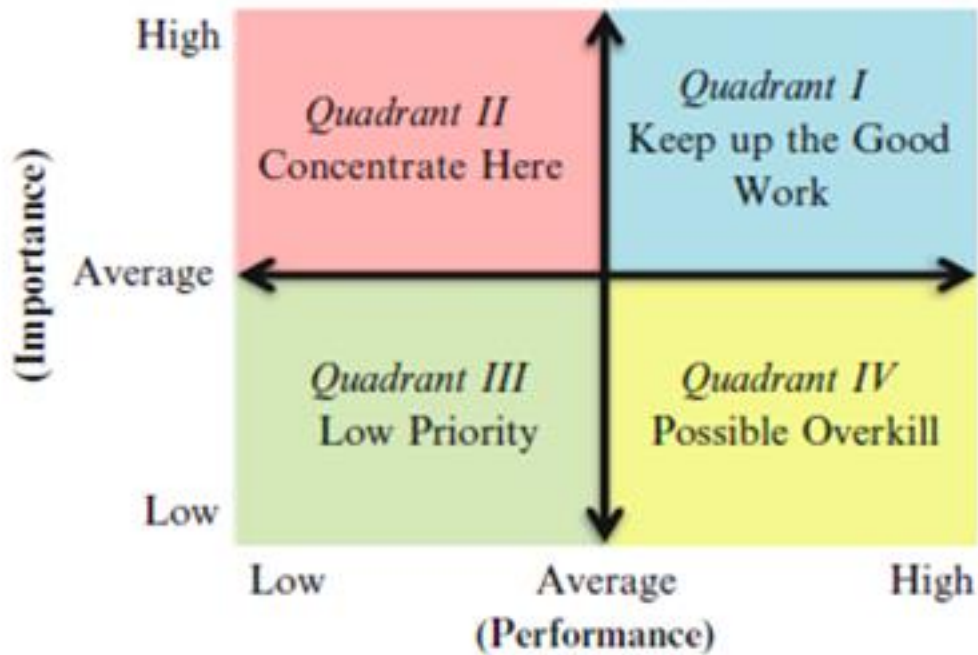


Figure 2

Figure 3 - Martilla and James' importance-performance analysis model (Ebrary, 2014)

2.2 Marketing in the Digital Age

Marketing, like most things, has changed drastically in recent years as a result of the phenomenon known as 'Web 2.0' (DiNucci, 1999). This is a concept that is being applied as a shorthand term to anything cutting-edge that seems to gain momentum online and can describe certain websites, cultural trends including social networking, or simply the underlying technology that makes today's incredible web applications possible (Funk, 2009). The integration of internet technology in business is no longer an option, but a matter of how it can be deployed in the most effective way (Porter, 2001)



The rapid growth in digital communications is outlined by Cisco (2017) in a trend analysis demonstrating how much the daily traffic of the global internet has changed over the years in relation to Gigabytes (GB):

- 1992: 100 GB per day
- 1997: 100 GB per hour
- 2002: 100 GB per second
- 2007: 2,000 GB per second
- 2016: 26,600 GB per second
- 2021: 105,800 GB per second

This change has paved the way for the establishment of digital marketing, which may be defined as the achievement of marketing objectives through the application of digital media, data, and technology (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

It can be said that using internet-technology (IT) equipment when developing marketing activities may be a large source of competitive advantage when it comes to the improvement of innovation processes and their outcomes. A sizable extent of these benefits emerges from the fact that IT can be used as a major source of both acquisition and generation of market information and is one of the most appropriate media when it comes to getting close to the marketing environment and creating knowledge surrounding the agents that it consists of (Vilaseca-Requena, Torrent-Sellens and Jiménez-Zarco, 2007).

The diverse tools provided by social computing in relation to communications are likely the reason why marketers have incorporated social media within their strategies.

2.3 The Rise of Social Media

A working definition of social network sites refers to a series of web-based services that give individuals the opportunity to construct a public profile within an encircled system, express a list of users they choose to share a connection with, and view and traverse their connection list with those made by others within the same system. The categorisation and nature of these connections vary between sites (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013).

In today's society, social media extends itself across many platforms including mobile phones, desktop computers, and tablets. This allows it to create various forms of presence, especially as the increasing use of smartphones is changing the demographics of social media, as social networking sites are no longer used primarily by younger individuals (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

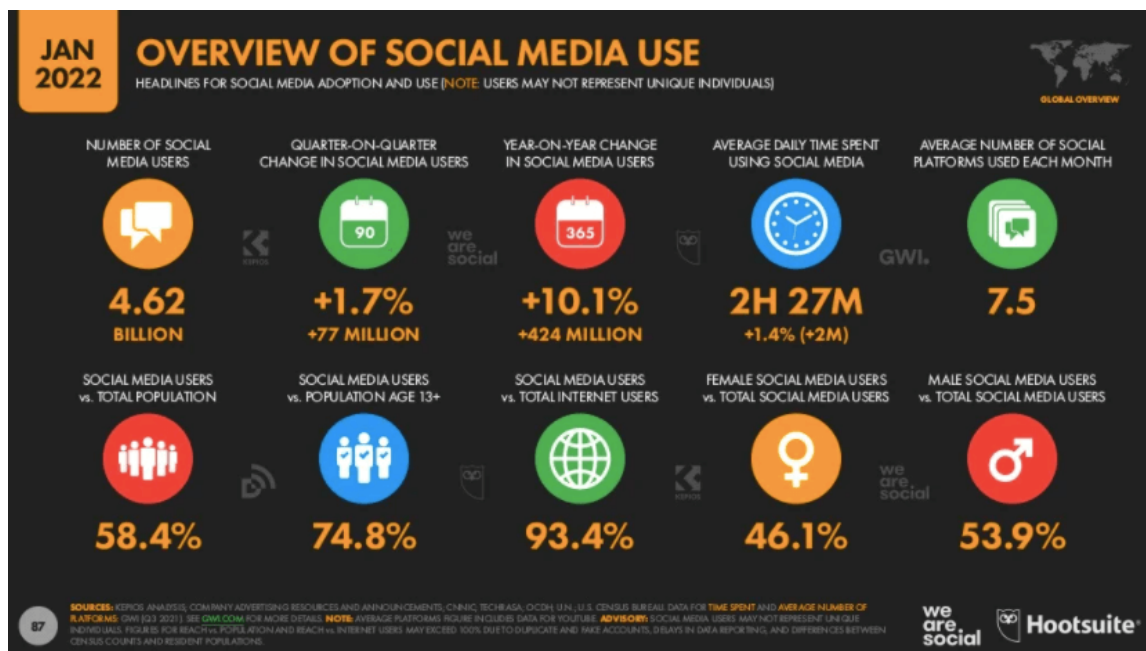


Figure 3 - overview of social media use (Smart Insights, 2022)

As shown in Figure 3 above, the number of social media users as of January 2022 is 4.62 billion, with 58.4% of the total population using social media.



The variety of social media platforms available for use provides an organisation with a wide range of options available for the dissemination of information at a high speed. Key information can also be prepared in advance in a way that is professionally presentable ready to be shared online to a target audience (Rees, 2020). It is likely that this, along with the rate at which the population of social media users is growing, is partly responsible for the increase of social media being incorporated into the marketing campaigns of many businesses.

2.4 Social Media Marketing

There are a number of ways organisations are able to use social media to improve marketing outcomes. For example, individuals or firms may use a diversity of networking activities in an attempt to stimulate network growth and success online through the establishment of new network users, promoting products and strengthening relationships with existing customers. These activities have a direct impact on immediate success and also stimulate relationships between customer and merchant (Ansari *et al*, 2018). In the United States alone, more than 14.8 billion US Dollars was spent on social media marketing in the year 2016 (Statista, 2016).

One of the first factors a business needs to consider when it comes to successful social media marketing is the online presence they create as a result of a campaign. The substance of the first impression that a business makes online is crucial, as this impression is continuous through repeated online social interaction, because of this it is very important for this essence to be determined before establishing themselves on social media (Brown, 2012).

Butow *et al* (2020) articulates that when it comes to marketing through social media, it is important to be attentive to increasing trends, as adhering to these trends are likely to gain



followers at a more consistent rate and increase online visibility by gaining more followers and shares day after day.

Moreover, the research of Scott (2011) includes an investigation into the use of social media. The findings of this research suggest that it is crucial to set a clear goal when building a digital marketing and PR plan to implement on social media. The author emphasises the importance of a buyer orientated focus that are in accordance with the organisation's overall goals.

Many businesses adopt the use of influencers in their social media marketing strategy. The term social influence may be defined as the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviours of a target audience changing as a result of the actions of another individual, known as the influencer, according to Raven (2008). It is estimated that over 60% of companies today experiment with the use of social media influencers in the achievement of their marketing goals. This social influence heavily relies on the target audience's experiences and feelings towards the exemplary figure being used (Ouvrein *et al*, 2021). Many people perceive social media influencers to be highly authentic and considerably more trustworthy than traditional endorsers or celebrities, which contributes to the increasing popularity of these individuals amongst audiences (Grave, 2017). One common of using social media influencers is the establishment of a key opinion leader (KOL), which refers to an active member with a large quantity of followers and a pronounced volume of interaction on social networks. Identifying the most effective KOL for a business and its audience is paramount to the successful incorporation of social media influencers in a social media marketing approach (Arora *et al*, 2017).



2.5 SMEs and Social Media Marketing

In the UK, there is no official definition of an SME on the basis of net worth, turnover, number of employees or profits, however, for the purpose of the business support programme, the EU has defined an SME as a firm with less than 250 employees, an annual turnover that does not surpass €50 million, and a net work of less than €43 million (European Union Commission, 2003). These types of businesses have a strong sense of entrepreneurship, a significant degree of adaptability, and contain features that are tremendously diverse (Ali Abassi *et al*, 2022).

In recent years, the utilisation of social media strategy has become common amongst SMEs. Adopting the use of new phenomena such as social media within marketing practices may be very beneficial due to the fact that SMEs are habitually deficient in marketing resources (Maduku *et al*, 2016).

2.6 Conclusion

Despite the plethora of information available in existing literature relating to the success factors of marketing and how the concept of marketing has developed in recent years in correlation with the expansion of technology and internet use, there is a significant gap in literature surrounding the use of social media marketing amongst SME's in the South Wales area of the UK. Although figures from Statista (2020) reveal that in 2020 75% of SMEs from the UK used social media to market their businesses, and Barnes *et al* (2012) has articulated how SMEs have been early adopters of social media marketing practices, there is little to no



published work on the in-depth aspects of these strategies and how to increase their success rate, especially relating to those in South Wales.

This gap in literature acts as the rationale for this dissertation as it aims to create an effective framework outlining the key success factors of social media marketing specific to SMEs in the South Wales area.



3. Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to outline the methods used in the primary research being carried out as part of this dissertation. It will communicate a working definition of research and also explore the key areas of the research onion model and the ways in which it is useful to the conduct of effective primary research.

The primary research carried out in this project has been conducted in line with the appropriate elements of the research onion, these chosen elements have been explained and justified throughout the chapter with reference to relevant literature. This chapter has been written in accordance with the following objective:

Develop and carry out primary research through the use of semi-structured interviews in order to identify how SMEs in South Wales use social media within their marketing strategies and the ways in which they measure the success of their social media campaigns.

3.1 Research Design

Collis and Hussey (2014) state that although there is no definitive definition of the term research, there is a general agreement that research is an inquiry and investigation process that is both systematic and methodical and successfully increases knowledge. Further, primary research refers to exploration that is collected first hand rather than found in existing literature such as books, databases or journals, the purpose of which is to learn about something new that can be confirmed by others (Driscoll, 2011).

One crucial factor of effective research design is that the researcher understands the boundaries and context within which the data collection techniques, data processing, and analysis procedures should be chosen. All elements of research should be designed in such a way that they are both justified and explained (Sahay, 2016). One model that can help with this, is the research onion.

3.2 The Research Onion

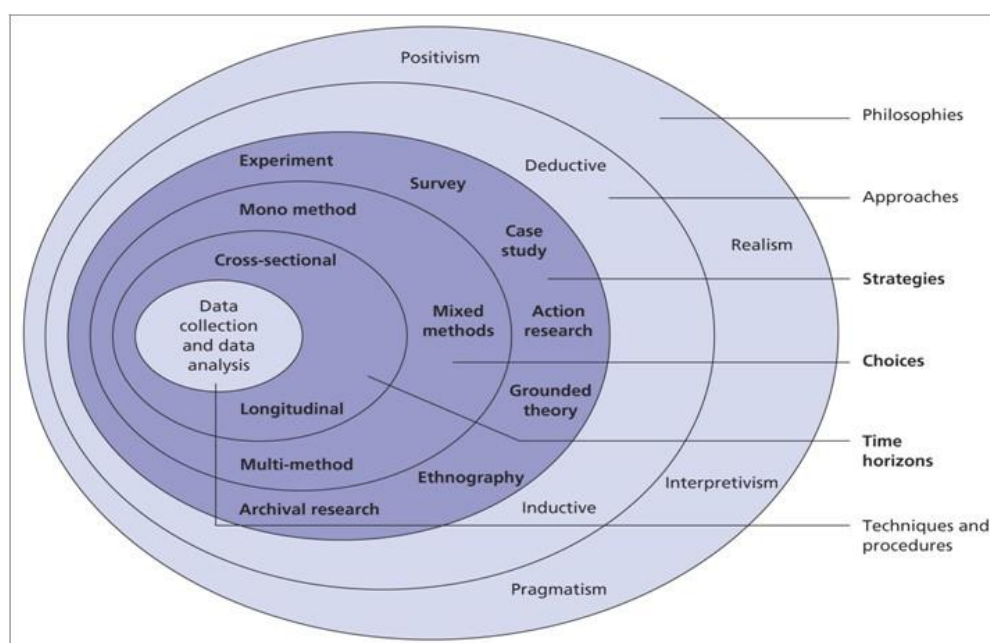


Figure 4- the research onion (15 Writers, 2019)

Figure 4 shows the research onion model put forward by Saunders *et al* (2007) relates to all the essential philosophies to consider when embarking on primary research, it outlines the fact that at every stage of the research, assumptions are made that shape the way in which the research is understood. In this model, the stages of research are represented by the layers of the research onion (Burrell and Morgan, 2016; Crotty, 1998). It is paramount to the coherent and credible design of a research project that the assumptions are consistent and



adequately considered as they underpin the methodological choices made, research strategy implemented, data collection techniques used, and procedures followed for analysis. It is these factors that allow for the design of a comprehensible research project whereby all elements of primary research coincide with each other (Johnson and Clark, 2006).

3.3 Philosophy

Classical research methodology is built on the basis of a certain philosophical theory which implies strategies and techniques of the research (Nweke and Orji, 2009). The philosophies layer of the research onion concerns itself with these ideas.

This dissertation employs a research approach based upon the interpretivist paradigm. This relates to the researcher using their social skills to perform a specific role in an attempt to observe and understand how others understand the world (O'Donoghue, 2006). The social science of interpretivism surrounds understanding and description of real human interactions, meanings and processes from which genuine organisational settings are established (Gephart, 2004). It is also a concept that relies on formal logic, deduction, and abductive reasoning in order to interpret qualitative data (Blaikie, 1993).

This paradigm was consulted for this dissertation as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject of social media marketing amongst SMEs in South Wales. It allows for research collection through thorough discussion with research participants. Interpretive study also allows for an insider view that privileges the researcher's knowledge of a specific situation or concept, in this research study, this means that it allows for a further understanding of the knowledge and shared ideas of those who own SME's in the South Wales area and the ways



in which they are used to implement effective social media marketing. It also allows for the examination of how common-sense meanings are created and used by SME owners for practical purposes (Cassell, Cunliffe, and Grandy, 2017).

3.4 Approach

The next layer of the research onion refers to the approach that the researcher takes to research. According to O'Reilly (2009), an inductive approach is when the individual carrying out the research allows theory and ideas to emerge from the data due to having very few preconceptions. Deductive research, however, refers to a situation whereby an assumption is derivative of existing theory, the observation is then explored and data is collected to test the assumption.

This research adopts an inductive approach. A working definition of inductive reasoning includes generalisation based upon an identified example, the creation of an inductive suggestion from a specific idea, and the drawing of a correlation (Goswami, 2011). The main purpose for using an inductive approach is to take raw textual data and reduce it in order to establish clear links between research objectives and findings summarised from the data to develop a framework surrounding the underlying structure of experiences and/ or processes that are apparent within the raw data (Thomas, 2006).

An inductive approach is appropriate for this dissertation due to the fact that it is based upon little-to-no preconceptions surrounding an idea. The topic of social media use in marketing amongst SMEs in South Wales is one that has not been explored, thus meaning it is not possible to derive conclusion from a high volume of existing data and preconception. This



research project utilises first-hand data collected in order to build up to the materialisation of a suitable framework, thus making an inductive approach the most applicable.

3.5 Strategy

Research strategy may be referred to as a general way for the researcher to decide on a data collection method that is most suitable for answering a research question or reaching an objective (Menikovas, 2018).

This dissertation opts for a collective case study research strategy. Case study research aims to explore and portray a specific situation with a view to developing understanding, further, collective case study research achieves this through the analysis of more than one case in order to achieve a form of representation (Cousin, 2006).

Researching using a case study strategy is suitable for this dissertation as the aim is to produce a framework model based upon the identified social media marketing success factors for SMEs in South Wales. In order to do this, a case study of a collection of SMEs in South Wales is required. Through looking at these businesses as a case study, a sense of representation can be had, and an accurate and effective framework can be constructed.



3.6 Choice

This section of the research onion framework relates to the method of data collection. The research objectives and nature of study typically influence the type and amount of data to be collected. Conducive to achieving the aim of this dissertation, a mono-method approach has been selected given its exploratory nature and narrative approach. This method refers to the implementation of one method of research only, this being either qualitative or quantitative (Hair *et al*, 2015).

This dissertation uses a single data collection method, being semi-structured interviews in order to collect qualitative data. This is the only method that has been chosen due to the investigative nature of the research aims. By using a singular qualitative method, this research is able to focus on verbal data and gain an in-depth overview of social media marketing from the perception of SMEs in South Wales. Qualitative research may be defined as an unstructured approach to research utilising a small selection of individuals in order to produce non-quantifiable perceptions to motivations, emotions, attitudes and behaviours (Housden, 2012).

Quantitative studies, on the other hand, have a somewhat numerical focus and make use of quantifiable systems of collecting data (Alturki, 2021), since this project is based upon the key factors that are seen as paramount for the success of social media marketing to SME owners in South Wales, it would be inappropriate to select a multi-method or solely quantitative approach as the numerical data provided would not deliver the in-depth opinions and exploration needed to reach the research aims.



3.7 Time Horizon

The time horizon of a research project relates to the timescale within which research is to be completed. This study has adopted a cross-sectional time horizon in opposition to a longitudinal approach, due to the time limitations of the project. A cross-sectional study uses collected data in order to create conclusions surrounding a population of interest at any one point in time, this type of study has been described as being a ‘snapshot’ of the population about which they research (Lavrakas, 2008).

3.8 Technique and Procedure

The final layer of the research onion directs the research design towards the collection and analysis of data, all aspects of research design that precede this section aid in the determination of the type of data collection being carried out and the analysis procedures being followed in order to meet research aims as accurately as possible (Denicolo and Becker, 2012).

3.8.1 Collection Method

The data collection method used in completion of this dissertation is semi-structured interviews. Interviews may be referred to as a question-answer conversation between two individuals conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and may be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in larger groups known as focus groups. This method of data collection allows respondents to provide their experiences, opinions and motivations surrounding a topic, this is what makes them a valuable source of information



and background on issues that may not be otherwise easily observed (Tracy, 2020). Further, a semi-structured interview is an interview whereby the interview is not led by following a set of pre-determined questions, they allow the exchange to unfold in a more conversational manner through offering the interview a chance to explore issues that are important to them (Longhurst, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews have been chosen for this project due to the fact that they allow for the discovery of independent thoughts and opinions of individuals and also gives the interviewer maximum latitude in order to spot useful leads and pursue them (Adams, 2015). Due to the exploratory nature of this project, this was the method chosen by the researcher as it provides the opportunity to explore the topic of social media marketing in-depth from the perspective of SME owners in South Wales. This type of interview is also said to provide a high level of validity due to their ability to gather detailed accounts of perceptions, actions and roles first-hand (Ahlin, 2019).

These have been recorded with the permission of the interviewee, in order to be transcribed and further analysed by the researcher. A transcript of one of the interviews carried out can be found in Appendix 2.

3.8.2 Analysis Method

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews has been analysed using a thematic analysis method. This refers to when data is thoroughly examined by the researcher to reveal common themes, topics and/ or ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This has been done manually by the researcher. By reading through the transcripts of each interview, the researcher was



able to highlight common themes and words and sort these into generalised terms relating to the success of social media campaigns amongst SMEs in South Wales. With the discovery of these common themes and factors, a mind-map framework has been produced outlining the key success factors of social media success factors from the perception of SME owners in South Wales.

as each interview has been transcribed and read through, the researcher has identified common words relating to social media marketing and also success factors that have been recognised amongst all interviews in order to create a mind-map framework to demonstrate the findings of common themes. This framework has also been expanded on and explained in further detail.

Additionally, the researcher has utilised the data analysis software, NVivo, to produce a word cloud. NVivo is a software used for mixed-method and qualitative research, containing a wide range of tools used for the analysis of unstructured data including audio, videos, images, and transcripts (Richards, 1999). The word cloud created from the responses of the interviewees consists of the most common words used amongst the SME owners during the interviews, all irrelevant words have been removed from this word cloud in order to produce a visualisation of the key terms that were common amongst all interviews.

3.8.3 Sample

When it comes to primary research, to study an entire population would be extremely prohibitive in terms of time, resources, and funding. Consequently, it is crucial to select a subset of subjects that are representative of a certain population; this is referred to as



sampling (Lunsford and Lunsford, 1995). This dissertation has utilised the idea of homogeneous sampling, which refers to a method of purposive sampling. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), homogenous sampling refers to the focus on candidates who share comparable traits or certain characteristics. In the case of this research, the sample that has been selected have been selected with the common criteria of running a small-medium enterprise in the South Wales area.

Participants of this sample have been identified and contacted online by the researcher, and all interviews have either been carried out in-person or over video-call. This is due to the location of the researcher being a limitation and also complications that have emerged as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

When planning this research, no specific sample number was selected. Instead, the researcher interviewed SME owners in South Wales until theoretical saturation was met. Bloor and Wood's (2006) working definition of theoretical saturation is the continuation of data collection to a point whereby no new conceptual insights are identified.

3.8.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles have been considered when selected the sample for this research in a number of ways. The sample that has been identified does not consist of any individual under the legal age of eighteen, no vulnerable populations have been identified also.



Informed consent is a predominant concept when it comes to conducting ethical research, it includes providing partakers with clear information regarding what their involvement entails and offering them with the opportunity to make a decision on whether they would like to continue (Wiles, 2012). Verbal consent was attained at the beginning of each interview, whereby all participants agreed to their responses being used by the researcher in the completion of this dissertation. It was also clearly communicated to the participants prior to the interview that the completion of the interview was entirely voluntary, with each interviewee understanding that they were able to withdraw from the research at any point without given reason.

In terms of data storage, all interview recordings and transcripts were available only to the researcher, being stored on a private, password protected computer accessible by only them. Participants were also made aware that all of their data would be destroyed up to thirty days after the interview was conducted, with the information being published as part of the dissertation remaining completely anonymous. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants has been kept throughout the entirety of this research project.

All research has also been pre-approved through the completion of an application form for ethical approval, available to view in Appendix 1.

3.8.5 Limitations

This research study has been conducted in completion of a dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in Business Management at University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Due to this, a major limitation was the timescale of



this project. The researcher completed this research during their final year at university, meaning that the timescale was considerably short.

Additionally, due to the nature of the study, no funding was provided thus resulting in limitations regarding resources. The researcher, as a student, was limited to the resources provided by the university, such as the library available to students, and also free resources available to them, such as the free NVivo software available online.

Finally, this research project was completed during the post-recovery phase of the coronavirus pandemic. Due to isolation laws, some complications were encountered regarding the carrying out of the interviews, however, in the case of a participant contracting Coronavirus and having to isolate as per government guidelines, alternative arrangements were made, and interviews were carried out via video call.

3.9 Conclusion

To conclude, all elements of this research study have been carefully considered in the interest of satisfactory research design. The data collection method has been carefully considered and justified by the underpinning philosophies and concepts relevant to designing efficient research. The sample has been selected carefully with the principles of research ethics being considered and adhered to at every stage of the research process.



4. Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines and analyses the data found when researching participants in order to satisfy the third and final objective of this dissertation:

Utilise the information collected to fabricate a framework of success factors for social media marketing amongst SME's in South Wales.

4.1 Analysis

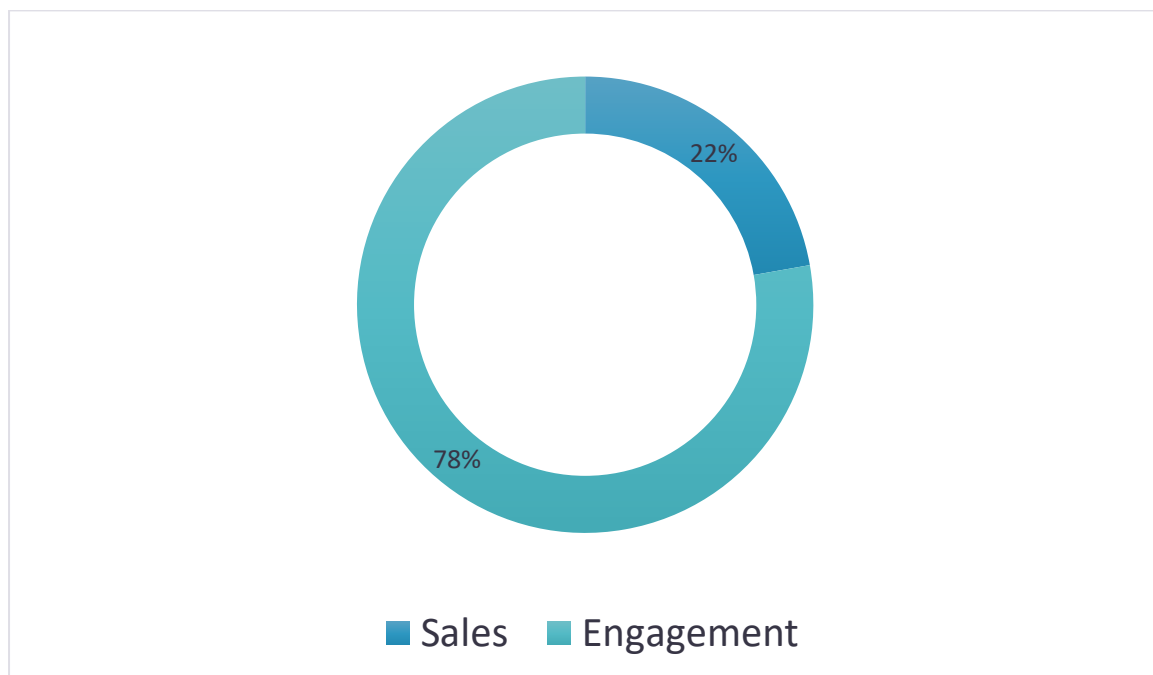


Figure 5 - sales vs engagement as a preferred result of social media marketing



During the interview, participants were asked whether they would prefer to receive more sales for their business or increased engagement as an end result of a successful social media campaign. Figure 5 outlines the result of this question, demonstrating that 78% of the SME owners interviewed would prefer an increase engagement over sales. One participant of the research stated:

“Since we are a small and independent business, we rely on repeat purchases from customers who are loyal to us more than kind of one-off sales from people who have never heard of us. Obviously, we appreciate every sale we get, but we notice that when we get our name in people’s heads and our business gets a good reputation among a lot of people, we receive more sales in the long run.”

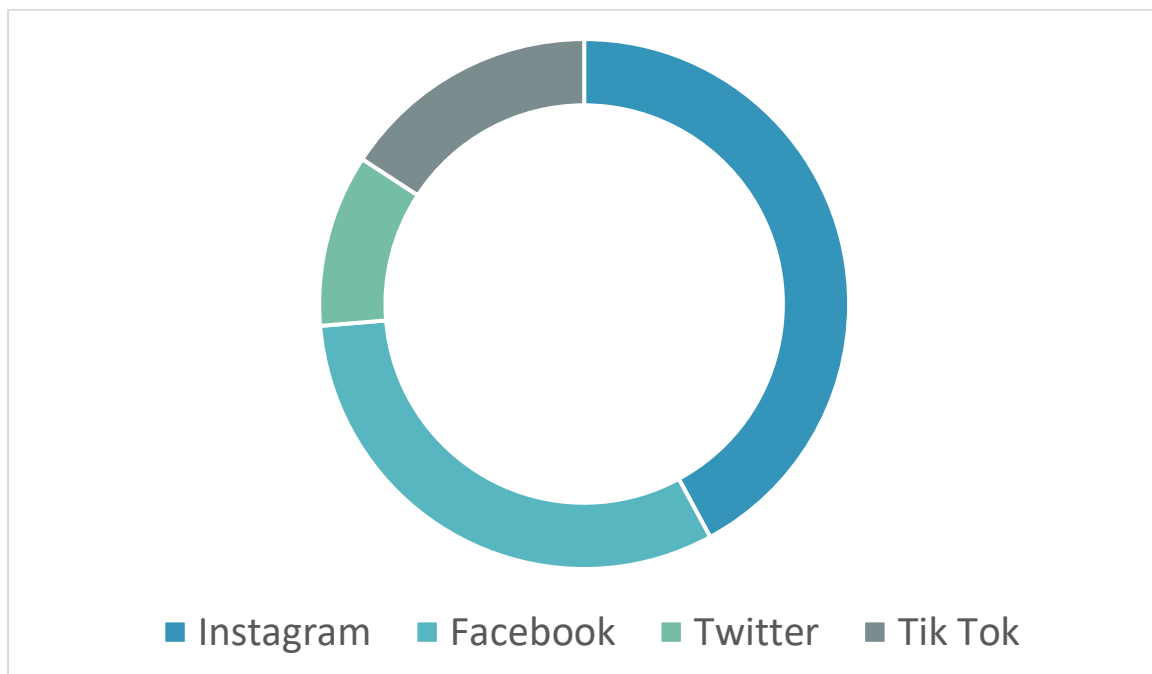


Figure 6 - social media platforms used by interviewees



Figure 6 above demonstrates the social media platforms used for marketing purposes by the SME owners interviewed. It is clear to see that Instagram is the most popular platform to market on as all participants claimed to use this platform for marketing, followed closely by Facebook, with little engagement with Twitter and Tik Tok.

Figure 7 outlines the number of social media users active on each platform in the year 2022. These results correlate with the findings of the interview with Facebook, Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok being in the top six social media sites used worldwide. Twitter ranking so low in these figures also explains the lack of usage for marketing amongst the SMEs interviewed.

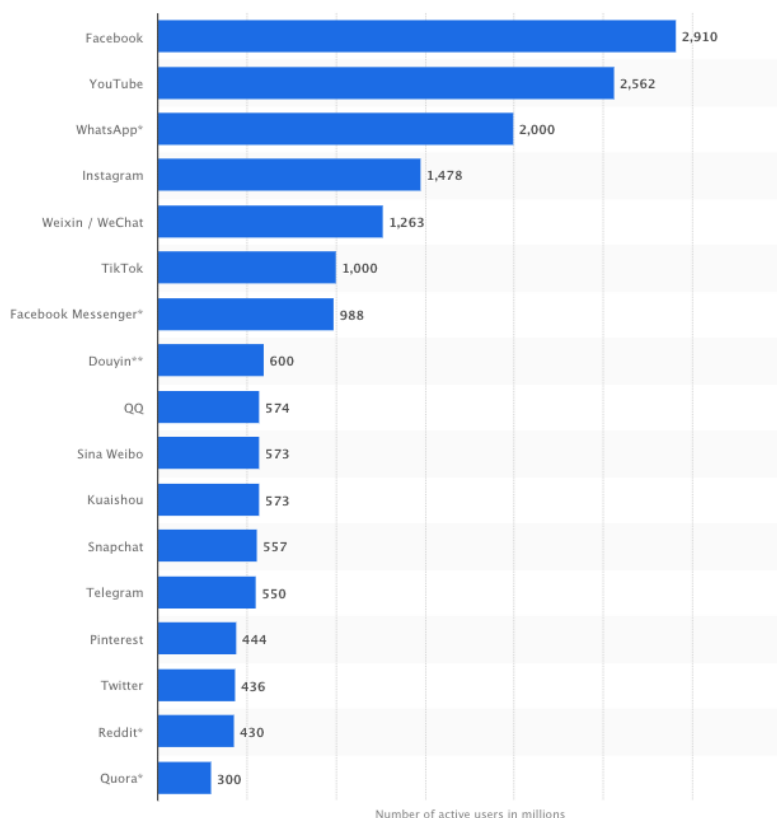


Figure 7 - most popular social media networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users (Statista, 2022).



Figure 8 - word cloud of most common word from interview responses

Figure 8 demonstrates a visualisation of the most common words used within the responses of the interviews that were carried out. It is clear to see from this image that most participants mentioned people, followers, and engagement the most, which suggests these are some of the most important factors when it comes to social media marketing for these SME owners in South Wales. Additionally, the word Instagram is significant in this image which reflects the fact that it was found to be the most used social media platform amid those who were interviewed.

4.2 Findings

The key success factors for a social media marketing campaign as described by the SMEs interviewed revealed a number of common themes and characteristics. These have been outlined within the mind-map framework in figure 9. Each element of this framework have been expanded on and explained below.



Figure 9 - success factors of social media marketing for SMEs in South Wales

4.2.1 Consistency

One of the most common themes amongst the interview responses when asked about what the business owners found made an effective social media marketing campaign, surrounded the consistency of posts. According to Killian and McManus (2015), the interaction consumers have with brands must be consistent in terms of message content, tone and also timing. If a brand is not consistent with their marketing communications and the frequency at which they post, they may be less likely to be remembered by a target audience, whereas frequent



posting keeps the brand name in people's minds. However, it is also important not to over-post content as this may encourage followers to unfollow the business.

4.2.2 Call to Action

Another factor of an effective social media campaign that was identified was having some form of call to action. According to Market Business News (2021), a call to action is a phrase, sentence or image placed with the intent of encouraging the viewer to do something specific. In this case, the specific actions that were identified amongst interviewees consisted of following the page of the business and clicking a link to the business's website. One participant stated:

"I think it is really important to give followers something that they can follow to see your business properly, especially being an independent business that they've probably never even heard of. It seems a bit pointless to post a photo of your product if they don't know where to go next to purchase or just get a better idea of who the business is. That's why we put a hyper link to our website on every picture we post on our [Instagram] stories and in the caption of all our main feed posts"

It seemed to be a common conception throughout the interviews that as a small business it was important to give customers the opportunity to follow some sort of link or instruction to get to the business page, with an additional participant adding:

"... especially on a platform such as Tik Tok, I find I can post a video of my stuff and the engagement on there will be great but many people will scroll straight past if they don't see any way of getting to the page to check out our range and prices and stuff."



When asked, most participants also revealed that they gain more sales when their promotional material includes some form of call-to-action than when it does not.

4.2.3 Informative

A further common factor identified is the information within the campaign. Similar to the previous factor identified, participants recognised that if the target audience of the campaign does not come away from viewing it being sufficiently informed on where to find the business page and what they are selling, it is unlikely to lead to any new sales or further engagement beyond that singular view. It was identified that it is very important to have the business name somewhere on every piece of marketing material posted to social media, particularly images. It is also important to clearly portray what is being sold so that no lines are blurred, especially with the wide reach of social media, it is likely that individuals who have never seen the business's name before will see the material.

4.2.4 Tone & Personality

The SME owners emphasised the importance of having a friendly tone when implementing their social media campaigns. It was stated by one participant that:

"We want our followers to see that we are friendly rather than a cold company that only cares about sales. I like reading reviews where people say how friendly we are as a company, especially since I think it's a big factor in good customer service as well."

This approach may differ to that of a larger organisation. Social media platforms enable for direct communication between firms and consumers, according to Barcelos, Dantas and



Senecal (2018), findings suggest that a human tone may not be the best option against a more traditional corporate tone when influencing purchase intentions. However, the influence of a human voice may be stronger when the business has a hedonic goal in mind. As seen in figure 5, the SMEs interviewed value an increase in customer engagement more than sales. This supports the reasoning behind the choice of using a friendly, human tone of voice as opposed to a corporate one.

4.2.5 Trends

Some of the interviewees discussed their incorporation of current trends within their social media marketing, with one disclosing:

"I find that following trends helps with my engagement more than anything else, especially using platforms such as Tik Tok that are purely visual. Posting my promotion in Tik Tok videos doesn't give me much opportunity to relay all the information about my business that I'd like to, so in these cases I find using sounds that are trending means my videos land on more people's feeds"

It was also mentioned by other interviewees that although they do not rely on trends to reach a wider audience, partaking in them helps in receiving a surge in engagement with posts.

4.2.6 Appearance

A lot of the factors mentioned by the SME owners interviewed related to the appearance of a marketing campaign. Simonson and Schmitt (1997) state that in order to create a long-



lasting identity that is attractive to consumers, attractive visuals and other various sensory markers that represent the brand appropriately can be effective. This is an idea that is not lost on the sample used, with one partaker articulating that:

“The appearance of my promotional stuff is a massive factor for me which is why I try to make all my photography as creative and professional as possible. My product is very simple, and promo can get really repetitive if I don’t find ways to make it look interesting and really eye catching.”

This response seemed to be repeated amongst all participants, with many emphasising the fact that their primary platform for social media marketing, Instagram, is primarily a photo sharing site, meaning that a lot of thought was required in the visual aspect of their marketing. Many also expressed the importance of campaigns being eye catching in order to encourage audience to stop and see what the material is rather than just scrolling past it without giving it a second glance.

4.2.7 Platform Selection

There appeared to be a common consensus when it came to the topic of platform selection, with all participants choosing Instagram as a sharing platform and most also utilising Facebook to market their business, as seen in figure 6. Some participants also admitted to using Tik Tok within their marketing campaign, this is not unusual due to the increasing popularity of the video sharing app as it is forecast to catch up with YouTube in terms of downloads by the year 2024 where both are predicted to take £18.2 billion in advertising revenue, despite Tik Tok being launched twelve years after the rival (Sweeney, 2022).



It seems to be a common theme amongst the South Wales SME owners that the most effective platform to use was the one which brought the most engagement with the release of campaigns. This seems to be particularly important to these small businesses as engagement plays a major part in brand loyalty and constant sales.

4.2.8 Relationships

According to Iverns and Valta (2011), the focus on providing functional benefits including improved quality or longer duration with goods and services have shifted. In an attempt to protect brands from increased vulnerability against competitors, differentiation is being sought through other means, one of these being the building of strong relational ties between a business and its target audience (Fournier, 1998). One of the SME owners interviewed said:

"I like to build a strong relationship with my clients, I find it much more valuable to have reliable customer base that have a high sense of brand loyalty than a lot of customers that only see me as another service. I try to engage with my customers as much as I can through my marketing, I also reply to comments and all of my messages through my social media pages because I think it lets my customers know I do value them all and care about what they think. There are a lot of my clients that I would actually describe as friends because I've built up such a good relationship with them ... I do find this pays off as it does improve my reputation and I find my name is more likely to be shared during casual conversations that my clients have with their friends and family, so many people have booked in with me for the first time saying that their friend or something has recommended me and I do believe that putting so much effort into my relationships with clients does play a part in this."



Other participants also stated the importance of building a relationship with their customer base in order to increase customer retention and brand loyalty.



5. Conclusion

To conclude, the plethora of existing literature available surrounding the topic of marketing emphasises the impact it has on the success of a business, with generalised models such as the AIDA model aiding businesses in understanding the concept. In recent years, the principle of marketing has undergone a significant shift, particularly with the emergence of digital marketing leading to the introduction of social media marketing. The use of social media in marketing campaigns is adopted commonly amongst businesses of all sizes, with a number of success factors being outlined in more recent literature. However, there is a significant gap in established literature relating to social media marketing for small-medium enterprises in the South Wales area. The aim of this dissertation was to establish various success factors for these businesses in order to create a relevant framework.

Underpinned by the essential elements of research design as outlined by the research onion model, this study includes data acquired from semi-structured interviews in an attempt to gain a qualitative insight to the use of social media marketing amongst SMEs in South Wales. The sample of this research has been selected via a purposive, homogenous sampling approach underpinned by the key elements of ethical research. An inductive approach has been taken to this research in order to build enough data and information to be able to analyse it and create a relevant framework containing the success factors of SMEs in South Wales regarding social media marketing .

The research carried out revealed a number of key factors of social media marketing valued by SME owners in the South Wales Area, a major one of which relating to the relationship that the business has with the customer and the personality they portray to them. This may



be due to the establish fact that engagement was also identified as a critical factor as the majority of the sample stated that an increase in engagement is more valuable than an influx of sales. Other key factors identified and analysed include tone, appearance, consistency, informativity, use of trends, call to action, relationship establishment, and platform selection.



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Appendices

Appendix 1; Form of application for ethical approval

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.
Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Rebecca Jayne Steele			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	UWTSD Institute of Management and Health			
4	Campus:	Swansea			
5	E-mail address:	1902180@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07359191472			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	1902180			
8	Programme of Study:	BA Business Management			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr. Gareth Hughes			



SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in) Approved by lecturer	☒	18/11/2021	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	<u>UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice</u> ☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy ☒
3	[List any other relevant documents here] ☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐



Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	An Analysis of Social Media and its Success as a Marketing Tool Amongst Small and Medium Enterprises in South Wales			
2	Proposed start date:	09/11/2021	Proposed end date:	13/05/2022	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity Although there is a plethora of information available regarding the ways in which marketing has changed in recent years, including the introduction of social media, there seems to be a gap in information on how SME's in the UK and South Wales utilise social media within their marketing strategies. This research aims to fill that gap and provide a framework of success factors relating to social media marketing amongst these businesses in order for it to be best exploited as a marketing tool. (this box should expand as you type)				
4	Research Question How do SME's in South Wales utilise social media within their marketing strategies and how can this be better improved through the incorporation of established social media marketing success factors? (this box should expand as you type)				
5	Aims of Research Activity				



	The primary aim of this project is to assemble a framework model that will outline the factors for success for social media marketing amongst SME's in South Wales through the identification of ways in which they are currently using social media marketing campaigns and their characteristics that have proved to make the campaigns successful. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To compile a comprehensive literature review that encompasses available research surrounding the topics of marketing and social media marketing. 2. Develop and carry out primary research through the use of semi-structures interviews in order to identify how SME's in South Wales use social media within their marketing strategies and the ways in which they measure the success of their social media campaigns 3. Utilise the information collected to fabricate a framework of success factors for social media marketing amongst SME's in South Wales (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with owners of SME's in the South Wales area. The participants of these questionnaires will be fully briefed on their voluntary status within the research and will be made aware that they are able to withdraw at any time without being penalised. These participants will also maintain full anonymity throughout the research and the project. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	UK only. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations



	beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents <u>NOT</u> publicly available?	NO	☐
		YES	☒
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒



5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒



9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	5-7 participants. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	Owners of SME's in the South Wales area. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	By reaching out to the business owners via social media and asking them if they would be willing to participate in the research. (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☒	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
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24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.					
If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.					
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended? <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>☒</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	☒	No	☐
Yes	☒				
No	☐				
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> Risk to participants: The research being carried out does not pose significant risk to the participants as it will be carried out on an entirely voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or ill-treatment as a result. Any sensitive data that the participants choose to disclose is at risk of being leaked if data protection measures are not taken. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i> </td> <td> How you will mitigate the risk to participants: Data from the research will be stored on a password-protected laptop only accessible by the researcher. All information will be deleted on submission of the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i> </td> </tr> </table>	Risk to participants: The research being carried out does not pose significant risk to the participants as it will be carried out on an entirely voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or ill-treatment as a result. Any sensitive data that the participants choose to disclose is at risk of being leaked if data protection measures are not taken. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: Data from the research will be stored on a password-protected laptop only accessible by the researcher. All information will be deleted on submission of the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
Risk to participants: The research being carried out does not pose significant risk to the participants as it will be carried out on an entirely voluntary basis and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or ill-treatment as a result. Any sensitive data that the participants choose to disclose is at risk of being leaked if data protection measures are not taken. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: Data from the research will be stored on a password-protected laptop only accessible by the researcher. All information will be deleted on submission of the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities				
	This project does not include any sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				
4	Risks to the investigator				



	For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest		
	Risk to the investigator: Participants may falsely accuse the researcher of things such as ill treatment and/or sharing data without permission. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: Permission to use the data collected will be verbally acquired from the interviewee as part of every interview carried out. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection		
	Risk to the University: Poor treatment towards participants may reflect badly on the university as an institution since the researcher is a student. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: All research will be carried out with full objectivity and fairness towards participants. Participants will be fully briefed on the research and will be made aware that they are able to withdraw at any time without any consequences or ill treatment and also be informed that the research is entirely voluntary. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems		
	Risk to the environment: This research project is carried out entirely online via phone or video calls and does not pose any environmental risks. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	Interview participants will have the option to receive an email (should they choose to disclose their email address) expanding on the purpose of the project and what their data was used for upon the completion of the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent



	Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Before carrying out the interview, respondents will be fully briefed on how their data will be collected and used disclosing that full anonymity will be kept. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	The interviewees will remain entirely anonymous throughout the project with no personal details being disclosed or recorded including their name nor the name of their business. All audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be kept on a password protected computer that is only accessible by the researcher. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		



	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	All computers within which data will be stored on private, password protected computers that are inaccessible to any individual other than the researcher <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
		YES	NO
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:		
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Full anonymity will be kept and information will be stored with utmost confidentiality. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Rebecca Steele (researcher) <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		



	Rebecca Steele (researcher) <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data collected will be stored on a private computer belonging to the researcher, which is password protected. This information will be erased upon the submission of the project to the university. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒



SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	R. J Steele	Date: 25/03/2022

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Gareth Hughes	Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☐	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☐	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☐	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☐	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☐	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name. You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore **it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.**



STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.



Appendix 2; Proof of interview in the form of a transcript from one of the interviews carried out

Researcher: Do you consent to your answers from this interview being recorded and stored securely?

Participant: Yes

Do you consent to your personal information being recorded, accessible only to the interviewer for up to 30 days after the interview takes place, after which they will be destroyed?

Yes

All personal information will be kept confidential and complete anonymity will be held. Do you consent to your answers also being used within the dissertation composed by Rebecca Steele, completed as part of the requirements of the BA Business Management Degree at University of Wales Trinity Saint David?

Yes

Do you understand that this interview is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any point without providing a reason?

Yes

Do you own a small/medium enterprise?

Yes

Where is your business based?

Cwmtwrch in Swansea



Do you use social media as part of your marketing strategy?

We do, yes

Which social media platforms do you focus on when it comes to marketing?

Instagram, Facebook and Twitter

Would you say any one of these platforms gains more engagement when it comes to marketing than the others?

Yes, we definitely seem to get the most traffic and engagement on our Instagram page than anywhere else

What kind of material do you post on these platforms?

General advertising content usually, information about who we are, updates about our services, promotion stuff for new services and we also hold competitions on our Instagram.

What kinds of competitions do you hold?

Generally, ones where people can win a free service or product by sharing a post on their stories and tagging their friends in the comment.

What are your usual aims and objectives when you post this kind of content as part of your marketing?

To promote our business and our services, because we're a small, local business we tend to rely on our good reputation and word-of-mouth to help us grow and gain a bigger customer base. We're also still a relatively new business so by holding the competitions it gets people sharing our page and helps spread awareness of who we are and what we do, a lot of the competitions require people to follow the page to enter so that also helps build our followers up quite a bit through a sort of domino effect.



So, you said you also post promotional content and advertising stuff on your pages, what do you find makes your social media marketing campaigns successful in terms of reaching your goals and objectives?

The appearance of the campaign is a huge factor in driving our engagement up, we also make sure our business is promoted clearly and positive so its important to use the right language when talking about our services. Understanding when to post is also something we take into consideration so that when we do put our campaigns out there, its engaged with and seen by as many people as possible.

Being an SME in the south wales area, do you ever tailor your marketing strategies to appeal to a local audience specifically?

Yes, we like to emphasise the Welsh aspect of our business and make the most of the fact that we are lucky enough to offer our services in such a beautiful location that is right on our target audience's doorstep.

Do you find this is effective in gaining engagement?

Yeah definitely, I think it gives us a sense of local friendliness and sort of familiarity as a business because we are local. People know that we live in the same area, very similar lives to them and it gives us a general sense of personality that we are really proud of.

Would you say that you insert a lot of your personality into your social media marketing campaigns?

Absolutely! We love that our customers know us as people rather than just a seller. It's that friendly relationship that sets us apart from the competition I think, we take so much pride in the way we interact with our customers because at the end of the day that's half of the appeal, people are able to see the quality of our stuff for themselves but in order to get to that point, we have to show that we care about those buying from us and demonstrate amazing customer service, which I think we do very well, especially since social media allows us to interact with these people so frequently and directly. It's nice to know you're talking to a real person with a human touch rather than just a customer advisor in a big firm who sees you as only a number.



In your opinion and in relation to your business, what is the ideal outcome of a successful social media campaign?

An increase in people buying our products is obviously the ideal goal, but also just gaining followers, having people check us out as a business and our name becoming more known to our target audience is also a huge win for us as it helps us to grow.

When implementing a social media marketing campaign, do you value an increase in engagement or an increase in sales more as a result?

I would definitely say engagement, since we are a small and independent business, we rely on repeat purchases from customers who are loyal to us more than kind of one-off sales from people who have never heard of us. Obviously we appreciate every sale we get, but we notice that when we get our name in people's heads and our business gets a good reputation among a lot of people, we receive more sales in the long run.



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