



Brunel
University
London

**The Effects of Social Media eWOM Communications on
Consumer Attitude and Behaviour**

A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Ratthanava Tivaratchai

Brunel Business School

Brunel University

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Abstract

Social Media (SM) applications allow users to communicate with various types of information about goods and services in the form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube are currently ranked as the most accessed and adopted websites in the world that provide eWOM communication. Most importantly, these SM applications may have a significant impact on the opinions and attitudes of users with regard to the product information being shared.

The aim of this research is to examine how different combinations of interactive attributes and features of eWOM being shared over SM applications effect consumers' attitudes and behaviours of intangible services in the healthcare industry. Relevant attributes derived from the literature, which include source credibility, trustworthiness and argument quality within SM eWOM messages are explored. These are examined in line with factors of Electronic Window Dressing (EWD) features, such as SM capabilities of simultaneous video, picture and web link sharing within the SM environment. This determines what types of different characteristics of eWOM alone or in combination with multimedia communications, can positively or negatively influence consumer's attitude that can have an effect on actual behaviour.

A conceptual framework is augmented and developed based on existing theories in relation to persuasion and attitude change. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) models are combined and adapted as a foundation of a new conceptual approach, noted as 'Social Media Communications Model' (SMCM), with additional components specifically related to SM communications in an attempt to form a predictive explanation of consumers' attitudes.

The research is designed as a comparative study by adopting an inductive interpretivist approach. A Qualitative method is used in the data collection process by performing in-depth interviews with 34 senior level managers with regard to SM communications in healthcare industry from both the United Kingdom and the United States. All of the primary data was transcribed, coded and thematically analysed.

The key findings revealed the most preferred SM platforms used in the UK and US, how source credibility, expertise and trustworthiness are effective, and why videos, pictures and the timing of post were significant in changing consumer attitude. Practically, the research provides businesses and organisation in similar service goods industries with a SM model that explains how to create successful marketing campaigns. The research likewise contributes theoretically by identifying the relationships of important constructs relevant to SM communications from a qualitative perspective, forming a new extended theoretical framework that can be a predictor of consumer behaviour.

The research further provides a better understanding towards the key factors of eWOM in SM that influence consumers to think and behave in certain ways, additionally contributing to the existing SM marketing literature by determining how and why certain SM messages are more persuasive than others and what attributes and factors lead to those changes. Finally, this research expands on the subject of SM eWOM by adapting the existing persuasions and consumer behaviour theories with relevant factors and constructs to SM, enabling business and marketing managers to create more effective SM content.

Keywords: Social Media (SM), Electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM), consumer behaviour, healthcare, service industry

Dedication

To my mother and father who have always believed in me and have continually shown their never-ending love and support in all my endeavours, thank you for always being there.

To my wife, for all her encouragement and strength throughout this journey, thank you for standing with me and being by my side.

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I am also grateful to all of the staff members at the CBASS PGR office for their patience in always responding to and providing answers to all of my needs and concerns during my PhD studies. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to the success of every Brunel student.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is completely based on my own work and has never been submitted for a degree in any university.

I also declare that all of the information collected and presented in this thesis is in accordance with all of the ethical rules and regulations of the university.

Ratthanava Tivaratchai

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Glossary of Terms

SM	Social Media
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
EWD	Electronic Window Dressing
WAVD	Web Advertising Visual Design
UGC	User Generated Content
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
SC	Social Capital Theory
SI	Social Influence Theory
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

**CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Research Overview

In the digital era of Internet marketing, SM has become an innovative technology that is increasingly being used by consumers to communicate and discover new information about goods and services within a users network. Traditionally, this form of highly effective communication about goods and services from family members, friends and experts that go beyond conventional television, radio and newspaper advertising has been defined as word of mouth (Dichter, 1966). Due to the evolution of current Internet technology, these types of conversations now occur online across various platforms and have been redefined as electronic word of mouth (Henning-Thurau, et al., 2004). These types of eWOM discussions and interactions online, as described by See-To and Ho (2014), are capable of reaching a broad audience around the world due to the capabilities of the Internet and may consist of positive and negative statements from consumers about products and services.

This phenomenon has allowed users of SM platforms to become empowered enough to positively or negatively affect an organisations' reputation by influencing large amounts of other SM users and consumers due to the advancement of SM applications and the increase of Internet usage. This has also given consumers the ability to rapidly disperse and share information with minimal effort and easily connect with people around the world. SM users are able to share and distribute different types of multimedia eWOM messages in the forms of pictures, videos, comment posts, online reviews, web links and user-generated content (UGC). The eWOM messages can originate from a variety of distinctive sources. Consumer reaction to these types of media mixed eWOM messages being shared over SM platforms has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

Prior to the advent and proliferation of SM communications, the majority of marketing and advertising activates of companies were through traditional one-way communications such as print, radio and television platforms. The creation

of SM technology has now challenged those traditional forms of marketing and has advanced the process of advertising into a new era of socially connected peer-to-peer eWOM communications through the Internet and SM platforms. Because of this advancement in Internet technology, the original concept of WOM has been transformed into a modernised, more powerful hybrid form of eWOM through SM platforms. This is cause for re-evaluation into how and why SM communications now affects consumer attitude and behaviour in the current state of SM marketing.

Currently, research about SM eWOM communications has provided limited knowledge about how these particular SM interactions can affect the attitudes and behaviour of its users. Recent studies regarding SM have been related to technology acceptance and influences of SM usage (Rauniar, et al., 2014) and exploring motivating factors of online website word of mouth through analysis of consumer post and comments (Chu and Kim, 2011). Other studies concerning SM marketing and branding, in general, have pertained to adoption, usage, exposer amount, SM characteristics, and strategic advice for businesses. There has been limited research in the area of how SM eWOM communications affect consumer attitude and behaviour from a qualitative perspective.

This study aims to explain how particular factors and variables in SM communications such as the interactive attributes of videos, pictures and web links, when merged in combination with attributes of message trust, source credibility, argument quality and expertise in a message, affect consumer attitude towards the SM communication and increases eWOM sharing behaviour. The correct mixture of these factors and variables when transmitted through SM platforms may produce a cognitive and emotional change in consumers that have not yet been discovered in the literature. Greater insight into how these aspects of SM communications emotionally affect users could construct a new current model of persuasive communication that is a predictor of consumer attitude and behaviour in today's highly advanced technological environments.

The research also determines the specific relationships of positive and negative characteristics of SM eWOM communications, which are particularly beneficial towards marketing strategies for businesses and organisations in the service industry. Therefore, it is necessary for marketing practitioners, academics and businesses to thoroughly understand how consumers interact with eWOM communications across the SM platforms and what the drivers are that produce authentic attitude and behavioural change in consumers.

This research contributes to the existing academic literature by attempting to uncover the motivating factors of SM eWOM communication that generate substantial cognitive, emotional and psychological change in consumer attitudes. Moreover, the results and findings from the research can be used as basis for developing a new SM communications model that is a predictor of consumer behaviour.

The study applies a qualitative approach method based on the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty and Cappicio, 1986) as a foundation for the conceptual research framework. Additional factors and variables particular to social networking technology, advertising and consumer behaviour are also observed in efforts to utilise SM eWOM communications attributes that can provide a theoretical foundation for future academic studies to be performed, as well as contribute to the existing academic literature.

1.2 Research Gap

There have previously been numerous studies on the subject of Internet advertising and the impact it has on consumers, but prior studies on the topic of SM eWOM communications and advertising that currently exist have been varied and concentrated in several different fragmented areas. Of the prior SM

communications research, factors of sender trust, eWOM, UGC, viral marketing, message source credibility, technology adoption, SM usage, purchase intention and consumer attitudes have been consistent throughout the literature across various types of studies and academic fields.

Previous research by Kirtis and Karahan (2011) on SM purchasing behaviour showed that 70% of consumers use social networking websites to find information about a brand or a product and that the recommendations from these sites are considered credible, valuable, and trustworthy. Exploration on influences of eWOM towards consumer decision making and perceived source trustworthiness has also been examined (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). Consumers believe that SM is a more trusted source of information for products than traditional forms of advertising (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Likewise, Pookulangara and Koesler (2011) similarly suggested that recommendations from other online SM users are the most reliable form of promoting worldwide. Another study by Cho, et al. (2014) additionally suggested that trust in the sender directly influenced attention and exposure towards advertising email messages. In particular, trustworthiness has been found as the most important credibility dimension and perceived expertise was determined to enhance eWOM adoption, while similarly improving the social functions of eWOM between different studies. The findings from these various studies have provided positive relationships between eWOM messages, source credibility, trustworthiness and quality of the argument within the communications.

Other previous studies have included holistic eWOM in purchase intention (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015), eWOM credibility and bridging and bonding (Levy and Gvili, 2015), and eWOM for movies reviews (Craig, et al., 2015). The influence of perceived source credibility on the effectiveness of health-related public service announcements by eWOM communication has also been researched (Kareklas, et al., 2015). Another study by Hudson, et al. (2014)

examined the influence of social media on customer relationships using social media communications in attendance of an intangible service such as music festivals. On the other hand, Cudmore, et al. (2011) compared the two award-winning medical websites with two top commercial healthcare websites to determine significant predictors of positive attitudes toward the websites when actively searching for healthcare. There has not yet been a study that has thoroughly examined all of the combined attributes of eWOM sharing within SM communications and why those attributes affect consumer attitude from a qualitative managerial perspective in the service industry. From this viewpoint, the mixture of core message characteristics such as source credibility, trustworthiness, expertise and features of argument quality when being shared simultaneously in a single message across specific SM platforms has not yet been fully explored. Therefore, the following first overall research question of this study is addressed.

RQ1. Why are certain combinations of message characteristics in SM eWOM communications effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

There have been research topics in relation to SM eWOM communications including SM eWOM dynamics affecting consumer attention on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest platforms (Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014). The impact of eWOM message characteristics on the perceived effectiveness of online consumer reviews has also been studied (Wang, et al., 2015). A study by Yang, et al. (2015) examined social shopping website attributes as drivers of reciprocity and positive eWOM, where co-shopping was positioned as behavioural outcomes of exchange. Research by Tsao and Hsieh, (2015) investigated how eWOM quality influences eWOM credibility and purchase intention and how the type of SM eWOM platform and product type moderates these influences. Additionally, Fang (2014) studied how users of SM platforms adopt information embedded in the eWOM reviews. The study focused on the

eWOM reviews generated from Facebook, compared to the marketing messages delivered by online retailers via other social networking sites.

There has yet to be any empirical SM communication study that has examined all these embedded interactive SM capabilities and how they affect consumer attitudes and behaviour through a specific SM platform. Studies of this communication environment have been limited therefore creating a possible gap to be fulfilled within the existing literature. Hence, determining what types of interactive SM features and capabilities such as photos, videos, web links, are considered the most robust drivers for generating increased eWOM through positively changing consumer attitude and behaviour. The breakthroughs are advantageous for organisations by forming effective marketing campaigns through SM. Thus, leading to the second overall research question of this study as stated below:

RQ2. Why are certain combinations of interactive SM capabilities in SM eWOM communication effective in positively influencing consumer attitude towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

Some other recent studies in SM advertising have concentrated on topics of consumer online brand related interaction (Muntinga, et al., 2011), effects of website personalisation (Ho and Bodoff, 2014), consumer creativity (Berthon, et al., 2012; Wu, et al., 2015), the usage and acceptance of SM technology (Raunair, et al., 2014), SM corporate reputation (Dijkmans, et al., 2015), as well as the effects of viral marketing on consumer purchase intention (Gunawan and Huarng, 2015). Another research by Reichelt, et al. (2014) examined the effects of utilitarian and social functions on the attitude and adoption of eWOM. Some specific interactive characteristics of SM and Internet communications have likewise been investigated, such as positive motivators of eWOM (Chatterjee, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Hudson, et al., 2015) and

the influences of eWOM on purchase intention, mainly focusing on attributes of volume and valence of messages (Tsao and Hsieh, 2015).

However, the majority of these previous studies have been quantitative in nature. There has yet to be a qualitative research performed that investigates how and why SM users perceive healthcare related SM eWOM messages and how these types of messages about intangible products and services affect consumer attitudes from a qualitative viewpoint. This gap in the literature leaves room for the investigation into the third overall question of this research:

RQ3: What other undiscovered attributes in SM eWOM communications may potentially be influential and why are they effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

Suggestions for further research suggested by Cheung and Thadani (2012) include a more in-depth empirical investigation into the key variables in social networking communication that can alter consumer reaction towards advertisements. Moreover, an exploration into determining different types of powerful interactive features that consumers encounter while communicating with businesses using SM has also been proposed by Dijkmans, et al. (2014). Although credibility, expertise and trustworthiness have all been previously explored and found to have an effect on eWOM adoption, with the current evolution of SM technology, these factors have not yet been studied simultaneously in relation to other interactive features of SM such as video, picture and web link sharing and how they effect actual consumer behaviour. The outcome of the combination of these attributes when transmitted in the form eWOM messages through specific SM platforms has previously not been fully explained. The knowledge gained from ascertaining how interactive features within SM form the psychological links that create strong emotional relationships

between consumers and businesses in this research adds to the existing academic marketing literature.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to determine the motivating factors in SM eWOM communication that can positively influence consumer attitudes and behaviour of intangible products specifically for healthcare services. Aspects of the interactive features that users are capable of performing within SM platforms such as Facebook are examined in association with the message characteristics of source credibility and trust in eWOM communications in SM. The research applies a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews from SM managers' perspectives that are considered most appropriate for providing abundant data in regards to this study.

The objectives of the study are outlined as follow:

- 1) To perform a comprehensive literature review of the current research available in order to obtain a greater understanding of the present status of eWOM in SM marketing and communications.
- 2) To develop a new conceptual framework based on fundamental persuasive communication theories that can be used to investigate the particular combination of variables that answer the proposed research questions.
- 3) To evaluate SM features including the sharing of videos, pictures, eWOM post and comments, and web links using the adapted conceptual model to ascertain if there are any existing relationships with the characteristics of message trust, source credibility, expertise and argument quality and why

these mixtures of factors have an influence on consumer attitude and behaviour.

- 4) To extend the current SM and eWOM marketing literature with new findings from the study and significantly add new constructs to the existing conceptual model that can be used as a strong predictor of SM consumer attitude and behaviour.
- 5) To provide innovative and relevant critical findings from the study that can be beneficial for both theoretical and practical implications for future SM research.

1.4 Research Methodology

The research assumes a qualitative method using semi-structured interviews of SM managers to identify motivating factors that influence consumer attitude when exposed to SM eWOM communications. The research assumes an epistemological position of interpretivism with an inductive approach, focusing on words as a model of data collection that assist in adding to the existing theories and help generate a new predictive SM framework. The benefits of using a qualitative method with an inductive approach come from the focusing on the individuals and circumstances involved with an importance on the descriptions rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2012).

The Interpretivist position as described by Bryman and Bell (2011) can be explained as the understanding of human behaviour by evaluating the subjective meaning of the social actions between people and the objects of natural science. This method assists in going beyond just understanding of what the relationships may be between the factors and variables of this study, but assist in the understanding of why specific actions and relationships occur in consumers

when engaging with SM eWOM and how those motivators work. The data from the qualitative interviews are then thematically coded and analysed.

The study also examined SM features with the ELM by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) as a base and guideline for the direction of the study in forming a new conceptual predictive framework. In relation to the theory, different message characteristics and attributes such as the influence of trusted contacts, message source credibility, argument quality, in combination with interactive SM capabilities such as the sharing of pictures, videos, web links and comment posts are adapted into the ELM to create a new conceptual framework. In addition, the constructs of attitude and behaviour from Theory of Reason Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) are also merged with constructs from the ELM.

The framework is applied to determine which of the particular factors and variables combined in a persuasive communication deriving from either consumers or businesses can create positive or negative attitude change through the adapted framework. Furthermore, the framework establishes which mix of attributes of SM interactivity exist that trigger complex levels of analysis and attention or directly generate minimal superficial associations of emotion for a consumer exposed to these SM communications. The combined framework of the ELM and TRA theories is also a new predictive model that can discover the underlying motivational factors that affect consumer attitude and behaviour towards eWOM communication in the SM environment.

In regards to the process of sample selection, this research applies a purposeful sampling technique of crucial informants in an attempt to create a generalised representation of the targeted population. This technique of sampling one member of an organisation, such as senior managers for interviews, can be beneficial when gathering data from large numbers of organisations (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The representative sample population selected for this study is comprised of interviews from high-level SM marketing managers for the purpose of comparing the data from SM to determine why the findings are significant.

Sampled senior marketing managers are persons directly in charge of their companies' SM social media activities and have adequate knowledge of their facilities, social media guidelines, processes and the behaviours of their SM followers.

Secondary data is also obtained through various statistical census organisations to help understand if there are any other constructs outside of the base research framework that may cause changes to the present status and recent trends of SM communications. The study additionally includes factors of demographics, Internet usage, connection availability and amount of followers to determine if there is any existing relationship across diverse geographic boundaries. All of the primary data gathered from the interviews is analysed using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo. This type of software is essentially designed for sorting large amounts of text information, as well as assisting in coding and creating concepts that will help develop the new theory (Maxwell, 2012).

1.5 Research Design

This research has taken a qualitative approach, adopting a constructionist philosophy from an interpretive perspective of how knowledge is acquired. The research has subjectively observed social influences and human interaction with an inductive approach focusing on words rather than numbers for data collection. Furthermore, the research was conducted during a specific period and compares interview data from two different locations in the world, namely the UK and the US. Therefore, cross-sectional and comparative strategy has been implemented in the research design.

The data collection process of the research applied semi-structured interviews from SM managers by telephone. The conversations have been recorded and

transcribed. The interviews section of the research obtained a well-rounded foundation of knowledge on the topic. The data from the interviews section was then thematically coded using the NVivo. These methods of research have led to a deeper insight into the effects of SM communications on consumer attitude. The conceptual framework that has been designed to investigate the SM eWOM phenomenon in this research is displayed here in Figure 1.

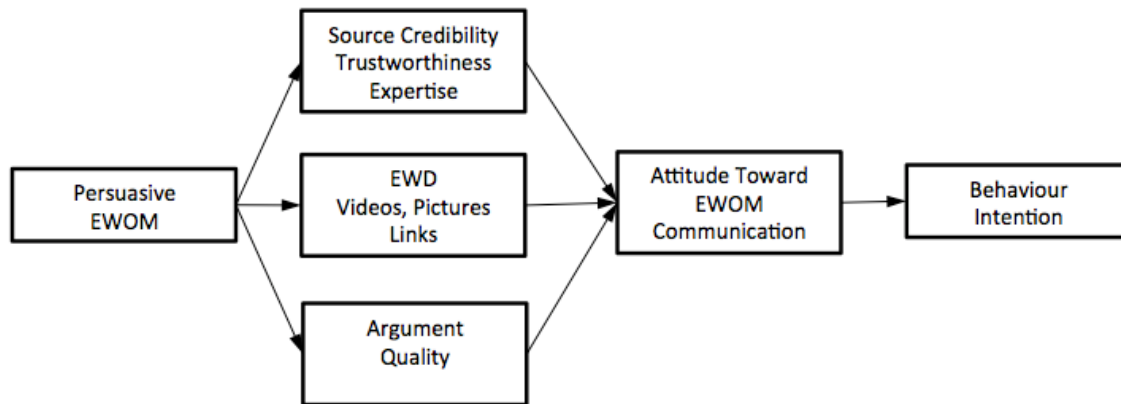


Figure 1. Elaboration Likelihood Model with Additional Variables
(Petty and Cacioppo, 1986)

The research adopts the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) as the base theory, adding factors and variables that are related to SM eWOM communications. The ELM provides for a dual route of message processing, allowing for message cues to trigger either a process of high or low message elaboration. The process of elaboration can lead to either long term or short attitude change. This attitude change is linked to actual behaviour through the TRA model from Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), which is included in the conceptual framework.

Furthermore, Gupta and Harris (2005) acknowledged that eWOM and source expertise of messages have been the two most researched factors in various studies and are documented to have a substantial effect on consumer attitudes

and perception from being examined using the central and peripheral routes of the ELM theory. Therefore, a concentration on the relationships of the SM message variables adopting the ELM theory are assessed by applying the central and peripheral routes of persuasive message processing to discover underlying motivational factors that affect attitude and behaviour towards communications in the SM environment.

Other possible predictive factors that are of significance to the original ELM theory may also be explored in relation to SM communications as the dynamic findings emerge. The study includes factors of demographics, Internet usage, and connection availability to determine if these have any effect across diverse geographic boundaries.

Recommendations by Hudson, et al. (2014) suggested that further exploration should be performed on consumers from a wide variety of countries and cultures in order to achieve greater insight on the advantages of SM ventures. Therefore, the research is design as a comparative study with the sample being from the United Kingdom and the United States.

1.6 Research Contributions

The majority of SM research has been performed on such topics as the influence of online consumer reviews, SM technology adoption, web personalisation, corporate reputation, viral marketing and motivators of eWOM. There has yet to be any empirical studies that have directly investigated the relationships between the characteristics of message trust, source credibility, argument quality and the associations they have with the diverse forms of innovative broadcasting that SM is capable of providing for businesses and consumers. Therefore, the research contributes to both extant academic and practical marketing literature by attempting to reveal what specific attributes of SM communication being

transmitted through SM platforms cause attitude and behavioural change in consumers.

The theoretical contributions of this study help in forming a new model that can be used as a predictor of consumer behaviour towards SM communications and reveal significant psychological relationships between how and why consumer attitudes are formed. The findings also extend and add new valuable constructs towards the existing ELM theory in regards to developing a more definite predictor of consumer attitude in relation to SM communication, which can be useful for future studies in the subject area.

Identifying the underlying properties and characteristics that consumers are exposed to from use of SM communication, for example, the combination of sharing of pictures and videos from a trusted source with high argument quality dispersed through a users network aid in distinguishing the individual dimensions and different measures of the SM phenomenon. This study also revisit definitive areas in advertising such as the fundamental concept of WOM and how this has now been transformed and adapted by SM to form the new hybrid idea of eWOM communications. Determining the key elements of this advancement and how it has affected advertising communications in the era of Web 3.0 and SM is likewise academically beneficial in revealing other valuable factors in addition to creating a more appropriate and accurate consumer behaviour predictive theory for use in social networking environments.

By collecting empirical data from different demographics, the study is able to compare how specific types of communications through SM can increase SM engagement and exposure for healthcare organisation. The research also determines particular techniques and methods that healthcare businesses can use to create effective SM advertising campaigns without having to encounter any drawbacks from negative SM interactions with their consumers. The findings from the particular demographics of the UK and US can also be generalised in

locations where SM penetration is prevalent and for marketing practitioners in an industry that provides intangible services such as healthcare. The research likewise brings into light the effectiveness of various SM communication combinations as well as exposes the possible dangers and limitations of SM advertising that can be detrimental for businesses. The results from this exploration on SM communication platforms and the effects it has on its users can furthermore be adapted by many businesses worldwide in various industries for marketing use on other SM applications and other websites. The exploration enriches the practical literature on SM marketing and furthermore enables businesses and organisations to accurately gauge the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns and activities online. SM is a technology that continues to develop and evolve over time. Therefore, more meaningful understanding of how consumers and businesses interact with one another through the technology is an essential addition of knowledge to the existing marketing literature for both academics and practitioners alike.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The first chapter of the thesis provides a concise introduction into the background and direction of the research. The chapter outlines the motivation for the study, the significant areas of research, research aims, research methodologies and structure of the thesis are explained in brief.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the existing literature relevant to the topics of SM and eWOM marketing. The importance of SM eWOM communications is explored, as well as a comprehensive explanation of the significant factors and variables relevant to change in consumer attitude and behaviour. Advantages and disadvantages of the research topic are also discussed, and the current gap in the literature is identified in the chapter.

Chapter 3 begins by reviewing several theories that have been applied in previous SM research. Then an illustration of how the conceptual framework applied in this research was adapted from existing persuasive communications and consumer behaviour theories ELM and TRA. Additionally, the chapter explains the linkage and relationship between different SM related constructs in the conceptual framework, as well as introduce the core research questions of the research.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and methodology to be adopted for the study. Distinctive paradigms and epistemological viewpoints are reviewed to determine and justify the appropriate approach for the research. Matters of sample selection, ethical concerns, and data collection procedures and data analysis techniques have been covered in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 5 provides the comprehensive results and findings of the comparative study. The demographics of the interviewees and demographics of the actual SM feeds of the organisations are clarified in the chapter. Furthermore, the chapter presents the results from the coded data using the NVivo software and thematic analysis technique.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings revealed in the previous chapter and presents interpretations of the conclusions, reflecting on the research questions, theoretical model applied and linking the findings back to the original literature review. The finalised SMCM is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7 finally presents the conclusion of the research and reviews how the research aims and objectives have been reached. Moreover, summaries of the findings are presented with research contributions, both practical and theoretical. The limitations and future suggested research is also presented in this chapter.

**CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an extensive review of the current literature relevant to the thesis topic and provides insight into the purpose and direction of the study. The chapter is divided into three main areas. The first area of review defines how SM communications are being used on various platforms and the strengths and weaknesses of SM. The second area of review covers the distinctive characteristics of eWOM messages and evaluates the concepts of source credibility, trust, expertise and argument quality. The third area pertains to the unique interactive attributes and features of SM messages such as the sharing of videos, pictures, web links and other company created content. Finally, the chapter concludes with the justification of the industry being studied, gaps within the reviewed literature and conclusion.

2.2 Social Media Defined

There are many different ways SM has been defined. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), SM can be explained as a diverse network of websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that allow users to generate and share content with one another online. This can create a form of communication that helps build essential relationships between the users of SM (Lacoste, 2016). SM is also considered as a group of Internet-based applications that allow consumer creation and distribution of UGC about products and services at low costs (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Wang, et al., 2012). Likewise, Whiting and Williams (2013) described SM as a form of communication that allows users to easily reach millions of people around the world.

These applications can also be accessed across multiple technological devices such as personal computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. The applications allow both consumers and businesses the ability to generate and

share SM content consisting of comment posts, pictures, videos and web links across a users network. These types of content can be messages that are personally designed and shared, to advertised content from businesses, depending on the original source of content creation. As content is increasingly being shared within a users network, the newsfeed on the users application are consistently updated with the new content and information being posted and shared from other users on the network. This multimedia information can then be consumed, evaluated and shared further across the network.

This type of technology has given consumers the empowerment to express and communicate opinions and comments about products and services that can cause considerable effects, both positive and negative, on businesses and organisations that use SM worldwide. The surge in the use of SM stems from the need of people to be able to communicate and experience a connection through their network of known people, whether on a social or professional level for many various intrinsic purposes. Hence, this is another motive for further investigation into how these exchanges of information online can affect consumer attitude towards a particular message. Furthermore, Berthon, et al. (2012) confirmed that knowledge and information distributed through SM platforms has transformed the average SM user from content consumers to content producers. Thus, this has altered the traditional methods of marketing into a new form of hybrid communication and advertising.

Moreover, SM has a direct effect on consumer perceptions towards businesses and organisations communicating over these platforms. Consumers can form certain opinions based on what is being said about a company over SM networks that can have a direct effect on company brand image and reputation. Kietzmann, et al. (2011) expressed that UGC being shared through SM has the capability to affect the reputation of a company directly, yet many executives tend to neglect this form of media due to the lack of adequately being able to comprehend how to engage with the technology successfully. Likewise, Mangold

and Faulds (2009) questioned how executives could tap into the power of SM users that are capable of communicating with hundreds of thousands of other consumers with just a click of a button. Therefore, more in-depth investigation into the increasing phenomenon of SM usage and the effects it has on businesses is needed to further understand why certain factors are potentially more successful in changing attitudes and behaviours with their desired audiences. Greater understanding of these concepts in SM communications towards consumer attitude can be of vital importance. This implies that organisations need to be increasingly aware of the potential impact SM communications can have on their company and understand ways to harness its influential power to be advantageous for their businesses.

2.2.1 Social Media and Advertising

Many businesses and organisations have now attempted to adjust their marketing strategies towards organic SM advertisements that are engaging and stimulating consumer interactivity online. With more than 80% of the world's largest companies now having a SM presence (Dijkmans, et al., 2014) and more than 70% of people online using some form of SM to interconnect with each other (Hudson, et al., 2015), it is apparent that SM has developed to become a dominant form of digital communication. Consumers also reacted more positively to organic SM advertisements that contained some form of eWOM or UGC than they did in the traditional form of paid advertisements (Hudson, et al., 2015).

Reports by Euromonitor (2013) stated that consumers would use SM as an all in one place to shop and giving way for businesses to advertise through these networks. From this, users of SM can rely more heavily on their social network connections for consumption opinions than they do on traditional marketing techniques. Of the companies that have a SM strategy to connect with their consumers, more than half are reported to have higher revenues than companies

that do not interact over the platforms (Dholakia and Durham, 2010). Additionally, Dijkmans, et al. (2014) acknowledged that SM usage is expected to increase over the next few years. However, previous studies have been fragmented and varied in the field of SM eWOM due to the platforms rapid evolution, providing only a limited amount of research into how SM communications and interactions have transformed marketing strategies for businesses.

According to the survey information published in 2016 by the Office of National Statics (ONS) in Figure 2, within the United Kingdom (UK) alone, over 82% of adults (41.8 million people) have accessed the Internet on a daily basis. Within the population, 76% of people accessed the Internet to find information about goods and services, while 51% of the population searched for information concerning healthcare services (ONS, 2016).

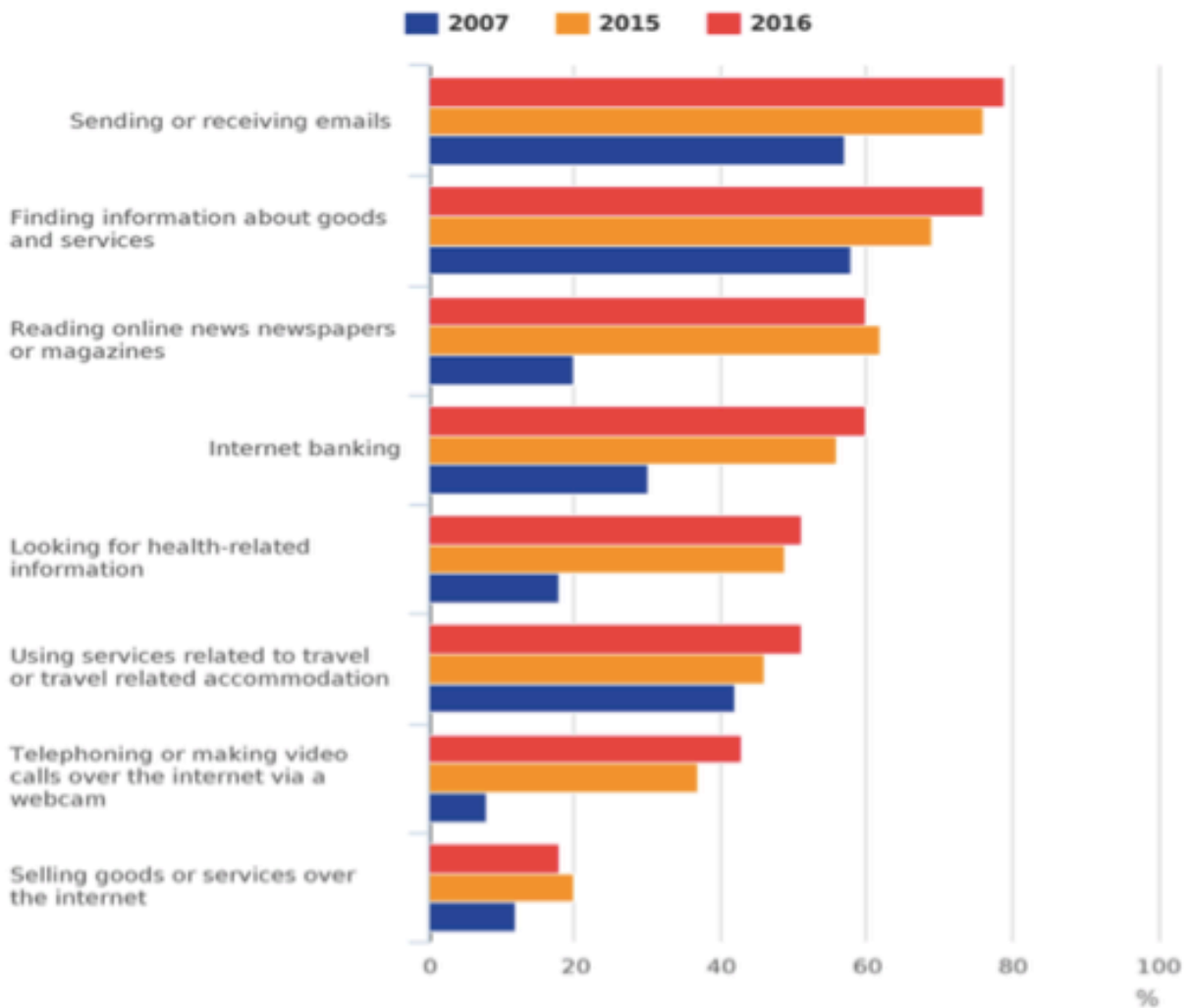


Figure 2. Internet Activities by Year, 2007, 2015 and 2016, UK (ONS, 2016)

Throughout the years 2007 until 2016, there has been a substantial increase in Internet usage in all areas of activity within the UK. The percentage of Internet connectivity in households with at least one adult over the age of 65 was at 53% across the UK, while 87% of homes with at least one adult ages 16 to 64 and 99% of homes with children all had access to the Internet (ONS, 2016). This demonstrates that access to online information about goods and services is readily available to all age groups across the UK and presents the opportunity for investigation into why consumers react to these types of communications about good and services.

In Figure 3, the ONS (2016) also stated that the amount of SM users has increased from 45% in 2011 to 63% of the UK population in 2016, of which 79% used SM everyday. The report further indicated that SM usage has increased across all age groups including adults aged 55 to 64 up to 51% and ages 65 up to 23% of the population using SM (ONS, 2016). A study by Siamagka, et al. (2015) likewise concluded that people do spend a majority of their time online using SM platforms more than any other type of websites.

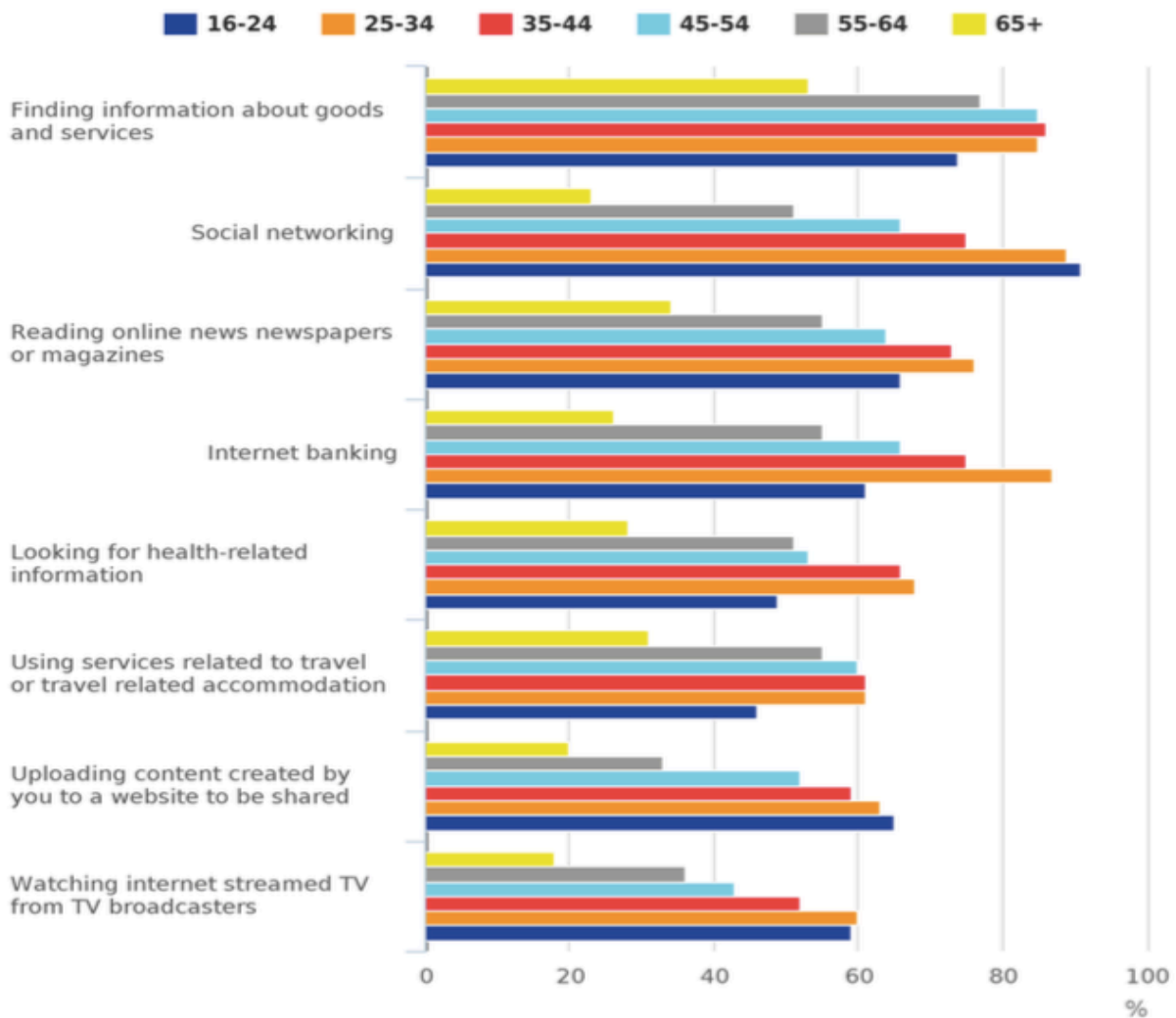


Figure 3. Internet Activities by Age Group 2016, UK (ONS, 2016)

Out of the total percentage of SM user in the UK, 15% used SM to contact medical doctors and healthcare providers to make appointments, while 9% of the

population made some form of purchase through an advertisement from SM (ONS, 2016).

In the United States, SM has a significant role in consumers everyday lives as well. Figure 4 presents the average amount of Internet usage for individuals above three years of age was at 79.3% of the total US population at the time of the report (United States Census Bureau, 2012). In 2016, the World Bank (2016) indicated that 76.2% of individuals in the US have access to and use the Internet. Another report performed by Nielsen (2016) indicated that almost 177 million people over the age of 18 in the US are actively engaging with SM, with the majority of 73% using SM through their smartphones, 30% through tablets and 29% through a personal computer with many using multiple devices at the same time. However, the smartphone is ranked as the most preferred device over all age groups.




BY AGE DEMOGRAPHIC								
	ADULTS 18+	ADULTS 18+ REACH %	18-34 YEARS OLD	18-34 YEARS OLD REACH %	35-49 YEARS OLD	35-49 YEARS OLD REACH %	50+ YEARS OLD	50+ YEARS OLD REACH %
 Smartphone	176.9 M	73%	59.6 M	82%	51.2 M	85%	65.5 M	60%
 Tablet	74 M	30%	21.4 M	29%	27.5 M	45%	25.1 M	23%
 PC	70.2 M	29%	17 M	23%	20.1 M	33%	33.1 M	30%

Figure 4. Average Weekly Reach of SM Over Platforms, US (Nielsen, 2016)

The data and figures above demonstrate that the reach of communications and advertisements through SM across all age groups in the US are very prevalent and robust. Findings from the report additionally presented that the average time spent specifically on SM in the US for all adults was over five hours a week, which was an increase of 36% from the previous year 2015 (Nielsen, 2016).

The study by the Pew Research Center (2018) in figure 5 displayed the most visited SM sites by US adults. YouTube and Facebook were considered as the top two SM sites with the highest traffic of online users visiting and entering the sites, accounting for 73% and 68% of US adults respectively.

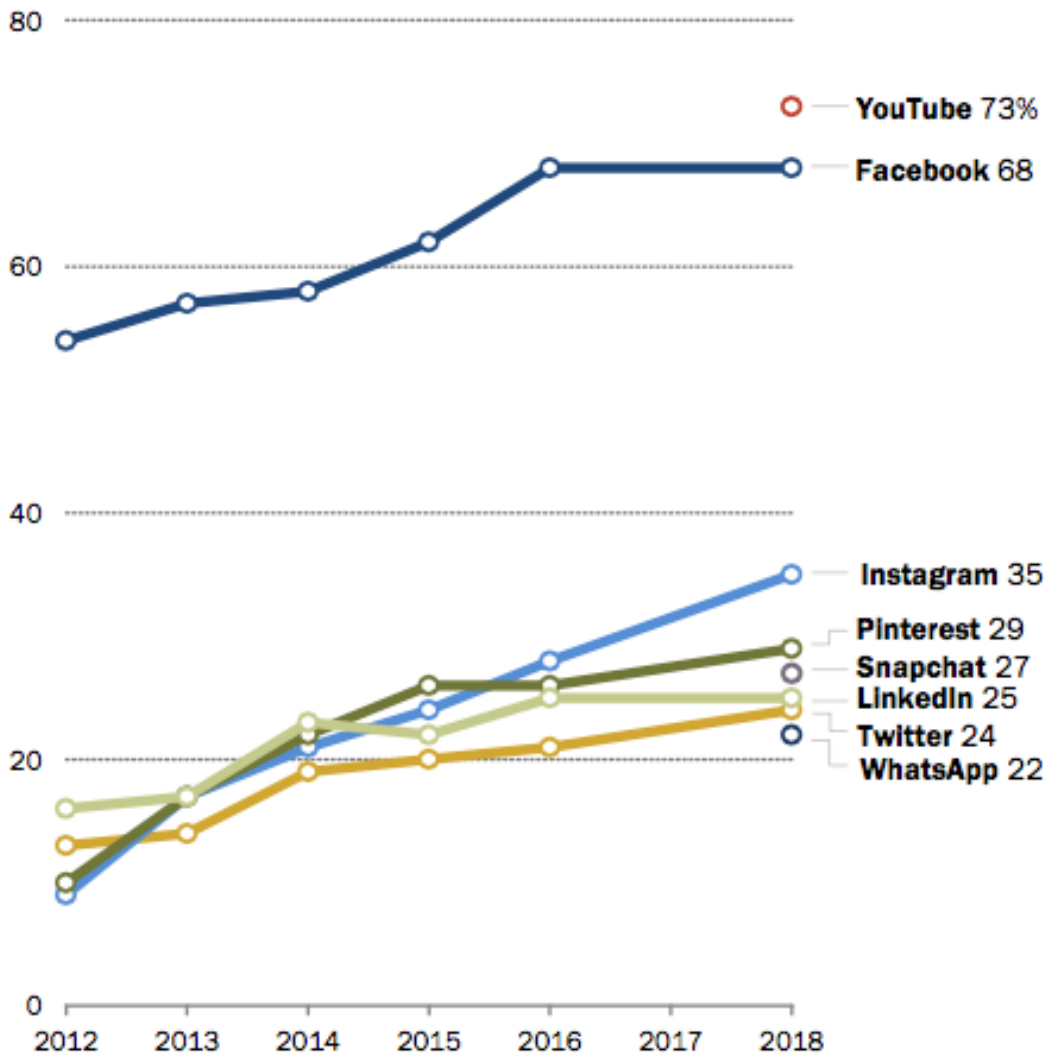


Figure 5. Percentage of US Adults who say they use the following Social Media Sites Online or on their Cellphone (Pew Research Center, 2018)

Facebook was also discovered by Nielsen (2016) to be the number one SM platform being used with over 178 million users through smartphones and with

over 90 million users on personal computers. Of all adults using SM in the US, on average 37% of those used SM specifically to find information about goods and services (Nielsen, 2016).

Businesses are also trying to integrate this type of Internet marketing into their advertising campaigns in attempts to positively change consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour (Lim, 2015). Research by Chen, et al. (2014) likewise found that SM is a convenient and efficient way for consumers to share opinions about products and services within their networks. Many businesses today have recognised the power of SM platforms as new ways to interpersonally connect with their consumers and harness the power SM to engage consumers more efficiently (Pookulangara and Koesler, 2011). The resourceful use of SM networking by both consumers and businesses has moreover been revealed in a study by Lacoste (2016) to increase overall marketing performance.

These SM platforms have become increasingly important in various aspects of consumer lives. People look for information and advice from their social networks as to what products and services are the best fits for their needs. A study by Hudson, et al. (2015) stated in regards to SM usage in the tourism and service industries, that there was limited knowledge on the impact of marketing strategies from SM activities between company and consumer such as generating organic eWOM, and that these specific SM behaviours and relationships have not been explored thoroughly promoting the need for further investigation. This is essential because SM has the capabilities to accurately direct businesses towards generating advertisements with high effectiveness in an efficient way to promote products and services, directly targeting consumers (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015). Furthermore, SM use has been advantageous for the medical industry by providing patients with relevant healthcare information through postings of not only text based content, but content in the form of pictures and videos as well (Li et al., 2018). But research on the use of SM in the healthcare industry has been limited (Li et al., 2018).

Currently, the effect of eWOM in SM advertising has not been researched from a comparative global standpoint, and it has become evident that more international companies need to investigate how SM advertising can be used effectively across various markets (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). The comprehensive literature review performed by Okazaki and Taylor (2013) identified three main theoretical perspectives that formed a base for future research in the field of SM advertising internationally and across different geographic markets. These perspectives included network capability relating to the available speed of communication, the capability of transferring of images across SM, and personal extensibility referring to the desire of consumers wanting to interact with each other. Although the theoretical framework presented by Okazaki and Taylor (2013) does account for some aspects of SM capability, the framework presented does not cover other abilities of SM and does not specifically link the three perspectives to actual attitude change and sharing behaviour. Through the rapid advancement of SM technology, the three theoretical perspectives detail by Okazaki and Taylor (2013) relating to SM research have been modified with additional constructs in this exploration, helping to form an adapted theoretical framework for further investigated to determine how effective SM communications are in the current state.

Moreover, Patino, et al. (2012) stated that because of the increase in the use of SM across the world, marketing and advertising techniques used by companies have become increasingly more imperative to comprehend. With the growth of SM usage among consumers, many companies have been trying to create an eWOM advertising strategy that works effectively within these SM platforms. However, it has become apparent that better understanding is needed as to what types of SM communications can create positive change in attitudes and motivate consumers to perform certain behaviours from both a marketing and academic perspective. Therefore, the broader exploration was initiated due to the growing amount of companies and businesses that are now attempting to

generate a positive SM presence to actively engage and create meaningful and long-lasting relationships directly with their consumers.

Interactive communications and advertisements produced and transmitted directly from organisations through SM platforms, when combined and shared with attributes of organic eWOM from a user, have not yet been thoroughly examined. Not all of the specific factors and constructs have been explored in unison from a qualitative managerial perspective as to what types of SM communications organisations can produce that will increase SM eWOM sharing behaviour from their SM followers. Therefore, it is essential to apply different research approaches and techniques to further examine the phenomenon.

2.2.2 Social Media Platforms

Facebook has grown and become one of the most popular global social networking sites (De Keyzer, et al., 2017) with users logging in everyday and accessing the site from many different parts of the world. Facebook provides various forms of interactive UGC such as post consisting of comments, pictures, video, website link sharing and newsfeeds from different personal and professional sources that can be shared within a vast network of people. Recent reports from Facebook (2013) stated that 1.2 billion active people were using the site monthly, with 757 million of those being daily users, an increase of 22% since 2012. Over 30% of time spent by SM users was on Facebook resulting in over 50 billion minutes, and over 800 million users on the site were conversing in over 70 different international languages (Rauniar, et al., 2014). Tseng, et al. (2014) go on to state that:

“Around 79% of the largest 100 companies in the Fortune Global 500 index used at least one of the most popular social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and corporate blogs”.

Facebook is still considered the most popular SM website throughout the different regions with 83% of SM users having a registered account (GWI, 2014). Fulgoni and Lipsman (2015) specified that organically shared messages via Facebook have the capabilities and power to considerably influence consumer behaviour.

The Pew Research Center, (2018) also indicated that approximately two-thirds of all Americans varying from different demographics segments expressed that they are active users in Facebook. Of those Facebook users, 51% also log in and check there SM feeds multiple times a day as shown in Figure 6.

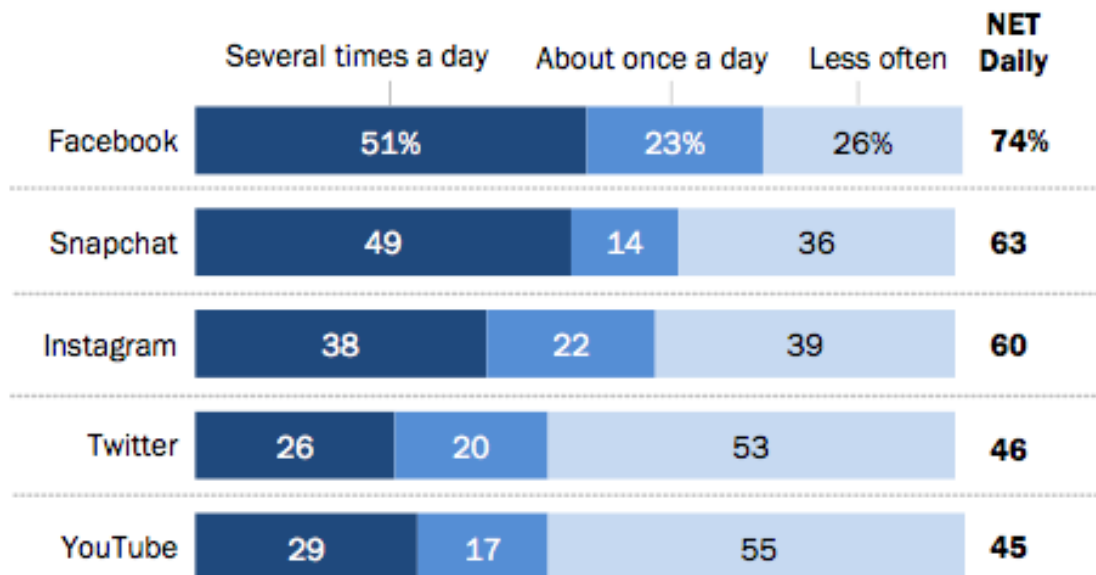


Figure 6. US Adults who Use SM Daily (Pew Research Center, 2018)

The frequency of Facebook login among US adults has signified the importance and popularity of the Facebook platform regarding traffic, volume and engagement with the users of SM. The rise numbers of Facebook members by consumers has additionally driven businesses to try and identify methods that help generate positive consumer eWOM through SM messaging to improve their marketing campaigns. Given the recent existence and phenomenon of SM usage, the standard level of expertise within the subject is yet to be determined,

due to the evolution of SM being so rapid (Fischer and Reuber, 2011). As agreed by Okazaki and Taylor (2013), there is a lack of knowledge in the context of the effects SM communications, as SM being around for only a short period of time, but still has been rapidly developing through programming and increased number of users.

Consumers share their thoughts and views about goods and services with others in their network through SM platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which are considered as the basis for the dispersion of eWOM communications (Lim, 2015). The cross-sectional study by Lim (2015) focused on how Internet advertising and eWOM affected consumer perceived value and risk in online buying groups. The study applied the cognitive response theory which links some qualities of persuasive communications, such as the source of the message, information within the message content and the recipients' own thoughts toward the message to understand how they affect attitude toward the brand and consumer purchase intention. The variables in the theory only accounted for some of the possibly characteristics of SM eWOM messaging, leaving opportunity for other attributes to be explored through applying a different framework with additional constructs. The Lim (2015) study was also quantitative in nature, applying a questionnaire to 240 consumers and examined the data by using multiple regression analysis to test relationships. This suggested that other possible research techniques such as qualitative methods and in-depth interviews could be applied to further add to the existing academic literature in the field.

Another quantitative paper by Levy and Gvili (2015) concentrated their study in the areas of eWOM in email messages, Internet forums, virtual worlds, short-message services and social networking sites. The exploration also included variables of information richness, source credibility, two-way communication and multiple messages cues. The quantitative findings did reveal that information richness led to increase the credibility of the message source channel. Although the information richness variable within the Levy and Gvili (2015) study consisted

of feedback capability, multiple cues, language and personalisation aspects, the studies variables were examine across different digital marketing channels and did not directly concentrate on SM communications. The various digital channels all had mixed capabilities of message sharing, which is diverse from the unique message creation abilities of SM platforms. As the influential power of SM communications becomes increasingly greater than those of other less advanced digital channels, further exploration is needed on how the related variables in previous studies can affect attitude and behaviour of consumers directly through current SM platforms. Levy and Gvili (2015) also specified that different SM platforms would provide different qualities of eWOM information. Likewise, the platform that eWOM communications are being distributed across has a substantial effect on the adoption of the messages (You, et al., 2015).

Unlike Facebook and other SM websites, product reviews from online shopping websites such as Amazon do not fully allow consumers to interactively contact each other or know the direct source of information. Therefore, trustworthiness for eWOM product review messages is likely to be lacking and less apparent on these types of online shopping platforms. The online reviews of eWOM from some companies and other websites do not have the sharing functions were users can like a post, view amounts of likes/dislikes, see the amounts of shares of pictures, videos, web-links, who's following who, read others comments, reply publicly and reply through private messaging. Facebook, on the other hand, has these kinds of interactive capabilities and is the largest SM network in the world that allows users to share eWOM messages about products and services between each other in this manner (Yang, et al., 2015).

Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow for these attributes of sharing information to happen. It is also suggested that eWOM regarding product reviews are more influential and have a more significant impact if they were generated from well-established websites, implying that the message platform has a significant effect on the adoption of the eWOM message (Cheung and Thadani,

2012). Although the investigation by Cheung and Thadani (2012) did concentrate and focus on SM platforms, applying a similar ELM dual processing theory, the analysis undertaken was from quantitative perspective using structural equation modelling.

Furthermore, Fulgoni and Lipsman (2015) likewise stated that not all SM platforms are the same, and each network can impact consumer behaviour in diverse ways. Chen, et al. (2014) similarly detailed that adopting the correct eWOM strategies in SM advertising is still a new unknown area for many advertisers. Thus, discovering the most effective SM eWOM communication strategy is the main focal point of this study. Despite the fast changing environments of SM, this study focuses on the social networking site Facebook and Twitter as the main SM platforms to be researched. As both Facebook and Twitter have existed for over a decade and has a significant amount of total active users and interactive multimedia capabilities, deeming the platforms an adequate stage for conducting this research.

2.2.3 Social Media Strengths and Weaknesses

In-depth study of SM eWOM and advertising has revealed many positive benefits both practically and academically. However, it has also exposed several weaknesses that can be detrimental for businesses that are not aware of the potentially damaging effects SM can have on a company brand image and reputation. Laroche, et al. (2013) advised that businesses should be cautious of the possible negative effects SM can create. Even a few negative product reviews can have serious effects on consumer perception towards a brand or company (Wang, et al., 2012). Additionally, with SM being a multi-directional communicating method with millions of users, it is difficult to regulate consumers from forming damaging thoughts and opinions that go against an organisations particular views and beliefs (Dijkmans, et al., 2014). Furthermore, a single

negative comment or video forwarded through SM to many friends in a users social network can be detrimental and destructive for those organisations who are unprepared to handle those situations (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Due to this lack of training and understanding, some businesses have been slower to adopt the new technologies (Michaelidou, et al., 2011). Taking precaution and being fully aware of the consequences business might encounter from mishandling their SM communications is key in preventing such undesirable outcomes.

Avoidance of such negative occurrences can be deterred from gaining a greater understanding of the factors that negatively affect the way users interact and communicate in the SM atmosphere. Additionally, a better understanding of how message characteristics of trust, source credibility, expertise and argument quality in a message is perceived through the various methods of interactive sharing of information via Facebook and Twitter assists in the prevention of businesses being exposed to negative eWOM from consumers.

A journal paper by Cudmore, et al. (2011) quantitatively examined healthcare business and how the overall quality, design, usefulness, ease of use, and quality of information of their websites were predictors of creating positive attitudes with users of the sites. Again the ambiguous variables in the Cudmore, et al. (2011) study are relevant to this research and need to be adapted and tailored to specifically fit the needs of further exploration into the current state healthcare SM eWOM and how to prevent negative attitudes. Cudmore, et al. (2011) likewise suggested for future research to explore the broader relationship between consumers and the attributes of interactivity provided by healthcare SM websites. Furthermore, Daugherty and Hoffman (2014) confirmed that consumers spent more time evaluating negative eWOM than they do for positive eWOM, while Tseng, et al. (2014) also expressed that negative eWOM has a stronger influence on consumers than traditional advertisements.

Because of rapid evolution of the Internet and SM, the amount of eWOM messages exchanged about goods and services has increasingly become publicly available.

Ulrich and Burnner (2015) stated that the effects of negative eWOM could be countered by positive eWOM originating from another consumer who is considered trustworthy. Although the research by Ulrich and Burnner (2015) was a quantitative experimental design in nature, the findings revealed the importance of source credibility and how the source can help to prevent and negate the effects of negative eWOM. This also suggests that responding to negative eWOM quickly and swiftly engaging consumer issues is the best method to counteract the effects. Therefore, this research explored if this concept still stands true with eWOM being communicated through SM platforms, in order to understand how to best prevent negative situations from occurring. This is valuable for businesses and organizations that are planning to and that are currently communicating on SM platforms. Conclusively, businesses that have not adopted SM into their marketing strategies due to lack of understanding are conceivably neglecting the chance to directly connect and interact with their consumers (Kim and Ko, 2012).

2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth

Traditional word of mouth (WOM) has been defined as verbal interaction with known people in a non-commercial manner about goods and services (Arndt, 1967). These WOM communications have been similarly understood as a dominant factor in motivating consumer decision-making and are deemed more reliable than traditional advertising (Kareklas, et al., 2015). This form of communication has always been acknowledged as being useful in changing consumer opinion and behaviour, but since the advent of SM technology, tracking WOM in the form of eWOM has become easier. Marketing managers

and advertisers are now able to measure content impact from the original message creation to the final purchasing behaviour through their SM platforms (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015).

The increase in Internet usage has further transformed traditional word of mouth by making it no longer relevant to be in close vicinity with one another to share opinions. SM has transformed the way people connect by enabling people to simultaneously share content with many users at once within a brief amount of time (Craig, et al., 2015). Figure 7 shows results from when adults were asked by the ONS (2016) if they take into consideration information from retailer websites, price comparison sites or online reviews before they made a purchase online within the last 12 months.

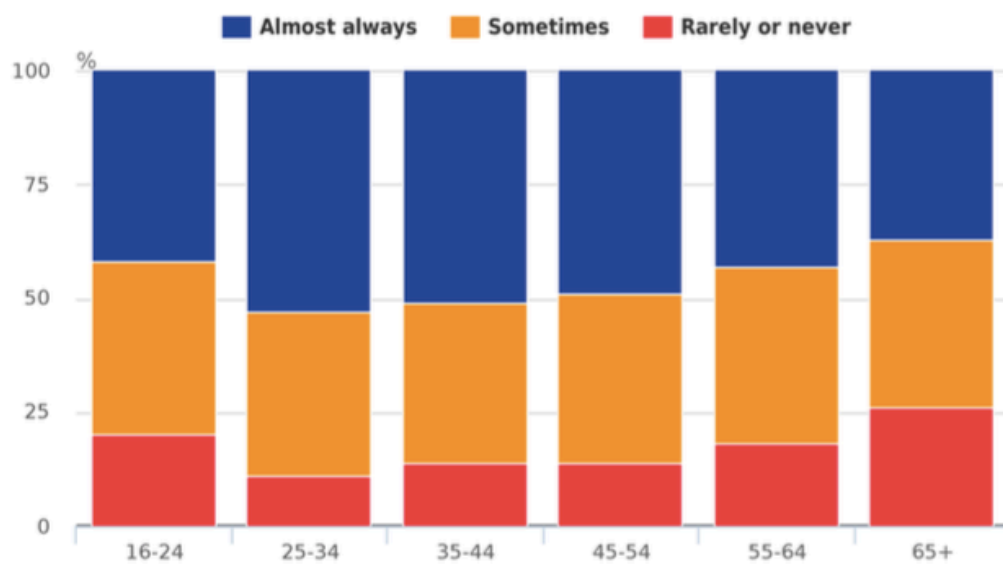


Figure 7. Considerations made before Shopping Online by Age Group, UK (ONS, 2016)

The Figure above shows that adults in all age groups from 25 to 64 reported similarly high rates of using information from online retailers, producers, service provider websites and peer reviews in the approximate range of 48% to 52% with the most popular use of online peer reviews being in the age group of 25 to 34, which was at 52% (ONS, 2016).

These statistics reflected that there are a high percentage of Internet users that search the Internet for information about products and services online in the form of eWOM before they make a purchasing decision. A quantitative study by Wu and Wang (2011) on the effects of Internet eWOM and source credibility likewise suggested that these types of consumers trust WOM considerably more than other types of information for evaluation of a product they to make a purchase. It is evident that the influential power within these types of eWOM communications being shared through SM act as cues for consumers to thoroughly evaluate the information about goods and services beforehand. Additionally, due to the nature of the organic origination of eWOM messages about goods and services, the topic has gained a great deal of attention from both marketing practitioners and academics alike (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008).

Another definition of eWOM is described as communications referring to any positive or negative statement made by any potential, actual, or former consumer about products and services that are made available to a broader audience via the Internet (Fang, 2014; Lim, 2015; Yang, et al., 2015; Wang, et al., 2015). Consumers now obtain information and recommendations about products and services by way of eWOM from SM websites (Dijkmans, et al., 2014). Cheung and Thadani (2012) asserted that there is a direct correlation to positive consumer eWOM with messages that originate from a trusted party and Tseng, et al. (2014) also express that positive eWOM has a stronger effect on consumers than traditional Internet advertisements. It has been found that trust is a crucial factor towards consumer dissemination of information, which is likewise influenced by eWOM through SM (Chu and Kim, 2011). The level of trust consumers have towards the company is directly related to the reputation that WOM has produced for that company (Allsop, et al., 2007). Furthermore, Sweeny and Swait (2008) discovered that consumers, who believe that an organisation was trustworthy, increased the amount of positive WOM about that particular

organisation. This sheds light that there is a direct relationship between trustworthiness and eWOM.

SM platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide users with unique methods of sharing trusted eWOM information that can cause genuine emotional change. This change in emotion could be dependent not only on the source and quality of the message, but also on the interactive method that the information is being shared. For example, consumer emotions may vary from a message or advertisement being communicated through a source of expertise in the form of a web link, compared to a video link or just a comment post on a topic. Likewise, messages being shared from a non-trusted source with a sound argument in the form of a viral user-generated video or picture may also produce true emotions that significantly change consumer attitude and behaviour.

Alternatively, negative WOM increased when consumers thought that a company had violated their trust (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). In terms of SM advertising, trust may have a direct positive or negative effect on eWOM and determining what generates this attitude shift in consumers is essential for businesses to understand before engaging in and establishing effective SM marketing campaigns. There are now other types of eWOM being created due to the technological advances in SM that allow users to share various types of information, including interactive attributes that can only be found in SM sites when sharing eWOM. Levy and Gvili (2015) identified that communication being transmitted via such platforms as email are mainly texted based eWOM messages, unlike SM that allows for additional information cues to be sent at the same time such as video, pictures, voice and text. These cues can be the cause of how effective eWOM is formed through SM that is dissimilar to other platforms.

The advertisements in this digital era can be distributed in various formats and across numerous different platforms of media outside of the traditional television, radio and print ads. The use of the original concept of advertisement as well as

its newer evolved version of eWOM can cause some confusion and discrepancy with other categories of media communications. Therefore clarifying the intricate differences in terminology between the categories of advertising and eWOM is essential for a better and clearer understanding.

A short paper by Campbell, et al. (2014) thoroughly categorised the typologies based on paid or unpaid content and the content being authored from the brand itself, the news media, or the user. The paper outlined that different types of content can be created, explaining that a message is considered advertising if the messages was from a brand and WOM if the message was from a user, as shown in Table 1.

		<i>Content Creator</i>			
		<i>Brand</i>	<i>Brand and News Media</i>	<i>News Media</i>	<i>User</i>
<i>Unpaid</i>	Social Video				Word-of-Mouth
	Viral Video		Publicity	Editorial Content	Consumer Generated Advertising
	Native Advertising				
<i>Paid</i>	Advertorial		Branded	Sponsored	Sponsored Word-of-Mouth
	Display Advertising		(Editorial) Content	(Editorial) Content	Consumer Generated Advertising Competitions

Table 1. Typology of Forms of Online Brand-Related Content (Campbell, et al., 2014)

This research similarly defines SM advertisements as content being created from the organisations themselves in the form of SM messages. Once that advertisement is broadcasted across the SM platform and gets shared by a user who is not paid, then the original SM advertised message becomes eWOM. During this process of message sharing, the original content may be adapted, altered or added to by the user. Moreover, users can personally edit the content before sharing and therefore, thru these actions the content is termed as eWOM

and or UGC (Campbell, et al., 2014). Another primary purpose of this research is to determine what types of content created by SM managers trigger SM followers and users to organically share the original message through their own networks, thus forming organic SM eWOM communications.

Erdogmus and Cicek (2012) likewise indicated that businesses should continue attempting to find methods of developing positive WOM, which is imperative to marketing in online environments. Advertising strategies using eWOM are also attractive for businesses because they are considered as low-cost advertising with the high capability of reaching large amounts of audiences via technology within a short amount of time (Trusov, et al., 2009). Villanueva, et al. (2008) also acknowledged that businesses gained more loyal consumers through the use of WOM techniques than any other traditional methods of marketing. An online survey performed by Dijkmans, et al. (2014) revealed that more than 50% of participants do not trust the traditional medium of advertising and over 90% believed the eWOM from their own networks is perceived as credible. The implementation of eWOM correspondingly has a significant correlation with consumers and their intentions to purchase from a particular company (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Moreover, the conception and use of eWOM by businesses has likewise been increasing, but measuring the effectiveness of the practice has remained difficult (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004).

Discovering how and why certain types of SM content created by SM managers effect SM users attitude and behaviour, leading to the increased sharing of the content by SM users in the form of eWOM, is another core objective of this research. Questions in this research are asked to determine the reasons why increased sharing behaviour of eWOM occurs when SM message characteristics of source credibility, trustworthiness, and argument quality are combined with SM interactive capabilities of video, picture and web links.

2.3.1 Trust in Electronic Word of Mouth

Traditional WOM is an act of sharing information offline between people. It is understood that sharing product information by WOM is not motivated by financial gain, thus causing belief that eWOM is more trustworthy and believable (You, et al., 2015). This concept of trust in a WOM message has played a crucial part in forming consumer attitude and perception in various aspects of marketing and advertising, as well as SM advertising. Previous academic marketing literature defined trust as a belief that an organisation is acting in the best interest of the consumer. Trust in a message has similarly been described as communication originating from a source that is considered credible by the receiver (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, 1980). Lopez and Sicilia (2014) also agreed that a message source perceived as being trustworthy has a positive effect on eWOM communications. Wang, et al. (2015) additionally suggested that positive eWOM is stronger and more effective than negative eWOM. However, too much positive eWOM may lead consumers to question the right intentions and purpose of the source of the postings (Wang, et al. 2015). Trustworthiness can likewise be described as the belief that the person who delivers the message has the intention to convey the information from an unprejudiced point of view (You, et al., 2015).

Alternatively, a study by Teng, et al. (2014) established that not only is the source of the message important, but the quality within the message itself can hold significant power on whether consumers believe if the message is trustworthy. Messages that originated from a credible and well-known person in a users network may not be the only reason why SM eWOM messages create trust. For instance, a recent study regarding SM and key account managers published by Lacoste (2016) explained that interactions between company employees and customers via SM have shown to be an influential factor for increasing trust. The study further indicated that employees gained the trust of customers by sharing links, replying to customers' comments, and actively

interacting with customers by using the employees' social network. This demonstrated that there might be several other factors involved in creating trust that can influence positive SM eWOM with consumers, which involves interactive two communications. This research also examines what other factors and cues in SM messages build greater trust and how that relates to users sharing positive or negative eWOM.

2.3.2 Source Credibility in Electronic Word of Mouth

The amount of credibility in classic WOM comes from the originator of the message being a person that is known and the amount of trustworthiness within that relationship (Levy and Gvili, 2015). Both concepts of source credibility and trustworthiness are strongly related with each other and can have a substantial effect on the receiving message. Levy and Gvili (2015) also clarified eWOM credibility as:

"The extent to which one perceives other consumer recommendations or reviews as believable, accurate or factual."

EWOM communication from a trusted source does lead towards increased persuasiveness of a message and are more convincing than market-driven messages produced and distributed by businesses and organisations (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Source credibility also produced positive attitudes towards SM eWOM reviews of goods and service (Teng, et al., 2017). Additionally, eWOM credibility is generated from a trusted source that is known by the user on a personal level (Levy and Gvili, 2015). A similar explanation of credibility in eWOM is described as shared information being accurate and correct by the level of expertise and trustworthiness of the person delivering the message (Kareklas, et al., 2015). The effects of eWOM communications on consumer behaviour highly depends on how recipients of a message view the actual

amount of credibility the message contains (Reichelt, et al., 2014). Some other findings from a survey examining the weight of viral marketing on purchasing intention by Gunawan and Huarng (2015) suggested that source credibility has a significant impact on consumer subjective norms, which in turn has a positive effect on their purchase intentions. Another explanation by Lopez and Sicilia (2014) defined source credibility as:

“The degree to which the audience perceives that the source intends to convey valid assertions.”

Consumers seem to have more trust in organic consumer generated eWOM than they do in business generated advertisements (Levy and Gvili, 2015) and if a message is accepted as being more trustworthy and from a source of expertise, then the message will have a greater influence on the attitudes and behaviours of consumers (Kareklas, et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the value of eWOM adoption by the recipients of the message can be significantly varied depending on how the message is developed. Many other factors contribute to how and why SM users accept a particular eWOM messages as being credible outside of the trusted source alone. Wang, et al. (2015) conducted research on how consumer attitudes and responses were affected by different eWOM message content characteristics. The characteristics included such variables as benefit centric messages, the valence of messages, along with source credibility. In addition, Levy and Gvili (2015) expressed that eWOM communications can also be generated and altered by advertisers and marketers, crafting inorganic simulated fake messages that can distort the credibility of the eWOM message when further shared. The source of traditional advertising originates from marketers and can be viewed by consumers as an attempt by business to manipulate consumer perception into using their services or buying their products. Conversely, the mixture of content in viral messages being organically shared with a definite purpose throughout the SM users close

and personal network can create a unique mixture that is a case for deeper understanding of how the diversity inside the message beyond source credibility effects eWOM adoption (Cho, et al., 2014).

Advertisers have also been found to use SM platforms not only to produce B2C eWOM messages, but also attempt to circulate eWOM messages that portray to be organically originated by consumers themselves (Levy and Gvili, 2015). This type of artificial eWOM message invention by marketers is an effort of delivering deceiving messages that do not originate from an authentic source. Some forms of eWOM may derive from unknown anonymous sources, which make it difficult to gauge the true expertise and trustworthiness of the message (Kareklas, et al., 2015). This signifies that there may be differences between the origination of the message and trusted source, which may not be deemed credible or the message may seem as credible, but not originated from a trusted source. These types of mixed credibility content formations may differ between messages and could possibly come from sources that may not be known and not considered trustworthy, but still assessed as trustworthy due to other factors or cues within the SM message. Thus, it is essential to understand the combination of factors in the message that truly affect the credibility of the message and influence consumers to engage in sharing the message. This is an aspect that has not yet to be examined thoroughly from a qualitative managerial perspective.

Determining source credibility is vital because the source of eWOM content maybe unknown by the recipient. The eWOM communication is most effective when the source is deemed to be trustworthy, hence, if the message is considered to be less trustworthy, then the eWOM message will have less impact on consumers behaviour (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). People who read information on the Internet discovered the difficulties discerning between source credibility and the information contained in the message being conveyed. Acknowledging that the features of artificial information can be due to the actual abilities and functions of the SM platforms the message is transmitted through (Levy and

Gvili, 2015). Attributes of interactivity, social network connections and strength of the message may all play a part on users perception toward the message. This eWOM phenomenon is unlike traditional WOM where the source of information usually is communicating face-to-face, making the source of the message known.

These types of eWOM communication across SM can contain other cues such as the quality of the written message, interactive features like pictures, videos or web links, timing and volume of the post and the direct communication provided by companies to consumers through SM. Therefore, this research attempts to further enlighten on these previous findings and contribute new additional insights yet unknown to ascertain why certain types of SM messages have an effect on actual consumer attitude and behaviour from a qualitative managerial viewpoint.

2.3.3 Expertise in Electronic Word of Mouth

SM messages also include other additional factors relating to attitude and perception that should be considered in addition to trustworthiness and source credibility, such as expertise and argument quality that can stimulate eWOM. Fang (2014) defines expertise as:

"Expertise reflects the amount of knowledge an individual has about a domain".

Expertise in a message can likewise be expressed as a communication originating from a person who is perceived as knowledgeable and is a specialist within that particular field or topic (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The higher the level of expertise that is assumed by a recipient of an eWOM message, the higher the level of credibility the message is perceived (Fang, 2014). Tsao and Hsieh (2015) also suggested that the online reviews shared by experts about the goods and services are considered more credible because their opinions are

perceived to contain a higher level of competence on the topic. Another description of expertise is the capability of the message creator to convey information that is comprehensive and thorough. These types of eWOM messages originating from a nonbiased, expert third-party source have also been found to be useful for high and low volumes of eWOM messaging.

On the other hand, expert knowledge on a particular topic may derive from a person who is unknown to the recipient of the message. A quantitative study by Lopez and Sicilia (2014) regarding the influence of eWOM towards decisions making of consumers presented that reliable eWOM information does not always have to be from experts or stem from someone close in a users network. This is cause for inquiry into whether there is other aspects in SM messaging that may increase the sharing of eWOM that does not originate from an expert source within users social network.

An expert message source can be determine through SM. SM provides a form of identification of user profiles that assist in allowing other users to evaluate the extent of expertise within an eWOM message being posted, especially when an individuals profile page contains other forms of media such as visual and audio features that allow readers to gauge expertise (Fang, 2014). These other cues help in developing the eWOM to either increase or lessen the potential influence the message may have. How much of an impact these other potential undiscovered message cues affect the recipient of the eWOM message is explored in this research.

2.3.4 Argument Quality in Electronic Word of Mouth

A study of how external influences shape technology acceptance by Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) defined argument quality as the amount of persuasion a message can deliver and that a strong argument from a trustworthy

source can affect consumer attitude towards a message. Likewise, Rauniar, et al. (2014) clarifies that the influential power and impact of SM messages are produced by the authenticity in the comments of the post created by users themselves. SM message being generated organically can contain other potential cues that can cause a higher sense of quality in the argument.

In the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of attitude change developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), argument quality is defined as detailed parts of information in a persuasive message that have stronger prolonged effects on a persons attitude, whereas peripheral cues related to meta-information about the message may have less of an effect on attitude. The ELM suggested that both argument quality and peripheral cues are directly related to attitude and belief change. Other cues and variables in addition to argument quality may exist within SM that can influence consumers to adopt and further share the messages. Beyond the quality of the argument, many peripheral cues have been suggested in the ELM literature, including the number of messages, number of message sources, source likeability, source credibility, as well as audio and visual cues. Of these, source credibility appears to be one of the more frequently referenced cues (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006).

A quantitative study examining eWOM adoption of SM users by Fang (2014) defined argument quality as the content aspects of how much the message can persuade the recipient to trust that particular message. Moreover, findings by Fang (2014) suggested that argument quality is still the strongest influencer and motivator of eWOM credibility in SM and suggested that providing eWOM messages with strong argument quality generates the most impact on getting recipients to adopt and accept the information. The results of the study suggested that argument quality was the strongest influencer on perceived credibility for users of SM and can positively affect truthfulness and consumer attitude towards the communication. Another recent paper by Teng, et al. (2017)

on persuasive eWOM in SM also agrees that sound convincing arguments have a significant effect on changing SM users attitudes.

In this research, argument quality is considered as the written text in the communication being used for persuasion. The argument quality construct assesses underlining characteristics of how the message is textually designed, what topic subject the message is trying to convey and the format of the message itself. The tone of voice of a SM message is also considered a factor of argument quality. A recent study by De Keyzer, et al. (2017) defines tone of voice in a message as being either factual or emotional written content, and that tone of voice had limited impact towards messages for certain service industries.

In SM communications, these diverse argument quality characteristics are mixed with a variety of interactive functional capabilities like the sharing of photos, videos, web links, private message sending, eWOM and UGC. Facebook and Twitter allow for users to perform in these functions simultaneously through their platforms. The integrating concepts of trust and source credibility are also applied in an attempt to discover the relationship between all of these factors and cues to asses the significance previous findings and determine the real causes and growing success of the SM eWOM phenomenon.

2.4 Interactive Abilities of Social Media

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide users with an easy method to interact with one another through simple actions such as clicking the "like" button on a specific video or picture, which produces the sensation of being entertained and the motivation to preserve personal social connections within a network (Fang, 2014). Advertisements being broadcasted through SM in high volumes, which include assorted attributes of creativity, produce emotion and

that are convincing usually generate a more considerable amount of discussion among recipients (Lim, 2015).

The messages being shared through SM can contain these kinds of characteristics. Additionally, Levy and Gvili (2015) described interactivity in SM platforms as being able to reply and respond to other users and have control of what is being communicated, as well as the time of the communication. Another description of interactivity in SM consists of the amount of modification allowed for a communication, which also include interactive features of clicking like, commenting on post and the sharing of videos, pictures and web link content (Liu, et al., 2017). The study by Liu, et al. (2017) of Facebook profiles of Fortune 500 companies also suggested that interactivity did not increase greater eWOM sharing behaviour. Although the study did reveal that messages with greater vividness in terms of communications that enriched sensory perceptions were considered more influential, beyond interactivity (Liu, et al., 2017).

These types of characteristics can increase the effectiveness and acceptance of eWOM communication and act as prominent cues that increase credibility and trustworthiness. This encourages the need to explore how these types of interactive abilities combined with sharing features of the SM platform are effective when infused with eWOM originating from specific types of trusted or non trusted sources within the social network.

2.4.1 Electronic Window Dressing

The concept of interactivity has been instrumental in the increasing growth of the SM phenomenon. Key factors such as sharing pictures and video, eWOM, UGC and viral marketing have all contributed to SM communications being more stimulating and interpersonal for its users. You, et al. (2015) had discovered that consumers are mostly impacted by the messages platform characteristics

outside of trustworthiness and accessibility. Likewise, Yang, et al. (2015) defined website quality as the consumer perception of the overall features of the website. The attributes of the websites are considered as features of performance, the motivation of consumers, visual aesthetics, navigation, user friendliness, privacy, security, entertainment, and being community driven (Yang, et al., 2015).

In a study of eWOM adoption in SM sites, Fang (2014) explains Electronic Window Dressing (EWD) attributes of SM as high technology, external links and graphics such as pictures and videos that can be used as effective cues to initiate attitude change in consumers. EWD acts like a storefront setting that is displayed with the purpose to attract the attention of consumers. Fang (2014) goes on to suggest that EWD in the SM setting should contain a definite amount of entertainment and stimulation for the message to be valid. Similarly, entertainment value and website quality in SM websites results in higher eWOM participation (Yang, et al., 2015). A quantitative journal paper investigating psychological attributes of YouTube videos by Ferchaud, et al. (2018) similarly indicated that videos including actual people were viewed as being more authentic and real. Another recent research by Khan (2017) further suggests examination into how and why SM users share YouTube content like videos through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter or either through web links.

In regards to eWOM advertising, Tseng, et al. (2014) expressed that message design, format and content are all significant towards the level of effectiveness in an eWOM communication. A larger number of photos and information being shared with an individual can generate a higher level of interest in the message in regards to online reviews (Tsao and Hsieh, 2015). Plume and Slade (2018) also agree this type of motivating entertainment value in SM is associated with the sharing of web link, news media, and photos, that give raise to higher levels of discussion. Conversely, a study on using pictures for healthcare related SM messages by Strelakova and Krieger (2017) found that photos containing information richness demonstrated high levels of likes, commenting and sharing,

greater than that of using videos or web links. SM now has the capabilities for users to share large amounts of photos and videos along with other factors contributing to the interactivity and entertainment value of the message. An objective of this research aims to determine which of these factors are most influential and why.

This interactivity in SM has been described as an exchange of communication through personal networks that can create social influence and is one of the prime marketing techniques that is currently available (Gunawan and Huarng, 2015). Instant communication between consumer and advertiser also produced a degree of involvement that can give consumers a feeling of more control using this form of collaborative interaction (Park, et al., 2011). SM users connecting with companies in this way experience a more significant relationship with a brand than those that do not. The positive experiences from this form of communication can generate constructive eWOM and customer loyalty (Hudson, et al., 2015).

Previous research on viral marketing email messages discovered that marketers should concentrate on the specific cues within a message that may increase the message receivers' entertainment value (Cho, et al., 2014). Research by Levy and Gvili (2015) described a variable examined in SM termed as information richness as media being shared that contains a variety of attributes and features such as numerous types of cues, feedback abilities, language variety and personalisation. The findings determined that information richness is an essential factor that profoundly influenced perceived source credibility of a message. These previous findings prompt for more in-depth investigation into what exact combination of cues and personalisation capable through SM affect consumers and if those information rich cues are a greater influence than the already understood message characteristics of trust, source credibility, and expertise and argument quality. Chen, et al. (2014) likewise agreed that the influential power

within an eWOM message being communicated in SM might derive from the time, source and various content attributes such as likes, tags, time and valence.

These different cues may have a link to the discovery of what specific new attributes in the current state of SM eWOM marketing that can generate a genuine effect on the consumer. Fang (2014) further stated that designing SM eWOM advertisements that are engaging, vibrant and exciting would create more interaction between the users in a social network. This message adoption can be done by creating eWOM that include videos, pictures and links in an appealing manner, along with other information rich content. A study of SM eWOM by Chu and Kim (2011) stated that the study was limited to certain determinants of eWOM and suggested for further investigation into other motivational variables that may influence users of SM. These other factors may now stem from the improved development of SM interactivity and capabilities that are available for SM users, allowing the user to share information in new and creative ways, such as the sharing of EWD attributes and information rich content.

The associations between SM advertising and consumer emotions exist through the dynamic interactions that SM sites such as Facebook and Twitter can provide for users. Pawle and Cooper (2006) emphasised that consumers do not always make decisions based on reason, but instinctual reaction and that individuals are heavily driven by emotion. The emotional reactions elicited through advertisements can play an integral part in interpreting and predicting consumer intention (Pham, et al., 2013). Prior research confirmed that WOM, consumer loyalty towards a brand and purchase intention are all influenced by emotions in advertisements (Hudson, et al., 2015). These powerful and meaningful emotions can be shaped through the way adverts are organically produced and distributed by users of SM.

Due to the innovative capabilities of SM websites such as Facebook and Twitter, both businesses and consumers can design and manipulate creative

communications that have substantial effects on human emotion, which may lead to considerable change in attitude and perception of a brand. The existing link between consumers being creative and engaging with interactive advertisements that produce a positive emotional change in attitude and perception can be reaffirmed by a study on consumer creativity from Wu et al. (2015). Attributes of EWD in SM advertising can also increase the amount of interest from consumers by creating different types of EWD, prompting users to post messages with external links, pictures, and graphics using technology can intensify the adoption of eWOM by consumers (Fang, 2014).

Therefore, this research attempts to discover what key aspects within a SM communication using interactive EWD characteristics of the SM platform can produce a positive emotional change in attitude that can be a predictor of consumer behaviour. Furthermore, Cheung and Thadani (2012) suggested that researchers should explore diverse aspects of SM stimuli, communicators and contextual factors in relevance to SM eWOM adoption across various platforms.

2.5 Intangible Products

A previous experiment on how SM eWOM affects consumer attention with students by Daugherty and Hoffman (2014) detected that the automotive and restaurant industries are the two most common industries that consumers look to find eWOM information about. In a study of eWOM opinion giving and seeking behaviour of SM users, Lopez and Sicilia (2014) suggested that there was more in-depth searching for information in the area of electronic product reviews, as eWOM in this product type are plentiful and available. However, other research has argued that these types of products are affected less by eWOM recommendations, as they are readily available to be tested and examined in store. An example is a study on influences of eWOM on purchase intention by Tsao and Hsieh (2015) that used an experimental design focusing on service and

intangible goods, as the eWOM from these products were found to be more likely to influence consumers. Craig, et al. (2015) provides a definition of experience intangible goods as:

“Products that a consumer must use or experience to determine their quality.”

You, et al. (2015) likewise stated:

“Experience goods are products that must be experienced to determine their quality.”

Consumers have less knowledge about product when the product is considered as an intangible and experience good. They tend to seek out more eWOM information from other consumers who have used those types of services and intangible goods that cannot be physically observed (Tseng, et al., 2014). Credence goods are another type of good similar to experience goods. Like experience goods, which can only be evaluated after purchase, credence goods such as legal services and medical services are even more challenging to evaluate after purchase.

Therefore, the influential power of eWOM in this category of services may be more compelling and provide more abundant data on the topic eWOM with the intent is to reduce risk before purchase. A reference from You, et al. (2015) confirm that intangible products do require extensive attention to eWOM recommendations. This is evident through a statement from You, et al. (2015):

“The eWOM effect is greater for products with low trial ability than for those with high trial ability. For a product with low trial ability, a peer consumer’s product experience can serve as a quality signal, which lowers the perceived risk in the purchase decision-making process”.

Intangible goods and services can have no physical qualities, making it an arduous task to establish its' true value before making a purchasing decision. This steers consumers to search for eWOM recommendations about intangible service goods in higher amounts. Many previous studies on the topic of eWOM are mainly focused on consumer reviews or opinions of tangible products, either through an experimental setting or quantitative approach. These products were in relation to shopping brands, case goods, electronics and other physically palpable products. Hudson, et al. (2014) also explains that there is a lack of research in regards to the effects SM eWOM between advertisers and consumers within the tourism industry and that there is still a need for additional exploration. A study by Tsao and Hsieh, (2015) suggested that research in the eWOM context should consider other product groups such as experience and service goods, exploring the expertise level of the sender and quality of website using a methodology of in-depth investigations.

There have been marginal amounts of qualitative works accomplished in the field of SM communication of intangible services such as healthcare, where consumer are unable to actually see or physically touch the products. These kinds of services make it hard for consumers to establish and form attitudes on the quality of services. Therefore, this study focuses on intangible goods in the healthcare services industry. Consumers are more likely to weigh in and consider the importance of eWOM in this category and deliberate more heavily over these types of products before making a final purchase decision, indicating the importance for deeper examination in this area.

2.6 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the extensive literature from previous studies has been presented on the relevant topics of SM eWOM advertising and consumer behaviour. The prominent aspect of each particular study has been highlighted,

including prior findings and recommendations for the direction of future research. The current attributes and state of SM advertising and eWOM have been outlined in detail including the development and progression of new factors and variables that have changed how consumers use and perceive communications within the SM landscape. The chapter revealed gaps in the literature and has provided a foundation that has shaped a pathway for further investigation into how do these combined attributes create changes in consumer attitude and encourage sharing behaviour of eWOM.

Chapter 3 provides details and background on the underlying theories, conceptual framework and proposed research questions used to perform the study.

**CHAPTER 3:
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical background that formulates the adapted framework being applied in this research. The conceptual framework is appropriate for investigating the determinants of SM media advertising that generate increased eWOM sharing behaviour in consumers in the healthcare industry.

The first section of the chapter explores previously used theories in SM research. The review of the theories provides the basis for a change in direction of theoretical approach and the call for the forming of a new adapted framework that is applied to the study, which will establish which types of communications are most persuasive. The second section introduces the primary theory, which is combined with a secondary theory to form an adapted conceptual framework to be a predictor of consumer behaviour. Other factors and constructs related to SM communications are also introduced in this section and added to the framework to ascertain their importance to this research. The third section reviews the questions that this study endeavours to answer and expounds on additional factors related to the field of SM eWOM research. The final part of this section concludes the chapter.

3.2 Previous Theories Used in SM

From conducting a thorough review of the relevant theoretical literature, this first section provides an overview of the theories that have been applied most frequently to study the effects of eWOM and SM communications. In the broader scope of previous SM literature, there have been multiple theoretical perspectives, applying a mix of various variables used to investigate the subject. Of the theories reviewed, the Social Capital Theory (SC) and Social Influence Theory (SI) have been widely used to investigate the topic of SM. These theories

have predominantly been related to the adoption and use of SM technology linking to consumer attitude and behaviour and have been widely applied.

3.2.1 Social Capital Theory

The SC theory was originated and developed by Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1986). There have been other variations of the theory by different authors, and the theory has been adapted in several different ways. A journal article by Narayan and Cassidy (2001) outlines the constructs of the SC theory as being group characteristics, generalised norms, togetherness, sociability, neighbourhood connections, volunteerism and trust. Another literature review on the SC theory topic by Valenzuela, et al. (2009) revealed that previous academics who have applied the theory also listed the constructs in the theory as trust, community engagement, gratification, as well as other concepts, but asserting that the central concept of SC is that interactions with other people can be beneficial for the people involved. Another definition of the SC theory by Guðmundsson and Mikiewicz (2012) illustrated that the SC theory comprises constructs also of trust, subjective norms and the magnitude of ones' network in determining that if the relationships in the network are stronger, then the more valuable the SC becomes. Valenzuela, et al. (2009) further revealed that communications and exchanges are obtained using the SC theory by exploring a persons' known network and that persons with larger associations within their networks have more SC, thus leading to higher engagement in SM. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) explains that constructs within the SC theory are suitable for examining humans on an individual level to establish the communal benefits gained from their networks. Although the SC theory is widely used and established, this research will not adopt the SC theory due to the research examining SM eWOM from managerial perspective instead of the consumers, while concentrating on the characteristics of the SM message contents. The only construct in the SC similar to the direction of the reviewed literature of this

research was the concept of trust, which has been applied to the adapted framework.

3.2.2 Social Influence Theory

Similar to the SC theory, the SI theory was developed by Kelman (1958). The theory contains the constructs of subjective norms, internal group influence and network identity and has been employed for studies that are related to human decision-making and behaviour of groups in social settings (Cheung and Lee, 2010). A structured review of the most applied theories, factors and variables in SM evaluated by Ngai, et al. (2015) discovered that antecedents of SC and SI are the two most applied concepts in attempting to determine peoples' attitudes, perceptions and their effects from use of SM technology. Many of these social factors of the SC and SI theory have been applied to many other information technology studies such as Chiu, et al. (2006) on virtual communities and Valenzuela, et al. (2009) and Lin and Lu (2011) on intentions and motivators of Facebook usage. All of the studies have included variables of social ties, trust, knowledge quality, knowledge and value sharing.

Although the SC and SI theories have been applied to understand SM usage, technology adoption, intentions and behaviours of consumers from the technological perspective, the theories may not be fitting to answer what factors are most persuasive for recipients of SM eWOM communications in the intangible services industry from a managerial point of view. This is also due to the factors and measurements within the theories being ambiguous and without uniform consensus, deeming the theories not specific enough for this particular research. Measurements of SC and SI are intended for the purpose of gathering data from the consumers through factors of compliance, community and identity. These factors would all have to be obtained through observing the person, or in this instance the SM users own social networks to understand their interactions

and expectations with others. Thus, the SC and SI theories may not be able to shed light on how to design persuasive eWOM messages that effect peoples' attitudes and behaviours from this perspective. Moreover, the SC and SI theories have mainly been utilised to study phenomenon from a consumer standpoint.

3.3 Theoretical Foundation of the Research Model

The second section of this chapter details how the conceptual framework was developed for this comparative research by combining two theories pertinent to persuasive communications and consumer behaviour. The section provides an overview of the core theories being implemented that formulates the basis for the merging of constructs that complete the conceptual framework. The relevant fundamental and established theories of ELM and TRA are explained in detail.

The framework of this research is first based on the combining of the two well-established theoretical models on persuasive communications and consumer behaviour. The main elements of the conceptual framework is drawn from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty and Cappicio, 1986) and combined with additional constructs from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) designed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). The purpose of adapting an extended conceptual framework from existing theories is to investigate how do distinctive characteristics of current SM communications have an effect on users engagement and sharing of eWOM across different SM platforms in the intangible service industry. This also helps to determine the effects of SM eWOM advertising on consumer attitude and behaviour. Additionally, the extended conceptual framework can be generalised to an extent and is fitting towards the future investigations of the SM phenomenon in the related subject areas.

Current research on the topic of SM eWOM also involves other variables and constructs outside of the original theories and models being adapted. Therefore

additional characteristics are also added to the new combined ELM and TRA conceptual framework. These additional characteristics are further explained in this chapter.

3.3.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

Many researchers who apply persuasion theories believe that there is a need for expanding on knowledge concerning how and why different attributes in a message affect the ability to comprehend and retain the information that is provided in the message (McGuire, 1985). This is possible through applying the ELM, which is an established dual process persuasive communication theory developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). The theory is used to describe how attitudes are formed and processed with the two routes of elaboration. The two routes include the central and peripheral routes of motivation that are used for information processing. The two routes do not only depend on the type of information being communicated, but also the ability, willingness and motivation of the message receiver to engage with the communication. The ELM is presented here in Figure 8.

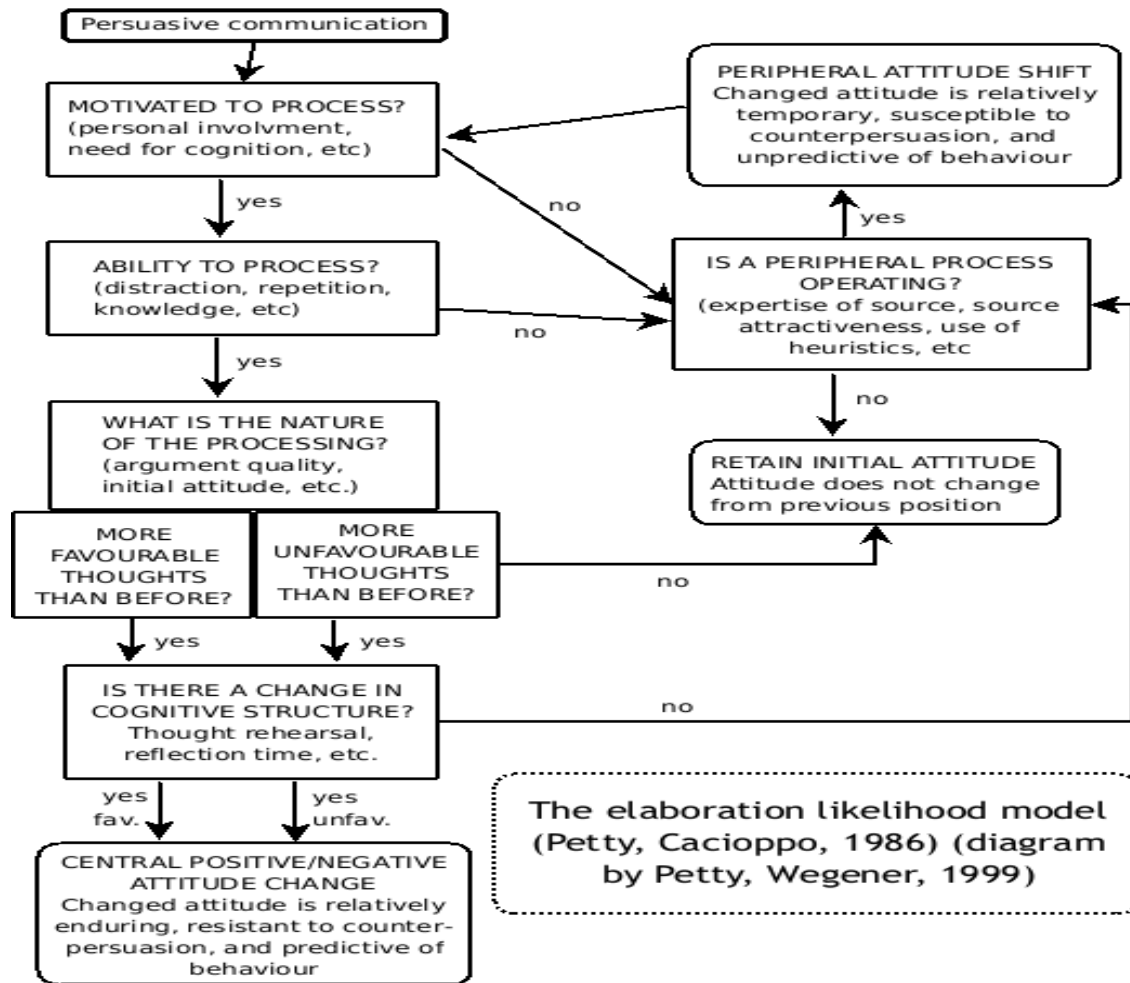


Figure 8. Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986)

The central route, as explained by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), is taken when a person has interest, motivation, ability, and encounters information that requires a higher level of in-depth evaluation to determine the real value and argument quality of the message. High levels of elaboration through the central route derive mainly from detailed cognitive evaluation of the quality of the arguments being communicated. It is triggered by an attempt from the receiver of the message to access relevant associations from memory to assist in elaborating the message being presented. (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006).

In a condition of high elaboration likelihood, the central route through argument quality is most likely to change and effect attitude of the message receiver, which is considered more permanent and genuine (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006). On the other hand, the receiver applies the peripheral route during the time of low elaboration likelihood towards a message. However, the peripheral route is taken when motivation to engage with the message is less, but can possibly be affected by external superficial cues that attract attention in making the message simple to evaluate (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). These types of peripheral cues can be in the form of distinctive factors that have an impact on the source of the message, presentation of the message and types of audio and visual aids that are embedded within the message (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976).

The ELM, which is the underlying theory in the research, has been used in several other studies in the context of marketing communications. A recent paper by Zha, et al. (2018) utilised the ELM to investigate SM information quality, source and reputation in SM. The ELM was also employed to study information usage and sharing in the tourism hospitality industry (Hur, et al., 2017) and for a quantitative investigating on the persuasive reasons and characteristics of SM messages diffusion (Chang, et al., 2015). Furthermore, the ELM is considered to be fitting for explanation of various types of specific qualities in communication that stimulate emotional change in consumer's attitude and perception (Tam and Ho, 2005).

The ELM theory is deemed to be appropriate for investigating persuasive communications that are distributed across SM platforms. Nonetheless, previous ELM research in the field of SM has been fragmented, limited, and without a clear definitive framework. Therefore, creating a call for further research into attributes of SM messages that have a persuasive effect on users attitude and behaviour is necessary (Teng, et al., 2014). With SM messages, the central route of elaboration may be stimulated when the receiver is exposed to messages that

induce an authentic desire to know the actual quality of the factual arguments in the message or maybe influenced by other factors in SM communications, perhaps through the peripheral route, or simultaneously through both.

The source, expertise and trustworthiness of a message are also relevant to the motivation to elaborate the message through the peripheral route and essential to consider in marketing communications through SM (Teng, et al., 2014). The study by Chaiken and Eagly (1983) found that simple cues such as audio, video, and different message sources have been effective and powerful deterrents of persuasion outside of just the written form of argument. Likewise, Shaouf, Lu and Li (2016) investigated the effects of web advertising visual design (WAVD) on purchasing intention from web advertisements using the ELM and concluded that the elements examined consisting of colour, shapes, images, font type, size and dynamic techniques were all deemed to be meaningful factors.

Although there have been some criticisms regarding the ELM theory. Kitchen, et al., (2014) suggested that the use of the theory maybe less pertinent in the current consumer driven digital atmosphere, due to the theory having been developed in the 1980's era and because of the rapid technological developments that have occurred since. Kitchen, et al., (2014) goes on to further critique the ELM theory by suggesting that the characteristics of argument quality need to be more thoroughly defined and that certain variable cue may trigger elaboration and persuasion that lead to attitude change through different route paths then originally intended, proposing that either the central or peripheral routes can be taken in varying situations, or simultaneously from both strong arguments and or from multiple cues. Therefore, this research utilises the original constructs of the ELM theory and adapts the model with additional constructs that are relevant to make the model more suitable for the current environment of SM communications today. The additional constructs added are based on a comprehensive literature review around the subject of SM eWOM marketing. Furthermore, when the adapted framework is applied to gather the data in this

research, the additional constructs are not restricted to specific routes of the ELM when the interviews are performed. This allows for new data to be discovered pertaining to the specific constructs and how they may create persuasion through either the central or peripheral routes, or both.

The process of elaboration through the ELM is of importance to this study as there are many distinctive combinations of cues a person may encounter when being exposed to SM eWOM advertising. Both routes in the ELM are used to explain how each particular set of situations may have diverse influences on a person (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006). Thus, both routes can be applied concurrently to examine effects that enhance online advertisement on SM platforms (SanJose-Cabezudo, et al., 2009). Depending on a particular cue being presented in SM eWOM advertising, the ELM provides an understanding of the two routes of processing, message elaboration and level of effectiveness of each cue in a particular message that causes change in attitude. Additionally, attitude change may link to change of intention and actual behaviour of a message receiver.

3.3.2 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The TRA theory has been widely used and applied in several SM and eWOM studies (Reichelt, et al., 2014; Gunawan and Huarng, 2015; Kareklas, et al., 2015; Shaouf, Lu and Li, 2016) and is widely recognised in areas of consumer behaviour and marketing as a reliable persuasive model of predicting human behaviour.

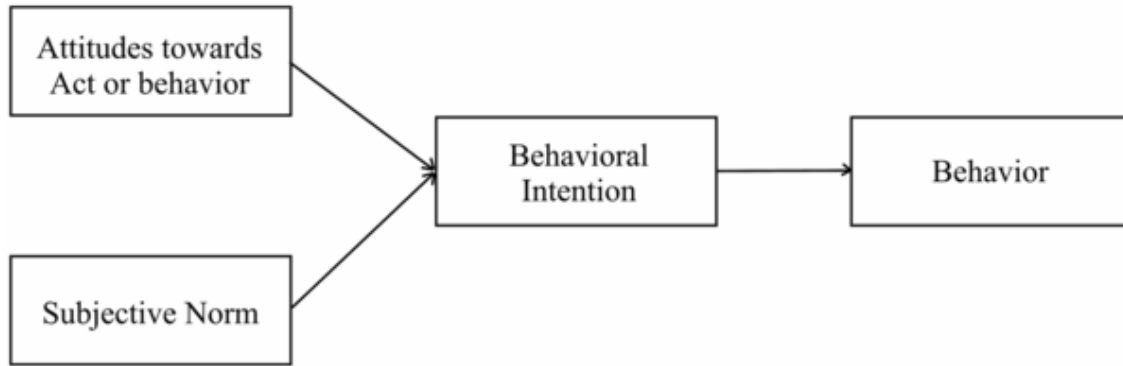


Figure 9. Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

The TRA theory explains that individual behaviour is motivated by factors of intention, attitude and subjective norms as shown in Figure 9. In the TRA, attitude is considered as personal feelings and beliefs that a particular behaviour is either deemed positive or negative (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Other related factors towards attitude are varied depending on a person's experience and the environmental surroundings.

Subjective norms refer to opinions of other groups of people who are influential on an individuals' behaviour, such as family and friends (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). The pressure and perceptions towards the actual behaviour being approved or disapproved is likely to change the actual behaviour within a person (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Both constructs of attitude and subjective norms are respectively related to the individuals underlying intentions that are linked to actual behavioural. Although subjective norms is a part of the TRA, due to this research focusing on gathering data from managers of SM content and not the actual SM users themselves the subjective norms construct is not adopted into the conceptual framework and only the link between attitudes leading to behaviour will be applied, as SM managers may not have full access to the people who provide the opinions and have an influence in a user's private network.

Furthermore, the application of the TRA has been widely adopted, adapted and combined with other theories to provide a better fit for the purposes of a study. For instance, research by Gunawan and Huarng (2015) has investigated effects of SM using the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) together with the Information Adoption Model (IAM) on purchase intentions of consumers. The TRA has similarly been updated and evolved into Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) and the Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) by incorporating additional constructs such as normative beliefs, control and behaviour beliefs in an attempt to predict human social behaviour. The TRA and RAA are predominantly designed to capture consumer perspective from the attitudes, beliefs and subjective norms variables and have been broadly applied quantitatively in most of the previous studies in the field of SM.

While the TRA has been widely applied to study consumer behaviour, there are some disagreements about the effectiveness of the theory. Some criticisms mention that attitude and beliefs are stronger predictors of behaviour than intention and that other factors outside of the TRA constructs can also be significant predictors of behaviour as well (Sniehotta, et al., 2014). This suggests that intention may not have as relevant of an influence on behaviour as expected. Sniehotta, et al., (2014) goes on the further express in the article that there are many other factors that influence attitude not detailed in the original TRA and that more elaborate extend forms of the theory should be developed to make the theory more robust for explaining human behaviour.

Therefore, this research does not focus on how intentions of users are formed, as the construct may not be relevant to how and why SM message characteristics are effective towards attitude change and actual eWOM content sharing behaviour. Also, the intention construct may not be able to fully determine or be impractical for shedding light into user behaviour from a managerial perspective. In addition, other factors are also included into the conceptual framework through the ELM to determine what characteristics are

most effective in influencing attitude, directly linking to behaviour change. These factors are derived from the literature review.

In relation to the significance of the attitude and behaviour constructs in the TRA, a study by Rauniar, et al. (2014) focused on understanding user attitude and usage behaviour on SM platforms by applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) initially developed by (Davis, 1986), which is an adaptation of the TRA. The dependent variables in the TAM mainly focused on technology functionality, perceived ease of use, and actual usefulness of the platforms, but do not concentrate on the independent attributes of persuasiveness in SM communications and messages. Rauniar, et al. (2014) discovered that the TAM had shown the significance of attitude towards actual behaviour from users. However, additional factors may be needed to fulfil the knowledge of technology acceptance in SM.

The conclusions from previous studies defined that the attitude and behaviour constructs in the TRA are influential elements in the consumer behaviour context. Therefore, the two constructs from the TRA, being attitude and behaviour are applied to the conceptual framework of this research and are linked to persuasive communication elements of the ELM.

3.3.3 Combining the ELM and TRA

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of how factors of SM eWOM communication are influential on consumers in the intangible products and services category, the integration of the ELM and TRA theories are combined to form a new conceptual framework predicative of attitude and behaviour that suits this context. As recommended by Teng, et al. (2014), the ELM can be adapted and integrated with others factors depending on the type of communications being explored. Therefore, additional factors and constructs have been added to

adapt the ELM in relation to persuasive SM eWOM communications. While the original ELM defines certain constructs to only cause cognitive persuasion through specific routes, either central or peripheral, this research will re-establish if this is still the case with the additional appropriate constructs in the current state of SM communications today.

All of the persuasive SM eWOM message characteristics in the conceptual framework through the adapted ELM structure will link to attitude change of the TRA, ultimately leading to behaviour change of increased SM eWOM sharing from users and recipients of the message. Moreover, applying additional constructs specifically related to SM communications may reveal interesting patterns in the findings. Thereby, this research utilises the ELM and part of the TRA theory in combination with relevant SM factors in the SM eWOM communication context. Furthermore, the latter constructs of the TRA attitude and behaviour are adapted into the framework with additional constructs from the previously reviewed literature through the ELM. Next, the complete adapted conceptual framework in this study is presented.

3.3.4 The Proposed Conceptual Framework SMCM

The indication from prior studies in the areas of Internet marketing, website advertising, SM and eWOM denoted that several factors in the area of SM eWOM have become apparent and consistently examined. For instance, research performed by Fang (2014) on adoption of eWOM in SM websites has examined attributes of external links, graphics, and technologies used. The study suggested that these types of EWD could potentially increase the level of adoption when combined with eWOM messages. Another study observed that change in user perception towards the messages was from visual aspects such as colour, brightness, size, images and shapes in website advertising (Shaouf, Lu and Li, 2016). Other significant factors such as source credibility (Gunawan

and Huarng, 2015), sender expertise (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) and argument quality (Fang, 2014) have also been apparent in similar studies.

Therefore, this research combines constructs from the ELM and TRA with constructs that have been previously presented in the literature review. These constructs include source credibility, trustworthiness and argument quality grouped as SM message characteristics. Other constructs include video, pictures and web links grouped as SM interactive characteristics. All of the additional characteristics are not predetermined to follow specific routes of elaboration, but will be examined to understand which of the characteristics are most persuasive and influential in causing long-term attitude change leading to behaviour through the TRA.

Below is the proposed conceptual framework applied in this research, termed as the Social Media Communications Model (SMCM) presented in Figure 10.

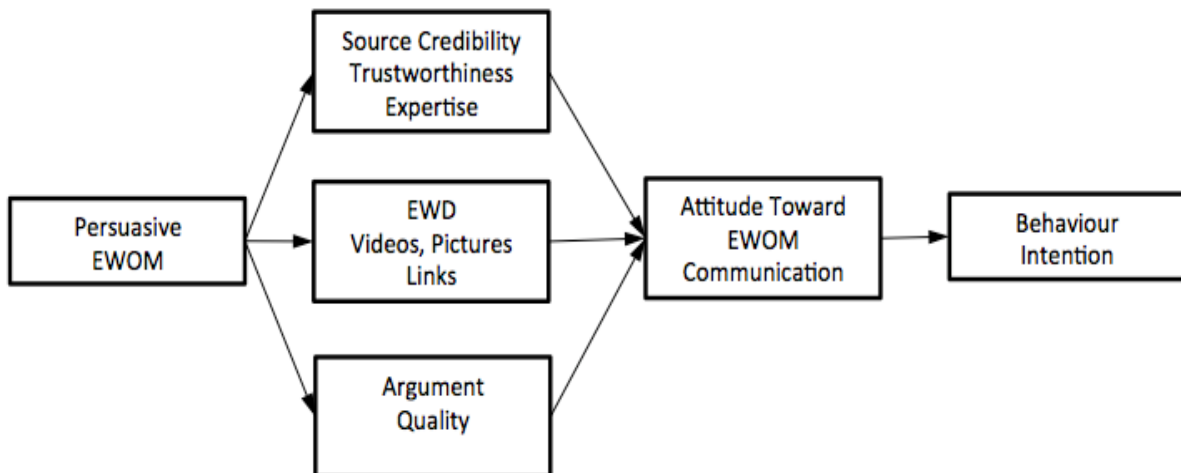


Figure 10. The Proposed Conceptual Framework SMCM

3.5 Research Question Development

As shown in Figure 10, the SMCM conceptual framework consists of different constructs that form the three main research questions that influence attitude and behaviour. The development of research questions related to these constructs are presented below:

RQ1: Why are certain combinations of message characteristics such as source credibility, expertise, trustworthiness and argument quality in SM eWOM communications effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

RQ2: Why are certain combinations of interactive SM capabilities such as video, pictures and web links in SM eWOM communications effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

RQ3: What other undiscovered attributes in SM eWOM communications may potentially be influential and why are they effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes towards intangible products and increase eWOM sharing behaviour?

3.5.1 Most Effective SM Platform

Currently, there are many unique types of SM platforms businesses can use for connecting and communicating with their consumers. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube can be considered as essential tools for allowing users the ability to network, share experiences and opinions and produce content about products and services that might affect organisations in some way (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Hamat, et al., 2012).

There has been a limited amount of research that explores both what is contained in the actual eWOM messages and how they are composed on various SM platforms (Williams, et al., 2015). Therefore, this study asks the questions of why SM managers choose a particular SM platform over another to post their SM content and why a particular SM platform is more effective in getting their SM followers to share eWOM messages.

3.5.2 Source Credibility and Expertise

Credibility in a message has been described as coming from a source that is considered being honest and accurate. Expertise refers to a source of being knowledgeable and proficient on a topic (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Source credibility and expertise in this study pertains to whom the SM message is originating from and the level of knowledge that a person may have on the message topic. Users of SM have struggled to determine the exact level of credibility of a message source because of the massive amounts of eWOM being transmitted through the Internet and SM (Park and Lee, 2008; Levy and Gvili, 2015). The messages can originate from various recognised and unknown sources. Therefore, the possibility of change in the attitude in the receiver is likely to occur through the peripheral route of elaboration. Therefore, this study attempts to determine why the source of a message is considered to be credible and what types of sources help to increase SM eWOM sharing by the receiver through a particular route of elaboration.

3.5.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in SM communications is similar to source credibility. However, trustworthiness in a SM message can be gained separately from the amount of credibility a source provides. Credibility in a message does contain different

characteristics, such as expertise and trustworthiness (Sussman, W.S. Siegal, 2003; Hu. et al., 2008; Reichelt, et al., 2014), and although eWOM is considered to be valid and reliable between sources known to one another, other attributes could affect trustworthiness such as the message quality, reasoning, and other factors assisting the relationship (You, et al., 2015).

A study by Cho, et al. (2014) stated that the message source is a fundamental component of the final result on how the message is received. Nevertheless, these types of messages including other features such as multimedia capabilities and non-personal communications that can significantly vary the amount of trustworthiness in a message. Likewise, unknown sources from an online platform such as reviewer ranking sites, along with quality factors of the website may enhance credibility of the eWOM messages and influence actual behaviour (Tsao and Hsieh, 2015). Factors that increase trustworthiness outside the source credibility and argument quality can be features of interactively responding and bilateral communication. Online reviews, prior reputation, and brand awareness are also considered as elements that have been known to change attitude through the peripheral route. Therefore, this study examines the message contents that are considered as trustworthy and why they increase trust and the sharing of eWOM through a specific route of elaboration.

3.5.4 Argument Quality

Argument quality as defined by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) as parts of information within a message that are deemed to be significant to the receivers' opinions, where the message is considered to be believable. Likewise, Fang (2015) described argument quality as the amount of persuasive power in the contents of eWOM reviews. Facts, news, and evidence are highly deemed as strong and supportive elements as to how argument quality can be persuasive in changing attitudes of the message receiver (Teng, et al., 2014). Some users of

SM are not always influenced by the credibility of a source or expertise, but rather by suggestions and information from various unknown sources (Reichelt, et al., 2014). In contrast, Gunawan and Huarng (2015) disagreed and stated that consumers are persuaded more by the credibility of the source rather than the actual argument. This clarifies that there is a distinction between the source, expertise, trustworthiness and the characteristics of the information composed within the argument quality of the message. The quality of argument in healthcare messages, for instance, can have many distinctive topics of discussion ranging from patient stories, humour, and educational subjects. Therefore, this study attempts to determine why attributes within argument quality are significant in changing attitude and increase sharing of eWOM messages by the receiver through a certain elaboration route.

3.5.5 Video Sharing

Videos are a widely used function that can be shared in the form of eWOM across various SM platforms. There has been a considerable upsurge in the number of videos posted on SM platforms that has produced a substantial increase of sharing and engagement (Khan, 2017). Research by Fang (2015) specify that there are three favourite features of eWOM sharing including web links, visuals designs and technology, in example pictures and videos that can be used as a cue to trigger attitude change. The exterior features of appearance, design, presentation, and accessibility of eWOM on SM platforms can enhance the level of trustworthiness, credibility and adoption of information being presented (Reichelt, et al., 2014). The sharing of eWOM videos is varied from the length, topic, and its authenticity. Therefore, this study establishes which route of elaboration triggers change and why such characteristics and qualities of videos significantly effect attitude and generate increased sharing of eWOM messages by the receiver.

3.5.6 Picture Sharing

The sharing of pictures through SM platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram has been a fast-growing trend and has become a common part of life. Picture sharing features are shown to surpass the number of times people listening to music and watch videos online. The motivations for people to share pictures on SM are varied and consist of reason like intrinsic value, getting attention, self-expression, and approval (Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen, 2016). Pictures are considered as the primary motivator that has driven the rise in user engagement of eWOM message in SM (Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014). The influential and powerful use of pictures being displayed on the screen has captured the attention of users and is one of the features that produce more shares than other types of content. A study by Shaouf, Lu and Li (2016) revealed that appealing and motivating aspects of visual design such as graphics, size, colour, images, and fonts in online advertisements have a direct influence on attitude as well as increasing the amount of engagement with recipients.

There are questions to why picture sharing is such a significant trend and how essential interactive characteristics within the content of the picture are influential. Therefore, this study examines different types of photo content that can increase user engagement and sharing of the eWOM message and how they affect attitude through either route of elaboration.

3.5.7 Web Link Sharing

Web links can enhance entertainment value, convenience, attractiveness and attention from receivers while raising the curiosity of gathering more information through the link (Fang, 2014). A numerous amounts of messages are shared across SM platforms that have a web link attached to the post. The presence of a web link can lead audiences to the organisations website, or other sources of

relevant information in the posts, causing greater interest and exposure to the message. Therefore this study attempts to determine how and why do web links increase the sharing of the eWOM message by the receiver and if they have a central or peripheral effect.

3.5.8 Attitude

Attitude can be explained as the thoughts and feelings of what people believe of themselves, other persons, and things around them (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The perceptions based on ones' own instincts, whether something is good or bad, have a particular impact on how a person behaves (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). A WOM study in healthcare services by Kareklas, et al. (2015) discovered that factors of source credibility did have an effect on attitude and also influenced actual behaviour of the receiver of the message. Therefore, this study attempts to determine the characteristics of SM eWOM communications that cause change in attitude in SM users.

3.5.9 Behaviour

Findings from research by Liang, et al. (2013) in the area of eWOM communications showed that attitude was linked with intentions, leading to behaviour. However, unique aspects of SM eWOM pertaining to products and services across a wide range of industries stimulate peoples' attitudes and behaviours in dissimilar ways. Therefore this study attempts to discover whether the change in attitude from exposure of eWOM communication leads to increased eWOM sharing behaviour and actual use of healthcare services.

3.5.10 Summary of Sections

The preceding sections have highlighted some of the previous theories applied in the area of SM to better understand how to properly investigate the effects of SM eWOM communication in the healthcare industry. The formulation of the conceptual framework in this study named the SMCM has been explained. Additionally, the developments of the proposed research questions have also been presented. The following section is the conclusion of the chapter.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the primary theories that are applied to the study have been introduced and defined, along with additional constructs that are relevant to the study. From the integration of theories with additional relevant constructs, the conceptual framework is introduced. Also, the research questions have been identified to conceptualise the scope of research. The next chapter discusses the selected research methodologies that are applied in an attempt for data analysis phase.

**CHAPTER 4:
METHODOLOGY**

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the new adapted conceptual framework named the SMCM was introduced and explained. The conceptual framework was adapted to discover how SM eWOM communication in the healthcare service sector can create positive attitude and behaviour in SM users and consumers. To better understand and correctly apply the SMCM to this study, this chapter considers the appropriate research methodologies and identifies the most suitable methods to be employed in this research. Thus, this chapter introduces the relevant philosophies, research designs, and approaches that are fitting for the research and justify the purpose for their use from a qualitative research paradigm. This chapter also explains the demographic selection of the SM manager participants, followed by information about the organisations social media newsfeeds.

4.2 Research Philosophy

A research paradigm can be explained as the set of assumptions and beliefs made by a researcher about the nature of how a research question should be approached and investigated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Selecting a research paradigm and philosophy that fits the overall study properly supports and structures the correct research approach and method, which then results in reaching the desired outcomes of the questions being asked in the research (Maxwell, 2012).

Of the research paradigms, the philosophy of phenomenology has been associated with qualitative studies. Phenomenology is a philosophy that recognises that reality around us is influenced by social actors by how they interpret the world and that those actions and behaviours contain meaning for people, which can be discovered through understanding their point of views (Bryman and Bell, 2001). Furthermore, the philosophy suggests that knowledge

can be acquired by studying the specifics of conscious experiences of people and that the philosophy is qualitative in nature, focusing on subjective examination of how people makes sense of the world and their occurrences (Frey, 2018). Frey (2018) goes on to further suggest that phenomenologist may perform research through an objective lens, but that the phenomenological approach cannot be limited to a specific scope or methodological position, allowing for the use of interviews as a technique for data gathering. Therefore, this philosophical position will help guide this exploration by allowing the researcher to understand the in-depth essential experiences from the managerial perspective of effective SM eWOM communications through the interviewing technique. Phenomenology is also associated with the position of interpretivism.

4.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Positions

Bryman and Bell (2001) also explained that research paradigms include ontological positions, defined as how specific viewpoints acknowledge the world, as well as epistemological positions, referring to how knowledge is gained and acquired. Having a detailed understanding of which research paradigm, ontological and epistemological position is appropriate for the processes of data collection and analysis that enhances the exploration process will assist in generating a more comprehensive research outcome.

Two widely used ontological paradigms have been applied in the field of business research as described by Bryman and Bell (2011) includes objectivism and constructionism. In terms of objectivism, phenomenon happens separately but is not affected by specific influences, whereas constructionism is defined as significant experiences that continually develops and is affected by specific influences and interactions. The position of objectivism is mostly associated with quantitative studies. On the other hand, the emphasis of constructionism is to draw attention to how the surrounding society is comprised and formed through

contributors in particular situations (Silverman, 2017). Socially constructed experiences assist people in making sense of their realities, which can only be understood from the subjective perspectives of the actual individuals involved (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Likewise, Hoque, et al. (2017) express that the constructionist position is subjective, descriptive and socially composes meaning and understanding. This suggests that constructionism can be subjective in nature. Constructionism can also apply a descriptive approach to gathering primary data through interviews and is aligned with interpretivism (Frey, 2018). Interviews can allow for the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and the participant of the study.

Furthermore, Crotty (1998) clarified epistemology as a position explaining how a researcher understands, acquires and interprets knowledge and theory whether it is objective or subjective, stating that this position includes the positivism and interpretivism perspectives. These philosophies are displayed in Figure 11.

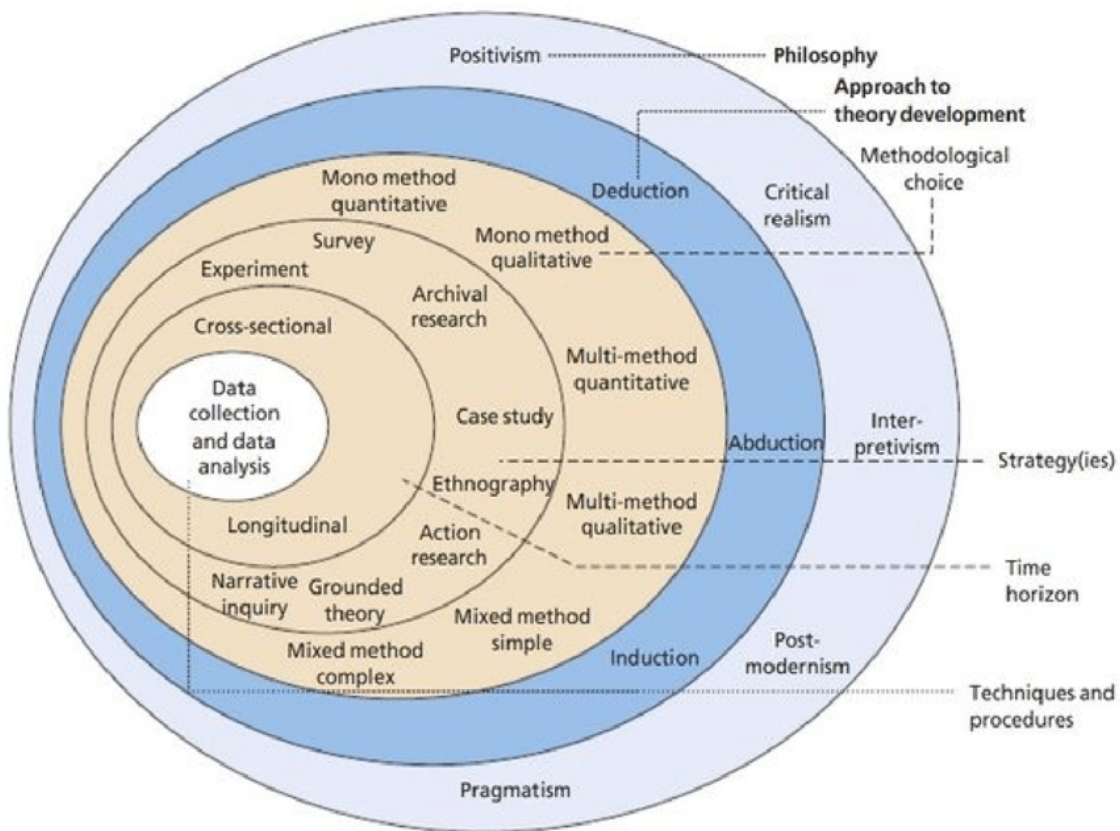


Figure 11. The Research Onion (Saunders, et al., 2016).

Positivism and interpretivism are the two main epistemological assumptions that define the perspectives of research to understand and gain knowledge and identify objective or subjective research assumptions. Furthermore, Crotty (1998) described positivism as a perspective in data collection by way of gathering statistical information and testing of hypothesis that is objective in nature. This research is qualitative by design and does not apply positivist assumptions. Alternatively, the interpretivism perspective is clarified as the obtaining of knowledge through observation before the creation of a theory, causing the separation between science and nature and is considered to be subjective (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Thus, this research defines constructionism and interpretivism perspectives as being qualitative in nature. Therefore, the foundational paradigms of this research will assume the philosophy of phenomenology, a constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

Research by Branthwaite and Patterson (2011) on the topic of SM research methods indicated that qualitative research for business and marketing is still very distinctive and useful. In pertaining to qualitative research, specifically in SM, that consists of numerous amounts of users and constant exchanges of information being performed between people in the networks, implies that there is subjective meaning in the phenomenon that consistently develops and alters based on these interactions. Thus, the interpretivism perspective is achieved by building from these precise meanings in interaction, forming significant, logical and complex relationships from observable data (Patton, 2015). Moreover, it is also considered as an effective method of understanding social interactions from a subjective lens by employing the techniques of interviews and observation (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Likewise, Creswell (1998) expressed that discoveries have uncovered subjective positions through the interaction between participants

and the researcher. Furthermore, Esch and Esch, (2013) iterated that it is not always possible to observe human behaviour from a completely objective lens, because according to human nature, a person cannot be totally objective due to the events that occur around them being subjective in certain circumstances.

Researchers who adopt an interpretivism position are most likely not to apply quantitative methods, but instead this research undertakes the exploration with a qualitative position in order to better understand the interconnection between the nature of human beings, their consciousness and actions with the physical world. From this viewpoint, people can create the interpretive meaning beyond the limitation of the physical effects, which can be accomplished by applying the interview technique.

4.2.3 Reason for Adopting Research Philosophy

As this study aims to examine how and why SM eWOM messages affect consumer attitude and behaviour from a managerial standpoint, the interpretivism perspective is considered fit for this research with a qualitative inductive approach for gaining new insights and knowledge on the topic. Such qualitative techniques can benefit the research to absorb the narrative rich data directly provided from participants who give insight and information into how these perceptions affect businesses and consumer behaviour (Branthwaite and Patterson, 2011). Review of the previous quantitative paradigms and philosophies that have been applied in the context of SM eWOM have provided a signal on how the research questions and framework should be developed from a qualitative perspective.

Applying inductive qualitative methods permits a researcher advantages regarding the provision to more details and articulations of participants expressions and the flow of words to be more open-ended, instead of a

deductive method, being restrictive and labelled (David and Sutton, 2011). The method of in-depth interviews can likewise help determine beyond the surface of cause and effect and delve deeper into the relationships that exist between the constructs of the framework. Additionally, the in-depth interviews also contribute to more intricate understanding of why such attributes cause changes in attitude and human behaviour from SM eWOM message.

In this section, research philosophy, perspectives and methods that are considered to be the most appropriate to the research context have been introduced. The philosophy of phenomenology, a constructionist position and an interpretivist perspective have all been selected to conduct the research. The following section presents the selected research design.

4.3 Research Design

A research design consists of the details of a conceptual framework, research questions, sampling techniques and the application of research methods for data collection and the analysis process (Miles, et al., 2014). An example of design components is provided here in Figure 12.

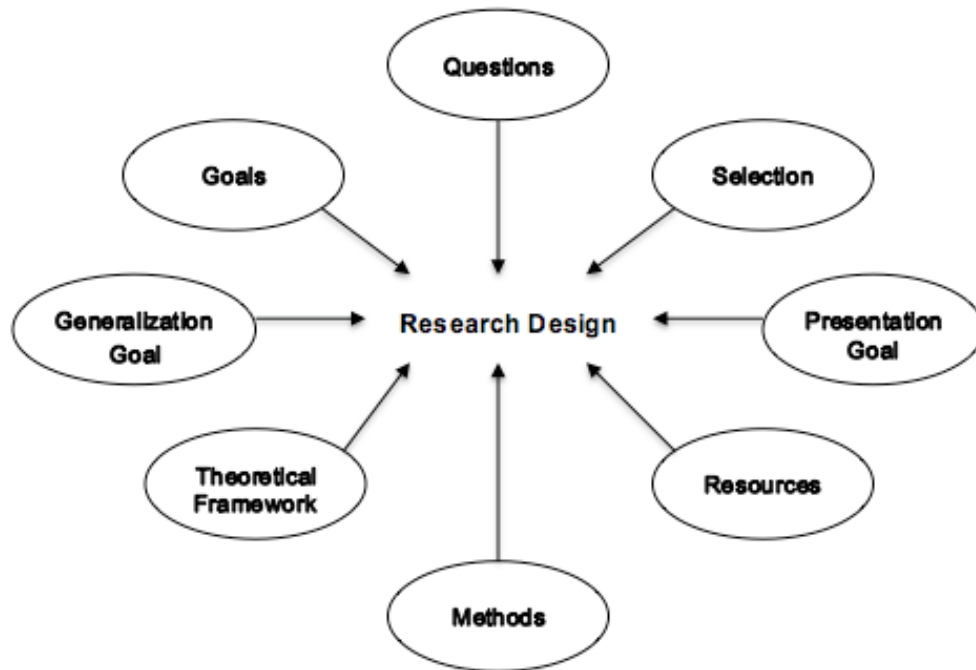


Figure12. Components of Qualitative Research Design (Flick, 2014)

The design of this study is outlined in several stages. The first stage was performing a comprehensive literature review to evaluate the current state of SM advertising and eWOM communications. The review process helps to clarify the existing gaps in the field and guide the research into the necessary areas of needed exploration on the subject of SM eWOM.

Second, based on the literature review, the relevant theories were evaluated, chosen and integrated with additional variables. Thus, the conceptual framework has been developed and termed as the Social Media Communication Model (SMCM). The relationships between the variables in the framework explore and determine the impact of certain SM communications on user attitudes and behaviour. Then in the third step, research questions were proposed in efforts to answer the existing unidentified phenomenon pertaining to the topic of SM eWOM.

Fourth, a pilot study is designed and performed to test whether the conceptual framework and research questions were comprehensible, appropriate, relevant and capable of answer the research questions. Fifth, once the conceptual framework and interview questions were amended, the study moved forward and continued with the process of data collection. The participants in the interview process are SM managers in the healthcare industry who generate and publish content on the SM newsfeeds of their organisations from both the UK and the US.

The sixth stage includes the analysis of interview data by thematic coding using the NVivo software. The coding process was performed several times in order to obtain the richness in the data. A process of grouping similar categories and removing duplicates produced the themes, codes and sub-categories exhibited for further analysis. The key themes and findings are later presented for final discussion and conclusion. The next section introduces the suitable research approaches selected that are implemented in this study.

4.4 Research Approach

Given the importance of selecting a suitable research philosophy, selecting a appropriate research approach is likewise necessary to properly conduct the study. Therefore, this section presents the reasoning in support of applying the inductive approach and how this approach explains and validates the study.

4.4.1 Deductive and Inductive Approaches

The deductive and inductive approaches are widely accepted and used in researching social science. As explained by (Ghauri, 2005), a deductive approach is characterised as being scientific, starting with a choice of theory and

leading to the forming of the hypothesis that evaluates and determines if the questions asked are approved or disapproved. The deductive approach is inherently theory-driven which determines the process of data collection based on the factors of the hypothesis, concluding with the revision of theory (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In a deductive exploration, the design of research is found to be dependent on the constructs of the framework to gain knowledge (Patton, 2015). The majority of quantitative studies are found to adopt a deductive approach and usually by employing survey techniques and analysis through numerical data (Saunders, et al., 2016). Generally speaking, quantitative studies mainly focus on numbers, structured theory testing and generalisability (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

In contrast, the inductive approach is initially motivated by the collection of data to discover new findings through investigation of a particular subject, which then formulates the theoretical building process (Saunders, et al., 2016). By revelation of new information through the process of inhibited exploration, the inductive process allows for significant knowledge to arise without predetermining what the particular new discoveries maybe (Patton, 2015).

There are also differences in the deductive and inductive techniques applied in terms of data gathering methods. A deductive approach is usually associated with positivism, being objective and applies a quantitative research design, focusing on hypothesis testing through statistical and mathematical models (Frey, 2018). These deductive quantitative methods consist of theory testing, focusing on numbers and are very structured. Whereas an inductive approach is qualitative in nature, instead of focusing on theory testing, the emphasis is on descriptive observation beyond numbers in the form of transcripts and narrative (Frey, 2018). These deductive qualitative methods focus on words for meaning, create theory from data and provide an in-depth contextual understanding of phenomenon. Some discrepancies between the deductive quantitative and inductive qualitative approaches are presented here in Table 2.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Point of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

Table 2. Contrast Between Quantitative and Qualitative (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

The data from a qualitative inductive analysis permits the formation of new ideas and descriptions that lead to the formation of theory (Patton, 2015). An inductive approach tends to apply techniques that help link the discovery of new phenomenon to developing the foundation for theory formation based on the data found (Saunders, et al., 2016). The approach does not limit or restrict the researcher from applying relevant theories to create appropriate research questions, which assist the procedures of examination for new ideas and thoughts (Saunders, et al., 2016).

Additionally, the Inductive approach being qualitative, focusing on words instead of numbers, concentrating on the unstructured process of gathering the rich and deep meaning within the data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Additionally, A qualitative method emphasises how social experiences occurs through the interactions of the people being observed (Silverman, 2017).

However, the difference between deductive and inductive approaches as simplified by Miles, et al. (2014) is that deductive is being a theory first top-down model, while the inductive is a built up model leading to theory creation. Inductive reasoning is generally associated with qualitative studies and begins with gathering data using the interview method that can lead to answering the research questions. This type of qualitative approach is appropriate for this research on the topic of SM eWOM, as it allows for uncovering of new motivators of consumer attitude and behaviour to be understood from managerial perspectives.

In this section, the deductive and inductive approaches were introduced and evaluated for its applicability and suitability for the research. The inductive method is selected and is adopted to undertake this study. The next section introduces the research strategy chosen that is used in this study.

4.5 Research Strategy

The research strategy plan is an essential connection between the research philosophies and methodological processes of gathering data that enable the exploration to achieve the desired research question outcomes (Saunders, et al., 2016). Research strategies transfer philosophy into practical and logical action consisting of data collection and analysis methods such as case studies, interviews, observation and analysis text (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) described that different methods and strategies could be associated with specific research designs, such as experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study or comparative design, which can be either quantitative or qualitative.

Thus, this research adopts a qualitative approach stemming from a constructionist paradigm. The study also applies a cross-sectional and comparative strategy by applying semi-structured interviews for data collection.

4.5.1 Cross-sectional and Comparative Strategy

A cross-sectional strategy is a study conducted in a certain period of time and considered a snapshot of the phenomenon at that particular moment, opposed to a longitudinal study, which is similar to a diary of information over a more extended period. (Saunders, et al., 2016). Bryman and Bell (2011) stated that the key aspects of cross-sectional strategy demonstrates the variance between numerous amounts of cases with a larger sample, conducted at a single moment in time and can be either assume a quantitative or qualitative approach. This type of strategy can be executed by gathering data from multiple nations and participants in a unique demographic location (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

A comparative strategy is another approach that can be implemented concurrently with the cross-sectional strategy. It concentrates intensively on the resemblances and differences between the samples being studied (Patton, 2015). Flick (2014) added that the comparative approach would observe multiple cases that are highly relevant to the structure, complexity and dimensions of the research design. The comparative strategy also allows for data collection from multiple locations across the world with the ease of current communications and technology, giving raise to the growth in popularity of comparative approach in a research context (David and Sutton, 2011). Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2001) also agreed that examination of organisations managerial procedures, traditional customs and social settings, applying the same methodologies in different countries, could be a pathway to greater understanding of influences on behaviour and natural reality.

Hence, this research investigates the effects of SM eWOM in the healthcare industry from the United Kingdom and the United States in an attempt to gain a comparative view of the current nature of SM eWOM in both settings. The primary data was obtained from SM managers being interviewed from two developed countries where the use of SM is considerably high. Therefore, this research has adopted a cross-sectional comparative strategy to suit the purpose of this research. The next section describes the aspects of conducting semi-structured interviews by telephone.

4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews Strategy

There are several types of distinctive methods for conducting interviews, which include in-depth, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) defined a structured interview as the most uniform method of questioning that can be quantifiably compared between the interviewed samples and are typically in the form of surveys or questionnaires. Although, structured interviews are beneficial, they miss the opportunity to enhance understanding from a direct human discussion. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

Bryman and Bell (2011) described another technique of unstructured interviewing as being preferably administered as a genetic exchange of dialogue where the researcher asks the participant just one or two questions, then allows the participant the opportunity to openly reply, leaving the researcher to react to the points of interest obtained from the participant. Whereas the semi-structured interview method is slightly similar in format to the unstructured, but does carry some variations. Saunders, et al. (2016) clarified that both semi-structured and unstructured interview methods are considered to be non-standardised in essence. Researchers who apply semi-structured interview usually base the format of questioning on a set of predetermined beliefs, themes and specific fundamental queries that are allowed to differ between participants, bearing the

particular situation. Pope and Mays (2006) added that semi-structured interviews are generally unconstrained regarding flexibility for asking open-ended questions that outline the parameters being investigated, permitting the interviewer discretion to probe deeper to discover certain particulars of the study.

The semi-structured interview design includes questions that follow a specific non-rigid format enabling the participants to answer freely outside of the context (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The adaptability in this interviewing method offers opportunity to identify new phenomenon that could arise outside of the proposed conceptual framework, with the intent to discover new insights and matters that may have not yet been explored. The benefits of conducting interviews can come from the ability to observe and accurately interpret the expressions, feelings and tonal attitudes that are difficult to grasp and comprehend with other methods (Branthwaite and Patterson, 2011). Table 3 points out the characteristics of each type of interview method.

	Exploratory	Descriptive	Explanatory	Evaluative
Structured		✓✓	✓	✓
Semi-structured	✓		✓✓	✓✓
Unstructured	✓✓			✓

✓✓ = more frequent, ✓ = less frequent

Table 3. Use of Different Types of Interview for Research Purpose (Saunders, et al., 2016)

This research employs a semi-structured interview method for the purpose of exploring, explaining and evaluating the topic of SM eWOM communications based on the integration of ELM and TRA theories with additional variables. The conceptual framework is an unrestricted guide to the types of questions being asked during the interviews. The next section illustrates the protocol of conducting interviews by telephone.

4.5.3 Telephone Interviews and Protocol

From examination of previous studies, the method of semi-structured interviews has been performed via telephone call. Some of the benefits of conducting interviews by telephone are from being financially cost effective, less time consuming and efficient for of accessing specific samples across a broad demographic area (David and Sutton, 2011).

Although telephone interviews do not allow for observation of personal cues, the method does permit for exploration of sample population in separate locations, fitting for semi-structured interviews and affords the participant a level of anonymity when confronted with sensitive questions (Berg and Lune, 2012). Likewise, Bryman and Bell (2011) expresses that performing face-to-face interviews involve investing a considerable amount of time and money due to travelling cost and the distance to and from each interviewee's location. In addition, telephone interviews do have their benefits from participant responses not being affected by possible bias from culture, presence, or particular personalities of the researcher to a certain degree (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Due to these reasons, this research decided to conduct recorded interviews by telephone.

The protocol for selecting the hospitals to be interviewed began by looking through a list of the largest hospitals by size in both the UK and US. Next the respective SM news newsfeeds of the largest hospital facilities were checked to determine if their SM newsfeed displayed adequate SM activity. The facilities SM newsfeeds with the highest number of SM followers were then approached first by initial telephone call. An introduction was made of myself the research project and the requirements necessary to participate. This email transmission is displayed in appendix A. Then an email follow up was sent with details of the research, followed by another phone call or email to schedule a convenient time to conduct the interview via telephone. The phone interviews lasted

approximately 15 to 20 minutes and were recorded, transcribed and later coded for analysis. All of the interviews were conducted and transcribed during the period of April 2017 to October 2017.

The next section presents the development of the interview questions and the administration of the interview questions during the interviews.

4.5.3 Interview Questions Development

The formulation of the questions being asked in the research is fundamental to the successful outcome of the study. The questionnaire development is essential to how the design of the research impacts the study being performed and should be designed early, clearly and formed in a manner in which the overall questions within the research can be answered (Flick, 2014). The qualitative interview questions should be outlined around the topic area of study to be able to answer the main research questions, not ask any leading questions, use language that pertains to the subject and is understood by participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The semi-structured format of the interview allows the study an opportunity to examine comprehensively the underlying reasons beyond the designed research questions as to establish precisely how certain phenomenon does occur. The three main research questions that were proposed in chapter 3 are intended to explore how certain attributes and qualities within SM eWOM communications increase eWOM sharing through a set of several open-ended questions.

The first of these questions asked was "which SM platform is the most effective in getting users to share messages and use your services". After the managers answered as to which specific SM platforms they are using, the meaningful question of "why" was then addressed, leading to significantly comprehensive

findings in the data. The next question was in regards to "what types of message sources do you think your patients consider credible and increase sharing and engagement of your eWOM messages". Depending on how the managers answered the question, the reasoning for exactly "why" was then further examined. This method gives the participant opportunity to provide open-ended narrative responses, contributing greater richness to the qualitative data. Some careful consideration was also taken into account when creating the research questions in order to avoid certain mistakes. Some of these include asking the long misunderstood questions, asking two question at once and questions leading to a desired answer or outcome (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

This section gave an example of example of how the research questions were developed, applied and administered relevant to the purpose of answering the overall research topic. The next section covers the sample strategies and sample size selected for this research.

4.6 Sampling Strategy and Size

Selection of the suitable sampling strategy and the sample size is an essential aspect for the success of this research. An appropriate sample should be able to characterise the group that is being explored in a way that is significant and valid (Saunders, et al., 2016). In this section, the distinctive sample strategies and size selection are explained in detail, as to why it is fit for this research.

4.6.1 Sample Strategy

A sample selection is needed whether performing interviews, surveys or observations since sometimes sampling the entire population is not possible and can be time-consuming and financially improbable (Saunders, et al., 2016).

There are two types of sampling techniques that are widely used in social science and related research areas such as probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Saunders, et al., 2016).

Probability sampling is defined as every possible participant having an equal opportunity of being chosen for the study as described by Saunders, et al. (2016), probability sampling includes techniques such as simple random, systematic random, stratified random, cluster and multi-stage techniques. On the other hand, a non-probability sampling technique is implemented when collecting information of the whole population is challenging to obtain (David and Sutton, 2011). The techniques include quota sampling, snowball sampling, convenience, and purposive sampling, which can be adopted when whole sample populations are difficult to obtain, or when timing and financial issues are not permitted and not realistic (David and Sutton, 2011). Therefore, the purposive sampling technique is selected and is employed in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) stated that purposive sampling is appropriate for selecting relevant professionals who are experts in the field being studied. It allows the researchers to apply their careful assessment in selecting a participant from a smaller sample that is especially informative and based on the research objectives (Saunders, et al., 2016). Moreover, this sampling technique as explained by David and Sutton (2011) is grounded on the researchers personal understanding and judgement of who should be the most fitting participants for the study.

A selection of the most qualified participants with the most experience in the field, in this case, senior-level managers, who are capable of shedding light on the area of study on, will provide more profound insight into the subject being studied which is a benefit of the purposive sampling technique (Flick, 2014). The purposive sampling technique also allows the research to focus on the comparative study of particular cases with the intent to study the distinctions between the two samples (Patton, 2015).

Among all of the possible sampling strategies, this research decided to apply a purposive sampling strategy due to the timeframe and resources. Therefore, the purposive sampling is the best fit for this study.

4.6.2 Sample Size

Sample size selection in a qualitative study is an essential aspect of conducting a research project. The sample size in qualitative research tends to employ a small number of samples concentrating instead on the richness and significance of data. In contrast, the objectives of quantitative research is more likely to gather information from the broadest possible sample to examine significant statistical differences (Miles, et al., 2014). Patton (2015) expressed that there are no definite guidelines when it comes to sampling size in qualitative research. The size is varied and relies on the purpose of the study and how valuable the information acquired is, as well as the availability of resources and the timeframe. However, the sample size in qualitative research is more relevant towards the amount of meaningfulness in the selection, it is a trade-off between extensiveness and broadness, and should be considered to the point when the data is redundant and saturated.

From a more simplified perspective clarified by Mason (2010), a typical sample size for conducting qualitative research, specifically for interviews, should be around twenty to thirty participants, with fifteen being the smallest amount and fifty being the greatest. Likewise, Saunders, et al. (2016) recommended that a standard qualitative study examining a diverse population should conduct approximately from five to thirty interviews until the information collected has become saturated. Recommended sample sizes are presented here in Table 4 and 5.

Source	Type of research	Sample size
Morse (1994: 225)	Ethnography/ ethno-science	30 – 50
Bernard (2000: 178)	Ethno-science, grounded theory	30 – 60
Creswell (1998: 64) 20-30; Morse (1994: 225)	Phenomenology	30 – 50
Creswell (1998: 64); Morse (1994: 225)	Qualitative research	5 to 25; at least six
Bertaux (1981: 35) adapted from (Guest et al., 2006)	Qualitative research	15 is the smallest acceptable sample
Charmaz (2006: 114)	Qualitative research	25 is adequate for smaller projects
Ritchie et al., (2003: 84)	Qualitative research	< 50

Table 4. Type of Research and Sample Size (Mason, 2010)

Nature of study	Minimum sample size
Semi-structured/ In-depth interviews	5 – 25
Ethnographic	35 – 36
Grounded Theory	20 – 35
Considering a homogeneous population	4 – 12
Considering a heterogeneous population	12 – 30

Table 5. Minimum Non-Probability Sample Size (Saunders, et al., 2016)

Therefore, the target sample size in this research is a total of 34 participants with 20 SM manager being from healthcare facilities in the UK and 14 SM managers from healthcare facilities the US. The imbalance between samples is due to the interviews being conduct simultaneously in both countries and reaching the level of saturation after the 34th interview. The level of saturation occurs when no new findings are discovered (Frey, 2018).

In this section, the sampling strategy and sample size selection process were evaluated and explained. The purpose and reason for the selection have also been clarified. The next sections introduce demographic details of the selected sample and explain the process of how the SM managers and their SM new feeds were chosen for this research.

4.6.3 Demographic Profile of UK and US Managers

Previous studies have attempted to discover factors that affect attitude and actual behaviour from a consumer perspective. Conversely, this research has employed an alternative approach by investigating the effect of persuasive SM eWOM communications on consumer attitude and behaviour from the SM managerial perspectives. The SM managers can create, distribute, respond and evaluate the SM communications of their followers, as well as gauge sentiment and comment on the effectiveness of these communications. They have direct access and can see their follower's actions, such as the activities of like, dislike, share, their reactions, and how and why they respond to certain types of content within a post.

For this purpose, the samples in this study are senior-level SM and marketing managers of hospital facilities in the UK and US. A sample selection of senior-level managers would be grounded in the fact that these people have comprehensive knowledge pertaining to the research questions being asked (Saunders, et al., 2016). There have previously been many business studies that have sampled managers from both the UK and the US. A quantitative study by Foxall (1990) sampled managers from both the UK and US to compare organisational behaviour patterns across the regions, with 78 managers being from the UK and 131 sampled managers from the US. Another study by conducted by Hassard, et al. (2012) performed in-depth semi structured interviews to compare human resource managers from the UK, US and Japan.

The Hassard et al. (2012) study focused on the personal perspectives of organisational change, downsizing, job security and career progression through 142 interviews, of which consisted of 37 interviews from Japan, 62 from the UK and 43 being from the US.

Another survey examination on public managerial networking environments from separate demographics compared 300 UK managers with 600 US managers that ranged from various government sectors and with different levels of experience and responsibilities (O'Toole, et al., 2007). The study goes on to further state that although the samples are not directly comparable, for the purpose of understanding general networking tendencies, the sample selection was justified for the particular study (O'Toole, et al., 2007). This suggests that using an unequal sample amount of managers from diverse demographic locations is possible and can result in the significant discovery of new findings.

Studies using managers as a sample have also been applied to investigate various sectors of business research. Likewise, the impact of SM usage on organisational performance has also been investigated from a qualitative perspective through a sampling of SM managers (Parveen, et al., 2015). The examination focused on aspects of SM branding, advertising and promotion, and discovered that SM is most effective towards organisation performance through increasing customer service relations, the ease of information access and reduction in marketing cost (Parveen, et al., 2015). The Parveen et al. (2015) study, which has some similarity in design to this research, was interpretive in nature, assumed an inductive approach and applied a purposive sampling method for conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews of active SM managers from different organisations in various industries. Therefore, the criteria for selecting healthcare SM managers in this research are based upon their experience in marketing and are persons who are currently directing their SM communications team, designing the facilities SM communications and interacting with their followers. Furthermore, with the continuous advancements

in SM technology, the position of SM manager is relatively in the beginning stages. Many hospital organisations have been adapting their departmental structures in order to facilitate the need for SM management. Therefore SM managers who are in these management positions will have access to comprehensive knowledge and information of SM user activity from supervision of their SM platforms. SM managers are also able to analyse why users comment on certain message, why they share a particular post and what types of content positively increase engagement.

The process of selecting SM managers initiated from searching through a list of the largest hospitals in the UK and US. The SM newsfeeds of the hospitals were then inspected to conclude the highest amount of SM activity and followers, which would lead to the most significant amount of knowledge and experiences possible being contributed to the research. The managers LinkedIn profile was also accessed to determine their level of experience and length they have spent with their organisations and in the field of SM marketing.

The managers were contacted by phone and were introduced to the concept of the proposed research. Those who agreed to participate received an email with details outlining the parameters of the study and requirements for participation. This email correspondence is again displayed in Appendix A. Then, either a call back or email reply was administered to schedule an appropriate and convenient time to conduct the recorded interview via a telephone call. All of the managers that were approached have been conducted in this manner and have consented to participate based on the ethical considerations of each participant in the research remaining anonymous.

The average level of overall marketing experience of SM managers in the UK is recorded at 7.05 years with the minimum experience level being 4 plus years. The maximum amount of experience level documented was over 20 years and the average experience level in their current positions was at 3.8 years.

From the US, the average overall marketing experience of SM managers was recorded at 13.7 years, with 5 years being the minimum and 25 plus years being the maximum. The average time spent at their currently held positions was documented at being 5.0 years. The managerial experience levels are compared here in Table 7.

Origin of Participants	Maximum	Minimum	Average Experiences in Marketing Field	Average Experiences at Current Position
<i>UK</i>	20	4	7.05	3.8
<i>US</i>	25	5	13.7	5.0

Table 6. Managerial Experience Level (Years)

With SM marketing being reasonably new in the healthcare industry and having not been entirely understood, the consequences of making a non-retractable mistake such as a post or comment being taken out of context and misunderstood by the reader, has been a serious cause and deterrent for many facilities to fully engage with their patients via SM, creating a need for greater understanding into how to properly manage these types of situations.

Some healthcare facilities have just started outlining their procedures on how to properly manage their SM marketing campaigns because SM is relatively new to many organisations. Some facilities have not yet formally set up specific departments to handle their SM communications or have not yet allocated human resources to manage the daily tasks. Therefore, some of these SM communication tasks have been shared with other departments, which resulted in minor differences in the levels of SM managerial experience and SM marketing activity that each facility has. Highly experienced marketing managers have also been moved between facilities and departments into the SM manager position, while their level of experience is accumulated from all of their related marketing

positions held. The participants have also been selected according to the specific industry that they are proficient and knowledgeable in, as well as the information they can access and provide in terms of their SM activities. Likewise, the healthcare organisations in this research were selected based on the highest amount of SM activity and followers on their respective SM newsfeeds. The biographical information of the sample is presented here in table 8.

Manager (country)	Gender	Management Experience (yrs+)	SM Management Position (yrs+)	Facility Size (beds)	Followers on Facebook (thousands)	Followers on Twitter (thousands)
UK 1	F	8	2	118	1.5	2.1
UK 2	M	5	2	125	4.5	3.2
UK 3	M	8	2	76	5	4.4
UK 4	M	8	5	965	9.6	11.1
UK 5	M	4	2	1,000	14.9	10.3
UK 6	M	8	2	250	3.6	17.4
UK 7	F	5	2	N/A	N/A	45.1
UK 8	M	11	11	1,213	11.8	7.8
UK 9	F	5	2	565	5.8	5.4
UK 10	M	13	8	470	2.8	9.4
UK 11	M	4	2	1,300	13	8.6
UK 12	F	5	2	1,103	22	11.2
UK 13	F	4	2	1,237	13.5	13.2
UK 14	F	8	6	430	2.4	10.5
UK 15	M	5	2	890	11.1	13.8
UK 16	F	5	2	160	4	10.8
UK 17	F	5	2	220	6.1	13.5
UK 18	M	5	2	922	20.2	11.8
UK 19	F	5	5	460	3.5	7
UK 20	F	20	13	1,677	17.7	12
US 1	M	8	3	411	16.1	224
US 2	F	15	3	318	186	19
US 3	F	30	7	463	41.1	3.7
US 4	F	18	3	958	33.6	14.8
US 5	F	27	6	547	8	1.1
US 6	F	14	13	515	0.207	13.3
US 7	M	12	9	1,034	80	42.3
US 8	F	15	4	1,154	595	518
US 9	F	6	4	976	222.5	70.6
US 10	F	20	5	1,704	14.8	12.5
US 11	M	25	12	524	34	8.5
US 12	F	5	2	970	50	10.1
US 13	F	5	2	306	76	20.6
US 14	F	6	2	631	6.7	7.7

Table 7. Biographical Sample Information

4.6.4 Demographic Profile of Newsfeeds

The number of SM followers on a newsfeed is of vital importance, as the levels of engagement from the SM users are significantly related to the amount of quality information supplied from the facilities. For this reason, the research concentrated on healthcare businesses consisting of demographics with the most number of followers on their SM newsfeeds in both the UK and the US.

Moreover, Chu and Kim (2011) mentioned and recommended to investigate across different demographic age groups as well as examine different applications in SM. Another previous exploration by Hudson, et al. (2014) suggested that research in SM eWOM should expand the subject by studying different demographics, groups, countries and different types of SM characteristics that have an impact on users. Gunawan and Huarng (2015) additionally advised future investigations into SM advertising by gathering information from multiple countries and perform a cross-country comparison to discover different aspects that enhance business performance. Spotts, et al. (2014) further suggested future research to investigate the specific elements that generate the increasing of interconnection within the SM eWOM conversation that can trigger greater influence across different locations and demographic groups. This is from the current growth of SM usage and the advancements in the technology that allows for other effective methods to transmit eWOM messages through SM worldwide. Therefore, to bridge the proposed recommendations from previous literature, this study has chosen the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) in an attempt to perform a cross-country comparison as suggested by Gunawan and Huarng, (2015) and Spotts, et al. (2014).

The rationale of SM newsfeed selection from the two countries was based on the number of actual followers and activities on their SM pages. Based on reviewing lists of hospitals in the UK and US, the hospitals official websites were first

examined to grasp the types SM platforms they are managing. By clicking on multiple SM page links provided from the hospitals official websites, the research was able to count the actual number of followers, activities and engagement among the SM users of that facility. The majority of platforms that were used by the facilities were Facebook and Twitter.

For all the UK SM platforms examined in this research, Twitter was shown to have approximately 228,600 followers, with an average of 11,430 followers per SM newsfeed. Facebook, on the other hand, totalled approximately 173,000 followers with an average of 8,650 per SM newsfeed.

For all of the US SM platforms, Facebook was shown to have the most activity with approximately 1,363,000 followers, with an average of 97,400 followers per SM newsfeed. Twitter in the US had a total of approximately 965,600 followers with an average of 68,900 followers. This is displayed here in Table 8.

Country	Facebook		Twitter	
	Total	Average	Total	Average
<i>UK</i>	173,000	8,650	228,600	11,430
<i>US</i>	1,363,000	97,400	965,600	68,900

Table 8. Number of SM Followers

The selection of organisations SM newsfeeds was not only based on participation availability alone, but also on the assumption that the newsfeeds with the most followers would produce the most significant data through the highest level of activity and engagement. This was likewise found to be true from the pilot study and first interviews with lower amounts of SM followers and activity. The following section explains the pilot testing process.

4.7 Pilot Testing

In order to assure that the questions for interview process are reliable, understandable, logical and answerable in a correct and timely manner, hence, a pilot testing was conducted. As described by David and Sutton, (2011), pilot testing is an integral part of the research process and should be conducted with a small number of people to determine if there are any faults in the structure, wording and the understanding of the questions. Therefore, 5 participants were chosen to participate in the pilot study. All of the pilot study participants were SM managers for the organisations they worked for. Four of the five managers were employed at healthcare facilities and one employed at an online shopping website. All five SM managers for the pilot study did have over 3 years experience, specifically in SM management and were responsible for creating content and increasing SM engagement for their organisations newsfeeds. The SM managers were able to see all of their followers SM analytics, activity, comments, shares, post and what SM content was the most effective.

All of the participants were interviewed based on the original format of questions for understandability and functionality and then were asked to give further feedback at the end of the interview. The comments and suggestions from the participants were all taken into consideration for questionnaire amendment. The research questions were then adapted. For instance, some terminologies have been removed and simplified. The length and proportion of questions have been adjusted for ease of understanding and flow between questions. Moreover, according to the time allowance between 15 – 20 minutes for each participant to perform the interview, the questions have also been adapted to be more concise and less time consuming. Consequently, the amended version of interview questions was completed and used in all 34 interviews as presented in appendix B. The next section covers the methods of data analysis applied in this research.

4.8 Data Analysis Qualitative

In this section, data analysis methods that are most appropriate for this qualitative study are presented and evaluated for applicability. The coding procedures, the process of thematic analysis and use of the NVivo software are explained.

4.8.1 Coding

The qualitative data in this research is from the words collected and transcribed into text from the managerial interviews. In regards to qualitative studies, a term or a brief expression of language that symbolically allocates significance found in visual data is an essential link between data collection and explanation of meaning (Saldaña, 2016). These types of data can be described as text or codes for this research.

Codes can be defined as labels with specific meanings used to departmentalise data originate from interview transcripts, photos, videos, websites, and Internet communications (Miles, et al., 2014). A single code can be placed into multiple categories if necessary, supporting the themes (Saldaña, 2016). The interviews were conducted, recorded and immediately transcribed into text. Table 6 is an example of some of the most relevant codes that were found in the transcriptions.

SM Platforms		EWD - Videos	
Facebook	Instagram	Short	Experience
Twitter	POS / NEG	Time Consuming	Knowledge
LinkedIn	Not Sure	Costly	Privacy
Source Credibility		Authentic	POS / NEG
Professionals	Celebrities	EWD - Pictures	
Doctors	Patients	Positive	High Quality
Staff	Family and Friends	Vivid	Must Use
Media Press	Expertise	Authentic	Real People
Trustworthiness		EWD - Web Links	
Two - Way Communications		Increase Traffic	
Interactivity		Educational Content	
Prior Reputation		Add Information	
Online Reviews		Short - Long	
Argument Quality		Volume - Timing	
Community	Education	Post at Specific Times	
Short - Long	Tone Friendly	No Repeat Content	
Fact - Based	Simple	New Content	
Negative	Sales Promotion	Community Updates	
Humour		Attitude	
Patient Stories		Behaviour	
Specific Details		UK - US Comparison	

Table 9. Example of Codes

The suggested amount of codes in qualitative studies should not accumulate up into the 1,000's but should be limited to around to fewer than 300 codes per study, with the final amount dependent on many other variables as well (Saldaña, 2016). Miles, et al. (2014) additionally suggested that the collection and analysis of qualitative data should be performed simultaneously with continual data collection and transcription to fill in potential gaps and reveal new significant findings that have not yet been discovered. Additionally, Saldaña (2016) defined

these patterns as the occurrences of everyday human interaction within the collected data that create more reliability in the findings.

In between the scheduled interview process with SM managers, after each interview was completed, a written transcription was produced from playing back the original voice recordings, which were recorded using a smartphone. Then the first transcriptions were comprehensively read and reread thoroughly to find keywords that were related to the discoveries in the literature review. Based on the keywords, categories and subcategories began to be developed which then became the basis of how other transcriptions were read and analysed. This process also allowed for continual revelation through the data collection process, permitting for the discovery of new unaccounted for findings to surface from the questioning between participants. New codes emerged from the process as well as the editing of existing codes. Some irrelevant codes were deleted and the remaining categorised codes were then analysed to determine significant themes. The technique also helped direct the flow of questioning, assisting in gathering more valuable data. However, Bryman and Bell (2011) stated that the downfalls of coding could be the context being too deluded, the codes becoming very disintegrated and the meaning behind the narration getting lost. Therefore, a systematic and intensive thematic analysis of the codes was performed to not lose any resonating substance in the data and to provide further insight and meaning to the transcribed text. This process is highlighted in the next section.

4.8.2 Analysing Qualitative Data using Thematic Analysis

There are several principal qualitative analysis approaches as explained by Pope and Mays (2006), being the framework approach, grounded theory and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data through coding, which allows themes to emerge directly from the text instead of the researchers own opinions (David and Sutton, 2011). Flick (2014) likewise

describes thematic analysis as a technique of establishing patterns within the robust details of the data and is often compared to narrative analysis. Additionally, thematic analysis is considered as a process of coding large amounts of interview data in a textual format, where themes are based on the regularity occurrences of expressions and phenomenon within the transcriptions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The first step in the process is to create a straightforward narrative account of each interview reflective of the research questions, extracting the main relevant research themes expressed by each participant and finally, the themes arise from the comprehensive report of the results (Flick, 2014). Correspondingly, Silver and Lewins (2014) describe a step-by-step procedure for applying thematic analysis, which applies to theory-driven approaches. The steps include first to become accustomed to the data, second to generate codes from the data, in attempts to discover the underlying themes, then to thoroughly reviews the themes by categorising labelling and creating a detailed account of the findings (Silver and Lewins, 2014).

This research applied the thematic analysis technique by first systematically coding the transcribed recorded interviews. The coding process took several attempts, as the codes were grouped into categories and subcategories and evaluated for anything significant that could have been overlooked. Systematically categorising codes helps in clarifying the definitive patterns and themes within the project (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013) and can be challenging to methodically analyse and discover the themes that arise out of the text (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interpretation of the codes and categories was based on the literature review and helped determine related meaning from distinctive descriptions provided in the transcripts, which formed the underlying themes of this research. From the data, themes and significantly related occurrences may appear through extensive reading of the text, interpreting and analysis of the data multiple times, unveiling interconnected relationships within the themes that go further than basic depiction (Pope and Mays, 2006). The reading and rereading of the interpretations of these categories and themes that connect and link

important thoughts and concepts helped reveal the authentic experiences of the participants, aiding in the formation of the related constructs of the conceptual framework. The themes revealed through coding the interview data are a good explanation of human behaviour (Saldaña, 2016). Furthermore, Saldaña (2016) additionally defines a theme as pieces of information that forms meaning through an assembly of phrases and or sentences such as text, through the classification and arrangement of codes that can be analytically examined, but they are not necessarily codes themselves.

The themes from the data were grouped using the NVivo software, which was useful for the organisation and interpretation of the discovered themes. Many of the themes were categorised and combined with relevance to reveal richness, depth and quality in the findings. This was the process that has been applied to this research, which resulted in the relevant themes being brought to light. This thematic approach is also one of the most understood techniques in healthcare studies that can be performed by categorising data into specific themes from all of the participants, assertively coding and comparing all of the information (Pope and Mays, 2006).

Due to the purpose of the thematic analysis technique being applied to compare cases and being based on a particular theory, the limitations of developing a new theory can be restrained from the analysis of too many cases being very time consuming (Flick, 2014). Furthermore, the coding process goes beyond just numerical categorisation but should be performed in a method that allows for the themes created to be comprehensible and represent the underlying meaning in the textual data (Pope and Mays, 2006). The themes within the data arose from the accurate coding and recoding of the interview transcripts using the NVivo software, which revealed the relevant findings from the research.

4.8.3 NVivo Software

Computer-assisted software can be used to help the process of qualitative data analysis by increasing the efficiency of coding, storing large amounts of information, organising, categorising, uncovering relationships, and assisting in the creation of new theories (David and Sutton, 2011). Of these types of software, the NVivo program has been used by many qualitative researchers to reveal new perspectives into how they see their data, increase detail to attention and has aided in the answering of their research questions (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013).

The NVivo software is not bound by any specific methodological approaches but is open to adoption of a vast amount of techniques that can be used with the software, and its purpose is not to replace traditional methods of analysis but to reinforce analysis with effectiveness and efficiency (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The NVivo software has the capabilities to systematically structure and organise the codes into groups, concepts and themes (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Therefore, this research used the NVivo software to organise and assist in the analysis of the primary data.

First, the smartphone voice recordings of the interviews were played back and listened to with great attention to detail at the same time as the interviews were being transcribed. The voice recordings were transcribed exactly as spoken using a computerised word processing program to create the hand typed transcription file. This accurate transcription word file was then uploaded to the NVivo software where the transcription could be read over, analysed and categorised to create the themes. Meaningful lines of codes relevant to the aims of the research were highlighted in the NVivo program and categorised into a filing system referred to as nodes, which link the source of transcription to the actual code itself. This was helpful in classifying what each participant provided to each specific code and category. The nodes were eventually sub categorised

into more detailed nodes and categories and then a list of the coded verbatim was created for each specific code and related transcription source. This provided the information rich narrative list of codes that was analysed and used to present the findings from each of the interviewed participants. From this process of coding using the NVivo software, the basis of the themes and constructs of the adapted conceptual framework were established.

The NVivo software also benefited the research by saving time and providing a platform that permits for clarity and meticulousness in the structuring of the new framework. Therefore, this research benefited from applying the NVivo software during the process of coding. Elaborate categorising of the codes and the structured organisation and creation of relevant themes that appeared in the transcriptions were shaped using the software.

4.8.4 Writing and Presentation

After data analysis using the NVivo software, the findings of the research are presented in a narrative format. This type of format is a logical, structured interpretation of interview data text that is understood to be multifaceted and genuine (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Presenting text in a narrative format should highlight differentiations between interviews, form perspective for the reader and be beneficial to the process of observing new contributions (Flick, 2014).

The narrative analysis focus is on substance and develops from codes and themes of the transcriptions, which is presented as a part or selection of the dialogue from participants, emerging into a thorough description of occurrences (Flick, 2014). Reasoning of making use of the narrative format is to present the findings as a detailed and coherent story. Focusing on the rich description of data through direct quotations from participants, narratives highlight main themes that

are relevant to answering the research questions. The narratives are presented in chapter 5.

4.8.5 Quality of Research

Quality of research pertains to the generalisability, reliability and validity of a study. Most qualitative studies have been criticised for not being able to accomplish these types of quality assessments compared to quantitative studies. However, the purpose of qualitative research is different from that of quantitative assessments. Generalisability and transferability in qualitative research can be explained as to what degree the findings are capable of being applied in different settings, and in a qualitative setting, refers to the investigation and explanation, leading to developing theory, instead of statistical generalisations (Saunders, et al., 2016). Furthermore, Flick (2014) explained that generalisability in qualitative studies can derive from how the examination of different transcriptions, combining of analysis techniques with different cases and context to develop theory, can establish a form of generalisability. This research focuses on theory building, which can equally be applied to understand attitude and behaviours of consumers in a similar setting and can be generalizable to a certain extent. To a certain extent, qualitative studies can also be generalised through particular settings, the specific amount of samples and similar findings that are nearest to the original study (Patton, 2015).

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research intends to apply structured, repetitive and standardised questioning that create findings which can be limited in experience and contain a level of artificiality and may be unable to answer how essential individual experiences occur (David and Sutton, 2011). Although the purpose of most qualitative studies is not the amount of generalizability, but rather the focusing of discovery in specific issues and notable instances in particular situations.

Reliability is also a concern for qualitative studies, as to if the research can be replicated or not. Reliability regarding semi-structured interviews can be understood as not having the intention to be duplicated, as they are complex circumstances since the study has been conducted at a specific moment in time, which can differ as time passes (Saunders, et al., 2016).

This research interviewed SM managers who can provide significant detailed information about the current status of what has been most effective for them to generate increased eWOM engagement. As the technologies advance, other factors and specifics may arise that have not been account for yet. However, through the prior testing of the interview question and reformatting, editing and specifically detailing the approaches and methods, this research attempts to lay a foundation through the creation of theory for future studies to apply these techniques to reinvestigate the SM eWOM phenomenon in the future. By being comprehensive, systematic and detailed in the whole process, this research has provided a form of reliability.

Additionally, Flick (2014) further clarified that the process of first testing the interview questions, then adapting them appropriately while applying a specific coding and data collection methodology can increase reliability through the documentation of the research process as a whole. Likewise, reliability from interviews can also be accomplished by the comparison of different narratives, examining them to see if the same explanations and interpretations originate from the differently compared texts (Flick, 2014). Moreover, reliability of qualitative research cannot be based on finding the same results that emerge from the same data collection process every time because using this techniques to check reliability for interviews studies would be an indicator of prepared statements, where relevant aspects of the study have been overlooked, rather than concentrating on the accuracy of what has been spoken (Flick, 2014). The

purpose of this research is to explore new occurrence and discover new findings and in-depth meanings beyond that of quantitative statistical correlations.

Another issue of research quality lands upon the validity of the study. A definition of validity and credibility from Saunders, et al. (2016) is considered as the amount of actual knowledge and understanding that has been fully comprehended from information gathered from the participant. Using precise and inquisitive questioning and exploring the received responses from different perspectives, an amount of validity and credibility can be obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews (Saunders, et al., 2016). Validity in this research has been obtained through the exploratory questioning and careful interpretation of the findings and coded themes drawn directly from the participants' own quoted verbal statements, being evident and displayed in the following chapter 5.

While quantitative studies rely more on standardised methods and intend to ascertain statistical findings, the qualitative approach is more of a less structured format, allowing for revelations of personal meaning beyond just numbers, subjectively understanding the world as interpersonal and being socially constructed (David and Sutton, 2011). Attempting to apply principles of science to the naturalistic inquiry, one must acknowledge that complete objectivity is not obtainable, therefore there must be some acceptance that methodology may not be faultless, but still one must strive for impartiality (Patton, 2015).

Through proper detailed planning, documentation of the processes, careful design, selecting appropriate methodical perspective, technology training and application, to extensive reporting of the findings, the transferability and generalisability of the research can allow for another researcher to perform a similar study in a suitable circumstance (Flick, 2014; Saunders, et al., 2016).

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Codes of ethics are guidelines for researchers concerning how they conduct themselves throughout the research process and their relationship with their participants (Miles, et al., 2014). The code of ethics also covers topics of confidentiality, participant permission, types of research questions being asked, sampling techniques and other concerns for conducting qualitative research (Miles, et al., 2014).

Bryman and Bell (2011) clarified some of the main ethical points to consider in business research, they are as follows:

- Does the study bring harm to the participant?
- Has the participant been fully informed and given consent?
- Is there any invasion of privacy?
- Has the participant been deceived in any way?

All of these ethical concerns have been thoroughly considered and adhered to in detail. In this research, there were no issues regarding physical or reputational harm that arose for participants or respective facilities and organisations. Moreover, the names of participants and organisations have been kept confidential.

The participants were first contacted through the information provided on the organisations' websites and SM pages via a phone call. Then the participants who agreed to take part in the interview were emailed details of the proposed research project and made aware their required levels of participation. The questions being asked during the recorded interviews were voluntary and not made mandatory to answer. Therefore, every participant had the right to refuse any questions that may cause discomfort and could withdraw from the process at any time.

None of the participants have been deceived in the processes of this research. All of the information provided by both parties through emails, phone calls and interviews have been kept confidential. The process was in line with and has been approved by the Brunel University Ethics Committee.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and explained the philosophies, strategies and methodologies that have been applied to this research. The reasoning for adopting an inductive approach, performing semi-structured interviews and the comparative design has also been described. Additionally, the chapter covered the strategies for sampling, the process of pilot testing and how the data is analysed. Finally, all ethical concerns were presented and taken into consideration to ensure the procedures in conducting the research followed the rules and guidelines of the code of ethics.

The following chapter presents the result and findings of this research.

**CHAPTER 5:
RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews results and findings of the interview data collected in the research. The first section of this chapter presents the findings from analysis of the responses being asked in the interviews. The next section reviews relative themes that have surfaced out of the data collected from the UK and the US are discussed and compared. The last section of this chapter then examines the overall coded findings to attempt to define and describe their meanings to better understanding the types of effective persuasive eWOM communications.

All of the findings are presented in sections and exhibit each of the unique attributes of persuasive SM eWOM communications that are predictors of users attitudes and behaviours.

5.2 Results of Qualitative Findings and Themes

This section displays the results and findings from the interviews of 34 SM managers from healthcare organisations in the UK and US. As previously explained, this research administered semi-structured interviews to explore how SM eWOM affects attitudes and behaviours of healthcare consumers. The findings from the transcriptions have been coded using the NVivo software. Each research question and factor in the conceptual SMCM framework was explored and analysed by employing a thematic analysis technique.

The newly discovered additions to the original themes of source credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, argument quality, videos, pictures and web links are all presented and discussed in detail in the following subsections below.

5.2.1 SM Platform Effectiveness

Given the question, as to which SM platform has been most effective in motivating their followers to share their message, the findings from the interviews revealed that Facebook is the platform that their facilities use most to communicate with their followers. A total of 21 managers agreed that Facebook was most effective, with 11 positive responses from the UK and 10 from the US. Whereas, Twitter is the next most used platform with 13 positive references, the majority of 11 references being from the UK preferring the platform.

One of the main reasons that UK managers preferred Facebook is that the platform has fewer limitations and constraints on message creation. Moreover, the platform allows users to create content without limitations such as letter count, as described by respondent UK11 explained:

UK 11 - Um, for us, we tend to get most engagement on our Facebook page. We find that we've got quite a lot of people who follow us or like us on Facebook. Um, so in terms of um, in terms of engagement, yeah we find that stuff tends to work a bit better on Facebook. And we are not constrained by characters as well of course on Facebook as we are on Twitter. So we can do it more creative with the kind of post that we do, even though you have more followers on Twitter but it's because Facebook lets you have more options.

Moreover, manager UK2 further explained and supported that Facebook has more capabilities than Twitter:

UK2 - Whereas Facebook is much better for large pieces of content, so we post a lot about orthopaedic issues, or if we are doing events, we promote a lot of those on Facebook.

Facebook allows more functions to be performed. Users are able to create exciting content with the various qualities provided through Facebook, which in turn gets shared across the platform more than other platforms. The majority of managers likewise express that Facebook allows for the most engagement and reach as elaborated by the UK18:

UK18 - Um, I think for the public certainly, I would say Facebook (why is that). I think a lot of the items that do well on our social media accounts are sort of human-interest items, your photos, like stories and photos featuring staff and patients and even videos that we make and put on. We don't pay to promote mass content on our social media, but when we put something on Facebook, what we find is through the Facebook social media network, it spreads, people like it, people share it, people comment on it, and that filters through the network. People knew it's from a friend of friends seeing these things and it tends to be sort of very well received.

Likewise, UK19 also supports that Facebook is more effective for engagement:

UK19 - It really depends on the content you want to put up. So for example, we normally use Facebook. It's got a lot of engagement. So if you kind of want to engage with your audience, I like to use Facebook, but obviously, Twitter is getting more popular now. It's also a very good channel, but it's more about analysing the news. Facebook engagement is very high on our channel.

UK12 and UK20 further stated that Facebook does allow more information to be communicated:

UK12 - Um, we use Twitter and Facebook the most. Um, we use them very differently. I think Facebook is the one that has allowed us to kind of say a lot more about what we are doing with patients really. We have a lot of followers who like that Facebook page. But I think um, Facebook is our most successful at

the moment it's the one we probably use the most. (more than Twitter) Um, I think so yeah.

UK20 - I think Facebook for us. (Why?) Facebook gets a lot more engagement and a lot more followers. We have a much bigger reach than we do with Twitter. And Facebook and Twitter are the only two social media channels that we use.

Manager US 33 stated that two-way communication through Facebook is another aspect that contributes to increased engagement from followers. This theme is further elaborated in detail in the coming sections:

US 33 – Um, yeah definitely Facebook. There's a little bit more opportunity to have a two conversation on that channel. So, I think one from a reach perspective, it's been the most effective, and then two we see more opportunities to talk to consumers or patients and kind of help them if they have an issue with their visit or some sort of billing mistakes or something like that, we are able to use that platform probably the most to help deal with those issues.

The majority of managers in the US confirmed that Facebook is the SM platform where they see the most engagement as described by US23, US26 and US31:

US23 - For now that is definitely our best performing channel. And that's pretty much across the board on all of our regions. That's where we have the most followers, the most engagement and that's where we dedicate most of our time to now.

US26 - We have the most users on Facebook and the most active users on Facebook.

US31 - I think for us in healthcare it's been Facebook just because that is sort of our social media platform of choice. Its kind of like our social media of record is how I like to put it. So that's where we traditionally put out most of our information or post and seems to be the most effective way right now to leverage our community.

Twitter, the next most used platform, with 13 positive responses, is explained to have appealing features such as being fast and simple to use. Also, the majority of engagement through this platform is said to be from staff members, not healthcare patients and customers. The responses from UK10, UK 16 and UK17 displays statements about how Twitter has been effective for them:

UK10 - I think people look to Twitter more for sort of general instant engagement with us. So, it's a useful way for us to share good news stories, which we are doing, and sharing things. But also, if people are making complaints, they are more likely to do it through Twitter than through Facebook. So we are able to respond quite quickly to people's concerns and issues, when they are raising it.

UK16 - I think with Twitter, it sort of is easier for us with the sort of word count, we can just sort of tweet things out when they happen. So it sort of, um (sounding not sure, thinking) sort of comes out with good news and things. We don't have to spend too much time drafting things. You know we sort of just quickly tweet things at the moment they happen.

UK 17 - I think Twitter is maybe more of um, it's a bit faster as a platform, so you can just ping out a tweet quickly. Some people tweet us from the hospital as well. And then they can tag the organisation as well. And then we usually respond or quote the tweet. Or try to pass it on to the member of staff that they referred too. So they can probably see us pass it on and then, so it's also quite nice.

Interestingly, US9 was the only manager in the US who agreed that Twitter is easy and quick to use:

US9 - I would have to say Twitter. (Why not Facebook?) So for Twitter, it's you know, you can share graphics, you can find something witty in a hundred and forty characters. And it's also easier to gain followers and for people to see your content than on Facebook.

UK14 provides an example of how staff members engage on Twitter:

UK 14 - So I think for our Twitter pages, it's probably the most interactive and the most accessible and a lot of that is around staff engagement and also being able to share patient feedback. We do get a lot of tweets from people who are using our services and then we share that on Twitter but also we share it with our other departments and then with our team.

UK6 also reinforced that the majority of their followers on Twitter are staff members as well:

UK 6 - Well, I am not sure how many of those people follow us are actually our patients. I would assume a reasonable percentage that is, but I also think because of our position and our reputation is quite a sort of world leading in mental health. We do a lot of work, we have partners, and we're training staff for the future. So I think a lot of sort of staff, I think a lot of other organisations and charities, government sector, and the (facility) follow us. So it's a really wide audience base.

Likewise, as exhibited by the UK15, UK18 and UK4, Twitter is a platform most followed by the their own staff members:

UK15 - So I think, so on Twitter we tend to, our follower tends to be kind of staff who work for us or kind of politicians or news outlet.

UK18 - And a lot of our staff use Twitter, so it tends to be what we tend to find more sort of engagement from staff highlighting work events, work topics.

UK4 - Twitter at the moment seems to be largely professionals sharing stuff, whereas Facebook is a lot of members of the public the messages are responded to more by the public.

In contrast, there were 9 negative responses about Twitter expressing that Twitter is not their platform of choice because of characters limitations and capabilities. Here are some responses from UK1, UK15, UK18 and UK19:

UK1 - With Twitter, we're obviously limited to characters, so the general basis is the message, a quote and then the link. And that is the general structure of what would be for Twitter.

UK15 - So obviously on Twitter, you've got your odd 140 characters. So you can't really do much about that. So, we try keeping everything as short as possible.

UK18 - Twitter we do get some of the items we put on they do okay, but in comparison to Facebook, they don't tend to be, they don't tend to have the same spread.

UK19 - First of all like Twitter they give you only one hundred forty characters. So you have to be very short and confined. But with Facebook, we kind of put more emotion in there because it's obviously the audience is different and they're kind of more like a community.

Other platforms have also been marginally mentioned such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Snapchat, but none of the responses determined any of these platforms were effective for increase eWOM engagement.

In comparison, the majority of managers who positively preferred the use of Twitter to Facebook were from the UK, which numbered 11 compared to 2 from the US, totalling 13 positive responses for Twitter. Both UK and US managers agreed that Facebook is the most effective platform respectively with 21 out of 34 managers agreeing. The remaining managers were not quite sure which platform is more effective than the others but did confirm that they all have a presence on both platforms, regardless if they may think one platform is less effective than the other.

5.2.2 Source Credibility and Expertise

From responses obtained through SM manager interviews concerning how and why source credibility and expertise affect attitude and behaviour, several significant findings had materialised. The responses reveal three significant categories related to source and expertise that have an effect on why SM users engage with their content, they are:

- Professionals, Doctors, Staff
- Family and Friends
- Patients, Authentic People
- Outside Media

The emerging categories of the source credibility and expertise theme are summarised in Figure 13.

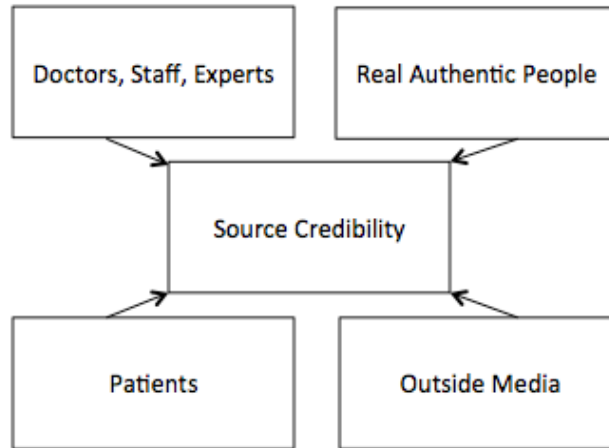


Figure 13. Linking Categories SC and EXP

The findings from this research determine that messages from specific sources are more effective in influencing their SM followers to share their eWOM messages. Of the 34 manager responses, 15 out of 20 from the UK and 11 out of 14 from the US stated that messages from professionals such as doctors and consultants were effective. Here is an example provided by manager UK3:

UK3 - In terms of credible source, it's a combination of using the clinical knowledge that we have. So that is the staff, as well as the consultants to produce materials that are relevant to particular audiences. For instance, the (facility) hospital may have an article on allergies. In which case we will get an allergist to look over or even write that for us, whereas someone from the (facility) may be working on orthopaedics writing an article on knee surgery. And that's where we get our credible sources. I mean to put it another way, if you want the best treatment you are going to look at who is the best doctor for doing that treatment, then that's where you get your credibility.

UK1 also supported that message from doctors with extensive knowledge in the field they practice in are useful for increasing engagement:

UK1 - In terms of a credible source I think a lot of our consultants who are world-renowned in our field, they have a lot of peer-reviewed published papers. They have done a lot of media work. They have had case studies from patients. They know their stuff. They participate in not only working with us but also NHS hospitals, which are also renowned. So first of all in terms of clinical excellence, messages that come from them, messages that are also respected by external parties, whether that be world health organisation or shared messages with the NHS are credible.

UK2 explained that not only messages from doctors are considered a credible source but also information from real research that is fact-based has value and contain credibility:

UK2 - Any information direct from a consultant. We will often re-tweet from consultants, and we will re-post blogs that they have done or articles they have been quoted in. So we try not to say too much directly from ourselves. If we try and say anything, we try and say it from the word of the consultant, the word of the doctor. They are the medical authority we are not.

Responses from the US about doctors and consultants are also in line with responses from the UK as being expert advice. As shown by US21, who further confirmed that source credibility also stems from the knowledge embedded in the information being shared:

US21 - Well if it's a quote in an article, it should probably be a doctor or someone with some type of degree, because then people are associating that with the expertise of all the school they went to, if you don't have that credibility, let's just say your just someone who works at the hospital, and you don't have that credibility you want to find data sources to back your claim, so you want to find studies to back your claim with data from other academic sources to prove your point.

Likewise, US28 affirmed that physicians from their facilities are considered as an expert and credible source:

US28 - So most of the content that we are sharing is credited to our researchers and our physicians. And I know that's what our audience is looking for from (facility name), within our mission of research education and patient care. People are really looking for something that is researched based, that clinical trials have been done around, or that our experts in some way shape or form have weighed in on.

Additionally, a response from US22 suggested that using a real person that works in the hospital that can be contacted is also effective in creating increased sharing of eWOM:

US22 - So, for example, we had a happy doctors day general type of blanket post on social media, and each hospital, we kind of tweaked it a little bit and not only that but for example, today I am going to create an individual post that is specific to the physicians here in California hospitals and create a photo collage along with some information that pertains specifically to these doctors here. And that will probably get more play than your standard post, and that is typically what we see.

Using content that contains information that can be validated and is authentic by with real people is also agreed by the US33:

US33 - Um, I mean our physicians are definitely our most credible source, and our experts that we rely on. So a lot of our content comes in the form of their blog content. And we share that via Facebook, having the widest reach again. When we are crafting the message, we make it a point in the copy to either quote

from the expert or make it clear that this opinion or this information is coming from one of our experts, one of the researchers or physicians.

As described by US24, using doctors and consultants as a message source generates more engagement with followers on their SM platform:

US24 - There are definitely other individuals, physicians, people that are recognised as experts in their field. I see patients, you know if they know a certain physician or researcher is recognised as an expert, then they tend to follow and share and pay attention to what that expert is saying.

US24 - But when we are talking about really specific conditions, that's where I think that people put more weight on what the physicians are saying and the researchers because they're really right at the ground. You know they see what's going on everyday and they see things that maybe aren't reported yet on CNN.

US23 and US27 claimed that the educational aspect of information from a professional source has also created credibility:

US23 - I think anything coming from our physicians would be considered credible. So for instance on our main brand channels, we do push out a lot of content that our physicians contribute too. So we write articles about different health and wellness type situations, and we have our doctors weigh in on that. So when we push that sort of thing out, that is a pretty credible source.

US27 - Let's say that if we are discussing vaccines or information on infectious disease. If we are getting that from our clinical experts here, I think our audience can trust that this is coming from (facility name), this is an academic medical centre that conducts research. You know we've got a solid reputation. So we can actually be in a position to kind of have that authority.

The mentioned statements from the managers revealed that the characteristics of highly competent and credible messages have to come from doctors, be fact-based, be real stories and intended to educate.

Only a few managers like UK4 stated that they used other professional sources, such as executives:

UK4 – Um, also our chief executive runs her own Twitter account, and so she gets a few re-tweets from us (laughing). So it does make it more credible I suppose that she also uses social media. So I would say sources would be our chief executives on our accounts.

Contrary to the use of messages from doctors and consultants, US22 argued that professional sources such as executives produce a different effect on the message receiver:

US22 - Also when you are posting a photo with a doctor in a lab coat, or you are posting about a nurse in scrubs, people tend to react to that differently versus somebody in a suit who might be a medical director. But you put that person in a white lab coat you take a photo of them, and you do a posting, and that reaction is different. People do respond differently.

The image of a professional source such as business executive managers is perceived as less competent than actual doctors and experts. On the other hand, in regards to staff members, UK4 said staff member are more important than executives:

UK4 – A Credible source, genuinely staff members. We create video content and do lots of photographs. We try to have the video content presented

by nurses and so forth as supposed to people in suits and managerial people. These things tend to do better as it's boosting the crowd.

UK7 and UK17 suggested that using real staff members with real official accounts is a signal of authenticity in the message. The story behind the person is a reason why these types of sources are found to be credible.

UK 7 - But we have found that actually having human and frontline staffs present on social media channels have been really effective for our engagement levels. And the way do that is that we make sure that we, if they have their own Twitter account themselves, we tag them in and we make sure an explain who they are at the very start like, this is Jane Smith, head nurse at (facility). She'll be talking today about so and so. So we set, we start the story if you like, we set up the context, as to whom that person is. And establish the credibility of that person. And also establish if that person is speaking on behalf of (facility). For us, that has been most effective. We do not really quote, tweet, or re-tweet people who have not got an official account. So for us, that is how we keep trying an ensure that the information coming out through our channel is seen as verified, rather than just re-tweeting anybody that is just quite interesting.

UK 17 - But not just sharing content for the sake of it. Making it useful as possible. But people are pretty good at sharing our stuff, especially on twitter. Staffs are real ambassadors I guess for us, which is great because they give a face to the organisation. Because we try and re-tweet staff that tweet about stuff they are doing or their achievements so that it's not just a corporate account continually sending out messages.

Both messages from doctors and staff are considered to increase sharing and engagement with their followers but managers, despite being professionals, are seen to be less effective.

Messages from patients were found to be equally effective for increasing engagement and sharing of eWOM in both the UK and US. Here are some examples from UK19:

UK19 - I think that the most successful one is patient stories. So you know it's quite extraordinary. Something quite rare happened, so that got a lot of extra attention as well, patients and members of the public.

Likewise, manager UK20 and UK3 stated that family and friends are the most effective source for their SM:

UK20 - Patients stories are usually what attract the most positive attention. That usually gets quite a lot of comments and sharing in terms of, more than (NHS Choices) generally more than that kind of health message post. Somebody was saying the mother had great care after the fall and hip operation will get a lot more positive attention than us reminding people to use sunscreen or promoting.

UK3 - Of course, that has a huge influence, huge influence. Whom are you going to find more credible? Someone who has had the same treatment or a doctor you have never met, yet has all of the accolades and all the influence and all the case studies in the world? It all comes down to someone saying hey I like this guy because he treats me and there's the swing. No matter how many times you can push out a message, it always comes down to, hey do you know someone who's had treatment for knees, ah yes I do. And then all of a sudden you are in another form of credibility and another form of trustworthiness.

Some of the managerial responses from the UK suggested that messages from patients could be more effective than other sources. However, when asking if the messages from family and friends were more effective than doctors and staff, UK4 responded as follows:

UK4 – Um maybe, possibly more, but certainly more than an executive or a manager.

Although the majority of responses from the UK regarding source suggested that it was a balance of doctors, staff and patients that worked best for their messaging source, the responses from the US, however, were concurrent with the response from the UK. Therefore, it confirms that message source from patients are just as effective, if not more than from doctors or staff.

Manager US30 and US29 also support the effectiveness of messages from patients:

US30 - I think messages from patients in the same way that you might trust the word of your family or friend on social media, on a review site, or on a social network like Facebook. You're going to trust someone who is like you. Someone who may be going through the same a health scare or had gone through a health experience, you would trust that persons' word over the doctors most likely. Although the doctor does provide that credibility, that authority figure, that educated person, who can tell you know kind of the nuts and bolts of what you need to hear, but the patient provides the human side and the more emotional side of the story.

US29 - It's certainly patients, patients and doctors yeah, definitely.

The number of responses referring to patients as a message source being a reason why SM eWOM messages are increasingly shared is 22 in total, with 14 responses confirming from the UK and 8 confirming responses from the US.

Beyond the key message sources being doctors, staff and patients, a few managers described some other possible message sources that were used in their message creation. The content is from sources of media outlets such as

press media, television stations, national charities, specific academies of health and general NHS accounts as stated by the UK1:

UK1 - But what we also try to do is anything in the media the comes out which is not quite from our consultants, will also get pushed out as well because it's got sort of a more consumer lifestyle approach, rather than a doctor saying fact one, fact two, fact three sort of thing.

A total of 9 responses were about media sources, with the majority of 6 responses were from the US suggested that using an outside media is an option but not the preferred choice of source in the message creation process.

Celebrities is another source that has been mentioned by managers and was considered by the majority of 27 out of 34 interviews as not an adequate source.

UK 7 - For us, celebrities is not at all what we are looking for. It's not appropriate. As a national institution, we have a job to serve patients, and that's a whole of the UK. Yet there is perhaps in other parts of the NHS, broadly politically celebrities to support the NHS. But for NHS (facility name), which is very much a specific part about running the operations of the NHS and that would not be appropriate for us.

The most responses from all 34 managers about what is considered a credible source for SM message creation were professionals including doctors and staff, which totalled 26 confirming responses, and messages from patients themselves totalling 22 confirming responses.

5.2.3 Trustworthiness

Having asked why and how trustworthiness is positively related to the increase sharing of SM eWOM from followers, 23 out of the 34 managers explained that it is because of their two-way interaction and communication with their followers. Another effective cause of why followers consider a message as being trustworthy is based on the prior reputation of the facility:

- Interactively communicating
- Reputation

The emerging categories regarding the trustworthiness theme are summarised in Figure 14.

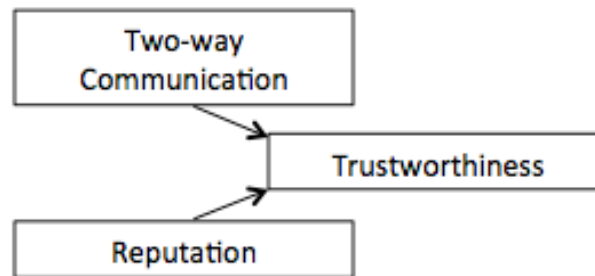


Figure 14. Linking Categories Trustworthiness

Responses from managers UK1, UK16 and UK17 present how interactively communicating with their followers increased trustworthiness:

UK1 - Yes definitely. All businesses have their ups and downs, and for example, when we get a negative response, we are always quick to rectify the situation that is happened and try to remedy them and how we can produce a better patient experience. And obviously, it is in the public domain so you would think eWOM is potentially second to none in this new technological world now.

And always trying to get the best patient experience as possible. I think that does have a relative effect on customer attitude and behaviour.

UK16 - Yeah, we try to as much as possible. If we are getting someone tweeting asking a question, we will tweet them back on the same day to answer his or her questions. Or if we get someone saying that they have had good care here then will re-tweet them back saying oh thanks very much, we'll share that with the person that they mentioned in the tweet. Or if we get a complaint or anything like that, then we will send them the tweet back, saying can you contact our complaints department so that it is properly followed up. (Okay, so those types of activities have been increasing trustworthiness for you)? Yeah.

UK17 - Yeah, yeah, of course, we speak back to them, for sure. That's the whole point of it. It's a two-way thing. Um, but for example, today somebody tweeted about how he or she had a great experience. So we said oh we'd really like to hear it. And also people complained about waiting times and things like that or if they can't get through. So we'll respond you know and try and see what we can do to help. And that's the dynamic I'd say more than anything. Please give me advice on whatever treatment that's happening. (And do you think that increases trustworthiness and positive attitude reacting like that)? Yeah, no, definitely, we've had quite a few people tweet us saying thank you very much, we like the social media feed for helping us because we've helped people book appointments and if they can't get through. Because I can appreciate the frustration with the Trust and the switchboard, appointment lines can get very busy too.

Responses from 13 managers in the UK in respects to establishing trustworthiness indicated that interaction with followers was a primary cause. From the US, 10 out of 14 managers affirmed that interactivity with their followers on their SM pages has also increasingly built up trustworthiness. Here are some supporting statements provided by US27 and US28:

US27 - Sure, I think that the real power and it's no secret, I think everyone knows this, but the real benefit and the real power of social media is the two-way communication. Organisations like ours, we are in a great position to spread a lot of information, but also it is important that we interact with our audiences. If people are Tweeting to us, that we Tweet back, or we re-Tweet, or we comment on the Facebook post, or we respond to any complaints to patients who haven't had a good experience. You know it's not a one-way communication, it's not a broadcast media, it's real interaction that I think that you could really build a valuable community of people who feel a part of your organisation.

US28 - I think the biggest way to build trust and continue a relationship is by monitoring and responding. And so we aim to monitor, we aim to respond to comments that come into our platforms within a few hours at most. We try to respond to everything within twenty-four hours, and we have a team. There is one person who is dedicated during business hours, and then the team of four or five of us rotate throughout the month who are on for an hour or two in the evenings and on the weekends. A lot of really positive comments and a lot of really positive feedback have been from us being so responsive. And whether that's providing them with the best phone number to contact us, or a resource on our website, or directing them somewhere else. You know that's one of the ways I think is very important and it's allowed us to be trustworthy, and it's allowed us to be authentic.

The responses include creating interactive messages by asking questions to get followers involvement, quickly reply to comments and complaints either privately or publicly and create the sense that someone is listening to followers concerns and problems. By adding these dynamic interactions in managing SM pages, the message becomes valuable and is considered trustworthy. However, it is noted that medical advice could not be provided online through SM due to regulations. Therefore the interaction is based more from a customer service perspective.

Furthermore, the prior reputation of organisations beyond that of their current Internet presence is another element that is considered to generate trustworthiness from followers. An illustration is presented here by UK3 and US27:

UK3 - I think obviously having established hospitals, we are kind of already halfway through that process. It takes a lot to try and establish yourself as a trusted source on the Internet. Anybody can be shouting from the rooftops. What we have going for us is the backing of (facility name) as the world largest healthcare corporation. But also the names of the actual hospitals that we have to carry their own weight as well. People are aware of the kind of treatment they would be expecting if they go to somewhere like (facility name) or even (facility name). It's synonymous to what they would expect in terms of treatment and using those names it carries a lot of weight when posting out or when actually trying to send out healthcare messages in terms of the services we provide, that in itself is a huge factor when it comes to actually being established and a trusted source. I think the establishment is key. Anyone can have a presence on the Internet, but I think you would need to have had a presence offline in order to have influence online.

US27 - I think our audience can trust that this is coming from (facility name) this is an academic medical centre that conducts research. You know we've got a solid reputation. So we can actually be in a position to kind of have that authority. I think that largely we are very lucky to have a really, really good reputation built over two centuries of existence. So people can trust us as an academic medical centre. They know that we're physicians, we're scientist, we're nurses. So most of it is that the reputation is certainly from those that came before have built, but that those her today are kind of really good stewards of.

Out of the 34 interviews, only 6 responses from the UK and 4 from the US acknowledged prior facility reputation as a minor reason for messages to be considered trustworthy by their followers.

5.2.4 Argument Quality

The questions concerning argument quality of the message pertained to the over topic of the content and mainly the written text of the message, separate from characteristics of source, trustworthiness and other SM messaging features. From the interviews, managers indicated several main categories that emerged during the interview:

- Fact-based educational information
- Patient stories
- Tone friendly light-hearted and simple
- Community updates
- Short in length

The emerging categories regarding the argument quality theme are summarised in Figure 15.

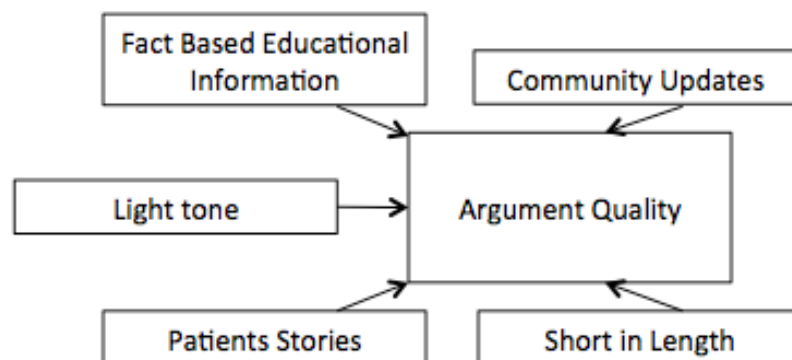


Figure 15. Linking Categories to Argument Quality

According to argument quality, a message that contains fact-based educational information is the most effective towards engagement and eWOM sharing. The number of responses that acknowledged this category as meaningful totalled 24 out of the 34 managers, with corresponding responses of 12 each from both the UK and US. The following are some responses from UK5 and UK7:

UK5 - Facts really, it has to be facts, health-driven, nothing private, not endorsing products or anything like that. Just really keeping in the brand guidelines for the NHS. So it's just following the necessary protocols. Just having the facts in place there backing up your source, I think that's the most crucial bit to everything. Just being credible is having the facts to back it up. I think they've gained trust in that.

UK7 - One of the objectives we have with everything is that we put it out to be curating an authoritative voice, a trusted voice. And that means that we are factually based on our content. Our place is to tell a story and to provide the facts and let other people have the conversations around it. So we do that by ensuring that the information we are putting out is incredibly clear and we try and keep our content very factual to build the trust among our followers knowing our information that we are putting out is verified, is high in quality and can be trusted.

Managers US28, US29 and US33 also agree that writing about factual educational information in their SM posts is influential:

US28 - Um so, the tone that we take we definitely want to be authentic. We want to be educational, backed in research in some way if we can. But at the same time, we also want it to be easy for the consumer to understand, because we are writing to the consumer, versus a doctor.

US29 - The tone we set is definitely community feel, its definitely more educational tone. Um, I just think it's posting quality content that everyone can, the everyday consumer can really benefit from and not only that just like educational things like health education and you know patient stories have really done really well. People really love to show patients stories so.

US33 - The third is more focused on education, so that is where a lot of our blog content falls in too. So our blog has its own content sections that maybe like healthy living, fitness type of information. Within that, we actually talk about our research. That's where a lot of our research content is.

The category of factual educational information in argument quality is related to and in line with the source credibility of the messages being fact-based and from real people. The way the message is written and the topic subjects they cover are also related to the increase in the trustworthiness of the eWOM message through the theme of argument quality. Some other statements regarding information being fact-based in argument quality are claimed to steer away from invalidated opinions, and things that could not be checked and confirmed.

Patient stories are found to be of significance as well. The findings revealed that authentic stories from patients are most influential towards changing attitude and increasing the amount of SM eWOM sharing. The validating responses of this theme total 21 responses, with 15 responses from the UK and 6 from the US. Manager UK10 describes the value of sharing patient stories on their SM pages:

UK10 - So very popular is when patients themselves send messages saying, generally we do get some negative results we do try to respond to, but generally it's about we've had really good care and thank you so much and what a wonderful story. I think it's the emotional stories generally it's more from patients because staff wouldn't do this because it's against patient confidentiality. But for example this was actually on Facebook last week, there was a patient

who had wonderful care, and the doctor was terribly understanding and sort of drawing pictures with us to sort of try and calm him down. And so she posted about this, which is sort of a lovely story, which goes really well. So I think it's very much the sort of, the emotional sort of stories from patients, which tend to be very well received.

Manager UK12 additionally explained and supported that messages with pictures alone are not enough to encourage engagement. Therefore the message needs to have an ingredient of authenticity such as a storyline from the actual patient. Moreover, UK14 states that a combination of beautiful pictures and heartfelt patient stories are the most effective:

UK12 - we always find that people like people and they like to see pictures of people. They like to hear about people's lives and their stories. Um if we just post a picture with just like a poster or something of something, it doesn't get very much engagement. Um, and if you post a picture of some people, whether patients or nurses or just porters or staff or anybody, it doesn't generate more engagement. People do like to see photos and smiling faces, but they also like to read about other people's stories and other people's lives. It needs to be quite short.

UK14 – Um, I think... a lot of it, or best sort of reactions shall I say, have come from sharing patient stories, especially ones that are accompanied by images. So they perhaps get the most attention. So, for instance, we have a lady who's daughter was treated for a burn, and she took a beautiful photograph and sort of messaged her thanks. And sharing that, the interaction that we got was incredible. A lot of human interest and I think that makes it a lot more credible if you got a patient saying something about their treatments, about what they have experienced and seen, but also about their own life situations. So those tend to be the most popular.

Furthermore, other examples provided by UK20 and US24 affirm that patient stories do increase engagement on their hospitals SM platform:

UK20 - Patients stories are usually what attract the most positive attention. That usually gets quite a lot of comments and sharing, generally more than those kinds of health message post. Somebody was saying the mother had great care after the fall and hip operation will get a lot more positive attention than us reminding people to use sunscreen or promoting.

US24 - The thing that people usually share the most are the heart warming stuff, at least on Facebook. You know a heart warming patient story. Things that are going on within the hospital, especially with, I mean we do a lot of things with the (inaudible) tiny babies. Like they get Halloween costumes that people make for them, that volunteers make for them. So stuff like that. People are really interested in sharing when there are those sorts of heart warming stories.

Responses from US33 and US34 likewise are aligned with those from the UK signifying that authenticity in messages from patients is most successful:

US33 - Yeah definitely that is some of our most popular content is we do talk a lot about our patients and try to highlight their stories. Typically they are very positive stories, but sometimes the stories will include some of the struggles of how they got to being in recovery or being healthy. So that is one of our main content themes that we share. Things like that definitely bring a lot of credibility even when we are sharing the message or when it's coming from the patient and their experience. (More than from a doctor?) It kind of depends; I think it is an apple to apples, and it kind of depends on what the content is if I had to compare patient stories to a blog post about healthy food swaps, something like that. Even though it's coming from an expert, the patient stories would probably win out from an engagement stand perspective.

US34 - And I also think that when we can add a kind of the human aspect to our stories no matter where we post, that's kind of the most important thing. So even if we are talking about research, putting a name and a face to the research is incredibly important.

Both responses from the UK and the US agreed that authentic and heart warming patient stories is some of the most impactful posts towards changing attitude and increase eWOM sharing.

Writing in a light hearted, friendly type tone was also identified to be persuasive and essential by 19 out of 34 managers, 11 from the UK and 8 from the US. Here is one of the best illustrations from manager UK7 and US21:

UK7 - We are beginning to be a trusted source of information, unfortunately, I think previously our tone has not reflected that. So we would have a very cold, very corporate and be very technical because we really wanted to make sure that we were explaining everything and being transparent. What that actually did was it showed that people didn't really understand, didn't feel that we were giving information sort of relevant to them. And a bit bamboozled by all the technical jargon and language. And what we've done is we've fundamentally changed our tone of voice. And our point when we are writing a tweet is to be friendly, approachable and accurate. So yes the accuracy of the link we are putting out or the publication of course is the most important thing. But making sure people understand the relevance of that content and the so what factor, really comes down to writing it in a way that is not daunting or seen as being quite cold. It's about trying to say to people, hey, and you might find this interesting. So it's a bit of a fine line, we don't want to be too colloquial with it, because of course, we've got a reputation as an institution to uphold.

US21 - When it is technical, and your patient has not been to school in over forty years, they are like what does this word mean? When they like to try to really study it, you lose your audience the more technical you get, and you just have to keep it very efficiently communicated where people are able to understand what you are saying.

UK7 and US23 further emphasised on the tone in the message that it should be friendly, light-hearted and casual and not be too technical:

UK7 - One of the things is the tone of voice is usually important. For me, I am an advocate for the tone of voice. It seems to be quite different from our tone of voice we use elsewhere, particularly on our website. To be friendly and approachable and use accessible language has been very positive for us.

US23 - I think with healthcare, in general, the language is very technical and clinical, but what we are trying to do on social media is really have more of a conversation. So we try to stick to certain conditions, it's just a much more user friendly language that anybody can understand. It's a little bit more of a casual tone then you would obviously find in your doctor's office.

Apart from a light tone of writing and patient stories being the most pertinent categories in argument quality, other relevant responses were in regards to messages being community-related. These responses concluded that posting messages about activities in the community and in the facilities, such as updates on emergencies, services or events around the city were beneficial. However, these types of posts about community only had a minor effect on increasing sharing and engagement as explained by manager UK18:

UK18 - Also if it's a development which effects a local community, you know people living in that area might see it then they'll share it with there friends.

You know for example if there is an application from someone wanting to open a pharmacy within a community that might attract a wee bit of interest. It's something the effects people. That's what tends to be an example. But I think these sites have a value if there was ever a major situation or emergency. We would be able to get the message posted quickly from our phones. We don't even need to be using the computer. And we can let them know, and those messages will spread. And a couple of years ago there were serious floods in the (city name) shire. And all hours of the day there were updates going out, so we were able to put messages out for public health messages about water supplies, and we were able to do that very quickly because the message was picked up by our partners, so they liked it and shared it, so it helped spread the message very quickly. We get to do stuff like that on the website, but it's a lot quicker getting out on social media.

Responses from US27, US30 and US33 gave further explanations of what community related posts might contain:

US27 - I think that especially you know, and it's a much longer conversation, but if there's ever a disaster like a (city name) (event name) bombing, we can actually provide information about what's happening at the hospital directly to our audiences, and we are essentially the horses mouth when it comes to information about ourselves. But then if you also think of us as a hospital taking care of patients, if there is a crisis or a disaster or something going on in the city of (city name) in which we are involved or are taking care of people. We can provide news and informative updates via social media that do extremely well, something even as simple as providing an informational update on operations during a major blizzard or something like that. People, I think like social media because again, you're not receiving messages filtered by someone else. You hear right from the institution. So sometimes those real time news updates that we can give out, people really engage with those because social has become not just social, but it's a source for news.

US30 - If we see something that might resonant with our audience, which is only based in (city name), then we will share that as well although it is not very frequent. I would say something that has to do with a very popular (city name) event or place. Comic-con is an example. It's an annual event. It's the largest comic convention, and it takes place here every summer. So we do try and piggyback on the excitement around that event on social media in particular by posting something may be relevant to a healthcare perspective or how to enjoy the event safely. We're the closest urgent care or ER if you get into trouble while you're there. So I think that is a type of content that we might share.

US33 - And our fourth bucket would be our community. So that's where we talk a lot about our community events that we have going on or ways that our experts or staff, in general, are involved in the community and how we are trying to kind of make the greater (city name) better overall.

Approximately half of the responses from managers had remarked the minor significance of posting about their communities.

Other responses on the topic of argument quality were in relation to the message needing to be short in length. The total number of responses about message length is 19, with 9 from the UK and 10 from the US. UK3 and UK4 describes the importance of this category:

UK3 - It needs to be short. In social media, your timeline disappears within a minute, minute and a half. It needs to be quick it needs to be snappy.

UK4 - If it's too long the people will switch off. If the language is too dense using acronyms and things like that, people will switch off and not read it. If it's easy to engage with if the language is simple and if it's simple, something that people can scroll past and take in in a few seconds that is what it is about.

Responses from managers US22 and US25 further elaborated upon the effectiveness of shorter messages:

US22 - I am less, people are not reading, they are using their smartphone, we need to get with that. I mean look sometimes I feel pressure to write more, but from a marketing standpoint, absolutely not. I think in one sentence you can deliver that message as efficiently and effectively.

US25 - I think shorter is more effective. I think today people don't read. I think a shorter message, and then you can have them click thru to more information if they want more information. People have no attention span.

The responses predominantly stated that shorter messages are more effective because Twitter limits the number of texts per post. Additionally, people invest little time in reading unless they are interested, or if they do not understand the language.

Other codes of humour and politics did surface as message topics when asked about argument quality, but the results were not substantial enough to be considered as categories. The majority of managers suggested that using pricing or marketing promotional tactics for their services did not produce any positive engagement or increase of any eWOM sharing in their SM communications.

5.2.5 Videos

The interview answers for why videos are effective in positively changing attitude and increasing eWOM sharing behaviour varied. There were 21 managers that suggested videos are an effective tool, but 18 managers explained that there are negative aspects and difficulties of using videos in SM eWOM messages. Some

of the main categories discovered about use of videos in SM posts are highlighted as:

- Videos being authentic
- Video production is difficult
- Videos must be short

The emerging categories that influence the videos theme are summarised in Figure 16.

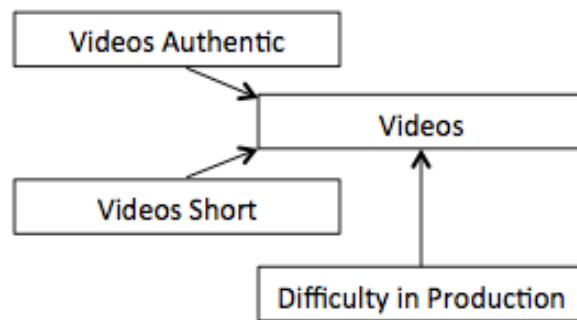


Figure 16. Linking Categories to Video

A depiction of how incorporating videos in SM eWOM is beneficial is described by UK19 AND UK4:

UK19 - I think the video has been the most effective. Video has been working very well. It's like a thousand of views, people kind of engage with it. So it is very good. I think it's just like you actually see what's going on. What's happening here, what people are talking about? It's actually trustworthy. But obviously, I think that videos with a title are more impactful because without a title it's not effective as a video with a title. But I actually think it shows a lot because people like seeing moving pictures. But they like to see the text as well, and that will really help. Without a title, I think a video just loses its impact.

UK4 - We create video content and do lots of photographs. We try to have the video content presented by nurses and so forth as supposed to people in suits and managerial people. These things tend to do better as it's boosting the crowd. But I think the stuff that makes the biggest impact is the video stuff. The practical use as opposed to a photograph where you can have an interview with quotes and then a photograph, or you can actually see the person saying it, and you can connect with their body language, and you can see actually where you are going to be giving birth. You can see the site you are actually going to witness when you come into the hospital. It's just an extension of familiarity that people can engage with and buy into it, video, definitely video. Demonstrating some of the good work that is going on is a lot more effective than saying theirs good work going on.

Video imagery provides more tangible visual effects and delivers more authenticity and trustworthiness than pictures. Here are some positive examples of video usage by the US22, US29, US30 and US33:

US22 - Oh my gosh hands down photos and videos, videos probably more, although they require more from us. For us to share a video, however scrappy a video you put together, it's still a lot of work, but they get the most play, more shares, more reactions, more impressions, more than the photos.

US29 - Certainly videos and photos, social media has become very, very visual friendly. And you know when your scrolling through your phone, it's easier to watch a thirty second video or see a photo than you know if you see a post with a link and you have to click the link, and it opens up a new page. So a lot of people have been reacting more to photos and videos. (Which ones more)? I would say videos more than photos.

US30 - We've also done a lot of videos, you know not just photography but a lot of videos as well as showing patient stories and peoples real life

experiences within our facilities. I think across the board, I think not only are we experiencing this but everything you read about social media right now, the video is what's drawing people in. There is the highest engagement with video. So we are developing our resources to learn more about video production, editing and shooting. We have purchased some equipment to be able to shoot better and edit. So we are investing in the video right now. Definitely those authentic, real non-stock photos do really well as well and that those certainly when out, both of those things, more so video, but both of those things over text and links.

US33 - Um, the video definitely, and it's getting more popular. We are starting to share more live video. Um, on Facebook at least, and we just find that it's easier to, more compelling to show more video type of content than blog content. So we are kind of testing to see from an engagement perspective are we able to get the same amount of information out here in a video format, as we are a blog. I say we share more of blog content, more linked content right now, but we are trying to put more focus on video. (More than pictures) Oh yeah definitely, we don't really share just static images anymore, it's either linking to a blog or video content. Sometimes we'll do an album of photos, and get them just specifically on Facebook, an album of photos if it's like a wrap up for an event.

Video creates a sense of authenticity beyond that of images and receives more engagement and sharing than photos, thus it generates greater trustworthiness in the message. Of the 21 responses, 9 from the UK and 12 from the US agreed that using videos is effective in increasing engagement and eWOM sharing. In comparison, the US managers rely heavily on the application and use videos more often than with UK managers.

Managers from both countries expressed that videos are valid, but somehow they are difficult to process and produce. The causes were due to lack of funding, experience and technical skills to produce a good quality video in house.

Managers UK20 and US22 provided the more rationale for not using videos on their SM pages:

UK20 - Um, videos are fairly effective. We are still kind of learning I would say. We are not, it's not something we do a lot of, although we are working towards using it more, because we recognise it as being pretty effective, and again we know that a Facebook post or a Twitter post that has a striking image with it will generally attract more attention and be more effective from one that doesn't.

US22 - So videos yeah, the thing with videos is while it's great and we are getting a lot of bang for our buck, it's a lot of work. I don't care if I do a really quick video, that's a lot of work! We have to validate every single thing. We don't just turn our phone on. It's not as simple as sharing a video on Snapchat with your friends, and you don't care. I mean yeah, there's a certain level of yes I want to look good, but from a marketing perspective you need to look at absolutely everything, from what's behind you, to what's on the side, to what patient information is possibly on the television screen ten miles away that we can't see. And it really slows us down, but it is part of the responsibility we have as marketing professionals.

Feedback from US23 further highlighted the lack of resources as a cause for videos being challenging to use and produce:

US23 - Um, well videos are very successful. We don't always have the resources to have a video every week or everyday, so it tends to get pushed out a little more rare.

Of the 18 negative responses regarding video usage, 15 managers, 11 from the UK and 4 from the US, stated that although the use of videos is essential and effective, it is difficult to create because of lack of investment and skills to

produce high-quality videos. Furthermore, managers UK1, UK19, UK3 and US34 additionally advise that another characteristics of using videos is that they need to be short in length.

UK1 - We use a range. We've used videos, boomerang, pictures, web links and I find a lot of them work. We have to bear in mind that especially with Twitter, especially with Facebook, people have little time, so the videos need to be short and snappy, they can't take ages to download, people are always swiping, especially with mobile use right now, your thumbs are always going a million miles an hour.

UK19 - it's just quick short about thirty seconds maximum. We don't want to have a very long video. The maximum longest video we do is like two and a half minutes. So we try to keep it to about thirty seconds to three minutes. It won't go further beyond that.

UK3 - I've had several other facilities also tell me the same thing that the video was just too time-consuming for some people on their mobile phones.

US34 - Um, so the type of content that is most effective is anything with video. And it's short, and it's sweet, and you know easy to digest. Um, the other thing we see a lot of really good stuff with is when we have success stories. So and again those are typically more visual.

This finding, however, is similarly in line with the argument quality theme indicating that textual posts should be short in length in order to capture engagement. The findings described that SM followers scroll through SM very fast and spend a little amount of time on either reading or watching something that they may not be entirely interested in.

5.2.6 Pictures

The posting of images is said to be influential for increasing SM eWOM sharing, as expressed by 20 managers, 12 from the UK and 8 from the US. The emerging categories are related to characteristics of pictures of being emotional, real and authentic. Images had to not be stock photos, meet a certain quality to attract attention and in every post, using an image was a requirement to increase engagement.

- Emotional Authentic Pictures
- Relevant Vivid Pictures
- Must Use Pictures

The emerging categories associated with the pictures theme are summarised in Figure 17.

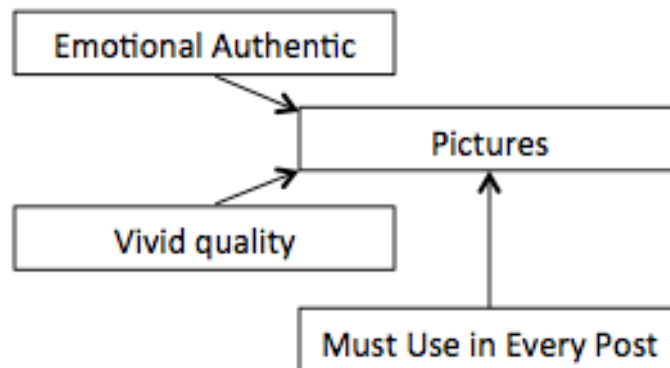


Figure 17. Linking Categories to Pictures

Manager UK3, UK5, US24 and US30 illustrate how emotional and authentic pictures are compelling:

UK3 - Definitely pictures. You will get more interaction and more engagement with pictures, closely followed by the video. I was just looking at a piece of research right before you called from Twitter itself. It is saying that 35%

of tweets get more engagement if they have a photo and a URL (web link). So that is a huge increase compared to those that just have hash tags or nothing at all. I think it is more interaction. I think people have an emotional connection with what they see. If it connects with them, they are highly likely to share it. Whereas pictures you see if you have that emotional connection if it does relate to you, that's where you hit the jackpot. That's where you'll start to share it.

UK5 - Photos, because it is visible start away. So web links you sort of have to click into them. People on Facebook and stuff, you'll know as well as anyone, you are attracted first by a photo or something like that. You are not going to just click on a link. So yeah, it sort of grabs the attention of someone.

US24 - If we are just trying to get a person talking about a heart warming story or something cool that's going on here then in that case photos usually work really well. If we can tell the story really short and all we need is the photo and a short little blurb, then photos perform really well too.

US30 - Not using stock photos is very helpful for us to show the more human side of healthcare. We show a lot of our caregivers from physicians to nurses to you know, physical therapy, are security people. We put a human face to our organisation, and that has paid off for us in terms of positive engagement and feedback from our users on social media. So I think that's one thing that you can do to create that more positive and human messages to share authentic visuals. Definitely those authentic, real non-stock photos do really well as well, both of those things, more so than video, but both of those things over text and links.

Pictures do not only have to be authentic, relevant to the audience and not be generic stock images, but they have to be of high quality and vivid as characterised by US22:

US22 - A few months ago our cafeteria at our hospital did a remodel, and it looked really nice. I didn't think that much of it, but then we took a few photographs, and then I remember contemplating that this sounds really stupid to post, like photos of our remodelled cafeteria. I'm like I don't know if I want to do it, people probably don't even care it's just a cafeteria. So I went against what my gut was telling me, and I ended up posting a little collage. Oh my goodness, people went nuts! And I was like what, that cafeteria? I mean it's beautiful, but it's not cafeteria Apple you know. It was a series of photos, and there was nobody in the photos, which is another thing I like to do, is to use a photo with people in it. This one didn't even have people. It was just the chairs and the environment. They were beautiful shots, but it ended up being one of our top posts in a series of months.

Some pictures may not contain actual human beings but still be relevant through the vividness and the high quality or beauty of the picture, which can be as effective. Many of the responses stated that pictures are a component in the message that is a must-have requirement and necessary to insert in every post. Managers UK17, US22 and US25 reinforce this concept:

UK17 - Every tweet I say has to go out with an image because you can just look at the analytics, it speaks for itself that photos are the best content on whatever it is, on whatever platform, it doesn't have to be twitter, so we also do that.

US22 - Photos are awesome too. Anytime we post a photo on Instagram or Facebook, the minute you post a photo people are looking at it, no matter how lousy the content is. I just have a general real of thumb. If there is no picture, then it didn't happen. And I try to communicate that with other people as well, because they will go to an event and say that was an incredible event and XYZ and that's great, but if you don't have a picture, then it didn't happen. I met the president awesome, where is your picture? Don't you have one? It didn't happen.

And the same goes with healthcare. It's the same thing. You need a photo. It doesn't matter necessarily. There isn't quite an emphasis on the quality of the photo, as there is you are saying something like you met the president, let me see the photo, even if the photo isn't beautiful, it doesn't matter, as long as there is a photo. Obviously, you want a better photo. I don't like to post unless I have a photo.

US25 - Oh we always put a picture, we never go without a picture, unless we have to. Unless we are desperate, so I would agree with that as well. Yeah, we always use photos with social. I say photos because you are talking specifically about social efforts.

5.2.7 Web Links

The sharing of web links is another feature in SM that can influence attitude and behaviour. By creating messages with web links, SM managers can add another dimension to the message. The use of web links in the message can drive followers to the actual facility website, allowing for more media exposure and information to be consumed. Two categories were emerged in relation to web link use:

- Web links increase traffic,
- Web links provide additional information.

The emerging categories connected with the web links theme are summarised in Figure 18.

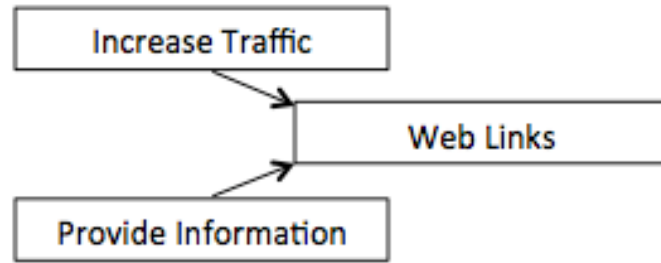


Figure 18. Linking Categories to Web Links

Responses from 16 managers, 11 from the UK and 5 from the US, made comments regarding the use of web links generating traffic to their facilities original website and provide additional information for their followers. Some of these remarks here are from managers UK11, UK13, UK15 and US24:

UK11 - We will also try and post a link to the official (facility name) website as well. So you know they can read more about this news on our website, and we'll put a link. So we kind of think that helps give it a bit more kind of authenticity.

UK13 - We never just do text. So I guess, and we always link back to our website. We tend just to use our website because you know we want to drive people there rather than any other website.

UK15 - If we are writing a good news story, a press release that we send out to local media, what we'll do is part of that process is we'll put a link to that from our website onto social media.

US24 - I think that also depends on what the objective is. You know if we are, obviously trying to drive traffic or something, the link is going to be more effective than something that doesn't have a link. If we are trying to share more information that can be shared in a post, then again the link is the way to go.

Some more examples of web links providing additional information is referred to by UK3 and US25:

UK3 - There needs to be little more behind it. There needs to be hard evidence to say that this actually works and we have the best consultant and we have the best equipment and this is why. And this then links to the websites as we use the websites quite a lot to showcase that information through case studies and evidence based information. And obviously, all the social media text that you would get would be linking out to all of those platforms.

US25 - Yeah we do. We post a lot of articles and wellness information that link to the website. And we try to post things that are of good value to them, not sales. So yes I think web links are helpful and part of our goal.

The purpose for the use of web links as explained by SM managers are to provide another multimedia feature in the message, as well as to promote their website and provide additional information.

5.2.8 Volume and Timing

During the early stages of this research after several interviews, a new and unexpected theme had organically emerged from the responses. The categories of volume and timing had become initially noteworthy from a few unplanned responses. After the responses started to accumulate and the theme began to resonant throughout the first interviews, the remaining managers were asked the question pertaining to volume and time. The theme of volume is defined as a post being used repeatedly more than once due to previous success or thru campaign necessity, or not using the same post content because of redundancy

and lack of interest. Timing refers to the specific time of day a message is posted.

- Volume – use of new content
- Timing – specific timing of post

The emerging categories aligned with the volume and timing theme are shown here in Figure 19.

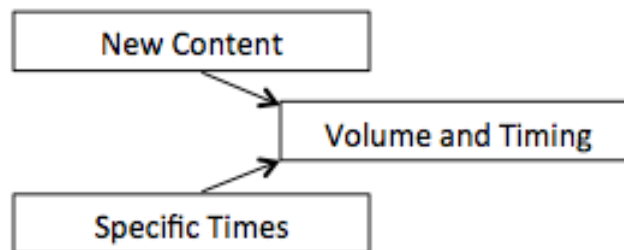


Figure 19. Linking Categories to Volume and Timing

The findings spontaneously emerged when manager UK3 was asked at the end of the interview if there were anything else the participant would like to add. Manager UK3 brought to light a new factor concerning the volume and timing of the message being posted. Unexpectedly, manager UK3 provided this enlightening response about the timing of a post:

UK3 - I don't have any questions, but in terms of that last point, we also have to take into account what else is going on around us. In terms of what's influencing them as individuals, world events are always going to have an impact. I mean social media now is so quick and so instantaneous that people are more in tune to what's going on around them. They tune into social media to see what's going on. It's now become the go to platform for first hand information. I mean how many times have you seen sort of pictures and videos of what's happening even before the press has got a hold of anything or even the site. You

know it's a major, major influence for these individuals and we have to be aware of what's going on as well because ultimately their attitude as to what's going on will also play a factor into what messages we can sort of send out. We have to be aware of what's going on so that we can contain our messages accordingly, to the time right down to the minute. It all depends, if something happens, I generally tend to tweet or send something out between five or six in the evening, that sort of downtime where I am hoping to get the individual on their way home. If anything happens during that time, or even a few hours before, there's no point. They are not going to tune in to me. They are going to be elsewhere. They are going to be focused on what's going on, and the message is already lost.

The interview further inquired manager UK3 by asking “so time does make a difference then?” and manager UK3 responded by saying:

UK3 - Time and I would say what's going in their world, not so much world events, but what's going on in there world. If something happens for them that has a big influence, then there's no point. Then you save the messages for another time.

From this point on, the theme of time and volume of posts were considered as influential factors that may affect attitude and behaviour towards SM eWOM. The remaining interviews of 21 managers were then asked the same questions, giving there was enough time during the interview, if timing and volume of the post and the numbers of times they posted a specific message cause any effect. Out of the 22 total responses from managers, 19 responses were concerning time, and 17 were concerning volume of post.

Here is a reply from manager UK9 after being asked if the timing of a post matters:

UK9 - Yes definitely. It makes more sense to post in the evening really, and on the weekend, rather than in the day just because everybody else is really at work or busy, or doing something. We do post in the day, but when we know, we got something really important to share we do look to either duplicate or wait until an evening and post them out. Because it kind of makes sense, you know there's more activity when people are at home. When they've got more time to sort of sit down and digest and look at their phones or computers and say probably after say four o'clock at the earliest, is probably the best time to post something.

Manager US29 further provides reason to why the correct timing of a post is essential:

US29 - Yeah absolutely, every platform we post differently. On Facebook, we'll post once a day around midday between eleven and one o'clock eastern time. And on Twitter, we post about eight times a day, and we do it on popular times say during the rush hour morning where people are commuting, when they are most likely on their phone, during their lunch break so between eleven and one and then again during rush hour at the end of the day and about one tweet or two before bedtime.

All of the 19 manager descriptions referencing importance of timing, with 11 being from the UK and 8 from the US, commented about proper timing of a post, which indicates that the selection of time is a crucial element for a successful post. The majority of managers did state that the best time to post was in the evenings. However, not all managers agreed on the same specific times, but all have confirmed that they considered the posting time based on when their followers would be most free to engage with their SM content.

The questions about timing lead to further inquiry as to if the volume of the post made any difference. The responses from 17 managers, with 10 from the UK and

7 from the US, described that the volume of a post or the amount of times a specific post gets used was found to have an effect on their followers. Manager UK17 describes the appropriate timing for using the same post more than once:

UK17 - As in repeat content, we try not to in regards to content because you know that's not that engaging really, the same thing over and over again. We try and have new stuff everyday or stuff that's relevant to people. We might reuse something if it's a campaign or something that happened a year ago or whatever. But we wouldn't just repeat something every week. We try and mix it up.

The repeatedly use of a specific post becomes useful for campaigns that regularly occur or on an annual basis. Apart from those types of informative announcements, reusing a post many times was not recommended by all of the managers, unless it is something exceptionally successful and had a large amount of previous engagement. Even then, successful posts are only reused at the maximum of one or two times. Managers US31 and US33 explain the details in their decision making:

US31 - But we don't send the same post out twice. We will just post it once. (Why is that, why not repost it)? That's interesting. We just haven't considered that, it just seems a little redundant. If you are scrolling thru our feed, you'll see the same post over and over. I would think that would get a little annoying if you just see the same post you know over and over. So that's not something that we generally do. If we see a post that's getting engagement that's doing okay, we'll occasionally boost post, but you know we won't repeat them.

US33 - Yeah so we do repeat content only if we find that post is performing really well and we're getting a lot of clicks of engagement on the platform then we will re-share it. It might not be that same day, but within that week we will re-share it. And it also depends on the times of some of the post. So if it's in the news for the week, then we will share it a couple of time that day. But

we are always accessing on a monthly basis. We look back on what content performs the best maybe the month prior, and then we look to re-share that the following month as long as it's still relevant.

5.2.9 Attitude

All of the findings presented in this chapter are meaningful reasons as to why certain categories and themes are persuasive in SM eWOM communications. All of the 34 managers being interviewed revealed that they were able to gauge their followers' attitude through their supervision and overseeing of their facilities SM newsfeeds. The research questions of each theme asked reasons why particular factors positively change attitude and increase SM eWOM sharing behaviour. The findings from managers' narratives have explained the most influential and effective themes that positively change attitude and behaviour from their own personal experiences. Managers UK12 and US30 express some examples on their capability of gauging attitude:

UK12 - Exactly yeah, we can kind of gage what people think about us through the messages, and we can get an understanding of what kind of things are going to go down really well, so we know that pictures of new born babies go down very well. Everybody likes pictures of babies, and we have a helipad as well. People like pictures of helicopters (laughing). So you know things that get people talking and get people really engaged and kind of what generates a positive response.

US30 - Yes, as far as sentiment we are tracking all of our posts, all of our responses to post, as far as positive and negative sentiment. And we are rolling out all of that feedback into a voice of the customer report that we then distribute to leader across our entire system. And we are able to measure sentiment over time.

Through the analysis of all responses from all participant interviews, the themes of professional source credibility, patient stories in argument quality and two-way interaction were found to be the most influential towards SM eWOM sharing behaviour.

5.2.10 Behaviour

The actual behaviour dimension is an attempt to determine two types of possible behaviour. The first is positive attitude leading to the behaviour of SM followers increasing the sharing of the original SM message, thus causing eWOM. The second type of behaviour is to identify if the managers can produce SM messages that lead to their SM followers coming into their facilities and actually using the services. The findings revealed that it was only possible for managers to determine through SM metrics where SM users shared a specific type of messages through their networks, thus increasing the amount of eWOM being communicated. Nonetheless, the majority of the managers revealed that there was no current metric or technology that is capable of linking their SM communications to SM followers coming in and using the services. Determining whether or not SM eWOM led to SM followers actually using the hospitals' services was not clear and unachievable.

All managers in this research stated that they were able to determine the amount of activity, engagement and message sharing being performed by their followers on their SM newsfeeds through SM metrics and statistical measurements. Manager UK3 further establishes this point through this statement:

UK3 - Yeah we can, and we do. So on the Twitter platform we can see which post has had the most engagement. We can see who the biggest influencer is for that month. And we can place together all of the influencers we

have, and we can directly target them as well. You know we find out what their interest is. Finding out what week they decided to start following us on. We can break it right down and be highly, highly targeted with our messaging. So going on our social media, was that message we put out there about knee surgery consistent and was it to the point and did it have a picture I like, for instance for me to click through. They are all going to influence that person's attitude and if they had a good experience getting through these messages and getting through these points of contact, then they will have a positive attitude. And their attitude will have a greater influence as to whether they will be recommending us or even coming to us in the first place.

This statement by manager UK3 establishes that linking attitude to eWOM sharing behaviour is possible through reviewing SM activity and statistics of their followers. Manager US22 provides another example, signifying that the amount of SM eWOM sharing could be determined:

US22 - We've never had somebody question our post or the message of it. And we see a lot when we people share a post because it's a sense of I validate this, so therefore I'm sharing this. We are not just looking at likes anymore, to me that is not a metric of success, a metric of success is almost more like sharing, sharing means I validate this as being true so therefore I am sharing this, so when I see something that's being shared, I'll give you an example. We partnered with a non-profit organisation to create a video of some star wars characters coming to the facility to visit paediatric patients. So there was this whole video that went with it. It was super cool, innovative, fresh and people loved it. Yes, you are attaching star wars, which is automatically going to give your likes up. Then you are watching staff at a hospital interacting with star wars characters introducing them to healthcare and then there are kids involved. Then we saw a tremendous amount of shares without even doing any sort of boosting. It just organically happened. When you see people sharing that kind of stuff, they are saying hey this is cool. I am okay with this I am going to share it.

Out of the 34 interviews, there were no genuine responses that suggested or validated the use of SM leading to people coming in and using the hospital services. There was also no evidence or statistical measurement that can conclude and link the usage behaviour to have occurred from managers SM communications, unlike the measurements for sharing behaviour and sentiment. Manager US34 renders this to be the case here:

US34 - Um, I don't think so, at least for us it's a metric that's not there yet. I know it's something we are working on. But I think it's a hard question to kind of answer because there are a lot of different things at play. So you know I think that would be a great metric that we would love to have, but it's kind of challenging right now to see the follow through kind of like where did you, why did you choose us.

5.2.11 Comparative Analysis of Findings

A comparative analysis of the findings from the UK and the US both revealed that Facebook was the most effective SM platform for healthcare organisation, especially for US managers. The Facebook platform had greater capability in performing interactive functions that lead to increased engagement. Interactive two-communications was also found to be an important factor in increasing engagement. Some SM managers from the UK revealed that Twitter was their preferred platform of choice due to the platform being fast and easy to use. Although, 21 of 34 managers from both UK and US did agree that Facebook was the most effective platform by having less limits on text communications and content creation abilities.

In regards to source credibility, both sets of managers did agree that messages from professional doctors, staff and actual patient were the most effective.

Managers stated that the message content needed to be from a real person with a real SM account and contain fact-based information. Messages from outside media sources or from the facilities managerial executives were deemed to not be effective from both UK and US responses. Managerial executives who are professional were perceived by SM users as being less competent than doctors, this maybe due to the assumption that executives underlying intentions could be driven by financial outcomes instead of altruistic motives.

Both UK and US managers agreed that interactive two-way communication and engaging in conversation with their followers lead to the increased level of trustworthiness from their SM users. Creating message content that asked questions that got users involved and by replying to comments and complaints provided users with a sense that the organisations were listening and were concerned about them. Prior user knowledge of the organisations reputation was found by both sets of SM managers to have minimal effect towards increased trustworthiness and was not considered as significant as interaction with their users.

In terms of the actual written text and argument quality of the messages, apart from pictures, videos and other interactive SM features, managers from both the UK and US found again that the information had to be fact based and from authentic people. The writing style and subject topics also affected the amount of message engagement, noting that messages needed to be written in a light hearted tone, be friendly in nature, contain less opinion and less statements that could not be verified or checked. Written content such as patient stories were also found to increase engagement from both sets of managers. Content containing pictures alone were not as influential, but also needed an aspect of authenticity from the actual patients themselves, such as heartfelt stories. Furthermore, managers from the UK and US both agreed that the messages need to be short in length, due to users investing little time in reading some SM post and lack of understanding complex language unless they were very interested.

When asked about the effectiveness of SM video content, manager responses from the UK and US exhibited a difference in results. Out of the 34 interviews, 9 UK and 12 US managers agreed that videos were effective because the content delivered greater visual effects and genuineness and achieved a greater amount of sharing creating more SM eWOM than pictures. Alternatively, there were 18 negative responses from SM managers, with the majority of 11 being from the UK. The issue with video usage for UK managers was that the production process was very difficult. Professional high quality video creation is costly to produce and their facilities lacked the experience and proper technical skills needed to create, edit and produce such content. Issues of video production difficulties were also expressed by only 4 of the US managers, possibly suggesting that the privatisation of US healthcare allow for more funding for hospital marketing activities. Both sets of managers did confirm that video content needed to be short in length and that they are essential towards increasing SM eWOM sharing.

The use of pictures was also determined to be influential for increasing SM eWOM sharing. A total of 20 manager responses, 12 UK and 8 US, indicated that picture are a must have in every SM post, if not with a video. Managers also suggested that pictures needed to express emotion, contain vividness and not be stock images. Pictures did not have to always contain images of actual people, but had to be high in quality, whatever the image topic. The remain manager responses about picture use were neutral, acknowledging that their use of pictures neither increased engagement or sharing activity. This maybe due to the types of picture these managers used, how they managed their SM feeds or other factors within the content of the message. Similarly, the response about use of web links demonstrated minimal significance in their usage. Of the 16 responses, 11 UK and 5 US managers described web links as being effective for generating more traffic to their facilities original website and providing more information for their users.

Through the interview process, new findings emerged outside of the original set of questions revealing that the volume and timing of the SM post was significant toward increasing engagement and sharing activity. Both sets of managers 11 from the UK and 8 from the US indicated that the specific timing a SM post was imperative to the success of the post. The exact times were dependent on each specific organisations needs, but were considered before any SM content was posted on their platforms.

Responses from 17 of the managers, 10 from the UK and 7 from the US further detailed that the volume of a single post was also relevant. Managers suggested that the use of the same post multiple times can be effective for campaigns that occur regularly, but do not recommend using a post multiple times if it is not successful, as this can seem repetitive and redundant for SM users. Both sets of managers further indicted that they rarely use the same post more than one or two times.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the qualitative findings of this research. The first part of this chapter provided the demographic profile of UK and US managers, as well as their organisations SM newsfeeds to provide the context and foundation of this research. The following section presented the emerging categories from the thematic analysis, that were relevant to the themes of source credibility, trustworthiness, argument quality, videos, picture, and web links. These themes were found to be significant in changing SM users attitude and behaviour towards SM eWOM communications. Other influencing factors, codes and categories emerging from the interview data related to themes were also displayed. A comparison of differences in the findings from the UK and the US

were acknowledged throughout the presentation of each specific theme. The following chapter details the discussions of these findings.

**CHAPTER 6:
DISCUSSION**

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review, examine and discuss the categories and themes that exist within the findings. A comparison of why one particular SM platform is more effective than another is presented. Additionally, the themes of source credibility, trustworthiness, argument quality, video, pictures, and web links are analysed in-depth and compared in both locations to determine how and why they influence attitudes and increases eWOM sharing behaviours of SM users. The discussions confirm and highlight the discoveries and results of the research. A finalised version of the SMCM is also presented and explained. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the discussions presented.

6.2 Discussion of Qualitative Results

This research endeavoured to determine how and why certain types of SM messages are effective in creating positive attitude and increase SM eWOM sharing behaviour in the healthcare industry. The capabilities of SM have been known to be a successful communication tool that allows for building of meaningful relationships between users (Lacoste, 2016). These types of meaningful messages being communicated between SM users in terms of products and services have been defined as the new form of word of mouth, being eWOM (Wang, et al., 2015).

Through the evaluation of SM eWOM, users of SM can obtain valuable information about goods and services (Dijkmans, et al., 2014). This evaluation of eWOM information by SM users can define the success or failure of a business. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine how and why certain SM messages are more effective than others. Therefore, the SMCM has been development through the review of existing literature and the combination of two theories, being the ELM (Petty and Cappicio, 1986) and the TRA (Ajzen and

Fishbein, 1980) along with additional factors related to the eWOM subject area. The SMCM has been applied to investigate the SM eWOM phenomenon and answer the research questions presented.

The results reveal that all of the themes not only confirmed previous results in the literature, but added additional insight into what significantly impacts attitude and sharing behaviour of SM users. Beyond what is effective, this research has gone further and discovered in-depth and detailed new reasoning for why and how the themes and factors in the previous studies affect SM users attitude and behaviour. The reasons and additional insights were presented, discussed and compared in detail.

6.2.1 Effectiveness of SM Platforms

The research began with determining which SM platform is considered the most successful for healthcare SM managers to get their SM followers to share eWOM messages. Of these SM platforms, Facebook and Twitter are considered to be popular (Tseng, et al., 2014) and the messages shared through the Facebook platform are one of the most influential in directing consumer behaviour (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015). The findings from this research exhibited that 21 of the 34 managers agreed that Facebook is their preferred SM platform, with 11 positive responses from the UK and 10 from the US.

Twitter was the second most used platform by SM managers because the platform is limited in capability and text character allowance. Although, some UK managers consider Twitter as a faster and more reactive platform, the platform does lack usefulness and reach. On the contrary, Facebook, from the managerial perspective, allows users to create more interactive content with greater text allowance, with greater picture and video capabilities. The engagement level and the number of users commenting, sharing and interactively engaging is

higher on the Facebook platform. Managers from both locations suggested that Facebook allows for easier two communications that led to their SM followers having greater positive attitudes and increased sharing behaviour.

In such environments as the healthcare service industry, where the product being offered to consumers is essentially intangible, the importance of gaining product knowledge and reading honest opinions and review information about these types of services has more implications and relevance than for those of tangible products. The significance and importance of providing trustable, reliable and believable marketing information through the correct SM channel is essential to the success or failure of attaining and retaining consumers brand loyalty to an organisation. The Facebook SM platform has been found to be able to provide these utilitarian types of service product information messages through eWOM. These conclusions are based on the findings of this research. On the other hand, the Twitter platform, although still useful, was described as being utilised for reading news, updating information and providing managers with some interactive capabilities. The results confirm previous findings from Yang, et al. (2015), Fulgoni and Lipsman (2015) and Pew Research Center (2018) that Facebook is the most effective SM platform.

6.2.2 Effectiveness of Source Credibility and Expertise

The next enquiry addressed why source credibility and expertise positively affect attitude and increase SM eWOM sharing from SM user. The results from the findings exhibited that the level of source credibility did have a positive effect on attitude and sharing behaviour in both the UK and the US, confirming findings from studies by Gunawan and Huarng (2015) and Reichelt, et al. (2014).

Going beyond confirming previous studies, this research offers additional insight as to the reasons why source credibility affects attitude and behaviour. This is

apparent from the interview data. Why a particular source was considered to be believable was depending on the amount of authenticity of the source. If the source was a real person from the facility they planned to visit and whether they were real staff or doctors of that facility, or if their background was considered as an expert through the information of previous research or education levels provided in the SM post. This does confirm finding from Fang (2014) and Tsao and Hsieh (2015) that experts are considered a very credible source. However, the interview findings of this research further present the reasons why and how a source or expert is considered credible by SM followers and users through the sources being real people, authentic, factual, research-based and educated.

Furthermore this relates to other industries as well, in terms of the marketing communications containing real people that work for or actually represent that particular organisation, instead of paid for actors or fabricated advertisements. The source of the SM message should include real authentic people that can communicate and interact with the SM users, building increased trust in the SM message, thus generating further SM eWOM sharing.

Other influential factors beyond being real professional or expert sources were discovered to be content from patient stories. These stories are not considered as originating from an expert or professional source, but the patient themselves

The authentic patient stories contained stories from people that have previously used the facilities services. This creates an emotional link with the SM follower who sees the post, whether by empathising and associating themselves to the situation or by relating to the circumstances. The patients were described to be more authentic and create a personal connection with SM followers. These types of post as described by SM managers created more engagement and eWOM sharing with their followers. The patient stories contained a high level of authenticity, emotion, and provide proof that the services were reliable, although,

the receiver of the message may not have previously known the actual identity these patients.

In addition, this finding can be compared to such content as informational product review messages. Product review messages whether by video or text, provide the message receiver with a certain amount of perceptible details about the product or services without actually being in physical contact with the product. Moreover, before purchasing the product or using the services, the information from another person who is not paid to advertise and uses the service such as a real patient, increase trustworthiness of the service and the facility.

In relation to other industries, these types of authentic people or stories can originate from real tourists who purchased a holiday package, content from people who actually purchased and driven a particular vehicle, or real passengers who travelled on a specific airline. These are just some examples of how these findings can be useful in other industries. However, this research did anticipate that recommendations from family and friends were difficult to evaluate due to the data being gathered from SM managers and not directly from the consumers themselves. But these new findings do corroborate with results from Lopez, and Sicilia (2014) that trusted and accepted eWOM information may not always have to originate from an expert or known source of information. The new findings reveal that authentic real emotional stories may also increase trustworthiness, leading to positive attitude change and behaviour.

6.2.3 Effectiveness of Trustworthiness

The themes of trustworthiness and source credibility are similar and can complement each other. SM messages originating from a specific source does increase trustworthiness of the message, although, from the findings of this research, trustworthiness can originate from other factors and themes outside of

the source being credible. This is in line with results from Teng, et al. (2014) clarifying that the source of a message is not the only factor that can influence trustworthiness and that trustworthiness can stem from other compelling qualities within the message. So the next question addresses this void by asking if there were other explanations as to why trustworthiness was positively related to attitude change and eWOM sharing behaviour.

The findings from both UK and US managers revealed two-way communication with SM users as one of the factors why trustworthiness increased. Managers' demonstrated this by providing customer service and interacting with SM users via their facilities SM newsfeeds. Being attentive, replying to SM users concerns, expediently answering questions and replying to comments and post were all found to be successful. These were the main causes of why trustworthiness increased positive attitudes and eWOM sharing behaviour, through interactive two-way communication. This also confirms the previous results by Lacoste (2016) that interaction between employees and customers via SM has a positive effect on consumers trust.

Reputation was also found to be a minor influential theme and cue in creating trust. Managers described that their facilities previous and existing reputation was a secondary factor in getting their followers to share their messages. The reputation category consisted of the facilities prior established history of successful operation, the current reputation and excellent treatment that they provide. This is a factor that facilities need to build or sustain prior to their SM communications producing any greater increase in trust.

Again, these findings reflect how being attentive to consumers concerns through responsive and attentive customer service instils a sense that the organisation cares for each of their consumers. This is similar to quickly replying to emails, answers customer helplines, not putting people on hold for long periods and making sure consumers' issues are never ignored. These activities can now be

performed with greater vigilance and proficiency through the techniques provided from SM communications.

6.2.4 Effectiveness of Argument Quality

Argument quality was one of the themes that consisted of categories and cues relating to the topic and subject of the message itself. Argument quality in persuasive messages contains significant parts of information that affect attitude (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). This theme referred to the writing style of the SM messages and what the message was trying to convey. The research asked why argument quality positively influences attitude and eWOM sharing behaviour. The data found significant categories of patient stories, the writing length having to be short, simple and light-hearted in tone and that information needed to be fact-based and educational. Post about community updates were also notable. These findings resonated from both UK and US managers.

Stories about patients were again found to be meaningful in this theme. This category produces an emotional connection with the message receiver as the receiver can associate with and personally relate with the individual story message. The category generates human interest, authenticity and real-life situations that are understandable to the message receiver. These types of stories may differ from the category in source credibility because the stories being part of the argument quality may not be coming from the patient but from another source, nonetheless, they are still considered as valid and influential. Furthermore, these stories provide a type of service product review that is a reflection of the healthcare they have received, thus providing first hand knowledge about the quality of service, the friendliness of employees, how the organisation treats their consumers and gives insight for the consumer from a non biased honest point of view.

The message length and tone was additionally found to have strong implications. Messages needed to be short and written in a friendly tone to trigger a response leading to message exposure and click through. This was due to SM users spending a minimal amount of time reading a single post, but more time scrolling through their news feeds. Any type of message that was too long in length was determined to have less engagement and was viewed less by SM followers. This reflects how SM users consume rapid amounts of information while using SM, thus messages that are not appealing in nature are more likely to be ignored.

Complicated and highly technical healthcare jargon similarly caused SM users to pay less attention to the post and was considered to be non-effective. People do not tend to understand complicated medical terms that are too technical. The written content in the message needed to be written with understandable vocabulary, inviting conversation and interaction. These types of messages, asking questions written in a friendly tone was found to be most effective. SM users are drawn to SM for the interactive capabilities the platforms offer. This allows user to comment about, express their feelings, opinions and creates a place where they can have a voice and be heard. SM managers can benefit from these occurrences by designing messages that are inviting, welcoming and responsive to consumers needs.

Written information needed to be fact based as well. The messages needed to show some evidence that it was based on some form of previous research and was actually factual before the message could be adopted and shared by the SM user. This was demonstrated through the postings having external links and additional content based on previous study and research. Sensitive service or credence goods such as healthcare treatment require a greater level of certainty in evaluation than that of tangible, material convenience search goods. Therefore, messages about these types of credence goods need to be based on reliable data because the level of quality is difficult to evaluate before consumption.

Another minor theme that was deemed to be effective was providing relevant up to date information about the community. SM managers shared this type of information because the messages contain real-life value through necessity and shows concern for the SM followers' welfare. It is a practice that demonstrates the willingness from the healthcare organisation to help another person in need and shows that the organisation cares about the community around them. These types of message post may be less effective than patient stories due to community updates possibly originating from other sources within the SM users newsfeed, but are still found to be useful.

These findings do reflect the underlying notion that the argument quality theme is a factor in gaining trust and that it is one of the most influential influencers for SM users to adopt eWOM information (Fang, 2014). This research goes beyond confirming previous findings by adding additional insight by explaining how and why argument quality affects attitude and behaviour through the findings discussed. The new reasons of why discovered in this research indicate the minute details in the message creation process, such as being short in length, friendly tone, authentic real-life stories, the information being fact-based and being proactive with updates about what is going on around the community.

6.2.5 Effectiveness of Videos

The next questions asked pertained to why videos were considered effective towards creating a positive attitude and eWOM sharing behaviour. This enquiry is pertinent to a study conducted by Fang (2014), whereas Fang (2014) describes videos, pictures, technology features, web links and visual graphics as effective cues and detractors of attitude change, providing entertainment and stimulation to the SM user. The findings from the managerial interviews of this research did confirm previous studies that videos are effective, but also discovered some

additional conclusions. Although SM messages produced with videos were found to be effective, the interview data from UK managers exposed that videos were difficult to produce. The difficulty was due to a lack of funding spent of production and technical skill to script, record and edit a quality video. Managers from some UK facilities found that their facilities did not want to invest in video production, or where reluctant, due to not fully understanding how to create quality content. Video production also required much work in labour hours, whereas some facilities had not appointed specific duties or departments to address this need in their organisations. Video production was also hampered by ethical consideration of sensitive patient information being recorded.

Of the statements confirming the effectiveness of video use in SM, the results from both UK and US managers indicated that being able to visual see beyond just reading of a text, provided another level of authenticity. Videos deliver voice, body language, accountability and tangible visual effects that other media content such as static stock pictures cannot provide. SM videos in the healthcare industry can convey similar outcomes of videos for product reviews. Allowing for inside access to information about service through visual motion picture, which offers another level of authenticity and reliability.

Again, videos displaying stories of patients, the appearance of the facility of services and educational doctor recommendations were some of the video content that was proved to be effective by SM managers. Additionally, videos were required to be short in length. This reflects the concept in the theme of the writing in argument quality needing to be short in length as well. This is due to the lack of instigating prolonged interest because of limited time and increased exposure from other SM content in a users newsfeed.

6.2.6 Effectiveness of Pictures

This research also sought out to understand how posting pictures on SM affect the message receiver. The SM managers were asked why pictures positively affect attitude and the sharing of eWOM was asked. The majority of the findings from the interviews did demonstrate that posting pictures with every SM message was recommended and proved to be more successful than posts without.

The findings of this research reflect the conclusions from a study of how eWOM quality can influence purchase intention through online reviews by Tsao and Hsieh (2015). The results from the Tsao and Hsieh (2015) study determined that more photos included with an eWOM message generated a more considerable amount of attention and engagement from the message receiver.

Moreover, the data from the managers interviewed in this research went on to provide additional insight by describing why SM followers were affected by the pictures they selected. Their comments advised that the pictures they selected had to be emotional and authentic pictures, not static or stock images. Managers stated that their SM followers had an emotional connection with the right pictures and could relate to the heart-warming stories accompanying the image. The specific pictures that received the most shares expressed an altruistic and human caring component within the message.

Outside of the emotional and human aspect of preferred images, managers further stated that the images they posted had to be of high-quality resolution and be striking images. The prerequisite for the image being posted had to be vivid, beautiful and required a process of evaluation and selection before being posted. Images posted with patient stories or actual members of staff from the facility also did very well regarding engagement, attention, and increased shares by providing a level of realism to the image. Using images was also considered a minimum requirement in every post based on recorded analytics and statistics

that the managers had from operating their SM newsfeeds. Images provided valid proof and evidence that something had occurred, thus creating increase trustworthiness in the SM message.

6.2.7 Effectiveness of Web Links

Another interactive feature within SM is the capability of sharing external web links. These links can allow SM users to access supplementary information about the topic of the SM post. Fang (2014) likewise suggested that messages with external web links do increase the amount of SM users eWOM adoption. This type of information richness in media is also considered a type of cue and personalisation within the SM message that increases engagement and credibility of the message for the receiver (Levy and Gvili, 2015). This lead to asking why web links positively affect attitude and lead to increase sharing of SM eWOM.

The findings from both UK and US managers interviewed did suggest that embedding web links in SM messages did increase click reaction and traffic to the facilities original website. The increased traffic to the SM managers' facility websites allowed for the SM follower to be exposed to more information regarding healthcare services, consultation, physician information, related articles and videos, and other online media. This exposé allows for the level of trustworthiness and credibility in the SM message to increase, thus changing the attitude and increasing eWOM sharing behaviour in the message receiver. The web links provide additional evidence-based information that supports the SM message and allow for a more significant amount of engagement with the SM follower.

These findings do confirm the results from both Fang (2014) and Levy and Gvili (2015) that embedding web links in SM messages do provide information

richness and positively increase the credibility of the message leading to change in attitude and behaviour, but the findings did not provide any additional insight beyond the confirmed findings of previous studies. Moreover, only 16 of the 34 managers interviewed stated that using web links was successful for their post. Many of the managers did disclose that they always place a web link into their SM messages, but less than half of the managers could conclude the practice being successful. This may have been due to the extra time needed to click through, download pages and accessibility issues of mobile phone users mobile. Speed factors and other types of the post within a person SM feed may have been the cause of distraction, a reason why web links did not cause interest or was not explored further by the SM follower.

6.2.8 Effectiveness of Volume and Timing

The original purpose of this research was not to investigate the aspects of the volume and timing of a post. These findings first emerged organically through the managers' responses to unrelated questions. After several interviews, a possible pattern started to appear with the remaining interviews, raising the question if volume and timing had made any significant change in the effectiveness of the SM message with SM users. When the research started to ask questions concerning volume and timing, the results revealed new insights into the theme.

Both sets of Managers explained that they tend not to post the same content multiple times unless the content was an annual event update, regular community update or something similar. Even when posting these types of previously posted content again, managers advised that the content still needed to be altered in some form to prevent redundancy within the SM message. The managers went on to further state that reposting the same content creates boredom and may annoy the SM users if they are exposed to the same message too many times. This created lack of interest and lack of trustworthiness in the

facility by not being creative with the content they posted and thus created lack of engagement in the message, as the content, if reposted does not have the same reaction as new content.

The responses regarding the timing of the SM post brought to light the fact that timing does matter. All of the managers in both the UK and US who had a chance to answer about timing specified that they all selected certain times during the day to post the SM message on their newsfeeds. These results do fall in line with the result from a quantitative study by Chen, et al. (2014) that the volume and timing of a post are predictors of eWOM messaging for Facebook users. Although findings of this research reflect those of Chen, et al. (2014), this research does provide additional insight as to why the timing and volume of the SM post matter towards attitude and eWOM sharing behaviour.

The managers interviewed described that there were only certain times they would post. These times included the afternoon lunch period, after work during peak travel times and in the evenings when their SM followers are most likely to be free to check their SM feeds and process the content they are exposed to. Not all of the managers agreed on specific times but did mention that they had selected times based on when they thought their audience of SM followers would be most likely to process the content. Managers knew that posting SM message at the wrong time leads to less response, engagement and sharing. The SM messages had to be posted when SM followers had free time to read the message. SM managers need to be aware and considerate of the surrounding and actions of their SM followers and be inline with their followers' schedules to correctly gauge the most successful timing of a post.

6.2.9 Attitude Change

This research endeavoured to uncover the reasons why SM eWOM affects attitude and behaviour. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) define attitude as what people think and feel about themselves and the things and others around them. Therefore, the constructs of attitude and behaviour in the conceptual SMCM framework are considered as constructs dependent on the emerging categories and themes of this research. Managers in this research were all asked if they could gauge the attitude and sentiment of their SM followers and why certain attributes in their SM content creation positively related positive attitude change.

All of the managers interviewed stated that their SM users and followers' attitudes could be measured through evaluating, reading and following the reaction to each of their SM post. Through the SM managers' own statistical and analytic capabilities, managers were able to ascertain precisely how many times each message was shared, read, seen or not seen or the amount of engagement each post received. Attitude was determined to be measurable by managers and the predominant themes that effect attitude have been presented in this research. In the TRA model, attitude is furthermore considered a predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

6.2.10 Behavioural Change

This research also asked managers if creating positive attitude increased the amount of eWOM sharing behaviour and if attitude change leads to their SM followers coming in and using their services. The results from a previous study by Liang, et al. (2013) regarding eWOM effectiveness confirmed that attitude is directly related to behaviour in various ways.

When asked if creating a positive attitude through their SM communications had any effect on behaviours, the answers from the managers established there was a link. Creating positive attitudes did directly relate to the increasing of eWOM sharing behaviour of their SM followers. Again this behaviour could be determined through the managers' ability to see the analytics and statistics from the SM newsfeeds they communicate on.

Although referring to the behaviours of SM followers coming in to use the facilities services, this data was not attainable and could not be confirmed by any of the managers. All of the managers indicated that there is currently no system or method to track the effectiveness of their SM communications leading to their followers physically coming through their doors. Only actual SM sharing behaviour could be recorded and confirmed.

The following Table 9. Provides a comparison of the main themes of this research.

Themes	UK Results	US Results	Confirms Previous Findings	Adds New Insight	Literature
Platform	Twitter	Facebook	Yes	Yes	Yang, et al., 2015; Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015
Source Credibility Expertise	Doctors, Staff, Patients	Doctors, Staff, Patients	Yes	Yes	Gunawan and Huarng, 2015; Reichelt, et al., 2014
Trustworthiness	Two Way Communications	Two Way Communications	Yes	No	Teng, et al., 2014; Lacoste, 2016
Argument Quality	Patient Stories, Facts, Tone	Patient Stories, Facts, Tone	Yes	Yes	Fang, 2014
Videos	Difficult Production	Authentic, Short	Yes	Yes	Fang, 2014
Pictures	Vivid, Must Have	Vivid, Must Have	Yes	Yes	Tsao and Hsieh, 2015
Web Links	Added Info, Traffic	Added Info, Traffic	Yes	No	Fang, 2014; Levy and Gvili, 2015
Volume Timing	New Content, Specific Time	New Content, Specific Time	Yes	Yes	Chen, et al., 2014

Table 10. Comparison of Main Themes

6.2.11 Review of Main Findings

A review of the main findings concludes that both UK and US SM managers agree that Facebook was the most effective platform for increasing eWOM. Some managers from the UK also inserted that Twitter was useful for them because of quickness of use, but stated that the platform did not have the interactive abilities and qualities of Facebook. These findings reflect the previous findings from Fulgoni and Lipsman (2015) and Yang, et al. (2015) that Facebook is the most effective SM platform in regards to influencing consumer behaviour.

Results from the source credibility construct brought to light that the message source needs to originate from actual persons related to the organisation, whether doctors, staff or patients themselves and provide factual and expert information. These results from both UK and US SM managers confirm previous results from Gunawan and Huarng (2015) and Reichelt, et al. (2014) that source credibility does influence attitude and behaviour. The results from the managers go on the further add new insight from previous findings of Lopez and Sicilia (2014), recognising that credibility in eWOM can be generated from a non-expert or unknown source. Both sets of managers explained that authentic real emotional stories from patients unknown to the SM user were also very effective towards increasing eWOM engagement. Likewise, increased trustworthiness can also originate from other reasons beyond that of content from a credible source alone. Both UK and US managers agreed that factors such as interactive two-way communications with SM users increased eWOM sharing of their content. This was done through providing customer service through SM, replying to comments of users and answering question publicly or privately on the platforms. This confirms the previous results by Lacoste (2016) that interaction between employees and customers via SM can increase user trust.

From the literature review of research by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), argument quality in persuasive messages was found to have a significant effect on attitude

of the message receiver. Both sets of SM managers in this research confirm those previous findings from Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and added that messages about patients experiences, written in a light hearted tone and being short in length worked best for increasing eWOM sharing on their SM platforms. Fang (2014) also confirms that argument quality is a theme that is a strong influencer of eWOM sharing behaviour.

The previous study from Fang (2014) also addressed the impact of how SM video content can entertain and stimulate consumers and create positive attitude. The findings from SM managers of this research corresponded with the findings from Fang (2014) that utilising video content is effective, but also shed new light into some difficulties of their usage. SM managers from the UK reported that videos were challenging to produce, due to shortage of funding for production and lack of in-house technical skill required to edit high quality content. Additional findings from US managers recognised that although video content does create engagement, that the videos needed to be authentic, be visually appealing and short in length.

The findings of this research regarding usage of pictures concluded that pictures had to portray some kind of emotional connection and had to be real authentic pictures, high resolution in quality and could not be stock images. SM managers from both UK and US indicated that their SM followers exhibited an emotional connection with heart-warming stories with an image. The pictures that received the most engagement were one's containing an altruistic and human caring component. These results reflect previous findings from Tsao and Hsieh (2015) observing that eWOM message received more sharing activity if they included a photo. In addition, the SM managers in this research further clarified what characteristics and specific details within the type of pictures were needed to increase positive attitude and sharing behaviour.

Apart from the effectiveness of pictures, research from Levy and Gvili (2015) described web links as a type of cue personalisation in SM messaging that can also increase engagement and credibility. Fang (2014) likewise proposed that a message containing web links does improve the amount of SM eWOM being shared. Results for the SM managers interviewed in this research highlighted that the application of web links in their SM messages directed user to their facilities home websites, increasing website traffic and provided their users with additional information about their services. The findings again confirm previous results from both Fang (2014) and Levy and Gvili (2015), expressing that the inclusion of web links in SM messages does provide information richness and positively increases the credibility of the message, causing a change in attitude and behaviour of SM users, but the findings did not provide any additional insight beyond the confirmed findings of previous studies.

SM managers were also questioned about the volume and timing of their SM post. The findings from both sets of managers regarding volume concluded that posting the same content more than once or twice was redundant and caused boredom for the their SM followers. Furthermore, both sets of managers expressed that the timing of posting was important and that they always evaluated when the right time of day was before deciding to post their content. The specific times varied depending on the each manager's decision, but they did conclude that the best times were when their SM followers were not busy. These findings reflect those of Chen, et al. (2014) suggesting that the volume and timing of a post are predictors of SM eWOM.

Other business and organisation in the healthcare and service industries can also refer to the discoveries found within this research and apply these concepts towards their own SM activity. Businesses that provide intangible products can gain greater understanding into what specific types of SM content can get their followers to engage with their business and increase exposure. The use of real people who are part of the organisation for SM content creation, instead using of

paid for fabricated adverts can be effective for generating positive attitudes and behaviours of consumers. Using authentic real stories from consumers as content and communicating with and responding through SM messages has also been shown to increase levels of consumer trust. Designing content that carries concern about the users interest and needs and asking users to interact and respond will also generate eWOM about the business or organisation. Content that includes vivid videos that provide information about services and non-stock photos of real people involved with the organisation have also shown to convey a level authenticity and reliability, forming social proof that builds consumer trust. Additionally, being aware of the specific times for posting content was found to be a factor. SM managers stated that posting at the wrong time lead to less engagement and that repeatedly posting the same SM content lead to decreased activity from their followers.

These findings discussed in this section have been used to adapt the finalised SMCM which is present in the next section.

6.3 Finalised Social Media Communication Model (SMCM)

After completing the analysis and discussion of all the results of this research, several new categories within the themes have emerged in relation to the constructs of the original proposed conceptual SMCM framework. The new findings have been added to finalise the SMCM.

The completed SMCM details how each of the categories in the themes are linked back to the underpinning ELM theory. The categories highlighted in red reflect the stronger influential factors of a theme that stimulate higher amounts of message elaboration and adoption. The categories highlighted in blue represent factors that are found to be less effective, but still have an influence on attitude.

Blue highlighted categories represent factors that cause low levels of message elaboration. The final SMCM is presented here in Figure 20 and in Appendix C.

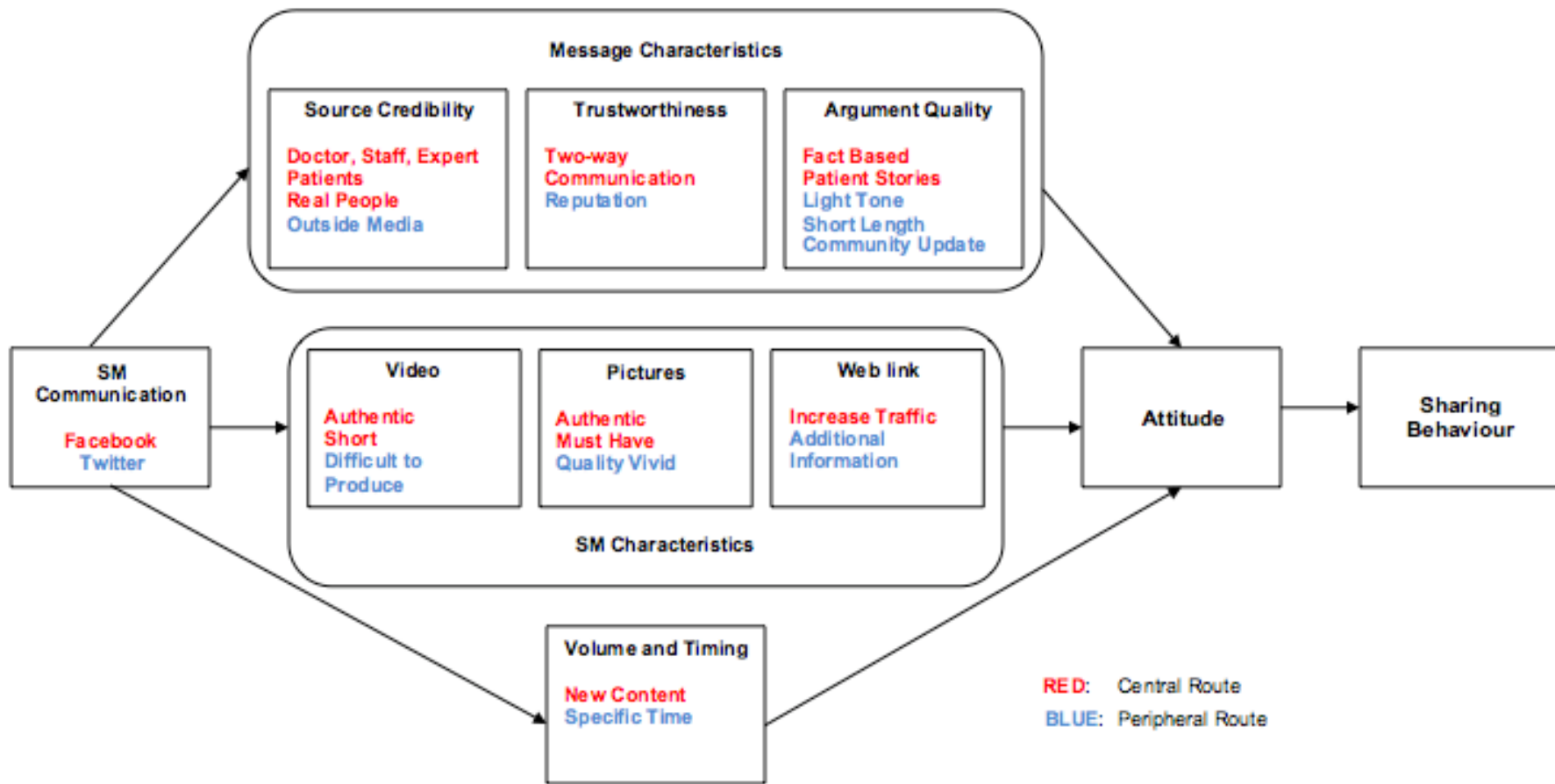


Figure 20. The Finalised Social Media Communication Model (SMCM)

6.4 Conclusion Summary of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the results and findings of the comparative research. The discussions described the significance of each theme as to why and how they generate positive attitudes and sharing behaviours in SM followers. The new findings and themes have surfaced from conducting the research through a qualitative lens. This allowed for the research to first gather primary data through in-depth interviews by applying an inductive approach, focusing on data to form theory. The inductive process also led to the interpretation of the findings that formed the constructs of the new SMCM through thematic analysis. The emerging themes discovered were found to confirm many of the previous findings in the literature, as well as add additional insight beyond what has already been revealed and known about the SM eWOM topic. These discussions further explain how the findings contribute to new knowledge through the confirming and complementing of previous studies. The chapter also outlines the significance of each of the categories in the themes of the final SMCM, providing a framework predictive of consumer behaviour. The next chapter presents the conclusions of this research, the fulfilment of the research objectives, a summary of the findings, practical and theoretical contributions, limitations and suggested future research in the subject.

**CHAPTER 7:
CONCLUSION**

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to conclude the research by giving an overall view of the thesis. The next section of the chapter provides a synopsis of the research aims and objectives and discusses how they have been accomplished. The third section provides a summary of the findings based on the research questions examined. The next section reviews the contributions to this research, both theoretical and practical. The last section covers the limitations of this research, as well as the possible path for future research on the subject.

7.2 Meeting the Research Objectives

The research aims and objectives have been presented previously in Chapter 1. The aims and objective are proposed to outline the intentions of what this research attempted to discover, which was how and why SM communications could positively influence consumer attitude and behaviour of intangible products in the healthcare service industry. How these five research objectives were achieved are discussed as follows.

7.2.1 Objective 1

The first objective of this research was to understand the current status of SM and eWOM. This was conducted by performing an in-depth review of the existing literature on the topic. The literature reviewed subject areas of SM platform capabilities, SM strength and weakness, attributes of eWOM and the interactive features of SM. Additionally, previously philosophical positions and methodological approaches of past studies were also taken into consideration, with the majority of past studies being quantitative in nature. The literature review also provided a greater understanding of the current status of SM eWOM in

various different industries. This provided a foundation for the development of proposed conceptual framework to be developed in order to further investigate the SM eWOM phenomenon in the healthcare industry.

7.2.2 Objective 2

The second objective of this research was to develop a conceptual framework reflecting on past theory that would be fitting for examining the effects of SM eWOM communication on consumers' attitudes and behaviour. The proposed framework coined the SMCM, consisted of factors and constructs derived from the literature review, combined with constructs from the ELM and TRA theories. Many other consumer behaviour and marketing theories beyond the ELM and TRA were also reviewed for the applicability and fit towards the study, but none were found to be relevant for answering the research questions from a qualitative perspective. After the review, the proposed conceptual framework was designed and became the basis of which the research questions were developed for examining the effects of SM eWOM by interviewing SM managers. The framework and research questions are presented in Chapter 3.

After all of the results from the research were analysed, the new themes that emerged were then added to the final SMCM previously presented and described in Chapter 6. The finalised SMCM can be applied for other SM communications studies of a similar nature for the purposes of predicating consumer behaviour.

7.2.3 Objective 3

Objective three aimed to examine all of the factors and constructs presented in the SMCM theoretical framework through in-depth interviews based on the research questions developed. The objective was reached by first presenting the

appropriate methodological approaches and positions of this research that helped guide the research process of gathering, collecting and analysing the data collected. A review of the previous studies on SM and eWOM found that a majority of the studies were conducted in a quantitative manner, being more objective, focusing on statistical correlations and numbers. Few previous studies were subjective and applied in-depth interview techniques and performed a thematic analysis of words. These positions and assumption are explained in detail in chapter four which presented the selected philosophies, approaches, designs and strategies applied in this research.

In Chapter 5, the presentation of the results and findings are displayed. The results were thematically coded and analysed, revealing the significant categories and themes in correspondence to the constructs of the SMCM. The recorded findings from the managers interviewed were then displayed in a narrative form.

7.2.4 Objective 4

The fourth objective was to enhance the current SM and eWOM marketing literature with new findings from the research and add new constructs to the existing conceptual model that can be implemented to predict consumer attitude and behaviour through SM. The new insights provided greater understanding as to how the construct of the SMCM are linked to consumer attitude and behaviour. The findings presented have also been linked to the previous literature reviewed and confirmed the results from previous studies, as well as adding new insight to the subject through the categories and themes that have emerged.

The adapted SMCM, with additional constructs and themes, can be used as a predictor of SM attitude and behaviour. The new additional themes linked to the SMCM were displayed in Chapter 6.

7.2.5 Objective 5

Objective five was aimed at contributing both practically and theoretically to the existing literature on the topic of SM eWOM communication.

Practically, the research provides businesses, organisations and marketing practitioners with a new theoretical guide and model that can be a greater predictor of consumer behaviour. The SMCM provides understanding of what attributes of SM communications can generate increased engagement and positively change attitude and behaviour. Theoretically the research also adds to the existing SM and marketing literature by exploration of the subject from a qualitative lens. By employing methods and techniques different from those previously applied, the research theoretical contributes new knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, objective 5 aimed to provide a basis for future studies to be conducted based on the findings and contributions of this research. The practical and theoretical contributions are presented in Chapter 7, along with considerations and recommendations for future research.

7.3 Summary of Research Findings

The purpose of this research was to determine how and why certain attributes of SM eWOM communications create positive attitudes and increase eWOM sharing behaviour with consumers of healthcare services. Research questions and a conceptual framework were developed in accordance with previous literature and existing theories. The framework and questions were then applied to examine 34 participants, who were high-level SM managers of their facilities. The results and findings of the research questions are presented as follows:

The findings revealed that Facebook was the preferred platform by SM managers in both the UK and the US for content creation and message distribution. This

was found to be that the Facebook platform gave managers more creative capabilities and functions that could improve exposure rates, engagement and increase eWOM sharing. The Twitter platform was found to be the next most effective platform. Managers from the UK preferred to use this platform to those from the US, due to Twitter allowing for quickness and ease of posting essential information. Although, the Twitter platform was found to be limited in capabilities, thus limiting effectiveness. No other SM platforms were found to be effective or significant.

Discovery from the research questions also found that source credibility and expertise did have a positive effect on attitude and behaviour. The most prevailing themes were that of message source being real authentic people that worked in that facility. These expert sources could be professionals such as actual doctors and nurses, but not executives. Messages from actual patients themselves were also determined to be powerful. Patient messages consisted of real stories that created an emotional connection with the message receiver. Both managers in the UK and the US confirmed that these were the most compelling types of message sources. Message from an outside reputable media source was alternatively found to be minimally effective, but not a message source of choice for managers.

The research question addressing the concept of trustworthiness exhibited that managers identified that the most effective themes for creating trustworthiness consisted of being responsive to their SM followers needs and by participating in two-way interactive communications with their followers. This included such activities as posting content that asked questions, encouraged more comments and provided customer service through replying promptly either publicly or privately. The managers from both locations describe this theme as being a predominant reason why their SM followers had increased trustworthiness in their facility. Prior facility reputation was also a marginal reason why

trustworthiness increased, but was not deemed to be as significant as two-way communications.

Several other significant categories emerged from the questions regarding the theme of argument quality. Managers stated that patient stories that developed an emotional and altruistic link with their SM followers were the most effective types of messages. Patient stories also gave their SM users real tangible descriptions and information that reflected the authenticity of the services they provided. Fact-based educational and informative message content was the next message type that was deemed to carry an impact. All of the messages had to be short in length and be written in a light-hearted friendly tone without complicated wording and terms. These findings were determined to be effective in both the UK and the US.

Research questions asking managers if creating SM content with videos were effective found that managers in the US used video content more often in their SM message creation than that of UK managers. Furthermore, the majority of managers in the UK detailed that the use of videos was challenging because of production cost, increased investment of time and lack of quality video production knowledge. Many of the facilities did have the proper department infrastructure to provide in-house video content creation and some of the production had to be outsourced, which was a cause for the lack of video usage. These were all found to be reasons why the use of videos in their SM content was limited. Although managers both in the UK and the US did agree that video content had to be authentic and short in length and that the use of videos were effective when post SM content.

This research also found that pictures in SM post were very effective. Managers explained that pictures had to contain a high level of authenticity. They had to be vivid in quality and that every post should include at least a genuine, realistic picture that stimulated an emotional connection. The findings moreover

concluded that each SM post should always include a picture. The majority of managers from both locations conclude that use of pictures in their SM communications is essential for increasing engagement.

The use of web links in SM post was determined to have minimal effectiveness towards attitude and behaviour. Only two themes arose from the web link use construct. Only half of the response from the UK and less than half of the responses from the US signified that the use of web links were very captivating. Although the findings did discover using web links in SM messages did lead to increased traffic and provided their SM followers more information on their facility websites.

During the process of interviewing, the themes of volume and timing of the SM post organically emerged. The discoveries from managers in both locations determined that each post has to be posted at a specific time that allows for the most exposure and engagement. These times differed from each facility, but managers did conclude that timing was taken into consideration for every post. The post also had to be content that was fresh, relevant and should not be repeat content used more than once unless necessary. The volume of post in terms of the amount of time the same message was posted was another reason that effected attitude and eWOM sharing behaviour. Managers asserted that posting the repeat content multiply times resulted in their SM users not being interested in the content and ended up causing annoyance.

The research questions regarding attitude change determined if attitude was measurable and why the themes and constructs referred to in the SMCM changed their SM followers' attitude. The majority of managers did explain how attitude was measured and confirmed that attitude was measurable through the SM platforms analytics they used. All of the SM managers that participated in this research were able to access sensitive statistical insights such as page views, reach, response rate, amount of new followers and shares through the SM

platforms metrics. These findings from the research are reflected in the themes that affect attitude and have been present in this research.

The last research question determined if positive attitude change was directly linked to increased eWOM sharing behaviour. Responses from managers signified that positive attitude change did increase the behaviour of SM followers sharing more eWOM messages. Although, the results did not link any change in attitude to SM followers coming into their facilities and using their services. This was due to the lack of monitoring capabilities and lead tracing metrics methods from SM that have not been developed yet.

7.4 Theoretical Contributions

Many of the previous researches and studies performed around the topic of SM eWOM have predominantly been quantitative in nature, focusing on numbers and statistical analysis. Therefore, an alternative qualitative approach was chosen for this research. By researching the subject from an alternative subjective perspective and applying interpretive and inductive approaches, the research was able to theoretically contribute to the existing literature in the field of SM eWOM by assume a alternative paradigm to the subject. Through this process and a comprehensive literature review, a conceptual framework was developed by also combining constructs from the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) and the TRA (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) theories. The additional constructs added were relative to SM messaging characteristics and the interactive features and capabilities of SM. This developed the SMCM that was applied for the exploration of this empirical research. The SMCM also theoretically contributes to the research by formulating a new extended theoretical model that can be predictive of consumer behaviour and contribute to the existing academic literature in the field of SM communications. The SMCM can be applied to identify relevant constructs directly related to the current status of SM messaging capabilities and

expand on how these qualities have a cognitive effect on the thinking process and actions of people exposed to SM communications, specifying and emphasising the important relationships of each construct in the SMCM. Chaiken and Eagly (1976) indicated that the different combinations of factors and constructs such as source credibility, trustworthiness and argument quality, mixed with various visual and audial components in a message can have a different impact on the message receiver. This created a need for more investigation into how and why certain SM message qualities affect attitude and behaviour (Teng, et al., 2014). The SMCM examined these constructs in the framework simultaneously and in combination to assert consumer behaviour in the current status of today's SM communications. Additionally, the two routes in the ELM can likewise be applied simultaneously with other attributes of SM to investigate the effects of SM eWOM communications (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006; SanJose-Cabezudo, et al., 2009).

The SMCM also provides a foundation for future empirical research and contributes a guideline for future development of new constructs and theories related to SM. Moreover, the research confirmed quantitative findings of previous SM eWOM studies, as well as academically contributes additional insights from a qualitative perspective. Additionally, this research has also contributed theoretically by adhering to the suggestions of previous studies and fulfilling the gap in the knowledge in the subject topic of SM eWOM through the adapted SMCM.

Many previous studies on the topic of SM eWOM have been based on a quantitative paradigm, thus providing only statistical information in the form of numbers. This research applied a technique of semi-structured in-depth interviews as a method of data collection, thus providing additional theoretical contributions of by utilizing an alternative approach obtaining qualitative data on the topic of SM eWOM that was rich in knowledge, containing information in the form of words and narrative, rather than statistical numbers. This was also

achieved by recruiting SM managers as participants instead of consumers, allowing for greater understanding of the SM eWOM phenomena through the perspective viewpoints of the actual content creators offering another pathway for future SM research. Finally, the research contributes theoretically by comparing the responses of managers from two different locations, being that of the UK and the US to determine any significant difference across the demographics.

7.5 Practical Contributions

Practically, this research contributed by providing greater insight into how SM content can be created to have a more significant impact on attitude, engagement and the sharing behaviour of SM users. This is particularly useful for businesses and managers in the services or credence goods industries that are actively conducting marketing activities through SM. Some of the practical contributions include providing a model for SM content creation that can be a predictor of positive attitude and increased SM eWOM sharing behaviour that is useful for businesses and organisation in the service and credence goods industries. Providing a useful SM model that can explain how to create effective SM marketing campaigns that result in higher consumer trustworthiness, brand loyalty, and ultimately increase the use of their services. Shed light on the comparative differences of SM content creation in two demographic locations with high levels of Internet usage. Finally, providing marketing managers and practitioners in other similar industries with a guideline to designing SM communications that can prevent negative outcomes and avoid undesirable repercussions detrimental to their organisations image and reputation.

7.6 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has provided a significant amount of new data that has contributed both theoretically and practically to the SM eWOM topic. Although there are still some limitations to this research, some issues are addressed here for possible further future research on the topic.

First, this research has adopted a purposeful sampling technique that is appropriate for selecting relevant experts related to the subject being studied. This technique is considered a non-probability sampling technique, thus is limited and may not represent the whole of the population.

Next, this study focuses on consumer behaviour such as posting, comment, liking and sharing messages from the facilities SM platforms being observed by senior SM marketing managers. The managers are the persons who create and distribute the SM content through their networks. Therefore, the activities behind the screen are observed and evaluated. The SM managers can identify consumer attitude and sharing behaviour but may not be able to adequately answer for consumers' actual intention leading to the behaviour. It is worth mentioning that the TRA theory stated that attitude has a link towards intention and lead to the actual behaviour of consumers. However, from this study, it is found that consumer attitude can be a predicator toward actual behaviour, but failed to answer consumer intention from a managerial perspective. Although it was observed that SM users acted in certain ways when exposed to certain types of content, their underlying intention of why they performed such action beyond the reaction from the SM content could not be fully determined.

Finally, another limitation was that only SM managers from hospitals and healthcare facilities were selected to provide information that reflected the credence goods and intangible products in the service industry. Other industries outside of the research have not been investigated. It is not fully known if the

SMCM will provide the same results and outcomes for other businesses marketing through SM in other tangible products industries such as technology, automotive and other related products.

Some suggested opportunities for future research that have resulted from the limitations in this research can be by applying a different sampling technique that can be a more probable representation of the population. Possible future research may also gather data from both SM managers and SM consumers simultaneously to ascertain if intention has any significant relation to behaviour under these specific circumstances. Other types of business and organisation beyond the healthcare service industry can also be researched using the SMCM to determine if the findings from this research are applicable across different industries outside of healthcare, as well as across other demographic locations outside of the UK and US.

As SM platforms continue to rapidly develop and new technologies and capabilities arise, future research can further develop the SMCM by adding new constructs and factors that are relevant to SM at that point in time. The SMCM can also be implemented to study other SM platforms that have not been investigated in this research. As these new unforeseen attributes and capabilities within SM emerge, there will be need and purpose for further investigation into the subject.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter first presented how all of the five aims and objectives set out at the start of the research have been accomplished. Then a summary of the significant findings was then offered to highlight the breakthroughs and new discoveries in the area of SM eWOM marketing communications from both the UK and the US. The theoretical contributions exhibited in this chapter signify the impact of the

new knowledge gained through this research, fulfilling the gaps in the literature of SM eWOM communications. The comparative results offer new practical insight into how and why SM eWOM communications are effective for businesses provide credence goods and operate in the service industries. The results can be a guideline for business and marketing practitioners to successfully manage and operate their SM communications.

Finally, this research contributed academically by developing a new theoretical framework with constructs related to SM communications that is a predictor of consumer behaviour.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Hi,

As per our phone conversation, here is the brief information regarding the research.

My name is Mr. Ratthanava Tivaratchai (Robert), a PhD research student from Brunel University London Business School and I am currently conducting a key comparative study on the topic of:

“Social Media Communications in the Healthcare Industry”

The main focus of the study is to understand how to create more effective social media communications that can increase positive patient attitudes in the healthcare service industry in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

The participants will be senior level managers who are familiar with or responsible for the social media communications of your organisation.

The interview will require approximately 15 minutes of your time at your convenience and can be performed in person or over the phone.

All the information you provide will remain anonymous and be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Brunel University code of ethics and regulations.

All of the analysed findings from the research will be provided to you at no cost.

The information discovered in the research will enhance your organisation by providing new methods of creating more effective social media communications that can improve the positive attitudes and perceptions from your patients.

Please let me know if you are interested, as your participation will also be greatly appreciated and very helpful towards the completion of my PhD.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Ratthanava Tivaratchai (Robert)

PhD Researcher

T +44 (0)74 4566 1541 UK

ratthanava.tivaratchai@brunel.ac.uk

Brunel University London

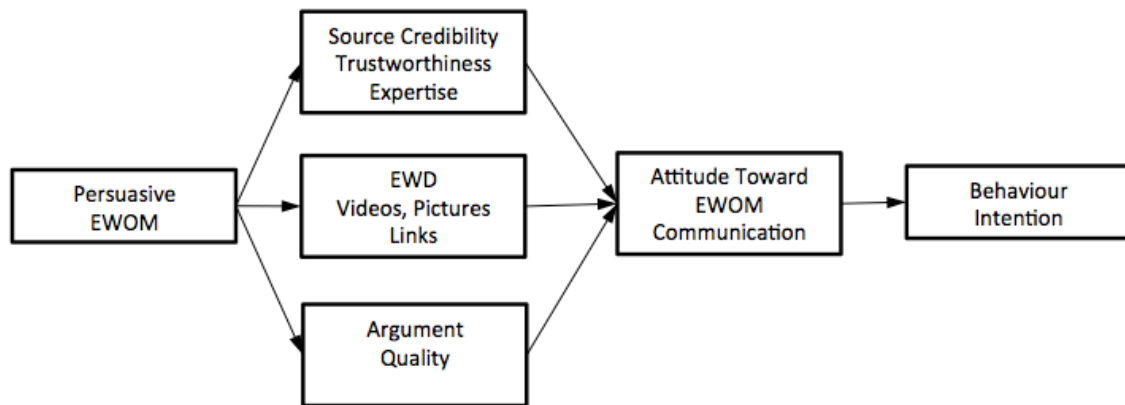
College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Brunel Business School

Eastern Gateway Building, Brunel University London, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom

www.brunel.ac.uk

Social Media Communications Model



Definitions of Constructs

Persuasive EWOM: Electronic word of mouth messages

Source Credibility: How believable, true or factual the message is

Trustworthiness: How trustworthy the message is

Expertise: Level the source is considered an expert in the field

EWD: Electronic window dressing – how pictures, videos, web links and rich information effect the message

Argument Quality: The amount of persuasiveness the actual argument topic of the message has on the reader

Attitude: Individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behaviour

Behaviour: Observable response actual behaviour to situation

Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

General Question about the Company

- What SM platforms do you think are the most effective for your organisation?
- Why is that platform more effective than others?

Trustworthiness –why message is considered believable, valid, true or factual

- What types of content do patients consider as trustworthy?
- Why do patients think that?
- What type of message do you think is not trustworthy?

Credibility – message is from a source that is considered credible

- When you create or share content, what types of different sources have you seen to be effective with your patients?
- Why is one more effective than the other?
- Why do you think patients share these types of messages?
- What types of sources have not been effective?

Expertise – person perceived as knowledgeable, specialist in the field

- What do patients consider as an expert opinion in your content?
- Do patients share this type of content, if so then why?
- What type of content do you think is not an expert source?

Argument Quality – amount of persuasion the text in a message can deliver

- What types of written messages are the most effective?
- Why is one type more effective than the other?
- Why your patients share these types of written messages?
- What type of written messages do you think are not effective?

Electronic Window Dressing – videos, pictures, web-links, rich information

- What interactive features are the most effective in positively influencing patient attitudes and increase eWOM sharing?
- Which ones' are the most influential interactive features in your SM messaging?
- Why do you think it is more effective then the other?

- What type of interactive features and rich information is not effective and why?
- Are there any other interactive features that are influential or effective in getting patient to share eWOM?

Time and Volume

- Do you post at a certain time?
- How many times do you post a certain message?
- Why does that matter?

Attitude – personal belief that behaviour is either positive or negative

- What do you think has a stronger influence on patient positive attitudes and sharing eWOM – source credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, argument quality or the interactive features?
- Is there anything else that may influence attitude and eWOM sharing?

Behaviour to Purchase – observable response of actual behaviour

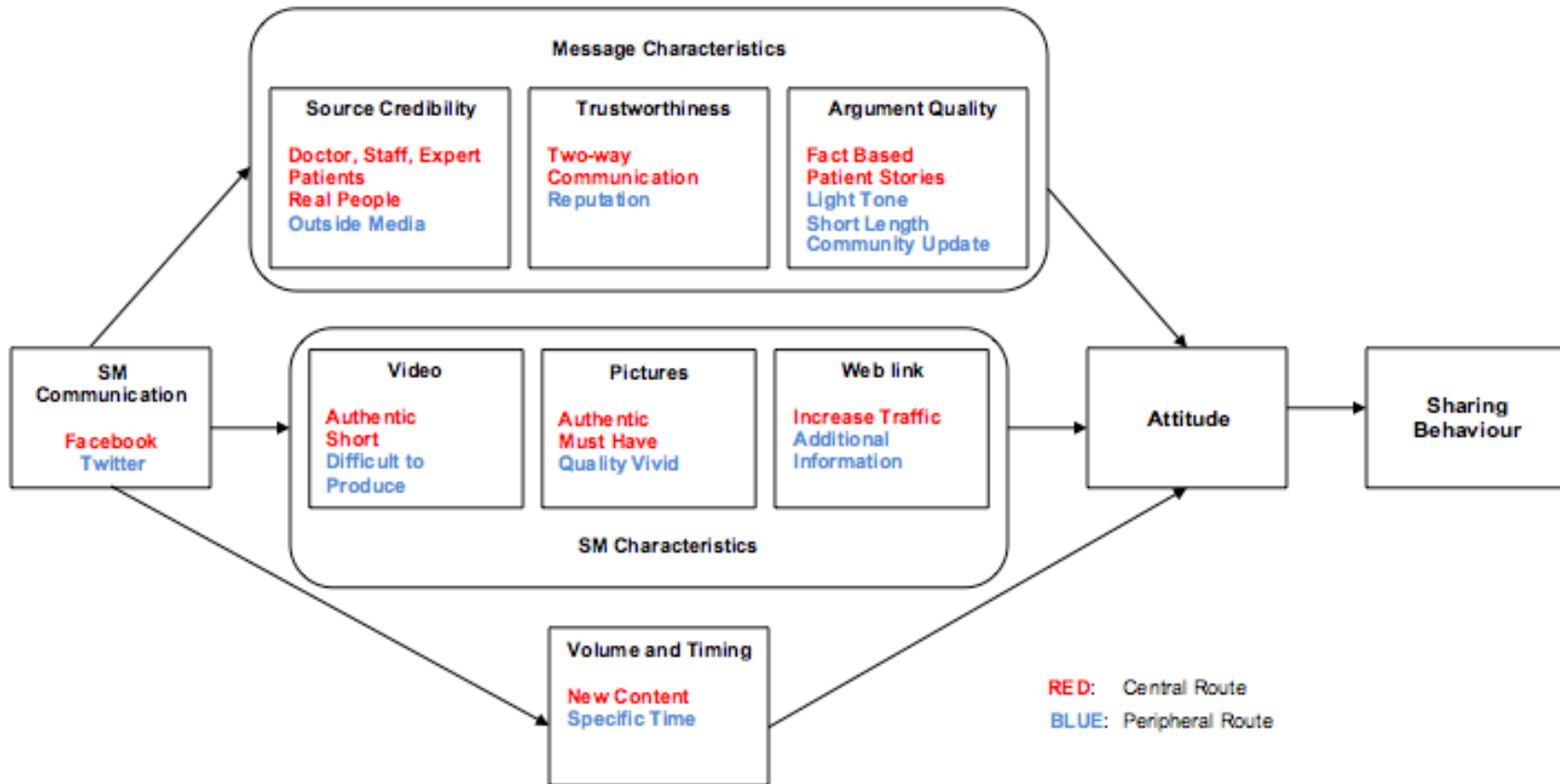
- Do you see your SM communications leading patients to use your services?
- What do you think is the strongest influencer for patient's to use your services?

EWOM – Electronic Word of Mouth

- What do you think is most influential for getting your patients to share your SM messages?
- Is there anything else you would like to add

Thank you for your time and participation

Appendix C



The Finalised Social Media Communication Model (SMCM)