

**EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN B2B MARKETING:
INVESTIGATION OF E-WOM EFFECT IN OIL AND GAS SECTOR IN
QATAR**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Soud Abdulaziz Al-khinji

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, Brunel University London

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work, except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Brunel University or other institutions.

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Abstract

The sweeping and drastic advancement of the Internet are an element touching diverse divisions of business, such as modifications in the marketing sector. The significance of social media communications in the advertising setting cannot go without being noticed. An essential aspect of social media communication, which significantly impacts product promotion and marketing, is electronic word of mouth, which consist of client-to-client communication concerning the brands and products that impacts the purchase decisions of the consumers. Although there exists an extensive investigation about the effects of eWOM in marketing generally, only few studies focus on the influences within the gas and oil industry and even fewer within the gas and oil industry in Qatar. Also, a study by Abitol, A., Meeks, J., and Cummings, R. G, titled "Does Oil and Goodwill Mix?: Examining the Oil and Gas Industry's Impact on Stakeholder Engagement on Facebook" and published in *Environmental Communication* in 2018 showed that the top oil companies, albeit using social media, are inept in effective engagement of stakeholders through the social media platforms. In depth knowledge has been gathered on this particular topic based on the different views of different researchers. Their different views have been discussed on existing relevant and authentic research studies. The research purposes to examine the influence of social media in business to business promotion by conducting an inquiry of eWOM in the gas and oil sector in Qatar. The potential remedies to the adverse impacts of eWOM will also be established. Consequently, the current study will present significant contributions to research as well as the management of the gas and oil sector in Qatar. The study will also provide significant alterations in the management of the oil and gas industry as it offers managers with an in depth understanding of both the merits and demerits of eWOM in the industry. This study mainly used primary sources of data based on the respondents from the Qatar oil and gas industry. The specific methods utilised to collect the data included sampling methods, observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The current study found out that the eWOM strategy promotes the acquisition of new customers as well as brand building. The study also found out that the positive results of eWOM strategy include an increase in brand knowledge and awareness, improved brand trust,

and unwavering brand loyalty. The current research also found out that eWOM strategy affected brand loyalty more than it affected brand knowledge and awareness and brand trust. The findings from this research indicate that marketing teams need to spend much time on social media to promote eWOM with particular attention to achieve marketing goals of improving loyalty, trust, and awareness as well as knowledge of the specific brand a company deals within oil and gas industry. However, because of the limitations of the study, particularly in the geographical coverage, future research should increase the scope of the study by increasing the number of participants derived from other regions so that the outcome of the study can reflect the broader target population. The aims and objectives of the research have been detailed. Six layers of the research onion and the entire details of the research data collection have been included here. Strong knowledge about the different observational processes as well as different data collection techniques. The detailed information about the research participants has been provided. Using the Cronbach Alpha, the reliability and validity of the entire interview sample has been tested. The process of questionnaire development, key measurement parameters and other specifications are included. It emphasized on the discussion of samples, organizations, marketing departments, size of the sample, sampling techniques adopted as well as the procedure through which the samples were recruited. It even provides insight on the control of quality in the data collection process. It establishes the validity and reliability assessment of the obtained data. Further added theoretical evidence in the light of the present findings and highlighted empirical findings dictating B2B and industrial-specific elements in the contribution of social media marketing in Qatar's gas and oil industry.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Marketing has traditionally been aimed at presenting data about an item or product and a company to the consumer from the viewpoint of the specific company. As a result, consumers have only accessed information that the marketers have determined to be essential and relevant to the specific consumer group. The changes in the marketing sector and other technological sectors have, however, led to a shift in the marketing strategies used by firms and consumers (Groeger & Buttle, 2014). The growth of the Internet and digital technologies has introduced a more accessible platform for consumers to seek and find information that they find relevant for themselves (Alaimo, 2014). As a result, consumers have gained more control of the marketing sector and can access and spread information about a product and a firm without the consent of the firm (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). The result is a more versatile marketing environment, which complicates marketing approaches for a firm. A more specific challenge is the social media usage for marketing, which gives consumers more power to seek information and advice on products from other consumers and the company (Groeger & Buttle, 2014). The use of eWOM has, further, enhanced the power available to consumers in gaining information on products from other consumers (Berger, 2014; Chu & Kim, 2011). Consumers can communicate with other consumers and discuss a product or a company without involving the marketing department of the company. Consumers to decide on purchasing a given item use this information or not.

Nevertheless, eWOM can have differing influence on different business sectors. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the use of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry. Specifically, the research will examine the impact of eWOM in the gas and oil sectors in Qatar, which is an area that has been inadequately explored in previous research. The chapter provides background information on eWOM and outlines the gap that the study seeks to fill. Besides, the purpose, goals, and importance of the research are given.

1.2 Background of the Study

There has been an evolution in the understanding and definition of marketing. Kotler (1972) attempted to widen the knowledge of marketing by describing marketing with regard to transaction and value creation which contributes to the attainment of set objectives for the parties involved. Baines, Fill and, Page (2013) also defined marketing as being a management process and activity. The fundamental objective of marketing consists of creating value and meeting the needs of the clients while achieving the organizational goals. Concerning this, organizations engage in marketing with an objective of attaining their set aims, and also satisfying the needs of customers. There is need to take into consideration the worth which organizations aims to establish for their consumers in their marketing activities and processes when coming up with a definition of marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Baines, Fill & Page, 2013).

The conventional marketing approaches consist of utilizing traditional communication channels to relay crucial evidence about brands and products from salespersons to the consumers. Killian and McManus (2015) asserted that the approaches provide business firms and marketers with an opportunity to decide on the information that reaches the potential clients. Armstrong et al. (2015) and Moran, Muzellec & Nolan (2014) explained that the practices employed in marketing involves the utilization of formal approaches which are unidirectional and impersonal, and limit the capability of the consumers to impact product development, or give feedback to organizations or companies.

Business to Business (B2B) marketing process is the way of marketing of services or products to other organizations or businesses (Cortez and Johnston, 2017). There is a basic difference between this B2B and the Business to Customer (B2C) marketing process as it focuses on the marketing of products as well as services to the consumers directly (Boyd and Koles, 2019). There are mainly four types of B2B marketing systems including producers, institutions, governments, and resellers (Cortez and Johnston, 2017). This present research has focused on the B2B marketing process in the context

of the social media marketing system. As a number of research articles have found that a large number of B2B based organizations in different sectors prefer digital marketing process in their businesses and eWOM marketing is one of the most effective social-media based marketing processes, this present research has aimed to know its impact on B2B business with special emphasis on oil and gas industry.

Leite and Azevedo (2017) and Stone and Woodcock (2014) explained that there are notable evolutionary changes in the conventional means of communication that not only affects modes of communication, but also influences marketing styles. According to leeflang et al. (2014), the Internet is the key aspect which energizes the adjustments in the marketing sector. Internet usage is essential in managing information from the dealer, and the organizations to the consumers. Mulhern (2009) explained that digital technology performs a crucial role in promoting communication with the consumers in an attempt to expand the speed at which marketers and consumers can relay info about a variety of merchandises to the clients. Concerning this, market efforts are adjusting to integrate, and focus more in digital marketing and digital technologies than before. Below is a presentation of the penetration and use of social media forums in the U.S.

Social media platform	Frequency of use per day	Individuals with access (percent)
Twitter	5	22
Facebook	8	63
Google plus	2	17
Instagram	6	27
Facebook messenger	3	47

Social media use in the United States. “Source: Chaffey (2016)”

In the present time, the Internet has become one of the most effective ways of communication among people. A large number of people are connected through the Internet and due to this reason, a larger number of business organizations have started online marketing operations. Thus, online marketing has also become a key part of the

B2B marketing system. As the theoretical background, the study of Magno and Cassia (2019), has found that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a type of buzz marketing process that focuses on the person-to-person contact through the Internet. On the basis of this theoretical background, a large number of business organizations in different sectors have started to implement this eWOM marketing process to improve the communication process among customers or clients. Current studies have revealed that in the present era, one of the important elements in the social media based communication process is (eWOM). This process greatly influences the marketing process in B2B context. This marketing process is applicable in both B2B and B2C business processes for improving communication system among customers and clients respectively. The theory of this marketing process has been developed focusing on the communications between customers or clients regarding products or any product or service or brand. The study of Zhang and Li (2019), has coined that implementation of eWOM in B2B business has a significant in the purchasing decision of the clients. From this background, it has become clear that eWOM marketing process has greatly influenced this marketing process of B2B system. As per the study of Prantl and Mičik (2019), eWOM can serve as a key indicator of the performances of companies. Many studies have also found that the relationships between the business and owners are improved by proper implementation and maintenance of eWOM marketing process through social media.

The use of social networking is a vital aspect in the advertising environment. Miller (2013), and Tuten and Solomon (2017) explained that there is an increased usage of social networking forums for communication that impacts the rapid changes in the transfer of information from one user to another. They also asserted that social media, as a communication tool is beneficial to the marketer and the consumer. According to Killian and McManus (2015), promoters and merchandizers can utilize social media forums to develop communication with customers, and obtain response from the clients about their products. Such information is essential in improving the customer experience, and among the means through which social media networks impact advertising is through the word of mouth (Chu & Kim, 2011; Killian & McManus, 2015;

Seeney, Soutar & Mazzarol, 2014). Through the usage of the Internet, the word of mouth has undergone an evolution, and managed to integrate the use of electronic devices to communicate. As a result, there is a development of the eWOM.

Lboqami et al., (2015) and Cheung & Lee (2012) explained that eWOM encompasses of communication between the customers through the use of social media expertise. These technologies in marketing consist of transmitting information on brands and products. EWOM is mainly concerned with a natural communication between the customers, and consists of giving advice, and offering appropriate information about a particular product. It also provides an opportunity for reviewing products, and providing information on previous experiences with the particular product (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). You, Vadakkepatt & Joshi (2015) asserted that consumers use the advice and information offered through eWOM to make appropriate purchase decisions. Concerning this, the significance of eWOM in marketing cannot be overemphasized or overlooked. The use of automated social communication by consumers is among the challenges that marketers face since it denies them an opportunity to control or regulate the information that reaches the consumers. Cheung and Thadani (2012); and Stiriadiadis and Van Zyl (2013) observed that this subjects marketers to a self-justifying position with intimidations to the loyalty of consumers.

Different dynamics have also been set up to impact the utilization of eWOM by the consumers. Goldsmith (2008) asserted that the two key social communication aspects of eWOM consist of advice and information. Consumers in eWOM attempt to get information concerning specific brands and products from other users. On the same note, users with experience in some products can help other users or consumers through advising them on the strategic characteristics of the products. The kind of information pinpoints the negative and positive features of the merchandises, which are anticipated to motivate or depress other customers in purchasing the items (Park & Kim, 2008).

Several authors have established the impacts of on diverse measures of marketing in various business areas. For instance, Park and Kim (2008) conducted a study with an aim of establishing the link between knowledge processing and eWOM on different consumers. The outcome indicated that consumers with more knowledge obtained from the different reviews were directly affected by eWOM. The information received also impacted their choice in purchasing a product. Cheung and Thadani (2012) also conducted a research with an objective of evaluating the impacts of eWOM on consumers, and established that eWOM is significant in impacting the perception of consumers towards brands and products. Concerning the impact on the perception of the consumer, eWOM impacted their intents to buy a given item. It is therefore evident that the studies, and other research are influential in highlighting the influence of eWOM in changing their attitudes, perceptions and intentions to purchase a product from different organizations.

A significant dimension, which has been investigated and is crucial for marketers, is concerned with the different ways eWOM impacts a product or a brand. Torlak et al (2014) asserted that interaction between a business and client through communication between consumers is an aspect, which considerably impacts the customer dynamics, which are closely linked to promoting a brand. To be specific, eWOM touches a product range, and leads to an ultimate impact on the intents of clients to buy a key product (Kim, Sung & Kang, 2014). Severi, Ling and nasermoadeli (2014) agreed with the findings and identified the relationship between measures of brand quality and eWOM. To summarize, eWOM can adversely or affirmatively impact brand perceptions of consumers, which impacts their connotation with the particular brand (Beneke et al., 2015; Eisingerich et al., 2015; Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013; Lin, Wu, & Chen, 2013).

The influence of eWOM on revenues and sales is another relationship, which is significant to the current study. Babic Rosario et al, (2016) conducted an investigation on the influences of eWOM on the transactions of a company. The outcome of the research recommended that there is a constructive association concerning the sales of a company and a positive eWOM. The results from other studies such as baek et al.

(2014), and Lu, Ye & Law (2014) supported the results of Rosario et al., (2016). The spread of affirmative thoughts about a service or product employing electronic communication forums can improve the transactions of a company, and increase the company's revenue. On a different note, adverse eWOM can moderate revenue and sales for a syndicate, except if liberating strategies are initiated to solve the existing challenge (Kim, Lim and Bryemr, 2015; Marchand, Hennig-Thurau &Wiertz, 2017; Tang et al., 2016).

The above argument focuses on the significance of eWOM in product promotion. It also provides particulars on aforementioned studies on the impact of eWOM on diverse business aspects. However, the results deliberated rely on the readings conducted in diverse sectors, instead of the gas and oil industry. Consequently, there is need to focus on how past studies have explored eWOM in the gas and oil industry, and generally in Qatar. The findings suggest that there are limitations in the number of research work that have concentrated on eWOM in the gas and oil industry, and specifically in Qatar. Researchers who have considered the gas and oil industries have primarily focused on social media, and have not been specific in eWOM. On the same note, these studies have also focussed on exploring the public relations and crisis management from the perspective of the company and not from the perspective of the consumer (Harlow, Brantley & Harlow, 2011; Chewning, 2015; Muradidharan, Dilistone & Shin, 2011).

The research which Harlow, Brantley and Harlow (2011) conducted focused on the Deep Horizon oil spill that led to public outcry and criticism of the British Petroleum Company. Harlow, Brantley and Harlow (2011) explained that the usage of social media by the British Petroleum Company was not appropriate in the management of the mater contrary to the expectations. On a different note, Muralidharan, Dilistone and Shin (2011) employed content analysis with an aim of assessing the application of social media in the British Petroleum oil spill catastrophe, and its effectiveness in safeguarding the image of the corporation. The findings of the research suggested that the company's social media usage was not appropriate in elevating or maintaining the image of the syndicate. As a result, the reviewed studies suggest that social media application is

unlikely to be an essential tool in crisis management with regard to gas and oil companies.

In as much as there are shortfalls in the past studies in evaluating the usage of social media and eWOM impacts in the gas and oil industry, our researchers have been appropriate in setting up eWOM in other departments. For example, various researchers have established the affirmative and aversive outcomes of eWOM in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Other researchers such as Bronner and De Hoog (2011), Cattalops and Salvi (2014) and so forth. Various researchers such as Alexandra (2015), Bataineh (2015); and Yang and Mautum (2015) explored eWOM in the education and finance sectors. The researchers evaluated the necessity for further study in other sectors with an aim of determining whether eWOM has the same impacts and potential solutions when the outcomes are adverse.

1.3 Problem Statement

Various people are increasing the amount of time spent in the Internet, conducting information searching and linking up with acquaintances and friends among various others. Social media forums such as video sharing websites, micro-blogging sites and social networking sites such as Facebook have undeniably altered how people across the world would engage in their routine activities. EWOM is therefore classified as part of social media networks which has achieved the managerial and academic attention among researchers who have decided to engage in investigating the diverse effects in various contexts-thus demonstrating the essence of eWOM in business (Cheung & Lee 2012; Lee, Noh & Kim, 2013; Zhang, Cracium and Shin, 2010).

Cheung and Lee (2012) focussed on investigating the intentions behind the reasons why customers use eWOM and established three major motives. These include delight, reputation, and a sense of belonging in providing assistance to consumers. Chu and Kim (2011) focussed on finding out the elements, which determine the usage of eWOM by consumers and came up with social capital, trust and susceptibility to relational

influence. These elements directly impacted the usage of eWOM. Zhang, Cracium and Shin (2010) conducted an inquiry on the appraisals of products posted online by the consumers and found out that there are undesirable and constructive biases concerning product reviews regarding promotion consumption objectives. Different brand elements of eWOM such as brand equity and brand image established that eWOM has key impressions on the image of the brand, and further encompass direct impacts on purchase motive in the Iranian motor trade. In the same way, the researchers also established that eWOM indirectly impacts the consumers' aim of procuring products and services. Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli (2014) conducted a survey on the role of the media on brand impartiality magnitudes such as loyalty, brand overtone and mindfulness among others in Malaysia, and established that eWOM impacts the superficial brand image and product quality. The image of the brand also acted as a mediation between eWOM and the perceived quality.

Other researches have also been conducted concerning eWOM on diverse sectors such as tourism finance and education. For instance, Harris and prideux (2017) conducted an investigation into eWOMs ability in impacting the behaviour of consumers in the tourism sector, and established that there is much information in the conduct of consumers in the contemporary sector. On the same note, also offers an increased essence in electronic proximity. Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2017) conducted a review on the impact of on hospitality and tourism, and established that eWOM significantly impacts the tourism and hospitality industries, and plays an essential responsibility in promotion in the same industries. According to Sotiriadis and van Zyl (2013), there are three major key factors which impact decision making among tourists with regard to the use of eWOM. These factors include expertise, reliability and magnitude of participation in the social networking platforms. Different studies have also looked at the purchase decisions of students and their academic performance with regard to eWOM use. Themba and Mullala (2013) focussed on investigating the social networking brand-associated eWOM and its effect on the resolutions to obtain services and goods among students in Botswana, and established that brand-related and opinion eWOM impacts decision making among students to purchase items and services. In addition, the study

found out that eWOM is a reliable information source with regard to products and brands. For instance, Vivekananthamoorthy, Naganathan, and Rajkumar (2016) conducted an investigation on the role of eWOM in simplifying communications and enlightening the academic standings of students established that eWOM impacts students positively, since it helps them in accomplishing tasks through enhancing self-efficacy.

Other studies have also looked at the social media impact on the gas and oil industry. For instance, Yin, Feng and Wang (2015) looked into how social media influences an oil spill by international organizations, and established that there exists an aversive online interchange between consumers, which significantly contributed to the productivity of a firm. On the same note, Rauschnabel, Kammerlander and Ivens (2016) also established that undesirable communications impacted on the virtual forums by the customers negatively affected the customer attraction and firms' sales. On the same note, Ye (2014) found the same outcomes after conducting a study on Facebook with regard to the BOC oil spill. The study established an undesirable online response, which led minimized stock prices and revenues for the energy companies. On the same note, Omar, Dahalan and Yusoff (2016) also conducted a research on the influence of social networking on the behaviour of sharing knowledge in a Malaysian gas and oil company and established that social media plays a precarious role in improved information sharing behaviour within organizations.

In addition, there are other researches, which examine eWOM in Qatar's gas and oil industry. However, these researches are limited. Concerning this, the goal of the present study is to fill the gap that emerges as a result of the inadequate enquiry conducted in the gas and oil industry in Qatar. The study therefore investigates the impacts of social networking in B2B marketing. The study stresses on evaluating the influence of eWOM on Qatar's gas and oil sectors. The research also aims to offer the potential clarifications for vindicating the deleterious influences on eWOM in Qatar's gas and oil sector.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The present investigation purposes to explore the impact of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing by conducting an inquiry of eWOM in the gas and oil industry in Qatar.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the progressive impacts of eWOM in the gas and oil segment in Qatar.
2. To establish the undesirable effects of eWOM in the gas and oil industry in Qatar.
3. To determine a potential remedy to the negative effects of eWOM in the gas and oil sector in Qatar.

1.5.1 Justification

As per the study of Al-Ali *et al.* (2019), social media-based marketing, mainly eWOM based marketing process has greatly influenced the entire business process in the gas and oil sector. The study of Giantari and Giantari (2020), has also revealed that implementation of eWOM marketing process influences the purchasing decisions in the oil and gas sector. On the other hand, according to Al-Khinji (2020), there are both advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing or eWOM marketing process in the context of B2B system. As per this study, B2B branding and brand loyalty are the most concerning advantages of eWOM. In contrast, this study has also coined that a significant portion of organizations in the oil and gas sector has not able to adopt and implement new technologies due to lack of sufficient time, human resources and funds. As a result, in the potential competitive market, these firms cannot achieve competitive advantages, which in turn have a negative impact on the growth of firms. Therefore, based on these eWOM based literatures, it can be stated that the above-mentioned research objectives are justified for the present context.

1.6 Research Question

What are the influences of eWOM on B2B marketing in the gas and oil sector in Qatar and how can the undesirable impacts, if any, be solved?

1.6.1 Justification

According to the study of Wang *et al.* (2017), digital or social media marketing has become one of the most effective and preferable strategies of marketing most of the sectors. Among these, the oil and gas sector has also implemented this marketing process and in this way, this process influences different business aspects such as customer satisfaction, marketing efficiency, marketing time and costs in either positive or negative way. On the other side, Dwivedi *et al.* (2019) has found that social media plays a key role in the transformation of digital information in an effective way. In this specific context, social media as well as eWOM specific marketing process has improved the marketing efficiency in B2B business. Hence, on the basis of the literatures regarding eWOM marketing process, it can be said that the above-mentioned research question is justified for this present study. As for this reason, focusing on this question, the further processes of this research can be preceded systemically.

1.7 Implication of the Study

The present study will present substantial contributions to research and the management of the oil and gas sector in both Qatar and the entire global industry. Because of the limited studies linking eWOM to the operations in the oil and gas sectors, the current study seeks to fill the research gap by conducting research that focuses on social media, eWOM, and Qatar oil and gas industry in the B2B marketing. This study will be vital in making significant contributions to the prevailing body of enquiry and will be instrumental to the oil and gas businesses and the industry as a

whole. Through the current study, therefore, researchers in the oil and gas industry will be able to acknowledge the various impacts of eWOM in the oil and gas industry. Also, the conceivable clarifications to the deleterious impacts of eWOM in Qatar's gas and oil industry will also how the undesirable impacts, if any, be solved?

To be presented in the same research. Interested researchers in the oil and gas industry will also be able to expand research in eWOM based on the areas that the study shall highlight for possible future research.

This study will also be instrumental in altering the management of the gas and oil sector. Managers will be able to increase a profound indulgent of both the positive and deleterious effects of eWOM in the industry. Besides, managers in the oil and gas industry will be well acquainted with the possible solutions to the adverse impacts of eWOM. The current study will further alter the acceptance of social media and online promotion strategies in Qatar's gas and oil sectors in a B2B perspective. Managers, based on the current study's findings, will be able to properly manage eWOM in the social media platform in a manner that will avoid negative publicity, losses in sales and revenue, and a decline in the overall productivity in their firms. If an organisation is subjected to the undesirable influences of eWOM, managers in the gas and oil industry will be able to revamp their businesses back to productivity and past the break-even point.

1.8 Summary of Research Context

The context of this research has focused on the impact of social media on the marketing process of B2B businesses. In this particular context, special emphasis has given on the impact of eWOM social media communication-based marketing processes in B2B businesses in the Oil and Gas sector. Focusing on this aspect, the researcher has used different methods of data collection and analysis to obtain significant results of the specific research question. In this context, the researcher has used both primary and secondary methods of data collection including interview, survey and case study analysis. Asking both close ended and open-ended questions to customers, clients or

the experienced marketing managers of eWOM based marketing system, can help to know their views about this online based marketing process. Analyzing the views of these participants, it has also become clearer in which way eWOM process influences the entire business process and customer satisfaction of the respective business organizations. On the basis of this background, the context of this research has been developed. Focusing on this context, it can be stated that selection of this research topic area is justified.

1.9 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The current research seeks to ascertain eWOM and its effects in the gas and oil in Qatar. The study will, therefore, be limited to Qatar and companies that operate in the oil and gas industry in the country. This means that the findings of the study will reflect the actual effects of eWOM in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and might not be relevant to other sectors in the country. Besides, the oil and gas sectors in other countries might not find the results to be suitable for their context. Therefore, a generalisation of the results of the study may be limited outside Qatar and gas and oil industry. Consequently, the solicitation and interpretation of the findings in other situations need to be carried out with caution and should consider the environment, economic, political, and policy aspects of that country in relation to Qatar.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The process of carrying out the current study might be impacted by several limitations. First, the study will only collect data from gas and oil companies in Qatar. This might limit the generalisation of the results to the gas and oil sectors in other countries that are not similar to Qatar. The second limitation is that the study will be cross-sectional. This means that the information collected will be at a point in time. This limits the ability of the research to establish associations between the study variables. Therefore, future investigation in the area can be instrumental in establishing connections between eWOM and the effects determined in this study, as well as ascertaining the

effectiveness of the proposed solutions to the adverse effects of eWOM in the oil and gas industry.

1.11 Summary of the Chapter

Marketing is a sector that is inclined to various aspects. One of the elements that have changed the marketing environment globally is the advancement in technology and the use of the Internet. Previous marketing efforts only considered the information that marketers and firms found relevant and essential for the consumer. Unidirectional communication channels were employed to pass information from the marketer to the consumer in a formal way, limiting the activity of consumers in the marketing process. Nevertheless, the Internet has changed the marketing environment by shifting control from the marketer to the consumer. Consumers can seek and send information about products to other consumers without including the firm or the marketer in the process. This method of communication of utilizing social media digital forums is known as electronic word of mouth. Customers can use eWOM to access information and advice about products and companies, which can be used to make purchase choices. Based on the significance of eWOM, the current research seeks to investigate how eWOM affects business-to-business advertising in the gas and oil sector in Qatar.

This chapter has introduced the tenacity of the present research, which is to establish the impacts of eWOM in B2B promotion in the gas and oil industry in Qatar and determine probable solutions to adverse impacts of eWOM. The aim of the study will be achieved through three objectives including finding out the positive impact of eWOM, establishing the adverse effects of eWOM, and determining the possible resolutions to the adverse influences of eWOM in the gas and oil industry in eWOM. The chapter has also highlighted the limitations in previous research exploring the use of eWOM and its impacts in the gas and oil industry in different countries in the world- including Qatar. Finally, this chapter has suggested the possible significance of the results of the study in the oil industry both for management and future research. The following section

presents a review of literature, which explores previous research on electronic word of mouth and highlights the gap that the current study will fill.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Conventionally, marketing consists of the application measures, which are one-sided, impersonal and formal. Such measures include advertisements, publicity campaigns and promotions, which have been formulated to enlighten the consumer on the product of a company. Communication and technological advancements have impacted the development of advertising to integrate clients as dynamic contributors. Concerning this, such platforms and the social networks have become substantial features in the marketing and promotion of services and products of organizations, firms and industries. A key aspect of social media promotion is the utilization of eWOM to facilitate communication. EWOM consists of a two-way communication between clients, and can impact the purchasing decisions of the consumers. The following is a review of various literatures, which is also a presentation of the meaning of social media, and its impacts. Significantly, the review also looks at the past research on eWOM, the benefits and limitations to businesses. The literature review also provides a detailed analysis of the impact of eWOM in the gas and oil sector in Qatar and globally. The literature review also comes up with appropriate remedies to the undesirable effects of eWOM on the gas and oil sectors with regard to past literature.

2.2 Social Media

Social media consists of two terms: social and media. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social refers to the friendly companionship or relationship. Kietzmann et al. (2011) also defines media as a communication forum, which include newspapers, television, magazines and so forth, which aims to reach a wider audience. Therefore, the communication channel can be a social instrument for improving communication (Correa, Hisley & De Zuniga, 2010). Furthermore, it can be a forum for distribution and discussion of information among people (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social networking is therefore essential in providing an opportunity to network in a manner that enhances

trust amongst various individuals and communities involved. Leonardi, Huysman and Steinfield (2013) asserted that such forums therefore enable users to air out their ideologies, sentiments, and perceptions and also interact. However, different quotes have confused the meaning of social media among other expressions such as social networking, social news, web 2.0 among and so forth.

According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), there are various systems of social media, and one of the most prominent forms is micro-blogging. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) defined microblogging as a form of social networking, which focuses in the content, and restricts the features, which any user can type in each entry or publish. The most prominent micro-blogging forum is Twitter. Twitter is the fourth global traffic volume. Most of the Twitter user profiles is between 21-35 years, and integrates users who are highlight fascinated by the new technological advancements (Ramos, 2013).

Ramos (2013) classified social news websites as part of the social networking platforms, which allows users to send news articles and vote. Examples of such sites include Reddit, technoratti and Digg. News and articles are majorly voted for, and they appear on the news on the homepage of the website. They can also generate large volumes of traffic.

Ramos (2013) observed that bookmarks play a crucial role in saving the links of the websites. The bookmarks categorizes the website links. The most common bookmarks include Delicious and StumbleUpon. According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), other social networking forums enhance online interaction through private and public communication among people. Among the main social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Ramos (2013) further classified professional networks as a category of social media network. Such forums enhance business and professional networking. Some of the most popular professional networks include Xing, LinkedIn and Yammer. Ramos (2013) further identified multimedia social links that enables individuals to frame and share

graphic contents such as photographs, videos and audios. The fundamental ability of such platforms is that such multimedia contents can go viral.

2.2.1 Social Media Marketing

Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi (2012) perceived social media platforms as avenues for promoting products and following promotion with an objective of achieving social marketing and branding objectives. The major focus of social media marketing includes sharing of videos, images and contents for the marketing of a particular product. Therefore, social media marketing is the simplest way of reaching potential clients based on the fact that in the contemporary society, almost every adult population is on social media, and spends a lot of time in social networking platforms. Social media promotion is therefore a form of product marketing which is classified under the conventional web-centred approaches for marketing such as email newsletters and online advertising campaigns (Saravankumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012; Kaur, 2016; and Heymann-Reder, 2010).

2.2.2 Strategic opportunity and social media marketing

Heymann-Reder (2012) observed that consumers have become more cultured, and have embraced new approaches and techniques which are essential in analysing, evaluating, selecting and searching for their buying action for the goods and services. Various studies have also discovered new tendencies among consumers on the social media usage. For example, the necessity for customized products and the preparedness of consumers to be actively engaged in the improvements of products are growing. In addition, the various interests of clients in giving out their opinions at diverse phases of the business development is amassing.

These are among the issues, which affect the operations of marketers, and assist them in formulating marketing strategies that poses diverse setbacks and decisions (Winer, 2009). Marketing and promotion correspondents have therefore embraced the idea of

offering clients the kinds of services and goods that they require, and such services and products are tailored to suit the wishes and desires of the clients. In the same manner, the marketers have also become open to the concept of engaging in co-creating the products with the clients. Concerning this, Safko (2010) asserted that marketers engage in developing situations, which enable the cooperation with consumers in an attempt to test and develop new products. In addition, various companies are investing massively in social media marketing because of the increased competition, and acknowledgement by promoters of the need to be in control of the consumer-controlled social media platform (Heymann-Reder, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

As per the study of Magno and Cassia (2019), social media marketing process is a way of marketing process which includes different types of social media platforms. The use of the digital platform is the main focus of this marketing process. Nowadays, this specific marketing process is one of the most preferred ways of marketing in most of the business sectors across the world. Various aspects of a business such as brand equity, corporate branding and brand values are influenced by this marketing system. Brand equity is an important aspect of marketing that indicates the level of demand, loyalty of a brand (Rialti *et al.* 2016). The article by Sumbal *et al.* (2017), has found that social media marketing allows the companies to communicate with their customer and clients more profoundly and effectively. In this way, the marketing managers of the company can importance of branding from the perspectives of its consumers. Thus, this process also helps the marketing manager to monitor the conversation and views of the consumers about a product or brand and based on these findings they can make effective decisions about the change and modifications in the existing and new brands (Rialti *et al.* 2016). In this particular way, the companies can improve brand loyalty as well as brand equity. Thus, social media marketing process also improves the brand values as well as corporate branding process.

2.2.3 Benefits of social media marketing

Hensel and Deis (2010) asserted that different social media platforms have been invented through investigation, and they consider the diverse areas of simplifying business operations. To begin with, businesses benefit from social media marketing since the cost impacts are complimentary. The economic setbacks linked with online promotion are low in comparison to other marketing forms. Accessing most of the social media sites are free, and therefore, businesses can post relevant information to their clients, and proliferate traffic for their businesses.

Secondly, Shashi (2012) explained that most of the evident aspects of any new media is its capability to formulate and facilitate new social media forums to enhance social interactions. Social interactions are essential in allowing people to chat, sent messages, mails and also establish social networks, and so forth. Kaaplan and Haenlein (2010) also suggested that social media is applicable in establishing relationships with clients, identify new business opportunities and establish communities which are essential in establishing brand. Concerning this, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further explained that social media marketing provides a forum that enables marketers to get feedback and appropriate information from the clients in a way that enhances relationships and interactions.

Thirdly, Heymann-reder (2012) explained that social media plays a crucial role in providing marketers with an avenue to target audiences and consumers. Sarvanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012) explained that advertisements are channelled to customers with regard to their likings. Sarvanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012) also explained that high-tech advancement and innovation have changed the nature of social media. More complex computer-mediated networks have been formulated on the online forums and further integrate a higher degree of heterogeneity. Setbacks linked to physical location and time has become less significance with the advent and usage of computer social forums.

In addition to these, there are several benefits of social media or digital marketing process. These additional benefits include the creation of brand recognizing, improvement in brand equity and brand loyalty, improvement in brand awareness and so on (Sumbal *et al.* 2017). Focusing on this matter, eWOM technology is implemented in the marketing process to improve the marketing process accordingly. Hence, a number of studies have revealed that the implementation of eWOM communication process in the social media marketing has become more beneficial compared to the traditional marketing process (Dezdar, 2017). Attracting with these benefits, a large number of business organizations have adopted this social media marketing process along with the eWOM communication system.

2.2.4 Disadvantages of social media marketing

Kaur (2016) explained that social networking is a co-operative process, which encompasses interchange between two parties. Such exchanges need time commitment. Therefore, the fundamental focus of soil marketing has been undergoing changes, and it is directed through enhancing long-term relationship, an essential time investment is superficial, which businesses may not be willing to engage in. Organizations that utilize social media platforms to promote their products make use of trademarks with an aim of improving the genuineness of the same product. Kaur (2016) also explained that in most cases, copyright issues are likely to emerge when businesses promote their brands and products or even utilize their trademarks through third party outlets. Concerning this, Kaur (2016) asserted that on various occasions, marketers engage in continuous process of observing the usage of their trademarks and copyrights.

The receptions of negative outcome from the clients possess a key disadvantage of social media marketing. The same forum also enables consumers to air out their views concerning the product quality and service and also the external image of the companies. In cases where the company receives negative review from the clients, the company will be subjected to intense market pressure that may work towards

eliminating the competitors. Social media maintains the image of companies at stake in their daily dealings with clients (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Being a technology, B2B companies may find social media marketing unattractive. Past research has established both internal and external barriers to the integration of new technologies by B2B organizations (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011; and Keinanen and Kuivalainen, 2015). A key portion of organizations are slow in new technology adoption due to the perceived barriers such as adverse perceptions on the usefulness of social media, lack of time resource and funds to facilitate trainings, and lack of familiarity with a key technology. The implementation of any social media technology relies on the individual innovativeness of the chief executive officer of the firm and also the innovativeness of the specific organization. Other research has also provided suggestions that the size of the company regulates the implementation of decisions of social media marketing. In addition, minor companies embrace new technologies as a way of improving their brands compared to larger companies. Therefore, early implementation of social media marketing is achievable through small and medium B2B companies, which are innovative.

2.3 The Role of the Internet and Social Media in B2B Branding

Past studies have looked into the importance of branding for B2B organizations. Lindgreen, Beebrland and Farelly (2010) explained that in the contemporary period of increased commoditization, branding is essential for B2B firms since it enhances product differentiation through establishing consistency and uniqueness. B2B is very strong since it improves the quality perception of a company in the market and also enables organizations to extend their brand equity to different other categories. These extensions facilitate the barriers to entry, and also lead to higher demand that enables companies to maintain a premium price (Ohnnemus, 2009). In situations where competitive bidding is the culture, more so in the industrial markets, the agreement in making decisions can be achieved through branding products (Wise & Zendnickova, 2009). On the same note, a resilient B2B brand in the distribution channel is likely to

improve the ability of the firm to negotiate and also open up licensing opportunities. In addition, Ohnemus (2009) explained that good customer loyalty is linked to a resilient B2B brand that further brings more referrals to the business.

According to Karkkainen, Jusila and Valsanen (2010), the onset of the usage of internet and social media has enables firms to appreciate the tools as forums and channels which add value to the businesses, and also offers them an opportunity to embrace connectivity, circulation of information, transaction and also reduce costs of communication.

Karkkainen, Jusila and Valsanen (2010) further explained that the onset of Internet usage has provided an essential avenue for generating value from brands for the global B2B brand. Concerning this, marketers have resorted to improve knowledge, conversations, e-commerce and relationships (Jarvinen et al., 2012). Karkkainen, Jusila and Valsanen (2010) also explained that the usage of the Internet to improve B2B commerce relies on three value addition measures, which needs to be implemented. These include productive strategy, relational exchange and joint learning strategy. Research which have examined the essential role that the internet has played in building customer relationships within a B2B context have established that the internet is an essential forum for enhancing relationship marketing (Steyn et al., 2010).

Generally, participants within a network are the major beneficiaries from the social networks to improve the utilization of resources and also market their activities. Therefore, Stephen and Toubia (2010) explained that in a commercial realm, social networks offer significant benefits, which improves the economic value of an organization. Stephen and Toubia (2010) further asserted that social networks are essential in maintaining competition among large companies. The media also plays a crucial role in the survival of smaller firms.

2.3.1 Electronic Word of Mouth

An essential factor in the decisions made by consumers to purchase products has been linked to word of mouth communications (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), firms have based their marketing efforts on traditional word of mouth as an important means to influence the decisions of consumers. With the advent and advances technology and communication, word of mouth has evolved to include the use of technology. This form of word of mouth is known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM). As a social media marketing element, eWOM provides consumers with the opportunity to interact with other consumers- especially their friends and relatives- to gain information on different products and services available from a firm (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008).

Chu and Kim (2011) define eWOM as word of mouth that occurs through the use of online Internet facilities, including communication through email, forums for discussions, and review of products. As a result, eWOM has been stated to influence significantly the confidence of consumers in a product and their future interest in using this platform to gain information about other products (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, and Walsh, 2003). Also, King, Racherla, and Bush (2014) argue that the freedom provided by the Internet allows consumers to share their opinions freely with other consumers and seek advice on products. These developments have elicited more investments by firms on eWOM to engage consumers and increase their base (Goldsmith, 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jansen et al., 2009).

Several aspects differentiate eWOM from other forms of social media marketing. As a social marketing strategy, it provides firms with benefits that come with social communication. According to Goldsmith (2008), a significant factor in eWOM is the use of social communication to reach consumers. While eWOM is based on the interaction between consumers, traditional marketing efforts are unidirectional and impersonal with no opportunity for consumers to react directly to the advertisement or publicity. Also, eWOM involves communication that includes interaction between the two parties, where

one consumer seeks and receives information from another consumer (Goldsmith, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Walsh, 2003).

Goldsmith (2008), further, argues that the two fundamental characteristics of social communication that takes place when eWOM is involved are advice and information. One consumer seeks information, which consists of getting facts about a product or service in the market. The responding consumer provides this information and also provides advice to the first consumer. Counselling is often subjective and opinion from the other consumer can lead to a conclusion on whether the product is bad or good leading to decisions on whether to purchase the given product (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Hung & Li, 2007; Park & Lee, 2009).

Electronic word of mouth works on the elements of informal communication. As a result, it is personal and involves information being exchanged between individuals with feedback and advice (Cheung and Thadani, 2010). This exchange is vital because it lies in the trust that consumers have towards other consumers compared to marketers. The importance placed on trustworthiness in eWOM lies in the fact that other consumers have no benefit if an individual decides to make a purchase (Goldsmith, 2008).

A study conducted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) aimed at understanding the motives for consumers in engaging in eWOM. According to the authors, there are three forms of utility that drive consumers in eWOM. The first is the focus-related utility. This entails the satisfaction that consumers derive from a feeling of having added value to the community. It includes motives such as social benefit, power, being helpful to the company in the communication, and being concerned about other consumers (Yap, Soetarto, & Sweeney, 2013; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). The second satisfaction that drives consumers in eWOM is the consumption utility. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) argued that consumers engage in eWOM because of their need to acquire valuable feedback on a product. Finally, approval utility is the third motive that drives eWOM and involves the satisfaction that a consumer gets when others value their advice or comment and used to make decisions on the purchase of a product (Jeong, & Jang,

2011; Yang, 2013). Understanding these motives for consumers getting involved in eWOM calls for understanding the effects of eWOM on an organisation to, necessarily, enhance its use within a firm or an industry. Generally, electronic word of mouth presents a firm with both positive and negative consequences, which need to be harnessed to ensure success for a given firm or industry.

2.3.1.1 Definition of eWOM

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is defined as the specific type of marketing process that focuses on the effective communication among the clients or customers of a business organization (Dwivedi *et al.* 2019). This process is mainly based on the transmission of information about any brands and products of an organization. This marketing process allows the clients as well as customers of a company to discuss about its brands, products or services. These organizations can also apply their feedback system in this way. In this way, they can share and discuss their personal experiences about the use of any product or service. As for this reason, eWOM is considered as one of the most effective marketing processes based on social media or digital platforms. Instagram is one of the most popular examples of eWOM marketing process. On this platform, the clients in a B2B marketing system or the customers in a B2C marketing process, and discuss about the quality, price and other aspects of a product of a company. In addition to this, they can also give their feedback regarding the products or services which is an important part of the marketing process. Thus, eWOM has become a very efficient and effective marketing process in different business sectors.

2.3.1.2 Application of eWOM

eWom is a way of informal communication among the clients in B2B and among consumers in B2C marketing process using digital technologies. Applying this process, the marketers of a business organization can know the perspective of its consumers or clients regarding an offered product or service. As per the findings of Kim *et al.* (2018),

adopting a particular network approach is a suitable and effective method for obtaining an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the interactions among consumers through eWOM communication. In such way, this digital communication process in marketing influences the decisions taken by the consumers. The marketing managers of a company mainly imply this system and manage the entire system. The management of information is one of the most important responsibilities of the marketing managers of an organization in the eWOM marketing-based communication process (Al-Khinji, 2020). In many cases, it has been seen that due to carelessness of the marketing managers, the sales rate and brand loyalty have been negatively impacted due to many negative feedback (Kim *et al.* 2018). As for this particular reason, the individuals involved in the marketing operations of a company need to be very careful and attentive in managing information in this social media marketing system.

2.3.1.3 Activities of eWOM

There are a number of activities that are needed to be maintained by the individuals involved in the marketing process of a company. Current studies have revealed that the marketing managers are mainly responsible for the overall management of this marketing or communication process. In this context, at first, the business organization needs to introduce the eWOM process and the social, media platform on which the marketing process is operated. In this way, the clients of a B2B marketing system can use the online digital platform. Then, different clients of the business can discuss about the product, service or the brand offered by the organization. In addition to this, the clients can also share their personal experience on this platform and maintain an effective communication among them (Kim *et al.* 2018). Considering these discussions, they can make effective purchasing related decisions. These decisions in turn influence the sales rate as well as profit of the organization. Different business-related decisions are also changed based on the outcomes of this marketing procedure through digital platforms. As for these reasons, it is very important to perform all of these activities effectively.

2.3.2 General effects of eWOM

The eWOM strategy promotes the acquisition of new customers as well as brand building, whereby the mechanisms applied to facilitate the provision of feedback and information sharing regarding a brand. This is a useful- yet less costly- way for business organisations to ensure advertising efforts led to the acquisition of new consumers for the organisation (Dellarocas, 2003). However, communication associated with a given brand on the platform that is negative is a key contributor to the harm caused to an organisation (Ye et al., 2009). Quality control and the development of products is also a key contributor of eWOM based on feedback and consumer communication via social media platforms. This has been identified in current literature to be key in helping organisational management have a better understanding of the preferences of customers and their negative experiences with services and products (Duan et al., 2008). Also, electronic word of mouth was found by Litvin et al. (2008) to positively affect sales since the buying decisions of a consumer are impacted. Lastly, electronic word of mouth as found by Severi et al. (2014) affects brand equity that incorporates brand image, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality. Regardless of the vast amount of literature on the effects of eWOM in different sectors, few studies have explored eWOM in the oil and gas industry. Further, studies considering the oil and gas sector in Qatar and how firms are affected by eWOM is not extensive. As a result, there was a need for further research to ascertain the effect of social media, specifically eWOM strategy in B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas industry so that quantitative measures of the eWOM effects in B2B marketing can be developed to guide the collection of quantitative data.

A summary of the impacts of eWOM on an organisation was provided by Dellarocas (2003). The first benefit of eWOM involves acquiring new customers and building a brand. According to the author, the mechanisms used online to provide feedback and information about a brand can be an effective- yet less costly- way for a firm to complement advertising efforts and acquire new consumers for the organisation. Nevertheless, the same efforts can be instrumental in harming the organisation if the

communication on the platform is negative- a point supported by Ye, Law, and Gu (2009). Jalilvand, Esfahani, and Samiei (2011) posit that eWOM can be unpredictable for an organisation with the potential for both positive and negative effects in brand building and getting customers.

The second impact of eWOM for businesses highlighted by Dellarocas (2003) is the quality control and development of products. Accessing feedback and consumer communication through social media platforms helps organisations better understand the preferences of consumers as well as their negative experiences with products. Further, the author postulates that when feedback is accessible across the industry, it can enhance quality within the supply chain. Besides, the availability of this information online can decrease competitive advantage for a firm through enlightening competitors on the defects of products (Dellarocas, 2003; Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008).

Other researchers have assessed the impact of electronic word of mouth on different aspects of a business. According to Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008), electronic word of mouth positively affects sales by affecting the buying decisions of a consumer. Various researchers in different business industries have studied this advantage of eWOM. You, Vadakkepatt, carried out a meta-analysis and Joshi (2015) to ascertain the effect that eWOM has on the sales of firms. Their analysis included primary data as well as data collected from previous studies on eWOM. The results of the survey supported an increase in the volume of sales as a result of electronic word of mouth. This was especially prominent for durable goods and goods that are privately consumed. The researchers concluded that the positive effect of eWOM on sales requires firms to consider trustworthiness and credibility of the consumers who are the source of information. In agreement with the findings of this study, Babić Rosario et al. (2016) established an association between eWOM and sales. According to the authors, eWOM has a positive association with the sales of a firm. Nevertheless, the study by Babić Rosario et al. (2016) found that this association was dependent on the product, the social media platform, and the metrics of the platform. The authors concluded that

electronic word of mouth needs to be considered if a firm wants to increase sales due to its effect on consumer purchasing decisions.

The relationship between electronic word of mouth and brand equity was investigated by Severi, Ling, and Nasermodeli (2014). The study aimed to examine the association between eWOM on brand equity through the brand image, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality. The researchers found a significant association between eWOM and brand equity. The findings of the study illustrate the positive effect that eWOM through social media has on brand equity. According to Severi, Ling, and Nasermodeli (2014), effective use of eWOM can generate and develop brand equity leading to customer attraction and retention. They conclude that eWOM should be integrated into the marketing strategies for a firm to obtain positive results on brand equity. Another study was carried out by Yahya, Azizam, and Mazlan (2014) to establish the effect of electronic word of mouth on brand determination among students from the Middle East pursuing higher education in Malaysia. The study found that brand determination was affected by the value that individuals placed on the information received through eWOM. Therefore, eWOM was found to increase brand awareness and to enhance the views of individuals about a specific brand. Consequently, eWOM effectively strengthened brand determination and selection (Yahya, Azizam, & Mazlan, 2014).

Despite the potential benefits of electronic word of mouth on an organisation, Bulearca and Bulearca (2010) argued that eWOM could be a threat to its business. According to the authors, the potential of eWOM to spread at high speeds can be detrimental to a business if the information is negative. In their study, Bulearca and Bulearca (2010) assessed the use of Twitter as an electronic word of mouth platform and its impact on an organisation. They concluded that Twitter provided an essential platform for eWOM while posing the challenge of negative feedback about an organisation leading to the need of putting in place mechanisms to deal with such threats.

To further understand the potential effects of eWOM in a business environment, a comparison with the traditional word of mouth (WOM) is paramount. Andreassen and Streukens (2009) used the concept of private rooms to illustrate and describe the reach of word of mouth communication. According to the latter study, in light of the restricted nature of personal relations, a person's relationships are simple in structure and are represented in private rooms. Also, communication facilitated in private rooms spread rather slowly due to the nature of the shared content, which in most cases, is private. Private room communication permits group communication structures because the shared content, in most instances is among few people or between two individuals having close relationships with each other (Andreassen & Streukens, 2009).

On the contrary, the advancement of social media platform technologies, the emergence of eWOM has expanded information reach to include an unlimited number of persons who need to have access to Internet and technological device. In comparison, therefore, to the traditional word of mouth communication businesses can convey information very fast to other business quotas (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Andreassen and Streukens (2009), therefore, provide another view by using public rooms to describe and illustrate the reach of eWOM. According to Andreassen and Streukens (2009), public room communication permits any communication structure because the technology tools found on the online platforms allow the structuring of information to be in line with the preferred structure of communication (Sun et al., 2006). In conclusion, both concepts of eWOM concerning public and private rooms reveal eWOM as a more effective means of facilitating information reach when compared to the traditional word of mouth.

Trustworthiness in business is crucial for enhancing both long term and short-term ties among the stakeholders. The traditional word of mouth is a significant developer of lasting impacts on customer behaviour. The primary driver behind the latter capability was the high trust level emanating from the personal recommendations for purchase decisions. Since eWOM facilitates communication in the online environment and from

large groups of individuals who may not know each other, eWOM may lower the level of trust among the users of the same platform.

2.3.3 Previous Studies' General Focus On eWOM

Studies conducted on eWOM on other areas other than oil and gas are broad and have contributed significantly to the existing body of literature with a specific focus on sales, marketing, and tourism among other disciplines. Cheung and Thadani (2010) conducted a review focusing on the individual level research and found that a majority of the studies undertaken on eWOM communication investigated the receiver's psychological state. Some of the common factors highlighted in Cheung and Thadani (2010) include attitude, purchase intention, trust, and information adoption. Other common elements relating to the communicator highlighted in the same research include attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. A study conducted by Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli (2014), for instance, among students of a private university in Malaysia sought to investigate the mediating role of eWOM on brand equity constructs. The outcome of the study, which incorporated 300 participants, revealed that an indirect inter-relationship between the dimensions of brand equity and electronic word of mouth. As an implication for managers and marketers, the study concluded that eWOM provides a significant avenue for firms to improve their brand equity and further attract more customers.

Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) focused their study on eWOM's influence on purchase intention and brand image among customers in the Iranian automobile industry. Three significant findings were presented in the results. First, the brand image was found to be positively impacted by eWOM communication. Besides, eWOM and purchase intention had a strong positive relationship. Finally, the brand image was found to influence purchase intention. A similar study conducted by Toriak et al. (2014) among Turkish students focused on cell phone brands. The study reported similar findings to the one conducted by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) in Iran. The findings revealed that eWOM and brand image had a significant positive relationship. The same relationship was also reported between eWOM and purchase intention among consumers in Turkey.

Cheung and Lee (2012) went further to investigate the motive behind consumers' engagement with eWOM on the online platform. The study revealed three critical aspects that drive the consumers' intention to utilize eWOM namely, attain a sense of belonging, desire to alter reputation, and the enjoyment of helping others. The authors concluded that these factors were essential in motivating consumers to engage in eWOM. These consumers pass information to other consumers to experience personal satisfaction as a result of eWOM.

Chu and Kim (2011) also conducted a related study seeking to investigate the determinants of engagement of eWOM by customers. The study, however, focused on different social relationships, namely tie strength, social capital, trust, susceptibility to interpersonal influence among others. The findings revealed that, of the five studied social relationships, homophily, social capital, interpersonal influence, and trust were found to have a significant impact on consumers' use of eWOM. Lee, Noh and Kim (2013) presented a focus on free-market business in relation concerning the use of eWOM to provide an understanding of the success points in the use of eWOM. The study, therefore, investigated the eWOM factors that facilitate success in the open-market business. The study revealed three new significant factors and two established factors that impacted eWOM either directly or indirectly. The two established factors, according to the findings, included loyalty and satisfaction in the open market. Besides, the new significant factors included the desire for self-presentation, desire for sharing information and free market reward. The latter findings possess a similarity in the findings presented by Cheung and Lee (2012), where the passion for self-presentation and information sharing were common to the results given by both findings.

Because of eWOM receiving increased attention from researchers, Zhang, Craciun and Shin (2010) sought to investigate the persuasiveness associated with eWOM through online consumer product reviews. The study found that the impact of review valence on the persuasion of eWOM was mediated by the consumption goals that customers associate with the reviewed commodities. According to the findings, consumers

perceived negative reviews to be less persuasive when they evaluated products related to their promotion consumption goals. Also, an evaluation of products related to prevention consumption goals led to perceptions that positive reviews were less persuasive than negative ones.

In the tourism sector, research has also found eWOM as a significant contributor to enhancing tourism in different regions worldwide. Ishida, Slevitch and Siamionava (2016) conducted a study seeking to examine the effects of both traditional personal word of mouth and eWOM communications on tourist visits in Missouri. Also, the study sought to find out the difference between the two forms of communication. The results of the study revealed that both types of communication affected tourist visits. However, contrary to expectations (Andereassen and Streukens, 2009), the findings revealed that more significant influence on destination image was attributed to traditional personal word of mouth as opposed to the electronic own word of mouth. A similar study conducted in Iran by Jalilvand et al. (2017) seeking to find out the impacts of the traditional WOM and eWOM on the formation of the destination image. The study reported three crucial findings. First, the conventional word of mouth communication played a significant role in the process of cognitive, affective, and formation of a unique destination. Second, eWOM's effect on the cognitive, emotional, and individual image was found to be considerable. Besides, eWOM powerfully predicted travel intention and tourist attitude. Third, when compared to the traditional WOM, eWOM was found to have the most pronounced impact on destination image – a finding contrary to Ishida, Slevitch and Siamionava (2016).

2.4 Qatar Oil and Gas Industry

Qatar is one of the largest gas and oil producers in the world. Middle East countries like Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar have long been known to be rich sources of natural gas and oil, which these countries export and use to fund their national expenditures. The wealth of Qatar is founded on revenues from oil and gas, with eighty-five per cent of exports composed of oil and gas. Besides, about 70

per cent of the expenditure of the government is funded by oil exports (Al-Rasheed, 2016; Kirat, 2015).

According to Dargin (2007), Qatar is one of the three largest world producers of natural gas, with its natural gas reserve being ranked third behind Russia and Iran. The state owns the oil and gas industry in Qatar with private organisations being important stakeholders and owners of significant percentages of the industry. The fluctuations in the global oil process have greatly affected Qatar oil organisations- with both positive and negative results. Nevertheless, Aleklett and Campbell (2003) argue that the imminent peak and decline in the world oil reserves- especially in the Middle East- call for the implementation of effective policies to protect the economies of these countries.

The leading companies involved in the oil and gas industry in Qatar include Qatar petroleum as the main company. Other companies like Pearl GTL, Qatar Gas, and Ras Gas support it. Further, other smaller companies are involved in the oil and gas sector as either consumers or producers of the oil products (Al-Rasheed, 2016). The involvement of several organisations in the oil and gas industry in Qatar highlights the importance of marketing for these firms. Therefore, it is essential to explore how electronic word of marketing affects the oil and gas industry in Qatar as well as worldwide.

2.4.1 Use of eWOM in the oil and gas industry

Research on the use of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry is limited. Despite large amounts of literature on the use of eWOM in other sectors, like finance and tourism, very little is known about these efforts in the oil and gas industry. For example, Williams, Slade, Dwivedi, and Islamigova (2017) carried out an extensive study of Ewom in the marketing context. The researchers investigated various aspects of eWOM, such as the traditional word of mouth (WOM), eWOM, how to engage in Ewom, the persuasive element of eWOM, effects, and managing eWOM. The effects section reviewed various studies on the impacts of electronic word of mouth to other

industries such as the automobile industry and hotel industry. Specifically, the Williams, Slade, Dwivedi, and Islamigova (2017) found out that the presence of a high number of positive reviews of a car online increased the demand for that car. The scholars also investigated the effects of variables such as valence of information on eWOM. However, their extensive review of electronic word of mouth did not touch on the oil and gas industry.

Significantly, there are no studies that have considered eWOM in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Nevertheless, some researchers have mentioned the use of eWOM in the gas sector in their reviews- with a general conclusion that it was not a significant factor in marketing (Alsulaiman, 2013; Fang et al., 2011). However, cases of adverse effects of online social communication in the gas and oil industry have been documented by researchers, including Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016), Ye (2014), and Yin, Feng, and Wang (2015).

One study, which details the effect of online communication in the oil and gas industry, was carried out by Watson (2015). The researcher sought to compare how journalists' coverage of the 2010 BP oil spill differed with twitter coverage and found that the same factors that influenced local journalists, such as economic and social forces, also affected the tweets. However, the researcher did not explicitly mention the electronic word of mouth, but instead compared the mainstream media with alternative communication, twitter being one of them. Another study that comes close to detailing the use of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry was carried out by Abitbol, Meeks, and Cummings (2018). The researchers sought to investigate the use of Facebook to engage stakeholders and communicate community social responsibility activities. They reviewed Facebook posts from 12 oil companies listed in a top 50 company lists. Abitbol et al. (2018) found that despite using social media to communicate the CSR activities, the oil and gas companies were inept in the use of interactive language and two-way messaging, failing to engage stakeholders effectively. Thus, deeper research of eWOM use, effects, and application may benefit these companies by guiding them towards successful stakeholder engagement.

2.4.2 Effects of e-WOM in the oil and gas industry

Schindler and Bickart (2005) posit that communication between consumers on different products through the Internet presents an opportunity for organisations to benefit while also creating challenges for these firms. Yin, Feng, and Wang (2015) conducted a study to assess the effects of social media communication on an oil spill by a multinational corporation. In their research, the authors evaluated how Chinese consumers reacted to the oil spill by ConocoPhillips in 2011. Negative online exchanges among Chinese consumers led to negative results for the company. The researchers reported a significant drop in the stock prices of ConocoPhillips and reductions in output globally for the company. Yin, Feng, and Wang (2015) concluded that negative criticism from consumers online was an essential factor in determining the productivity of an oil company. These conclusions and findings contradict the assertions of Fang et al. (2011) on the insignificance of word of mouth in the oil and gas sector.

Another effect of electronic word of mouth on oil and gas companies is reduced revenues due to negative feedback. This is suggested by Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016), who assessed the effects of collaborative social media brand attacks on companies. In their findings, the authors argue that online platforms enhance the use of word of mouth to increase consumer power and develop company accountability. They conclude that negative social media communication between consumers can be detrimental to the sales of a company as well as reducing their ability to attract new customers.

One of the social media platforms used by consumers to seek and find information about products and services is Facebook. A study by Ye (2014) investigated the effects of Facebook use in the 2010 British Petroleum (BP) oil spill. The research established that eWOM from consumers was more favorable to the company when there was no third party involved in bolstering the image of BP. The researchers concluded that positive eWOM was possible in a crisis for an oil company when trustworthiness and

credibility were present for the consumers. Besides, negative feedback was associated with drops in stock prices and revenue for the gas company (Ye, 2014).

Omar, Dahalan, and Yusoff (2016) investigated the effect of social media usage on knowledge sharing among employees in the oil and gas industry in Malaysia. The researchers found out that knowledge on how to use social media promoted information sharing in the companies better than did team efficacy. Thus, e-WOM has some advantages as stated above, but suffers several disadvantages, whose solutions are presented below.

2.4.3 Recommended solutions to the adverse effects of e-WOM

Social media and technological advances have increased the voice of consumers in decision-making and representation in company resolutions (Lee & Youn, 2009; Lin & Lu, 2010). The speed of transmitting information from one consumer to another has increased over the years, with one communication being accessible to millions of consumers in seconds (Cruz & Fill, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Walsh, 2003). According to Lin and Lu (2010), consumers have been found to rely significantly on information from other consumers available online to make important decisions on purchasing products. These decisions can impact either positively or negatively on the image as well as the sales of a company. Therefore, gaining positive results from electronic word of mouth depends on the capacity of an organisation to harness electronic word of mouth as a marketing tool (Cheung & Thadani, 2010; Cruz & Fill, 2008). The use of websites, blogs, sites for social networking, emails, and discussion boards to provide advice and information to other consumers about a product increases the need for marketers to enhance their capacity to use these tools to increase sales and attract customers. This case also applies to oil and gas companies, which are affected by negative eWOM (Ye, 2014; Yin, Feng, & Wang 2015).

Lindenblatt (2014) argues that social media communication is seen as a threat to firms despite its potential to be beneficial. The author carried out a study to establish the

strategies that companies can employ to prevent damage to their brand reputation in the face of negative eWOM. The first recommended solution in dealing with the adverse effects of electronic word of mouth- proposed by Lindenblatt (2014) - involves the development of an effective crisis management strategy to deal with negative eWOM. In the study, the author found that companies emphasized the need to have a good reputation online and being professional at all times to ensure their resilience in case of negative electronic word of mouth instances.

The second recommended solution to negative electronic word of mouth is the need to create social media teams that are proactive and not just reactive. Silverman (2011) argues that being systematic and prepared is essential in eWOM marketing efforts. In agreement, Lindenblatt (2014) proposes the need for marketers to be active on online platforms and responding adequately to comments from consumers before negative feedback goes viral. This strategy can be useful in reducing the speed at which negative electronic word of mouth spreads and reaches other consumers (Lindenblatt, 2014).

The third recommendation from the literature presented by Stokes and Lomax (2002) involves developing procedures that can effectively deal with complaints from consumers online. According to Stokes and Lomax (2002), consumers tend to share their experiences with products and companies with other consumers and can influence the attitude of others towards a particular firm. Therefore, creating and supporting effective procedures for handling complaints can ensure customer satisfaction and enhance customer loyalty and retention for a company. However, the authors posit that most companies have not placed value on creating eWOM complaint procedures to mitigate adverse effects of consumer feedback online.

According to Lindenblatt (2014), another critical solution to negative electronic word of mouth is providing training for all employees of the company. The author postulates that having employees who are aware of eWOM and its effects ensures that they can deal with such effects positively. Also, being prepared as a company can effectively prevent

repetitions of the same mistakes and reduce the occurrence of negative publicity (Lee & Youn, 2009; Lindenblatt, 2014).

When negative electronic word of mouth occurs for an organisation, their response to this feedback is viewed to be critical in mitigating the negative effects of the eWOM. According to Ye (2014), the purpose of the response provided by the organisation can influence consumers to change their views about the given company and its products. In the study, the author found that the rebuilding strategies used by BP were effective in restoring the confidence of consumers in the company. Their immediate response to criticism through social media platforms and other media lead to a general feeling that BP was committed to restoring the affected areas and being accountable to the individuals affected by the oil spill in the Gulf Coast. Regardless of the perceived threat to the organisation from the public, Ye (2014) suggests that responding in an accommodative and restorative manner to negative eWOM can lower the effects of eWOM on the sales and image of the given organisation- including oil and gas firms.

Further discussion and research of the strategy used by a firm to respond to negative eWOM were carried out by Lee and Song (2010). The study sought to establish the importance of the response strategy for an organisation in case of negative electronic word of mouth. The researchers found that changing the negative attitude of consumers to enhance customer retention and attraction for the firm was dependent on the type of response given to negative eWOM. Enhancing brand image after negative eWOM was found to be associated with accommodative response strategies, while defensive strategies were linked to lowered customer loyalty and satisfaction. Therefore, Lee and Song (2010) conclude that organisations need to ensure that their strategies for response in the event of negative word of mouth online are accommodative and not defensive.

Van der Lans et al. (2010) suggest that preventing adverse eWOM effects can be done by managing the flow of information from the beginning. According to the findings of their study, the authors argue that companies can initiate viral marketing content, which

can be spread by consumers online to enhance marketing for the company. In this arrangement, the intended effects of the eWOM can be easily achieved while shifting the attention of the consumers from negative publicity. In agreement, Phelps et al. (2004) postulated that taking the initiative in eWOM could help an organisation turn their consumers into forces for marketing their products and services and not generating negative information on the Internet.

2.5 Forms of Commercial Transactions

The current section discusses the common types of commercial transactions in the marketing field. These forms include Business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-company (B2C). Further, the section compares between B2B and B2C as they related to the eWOM in the oil and gas industry.

2.5.1 Business to Business (B2B) Marketing

Business to Business (B2B) operations occurs between companies or business enterprises that seek to market their services and commodities exclusively to other firms or enterprises as opposed to operating with individual consumers (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Such commercial transactions may take place between retailers and wholesalers. On the online platform, for instance, employees of one business or company connect with those of other business institutions in B2B communication (Kumar & Raheja, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2012).

Businesses implement e-commerce in various ways in a manner that will achieve maximum benefits (Kumar & Raheja, 2012). In the process of adopting and entrenching e-commerce into their mainstream operations, three models have emerged in the B2B market. First is the transaction model that enables companies to establish conventional methods of transacting business with suppliers. In this model, conventional techniques, tools, and infrastructure are established across all business units (Gosain et al., 2003; Jussila et al., 2015; Kian et al., 2011; Kumar & Raheja, 2012).

Second is the process model that enables businesses and companies to establish standard processes that enhance both firms' efficiency and effectiveness. In the process model, both companies develop and share standard practices both outside and inside their premises (Kumar & Raheja, 2012; Perego & Salgaro, 2010; Piotrowicz & Irani, 2010). Third is the strategic relationship model that enables the establishment of strategic relationships that focuses on all the essential functions and interactions between business institutions (Ellis, 2010; Kumar & Raheja, 2012). The strategic relationship model, therefore, entails linking the two firms' enterprise resource planning (ERP), supply chain management (SCM), and customer relationship management (CRM) in a manner that will enhance the monitoring of production schedules, sales activity, and inventory management among others (Kumar & Raheja, 2012).

B2B operations have benefited companies in different ways, which include quickening the adjustments to customer demands, efficiently managing the firms' inventory, and reducing the costs related to paperwork (Kumar & Raheja, 2012). Besides, B2B operations have enabled firms to secure lower prices of goods and services from suppliers and reigning on rough procurements (Mantrala & Albers, 2012). Moreover, the e-commerce component of B2B operations has also been found to increase access to smaller firms, especially in the global market (Broekemier et al., 2015). While enhancing the reduction of transaction costs among firms, B2B e-commerce has been instrumental in providing an edge to businesses where the existing traditional marketing avenues and channels seem to work poorly (Dannenberg & Lakes, 2013).

Based on different performed functions by firms, B2B businesses maintain different types of websites that seek to facilitate exchange. First are the companies' websites that enable suppliers to exhibit their services and products since their major targets are other firms. Such companies' websites may incorporate various options such as distributor logins and locators, and user registration, among others (Kumar & Raheja, 2012). Second are the e-procurement sites that enable firms together with their agents to acquire services and products from vendors, bid for services and products, and

request for proposals, among others. E-procurement sites are, therefore, meant to serve a specific industry or market niche (Kumar & Raheja, 2012; Piotrowicz & Irani, 2010). Third are the broker websites that permit various intermediaries to connect buyers and sellers of specific goods and services (Dang, 2013; Kumar & Raheja, 2012; Muylle et al., 2018).

In Qatar's petroleum industry, various B2B operations are eminent through joint ventures, subsidiaries, and other investments, such as mergers. In demonstrating B2B activities in Qatar's petroleum industry, a focus on Qatar Petroleum is essential. Qatar Petroleum runs its business both offshore and onshore localities. To efficiently provide its services to clients, it engages in joint ventures and further acquires subsidiary companies among other investments. Given the imminent risks in the petroleum industry, Qatar Petroleum, through its previous subsidiary Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance Company, acquires three types of services namely fund management, reinsurance, and insurance services (Alkoot Insurance & Reinsurance, 2018; Gulf International Services, 2017; Qatar Petroleum, 2015).

Also, AMWAJ Catering Services – a full subsidiary of Qatar Petroleum - offers facilities management and hospitality services to Qatar Petroleum and other oil and gas firms within the industry. Some of the facility services provided by AMWAJ include cleaning, porter, VIP catering, and maintenance and support among others (AMWAJ, 2015; Qatar Petroleum, 2015). Gasal Q.S.C, a joint venture between three firms namely Qatar Petroleum, Air Liquide, and Qatar Industrial Manufacturing Company, deals in chemicals and industrial gases such as hydrogen and oxygen among others (Gasal, 2016; Qatar Petroleum, 2015).

2.5.2 Business to Consumer (B2C) Marketing

Businesses can either sell to other businesses or sell to consumers. Business to consumer marketing refers to marketing that takes place between a firm and its consumers. Consumers make purchases that are small and only required to meet

specific needs and often make purchases depending on the products that are already available and, in their view, (Beitelspacher et al., 2017; Chiu et al., 2014; Hande & Ghosh, 2015). The considerations of B2C marketing include time, size, and the need for a consumer. In B2C marketing, the focus of a firm is selling to individual consumers who need the products for their personal use. The products purchased by the consumers are for consumption by the individual or a household. Therefore, firms use marketing strategies and packaging approaches that suit a particular target consumer group. Conducting business to consumer marketing requires firms to make different considerations compared to marketing to other companies (Devaraj, Fan, & Kohli, 2002). The focus of marketing has to be on the consumer and creating a relationship with the consumer. This purpose requires trust.

Business to consumer marketing, whether online or offline, calls for the creation and sustenance of trust between the entities. According to Gefen and Straub (2004), consumers prefer making business transactions based on trust, especially when there are no guarantees given, and the deals are affected by uncertainty. Also, Gefen and Straub (2003) argue that business to consumer marketing is not possible without the presence of trust from both parties in the interaction. Since the environment of business is not controllable, consumers depend on trust to have a sense of certainty when making purchases- particularly for online transactions (Hong & Cho, 2011; Kim, Kim, & Shin, 2009; Kim & Prabhakar, 2004). Trust in B2C interactions is essential to counteract the uncertainties presented by the possibilities of lies and undesirable behaviour from the firm or the buyer (Hoejmose, Brammer, & Millington, 2012; Khalifa & Ning Shen, 2008; McKnight & Choudhury, 2006; San-Martín & Camarero, 2018)

A different and foremost consideration in business to consumer markets is the need for management of customer relationships. Dowling (2002) posits that growing lasting relationships with consumers leads to the development of loyalty, which can result in profitability compared to having customers who are not loyal to the firm. Businesses need to be more responsive to the needs of consumers. This, in turn, leads to improvements in the satisfaction levels of consumers and enhances loyalty (Lin, 2007).

Appropriate management of customer relations in B2C marketing and the creation of loyalty make consumers less aware of product prices but lean more on the brand (Dowling, 2002; Smit, Bronner, & Tolboom, 2007). The creation of loyalty enhances the sustainability of firms and increases the purchase of products by consumers (Chiu et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2011).

Advances in technology and the use of the Internet in commerce have changed the practices of B2C. Consumers are no longer receivers of goods and services but are active participants in product development and supply. According to Ta, Esper, and Hofer (2015), B2C transactions have involved the consumer as a passive component of the supply chain. However, electronic interactions increase the participation of consumers in value creation through engaging them in product development, service, and monitoring of product and service quality. Consequently, B2C has become vulnerable to electronic customer communications and requires firms to enhance their customer relationship management strategies (Anckar & D'incau, 2002; Tapeh & Rahgozar, 2008).

2.5.3 Business to Business (B2B) versus Business to Consumer (B2C)

How business organisations market to other businesses or companies differs from how they market to consumers. A significant difference between business to business marketing and business to consumer marketing is that B2B is based on logic (Iqbal, 2017). Iqbal (2017) argues that businesses seeking to make purchases are expert buyers who require more input from the firm and focus on establishing lasting relationships with companies. The business making the purchase requires the firm to provide detailed information about the product before the business can decide to purchase the product (Agag, 2016; Altounian et al., 2016). On the other hand, consumers require fewer details on the features of the product but are more interested in the benefits of the product to them. Consequently, B2B requires more input from the firm in persuading the buyer to make a purchase decision compared to B2C (Linton, 2015; Zhao & Guo, 2012).

Another fundamental difference between B2B and B2C markets is found in the customer base. In the former, the market has fewer large customers, while in the latter, the market has more small consumers (Solomon et al., 2013). Besides, the decision process in B2C is skewed towards influencing emotions while in the B2B market, rationality determines the direction of the decision process (Jarvis et al., 2016).

A concern in B2B is on the return on investment that a purchase holds for the buyer, while in B2C, there is less concern on return on investment. Businesses make purchases when they have a clear understanding of the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the product to them. This requires firms to provide conclusive arguments on the financial, time, and resources that a firm saves with a given purchase (Iankova et al., 2018; Pitt et al., 2017; Saha et al., 2014). In contrast, consumers are more interested in the personal benefits that they can get from making a purchase and less interested in the details on what they save when making a purchase. Therefore, B2C requires less data on return on investment but relies on simple and easy messages on the benefits of a product (Mencarelli & Riviere, 2015; Saha et al., 2014; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014).

2.6 Rationale and Potential Implications of the Study

The Internet and technology are changing the way business and marketing is being carried out across the world. Mathews et al. (2016) argue that the Internet is expanding business networks and increasing the global presence of firms. Besides, the Internet is instrumental in changing the role of the consumer in the activities of firms. As a result, consumers are becoming more involved in business processes and are not passive recipients of goods and services. Consumers have become active participants in business and influence product development and value creation.

An essential factor of the Internet that is driving consumer participation in business is social media and electronic word of mouth. This study seeks to explore how eWOM is

influencing business to business marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar but stands to establish findings that can benefit different sectors apart from the oil and gas industry. The results of this study will provide an understanding of how eWOM affects B2B marketing in the oil industry. Nevertheless, the information can also be used to understand the effects of eWOM on B2B in different firms outside the oil and gas sector. This information can help managers in firms know how to harness the positive impacts of eWOM on marketing to enhance their B2B transactions. Besides, managers can understand the negative effects that eWOM can present to a firm when conducting B2B market activities. This knowledge will help firms to develop and implement strategies that will mitigate the adverse effects of negative eWOM on their businesses with other firms.

Another outcome of this study is the establishment of possible solutions that firms can use to mitigate the adverse effects of negative electronic word of mouth. These solutions hold the potential of either reducing or permanently dealing with any adverse outcomes that may arise from negative consumer communication online. Firms can decide to use these strategies- where appropriate- to eliminate or control adverse eWOM effects. Generating possible solutions to negative eWOM is also a valuable addition to available knowledge on eWOM for businesses. Furthermore, the global magnitude of eWOM makes firms vulnerable to the effects that consumers can have when sharing information and advice on products of firms. Consequently, it is valuable for people in different sectors to have access to information on how to manage the effects of eWOM on their interactions with other firms.

The significant motivation behind this study lies in the limited number of studies that have explored eWOM in B2B marketing in the context of the oil and gas industry. Also, there are inadequacies in studies that have examined eWOM in the perspective of business to business marketing. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the existing research gap to enhance the understanding of how social media through eWOM affects B2B marketing. The results of the investigation will provide a background to which future research can be based. Researchers can use the findings and conclusions of this

study to explore eWOM in B2B in a different sector. The current study will be a significant guide for future researchers who want to explore social media marketing and how it affects B2B markets.

2.7 Theoretical background

Various theories have been developed around the traditional word of mouth concept (Erkan, 2016; Mishra and Satish, 2016). EWOM borrows mainly from the knowledge and theories upon which the conventional word of mouth has been grounded (Mishra and Satish, 2016). The current study also borrows from and further underpinned by some of the latter theories and includes the elaborate likelihood model and information adoption model. According to the information adoption model, the same way an individual form an intention towards the adoption of a technology or behaviour, he or she also can form an aim towards the adoption of a specific behaviour or idea (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). Consequently, the aspects that influence the embracing of technologies or practices can also be used to comprehend the acceptance and embracing of advice as well (Mishra and Satish, 2016; Sussman and Siegal, 2003).

The information adoption model, therefore, assists in the comprehension of how individuals' intentions towards a message, which includes eWOM, are developed (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). According to the theory, particular information or communication may have different impacts on individuals depending on the setting and context. Besides, the importance of eWOM information to an individual will also depend on the credibility of the source and the content's quality.

Expanding the information adoption model, customers may judge the importance of any information depending on the credibility and quality of the individual sharing it. Therefore, eWOMs developed by individuals in the close network may have significant influence compared to those produced by marketers (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). The elaborate likelihood model has therefore been used to enhance an understanding of the

process by which a person is influenced by the message he or she receives (Sussman and Siegal, 2003).

The elaborate likelihood model, therefore, seeks to explain how people process stimuli in different ways and how the same processes impact behaviour and attitudes. According to the latter model, when an individual seeking to persuade, also known as the persuader, sends information to a particular audience, a degree of elaboration results (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). Elaboration, in this case, refers to the level of effort an individual within the audience has to utilize to evaluate and process a message, hence, rejecting or adopting it (Marquart and Naderer, 2016). According to the elaborate likelihood model, while reflecting on the level of effort required, individuals react in two ways. Individuals either use low or high elaboration. The experience of either of the latter two determines whether peripheral or central route processing will be utilised (Cacioppo et al., 1986).

A high elaboration level is associated with the central route processing, while a low elaboration level is associated with peripheral processing. Considering the eWOM concept, consumers will engage in peripheral processing when they take part in the low involvement process of online reviews, hence, concentrating on non-content cues. Contrarily, customers will engage in central route processing when they take part in a high involvement process, which is more likely to enhance persuasion attempts, hence making review content more useful to them (Park and Lee, 2009).

2.7.1 Information adoption theory

Sussman *et al.* (2003) has developed the Information Adoption Model (IAM) or theory based on the information adaptation process. This researcher has aimed to explain the ways in which people adopt different types of information that in turn influences their behavior and intentions within the platforms of computer-mediated communication. The key factors that significantly influence the ways of adopting information of individuals are also explained in this model in an organizational context. In the present time, the

researcher has focused on this model with the rapid development of online communities' especially social media and other digital platforms (Dezdar, 2017). This model is based on both the dual process model informational influence such as Elaboration Likelihood Model and the technology acceptance model (TAM). Apart from this context, the study of Boyd and Koles (2019) has stated that one of the most accepted theories of information adoptions TAM but there is a limitation in its explanatory power. As for this reason, there is a need for the development of proper information adaptation theory. This TAM theory mainly focuses on the individual computer usage and information system while it neglects social process. As for this reason, this TAM theory has been compiled with another theory and in this way, this IAM theory has been developed. One of the most effective applications of this IAM theory is in the online or digital communication system. Due to this reason, the business organization in different sectors like the oil and gas sector can follow this theory to improve their information adaptation system in the concerning social media based eWOM marketing process.

2.7.2 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

ELM is a useful model for explaining the ways in which information within the message affects the receivers (Boyd and Koles, 2019). Apart from this, this model helps to describe different aspects of attitudes form changes. It is also helpful in explaining the processes associated with the effectiveness of persuasive communication. As for this reason, this particular model is one of the most effective models of information adaptation and information management. This theory states that the informational influence may take place in any situation in the elaboration of the receivers. In addition to this, this influence can also associate with any type of information route. As per the study of Cortez and Johnston (2017), there are mainly two kinds of information routes, which include peripheral route, and central route. As per this model, individuals can obtain a high level of elaboration when they have a careful and deep consideration of the particular information. On the basis of this context, it can be said that this information related model or theory could also be implemented by the business

organizations to make their online marketing or communication process efficient and secure.

The abovementioned two theories have been considered in this study because both of these two theories or model is significantly related to information management or information adaptation. In addition to this, as all of these concerning theories are authentic and have been used in a large number of information or communication-based studies, it can be said that selection of these two theories is justified. Apart from this it can also be stated that applications of these theories can also help the business organizations in the oil and gas sector to resolve the information adaptation related issues in the marketing communication process using digital platforms. The particular organizations that have not able to adopt new digital technologies in their marketing process can implement these two theories in this particular context. Considering all of these aspects and findings of the existing secondary resources or literatures, it can be said that it is justified to discuss these two theories in this study.

2.8 Conceptual Framework Development

The current section presents the theoretical framework upon which the current study is anchored. Specifically, the research draws upon the literature of brand knowledge, brand trust, brand loyalty, electronic word of mouth, and brand opposition to develop a conceptual framework. The proposed conceptual framework highlights the significant factors that can explain a large proportion of the variance in B2B marketing construction. Further, the theoretical framework is central in identifying the research hypotheses of the present research project.

2.8.1 Brand knowledge and Awareness and eWOM

The literature has widely elaborated on the potential impact that eWOM use has on brand knowledge and awareness among consumers. Alexandra (2015) examined whether eWOM had any effect on retail bank customers. The researchers found that

eWOM influences customer preferences in the banking sector and the influence affected B2B marketing, an aspect that can be explained through the theory of planned (Alexandra, 2015). That is, individual behaviour and beliefs shape the customer's intention to use a specific product or service from a recommended brand by other consumers. Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013) also pointed out that eWOM plays an essential role in influencing brand knowledge and awareness among consumers. Ahmad and Laroche (2017) remarked that eWOM facilitates brand knowledge and awareness about a product or service and influences consumers to make informed decisions. Based on the above literature insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: the positive eWOM activities of a company increase brand awareness.

The subsequent sections present the specific constructs, which are affected by eWOM during brand knowledge and awareness.

2.8.1.1 Consumers' Wanting Additional Brand Information (BKA 1) and eWOM

Ahmad and Laroche (2017) researched on how eWOM influenced information demand in the commerce industry. The researchers observed that information spread through word of mouth, derives consumer curiosity about the brand. In the process, there is an upsurge of consumers who want more information and insights about a given brand. Thoumrungroje (2014) also remarked that eWOM contributes to growing awareness about a brand among potential consumers necessitating the need to avail additional information. Al Halbusi, Hussam and Tehseen (2018) shared that when the popularity of a brand surges in the market through social media posts, there is increased consumer interest towards the new products, as everyone attempts to understand the advantages of innovations over the already existing ones on the market. The positive impact of eWOM in generating information demand on a new product has also been reported by researchers such as Cheung and Lee (2012) and also by Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013). Based on these literature insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H1a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers wanting more information about specific brand products or services.

2.8.1.2 Consumers Seeking Information about a Brand (BKA 2) and eWOM

The literature also indicates that eWOM influences consumers to search for additional insights to learn about marketed products. Ahmad and Laroche (2017) noted that the want for additional insights occurs during B2B marketing in efforts to understand the product. Other researchers such as Thoumrungroje (2014) noted that a new product trigger individual consumer search for the product to evaluate its effectiveness against the popular believes which might be shared about the product on social media. Cheung and Lee (2012) noted the slow nature among consumers to embrace new products in the market, but also noted that social media creates a strong interest for new brands which triggers a person to tray new services and products. Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019) increased the number of consumers interested to search more about a product and this increases the valence and volume of the new product in terms of information search. Ashley and Tuten (2015) noted that customers are more likely to search about a new product to compare its features to the services or products, which they usually use in efforts to decide whether the product is better or inferior to their preferred brand. Based on these literature insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H1b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' seeking additional information about specific brand products or services

2.8.1.3 Consumers Obtaining Information from Brand Owners (BKA 3) and eWOM

Ashley and Tuten (2015) also posited that new information shared on social media through eWOM about a product generates interest not only about the brand, but also the need to seek further insights about it from brand owners. Cheung and Lee (2012) shared that knowing more about the owners of a new product is key to making purchase intentions. Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013) observed that some customers are more curious

about the brand owners; it's country of production or manufacturing site. In the process, search for information about a brand is fundamental in the success of any brand during B2B marketing, and especially when information is availed through eWOM. Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019) shared that brands that are associated with negative eWOM are less likely to attract the consumers' interest in searching for additional revelations from brand owners. In contrast, highly reputable brands are likely to generate interest and desire for more information from brand owners (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and as well as the final purchase intention (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). As such, it can be hypothesized that:

H1c: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' obtaining information from brand owners about new products or services.

2.8.1.4 Consumers Referring a Brand (BKA4) and eWOM

The literature widely agrees that a product or service from a specific brand that meets the needs and desires of consumers is likely to be referred to other consumers. Through eWOM, Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Wong (2014) shared that products that meet the needs of the target market widely receive positive reviews on social media. Such positive reviews are likely to trigger referrals from one customer to another both during eWOM and during official B2B marketing. On the contrary, Bayunitri et al. (2017) remarked that a product less likely to meet consumer needs is hard to sell. In the process, such a product is considered substandard and cannot be referred to other customers through social media sites (Alsulaiman, 2013; Fang et al., 2011; Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006). As a result, it can be hypothesized that:

H1d: eWOM has a direct effect on brand referrals during B2B marketing through social media sites.

2.8.2 Brand Trust and eWOM

The literature also elaborates on an important role that eWOM plays towards facilitating brand trust among consumers. Alsulaiman (2013) noted that eWOM influenced information about a product and empowered a consumer to decide on a product. Fang et al. (2011) noted that brands that meet customer expectations and needs are more likely to generate loyalty and long-term trust than those who do not meet consumer needs. Ottman, Stafford, and Hartman (2006) also shared the central role of brand quality through eWOM feedbacks on social media in ensuring brand trust among consumers. Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016) indicated that a product, which receives more positive reviews through eWOM, is likely to win consumer trust and repeated purchase in the future. In light of these brand trust considerations, it can be broadly hypothesized that:

H2: eWOM has a positive effect on brand trust among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.1 Brand Anticipations (BT1) and eWOM

The literature has discussed several brand trust constructs that are likely to influence positive consumer association through eWOM. Ye (2014) shared that eWOM shared on social media about the superior qualities of a product serves to provoke consumer interest. When a given brand meets customer anticipations, it is likely to generate interest and positive reviews. Yin, Feng, and Wang (2015) noted that eWOM informs customer decisions about a product where brand trust can result if their expectations or anticipations are realized through such a brand. Based on these literature revelations, it can be postulated that:

H2a: eWOM has a positive effect on brand anticipation during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.2 Brand Confidence (BT2) and eWOM

Another important attribute that influences brand trust is consumer confidence. Information shared by consumers on social sites through eWOM is likely to influence consumer choice about a product or service (Ye, 2014). Yoo, Sanders, and Moon (2013) noted that through eWOM, consumers could share their experience with a brand product or service. A positive experience is likely to generate confidence towards a brand (Yoo, Kim, & Sanders, 2015), while a negative experience is likely to compromise consumer confidence about a new product or service. Based on these insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H2b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer brand confidence during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.3 Brand Satisfaction (BT3) and eWOM

Similar to brand confidence and satisfaction, Yap, Soetarto, and Sweeney (2013) shared that eWOM has a potential impact on customer satisfaction. For instance, information shared on social sites about a product can help other customers become aware of the brand and its capacity to meet the specific needs of consumers. Xie et al. (2018) shared those consumer perceptions through eWOM about the possibility of a given brand to satisfy their needs can trigger a positive response market response on the need to uptake the product. In the process, there is a direct impact that consumer feedback about products has on individual needs. In the process, it can be hypothesized that:

H2c: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer brand satisfaction during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.4 Brand Disappointment (BT 4) and eWOM

A disappointing brand is less likely to meet consumer needs and expectations. In a study on the effect of social media in B2B marketing in Qatar, Al-khinji et al. (2019) identify that one of the vital aspects that determines product success is the ability of a brand to meet consumer needs and expectations. Sweeney, Soutar, and Mazzarol (2014) also observed that eWOM facilitates customer experience on social media through feedbacks where brands deemed substandard are more likely to generate disappointment to potential customers, even before they purchase the said product or market. In the process, a brand can lose a potential customer when general information on social media through eWOM reflects consumer disappointment (Tariq, Abbas, Abrar & Iqbal, 2017). In summation, it can be hypothesized that:

H2d: eWOM has a direct influence on consumer brand disappointment during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.5 Brand Honesty (BT 5) and eWOM

The nature of the marketing message used by a brand also determines its success or failure in the market. Brands that promote legitimate messages are ultimately in a position to generate positive reviews and trust among consumers (Vo, Xiao, & Ho, 2017). In contrast, brands that distort facts and present a false narrative about a product are likely to encounter opposition on social media as consumers who have experienced the products are likely to share the contradictory experience with the product (Yoo, Kim, & Sanders, 2015). In the process, such a brand is prone to losing trust for presenting false information to its potential consumers about their services or products (Weitzl, & Hutzinger, 2017). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H2e: eWOM has a direct influence on the honesty levels consumer attaches to a brand during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.6 Brand Concerns or Problems (BT 6) and eWOM

Mihardjo, Sasmoko, and Alamsjah (2019) investigated the influence of digital customer experience and eWOM on brand image and sustainable performance of supply chains. The researchers observed that brands that showed concerns and positive efforts or commitment in resolving consumers' problems generated positive reviews. Increased interest in resolving customer problems is critical in establishing long term consumer confidence with a brand (Muralidharan, Dillistone, & Shin, 2011) and established customer loyalty through repeat purchases (Omar, Dahalan, & Yusoff, 2016). Therefore, there is a strong relationship between positive eWOM from consumer experience when brands offer to address problems their customers experience when using a given product or service from a specific brand. These insights lead the researcher to hypothesize that:

H2f: eWOM through social media has a direct influence on consumer brand concerns during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.7 Brand Initiatives (BT 7) and eWOM

Reza and Samiei (2012) investigated how eWOM affects the brand image and purchase intention in Iran. The researchers noted that when the automobile industry makes efforts to satisfy consumer needs, it is likely to receive positive endorsement through eWOM. Seo and Park (2018) also noted from the airline industry that a brand that makes deliberate efforts to offer quality services is likely to receive positive reviews from consumers. These reviews indicate that brands that make initiatives to promote consumer needs or satisfy the market generate positive reviews about their products. Similar to brand satisfaction and confidence, consumer-based initiatives are vital to attaining customer needs for any brand aspiring to grow and expand its market share (Shen, Li, & DeMoss, 2012). Shin and Dahana (2017) pointed out that social media could share a brand's commitment in promoting customer needs, thereby affecting their

purchase decisions. In light of these literature considerations, it can be hypothesized that:

H2g: eWOM has a positive effect on a brand's commitment of promoting consumer-based initiatives during B2B marketing.

2.8.2.8 Brand Compensation (BT 7) and eWOM

Ashley and Tuten (2015) noted that consumers who experience any loss when using a brand are relieved when they are compensated. Cheung and Lee (2012) stress the importance of product warrant in the event of loss or product damage. During such unfortunate incidences, consumer trust is likely to be influenced by the level of support they receive from a brand in terms of recuperating their losses (Anastasei & Dospinescu, 2019). Shin and Dahana (2017) customer attitude towards a brand on social media can be affected by the help they receive from a particular brand in terms of compensation. Further, support level from brands determines customer response and feedback on social media through eWOM, which can either, be positive or negative (Sijoria, Mukherjee, & Datta, 2018). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H2h: eWOM has a direct effect on consumer perception of brand compensation during B2B marketing.

2.8.3 Brand Loyalty (BL)

Luo and Zhong (2015) examined communication characteristics on social network sites and the influence the eWOM has on brand perceptions. Results revealed that positive communication and information sharing about services have a positive impact on consumer acceptance of marketed products. Kim, Seo, and Schrier (2014) noted that the perceived credibility of eWOM, either negative or positive, has an impact on consumers' loyalty and repeat purchase intention. Omar, Dahalan, and Yusoff (2016) also noted that positive brand perception through eWOM increases customer loyalty

and future repurchases, while Chiu et al. (2014) indicated that brands that create hedonic and utilitarian values generate brand loyalty through eWOM. The literature observations support the general hypothesis on brand loyalty in that:

H3: eWOM has a positive effect on brand loyalty among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

2.8.3.1 Purchasing from Specific Brand Only (BL 1) and eWOM

Kim, Jang, and Adler (2015) researched on some of the reasons why some café customers tend to spread eWOM. Findings from this hospitality management research revealed that satisfied customers are more likely to share the positive attributes of a specific café. Customers are also likely to spread eWOM when a café continually meets their needs. In the process, such customers are more likely to continue seeking similar services from a single brand, denoting a positive relationship between customer experience and repurchase intentions (Kim, Jang, & Adler, 2015). Thus, it can be noted that the choice to purchase from a specific brand denotes a well-entrenched brand loyalty by customers. Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) observed that social eWOM influences brand attitude and purchase intention, where the continued preference for a single brand is attributed to brand loyalty. Based on these insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H3a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer loyalty in terms of purchasing from a specific brand only.

2.8.3.2 Commitment to a Specific Brand Only (BL 2) and eWOM

Lee and Youn (2019) investigated how eWOM platforms influence consumer product judgment. The researchers observed that the continued use of a product reveals some sense of customer loyalty. That is, eWOM provides positive reviews where consumers are motivated by other customers to continue using the product over a prolonged period

mainly through product reviews and ratings on social media. Lovett, Peres, and Shachar (2013) examined how eWOM influences brands. Researchers found that customers loyal to a brand shared their positive experience on social media to show their commitment and liking for the product. In turn, positive sentiments are likely to attract other customers to the brand. Kim, Jang, and Adler (2015) noted that besides purchasing from a single brand, consumer loyalty to a brand is evident from their commitment to continue using products or services from that specific brand. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H3b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of continued commitment to a specific brand only.

2.8.3.3 Lack of Commitment to a Specific Brand Loyalty (BL 3) and eWOM

As noted in the previous section, commitment to a specific brand denotes that consumers have a preference for such a brand compared to products from other brands (Lee & Youn, 2019; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). Customers who are committed to a brand are also more likely to use eWOM to give positive reviews about the brand (Kim, Jang, & Adler, 2015). Fianto, Hadiwidjojo, Aisjah, and Solimun (2014) shared that a brand with a negative image due to dissatisfactory reviews on social media will likely develop negative brand loyalty from customers. In elaboration, this indicates that when consumers show a lack of commitment to a brand, the process can be interpreted as a lack of brand loyalty towards the brand's services and products. Based on this literature review findings, it can be hypothesized that:

H3c: eWOM has a negative effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of lack of commitment to a specific brand.

2.8.3.4 Regular Purchase from a Specific Brand (BL 4) and eWOM

Furner, Zinko, and Zhu (2016) noted that customers who purchased certain brands on regular occasions show they have brand loyalty to a particular product. Results from the impact of eWOM and information overload in the service industry on social media indicate that customer preference on continued customer purchase of a single product reflects brand loyalty (Furner, Zinko, & Zhu, 2016). Gaitan et al. (2013) found that the social identity linked to eWOM and customer referrals on social network services is a clear manifestation of brand loyalty, where positive referrals are likely to generate a regular purchase. Gvili and Levy (2018) found that social capital that is positively made from eWOM served to enhance consumer engagement with a brand, where a positive experience is likely to inform regular purchases. In light of these deliberations, it can be hypothesized that:

H3d: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of regular purchases from a specific brand.

2.8.4 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL)

Hornik, Shaanan, Cesareo, and Pastore (2015) researched on how information about brands is disseminated via eWOM. The researchers noted that while good news about a brand travels fast, the bad news is more likely to move even more quickly. Any news about a brand is expected to generate two outcomes: encourage new consumers to purchase a product, or dissuade potential market from buying a brand due to negative feedbacks spread through eWOM. Huete-Alcocer (2017) reviewed past publications on the impact of eWOM on consumer behaviour and reported that there is consensus among scholars and practitioners that negative brand reviews generate opposition against brands deemed to be substandard or brands that fail to meet consumer expectations. Chan and Ngai, (2011) reported that a negative experience with a brand is likely to inform a customer to dissuade other consumers from purchasing the product

through eWOM shared via social networking sites. Considering these findings, it can be broadly hypothesized that:

H4: eWOM hurts brand oppositional loyalty among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

The subsequent sections present four important constructs that contribute to consumer brand oppositional loyalty during B2B marketing.

2.8.4.1 Discouraging Friends and Family (BOL 1) and eWOM

Chang and Wu (2014) shared that a negative experience with a brand is likely to provoke a consumer to dissuade others from purchasing a product from a specific brand. Most customers are not only expected to discourage other consumers, but share their negative experience with close friends and family members (Chang & Wu, 2014). In the process, negative experience through eWOM is likely to trigger brand oppositional loyalty where consumers tend to discourage their friends and close relatives from using services and products from a particular brand. Hornik, Shaanan, Cesareo, and Pastore (2015) pointed out that negative consumer experience is likely to reach a broader market where dissatisfactory reviews hinder product uptake in the market. Based on these insights, it can be hypothesized that:

H4a: eWOM influences consumer discouragement of friends and family on brand purchase during B2B marketing.

2.8.4.2 Lack of Desire to Purchase Specific Brand Products (BOL 2) and eWOM

Over the years, eWOM insights on a negative experience with products and services have been highly specific. That is, negative consumer reviews as tailored explicitly to particular products (Chen et al., 2015). Chen et al. (2015) examined how consumer purchase decisions change after experiencing services from holiday companies in the

United Kingdom. The researchers found that eWOM from consumers on social networking sites are tailored to individual companies where specificity is key to expressing frustrations or negative experiences among consumers, in efforts to ensure others do not get exposed to the same experience. Hussain et al. (2017) found that consumers' eWOM is highly credible and likely to influence other consumers about the perceived risk of using specific products. Negative eWOM always generate opposition to a brand under consideration (Chang & Wu, 2014). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H4b: eWOM influences consumers' lack of desire to purchase from a specific brand product during B2B marketing.

2.8.4.3 Always Posting Negative Reviews about a Brand (BOL 3) and eWOM

Hussain et al. (2018) shared that the consumers' online information adoption behaviour is influenced by antecedents and motives shared by other customers through eWOM. A customer who has had a negative experience with a brand is more likely to share his or her frustrations with other customers through eWOM on social media (Bayunitri et al., 2017; Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Hutter et al. (2013) remarked that negative brand experience on social media via eWOM creates unfavorable brand awareness and purchase intention. Continued eWOM posting on social media can be closely tied to negative brand experience, a move that can promote brand oppositional loyalty in the market (Brodie, 2017). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H4c: eWOM influences consumers' repeated posting of negative reviews about the brand product during B2B marketing.

2.8.4.4 Never Trying Products from some Brands (BOL 4) and eWOM

Customer experience on social media through eWOM can have long-lasting negative impacts on brand success. Some consumers might decide to avoid using specific

products due to the negative perceptions that other consumers have towards them (Chen, Teng, Yu, & Yu, 2016). Chewning (2015) agreed that negative experience based on multiple voices and multiple media about the BPs crisis had an adverse consumer perception towards BP products resulting in its decline in the stock market. Daugherty and Hoffman (2013) noted that eWOM is fundamental in capturing consumer attention within social media platforms, where negative experience can have long-lasting perceptions about products prompting consumers never to use some products. Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, and Palihawadana (2011) reported that brand image and country of origin drives purchase intentions with experience with products from some brands or countries having permanent negative perceptions among consumers who avoid some brand services and products. In light of these observations, it can be hypothesized that:

H4d: eWOM influences consumers' decisions of never trying specific brand products during B2B marketing.

In summation, the conceptual framework for this research is developed as shown in Figure 1.

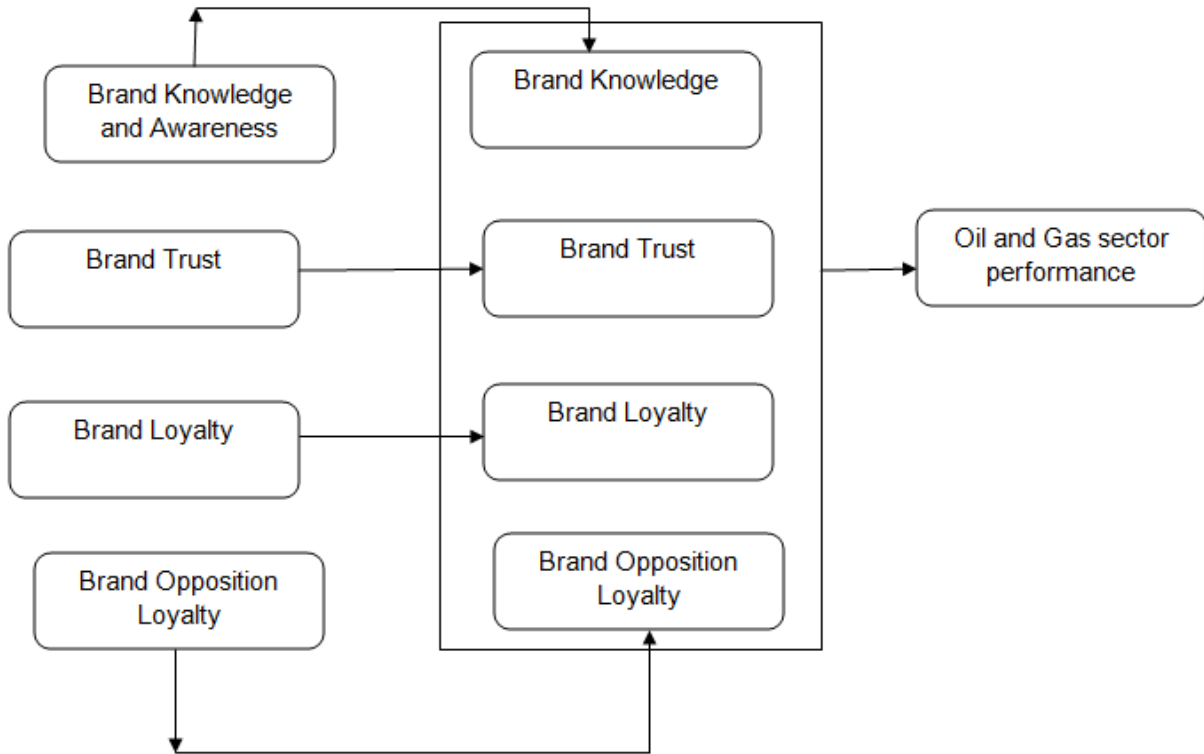


Figure 1: Conceptual framework developed for this study.

2.9 Research Hypotheses

Based on the review of previous literature, the following research hypotheses were developed for this study:

H1: the positive eWOM activities of a company increase brand awareness.

H1a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers wanting more information about specific brand products or services.

H1b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' seeking additional information about specific brand products or services

H1c: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' obtaining information from brand owners about new products or services.

H1d: eWOM has a direct effect on brand referrals during B2B marketing through social media sites.

H2: eWOM has a positive effect on brand trust among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

H2a: eWOM has a positive effect on brand anticipation during B2B marketing.

H2b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer brand confidence during B2B marketing.

H2c: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer brand satisfaction during B2B marketing.

H2d: eWOM has a direct influence on consumer brand disappointment during B2B marketing.

H2e: eWOM has a direct influence on the honesty level consumers attach to a brand during B2B marketing.

H2f: eWOM through social media has a direct influence on consumer brand concerns during B2B marketing.

H2g: eWOM has a positive effect on a brand's commitment to promoting consumer-based initiatives during B2B marketing.

H2h: eWOM has a direct effect on consumer perception of brand compensation during B2B marketing.

H3: eWOM has a positive effect on brand loyalty among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

H3a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers loyalty in terms of purchasing from a specific brand only.

H3b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of continued commitment to a specific brand only.

H3c: eWOM hurts consumers' loyalty in terms of lack of commitment to a specific brand.

H3d: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of regular purchases from a specific brand.

H4: eWOM hurts brand oppositional loyalty among consumers in the oil and gas industry in Qatar during B2B marketing.

H4a: eWOM influences consumer discouragement of friends and family on the brand purchase during B2B marketing.

H4b: eWOM influences consumers' lack of desire to purchase from a specific brand product during B2B marketing.

H4c: eWOM influences consumers' repeated posting of negative reviews about the brand product during B2B marketing.

H4d: eWOM influences consumers' decisions of never trying specific brand products during B2B marketing.

From the above developed hypotheses, it has been seen that there are a number of variables that have been considered in this data analysis process. Among this, brand trust is one of the most important variables in this context. Brand trust refers to an aspect which helps to develop and ensure brand loyalty of an organization (Cortez and Johnston, 2017). Both the company and the consumer can influence brand trust between them. Brand loyalty is also a variable in this study. Brand loyalty refers to the tendency or behavior of consumers to purchase particular brand or process over another (Dwivedi *et al.* 2019). Because of this reason, there is a chance of the effect of social media or eWOM marketing processes on brand loyalty.

2.10 Summary of Literature Review and Knowledge Gap Identification

Traditionally, marketing has used strategies that are unidirectional, formal, and impersonal to reach potential customers and acquire these customers for a firm. Consumers have received information about products based on what marketers think is essential and can enhance sales and customer acquisition. However, consumers have engaged in seeking and sharing information with other consumers about different products. This information is often valued due to the credibility of the consumer and the trust that other consumers place on the source of information. With the advances in technology and an increase in connectedness, social media has been instrumental in

making information accessible to consumers within seconds. These developments have led to the development of electronic word of mouth- one on one communication between consumers on negative and positive information about products and services. The purpose of this review was to explore previous research on electronic word of mouth and its effects.

Several effects of eWOM were identified for different sectors. Electronic word of mouth was established to enhance the transmission of information about a product from one consumer to other consumers in the market. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge to business organisations through enhancing access to positive as well as negative information about a product. Researchers have agreed on the importance of eWOM in improving sales for a firm. Also, eWOM has been established to influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Positive eWOM was found to strengthen brand equity through increasing brand awareness, brand association, brand image, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. However, negative eWOM was associated with loss of customer satisfaction and loyalty leading to decreases in sales and revenues for a company.

Research on the significance of the electronic word of mouth in different sectors is extensive. The most available studies involve eWOM in the context of the education, finance, and tourism sectors. Despite the vast amount of literature on eWOM in different areas, research outlining the use and effects of eWOM in the oil and gas sector is limited. Furthermore, studies that have investigated electronic word of mouth in the Qatar oil and gas industry are scarce- if not unavailable. Nevertheless, the few available studies on the importance of eWOM in the gas and oil sector establish a consensus on its effect on the image of the organisation and revenue. This is in contrast to other researchers who assert that electronic word of mouth was insignificant in the oil and gas sector compared to other business sectors.

The limited number of studies dedicated to investigating the use of eWOM in the oil and gas sector highlight a gap that exists in this sector. Also, limitations in studies that have considered the oil and gas industry in Qatar necessitate future researchers to fill this gap. As a result, the current research seeks to investigate the effects of social media in

B2B marketing. It aims to establish the impact of electronic word of mouth on the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Also, the study will explore possible solutions to mitigate adverse effects of eWOM in the Qatar oil and gas sector.

In conclusion, social media marketing has been used for several years since the advent of the Internet and further developments in technology. An essential aspect of the social media market is the use of word of mouth to influence the buying decisions of consumers. This review has highlighted the general effects of electronic word of mouth on organisations as well as its impact on the oil and gas industry. An important conclusion drawn from the review is the importance of eWOM in influencing the sales of a firm and the oil and gas industry. Also, eWOM affects the brand of an organisation, thus, influencing the decisions of consumers to either purchase or not purchase the products of the given organisation. Despite a large amount of literature on the use and effects of electronic word of mouth in different sectors, few studies have explored social media marketing and eWOM in the oil and gas industry.

Further, there is a limitation in the number of studies that have considered the oil and gas sector in Qatar and how firms in this sector are affected by electronic word of mouth. Consequently, there is a need for research to ascertain the significance of social media in B2B marketing in the Qatar oil and gas industry and how eWOM affects this industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill this gap by assessing how B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar is affected by electronic word of mouth. Also, the possible solutions to mitigate adverse effects of eWOM in the sector will be investigated.

Chapter 3: Research Context

3.1 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the effects of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) strategy in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. To accomplish this aim, the research context will seek to achieve the following goals; (1) to describe the local, global and national settings for this research, (2) to identify current problems, historical precedents and questions that are more likely to affect how the research process as observed at the local level and strategies used to address the issues, (3) to identify global, national and regional issues likely to affect the research process and, (4) to ascertain the need of establishing relationships between competing priorities, different people and different social groups and organisations. This chapter starts by describing the local research context, which is then followed by the broad research context. It also examines regional and national research stakeholders and identifies the international issues and how the researcher will engage with other partners. Finally, the chapter gives a review of data collection and activities for building relationships and an approach for engaging global and local stakeholders.

3.2 Local research context

The local research context entails an evaluation of the economic, religious, social, and political factors likely to affect the research process (Barab and Squire, 2004; Bornmann, 2013). When planning for this research study, different characteristics associated with the various communities will be assessed. This will include information on how the characteristics vary with the types of stakeholder communities in the gas and oil sector in Qatar. The following table shows the features of the Qatar oil and gas sector communities and their variation. One stands for the population possessing the trait permanently, 2 (the community frequently possesses the feature) and 3 (the

identified community occasionally possesses the feature) and 4 (population never exhibit the feature).

Type of community in this marketing research

Characteristics of communities	Racial/ethnic	Occupational	Religious	Virtual	Aboriginal	Disease	Political or geographical
Common traditions and beliefs, as well as shared history and search for sacred knowledge	1	1	1	2	1	3	2
Inclusiveness of culture	2	3	1	4	1	4	3
Common culture associated with health	2	3	1	4	1	1	2
Prioritizing community development to wellbeing of members	3	3	3	4	2	2	2
Geographic localization	3	4	3	4	2	3	1
Shared	3	4	3	4	1	3	1

resources or common economy							
Community self-identification	2	3	1	1	1	3	1
Communication network	3	2	2	1	1	3	2
Legitimate authority	4	3	3	4	1	4	1

Table 1: Characteristics of different kinds of communities in this marketing research

3.3 Characteristics of community type in Qatar’s oil and gas sector to be involved in this research

The community type based on racial/ethnic background in Qatar’s oil and gas industry constitutes Arabs while occupational communities in this sector include drillers, motorman, rig manager, roustabout, petrol station attendants among others. The religious communities in this sector include Muslims, Hindus, and Christians while virtual communities comprise groups of individuals utilizing technological platforms to communicate. Also, the aboriginal community consists of the indigenous communities such as the Omani tribes. Another population of concern in this marketing research is the group with silicosis disease (who inhale silica elements). Finally, the political or geographical community constitutes Qatar's oil and gas business communities (Karell, 2015).

3.4 Background of interviewees

The interviewees who participated in this mixed study were 12 and were selected from the oil and gas sector, Qatar. The 12 participants included five female employees and 7

male employees (see table 2). Four of the participants were managers, four middle managers, 4 were senior employees in the marketing department. The participants had a vast experience in the marketing of oil and gas products since the least had a two-year marketing experience (see table 2). The 12 semi-structured interviews revealed three key themes associated with the positive and negative effects eWOM in B2B marketing. These include brand trust and brand loyalty, which were positive effects of eWOM and oppositional brand loyalty as the negative effect of eWOM strategy. The conclusions drawn from the qualitative findings will form the foundation of quantitative research since they will assist in the development of measures associated with eWOM to gain a statistical understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.4.1 Details of the interviewees

At first, 68 employees who presently work in the gas and oil industry of Qatar has been finalized to be interviewed. Based on the availability of the participants, 12 final participants are selected as the final participants. Generally, managers, Middle managers and senior employees of the oil and gas industry have been included here. All the interview participants have job experience in the particular industry for more than 3 years. Only an experienced employee can talk about the strategies of B2B marketing of an industry (Zolkiewski *et al.*, 2017). Internet buzz impacts product value. The oil and gas industry are not an exception in this matter. Products with more social media presence perform better in the business field than the products with less social media exposure. Other businesses also validate the product value based on their social media presence. Top managers of the companies review the market trend for sake of their products. Therefore, the researcher has only considered the top officials as interview participants.

Moreover, the researcher has later added some of the interview participants who own corporate and private enterprises. Corporate and private enterprises represent the other point of B2B marketing. They purchase the products of the oil and gas industry.

Therefore, the perception of business owners is also important. Only the experienced owners are added to the interview list. Experience plays an important role in understanding the market trend (Gvili and Levy, 2018). The concept of conventional marketing has changed in this era. Strong social media presence and buzz marketing influence the customer's mind. The modern marketing trend can be applied to the oil and gas industry as well, which has followed conventional marketing patterns for a long time.

Only an experienced employee as well as an experienced businessman can track the impact of a new marketing method on the industry. Therefore, all the interview participants were re-experienced in their respective fields. From the whole interview details, it can be said that marketing managers, middle managers, and B2B customers are included in this entire process. They all are highly educated. Male and female, all the participants are included here to reduce gender bias. The researcher has tried to make the participant list proper.

Pseudonym/ Penname	Gender	Company/firm	Education level	Management level	Experience level
A	Male	A corporative enterprise	Masters	Managers	2-3 years
B	Female	Private owned enterprise	Undergraduate	Middle Managers	4-6 years
C	Male	A corporative enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	6-10 years
D	Male	Private owned enterprise	Masters	Managers	6-10 years
E	Female	A corporative enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	2-3 years
F	Female	A corporative enterprise	Masters	Middle Managers	6-10 years
G	Male	A corporative enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	More than 15 years

H	Male	Private owned enterprise	PhD	Managers	More than 15 years
I	Male	A corporative enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	6-10 years
J	Female	Private owned enterprise	Masters	Middle Managers	10-15 years
K	Male	A corporative enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	2-3 years
L	Male	Private owned enterprise	Undergraduate	Senior Employee	4-6 years

Table 2: Details of the interviewees

(Source: Self-created)

3.5 Identification of international issues and engagement with allies

This step will involve collecting information concerning the global context via email forums and network meetings with knowledgeable persons from Qatar. This approach would help in determining the global issues, institutions, and people with the capacity to promote routine communications to make the research project successful (O’Haire et al., 2011; Phillipson et al., 2012; Mackinson et al., 2011; Camden et al., 2015). As such, the researcher will be able to come up with a message to address unexpected research issues in this nation. In this research project, the researcher is set to embrace joint sponsorship with other academic researchers from Qatar universities and other stakeholder partners such as policy regulators. The academic partners from Qatar would help the researcher to identify relevant research bodies that are involved in determining the research boundaries. Discussions between the stakeholders would be facilitated via satellite communications (such as the internet) to ensure both parties are updated on the news and emerging research challenges. Since no research can take place in a vacuum, global discussions on research ethics and priorities can affect the direction of the research outcome.

The following strategies will be used to engage knowledgeable stakeholders to facilitate learning regarding the global context (1) provide the researcher resources and time for structured engagement using an open email platform to discuss relevant topics associated with the research activity (2) offer research time to take part in multi-stakeholder communications with government and academic researchers to share information regarding researching this nation at the global level (3) invite non-researcher members to open sessions of the researcher's research meetings where they will be encouraged to provide vital information associated with the research process and (4) holding two meetings with the stakeholders including government and academic researchers before concluding the research plan. This will be done to share information at local, regional and international levels. These strategies will be aimed at identifying any research issues likely to hinder the accomplishment of research activity at Qatar oil and gas sector to investigate eWOM strategy.

3.6 Review of data collection and activities for building relationships

The step will involve carrying out a discussion with the researcher to analyse the broad context and map the community within Qatar's oil and gas sector to make them aware of the outcomes that could be used to modify the research plan accordingly. It is vital if the design of the research project gets approval from both parties at the local, regional and global levels (Guise et al., 2013). Despite stakeholder discussions presenting information that could be used to modify the research project, it is not always the case. This makes it challenging to work with them because they will perceive that their opinions and views are not worthy (Wright, 2011). It is essential to hold one common meeting with all stakeholders to document their ideas, the proposed responses and potential modifications to the research plan. It is also fundamental to follow-up with different stakeholders and thanks them for their help in making the research planning a success. Finally, it will be essential to inform them of how their ideas are being utilised and promise to let them know the progress of the research within the region.

3.7 Establishment of engagement system for global and local stakeholders

This step will involve building a two-way communication channel with all identified stakeholders at the local, regional, and global levels (Weerts and Sandmann, 2010). An updated contextual analysis of the factors likely to affect the research project at the nation will be created. The study would be aimed at providing information to form the basis for establishing stakeholder relationships. Also, it will help in solving problems together with the stakeholders, although they may not directly be engaged in the research activity or its advisory team. The strategy to ensure the researcher is aligned with the broad context will entail creating a system for receiving and sharing regular stakeholder updates via emails. The formal plan will involve creating an email platform to capture global audiences. Such people are fundamental in the research process similar to the key stakeholders because they will play a distinct role leading to a successful research process in Qatar. Building trust will entail sharing research concerns, information, and queries about the research activity and how the concerns will be addressed at local, global and regional levels. An approach to establishing stakeholder relationship may not be direct as such, but entails mutual respect as well as willingness to work with different people who are knowledgeable outside the research field (Wagner et al., 2012; Susanne and Ellerup, 2011).

3.8 Background of interviewees

One hundred forty-three employees who work in Qatar's gas and oil industry have been finalized for the interview process. The considered sample is further required to represent the population to ensure that the research findings can be generalized from the research sample to the target population as a whole. In the present study, the sample population involved employees of the B2B organization in the oil and gas sector of Qatar. The B2B organization from which the respondent sample has been gathered is mostly from GASCO, Qatar Petroleum, and SPIE. Experienced employees of the organization are capable of reviewing the market trend for the offered products;

therefore, the present research has considered only the experienced employees as respondents of the research.

3.9 Researcher

The researcher refers to the researcher who is involved in a research project. The member of a researcher works, focusing on a particular common goal (Boyd and Koles, 2019). The organizations that are involved in research are also considered as the important members of a researcher. In addition to this, the business organizations in the oil and gas companies on which E-WOM impacts are found are also the members of this present researcher. The supervisors who have helped and guided to conduct this research systemically are also the present researcher members. In the present research, there is no research group. It constituted of only the researcher and the respondents who were interviewed (interviewee).

3.10 Summary and Conclusion

This study seeks to examine the influence of social media in business to business (B2B) promotion through an examination of eWOM approach in the gas and oil sector in Qatar. The research context associated with this research study has been presented above. An indulgent of the local and global settings that are likely to affect the progress of the research process has been pursued. The local context has featured factors associated with the characteristics of the communities from which basic information will be sought. The identified communities from Qatar's oil and gas sector include the racial/ethnic, occupational, religious, virtual, aboriginal, disease and political or geographical communities. Some of these communities are likely to affect the research activity, and it is fundamental to understand different characteristics associated with them and how effective they can be utilised in the research. The broad research context has also highlighted the major stakeholders including Qatar government and academic

researchers, that will offer advice related to researching Qatar. Similarly, vital global issues likely to affect the research including ethical and social issues, have been identified and their solutions proposed. Issues of discrimination would be dealt with by the relevant authorities regulating research in the nation. Other small issues such as plagiarism and falsification of information will be addressed by upholding research integrity. This research will involve different stakeholders including the university researchers and other regulatory bodies, to ensure the study is successfully planned to eliminate the chances of failure. The engagement system with stakeholders includes a two-way communication channel where concerns and knowledge will be shared to address the concerns accordingly, as noted by Weerts and Sandmann (2010).

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Both research and knowledge increments are terminologies that are used in research. Research is commonly applied by researchers to polish what is already known about the given research phenomenon (Bryman, 2015). According to Babbie (2015), different dimensions can be applied in research to investigate the research phenomenon effectively to gain new knowledge and new opportunities for further investigation. Thus, it could be argued that knowledge and research have a positive correlation (Babbie, 2015). Furthermore, research is regarded as a scientific approach applied in gaining desired information to explore the given research subject. Gaining such information is dependent on the research criteria and objectives (Bryman, 2016). Research is specific and follows some definite direction. Random search is never considered a proper way of research if no conclusions are drawn. Furthermore, directionless research results in confusion among readers (Bryman, 2017). It is hard to create a pattern of knowledge and, in the process, becomes difficult to understand the subject matter. As such, research ought to apply systematic as well as scientific approaches in data gathering (Walliman, 2015). Generally, research varies depending on the thought process and mindset of people involved in the study.

According to Bryman (2015), research can be conducted to collect previous information or add new information to already established findings. In some cases, research could be done, and the basis of the results, additional initiatives can be pursued to improve current knowledge. Thus, research constitutes different motives and can be undertaken from various perspectives. The stronger the process of research, the stronger the process of discovery and invention among researchers (Bryman, 2016). Research in this aspect contributes much to the community by helping researchers come up with something unique to deliver innovative and new knowledge. Research helps the community to redefine the social problems and providing the most appropriate intervention to the issues identified (Bryman, 2015).

The methodology section is vital in research since it offers the foundation of the entire research study. This section facilitates an understanding of the science of research while examining the different research aspects (Babbie, 2015). Bryman (2017) reports that the methodology section can be considered as the guideline for approaching the entire research. Various research alternatives comprise of the research aspects and their justifications captured in this chapter representing the thoughts of the researcher towards accomplishing the research subject. In the completion of the research, research methodology is essential as see above. According to Walliman (2015), the research methodology is a fundamental technique applied to solve a given research problem. Bryman (2015) argues that a research methodology is a tool for achieving the research study's purpose quickly and appropriately. The research questions and objectives are also important when determining the method of data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2015; Davies and Hughes, 2014; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Creswell and Clark, 2017).

This study was seeking to investigate the effect of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) strategy in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. The methods and measures followed in accomplishing data collection and analysis are explored in this chapter. The research model applied to approach the research activity has also been examined. The research philosophy that guided the research activity has also been presented. The approach and methods used, as well as sample population and procedure for sampling, have been highlighted. Procedures for data collection and analysis have also been underlined. Besides, the validity and reliability of data, as well as ethical considerations, have been evaluated. Finally, the limitations of the selected research methodology have been presented.

4.2 Research Aim

The current research aimed to investigate the effects of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the oil and gas sector in Qatar.

4.3 Research Question and Objectives

4.3.1 the following question was pursued:

What are the impacts of electronic word of mouth on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and how can the negative effects, if any, be solved?

4.3.2 following objectives were pursued:

1. To determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.
2. To find out the adverse effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.
3. To establish a possible solution to the negative effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.

4.4 Research Onion Model

The selection of a research model for use during research activity largely depends on the understanding of the research study in connection to the epistemological deliberations, theory, and research questions. This is so because the models significantly differ in these contexts (Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis, 2012). It is therefore crucial for one to select a research model that will be applied to present an opportunity for identifying the steps that will be followed and ensure the collection of relevant data (Bryman, 2017). For this research, the research onion model by Saunders

et al. (2009) was employed. The model was selected because of its ability to offer detailed knowledge associated with the research process (Saunders et al., 2012). The research activities were subdivided into manageable sections (see Appendix 1). These included identifying the philosophical foundations on which the research process was to be laid, selection of the research approach, research strategies, identification of the timeframe and the procedures and techniques employed for the success of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.4.1 Outer Layer: Research Philosophies

In this section, a description of the research philosophy that was employed in this study is provided in relation to other research philosophies. According to Mack (2010), many scholars regard a research philosophy as a belief linked to how data is collected, analysed and utilised in research activity. The transformation of that which is acknowledged to be real from that which is thought to be true is the primary purpose of social science research (Bryman, 2016). There are different philosophies including ontology, epistemology and axiology can be applied to show the reality of a research phenomenon (Yusuf, Adams, and Dingley, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012).

4.4.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is used to understand the real and true nature of the subject under study. In this regard, the focus of the researcher is to identify facts in a detailed manner (Duberley, Johnson, and Cassell, 2012). The ontology philosophy requires more explanation for the changes in the study subject. Furthermore, there is an examination of reality and its impact on societal dimensions. Saunders et al. (2009) report that there is a massive gap between perceptions about reality and actual reality and thus doing away with the differences between the different aspects is what is contributed by the ontology philosophy.

4.4.1.2 Epistemology

Regarding epistemology philosophy, facts associated with reality and the true nature of the subject area is assumed to have taken place (Duberley et al., 2012). In this philosophy, facts about truth and reality are not directly accepted. In this view, research must be conducted to test reality and the actual outcomes in the natural setting (Saunders et al., 2015a). Opinions are also considered to be part of scientific research.

4.4.1.3 Axiology

For axiology philosophy, the study integrates his/her thought process in the study. The opinion of the researcher also plays an essential role in the entire research process including data collection, topic selection, sampling, and other methods and this may ultimately affect the study results (O’Gorman, Lochrie and Watson, 2014). This study applied the epistemology philosophy since it was seeking to understand the perceptions of people regarding reality and the true nature of the research subject (effect of eWOM) (Leitch, Hill, and Harrison, 2010).

4.4.2 Layer 1: Subcategories of Research Philosophies

This is an extension of the outer layer comprising of the subcategories of the research philosophies (epistemology, axiology, and ontology). O’Gorman et al. (2014) argue that philosophy selection should be systematic. The subcategories of the research philosophies include objectivism, constructivism, positivism, interpretivism and realism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.4.2.1 Objectivism

Based on the objectivist philosophy, individuals have different objectives of conducting research. This implies that a social phenomenon under investigation would have different meanings among individuals and that such people can never have similar

behaviours towards a similar situation (Saunders et al., 2009). The philosophy acknowledges the diversity of the thought process of different people within a society (Petty, Thomson, and Stew, 2012).

4.4.2.2 Constructivism

It is contrary to the objectivism philosophy in research. A change in the mindset of the people in a society leads to an understanding of a social phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012). In objectivism philosophy, social phenomenon influences society. However, in constructivism philosophy, the societal elements influence reality about the social phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.4.2.3 Pragmatism

It is applied to explain the existence of both objectivism and constructivism approaches in research. Based on this philosophy, objectivism and constructivism can be applied in any research project to have detailed knowledge and the most appropriate solution to the social problem being studied (Saunders at al., 2012). The philosophy is advantageous in that there is an application of both interpretive and positivist schools of thought (Bishop, 2015; Mertens, 2014; Feilzer, 2010). It is to compensate the weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research approaches that the pragmatism approach is used. This is possible due to the use of both objective and subjective approaches to achieve the research target (Morgan, 2014; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

4.4.2.4 Realism

There is a distinction between positivism and realism in research although both research philosophies work similarly and their principles follow a common ideology. For realism philosophy, the social reality is believed to be unchangeable in relation to the changes in the social phenomenon and most cases remain the same (Rahi, 2017). The

philosophy is often used when the scope of research to test reality is narrow, and scientific methods are not always perfect. Just like the positivist philosophy, in realism philosophy, the scientific methods, as well as truths and reality concerning the social phenomenon, can be transformed (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.4.2.5 Positivism and Interpretivism

According to O’Gorman et al. (2014), western social science has identified two main research philosophies that include scientific philosophies/ positivist and anti-positivist/ interpretivism.

4.4.2.5.1 Positivism

With the positivist philosophy, the researcher is accountable for measuring the difference between accepted knowledge and actual knowledge. The researcher has an opportunity to develop questions and test them in the natural environment to understand the research phenomenon. Researchers who make use of the positivist school of thought believe in objective description of reality due to its stability and ability to be observed with no interruptions on the research phenomenon that is being investigated (Arghode, 2012; Tuli, 2011; Reiners, 2012; Taylor and Medina, 2013; Aliyu et al., 2014). With the approach, it has been contended on the need to do repeated observations and the isolation of the research phenomenon, as noted by Denscombe (2014). This involves seeking how reality influences a single independent variable for the establishment of regularities and the associations that exist between such variables in the social world. Based on previous explanations of realities and whose inter-relations are known, predictions can be made as noted (Gummesson, 2017; Antwi and Hamza, 2015; Robson and McCartan, 2016). In some situations, however, Rahi (2017) reported that based on the philosophy, some variables might not be researched because they would not be measured.

4.4.2.5.2 Interpretivism

A researcher can apply the interpretivism approach to research to understand the study subject. The philosophy focuses more on individuals' mindsets within their natural environment. In this view, it is the role of the researcher to try and understand the connection of people to one another and the effect of their cultural existence (Saunders et al., 2009). Followers of this belief contend that through subjective interpretation, reality can be fully understood in regards to some research area (Bachman and Brent, 2014; Duberley et al., 2012; Moon and Blackman, 2014; Petty et al., 2012; Scotland, 2012). According to Chowdhury (2014), interpretivists need to carry out a study in its natural environment to have an interpretation of the people's views, perceptions and thoughts. To avoid triggering research bias, it is believed that the researcher cannot influence the research subject. It is for this reason therefore that it is important to use participants' views as a basis for the interpretation of reality (Leitch, Hill, and Harrison, 2010; Moon et al., 2016).

This study seeking to understand the effects of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar sought an interpretation of both positive and negative effects of negative electronic word of mouth on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Similarly, it sought to determine effective causal relationships between different variables. For this reason, an in-depth and quantitative understanding of the data that was analysed using interpretive and quantitative techniques was utilised. As such, interpretivism and positivism philosophical approaches were applied to pursue this research activity.

4.4.3 Layer 2: Research Approach

Saunders et al. (2009), layer 2 of the research onion model, covers the research approach. World over, there is no single research approach that has been deemed better than others but scholars have through consensus, affirmed the importance of combining a variety of methods to improve on the quality of data collection and research

findings (Lewis, 2015). Examples of the approaches that can be employed in the investigation of a research phenomenon include inductive, abductive and deductive methods (Osman et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2015a; Woo). The deductive research approach is employed when the scholars are testing a theory that is already in existence through the collection of evidence relevant to the research phenomenon (Bradbury et al. 2014). Besides, sunders et al. (2009) defined the deductive research approach as an approach in which answers to an already existing question about accepted reality are pursued. In most cases, the researchers move from principles or theory to a specific statement that needs investigation. According to Saunders et al. (2012), the scope of the deductive research approach is narrow compared to the inductive method.

The inductive research, on the other hand, advances the analysis and utilisation of the data that has been collected to develop new ideas related to the research phenomenon that is not existing (Soiferman, 2010). Saunders et al. (2009) argue that as an initial approach, the researcher evaluates the problem statement based on the already developed theory. In this case, observation is critical since it transforms the thought process and the current mindset accordingly. When combining both inductive and deductive approaches to counter the weakness of using a single strategy, the resulting approach is known as an abductive approach (Walton, 2014).

Some of the weaknesses include the criticism of inductive reasoning theory building cannot be facilitated by any amount of evidence and the lack of clarity in regards to how theory is identified and tested, causing deductive reasoning not to hold ground (Zalaghi and Khazaei, 2016). The approach promotes the need to establish logical inferences and assist in developing new theories (Walton, D., 2014). Therefore, this study applied both deductive and inductive approaches. The inductive approach was used in phase one of data collection to identify themes emerging from the collected data. The research questions were used in narrowing down the scope of topics (Gabriel, 2013). Also, the deductive approach was employed to pursue quantitative data collection and analysis to gain quantitative insights associated with the research phenomenon.

4.4.4 Layer 3: Research Strategy

Based on the general purpose of the study, a variety of research styles can be employed to identify data collection and analysis sources. These include case studies, action research, archival research, grounded theory, surveys, and experiments to investigate the research phenomenon (Gray, 2013). In the case of experimental research, scientific techniques are used to investigate a research phenomenon. Such techniques include laboratory methods, which help in facilitating the measurement of the expected research outcomes against the results (Campbell and Stanley, 2015). Action research is used in investigating a research phenomenon associated with a community of service to propose appropriate interventions to improve various practices (Bryman, 2016). The method entails an examination of different community practices to ensure they correspond to the required standards. In this view, it promotes a reflective practice allowing the assessment of professionals in the community setting to improve service delivery to community members (Bryman, 2017).

Archival research involves investigating a research phenomenon using existing materials (Bryman, 2015). This form of research may sometimes incorporate a systematic literature review to examine the patterns of the current study to come up with a sum of knowledge associated with the research phenomenon. This includes investigating the application of previous research on particular research topics (Klenke, 2016). For grounded theory, May (2011) reported that the inductive approach is applied to retrieve patterns emerging from data as a precondition for the research. For instance, the interview data can be transcribed and coded after which grounded based on commonalities existing between responses. This implies that results must be retrieved from complete research (May 2011).

Survey designs are also crucial in social research to understand the experiences of the people (Rea and Parker, 2014). Surveys are applied in different cases such as health, psychology, governance, and marketing (Krosnick et al. 2015). Many researchers prefer using survey design due to its low-cost implications and convenience in collecting data

and also have high representativeness (Fowler Jr, 2013). In survey research, the participants are drawn from different settings while investigating the research phenomenon. According to McDaniel and Gates (2013), it is vital to apply the survey research when it comes to the selection of research participants from various research contexts. As noted by Brinkmann (2014), one of the approaches that facilitate data collection using survey research is through the use of questionnaires. During this process, one develops a questionnaire guide to collect responses of participants (Kallio et al., 2016). The design of the questionnaire guide can be structured in a way to gather demographic information from the respondents and also information regarding the research questions.

The case study research can also be used in research studies. This strategy allows the collection of data from a specific research context for understanding the experiences of the people (Yin, 2017). The advantage of case studies is its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon aiding researchers to understand the specific research context. It is this advantage that however, leads to its limitation as it cannot be generalised to a bigger sample population (Cronin, 2014; Yazan, 2015; Hancock and Algozzine, 2016; Yazan, 2015). Semi-structured interviews can be used in collecting data when using the case study design, whereby the researcher works in a flexible manner that permits the participants to relay their views (Hancock and Algozzine, 2016).

The current study was seeking to understand the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. This makes the oil and gas sector a specific area for this research. Therefore, the case study and survey strategies were employed to gather relevant evidence from the oil and gas as a case sector in Qatar to accomplish the aim of the study. First, the case study strategy was applied for an in-depth understanding of the study area and then the survey strategy for gaining quantitative insights about the study area (Blaikie, 2010).

The research is mainly related to check the impact of internet buzz on the business to business marketing of the oil and gas companies of Qatar. Therefore, applying both the primary and secondary research process are justified. The survey, as the primary quantitative process is applied here. On the other hand, the interview process has been applied which is a qualitative research method. Mixed method research helps to identify all the research aspects minutely. Moreover, the qualitative and quantitative viewpoints of the entire research process can be addressed by a mixed-method (Gibson, 2017).

4.4.4.1 Oil and Gas Sector in Qatar

Qatar's oil and gas (energy) sector is well-developed and consists of a diverse array of companies that are owned by the state and inclusion of the private sector in major energy projects. Qatar remains a key player in gas and oil in the international business (Oxford Business Group, 2016). Due to the ongoing global financial crisis, the nation's hydrocarbons income accounting for a significant portion of the net income was impacted negatively. Also, crude oil had been observed to be losing its value by two-thirds between 2014 and 2016 (Oxford Business Group, 2016). Also, the cancellation of the multi-billion-dollar petrochemicals (a second one to be cancelled within six months) affected the nation significantly (Oxford Business Group, 2016). There is an increase in the oil and gas output from Iran and the USA globally, implying that Qatar will continue experiencing the price slump. However, despite the many challenges facing the nation, it is better positioned than other market players including the U.S. and Iran. It is number four in terms of the production of dry natural gas and liquefied gas. This has been achieved through its targeted investments that have promoted the expansion of value-added gas to liquids as well as condensed production (Oxford Business Group, 2016). The Qatar oil and gas market is dominated by different companies including total, shell and ExxonMobil and other small companies including Qatar Petrochemical Company, ABM Qatar and RasGas (Scope Company, 2019). Since different strategies including eWOM, can be used to enhance the competitive edge of companies (Bhattacharya,

2016), it was worth investigating the effects of eWOM while being applied in Qatar's oil and gas sector to attract more customers in the current competitive market.

4.4.5 Layer 4: Research Choices

Research can include qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research. Such studies differ in terms of the level of study and that the research approach varies based on the nature of the research project (Saunders et al., 2009). Quantitative research represents the collection of data associated with numbers and statistical techniques are applied to analyze the data (Rea and Parker, 2014). Qualitative research also involves the gathering of people's views and opinions that require qualitative analysis methods (Wahyuni, 2012). Three research choices can be selected in facilitating a research activity. These include mono, mixed as well as multi-research options (Saunders et al., 2012). In the case of a single research approach application, the choice is known as mono-research while the use of two research approaches is referred to as mixed research (Guetterman, Fetters, and Creswell, 2015; Hussein, 2015; McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015). Further, a multi-research choice comprises more than two research strategies for example, experiments, case studies, ethnography and survey strategies (Saunders et al., 2012).

In this study, there was a need for conducting an in-depth investigation so as to answer the research questions effectively. This kind of investigation was able to support qualitative evidence collection to help in understanding the opinions, perception and views of the people based on their experiences in regards to the research phenomenon (Lampard and Pole, 2015; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In gathering the views, opinions and perceptions of the participants for an in-depth understanding of the research subject, semi-structured interviews were utilised.

Also, after the collection of qualitative data and analysis, quantitative methods were applied to gather quantitative findings that were triangulated with the results of the

qualitative findings to enhance understanding of the research phenomenon. In this case, mixed-qualitative research was applied for collecting, analysing, and utilizing evidence relevant to the research area. This was to enhance an understanding of the negative and positive effects of social media in B2B marketing and solutions to negative impacts.

4.4.6 Layer 5: Time horizon

This layer examines the period taken to complete the research and includes two kinds of time horizons. These include cross-sectional and longitudinal (Saunders et al., 2012). Researchers applying the longitudinal approach to understand their study area usually take long periods for studying the given subject. On the other hand, those using the cross-sectional research approach take short periods in studying the research phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). A cross-sectional time horizon is applied when seeking to explore behavioural aspects of the participants concerning a social phenomenon at a single point in time. On the contrary, the longitudinal time horizon is employed when studying behavioural aspects of respondents in an extended period (Saunders et al., 2009). This current study applied the cross-sectional research approach with a mind of understanding the ongoing impacts of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in current Qatar.

4.4.7 Layer 6: Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The layer captures the tools and methods used in gathering and analysis data relevant to the topic of study. Bryman (2015) reports that data collection and analysis are essential in research, just like other methods and depend on the methodology utilised. The process used in data collection and analysis contributes significantly to the overall validity as well as the reliability of the study. Regardless of the data collection and analysis utilised in the research, data is only divided into two: primary and secondary data. Primary information is regarded as the data collected using first-hand sources of data gathered using surveys or interviews from participants (Bryman, 2016). On the

other hand, secondary data is regarded as data derived from the perceptions and opinions of other researchers (Denscombe, 2014). Bryman (2015) reports that secondary data constitute already processed information by another person. Other sources of data such as newspapers can serve as primary as well as secondary sources, as highlighted by Bryman (2017) and it depends on whether the news reporter was present. This research utilised primary sources of data that were respondents from the Qatar oil and gas context.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data areas are included in this research. Qualitative data has helped to review the perception of the participants about the significant impact of E-WOM in the B2B marketing process of the gas and oil sector of Qatar. It is important to know the employee perception as they are the core components of the gas and oil industry. The interview is an open response process that has helped the employees to put a range of viewpoints of the employees. Additionally, Survey is a quantitative process (Ongena and Dijkstra, 2020). The responses are close-ended. Due to the limitation of the responses, the quantitative nature of responses can be addressed.

4.5 Research Design

A research design is defined as a description of the research process from the start to the end (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). It constitutes all measures that lead to the adoption of the methodology applied in the research, how participants are selected and the process of data analysis (Creswell and Clark, 2017). Different research designs can be applied in the research activity to understand a research phenomenon. They include descriptive designs, exploratory designs and explanatory designs (Wahyuni, 2012). With the descriptive research design, the researchers investigate the experiences of the participants. According to Saunders et al. (2012), an explanatory design is more focused on the explanation of the characteristics of the target population.

In most cases, the explanatory design is applied when using the quantitative framework to study the impact of one variable on another (Davies and Hughes, 2014). Finally, the exploratory design leads to the exploration of a research phenomenon with little knowledge about the issue to conduct systematic research. An exploratory study is used in research to inform further research associated with the research phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). Based on the above explanation, this research study employed the exploratory research design since it sought to investigate the experiences of employees in Qatar's oil and gas industry regarding the eWOM strategy in marketing in B2B.

Other methods that were used to facilitate the gathering of empirical data from the research setting include sampling methods, observations, questionnaires and interviews (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.6 Research Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample in research is regarded as a segment of the total population (Bryman, 2017). In this research, the sample population involved B2B business firm employees from the oil and gas sector in Qatar utilising eWOM strategy in marketing its goods. As of 2015, before the restricting of the oil and gas sector, the industry employed 14, 000 employees (Shamseddine, 2015). Since the number of employees is huge for this mixed research study, the following formula was used to determine the appropriate survey sample:

$$n = (Z)^2 * SD (1-SD) / (\text{margin of error})^2$$

Where n denotes the sample size, Z value is the confidence level set, and SD is the standard deviation. The mostly used confidence levels include 90%, 1.645, 95%, 1.96 and 99%, 2.58 (Rucker, 2017). Using a margin error of +/-10% (.1) and a confidence level of 90% and SD of 0.5, then n will be:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= (1.645)^2 * 0.5 (1-0.5) / (0.1)^2 \\ &= 67.6506 \end{aligned}$$

Approximately 68 employees.

Sampling methods can be used in selecting the appropriate survey sample to represent the target population. For this study, purposeful sampling was applied to select 68

employees working in business firms operating in the oil and gas sector in Qatar using their LinkedIn profiles. Also, it was applied to select employees who have worked in the marketing department for over two years. This represented the target population from Qatar oil and gas sector. In general, purposeful sampling is defined as a sampling technique in which a non-probabilistic sample is identified and selected depending on the attributes of the target population and the study objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, purposeful sampling involves selective, subjective as well as judgmental sampling to identify the most relevant sample to use in investigating the research phenomenon (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). The purposeful sampling method is beneficial since various sampling techniques can be applied including homogenous or case sampling. However, it has limitations including research bias if judgments in research are poorly considered. Also, it becomes difficult to defend a sample's representativeness among the readers (Etikan et al., 2016).

From the 68 employees, approximately 12-15 employees were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews to aid in the collection of qualitative data. To overcome research bias due to purposeful sampling, simple random sampling criteria were used (Robinson, 2014). The sampling technique is to be used in selecting the sample of 12-15 respondents who are targeted to participate in answering the interview questions. The number (12-15) of interview participants has been argued to be appropriate for qualitative interviews to reach participant saturation (Latham, 2014; Mason, 2010). According to Robinson (2014), random sampling involves the selection of a sample of respondents from the whole target population in which each person has an equal chance of selection. With simple random sampling, the researcher finds it more comfortable, and there is accuracy in representing the target population. When simple random samples are done correctly, there are minimal errors regarding the representation of the total population (Abd-Elfattah et al., 2010). As such, random sampling becomes advantageous when studying a large population. The method was selected for this study because it helped the researcher to investigate the effect of social media (eWOM) across a large population from the gas and oil sector in Qatar. Regardless of its benefits, random sampling also has some disadvantages. First, it

requires a lot of time to combine a list of all employees from the case study. This could be tedious as other companies may not be willing to release their data (Emerson, 2015). Also, Emerson (2015) reported that privacy issues may deter companies from sharing employee information. After selecting appropriate participants, consent was sought from each of them to participate in this research activity.

4.7 Data Collection Methods

Methods, including observational research, questionnaires, and interviews can be used in collecting data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Such methods are selected based on the aim and objectives of the study. A discussion of the methods is given below:

4.7.1 Observational research

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) define observational research as a systematic method commencing at viewing and then recording of behaviours and actions of the research participants. Due to its systematic nature, Bryman (2017) argues that the method is replicable and could be used in understanding a similar research phenomenon in different settings. When making observations on the participants, the researcher does not alter the research environment or influence them in any way but apply their sense to view the participant actions and behaviours within their natural environment (Bryman, 2016). According to (Bryman 2015), observational research is chosen if the actual behaviour of the targeted population is more likely to be different from what will be reported if the population is asked. There are three observation research methods, including naturalistic, participant and controlled observation (Coolican, 2017). The naturalistic view is the kind of scrutiny embraced by researchers to study the actions of participants within their natural environment from day to day and is sometimes referred to as a nonparticipant observation. Participant observation is also regarded as the type of observational research in which the research inserts him/herself to the group under study. In these studies, the investigation can be undercover or may reveal him/herself (Reinharz, 2017). Finally, controlled observation is a type of observational research

taking place in controlled conditions and most cases take place in a laboratory environment (Coolican, 2017).

4.7.1.1 Methods

In the research process, three types of observation methods are naturally used. The methods are as follows;

- Controlled observation
- Naturalistic observation
- Participant observation (Musungwini and Van, 2017)

Surveys and interviews both are applied in the naturalistic as well as participant observation. Controlled observation is generally applied in the lab test where the participants are bound to act as per the researcher's direction. The survey is close-ended; still, it helps the researcher to respond freely. Moreover, the interview is a more naturalistic process where the participants can respond as per their wish.

Controlled observation is competent for laboratory research studies. The participants can only respond to the provided parameters in controlled research. Market research is open. This cannot be done within a limited laboratory environment. Controlled studies are time-consuming as well.

Naturalistic observation is the most used research method for market researchers. E-WOM impact study is directly related to the marketing aspect of the oil and gas industry. The researchers can investigate the natural behavior of the participants in the natural environment. It can help the researcher to take notes on the observed behavior later (Bratich, 2018).

The concept of participant observation aligns with naturalistic observation. However, the researcher gets involved with the participants in participant observation. Being a part of the research environment, the researcher can manipulate the research variables naturally. Natural manipulation can help the researcher to find out the desired results from the entire research process. Coding the information and taking notes are the two important skills that the researcher needs to consider (Roulet *et al.*, 2017).

4.7.1.2 Justification of the choice of method

A combination of naturalistic and participant observation is applied in this research. The naturalistic observation process ensures research validity. This process also helps to deliver new ideas. Coding is an important approach to naturalistic observation. The participant identity is masked by anonymous codes. Therefore, the participants can share their viewpoints freely. The interview process is more naturalistic which opens up new ways of research. Therefore, this process has been applied to justifiably.

Participant observation directly involves the researcher. A survey is one kind of participant observation. Being a part of the research environment, the researcher can control some variables. Self-reported data errors can also be mitigated through this procedure. The participants can be impacted by knowing the involvement of the researcher. However, the anonymity of the researcher's responses has helped the participants to take part in the process freely.

From the overall discussion of the observation methods, it can be said that mixed observation has helped the researcher to achieve research objectives.

4.7.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument that has a series of questions targeted at aiding the researcher to collect information that can be quantitatively or qualitatively analysed (Brace, 2018). For the collection of survey data, two types of research questionnaires can be used including closed-ended questionnaires and open-ended questionnaires. The open-ended questionnaire is applied when seeking to collect qualitative data that should be interpreted using qualitative means. In this regard, researchers select open-ended questionnaires because there are no limitations on the participant responses (Krosnick, J.A., 2018.). On the other hand, closed-ended questionnaires are utilised when seeking to gather quantitative evidence to help in examining the relationship between research variables (Brace, 2018). For questionnaire administration to target participants, the researcher can use different alternatives such online survey programs including BOS survey programs, to distribute the questionnaire to answer the questions (Rea and Parker, 2014).

4.7.3 Interviews

Interviews are used when seeking to gather an in-depth understanding of the study area (Chenail, 2011). According to Doody and Noonan (2013), there are three methods of qualitative interviewing. These include informal conversational, guided, and open-ended interviews. The informal conversational interview resembles a chat in which participants may forget that they are being interviewed. The interview questions arise from the immediate context and are useful when using observational fieldwork (Brinkmann, 2014). With the guided interview, the researcher prepares a checklist to capture all relevant topics (Chenail, 2011). However, the interviewee is allowed to ask questions that may be interesting to the researcher. The approach is best used when seeking an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon at the same time permitting the researcher to keep the interview guided by the set parameters pointing towards the aim and objectives of the study (Bryman, 2015; Bryman, 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015). Finally, the open-ended interview approach offers researchers an opportunity to come

up with open-ended questions that are carefully worded to minimize variations in interview questions. According to Doody and Noonan (2013), open-ended interviews are commonly applied when two researchers are involved in gathering data to understand a common aim and objectives. However, there is less flexibility among the participants when this approach is used in collecting data (Bryman, 2015).

4.7.4 Data collection

This study applied the guided interview approach and a questionnaire to guide the collection of qualitative interview data and quantitative data, respectively from employees selected from Qatar's oil and gas sector. Specifically, this research study utilised the semi-structured interview method and closed-ended questionnaire method for gathering the employees' views regarding the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector. The researcher interviewed ten employees from Qatar's oil and gas sector selected through the random sampling techniques from the 68 employees representing the whole population of workers in the oil and gas sector. The survey questionnaire was then administered to the 68 employees identified to participate in the collection of quantitative data.

4.7.4.1 Data collection procedure

After obtaining approval from the university's research committee, the semi-structured interviews were administered online to the identified respondents via Skype. The interview session took approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and the respondents were asked to suggest the best time when it was convenient for them. The collection of interview data took about two weeks, after which it was transcribed and analysed as described in the following section. After preliminary analysis and note-taking, results were again sent to the participants for member checking to ascertain their accuracy (Harper and Cole, 2012; Carlson, 2010). Their responses after reading through the transcribed interview data were used in the final thematic analysis.

After thematic analysis, the findings were utilised in informing the subsequent quantitative data collection (survey) and analysis. The online questionnaires were administered to the identified 68 participants to give their inputs regarding the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector. The survey was conducted within three weeks and retrieved for further analysis. The quantitative data was to give more insights regarding the effects to determine which ones are more influential than others.

4.7.4.2 Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic and statistical analyses were used to analyse the collected data to understand the effects of eWOM strategy in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Thematic analysis has significant benefits compared to other methods including statistical analysis. Applying thematic analysis on the data collected by researchers who are new in the career is easy since the researchers are only concerned with the emerging themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Also, unfamiliar researchers about other qualitative methods find thematic analysis easy to grasp and a quick method to learn because it has few procedures (Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas, 2013). According to Clarke and Braun (2014), thematic analysis is advantageous since researchers are enabled to explore participant perspectives, highlighting differences as well as similarities and gaining desired insights. The method is also important since it helps in summarising key data features following a well-structured data handling method. This helps in ensuring the final report is well-organised (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Also, the process provides theoretical freedom to the researchers allowing them flexibility when researching to reveal the in-depth account of data. Lastly, Sgier (2012) reports that thematic analysis is easily replicable in other research settings promoting the integration of research findings in making conclusions.

Regardless of its benefits, thematic analysis has disadvantages limiting its application. The disadvantages become more evident when compared to other qualitative methods of research. First, thematic analysis lacks adequate literature associated with it compared to other qualitative methods such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and

ethnography, and many researchers feel unsure of the ways to make the method rigorous (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). With a simple thematic analysis, researchers lack an opportunity to make claims about the use of language (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), despite thematic analysis being flexible, lack of coherence as well as inconsistency can be experienced during theme development. Through epistemological perspective, consistency, as well as cohesion, can be addressed by underpinning the empirical claims of a given study (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Since thematic analysis is reductive, researchers are likely to lose the context of the research when breaking down collected data. In this regard, themes are considered to be in seclusion from the social perspective. This is because the researcher may fail to consider issues affecting participants during interviews (Vaismorad et al., 2013).

4.7.5 Thematic Analysis Process

To thematically analyze the collected data, the researcher can be guided by six steps. First, the researcher needs to get familiarized with the collected data. Active engagement of the researcher with the data is necessary through transcription of the interview interactions with the participants and then listens to the interview recordings and reading of the transcripts (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The researcher thus pens down the initial ideas. The researcher is obligated to be familiar with all the data aspects and be able to understand the content of the interactions with interviewees (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This stage enables the researcher to lay a firm ground for subsequent analysis. Secondly, there is a need for the researcher to develop initial codes. Initial codes that are meaningful and appear to be appealing are then identified once the researcher is familiarised with the data. According to Clarke and Braun (2014), the codes should be aiming towards the accomplishment of study objectives and that they should be specific. Thirdly, the researcher needs to identify themes that are emerging from the data. Identified codes are taken through interpretive analysis in this step. However, the primary area of concern is that of the researcher being able to keenly introduce the relationship existing between subthemes, themes and codes (Javadi and Zarea, 2016).

Fourthly, there is a need for the researcher to conduct a review of the themes that have been identified. There are some critical questions that the researcher is supposed to respond to such as, whether to separate, discard, refine or combine the initial themes. Clear organisation of data within the themes ought to be done in a meaningful manner for a distinction to be seen between the themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). During this step, there are two phases; one, close checking of the themes in relation to the coded themes and two, generation of a thematic map. The fifth step involves the definition and naming of the themes. Within the scope of the data that has been collected, subthemes and themes are defined and redefined. The researcher is then obligated within the step to provide definitions and names of the themes that mark a clear purpose of each identified theme to support the objectives of the research (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The final step involves the production of the report by the researcher. After the researcher's analysis has been transformed, there is a need for writing down compelling extract examples associated with the research objectives, questions, identified themes and literature (Clarke and Braun, 2014). The analysis done should be able to provide the reader with a chance to appreciate the validity of the findings. The analysis should provide empirical evidence that is used in addressing the research questions and contributing to the realization of research objectives rather than merely describing themes (Javadi and Zarea, 2016).

For this research project, the researcher divided the six highlighted steps into three phases including the preliminary stage, theme identification, and theme coding based on the research questions (Sgier, 2012; Smith and Firth, 2011; Clarke and Braun, 2014). In the preliminary phase, there was listening to the interview data that was digitally recorded three times. The purpose of the first listening was to ensure that there is no missing participant information and that the interview data is complete. During the second listening, there was random taking of notes without considering individual interview responses. The third listening entailed taking notes based on the answers provided by the respondents. Once the records had been taken, the second phase involved identification of themes related to the negative and positive impacts and their

solutions through social media in B2B businesses in the gas and oil industry in Qatar. Once the themes were identified, the last phase involved coding of the themes based on the research questions. For labelling of the identified themes, bracketing technique was employed with the themes also being defined for ease of reference during result presentations (Tufford and Newman, 2012; Chan et al., 2013).

4.7.6 Statistical Analysis Process

Multiple criteria approaches were used to examine the quantitative data. The criteria focussed on exploring the internal consistency of operationalization using multiple-item constructs that are tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Also, the measures were used to assess the validity of the study which comprised convergent validity that was checked using multiple-item constructs to test item-to-total correlation, discriminant validity using multiple-item constructs to perform a factor analysis and nomological validity. This helped in testing whether study results were consistent with a larger body of knowledge and if they contribute to the reference field. Finally, the multiple regression model was applied to investigate effective causal relationships between the study constructs developed from the qualitative findings and previous literature (Blaikie, 2010).

4.7.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity in research is defined as the ability of the research findings to be truthful and honest (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). According to Noble and Smith (2015), it involves establishing the credibility of the data. Credibility denotes the researcher's confidence in the findings, and for this study, it was assessed using the triangulation technique whereby multiple perspectives (qualitative and quantitative) were applied to understand the research phenomenon (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). Reliability denotes transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study findings (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). Transferability is regarded as the ability to demonstrate that research outcomes apply to different research contexts to address similar research problems

(Marshall and Rossman, 2014). The researcher applied the thick description strategy in which a detailed in-depth account of the experiences as suggested by White Oelke, and Friesen (2012) of employees with eWOM strategy in B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry was made. With the detailed account of the workers' experiences with the plan in the oil and gas industry, it was easier to transfer the findings to another research context to understand similar situations.

Also, reliability represents the study's ability to be confirmable (Anney, 2014), while confirmability is defined as the extent of neutrality in research (Yilmaz, 2013). This was achieved by conducting audit trails to investigate every data analysis step to facilitate the decision-making process, as suggested by Anney (2014). Finally, dependability (the extent that the same study by different researchers would obtain consistent outcomes) (Yilmaz, 2013) of the study findings was checked. This study employed an inquiry audit whereby an outside person was tasked to evaluate the research process starting from data collection and analysis to ensure consistency in the findings and increased capacity to obtain similar results by other scholars (Markle, West, and Rich, 2011).

4.7.8 Ethical Considerations

In this dissertation, honesty was among the critical ethical considerations. Manipulation of data was avoided to ensure appropriate data regarding the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector is obtained. In every step of data collection and reporting of different aspects of this dissertation, honesty should gain a huge priority by the researcher as advised by Shaw et al. (2010). For instance, avoiding plagiarism and its associated issues in the dissertation denotes the researchers' quest for honesty in compiling this dissertation. According to Harris (2017), plagiarising other people content will mean the dissertation is not credible. In this regard, the thesis was to be written using the researcher's language to avoid claims of copying other scholars' content. Also, self-interpretation was not supposed to be part of the process of gathering data from primary sources, as suggested by Anney (2014). In research, respect for intellectual property rights (IPR) is fundamental when using other researchers' work that

has been previously published or not published. In this process, the researcher is not supposed to use the material directly, and if used indirectly the author of the content must be appropriately cited. This is aimed at minimizing infringement of the IPR of the author of the materials. Also, in relation to the IPR of the participants of this research, they were asked for permission to include their information in this research (Walliman, 2017).

Also, the honesty of the researcher was guaranteed while obtaining participant responses during interviews. There was a need to ensure there was no hesitation from the participants and authority from the researcher requiring participants to respond in a given direction (Anney, 2014). Besides, there was no manipulation of the information and it was reported as provided by the respondents. Further, the researcher was to give the audience review without any spicing on the content to meet personal expectations. In this view, there was no entertainment of any additional information that was not captured by the respondents, thus avoiding self-interpretations (Shaw et al., 2010).

Other ethical considerations entailed seeking approval from the research ethics committee, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants (Lüders, Fossheim, and Ingjerd, 2015). Before the commencement of the research activity, consent was sought from the university's research ethics committee to determine the suitability of the approaches to eliminate ethical concerns among the respondents. One of the major activities to solidify research ethics is seeking consent from the research participants (Lüders et al., 2015). The consent form sent to them addressed various areas including informing them of their freedom to leave the research process if not comfortable. Furthermore, it informed them that the collected data would only be used for academic purposes and that it would be destroyed once the dissertation is published. Also, pseudonyms were used to ensure the participants remained anonymous since false names were applied (Anderson, 2010; Dymrna et al., 2010; Saunders et al., 2015b; Xu and Storr, 2012). For confidentiality, the interview and survey data were stored using encrypted USB disc and password protected computers allowing access to the researcher alone, as suggested by Klenke (2016). Similarly, the

storage tools were kept safely in a lockable room with access to the researcher only (Lüders et al., 2015).

4.8 Limitations of the Research Methodology

This research methodology selected had different limitations that were addressed to make it successful. The use of qualitative interview design limited the generalisation of the research findings to other research settings as found by Lewis (2015). Also, there was limited generalizability of the research findings to other sectors in Qatar. This was overcome by utilizing the appropriate number of survey sample that was selected using purposeful methods to aid in the collection of quantitative data. This implies that the sample population was assumed to represent the whole population from the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Research bias was also a limitation to this study (Chenail, 2011; Doody and Noonan, 2013) since the researcher may seek specific participant responses to answer research questions. Also, the use of purposeful sampling in selecting the survey participants introduced bias issues. However, the flexibility of the researcher as well as strict adherence to the interview guide, helped address this research bias. Similarly, the use of random sampling helped minimize research bias resulting from the use of purposeful sampling (Emerson, 2015). Finally, the interview and survey data were more likely to get mixed up and to get lost. This was avoided by limiting the interview responses to a digital audio recording to undergo transcription later (Hay-Gibson, 2010) and also storing the questionnaire data safely (Krosnick, 2018).

4.9. Summary and Conclusion

This study was aimed at investigating the effects of social media on B2B marketing through an investigation of eWOM strategy in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Three research objectives were pursued. These included (1) to determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar, (2) to find out the negative effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and (3) to establish the possible solution to the negative effects of electronic word of

mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. The methodological chapter was essential in this research because it provided the foundation of the entire research study and facilitated an understanding of the science of research while examining the different research aspects.

The methodology chapter has explored methods to be used in the collection, analysis, and utilisation of data to understand the effects of social media (eWOM) in B2B marketing. The epistemological, philosophical approach, specifically interpretivism and positivist philosophies, were selected as the approaches to this research to gain an in-depth understanding and quantitative insights of the research phenomenon. A mixed research method applying both inductive and deductive approaches was selected to be used in facilitating the understanding of this research phenomenon. A case study research strategy in which semi-structured interviews were used and a survey strategy in which open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data from the identified participants were employed. The participants were selected from the oil and gas sector in Qatar using both purposeful and random sampling techniques. To ensure the research was successful, various ethical considerations embraced have been discussed. Also, the limitations of the research methodology as well as the validity and reliability of the study, have been explored in this chapter. Chapter four presents the qualitative research findings after data analysis.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five presents the findings after the qualitative analysis of the interview data. The objectives of the study included (1) to determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and 92) to find out the adverse effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. As stated in the research methodology, this research utilised semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data regarding the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar to identify variables associated with eWOM effects in B2B marketing. This was aimed at developing appropriate research constructs that will be relevant for the Qatar context to gain a statistical understanding of the identified impacts of eWOM strategy in B2B marketing. The chapter's organisation is as follows: first, the findings associated with eWOM effects in the B2B marketing in Qatar oil and gas sector are described as identified from the interviewees selected from the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Secondly, the chapter gives a discussion of the findings concerning the collaboration concept to inform the subsequent phase of designing the quantitative data collection process. The questionnaire items are also developed in this section to guide the quantitative study that is to be analysed in Chapter five. The implication of the findings will be examined in chapter six and will help in accomplishing the third research objective that sought to identify possible solutions to the negative effects of eWOM strategy in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.

5.2 Findings from Qatar's Oil and Gas Firms

To enhance the conceptualisation as well as improve the validity and reliability of this research, a qualitative research study was mandatory to guide the design of the quantitative data collection process. The qualitative study was aimed at helping the researcher in identifying different variables associated with eWOM strategy and its effect in B2B marketing. The variables would help in the development of study

measures appropriate in the Qatar context. The semi-structured interview (see Appendix 1) was used in collecting qualitative data and thematic methods in analysing the data to gain in-depth insights into the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector. This particular section gives a discussion of the qualitative findings highlighting both positive and negative effects of the eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar oil and gas industry.

5.2.1 Interview coding process and validity

Case Processing Summary

	N	%
Valid	12	100.0
Cases Excluded	0	.0
Total	12	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
1.000	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V1	2.0000	1.34840	12
V2	2.0000	1.34840	12
V3	2.0000	1.34840	12

V4	2.0000	1.34840	12
V5	2.0000	1.34840	12

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
V1	8.0000	29.091	1.000	1.000
V2	8.0000	29.091	1.000	1.000
V3	8.0000	29.091	1.000	1.000
V4	8.0000	29.091	1.000	1.000
V5	8.0000	29.091	1.000	1.000

Table 3: Validity test (Interview)

5.2.2 Validity

Statistical validity represents the limit up to which a profound conclusion can be drawn from a specific statistical test (Baskale, 2016). To achieve statistical validity, an adequate sample size is required. In this research, the researcher has previously decided to include 68 participants. Communicating and taking consent from each participant is quite challenging. Moreover, 50% of the participants are company high officials. With proper permission and accessibility, the researcher has conducted the whole session on 12 participants.

To determine the validity and reliability of a research data set, Cronbach alpha is an efficient method. This result also indicates about the internal consistency of the whole data. Cronbach alpha helps to determine whether a score is competent to be tested or not. As per the research theory, the valid Cronbach alpha test results from 0-1.

However, in some cases, a negative result is reported as well. A negative number indicates a fault in the dataset. Here the Cronbach alpha value is 1. Therefore, it can be said that the dataset is not invalid. The sample size can influence the validity and reliability of the dataset. As per Cheung and To, (2019), Cronbach alpha value ranges from 0-1. A value of 0.70 is considered to be good. Any value of more than 0.90 is considered to be the best value. Here the researcher has used SPSS to conduct the validity calculation. The Cronbach alpha value is 1. This value reflects the high validity of the interview data set.

5.2.3 Justifications

Conducting a research process with an invalid dataset is not acceptable. As the interviewer has failed to include all the 68 participants in the process, the validity test has been done. The good validity value indicates that the interview process is still valid with a limited number of participants. Therefore, the interview dataset is valid as well as justified for the present research. A valid interview data set has helped the researcher to know the qualitative perception of the industry stakeholders about the impact of E-WOM on industry performance.

5.2.4 Interview coding and participant anonymity

Market research generally consists of handling of several confidential industry data. The interview is an open-ended process, participants may leak several confidential information while responding. The researchers discard confidential information from the research process. However, the anonymity of the research participants is important for ethical research practice (Williams *et al.*, 2017). As can be observed in the interview details table, the respondents are replaced with certain codes. This process has masked the respondent identity. Neither the researcher nor any other person can link up the responses with the identity of the participants.

The interview is an open-ended process. This helps to acquire important insights of the participants. Summarizing all the answers is quite difficult. Coding helps to arrange the responses in a processed manner. Interview coding can be done following two approaches;

- Manual Coding
- Automated coding

Manual coding is applied as the simple coding method by researchers in qualitative research. The responses are segmented as per the pre-set category. The research variables like brand loyalty, brand equity have been considered here as the categories to code the interview responses. In research with limited responses, manual coding can be applied. Another key approach is automated coding. Algorithms are used to identify similar responses. The thematic algorithm can properly segment the whole dataset.

5.2.5 Justification

The researcher has conducted the whole interview process virtually. Moreover, the participant identity has been masked with the letters from A-L. These 12 letters represent the participants and the responses have been accounted for following this anonymous manner. In case of accidental leakage of confidential information, no-one is going to behold as responsible. Therefore, it can be said that the researcher has maintained an ethical research process.

Moreover, manual coding has been applied here. As the response number is only 12, manual coding is the justified approach. Automated coding demands software installation. Manual coding segmentation aligning with the research variables has made

the research process proper. From the interview responses, certain new variables have been acquired like brand quality and price.

5.3 Collaboration

The collaboration concept is key in the marketing sector to ensure firm goals and objectives are met (Wang, Okumus, and Naipaul, 2006; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007; Ngo, Lohmann, and Hales, 2018). This is because it involves the sharing of resources to enhance influence, increase leads and brand (d'Angella and Go, 2009; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007; Naipaul, Wang, and Okumus, 2009; Wang, 2008; Wang and Xiang, 2007; Fyall and Garrod, 2005). Through the social media/internet, the concept of collaborative marketing has been enhanced and made easier. Interview data obtained from Qatar's oil and gas sector show that the oil and gas companies have been introduced to the concept of collaboration and other practices related to teamwork in the marketing of goods and services. Therefore, the oil and gas firms are in the initial stages of incorporating the teaming concept in the marketing process to enhance sales and brand equity. As indicated by respondent A: "...In the firm I offer services, we have nurtured a culture of mutual support and teamwork...we give advice and help one another in solving problems associated with routine duties" (Respondent A). Such an approach helps workers to be nice to one another so that support can be rendered when a need arises, as reported by respondent H. According to respondent J, various firms in the oil and gas sector have been organising different joint activities including games, to enhance collaboration and relationship building between and within firms. This has led to the improvement of some of the current projects as more workers have learned to trust one another in working together to accomplish the goal and objective of the project. In Qatar, employees have learned the need to work together using different platforms to strengthen the capabilities of similar or complementary firms in meeting their business goals.

All that the collaboration concept focuses on, as highlighted by interviewee L, is the accomplishment of a common purpose since different companies can join hands to create a higher influence on the consumers than the individual influence on consumers. Also, interviewee (I) reported that exposure to the social media platforms for the joint endeavour is more likely to establish leverage that leads to a greater influence for all the business firms. Regardless of companies not in need of a common audience to ensure each benefit from the collaborative marketing, it is beneficial when they seek a common audience as argued by interviewee H. Also, interviewee D said that collaboration in marketing is a process through which firm interests, marketing muscle and resources are aligned with those of other like-minded firms. This concept has been in existence for decades in the advertising/marketing field. For instance, interviewee F said: “in the energy sector it has been used whereby online magazines are utilised to offer opportunities for collective/collaborated marketing whereby different ads are displayed...”

Interviewee B said that during collaboration, similar companies or complementary firms are permitted to combine efforts in advertising to cut down the costs at least 10x. However, interviewee D said: “...collaboration is not just for helping firms save money but also to offer firms opportunities to acquire collective strength to promote the firm’s credibility and its brand...” According to interviewee E, the coming together of top firms increases their customer retention, brand recognition and customer value. Each time a customer seeks information concerning the given product or service from the top business operators, it is more likely that they will refer the brand experience to friends or families. The collaboration marketing strategy as established by interviewee F, deals with specialised auction and regular deal sites to promote brands. Respondent F further stated: “business merchants with limited capacity to market their products individually can become substantial as well as trusted providers with the help of the umbrella brand...” In addition to the online marketplaces and online marketing tools, interview K reported that marketers could work jointly with webinars and virtual trade events to boost their marketing strength. For instance, the Inside Sales Virtual Summit is one of the examples of collaborative marketing encompassing 62 sales organisations some of

which are direct competition while others are complementary (respondent A). The reality is that all the organisations are aligned with the aim of creating a platform for sharing information about sales in tourism and any emerging news.

Collaboration among companies facilitated by the application of the eWOM strategy can significantly affect the marketing outcomes, including brand equity that incorporates brand image, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality. A person from similar companies or different companies combining efforts to share vital information can share the product experience with friends and then friends can also share the experience with other friends. This study sought to investigate the effect of social media in B2B marketing: the investigation of eWOM impact on the oil and gas sector in Qatar. In this regard, the collaboration concept was examined by exploring the degree in which brand community members actively support one another in the oil and gas sector in Qatar to make purchases. Four themes emerged from the interviews conducted to collect qualitative data and they represent both positive and negative effects as aforementioned. These included brand loyalty, brand knowledge and awareness, oppositional brand loyalty and brand trust. The positive impact of eWOM is discussed first and then the adverse effects.

5.4 Positive effects of eWOM strategy

The section examines one of the themes associated with the positive effects of eWOM in B2B marketing. Previous research (Wang and Xiang, 2007; Wang and Krakover, 2008) shows that brand community member participation is facilitated by functional or informational values that drive members in getting advice from others regarding the given brand. Also, it is driven by the objective of seeking more information about the brand (Naipaul et al., 2009). Regarding the development of the quantitative survey, this study explores four themes associated with positive effects of eWOM in B2B marketing that emerged from the data including brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand trust and oppositional brand loyalty. Furthermore, this section explores the capacity of eWOM to enable firms in the oil and gas sector to positively motivate consumers towards building

trust in the brand. When consumers have high chances of trusting a given brand, they are motivated to make purchases or even refer the brand to their friends and families. Finally, the section examines the responses of the interviewees regarding eWOM and its association with brand loyalty. This was to investigate whether the eWOM strategy can be used to increase brand loyalty among the community of followers of a given brand.

5.4.1 Brand knowledge and awareness

Information/knowledge-seeking is among the most important reasons that led to the reading of eWOM being displayed in a brand community's page. Four of the interviewees (A, B, J and L) were keen to mention the importance of seeking advice or help regarding the brand from other consumers. Also, interviewees (A and L) showed more interest in on opinions of other fans concerning the brand, its qualities and how it could be used. The brand community in this theme has been referred to as a source of information on itself by all the interview participants. According to respondent A, the brand community members offer comments and reviews that can be found in brand pages as opposed to other social networks. Concerning the Total firm brand page, for instance, one of the respondents (L) pointed out his interest in getting the latest news, gossip and inside information regarding the brand:

"...mostly for information – particularly before the announcing of promotions – rumours always attract you to a looking for the brand ...thus most of the comments written by people is based on what they suspect or what they've heard or got information from insiders" (respondent L). In a similar case, another respondent (E), who is also a Total brand community member on the official page, narrated her experience. The respondent noted the importance of receiving the news from the brand fans: "...getting updates regarding the Total brand, as you know how it feels good to get gossips about the promotional updates even when outside the country, new contracts signed by new market players... things like that...I think it would have been a big task and quite difficult to follow up on the Total brand news without these groups being around." (Interview E).

This qualitative data has shown that brand community members use the community to learn from other members who have previously used the brand and get their experiences to know the qualities. This means they get to know the brand they are using or seeking to use from other people's experiences. According to one of the interviewees (Respondent A): "...I would like to get some suggestions about the brand – if the product has some problems or if they like it' (Respondent A). Respondent (C) additionally addressed this motivation referring to the probability of future behaviour, instead of reflections on the real experiences of the past. The respondent further discussed the interest to read more on what people post on the page, seeking to find their views and opinions about the product. He pointed out: "...at times we look at a product, and there is confusion on whether to buy or not to... it is preferably a better way to go about it ...just post on the page and get the response of those who like the page about the product... to gather information preferably from users of the product' (Interviewee C). One of the most documented motivations is community advice search that was noticeable across the interviews. The search is aimed at enhancing brand knowledge among the community members. Respondents including A, F, J, and K, who were from various brand communities, talked about reading comments from other people on the energy brand community page, with the communities including brands from different service and product categories.

5.4.1.1 the basic concept of brand knowledge and awareness

Brand knowledge is the customer's understanding of the brand association and brand image. Brand knowledge is provided to the customers by the brand awareness campaigning of the companies. With a poor brand experience, a customer can develop a poor brand image. Qatar is a country where the oil and gas industry is one of the profitable industries (Al-Khinji, 2020). The presence of several companies in the companies makes the process more challenging for other companies. E-WOM is a buzz marketing strategy. The more virtual buzz a company can create virtually, the more strongholds it has on the virtual brand image.

B2B marketing remains restricted in the transaction of the materials between the two business organizations. B2B buying in the oil and gas industry generally involves a huge amount of financial transactions. Therefore, it can be said that a business can only purchase a particular product when the brand image is strong. As indicated by Chang, Wang, and Amett (2018), social media buzz or social media marketing is important for retaining the brand image in the modern world. Several B2B customers, continuously review the online buzz or engagement about a brand and then make a purchase decision. The more prominent is the presence of an oil and gas industry brand in social media, the more B2B marketing advantage, the brand is going to achieve.

Brand awareness is a popular marketing term. It describes the measure to which the consumers are aware of the products of a specific brand. Creating brand awareness is considered to be the first step to promote a new brand or new products of an existing brand. Brand image and brand awareness are two interrelated terms. The more a brand-aware the customers about the products, the more improvement it infuses in the brand image. Social media marketing strategy is adopted by different brands to increase brand awareness virtually. In the modern world, virtual media in terms of social media is an important marketing platform. The business engagement in the social platforms increases the brand value which contributes to brand image elevation as well (Wang *et al.* 2017). These two interrelated terms help in understanding the importance of brand image and awareness relating to their importance in the gas and oil industry of Qatar.

Brand awareness is also vital for the marketing team of the oil and gas firms to attract and retain more customers. Other than just getting information from associate brand community members on the brand pages, respondents regularly made mention of the brand itself as a source of information about its services and products. Therefore, the communication that is posted on the community page is perceived as eWOM because an individual makes it, and it gets to be seen by members of the brand community and a possibility to be visible to non-members by them being 'connected' to the poster. One of the interview respondents from Doha Petroleum Construction Co Ltd (F) noted that she

had in the past engaged in eWOM through posting comments on the brand community enquiring about the brand from the page managers. She said:

...it is quality means of getting quick answers or quick feedback or quick responses about a given brand. —Interviewee F.

Particularly, for getting information from the brand, this was viewed as a suitable way where the respondent discussed her experience:

...I at times leave my comments below the photos – asking the brand a question. If there was no link or price up on something...— Participant B.

Interviewee L further revealed that community brand administrators were publicly being contacted on Facebook pages to provide product assistance. For instance, the respondent (C) narrated his Qatargas Facebook brand community experience: “... there is a time I had about a promotion associated with Qatargas, and I opted to visit the Facebook page to ask a question rather than contacting customer support...” (Interviewee C). Seen as taking a different route from the past motivation, where sources of information were other brand community members, some of those interviewed (A, C, F, J, and L) in this study discussed directing their inquiries to the brand itself. In this motivation, some of the keywords used for search brand information include ‘feedback’, ‘response,’ ‘question’ from the brand, and were thus referred to as brand assistance to increase brand awareness. Due to its ability to directly communicate with the brand on their page, interviewee H said that Facebook brand pages were a prominent motivation in this context. However, respondent J argued that since other brand fans normally manage them, it becomes difficult to emerge in the context that is run by enthusiast brand communities.

According to the interviews, A, C, and F, besides helping other customers, participants in the community brand pages felt a need for supporting the brands that they follow on social media. In reference to this motivation, respondents mention their experience and positive feeling towards the brand and consequential readiness to offer it support and attract more followers. Interviewee D said: “...I would like to share quality information’ in regards to the brand, and want to cause ‘many more people to like the page...” (Respondent D). Also, the respondent (I) mentioned a case where he wanted to

appreciate the work and efforts of the Dolphin Energy brand in developing their petroleum products. To show gratitude, he opted to post a comment on the brand community page:

...when they announced adding new features on the product, I was like 'wow this is wonderful, thank you for working on it. — Interviewee I.

Furthermore, respondent K revealed that members of the brand community experience the need to use their social network platforms to promote and support their preferred brand, introduce their friend to it and thus act as brand ambassadors. He stated:

I take photos of the brand, put comments, upload it and tag the company in it...and everyone will know about it. It is almost like advertising or marketing them. — Interviewee K.

Of importance to note and mention is that participants were not just describing the activities of other members that they saw within the communities, but they were at times talking about their personal experiences on the community brand pages. One of the interviewees (Respondent E) for example, mentioned what she views on the brand pages where she is a follower:

...you get a brand organizing something like an event, you get to see people participate in the event, they ... do posts appreciating them ... and they are like 'oh that's amazing' or you get see their comments that reveal their support. — (Respondent E).

It is evident that members of the community brand pages promote the brand to their network of friends and inviting others to join. This often transpires when the brand community members play an active role in the community or have cordial and friendly relationships with those who are managing the brand community. Through this, the interviewee J said:

... I see that I have encouraged and inspired those connected to the brand to be aware of brand activities. — Respondent J

One of the other informants (Interviewee A) highlighted:

I may intentionally share a post because there is a friend I know engaged with a brand, therefore, in this scenario, I certainly try to promote the brand and make

people aware of it... just expose it to as many people as possible. — Interviewee A.

There is also a close connection created to the brand, as noted in the conversations with the interview participants when other community members of a brand appreciate the excellent brand experiences. In this regard, interviewee L said:

I feel like giving something in return by posting positive feedback on their page to help promote the growth of the brand to become more successful. — Respondent L.

5.4.2 Brand trust

The application of the eWOM strategy was mentioned to have affect trust towards a given brand positively. In this area, four of the interview respondents (A, H, J, and L) indicated that through regular exposure of consumers to the online brand, the newsfeed posts, visiting the brand community and viewing brand reactions and giving responses to other customers, their trust on a given brand is increased. Furthermore, five of the respondents highlighted that when they reflect upon the personal experience associated with their communication with the given brand on the online platform to solve a given issue or seek information about the brand, their trust towards the brands is enhanced. This means that the feedback offered about the brand is satisfactory. In this regard, interviewee B stated:

...I have grown to trust brands more...— Respondent B.

Interestingly, six of the interviewees (A, B, C, E, J, and K) related their narrations with the negative experiences with brands that are resolved positively by offering satisfactory communication to the brand community. In such scenarios, the positive communication results in a growing level of trust towards the brand. In this view, respondent C said:

I am really impressed when brand managers give good responses but...I get really annoyed with firm.... when the response isn't ideal.... it isn't the best. — Respondent C.

Also, interview J pointed out:

...since the firms take time to write quite lengthy responses to the issues experienced explaining why they happened you know and informing me the point

of contact to seek more information, as well as how to track the brand in the future... and such like stuff I get to trust the brand a little bit more. — Interviewee J.

Finally, respondent K said:

Giving lengthy feedback you know...it is kind of eases my initial brand concerns... so this means I have a really good experience with the brand and in the process, I will love to trust it the more...— Interviewee K.

Trust was reported by seven of the interviewees (A, C, D, F, G, H, and K) to be as a result of positive experiences with the given product as well as the behaviour of the brand as depicted by the brand community. Social media does not only help consumers to link with brands personally but also monitoring the brand community behaviour towards other fans. As such, interview G said that brand followers can for personal opinions regarding the brand and establish the urge to trust the brand that gives them and other members, pleasure and enjoyment. Also, respondent E explained: "...they were nice to others and me besides their really nice product... this made me impressed with how they treated me...their behaviour is good and I think I should always trust them and use their products again and again." (Respondent E).

Therefore, qualitative data has confirmed that brand trust can result from passive as well as active eWOM communication in which different community members of a given brand read responses from others on the page and give their inputs associated with the brand. Such disclosures will create a desire to share vital information about the brand to friends and members since the product experience is excellent.

5.4.3 Brand loyalty

Seven of the interviewees (A, C, D, F, H, J, and L) further reported stories associated with an increase in brand loyalty when the eWOM strategy is being applied in the B2B marketing process. Being able to trace and observe the vast amount of information from the community members of a brand using their newsfeeds, the interviewees confirmed that there was an increase in the number of brand purchases since they become more

informed about the brand, its benefits and disadvantages. One of the respondents (A) said that when he sees a vast amount of information about a product that is positive, she gets encouraged unable to resist the urge to buy it for use. This is an implication that consumers can choose one brand over another if they associate it with negative experiences. However, when they have positive experiences that are highlighted by the number of good responses, it means they have adequate knowledge about the brand since they are connected to social media. Respondent I said: "...actually similar to the brick and mortar store social media platforms more so Facebook enables me to see something on my phone.... during my lunch-break I go the store and check it out... if it is a deal, or it some special offer, I am more likely to shop here than their competitors" (Respondent k).

Combined evidence from the qualitative research indicates that when the brand content is exposed to the community of members following the brand keenly on the brand pages and social media sites, behavioural loyalty is triggered among the members. Undoubtedly, this finding was discussed concerning the overall customer engagement with the brand on the brand page. Some of the interviewees (B, E, and G) did not report whether they felt more loyal to the given brand due to their engagement with eWOM via brand community social media sites. However, when the customer-generated content appears in the brand community social media sites and is consumable by the community members, it is expected that eWOM would result in high levels of brand loyalty marked by their attitude and behaviour towards the brand.

5.5 Negative effects of eWOM strategy

The section also explores themes associated with the adverse effects of eWOM on B2B marketing. Regarding the development of the quantitative survey, the oppositional brand loyalty factor is explored. This was used to document the capacity of eWOM strategy in negatively affecting consumers towards building high levels of brand loyalty. This is a cynical marketing outcome in the gas and oil sector in Qatar. Low levels of trust on the brand may motivate consumers' reluctance in purchasing or even referring

the brand to friends and families. The specific theme in this section is based on the responses of the interviewees about eWOM and its association with brand loyalty. This was to determine whether the eWOM strategy can be used to decrease brand loyalty among the brand community members and further affect anticipated sales.

5.5.1 Oppositional brand loyalty

The interview respondents also revealed sentiments towards the oppositional of brands in which they might have negative experiences. One of the participants (J) gave an account of personal experiences with the most favourite energy brand (Total) and the actions of the brand followers on the brand page:

“...You know I observe a lot of members share information about Total energy firm which is offensive to some of the other members...” (Respondent J).

“...of course, I love Total oil firm because I fuel my car there than any other brand...so I usually observe negative responses about the firm from those I think are from the rival brand...” (Respondent J).

In this regard, the actions of the followers of a given brand in the social media sites which exhibit oppositional brand loyalty vary due to the changing marketing environment and preference for goods and services, as expressed by other members. In practice, customers showing oppositional brand loyalty on many occasions are likely to search for a more preferred and desired energy brand and offer recommendations to friends or family members, thus limiting their choice of the energy brand. Respondent L noted that negative sentiments from the members of a brand community affect their attitude and behaviour towards the purchase of the brand. For instance, the respondent pointed out

...if I feel to support a given energy brand...just like it happened to me some time back you know... and knowing very well that I'm more than interested in the brand or its related services as will be provided to me... I might tend to think 'oh no.... it is not okay to 'like' the brand on this page... promote this brand page if I feel to support another one (Respondent L).

Furthermore, three interviewees also acknowledged negative opinions regarding opposing brands or products. This was illustrated by respondent K who said that he really sees members opposing brands in their brand page to be wrong.

The last two effects of eWOM, including brand loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty, received fewer responses among the interviews as much focus was directed to brand trust and brand knowledge and awareness. In the interviews, all respondents mentioned that brand knowledge and awareness and brand trust are affected by eWOM strategy. This is because members of the community of the brand seek to know the experiences and knowledge associated with the brand they are searching for, which in the process affects their trust in the brand. The qualitative data has demonstrated that eWOM as a form of social media marketing where members are actively engaged in giving responses to given brands affects their loyalty behaviours towards the brand as well as their brand information and awareness.

5.6 Survey Development

The section presents a synthesis of the literature and the findings discussed above to develop measures of the constructs that helped in establishing the statistical insights to help in understanding the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar to give recommendations. To test the conceptual model developed by synthesising the findings and the literature review chapter, two phases were undertaken. These include the development of valid measures associated with the effect of eWOM in the oil and gas and testing of relationships between the constructs. The criteria of Bagozzi's (1988) was critical when developing measures to examine different study constructs while designing quantitative research.

In this research study, the criteria sought to highlight the theoretical meaningfulness of the study concepts in which integrative view of the study model was based on findings from previous research on the effects of eWOM in marketing, empirical research and different theories. Also, the criteria sought to show the observational meaningfulness of

the study concepts in which measures that have been previously validated to test eWOM in marketing were used in a pilot study. Also, the criteria focussed on examining the internal consistency of operationalization using multiple-item constructs that are tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Finally, the measures were used to assess the validity of the study which comprised of convergent validity that was checked using multiple-item constructs to test item-to-total correlation, discriminant validity using multiple-item constructs to perform a factor analysis and nomological validity. This helped in testing whether study results were consistent with a larger body of knowledge and if they contribute to the reference field.

The final study model comprised of 12 constructs. During the initial stage of survey development, the constructs associated with the eWOM effect in B2B marketing were defined (Blaikie, 2010). Notably, the qualitative findings and insights from the previous literature related to marketing and communication helped define those constructs. The second step questionnaire development involved evaluating the fitness of the definitions in the current research context and capacity to elaborate the core constructs of the research. Besides, in this stage of conceptualisation, identification of the dimensions of the constructs was done where needed. The stage also involved operationalizing the concepts (see Appendix 2) associated with the constructs into variables that could be used to understand the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing (Blaikie, 2010). Similarly, this stage included seeking for the measurement scales that are most appropriate from the previous literature where existing scales were examined. Furthermore, it entailed making vital decisions regarding the proper number of items in the questionnaire and it was agreed that each variable will contain two items to ensure a high level of construct validity (McGregor and Murnane, 2010). The third step involved making decisions associated with the appropriateness of the measurement scales for each variable. The stage encompassed a review of previous literature to identify suitable measurement scales. As a result, the existing measurement scale developed by Likert was utilised in this quantitative research. Consistent with the positivist philosophy, the identified variables were operationalized as 5-point Likert-type questions (Yan, 2006) that did not include demographic items and are outlined below.

5.6.1 Pre-test and pilot study

Pre-test: the survey was first tested utilising a small group (10 participants) to determine their understanding of the questions and identify any issues associated with the structure of the study, wording, or clarity of the items. Concerning the suggestions of Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the participants in this pre-test were selected from the target group which was employees in the marketing department of oil and gas firms in Qatar. Few errors associated with the wording of the questions identified were rectified. Furthermore, some of the 10 participants suggested the questionnaire be restructured to reduce fatigue and this was addressed accordingly. After the modifications of the survey questionnaire, some of the participants were also tasked to give their feedback on the new survey. After confirming it was okay, the questionnaire was finalised for use in collecting data to understand the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector.

5.6.2 Pilot study

The survey was also pilot tested using 10 participants also to examine the appropriateness of the measurement scales. The pilot study was undertaken in three months where the researcher applied one approach to select the participants. This was the official LinkedIn profile page. After selecting them the researcher explained the purpose of the pilot study and enquired about the possibility of administering the questionnaire using their emails. The researcher contacted over 100 participants, but only 30 agreed to give out their emails to conduct the survey. The suggested sample by Reinharz (2017) is between 10 and 30. Besides, the pilot study's purpose was to evaluate the measurement scales where a ratio approach was applied to predict the sample size. The scale for eWOM effect in B2B marketing comprised 12 items in the questionnaire; thus, the recommended minimum number of participants per variable should be five implying for this quantitative study, the minimum number of participants was 60. After administering the survey to many participants as possible, the researcher obtained 178 surveys. After screening of the surveys, the surveys were reduced to 68,

which were then used in the final data analysis to check the properties of the measurement scales. After doing this, the identified scale was found to be relevant and takes as the final questionnaire.

5.6.3 Final questionnaire

The final question comprised of two sections after restructuring to reduce fatigue. These include the section for demographic information, the other section the five variables identified from the synthesis of qualitative findings and literature review. Both positive, as well as negative statements were used to avoid common method variance (Rahi, 2017). The opening page of the survey introduced the participants to the survey research while stating its purpose and time to be taken. The introduction also captured the personal information of the researcher, and participants were informed to contact the researcher for clarity regarding the study. The funnel approach guided the structure of the survey, whereby the demographic questions were asked first. For participants to qualify for this research, they had to more than 23 years, worked in the marketing department for more than two years and participants in the social media platforms. Some of the demographic questions include the following:

1.	Are you 23 years old or above?
2.	Are you educated?
3.	Have you or do you work in the marketing department?
4.	Are you a regular participant in brand community pages in social media

Table 4: Screening Questions.

After demographic questions, questions related to the eWOM outcome in B2B marketing were asked. Also, issues associated with the application of eWOM in B2B marketing were asked. The questionnaire is found in Appendix three. For the survey questionnaire, the multiple-item method was utilised and the items were based on the 5-point Likert scale with a scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree), 2(disagree), 3(neutral), 4(agree) and 5(strongly agree) (Rea and Parker, 2014).

5.6.3.1 Questionnaire and measurement details

The interview question has been designed in a specific manner. The first questions relate to demographic variables like gender, education level, company information, departmental level, and marketing experience. The basic characteristics of a selected research population can be known from the demographic variables. Social media usage and buzz marketing interest are directly related to gender and educational level (Duffett, 2017). The more educated a person is, the more he/she is involved in social media marketing. However, here a specific individual has been chosen as the representative of a specific business. Therefore, the involvement of higher business authorities in social media marketing has been assumed from their perceptions.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of three questions related to the impact of E-WOM in B2B marketing. The rapid growth of the virtual medium has affected the conventional business environment to a great extent. The electronic word of mouth or E-WOM involves the factor of the consumer to consumer communication using social media platforms. In the B2B process also, any particular high official or a team of higher officials make the purchasing decision. Therefore, it can be said that E-WOM is important in B2B marketing as well. To increase the social media engagement of a brand, the proper teamwork of a virtual marketing team is important. Therefore, the sixth categorical question has tried to find out the importance of organizational teamwork in the success of the E-WOM marketing process in the oil and gas sector of Qatar. Industry buzz can impact upon the marketing process of the entire industry. Therefore, measuring social media engagement is important from the viewpoint of marketing. The more people talk about a brand in social media, the more they prefer the brand for purchase. In the B2B process as well as social media plays an important role.

Therefore, it can be said that all the data analysis questions have been designed to achieve the research aim. Moreover, the researcher has tried to include all the related

details in the questions. The survey and interview process has helped the researchers to achieve the research objectives. Moreover, properly formed questions have helped in interview coding as the responses indicate the same parameters. This has also helped in extracting the variables for statistical analyses as well. A combination of the proper questionnaire, proper response scale, and proper extraction of the variables have helped the researcher in constructing the research conclusion. Moreover, it can be said that the way of formation of a questionnaire from this research can guide future research studies as well.

The research has the intention to find out the impact of E-WOM in the B2B marketing process of the companies of the oil and gas sector. The more prominent the brand presence in social media, the more profit, the company is going to earn through the B2B process (MaleisiRad and Shoushatri, 2020). Therefore, the seventh interview question is designed focusing on the impact of its brand awareness in the gas and oil industry. The main motto of proper marketing is increasing company profits. In a product-based business, the increased purchase can only increase the company's profit. Increasing customer trust is directly related to profit increase. In the B2B process, other business organizations are considered to be customers. Therefore, the trust components have been added to the eighth interview question. From the overall interview responses, the constructs are formed which include;

- Brand awareness and knowledge
- Brand trust (reliability dimension)
- Brand trust (Intentional dimension)
- Attitude dimension in case of brand loyalty
- Oppositional aspects of brand loyalty

The interview constructs have later helped to develop the survey questions. The first four survey questions are related to demographic variables while section two completely

deals with the E-WOM marketing components. Considering the viewpoint of Chyung *et al.* (2017), the Likert scale has been chosen to measure the survey responses.

The Likert scale provides a vast option range to the participants. Therefore, they can choose their responses properly. As the five-point measurement is applied on the Likert scale, the variation of response intensity can be properly recorded from this. The researcher has also added a Likert scale to increase the diversity of the responses. A five-point scale increases the data authenticity in the whole closed response approach as well. Therefore, it can be said that applying the Likert scale for measurement is justified for this research.

5.6.3.2 Justifications

From the overall pattern of the survey and interview questions, it can be said that the researcher has tried to include all the aspects related to social media marketing. Proper use of demographic variables with other marketing components has increased the authenticity of the survey and interview questions. Moreover, it can be said that five-point scale usage has increased the variety of responses. All the selections are therefore justified as per the research objectives.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Data Analysis and Findings

6.1 Introduction

The main aim of the current research was to investigate the effect of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Furthermore, the study's aim was accomplished through three objectives (1) to determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar, (2) to find out the adverse effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and (3) to establish the possible solution to the adverse effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. To collect quantitative data for accomplishing the aim of the study, questionnaires developed in chapter four was used. The researcher expected to collect data from more than 68 participants as indicated in chapter three of this dissertation. This required administering the questionnaires to over 68 participants to increase the likelihood of obtaining more participants filling the surveys to enhance study generalizability. In this regard, 143 participants filled out the questionnaires entirely and returned them as required by the researcher.

Chapter six presents the quantitative results after analysing the data using different statistical methods. The chapter is divided into various sections. First, it gives the demographic information of the participants then followed by descriptive statistics on participants' responses on different aspects of B2B marketing including brand knowledge and awareness, brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand oppositional loyalty as well as issues of eWOM strategy application. This will be aimed at achieving the research objectives as anticipated. Finally, the chapter presents inferential statistics to identify the causal-effective associations between eWOM and B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector. This is aimed at concluding the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector, which was the main aim of this study. The inferential statistics aided in testing the hypothesis developed in chapter five. The section also

examines the reliability of the questionnaire and validity using different techniques. The following section describes the demographic information of the participants.

6.2 Participant Distribution based on Demographics

The section explores different information associated with the respondents who participated in giving their responses on different questionnaire items to investigate the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar’s oil and gas sector. This analysis was aimed at trying to understand if the participants met the qualification criteria defined in chapter five of this dissertation. Notably, the sections present demographic information of the participants associated with age, gender, education level, and length of service in the marketing department.

6.2.1 Distribution by Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	19	7.1	13.3	13.3
2	87	32.5	60.8	74.1
3	28	10.4	19.6	93.7
4	5	1.9	3.5	97.2
5	4	1.5	2.8	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 5: Distribution of Participants by Age.

From table 5, participants with ages between 23 and 27 years were 13.3%, while those with ages 28 to 32 were 60.8%. The table also indicates that participants aged between 33 and 37 were 19.6 %, whereas those with ages 38 to 42 were 3.5%. Finally,

respondents that were more than 43 years were 2.8%. It is clear from the data that most respondents were aged between 28 and 32 years who comprise of the young employees in the marketing department. Few of the employees are over 43 years indicating an age most workers in the marketing department may be working from their offices.

6.2.2 Distribution by Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	66	24.6	46.2	46.2
2	77	28.7	53.8	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 6: Distribution of Participants by Gender.

A large number of people who participated in this research to examine the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing were females with a percentage of 53.8% (see table 6). Only 46.2% (see table 6) of the participants were males. This indicates that most employees in the marketing field to utilize eWOM in the oil and gas sector are women as opposed to men. Similarly, it means that few men are employed to promote given brands using eWOM strategy.

6.2.3 Distribution by Level of Education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1+	16	6.0	11.2	11.2
2	39	14.6	27.3	38.5

3	29	10.8	20.3	58.7
4	43	16.0	30.1	88.8
5	16	6.0	11.2	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 7: Distribution of Participants by Level of Education

Table 7 highlights the distribution of participants based on their education levels. Some may be holders of a college diploma, undergraduate degree, masters' degree and holders of Ph.D. Table 7 shows that participants in this study with a college certificate were 11.2 % while those with college diplomas were 27.3%. A considerable number of the participants, 30.1% (see table 7) were holders of an undergraduate degree from a recognized university in Qatar. Among the participants, 20.3% were holders of masters in the field relevant to marketing and the rest, 11.2% (see table 7) were holders of Ph.D. The data indicates that most of the employees in the oil and gas sector in Qatar to spearhead marketing departments are holders of undergraduate degrees.

6.2.4 Distribution by Length of Service in the Marketing Department

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	12	4.5	8.4	8.4
2	26	9.7	18.2	26.6
3	13	4.9	9.1	35.7
4	48	17.9	33.6	69.2
5	44	16.4	30.8	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		

Total	268	100.0		
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Table 8: Distribution of Participants by Length of Service in the Marketing Department.

As indicated in table 8, 8.4% (see table 8) of the participants recruited for this study have worked in the marketing department for at least 2 years to a maximum of 6 years. Also, 18.2% (see table 8) of the participants responded that they have worked in the marketing department for 7 to 11 years. Among the respondents, 9.1% of them, as shown in table 8 have worked in this department between 12 and 16 years. Most participants (48%, see table 8) had been in the marketing department for 17 to 21 years while 30% have worked there for over 21 years. This indicates that most workers in this research had adequate experience to give responses to the use of eWOM in B2B marketing in Qatar’s oil and gas sector. The following part presents results related to the different aspects of B2B marketing (which can be positive or negative effects) as well as eWOM strategy.

6.3 Descriptive Statistics of B2B Marketing and eWOM constructs

The section presents results after analysis of data highlighting the different aspects of B2B marketing used in the oil and gas sector in Qatar to determine if the specific elements point to the primary marketing outcome. Such elements include brand knowledge and awareness, brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand oppositional loyalty, which are outcomes of any marketing campaign to increase or decrease firm revenues and profitability. The section starts by examining brand knowledge and awareness responses to gain an understanding of how participants view it in the marketing field. Different descriptive statistical methods including frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs, will be used in presenting the results.

6.4 Brand Knowledge and Awareness (BKA)

Four constructs denoting brand knowledge and awareness were developed and labelled, BKA 1, BKA 2, BKA 3, and BKA 4. The following are descriptive statistics of the four constructs using pie charts to determine whether participants agree or disagree with the constructs as a form of brand knowledge and awareness.

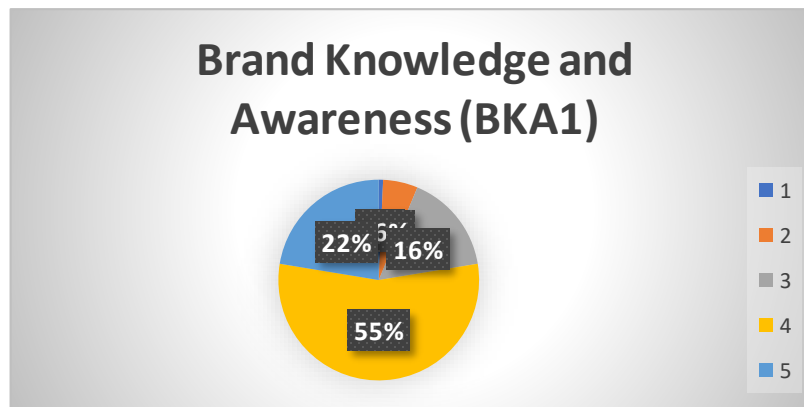


Figure 2: Brand Knowledge and Awareness (BKA 1).

As indicated in figure 2, 1% of the participants strongly disagreed that they want more information about the products of a given brand, which is associated with brand knowledge and awareness. Also, 6% disagreed with the statement. Contrary, most of them (55%, see figure 2) agreed that they want more information about the products of a given brand. Similarly, 22% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. Only, 16% of the participants indicated their neutrality with the statement. Based on this information, more participants acknowledged that they wanted more details on the products of a given brand which is more of brand knowledge and awareness (55% and 22%, which is 77% in total). This, therefore, made it an essential aspect of B2B social media marketing.

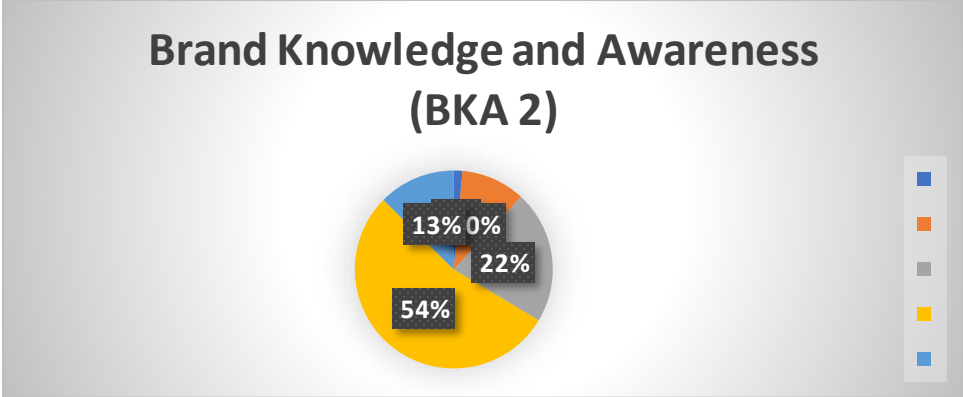


Figure 3: Brand Knowledge and Awareness (BKA 2).

Among the participants, 1% (see figure 3) of them strongly disagreed that they seek more information about how to use a brand from other members using different platforms. Similarly, as shown in figure 3, 10% of the participants disagreed with the statement as opposed to 54% of the participants who agreed. Furthermore, 13% (figure 3) of the participants strongly agreed that they seek more information about how to use a given brand from other members of a given group. However, 22% of the participants remained neutral. The data indicates that more participants agreed or strongly agreed that they seek brand information from other members of their social groups. As such, the aspect was important in this research as a B2B social media marketing approach.

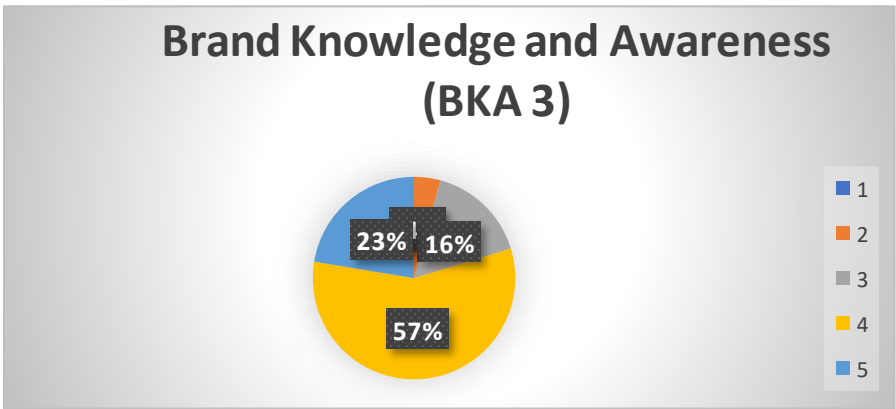


Figure 4: Brand Knowledge and Awareness (BKA 3).

As highlighted in figure 4, none of the participants strongly disagreed on the statement that they obtain more information about a brand from brand owners, which is an aspect

of brand knowledge and awareness. On the other hand, 4% of the participants disagreed with the statement. Moreover, 16% of the participants remained neutral on the statement. Also, 57% of the participants agreed and 23% strongly agreed that they obtain more information about a brand from brand owners. It is clear from the results that more participants (57% and 23%) agreed that they often obtain more information about a brand from brand owners. Thus, it was a vital element of B2B social media marketing that needed to be examined further.

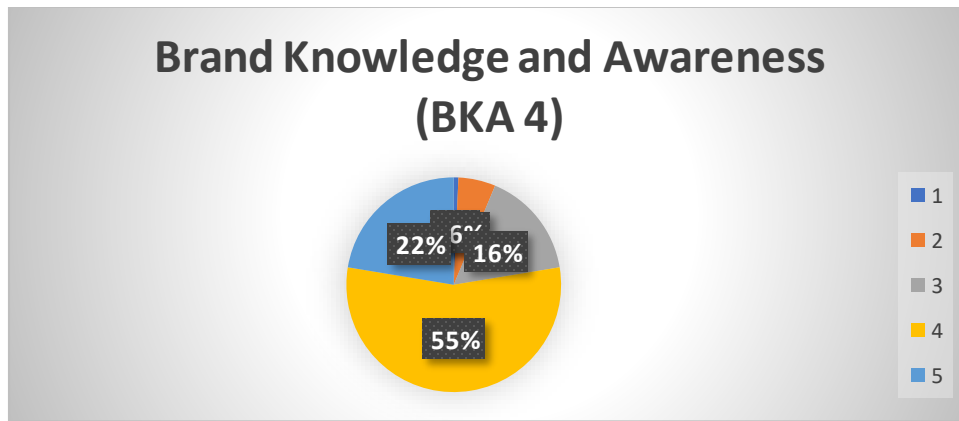


Figure 5: Brand Knowledge and Awareness (BKA 4).

Finally, 1% of the participants strongly disagreed that they are eager to refer a given brand to family members and friends using different social platforms. Only 6% of those participants disagreed with the statement, as 55% agreed with the statement. Also, 16% of the participants remained neutral. On the other hand, 22% strongly agreed that they eager to refer the brand to family members and friends. Generally, more members (55% and 22%) agreed and strongly disagreed with the statement compared to those who disagreed as well as strongly disagreed. In this regard, this statement associated with brand knowledge and awareness was a potential aspect of B2B social media marketing.

6.5 Brand oppositional loyalty (BOL)

There were also four constructs associated with brand oppositional loyalty, including BOL1, BOL2, BOL3, and BOL4. This section examines the responses of the

participants regarding whether the constructs fall under the brand oppositional loyalty, which is a crucial element of B2M marketing. Unlike the previous section, frequency tables will be used in this section to present the results.

6.5.1 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	20	7.5	14.0	14.0
3	56	20.9	39.2	53.1
4	57	21.3	39.9	93.0
5	10	3.7	7.0	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 9: Brand oppositional loyalty (BOL 1)

Surprisingly, a large number of participants (39.2%, see table 9) remained neutral in responding to the statement that they continuously discourage their friends and families from using products from specific brands they interact with. On the other hand, a few of them (14%) as shown in table 9, disagreed with the statement. On the contrary, a good number of them (39.9%, see table 9) agreed with the statement that they would regularly discourage friends and families from using products from particular brands. Among the respondents, 7% (see table 9) of them strongly agreed with the statement. This shows that more participants (39.9% and 7%) acknowledged that they regularly discourage friends and families from using products of certain brands. This made it an essential area of B2B marketing critical in the social media platforms and is strongly perceived to be negative.

6.5.2 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 2)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	.7	1.4	1.4
2	11	4.1	7.7	9.1
3	23	8.6	16.1	25.2
4	66	24.6	46.2	71.3
5	41	15.3	28.7	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 10: Brand oppositional loyalty (BOL 2)

Also, participants gave their responses regarding the capacity to purchase goods and services from specific brands regardless of their ability to satisfy them. Only 1.4% of the participants (see table 10) strongly disagreed with the statement as 7.7% (see table 10) of the participants also disagreed. Unlike the previous statement, only 16.1% remained neutral in their views. A large number of the participants representing 46.2%, as shown in table 10, agreed that they could never make purchases on goods and products associated with a particular brand. Additionally, 28.7% (see table 10) strongly agreed with the statement. The results indicate that many participants acknowledged that lack of desire to purchase goods and products associated with a certain brand and this denotes brand oppositional loyalty. In this view, it was also categorised as an essential aspect of social media B2B marketing that requires further investigation.

6.5.3 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 3)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

1	2	.7	1.4	1.4
2	11	4.1	7.7	9.1
3	23	8.6	16.1	25.2
4	66	24.6	46.2	71.3
5	41	15.3	28.7	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 11: Brand oppositional loyalty (BOL 3)

Among the participants, 1.4% (see table 11) of them strongly disagreed that they will often post negative views regarding products of specific brands, while 7.7% (see table 11) of the participants disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 46% as highlighted in table 11 of the participants, agreed that they post negative views associated with a given brand on different social platforms. Among the participants, 28.7% (see table 11) strongly agreed with the statement, as 16.1% remain neutral. Based on this information, it is clear that many participants (46% and 28.7%) who took part in this research project often post negative views about a given brand in social media may be on different occasions. As such, the aspect was categorised as an essential element in B2B marketing in the social media platform.

6.5.4 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 4)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	36	13.4	25.2	25.2
2	46	17.2	32.2	57.3
3	25	9.3	17.5	74.8
4	29	10.8	20.3	95.1

5	7	2.6	4.9	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 12: Brand oppositional loyalty (BOL 4)

As indicated in table 12, 25.2% of the participants strongly disagreed that they can never try services and products from given brands. A few of the participants (4.9%, see table 12) strongly agreed that they could never try services and products from given brands. A large number of the participants, as shown in table 12 (32.2%) disagreed with the statement. Moreover, 17.5% of them remained neutral. From the results, more participants (32.2% and 25.2%) did not positively respond to the statement they never try services and products from given brands. In this regard, it is not surprising how the participants responded since most people like to try out services and products from different brands to make comparisons. This construct was, therefore, an essential aspect of B2B marketing in the era of social media.

6.6 Brand Trust (BT)

The section examines the different constructs developed for exploring brand trust in B2B marketing to identify the responses of the participants. Notably, the section seeks to highlight that given constructs are accurate to the participants' knowledge. The section presents the results of eight constructs developed in the questionnaire, including BT 1, BT 2, BT 3, BT 4, BT 5, BT 6, BT 7, and BT 8. Bar graphs are used to present the results in this section as follows.

6.6.1 Brand Trust (BT 1)

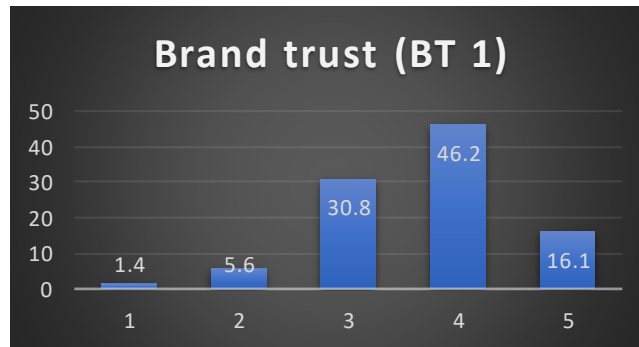


Figure 6: Brand Trust (BT 1).

Figure 6 above indicates that 1.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they trust brands that meet their anticipations while 5.6% (see figure 6) disagreed with the statement. A large number of the participants remained neutral (30.8%, see figure 6). However, most of the participants as shown in figure 6 (46.2%) agreed that they trust brands that meet their anticipations. Also, 16.1% of them strongly agreed with the statement. The results show that a large number of participants (46.2% and 16.1%) acknowledged that they get motivated to trust a given brand that meets their anticipations. This made the construct necessary in this research to understand how eWOM affects it in B2B marketing.

6.6.2 Brand Trust (BT 2)

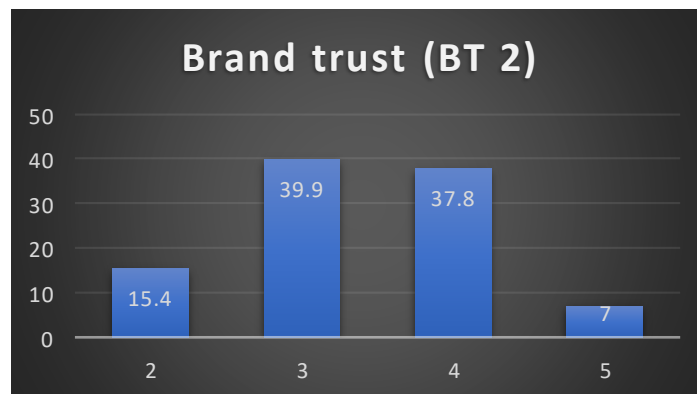


Figure 7: Brand Trust (BT 2).

Confidence about a given brand was also examined among the participants in which 15.4% (see figure 7) of the participants disagreed that they trust brands they are confident about. However, contrary to this, 37.8% (see figure 7) of the participants agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 7% of the participants as shown in figure 7 strongly agreed that trust comes when they are confident about a given brand. Among the participants, 39.9% remained neutral. The study results indicate that many participants acknowledge that they trust brands they are convinced about (37.8% and 7%). As such, this construct was vital in examining B2B marketing in the social media platform.

6.6.3 Brand Trust (BT 3)

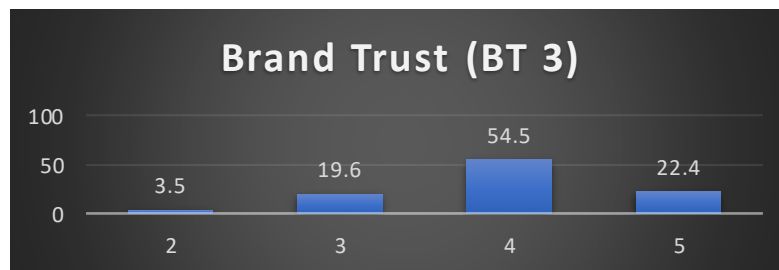


Figure 8: Brand Trust (BT 3).

Also, participants were asked about their trust in brands if satisfied with the brand. The results shown in figure 8 indicate that 3.5% of them disagreed with the statement as a large number of them agreed with the statement (54.5%). Also, 22.4% of the participants strongly agreed that they get to trust a given brand if they are satisfied with it. On the other hand, 19.6% (see figure 8) remained neutral. It is clear from the results that more participants (54.5% and 22.4%) acknowledged that their trust in the given brand depends on satisfaction with the brand. The construct was therefore important in this research for contributing to brand trust, an aspect of B2B marketing.

6.6.4 Brand Trust (BT 4)

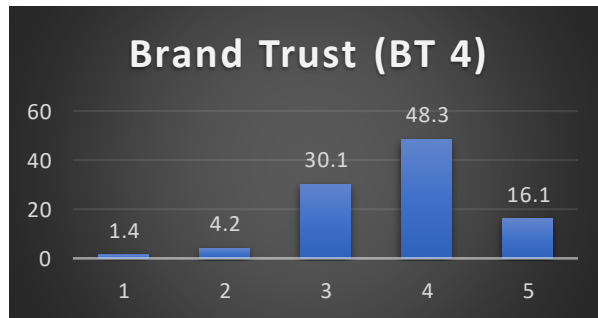


Figure 9: Brand Trust (BT 4).

Brand trust was also examined based on disappointed with a given brand and results indicate that 1.4% (see figure 9) of the respondents strongly disagreed that they trust brands that never disappoint them. Also, 4.2% of the participants reported disagreement with the statement, as 30.1% of them remained neutral. On the other hand, 48% of the participants (see figure 9) agreed that disappointment with brands makes them have a sense of trust in the brands. Similarly, 16.1% of them strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, it is clear from the results that most participants recognised that they trust brands that never disappoint them. This showed how vital the construct is in B2B marketing.

6.6.5 Brand Trust (BT 5)

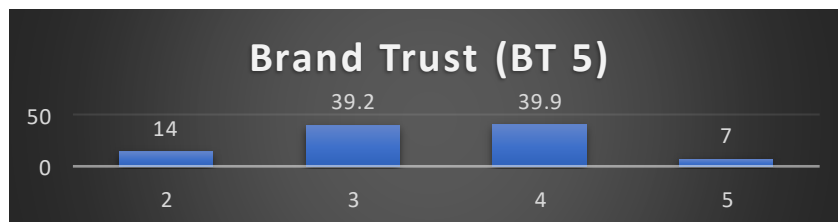


Figure 10: Brand Trust (BT 5).

When the concerns of the participants regarding products and services of a brand are addressed honestly by a given brand, 14% (see figure 10) of them disagreed that they

get to build their trust in the brand. Among the participants, 39.9% of them agreed that they get to build trust in the brand in which products and services of a brand are addressed honestly. Also, 7% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. However, 39.2% of the participants remained neutral to the statement. As indicated in these results, many of the participants (39.9% and 7%) know that when their concerns about products and services of a given brand are addressed honestly, they get to trust the brand more. In this regard, the construct is fundamental in B2B marketing in assessing brand trust.

6.6.6 Brand Trust (BT 6)

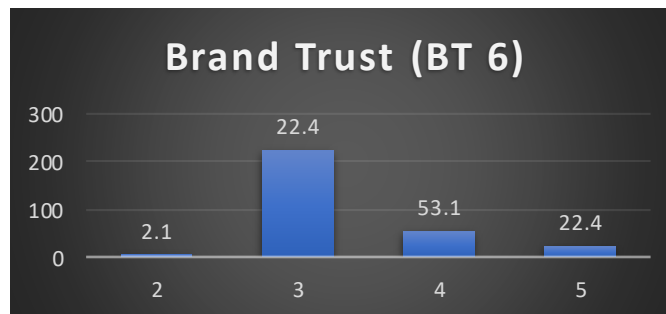


Figure 11: Brand Trust (BT 6).

As shown in figure 11, 2.1% (see figure 11) of the participants disagreed that problems with products and services of given brands solved using these brands make them trust the brand. A large number of the participants (53.1%) and (22.4%) agreed as well as strongly agreed respectively that solving issues with brands using the same brands builds their trust in the brands. Among the participants, 22.4% remained neutral. These results imply that brand trust depends on the capacity of brands to solve their customer concerns using their brands to have their customers trust them in the provision of services and products in the future. Concerning this view, the construct was fundamental for examining B2B marketing.

6.6.7 Brand Trust (BT 7)

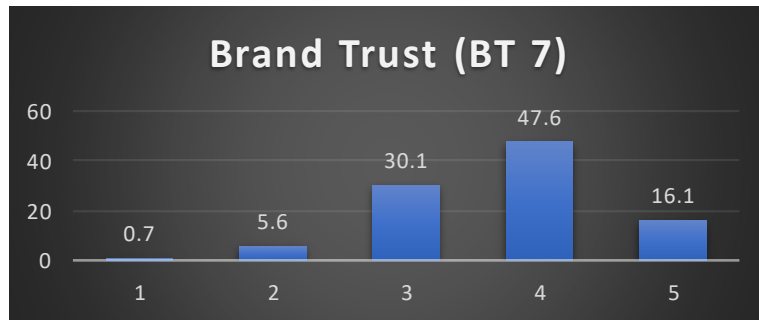


Figure 12: Brand Trust (BT 7).

Remarkably few participants (0.7%, see figure 12) strongly disagreed that the brand making initiatives to get them satisfied attract their trust. Among the respondents, only 5.6% (see figure 12) disagreed with the statement. Many of the participants, as indicated in figure 12, agreed (47.6%) as others strongly agreed (16.1%) that they trust brands seeking to satisfy them. On the other hand, 30.1 remained neutral in answering this question. The results are indicating that initiatives to satisfy customers help boost their trust in the given brand and this makes the construct an essential element of B2B marketing that needed further investigation.

6.6.8 Brand Trust (BT 8)

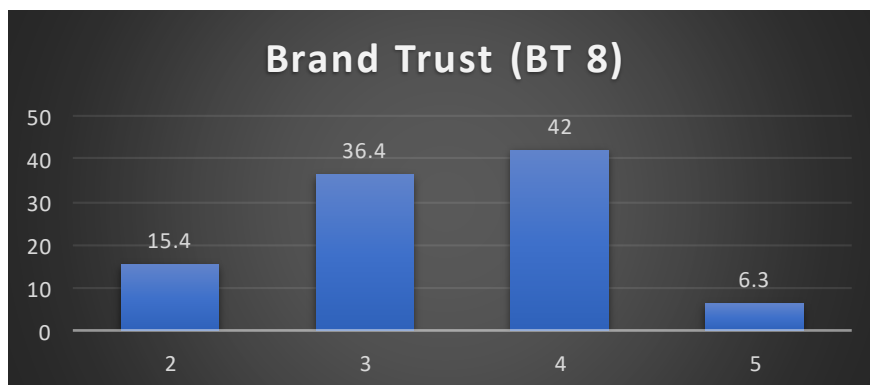


Figure 13: Brand Trust (BT 8)

Participants were also evaluated to determine their trust in given brands in the oil and gas sector when brands compensate them after experiencing issues with its services. Among the participants, 15.4% of them as indicated in figure 13, disagreed that compensations on issues faced make them trust the brand. However, 42% agreed as 6.3% strongly agreed (see figure 13) that reimbursements make them trust the given brand more. On the other hand, a large number of participants (36.4%, see figure 13) remained neutral. The results suggest that brand trust is achieved when customers are compensated for issues faced with given brands. In this regard, it makes it an essential aspect of B2B marketing.

6.7 Brand Loyalty (BL)

The section examines the four constructs of brand loyalty including BL 1, BL 2, BL 3 and BL 4. Notably, the section aims to check whether the participants recruited in this research engage in the different aspects of B2B marketing represented by the four constructs. Frequency tables are used in presenting the results.

6.7.1 Brand Loyalty (BL 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	6	2.2	4.2	4.2
Valid 3	29	10.8	20.3	24.5
Valid 4	64	23.9	44.8	69.2
Valid 5	44	16.4	30.8	100.0
Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 13: Brand Loyalty (BL 1).

Table 13 presents' results examining the brand loyalty of participants to given brands and the following is true based on the results. Among the participants, 4.2% (see table 13) of them disagreed that the purchase of products associated with a given brand only denotes brand loyalty. Contrary to this group, 44.8% (see table 13) of the participants agreed that brand loyalty is about purchasing products of a given brand only. Also, table 13 shows that 30.8% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement whereas 20.3% remained neutral. The results show that more participants (44.8% and 30.8%) acknowledged that brand loyalty entails the purchase of products associated with the given brand only and this implies that the construct is a vital B2B marketing component.

6.7.2 Brand Loyalty (BL 2)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1	.4	.7	.7
2	29	10.8	20.3	21.0
3	35	13.1	24.5	45.5
4	69	25.7	48.3	93.7
5	9	3.4	6.3	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 14: Brand Loyalty (BL 2).

Also, 0.7% (see table 14) of the participants strongly disagreed that when brand loyalty is when they are committed to the given brand. Among the respondents, 20.3% of them, as seen in table 14, disagree with the statement. However, 48% (see table 14) of the participants agreed that when they are committed to brands that show their loyalty to

the given brand. Also, 6.3% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. Some of the participants (24.5%, see table 14) remained neutral. Results imply that the construct is key to explaining brand loyalty since most participants (48.3% and 6.3%) expressed their sentiments that getting committed is a way of expressing brand loyalty.

6.7.3 Brand Loyalty (BL 3)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	5	1.9	3.5	3.5
3	28	10.4	19.6	23.1
4	78	29.1	54.5	77.6
5	32	11.9	22.4	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 15: Brand Loyalty (BL 3).

On the contrary, 3.5% of the participants, as highlighted in table 15, disagreed that when they are not committed to the given brand, it represents brand loyalty. Among the participants, 19.6% (see table 15) remained neutral in their responses. However, 54.5% (see table 15) agreed as 22.4% strongly agreed that brand loyalty also denotes a scenario of not being committed to the given brand. Since most participants, as highlighted in table 15, agreed (54.5%) as others strongly agreed (22.4%) with the statement, it made this construct a significant element of B2B marketing.

6.7.4 Brand Loyalty (BL 4)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

1	2	.7	1.4	1.4
2	6	2.2	4.2	5.6
3	43	16.0	30.1	35.7
4	69	25.7	48.3	83.9
5	23	8.6	16.1	100.0
Valid Total	143	53.4	100.0	
Missing System	125	46.6		
Total	268	100.0		

Table 16: Brand Loyalty (BL 4).

Finally, brand loyalty can be determined by the regular purchase of products and services of given brands. In this regard, 1.4% (see table 16) of the participants strongly disagreed that brand loyalty involves the regular purchase of brand products and services. Additionally, table 16 shows that 4.2% of the participants disagreed with the statement while 30.1% of the participants remained neutral in their responses. However, most participants agreed (48.3%, see table 16) as 16.1% (see table 16) strongly agreed that regular purchase of brand products and services denote brand loyalty. Since most participants acknowledged that brand loyalty includes the regular purchase of brand products and services, therefore the construct was significant in this research.

6.8 Application of eWOM

The section examines responses of the participants to determine whether the constructs, including eWOM 1, eWOM 2, eWOM 3, and eWOM 4, explain how eWOM strategy is applied in the B2B marketing field. Pie charts are applied in presenting the data.

6.8.1 Application of eWOM (eWOM 1)

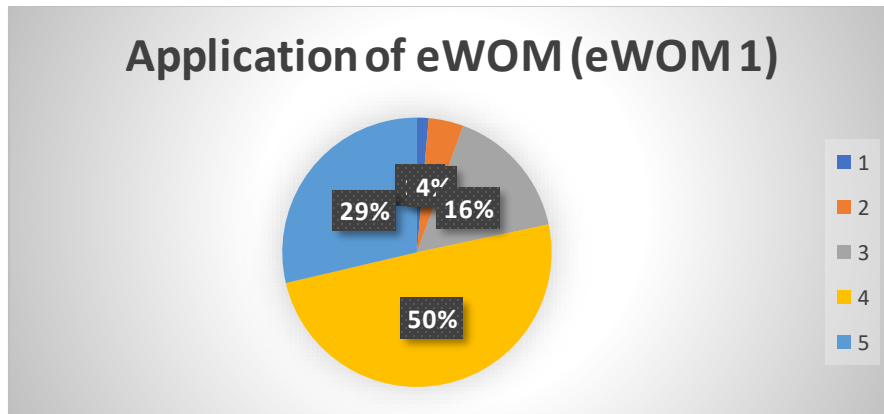


Figure 14: Application of eWOM (eWOM 1).

As indicated in figure 14, 1% of the participants strongly disagreed that regular reading of other members' posts in social media platforms represents an application of eWOM, while 4% disagreed with the statement. Only 16.1% remained neutral in their responses to the statement. On the other hand, 50% (see figure 14) agreed as 29% strongly agreed that regular reading of other members' posts is a form of eWOM. The high number of those acknowledging the statement to be a form of eWOM (50% and 29%) implies that the construct was vital in this study.

6.8.2 Application of eWOM (eWOM 2)

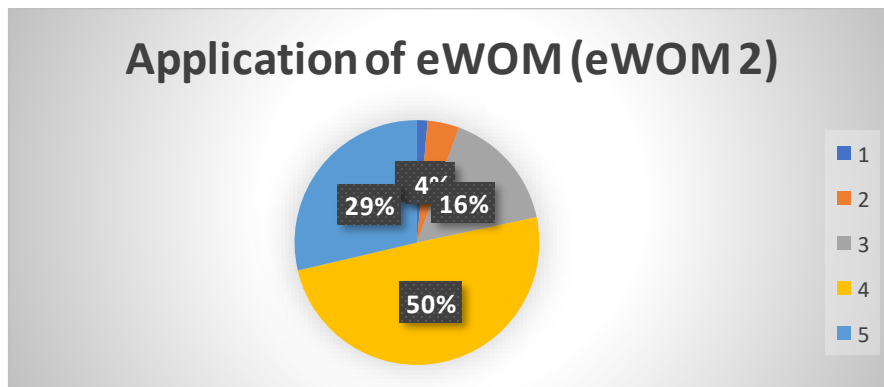


Figure 15: Application of eWOM (eWOM 2).

Regarding the use of the brand page to seek other member's opinions, the researcher obtained results similar to those of regular reading of other member's posts. For instance, 1% of the participants as shown in figure 15, strongly disagreed as 4% disagreed that the use of the brand page to seek other member's opinions is a form of eWOM. Contrary, the figure highlights that 50% of the participants agreed, and 29% strongly agreed with the statement. Only 16.1% of the participants remained neutral as they responded. The results imply that the use of a brand page to seek other member's opinions is a form of eWOM strategy.

6.8.3 Application of eWOM (eWOM 3)

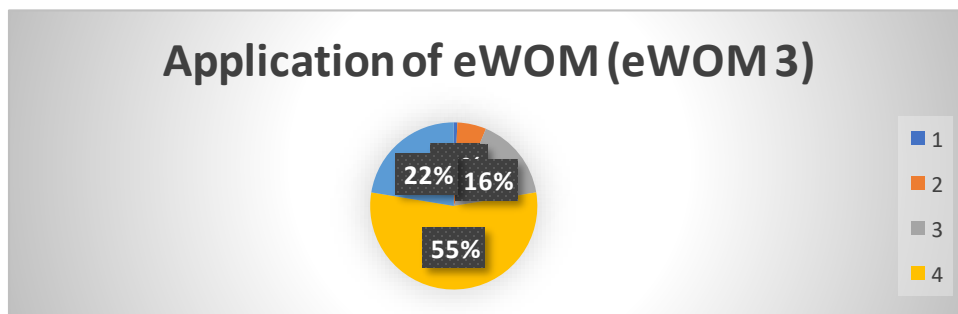


Figure 16: Application of eWOM (eWOM 3).

Among the respondents, 1% of them as shown in figure 16 strongly disagreed that sharing information associated with a given energy brand is a form of eWOM. Additionally, 6% of the participants disagreed with the statement as 16% of them remained neutral. However, most participants (55%) agreed that the item was a form of eWOM. Similarly, 22% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. Since most participants (55% and 22%) admitted that the statement was a form of eWOM, it was essential for this research.

6.8.4 Application of eWOM (eWOM 4)

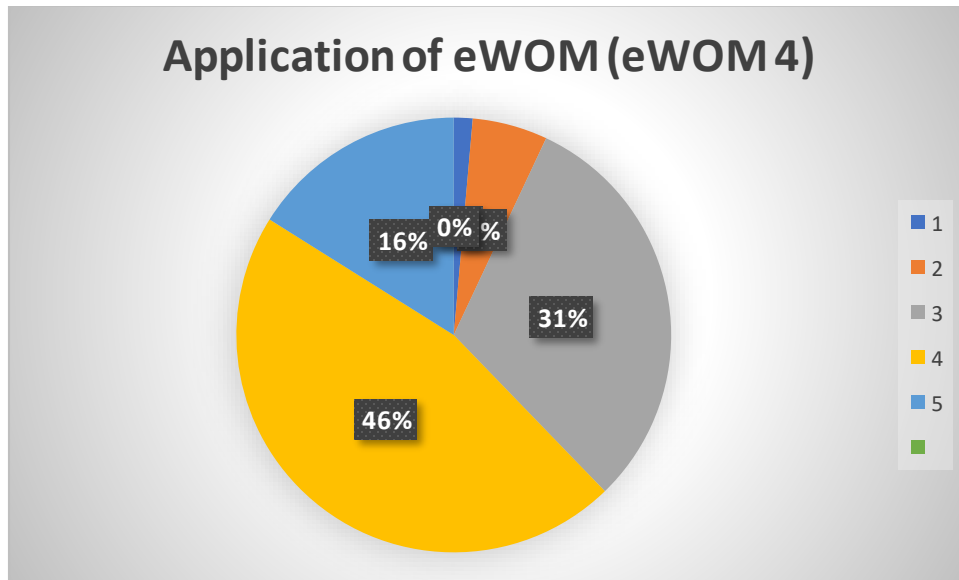


Figure 17: Application of eWOM (eWOM 4).

This last figure (17) is exploring the responses of participants regarding the sharing of brand posts to the community members and others being a form of eWOM strategy. The results indicate that 1% (see figure 17) the participants strongly disagreed with the statement, while 5.6% disagreed. A good number of participants (30.8%, see figure 17) remained neutral. On the contrary, 46% of the respondents agreed as 16% strongly agreed that sharing of brand posts to the community members and others is a form of eWOM strategy. Many of the participants (46% and 16%) acknowledged the statement was a form of eWOM. As such, it was essential for this research.

6.9 Mean and Median Distribution of Participant Responses on Key Variables

The section presents results of the data analysis to evaluate the differences between the mean and median values of the responses obtained for the critical variables including eWOM, brand loyalty (BL), brand oppositional loyalty (BOL), brand trust (BT) and brand knowledge and awareness (BKA).

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
BKA	143	1.50	5.00	3.7920	.57530	-.817	.203
BT	143	2.25	5.00	3.5070	.43700	.310	.203
BL	143	1.75	5.00	3.7080	.55585	-.296	.203
BOL	143	1.50	4.75	3.4441	.70985	-.721	.203
eWOM	143	1.00	5.00	3.9056	.78037	-.839	.203
Valid N (listwise)	143						

Table 17: Mean and Median Distribution of Participant Responses on Key Variables.

Table 17 displays the descriptive statistics associated with the mean and median distribution of participant responses on key variables identified from the synthesis of the previous qualitative study and the previous literature. The total number of participants in this research was 143 for individual variables. The mean distribution of participant responses associated with variable BKA is 3.7920 with Std. Deviation of .57530. The Skewness value is -.817 implying that the mean distribution of participant responses is skewed towards the left since the value is negative. Generally, the results indicated that the mean distribution of participant responses across the five Likert scales measuring the BKA variable is smaller compared to the median distribution of participant responses. Regarding the BT variable, the mean distribution of participant responses is 3.5070 and the Std. deviation was .43700. Unlike the BKA variable, the Skewness value is a positive value of .310. The results indicate that the mean distribution of participant responses is skewed to the right and as such, the median distribution of participant responses is smaller compared to the mean distribution of participant responses. For variables BL, BOL and eWOM, the mean distribution of participant responses are 3.7080, 3.4441 and 3.9056 while the Std. deviation values are .55585, .70985 and

.78037 respectively. Also, their Skewness values for the three variables are -.296, -.721 and -.839 respectively. Like the BKA variable, the Skewness values of the three variables are negative showing that the mean distribution of participant responses is smaller compared to the median distribution of participant responses on individual variables.

6.10 Study Reliability

As defined in the methodology chapter, reliability in quantitative studies is the internal consistency of the questionnaire items measuring different constructs. With Cronbach's alpha value more than .70, the items used in measuring the research constructs are reliable (Babbie, Wagner, and Zaino, 2015). The section examines the reliability of individual items in measuring the anticipated variables grouped into two categories, item constructs measuring B2B marketing and item constructs measuring eWOM. Additionally, the section examines the reliability of items on combined eWOM constructs as well as B2B marketing constructs in measuring these key two variables.

6.10.1 Reliability of items measuring B2B marketing

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.813	20

Table 18: Reliability of items measuring B2B marketing

Table 18 indicates Cronbach's Alpha of .813 on the items measuring the B2B marketing variable. Since the value is more than .70, it implies that the items were reliable in measuring the B2B marketing variable. As such, there was satisfactory internal consistency of the item constructs.

6.10.2 Reliability of items measuring eWOM strategy

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.882	4

Table 19: Reliability of items measuring eWOM strategy

Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha for items measuring eWOM strategy was .882, as shown in table 19. The value is more than .70 and this indicates that the items' internal consistency is acceptable. Generally, this indicates that the items measuring eWOM strategy are reliable in measuring the variable.

6.10.3 Reliability of combined items measuring eWOM strategy and B2B marketing

The section assesses the reliability of the combined item constructs after the transformation of individual item constructs to form new constructs. Furthermore, it was essential to determine if the items' internal consistency was satisfactory to measure the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The following are the results.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.866	5

Table 20: Reliability of combined items measuring eWOM strategy and B2B marketing

Cronbach's Alpha value is .866 (see table 20), which is more than .70. This result indicates that the transformed item constructs have satisfactory internal consistency. In this regard, the items were reliable in measuring the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The next section analyses the validity of the study using different aspects.

6.11 Study Validity

This part analyses the data to determine its validity in measuring the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector. Notably, the discriminant validity aspect was examined using the data collected through exploratory factor analysis employing a commonality analysis test. The test was assessing the suitability of the questionnaire items in measuring the given constructs. According to Kline (2014), a value of more than .400 (40%) in the commonalities captured in the extraction column implies that the specific item is related to other items and as such, they possibly measure a similar variable.

6.11.1 Discriminant Validity of the Questionnaire

Exploratory Factor Analysis using Commonality Analysis Test

	Initial	Extraction
BKA1	1.000	.879
BKA2	1.000	.606
BKA3	1.000	.546
BKA4	1.000	.879
BT1	1.000	.907
BT2	1.000	.610
BT3	1.000	.930
BT4	1.000	.914
BT5	1.000	.963
BT6	1.000	.558
BT7	1.000	.727
BT8	1.000	.470
BL1	1.000	.531
BL2	1.000	.657

BL3	1.000	.930
BL4	1.000	.914
BOL1	1.000	.963
BOL2	1.000	.895
BOL3	1.000	.895
BOL4	1.000	.667
eWOM1	1.000	.846
eWOM2	1.000	.846
eWOM3	1.000	.879
eWOM4	1.000	.907

Table 21: Exploratory factor analysis using Commonality Analysis Test

Items measuring brand knowledge and awareness (BKA) had all values in the extraction column of the commonality test of more than 40% since the least value was 54.6% (see table 21). Also, the values of items measuring brand trust were over 40% with the least being 47% (see table 21). Besides, items measuring brand loyalty had values over 40% with the least being 53. % (see table 21) while those measuring brand oppositional loyalty were over 40% with the least being 66.7% (see table 21). Finally, the values for items measuring eWOM were all over 40% since the least was 84.6% (see table 21). Generally, table 21 shows that the commonality values captured in the extraction column are all more than 40% and this indicates that the particular item constructs are associated in measuring the critical variables identified in this research (Gefen and Straub, 2005). This implies that the discriminant validity of the developed questionnaire was satisfactory and therefore could measure the anticipated variables.

6.11.2 Convergent Validity of the Questionnaire

Convergent validity, as indicated in chapter three, is the extent to which the given scale is similar to other theoretical functions. Also, Canivez et al. (2009) say that convergent validity reflects the degree to which the given construct tests the given study variable.

With the statistically significant correlation between test functions, then convergent validity is satisfactory. With statistically insignificant correlations, then it implies that the given construct is not acceptable and this construct should be dropped from further analysis. Table (21) shows the test for convergent validity using correlation analysis performed on the collected data.

6.12 Correlation between eWOM and B2B Marketing Constructs

6.12.1 Brand knowledge and awareness and eWOM

The section examines data to determine if the different B2B marketing constructs associated with brand knowledge and awareness are valid to be used in evaluating the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing.

6.12.1.1 Brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 1) and eWOM

Table 22 shows that the correlation between eWOM and Brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 1) is $r = .769$. The value is closer to 1 implying the two are strongly correlated with one another. The value for Sig. (2-tailed) is .000, implying that the correlation between the first construct of brand knowledge and awareness and eWOM was statistically significant. This indicates the convergent validity for this particular item was satisfactory and hence was retained in this study. The correlation confirms the research hypothesis H1a which stated that:

H1a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers wanting more information about specific brand products or services.

6.12.1.2 Brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 2) and eWOM

The correlation between eWOM and the second construct of B2B marketing (BKA 2) is -.081 (see table 22), showing a negative relationship between the two that is not strong.

The Sig. (2-tailed) value for the correlation (r) is .338 (see table 22), which is more than .05 showing that the correlation is not statistically significant. Overall, this indicates that the convergent validity of this particular item is not satisfactory. As such, it was dropped as a B2B construct for assessing the anticipated eWOM effect on B2B marketing. The correlation confirms the research hypothesis H1b which stated that:

H1b: eWOM has a positive impact on consumers' seeking additional information about specific brand products or services

6.12.1.3 Brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 3) and eWOM

As shown in table 22, the correlation between the third construct of B2B marketing (BKA 3) is $r = .342$, indicating a positive and average relationship between the constructs. However, the Sig (2-tailed) value of the association is $.000 < 0.05$ showing that correlation is statistically significant. The general implication of this finding is that the convergent validity of this item is satisfactory and as such, it was retained for further examination to assess the eWOM effect on B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm the research hypothesis H1c which stated that:

H1c: eWOM has a positive impact on consumers' obtaining information from brand owners about new products or services.

6.12.1.4 Brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 4) and eWOM

There is a positive and robust correlation between eWOM and the fourth B2B marketing construct of brand knowledge and awareness (BKA 4) ($r = .769$) (see table 22). This is because the value is close to one. Moreover, Sig. (2-tailed) value of the correlation is .000 (see table 22) indicating that the relationship between the two constructs is statistically significant. Overall, the convergent validity of this item was satisfactory implying that it was retained to examine the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm the research hypothesis H1d which stated that

H1d: eWOM has a direct impact on brand referrals during B2B marketing through social media sites.

6.12.2 Brand Trust and eWOM

The section examines the correlation between eWOM and brand trust, which is a B2B marketing construct to determine its capacity to be used for understanding the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing.

6.12.2.1 Brand Trust (BT 1) and eWOM

A strong and positive correlation between the first construct of brand trust and eWOM construct was found, as indicated in table 22 ($r = .640$) (see table 22). The value for Sig. (2-tailed) is .000 (see table 22) showing that the correlation between the constructs is statistically significant because the value is less than .05. Since the correlation is strong and statistically significant, it implies that the convergent validity of this brand trust item is satisfactory. Thus, it was retained in examining the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2a which postulated that,

H2a: eWOM has a positive impact on brand anticipation during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.2 Brand Trust (BT 2) and eWOM

The correlation between eWOM and the second item of brand trust, as shown in table 22 is ($r = .209$), which is positive. Sig. (2-tailed) value found was .012 < .05 (see table 22) and this highlighted that the correlation although not strong, was statistically significant. In this regard, the convergent validity of this item was acceptable and as such, it was used in understanding the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2b which postulated that,

H2b: eWOM has a positive impact on consumer brand confidence during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.3 Brand Trust (BT 3) and eWOM

An average and positive correlation was established between the third item of brand trust construct and eWOM construct ($r = .409$), as highlighted in table 22. Furthermore, Sig. (2-tailed) value was .000 (see table 22), which less than .05 indicating that the correlation was statistically significant. This finding implies that the convergent validity of the item was satisfactory and it was thus retained for assessing the eWOM effect on B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2c which postulated that,

H2c: eWOM has a positive impact on consumer brand satisfaction during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.4 Brand Trust (BT 4) and eWOM

The fourth item, BT 4 of brand trust, was averagely correlated with eWOM and that that correlation was positive ($r = .420$) as indicated in table 22. Similarly, Sig. (2-tailed) value was ($.000 < .05$) (see table 22) showing that the correlation was statistically significant. Overall, the results show that the convergent validity of the item was acceptable and as such, it was retained for further investigation. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2d which postulated that,

H2d: eWOM has a direct influence on consumer brand disappointment during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.5 Brand Trust (BT 5) and eWOM

A positive but weak correlation was identified between the fifth item of the brand trust (BT 5) and eWOM ($r = .079$), as shown in table 22. Moreover, the weak correlation was statistically insignificant since the value for Sig. (2-tailed) was .348 (see table 22) which is more than .05. This implies that the item's convergent validity was unsatisfactory and, in the process, it was dropped for further investigation of the research phenomenon. However, the correlation results do not confirm hypothesis H2e which postulated that,

H2e: eWOM has a direct influence on the honesty levels consumers attach to a brand during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.6 Brand Trust (BT 6) and eWOM

Regarding brand trust item six and eWOM, an averagely strong and positive correlation was established ($r = .456$) (see table 22). For statistical significance, a Sig. (2-tailed) value of .000 was obtained as indicated in table 22, and this value is less than .05 implying that the correlation was statistically significant. Therefore, the results mean that the items' convergent validity was acceptable and that it was retained to be used in further assessments of the research phenomenon to understand the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2f which postulated that,

H2f: eWOM through social media has a direct influence on consumer brand concerns during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.7 Brand Trust (BT 7) and eWOM

As displayed in table 22, the correlation between the seventh item of brand trust and eWOM is ($r = .395$). The correlation is averagely strong and positive. The Sig. (2-tailed) value associated with the correlation was .000 (see table 22), which is less than .05.

This implies that the correlation between the two constructs was statistically significant, indicating that the item's convergent validity was satisfactory. As such, it was fundamental for further investigation of the research phenomenon. Thus, it was retained to help examine the effect of eWOM on the B2B marketing process in Qatar's oil and gas sector. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2g which postulated that,

H2g: eWOM has a positive effect on a brand's commitment to promote consumer-based initiatives during B2B marketing.

6.12.2.8 Brand Trust (BT 7) and eWOM

In this section, the last item was item eight, whose correlation with eWOM, as indicated in table 22, was ($r = .132$). The results indicated a weak correlation between the two constructs and since the Sig. (2-tailed) value was .116 (see table 22), it implies that correlation was statistically insignificant. In this regard, the item was dropped for further investigation to understand the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing since its convergent validity was unsatisfactory, indicated by a statistically insignificant correlation. The correlation results confirm research hypothesis H2h which postulated that,

H2h: eWOM has a direct effect on consumer perception of brand compensation during B2B marketing.

6.12.3 Brand Loyalty (BL)

The section examines the convergent validity of the items associated with brand loyalty in relation to eWOM construct to determine if they are valid in evaluating the eWOM effect in B2B marketing processes.

6.12.3.1 Brand Loyalty (BL 1) and eWOM

The first brand loyalty item (BL 1) had a strong and positive correlation with eWOM ($r = .631$), as shown in table 22. Additionally, Sig. (2-tailed) value was .000 (see table 22), which is less than .05. This implies that the correlation between the two constructs was statistically significant and this finding led to the conclusion that the convergent validity of the item was satisfactory and hence it was retained for the next step of the analysis. The results confirm hypothesis H3a which postulated that:

H3a: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer's loyalty in terms of purchasing from a specific brand only.

6.12.3.2 Brand Loyalty (BL 2) and eWOM

The second item of brand loyalty (BL 2) was found to have a weak correlation with eWOM as displayed in table 22 ($r = .075$). The value for Sig. (2-tailed) was .372 (see table 22) $> .05$ implying that the correlation was statistically insignificant. This shows that the item convergent validity was unsatisfactory, and thus, it was dropped from investigating the research problem further. The results confirm hypothesis H3b which postulated that:

H3b: eWOM has a positive effect on consumer's loyalty in terms of continued commitment to a specific brand only.

6.12.3.3 Brand Loyalty (BL 3) and eWOM

Item three of the brand loyalty variable was found to have an averagely strong correlation with eWOM, which was ($r = .409$) (see table 22). The correlation was also positive as indicated. The correlation between the two constructs was statistically significant since the Sig. (2-tailed) value was .000 (see table 22), which is less than .05. This implies that the convergent validity of the third item of brand loyalty was acceptable

and thus, the item was retained for further analysis of the research problem. The results confirm hypothesis H3c which postulated that:

H3c: eWOM hurts consumers' loyalty in terms of lack of commitment to a specific brand.

6.12.3.4 Brand Loyalty (BL 4) and eWOM

Similarly, the correlation between the fourth brand loyalty items was averagely strong and positive ($r = .420$) (see table 22). Sig. (2-tailed) value obtained for the correlation was .000 (see table 22) $< .05$, indicating the correlation was statistically significant. The results indicate that the convergent validity of this fourth brand loyalty item was satisfactory and hence it was retained for subsequent data analysis steps. The results confirm hypothesis H3d which postulated that:

H3d: eWOM has a positive effect on consumers' loyalty in terms of regular purchases from a specific brand.

6.12.4 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL)

This part examines the correlation between the items associated with brand oppositional loyalty and eWOM to determine their convergent validity that either led to their retention or rejection in further analysis of the research problem.

6.12.4.1 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 1) and eWOM

Brand oppositional loyalty's first item was found to have a weak correlation with eWOM as displayed in table 22, however positive ($r = .079$). This correlation was found to be statistically insignificant since the value for Sig. (2-tailed) was .348 (see table 22), which was greater than .05. This indicated that the convergent validity of this item was unsatisfactory and thus could not be used in further analysis of the research problem.

The findings do not confirm research hypothesis H4a which postulated that:

H4a: eWOM influences consumer discouragement of friends and family on the brand purchase during B2B marketing.

6.12.4.2 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 2) and eWOM

Table 22 indicates that the correlation between the second item of brand oppositional loyalty (BOP 2) and eWOM is averagely strong and positive ($r = .575$). Moreover, the correlation was found to be statistically significant since a Sig. (2-tailed) value of $.000 < .05$ was found. This indicates that this item's convergent validity was acceptable and thus could be used in examining the effect of eWOM in the process of B2B marketing. The findings do not confirm research hypothesis H4b, which postulated that:

H4b: eWOM influences consumers' lack of desire to purchase from a specific brand product during B2B marketing.

6.12.4.3 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 3) and eWOM

Similarly, the third item of brand oppositional loyalty (BOL 3) was noted to have a positive correlation with eWOM ($.575$) (see table 22), which was statistically significant since the value for Sig. (2-tailed) was $.000$ (see table 22) $< .05$. The results indicated that the item had a satisfactory convergent validity and as such, it was used in the subsequent data analysis process to understand the research problem. The findings do not confirm research hypothesis H4c which postulated that:

H4c: eWOM influences consumers' repeated posting of negative reviews about the brand products during B2B marketing.

6.12.4.4 Brand Oppositional Loyalty (BOL 4) and eWOM

Finally, the fourth item of brand oppositional loyalty variable (BOL 4) had a positive but weak correlation with eWOM ($r = .130$), as shown in table 22. The value for Sig. (2-tailed) was .122 (see table 22), which was higher than the acceptable value of .05. The results thus indicate that the item had unsatisfactory convergent validity that led to its rejection for further analysis of the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. The findings do not confirm research hypothesis H4d which postulated that:

H4d: eWOM influences consumers' decisions of never trying specific brand product during B2B marketing.

Correlation between eWOM Variable and B2B Marketing Constructs

	eWOM	BKA1	BKA2	BKA3	BKA4	BT1	BT2	BT3	BT4	BT5	BT6	BT7	BT8	BL1	BL2	BL3	BL4	BOL1	BOL2	BOL3	BOL4
eWOM	Pearson	1	-.081	.342	.769	.640	.209	.409	.420	.079	.456	.395	.132	.631	.075	.409	.420	.079	.575	.575	.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.338	.000	.000	.000	.012	.000	.000	.348	.000	.000	.116	.000	.372	.000	.000	.348	.000	.000	.122
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BKA1	Pearson	.769*	1	-.141	1.000	.482	.100	.305	.438	.137	.301	.212	.041	.554	.208	.305	.438	.137	.561	.561	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.094	.000	.000	.234	.000	.000	.103	.000	.011	.627	.000	.013	.000	.000	.103	.000	.000	.785
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

BKA 2	Pearson	-	-	1	.01	-	-	.05	.010	-	-	.02	.01	.10	-	-	.010	-	-	-	-	.04
	Correlation	.081	.141		.141	.128	.056	.010	.096	.034	.011	.016	.019	.135	.007	.010	.096	.034	.046	.046	.046	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.338	.094		.902	.127	.505	.905	.252	.687	.801	.851	.196	.107	.932	.905	.252	.687	.584	.584	.584	.621
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BKA 3	Pearson	.342*	.240	.01	.240	.14	-	.301	.105	.060	.25	.15	.14	.13	.05	.301	.105	.060	.068	.068	.32	
	Correlation	*	**	0	**	.015	.010	**	.105	.060	.077	.011	.010	.018	.054	**	.105	.060	.068	.068	.068	.324
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.902	.004	.085	.902	.000	.213	.475	.002	.072	.096	.100	.521	.000	.213	.475	.418	.418	.418	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BKA 4	Pearson	.769*	1.00	-	.24	.48	.10	.305	.438	.137	.30	.21	.04	.55	.20	.305	.438	.137	.561	.561	-	
	Correlation	*	0**	.141	0**	1	.22	.0	**	**	.137	.11	.02	.04	.208	**	**	.137	**	**	.023	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.094	.004	.000	.234	.000	.000	.103	.000	.011	.627	.000	.013	.000	.000	.103	.000	.000	.000	.785
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

BT1	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.640*	.482**	-.128	.145	.482**	1	.295**	.200*	.243**	-.019	.216**	.182*	.098	.387**	.099	.200*	.243**	-.019	.403**	.403**	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.127	.085	.000		.000	.017	.003	.824	.010	.029	.240	.001	.241	.017	.003	.824	.000	.000	.495
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BT2	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.209*	.100	.056	-.010	.100	.295**	1	.082	.224**	-.070	.165*	.167*	.203*	.040	.015	.082**	.224**	-.070	.142	.142	.241**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.234	.505	.902	.234	.000		.333	.007	.404	.048	.046	.015	.633	.855	.333	.007	.404	.091	.091	.004
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BT3	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.409*	.305**	.010	.301**	.305**	.200*	.082	1	.423**	.028	.318**	.152	.118	.297**	.087	1.000**	.423**	.028	.236**	.236**	.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.905	.000	.000	.017	.333		.000	.744	.000	.069	.160	.000	.303	.000	.000	.744	.005	.005	.007
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

BT4	Pearson	.420*	.438	-	.10	.438	.24	.22	.423	1	.241	.30	.15	.01	.37	.04	.423	1.00	.241	.436	.436	.05	
	Correlation	*	**	.096	.105	**	.33**	.44**	**	1	**	.77**	.11	.09	.88**	.06	**	.00**	**	**	**	**	.07
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.252	.213	.000	.003	.007	.000	.004	.000	.000	.072	.818	.000	.587	.000	.000	.004	.000	.000	.000	.502
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BT5	Pearson	.079	.137	-	.06	.137	.01	.07	.028	.241	.09	.11	.06	.07	.13	.028	.241	1.00	.119	.119	.11		
	Correlation			.034	.060	.137	.019	.070	.028	**	.091	.110	.066	.071	.131	.028	**	.00**	.119	.119	.114		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.103	.687	.475	.103	.824	.404	.744	.004	.238	.192	.431	.398	.120	.744	.004	.000	.155	.155	.177		
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	
BT6	Pearson	.456*	.301	.02	.25	.301	.21	.16	.318	.307	.099	.40	.06	.20	-	.318	.307	.099	.283	.283	.28		
	Correlation	*	**	.021	.257**	**	.216**	.165*	**	**	.099	.402**	.063	.200*	.007	**	**	.099	**	**	**	.06	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.801	.002	.000	.010	.048	.000	.000	.238	.000	.457	.017	.934	.000	.000	.238	.001	.001	.001		
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	

BT7	Pearson	.395*	.212	.016	.151	.212	.182	.167	.152	.151	-.110	.402	.273	.143	.031	.152	.151	-.110	.184	.184	-.046
	Correlation	*	*		*	*	*	*				**	**						*	*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.011	.851	.072	.011	.029	.046	.069	.072	.192	.000	.001	.088	.714	.069	.072	.192	.027	.027	.588
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BT8	Pearson	.132	.041	.109	.140	.041	.098	.203	.118	.019	-.066	.063	.271	.009	-.018	.118	.019	-.066	.045	.045	.137
	Correlation							*					**								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.116	.627	.196	.096	.627	.242	.015	.160	.818	.431	.457	.001	.919	.828	.160	.818	.431	.595	.595	.102
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BL1	Pearson	.631*	.554	-.135	.138	.554	.387	.040	.297	.378	.071	.200	.143	.009	.140	.297	.378	.071	.492	.492	.039
	Correlation	*	**			**	**	0	**	**		*	3	9	1	**	**		**	**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.107	.100	.000	.000	.633	.000	.000	.398	.017	.088	.919	.096	.000	.000	.398	.000	.000	.641
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

BL2	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.075	.208*	-.007	.054	.208*	.099	.015	.087	.046	.131	-.007	.031	-.018	.140	1	.087	.046	.131	.107	.107	-.191*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.372	.013	.932	.521	.013	.241	.855	.303	.587	.120	.934	.714	.828	.096		.303	.587	.120	.203	.203	.022
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BL3	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.409*	.305**	.010	.301**	.305**	.200*	.082	1.000**	.423**	.028	.318**	.152	.118	.297**	.087	.423**	.028	.236**	.236**	.224**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.905	.000	.000	.017	.333	.000	.000	.744	.000	.069	.160	.000	.303	.000	.744	.005	.005	.007	
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
BL4	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.420*	.438**	-.096	.105	.438**	.243**	.224**	.423**	1.000**	.241**	.307**	.151	.019	.378**	.046	.423**	.241**	.436**	.436**	.057	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.252	.213	.000	.003	.007	.000	.000	.004	.000	.072	.818	.000	.587	.000	.004	.000	.000	.000	.502
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

BOL 1	Pearson Correlation	.079	.137	-.034	.060	.137	.019	.070	.028	.241**	1.000**	.099	-.110	-.066	.071	.131	.028	.241**	1	.119	.119	.114	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.103	.687	.475	.103	.824	.404	.744	.004	.000	.238	.192	.431	.398	.120	.744	.004		.155	.155	.177	
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	14	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
																3							
BOL 2	Pearson Correlation	.575*	.561**	-.046	.068	.561**	.403**	.142	.236**	.436**	.119	.283**	.184*	.045	.492**	.107	.236**	.436**	.119	1	1.000	-.033	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.584	.418	.000	.000	.091	.005	.000	.155	.001	.027	.595	.000	.203	.005	.000	.155		.000	.700	
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	14	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
																3							
BOL 3	Pearson Correlation	.575*	.561**	-.046	.068	.561**	.403**	.142	.236**	.436**	.119	.283**	.184*	.045	.492**	.107	.236**	.436**	.119	1.000	1	-.033	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.584	.418	.000	.000	.091	.005	.000	.155	.001	.027	.595	.000	.203	.005	.000	.155	.000		.700	
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	14	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
																3							

BOL 4	Pearson																					
	Correlation	.130	-.023	.042	.324**	-.023	.057	.241**	.224**	.057	.114	.286**	-.046	.137	.039	-.191*	.224**	.057	.114	-.033	-.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.785	.621	.000	.785	.495	.000	.007	.502	.177	.001	.588	.102	.641	.022	.007	.502	.177	.700	.700	
	N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 22: Correlation between eWOM Variable and B2B Marketing Constructs.

6.13 Correlation between key Research Variables

		eWOM	BKA	BT	BL	BOL
eWOM	Pearson Correlation	1	.769**	.656**	.558**	.575**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
BKA	Pearson Correlation	.769**	1	.420**	.534**	.561**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
BT	Pearson Correlation	.656**	.420**	1	.609**	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
BL	Pearson Correlation	.558**	.534**	.609**	1	.444**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
BOL	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.561**	.464**	.444**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	143	143	143	143	143

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 23: Correlation between key Research Variables.

The section examines the correlation between eWOM strategy and specific B2B marketing variables explored earlier to highlight the connection between eWOM strategy and its effects on B2B marketing. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the strength

of the linear relationship between the two variables. The B2B marketing variables used in this section were computed following the dropping of some associated items after evaluating their convergent validity. The section is for testing hypotheses developed in chapter five to conclude on the identified positive and negative effects of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector.

6.13.1 Positive Effects of eWOM Strategy on B2B Marketing

6.13.1.1 Increase in brand knowledge and awareness

This section examines data to identify if eWOM is linked to an increase in brand knowledge and awareness. Table 23 shows that the correlation between eWOM and increased brand knowledge and awareness is strong and positive ($r = .769$). The correlation was found to be statistically significant since the Sig. (2-tailed) value was .000 (see table 23) $< .05$. This shows that an increase in brand knowledge and awareness, an aspect of B2B marketing, is strongly linked to the application of eWOM strategy.

6.13.1.2 Improved brand loyalty

A strong and positive correlation between eWOM and improved brand loyalty was established, as shown in table 23 ($r = .656$). The value for Sig. (2-tailed) was .000 (see table 23), which was less than the acceptable value of .05 thus indicating that the correlation was statistically significant. Overall, the result implies that improved brand loyalty, an aspect of B2B marketing, is strongly connected with the application of eWOM strategy.

6.13.1.3 Enhanced brand trust

Another positive effect associated with the application of eWOM strategy in B2B marketing was enhanced brand trust. The correlation between enhanced brand trust

and the eWOM application was positive and strong, as indicated in table 23 ($r = .558$). Since the Sig. (2-tailed) value was .000 (see table 23) $<.05$, the result then implies that the connection between enhanced brand trust and aspect of B2B marketing and application of eWOM strategy in Qatar's oil and gas sector is strong.

6.13.2 Negative effects of eWOM strategy on B2B marketing: Increase in brand oppositional loyalty

The negative effect of B2B marketing associated with the application of eWOM in Qatar's oil and gas sector is increasing brand oppositional loyalty. The correlation between increased brand oppositional loyalty and eWOM is ($r = .575$), indicating the connection between the two is averagely strong. The value for Sig. (2-tailed) is .000, which is less than 0.5 and thus indicates that the correlation between the two variables is statistically significant. The result implies that the application of eWOM in the oil and gas sector in Qatar increases brand oppositional loyalty.

6.14 Relationship between key Research Variables

After determining that eWOM has a strong connection or relationship with the identified eWOM effects on B2B marketing, this section examines data to evaluate the extent of variation of the relationship and its statistical significance. This was aimed at testing the hypothesis developed in chapter five of this dissertation. Particularly, this section utilised a single regression model to analyse each effect of eWOM on B2B marketing and application of eWOM strategy in the B2B marketing process. The section begins by evaluating the model fit on the data collected whereby the value for R and R-square columns are checked. This is then followed by the analysis of the variation of the relationship or connection in which the B and P values were assessed.

6.14.1 Relationship between increased brand knowledge and awareness (BKA) and eWOM

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.769 ^a	.591	.588	.50067

a. Predictors: (Constant), BKA

Table 24: Regression model summary for BKA and eWOM.

The value for the R column is .769 (76.9%) (See table 24) indicating that the model is fit for the data that it was supposed to analyse. This is because the value is more than 50%, as indicated by Babbie et al. (2015). Furthermore, the R-square column is .591 (59.1%) implying that variation in brand knowledge awareness can be explained by a 59.1% variation in the application of eWOM in B2B marketing. This further confirms that the model was fit for the data.

Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.030	.231		8.774	.000
BOL	.477	.057	.575	8.335	.000

a. Dependent Variable: eWOM

Table 25: Regression Coefficients for BKA and eWOM

As shown in Table 25, the B-value is .477 (47.7%) indicating a positive relationship between eWOM and increased brand knowledge. In this regard, as the application of eWOM in B2B marketing is increased by one unit, there is increased brand knowledge and awareness among customers by 47.7%. The relationship between the two variables was found to be statistically significant since a p-value of $.000 < .05$ was obtained as indicated in table 25. As such, hypothesis one postulating that eWOM strategy positively affects brand knowledge and awareness among consumers was confirmed.

6.14.2 Brand Loyalty and eWOM

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.558 ^a	.311	.306	.65008

a. Predictors: (Constant), BL

Table 26: Model summary for BL and eWOM.

The R column value is .558 (55.8%) > 50%, and it implies that the model is fit for the data it was supposed to measure. Moreover, the R-square column value is .311 indicating that variation in brand loyalty by one unit can be explained by variation in eWOM strategy application by 31.1%; as such, the model was fit for the data.

Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.453	.312		4.655	.000
	BL	.622	.078	.558	7.976	.000

a. Dependent Variable: eWOM

Table 27: Regression Coefficients for BL and eWOM

The relationship between brand loyalty and eWOM is positive since the B-value obtained, as indicated in table 27, is .622 (62.2%). This implies that as eWOM strategy application is increased by one unit, brand loyalty is enhanced by 62.2%. Furthermore, the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant since the p-value obtained was .000 (see table 27) <.05. In this view, hypothesis 2 hypothesising that eWOM strategy positively affects brand loyalty among the consumers was confirmed.

6.14.3 Brand Trust and eWOM

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.656 ^a	.431	.427	.59088

a. Predictors: (Constant), BT

Table 28: Model Summary for BT and eWOM

The R column value, as shown in table 28, is .656 (65.5%) which indicates the model was fit for the data. The R-square value was .431 (43.1%) (See table 28) showing that variation in brand trust can be explained based on variations in the application of eWOM strategy in B2B marketing.

Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.654	.319		2.051	.042
BT	.832	.081	.656	10.329	.000

a. Dependent Variable: eWOM

Table 29: Regression Coefficients for BT and eWOM

The B value obtained for brand trust and eWOM strategy was .832 (see table 29), indicating that there was a positive relationship between brand trust and eWOM strategy. The results show that as eWOM strategy applications increased by one unit, then brand trust, an aspect of B2B marketing is increased by 83.2%. The relationship was statistically significant since the p-value was .000 (see table 29) <.05. Thus, hypothesis three posting that eWOM strategy positively affects consumers' brand trust was confirmed.

6.14.4 Brand Oppositional Loyalty and eWOM

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.575 ^a	.330	.325	.64098

a. Predictors: (Constant), BOL

Table 30: Model Summary for BOL and eWOM

The R column value is .575 (57.5%) > 50%, thus showing the model is fit for the data. The R-square column value is .330 (33%) (See table 30), which implies that variation in the brand oppositional loyalty can be explained based on variations in the application of eWOM strategy in B2B marketing.

Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.030	.231		8.774	.000
BOL	.477	.057	.575	8.335	.000

a. Dependent Variable: eWOM

Table 31: Regression Coefficients for BOL and eWOM.

The B-value, as shown in table 31 for brand oppositional loyalty and eWOM strategy, is .477 (47.7%) showing that an increase in eWOM strategy application in B2B marketing by one unit increases brand oppositional loyalty among consumers by 47.7%. The relationship is statistically significant since the p-value of the relationship is .000 (see table 31) is less than .05. Therefore, hypothesis four postulating that eWOM strategy positively affects brand oppositional loyalty of the consumers was confirmed.

6.15 Discussion of the sample

In terms of research, a sample is referred to as the group of individuals that are extracted from larger segments of the target population. Since in research it is completely impossible to take data from the entire segment of the target population, a sample from the same is extracted from which data is collected and interpreted, and then the findings are generalized to the entire population sample. The considered sample is further required to be representative of the population in order to ensure that the findings of the research can be generalized from the research sample to the target population as a whole. In the present study, the sample population involved employees of the B2B organization in the oil and gas sector of Qatar. The industry is expected to employ more than 14000 employees who are evidently huge for the present

research. Hence, to determine the appropriate sample for the survey, the below formula was utilized.

$$n = (Z)^2 * SD (1-SD) / (\text{margin of error})^2$$

In this research, the research adopted purposive sampling to extract a sample of 143 B2B firm employees from the oil and gas sector. It is a non-probability sampling technique that is utilized to produce a sample of the target population that can be further assumed logically to be population representative.

The demography of the sample constituting of 143 respondents participating in the quantitative research process is provided in the table below:

Age	
25-35 years	41
35-45 years	64
Above 45 years	38
Gender	
Male	76
Female	67
Educational Status	
Diploma	32
Graduation	72
Post-Graduation	39
Employment Level	
Front Line Employees	79
Second Line Employees	64

Table 32: Demography of the Sample

(Source: Self-Created)

6.15.1 Discussion regarding organizations and marketing departments

An important aspect that is being investigated in this particular research is the ways eWOM impacts a brand and the associated components of branding. Researchers have argued that communication among consumers is a factor that is expected to significantly influence other factors related to brand marketing. Specifically, eWOM is expected to impact the image of the brand further leading to a plausible effect on the intentions of the consumers to go for a specific brand. In agreement with the results indicated by such researchers, other studies indicated a strong correlation between eWOM and measures of the brand such as its equity, awareness, image, association, as well as perceptions of quality (Al-Khinji, 2020). In other words marketing of the brands electronically possesses both positive as well as a negative impact on the perception of the brand by the consumers further impacting the strength of association of the consumers with that particular brand.

A different aspect of the relationship significant to this study is the influence of eWOM on departments of sales as well as revenues. The sales departments of the B2B organizations involved in the oil and gas sector in Qatar are found to be highly influenced by the impact caused by eWOM. The results from studies indicate a strengthened association between the company's sales figures and positive eWOM. It can be inferred that spreading of positive emotions regarding a product or the service through utilizing an electronic communication media also referred to as social media enhances the sales or the revenue of the B2B companies and the same can be said for negative eWOM reducing the level of sales and revenues for the company unless certain effective measures exist that possess the ability to rectify the developed challenges (Diba *et al.* 2019). Thus, the present discussion regarding organizations and marketing departments highlights the significance of eWOM in marketing. It illustrates the findings from the previous research works delineating the impact of eWOM on other departments of the B2B companies. The findings discussed are moreover carried out in

the oil and the gas sector in Qatar thereby aligning the relevance of the same with the quantitative findings that are generated in the latter sections.

6.15.2 Recruitment of the sample and procedure of data collection

As discussed earlier, a sample of 143 employees of the B2B companies in the oil and gas industry of Qatar is selected adopting the technique of purposive sampling which allowed the researcher to produce a sample that can be assumed in a logical manner to be representative of the target population. Since the present research involved human subjects, the research undertook essential ethical considerations to proceed with the data collection process. The sample has forwarded the questionnaire in their respective e-mail ids in a Google doc format. The questionnaire consisted of the basic instructions required to address the items of the same. The respondents were further provided with a time limit of 2 days to complete the items of the questionnaire and mail it back to the researcher. The respondents were clearly instructed and were provided with the choice to not answer any item if they find it uncomfortable to answer the same. The obtained data was utilized only for the purpose of the research and integrity, confidentiality, as well as privacy of the respondents were maintained throughout the process of data collection. The obtained data was further stored in Google drive of the researcher and was deleted after the completion of the research. The findings of the obtained data were protected through intellectual property rights which gave the researcher the sole ownership of the utility of the data. The process of data collection effectively gathered and measured information on variables of interest and further develops a systematic possible way to address the stated research questions, test the relevant research hypotheses, and evaluate the findings of the undertaken research.

6.15.3 Controlling the quality of data collection

In order to control the quality of data collection, accuracy, relevancy, completeness, timeliness, as well as consistency criteria need to be met. The standard to obtain a good quality of data differs based upon the requirement of the data itself. Therefore, for a researcher to maintain good control regarding the quality of the data it is important to ensure quality control techniques in the process of data collection.

6.15.4 Validity and Reliability Assessment of the collected data

		N	%
Cases	Valid	143	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	143	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.981	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V1	3.0493	1.29005	142
V2	3.2042	1.47094	142
V3	3.5070	1.41294	142
V4	3.5986	1.57128	142
V5	2.7394	1.48601	142

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
V1	13.0493	32.912	.963	.975
V2	12.8944	31.230	.939	.977
V3	12.5915	31.775	.945	.976
V4	12.5000	30.039	.947	.977

V5	13.3592	31.026	.942	.977
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Table 33: Reliability Assessment

(Source: Self-Created)

Convergent validity is considered as a sub-type of construct validity. Construct validity of a test means that the test which is designed to measure a particular form of construct is measuring the same. Convergent validity includes two forms of measures that are supposed to measure the same construct and present strengthened relations with one another. On the other hand, discriminant validity presents that two measures that are not expected to relate with each other are in a real sense, unrelated. Thus, both forms of validity can be considered to be an essential requirement for the establishment of construct validity.

Cronbach Alpha, on the other hand, measures, internal consistency of the obtained data, in other words, it establishes the degree of closeness of the set of items as a group. It is even considered to be a measure of scale reliability. The increase in the average inter-item correlation further causes an increase in the value of Cronbach Alpha. From the above table, it can be seen that the value of Cronbach alpha is obtained to be 0.981 which is considered as very high indicating a high degree of closeness between the considered variables thereby forming a group. Cronbach alpha further estimates the coefficient of reliability, therefore the high value of the same can be even regarded as possessing high scale reliability of the considered variables. Thus, it can be said that the items of the set accurately represent the construct it is supposed to present hence, scoring high even on construct validity.

6.16 Impacts of eWOM on B2B Marketing

The purpose of this research was to examine the effects of social media on B2B marketing through the assessment of eWOM in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Objective 1 attempted to determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Objective 2 sought to find out the negative effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Finally, Objective 3 was created to establish the possible solutions to the negative effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.

6.16.1. Objective 1 — Positive Impacts of eWOM on B2B Marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar

First, based on the study findings, eWOM was identified to have various positive impacts on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. The study identified that eWOM contributed to an increase in brand knowledge and awareness. The correlation between eWOM and brand knowledge & awareness was positive revealing that any positive feedbacks on social media concerning the oil and gas sector in Qatar can be interpreted as a positive acknowledgment by consumers. These insights have been identified in the literature where eWOM has been closely tied to various constructs. Alexandra (2015) reported that eWOM influences customer preferences and customers became more aware of a specific brand. Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013) further reported that eWOM plays a central role in influencing brand knowledge and awareness among consumers, while Ahmad and Laroche (2017) elaborated that eWOM enabled consumers to make informed decisions. Through eWOM, consumers can access additional insights about the brand and this means that the gas and oil industry can use eWOM to give insights about its products and attract positive market reception.

Ahmad and Laroche (2017) reported that information spread through eWOM derives consumer curiosity about the brand. Al Halbusi, Hussam, and Tehseen (2018) indicated that when the popularity of a brand surges in the market through social media posts,

there is increased consumer interest towards the new products. The positive impact of eWOM in generating information demand can be maximized by eWOM to advance its products in the oil and gas industry (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Lee, Noh, and Kim (2013). Another important aspect is that eWOM influences consumers to search for additional insights to learn about marketed products. Ahmad and Laroche (2017) shared that consumers tend to seek further insights about a brand during B2B marketing in efforts to understand the product. The oil and gas industry can use the social media platform to provide its target market which relevant information while marketing its products to increase consumers' purchase intention (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Importantly, the oil and gas industry can use eWOM to motivate its existing customers to refer its products to friends and increase its sales prospects as noted by Balakrishan, Dahnil, and Wong (2014).

Second, the study also revealed that eWOM has a positive impact in terms of improving brand loyalty among consumers. The study obtained a robust positive correlation between eWOM and improved brand loyalty echoing the revelations obtained from past studies where Luo and Zhong (2015) pointed out that positive communication and information sharing about products through eWOM has a positive impact on consumer acceptance the marketed products. Omar, Dahalan, and Yusoff (2016) also noted that positive brand perception through eWOM increases customer loyalty and future repurchases, while Chiu et al. (2014) indicated that brands that create hedonic and utilitarian values generate brand loyalty through eWOM. The literature observations support the general hypothesis on brand loyalty based on four constructs that can be used by the oil and gas industry in Qatar to market its products through B2B. One, the study found that some customers preferred to purchase from specific products because of the quality and value they get from such products. Kim, Jang, and Adler (2015) showed that satisfied customers are more likely to share their positive experiences on social media through eWOM and continue using similar products establishing long-term loyalty. Three, the study also observed that customer loyalty is reflected through a commitment to a specific brand. Lovett, Peres, and Shachar (2013) pointed out that positive sentiments are likely to attract other customers to the brand and build a strong,

loyal base for quality products. Four, the study noted that customer loyalty is evident through regular purchase, where appropriate information about a brand on social media generates repeated purchases. Gvili and Levy (2018) reported that positive experience through eWOM is likely to inform regular product and service purchases further advancing customer loyalty in terms of continued purchases from a specific brand.

Third, eWOM also facilitates enhanced brand trust in B2B marketing based on the correlation findings from the oil and gas industry in Qatar. The results are in line with past literature publications where eWOM has been noted to influence brand trust. Results from both the interviews and surveys revealed that eWOM plays towards facilitating brand trust among consumers. For instance, eWOM influenced information about a product and empowered a consumer to decide about a product, while social media feedbacks through eWOM facilitates brand trust among consumers. Based on the interview and survey findings, brand trust was informed by various factors such as consumer anticipation and confidence with the brand. In both cases, the results revealed that when products meet customer expectations, there was a direct impact on messages shared on social media about the product and subsequent brand loyalty. The literature has also indicated that eWOM informs customer decisions as consumer confidence on brand expectations increases (Yin, Feng, & Wang, 2015). Brand confidence also served to promote consumer trust where the findings agree with past literature in that positive consumer experience is likely to generate confidence towards a specific brand (Yoo, Kim, & Sanders, 2015), thereby ensuring continued trust and loyalty. On the contrary, however, it can be noted that participants indicated that a negative experience with a brand erodes consumer confidence thereby diminishing consumers' trust. The survey results also showed that customer trust in a brand can be generated through brand satisfaction. Yap, Soetarto, and Sweeney (2013) elaborated that eWOM can potentially influence customer satisfaction which is a vital aspect of consumer trust. Survey results also indicated that insights shared via eWOM on social sites about a product can help other customers become aware of the brand and its capacity to meet the specific needs of consumers. However, the participants shared that when brands create poor quality products, it becomes challenging to meet their needs and this results in disappointments that can erode consumer trust. As such, it becomes

evident that eWOM has positive effects in terms of creating consumer trust and these findings can be applied to the marketing of oil and gas industry in Qatar through social media platforms.

6.16.2. Objective 2 — Negative Impacts of eWOM on B2B Marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar

Objective 2 was developed to find out the adverse effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Findings from the interview and survey findings revealed that one of the main adverse effects of B2B marketing directly related to the application of eWOM in Qatar's oil and gas sector is increasing brand oppositional loyalty. Interview results noted that negative brand reviews generate opposition against brands deemed to be substandard or brands that fail to meet consumer expectations. Moreover, survey results indicated that the correlation between increased brand oppositional loyalty and strong and is statistically significant. Therefore, the researcher concluded that one of the negative impacts of applying eWOM in the oil and gas sector in Qatar is brand oppositional loyalty. Negative feedback and comments about a given brand will always attract negative feelings about the brand and the chances of buying it are limited. Specifically, negative feelings trigger low levels of trust in the brand and this motivates consumers' reluctance in purchasing or even referring the brand to friends and families.

Similar observations have also been made in the past literature on potential negative impacts eWOM has on brand perception. A study undertaken by Schindler and Bickart (2005) revealed that the nature of information shared among consumers on social media provides the opportunity for companies to sale their products while at the same time also creating new challenges, especially when consumer needs are not met. For instance, the negative information on social media about a product has far-reaching negative consequences for a brand that is deemed to contradict consumer expectations. Lin and Lu (2010) noted that negative criticism about products on social media through eWOM has a substantial impact on determining not only the

performance of a product but also the market competitiveness of a company. The findings from the current study contradict initial observations made by Fang et al. (2011) in that eWOM did not have any significant negative impact on product profitability in the oil and gas industry.

Another effect of electronic word of mouth on oil and gas companies is reduced revenues due to negative feedback. This is suggested by Rauschnabel et al. (2016), who assessed the effects of collaborative social media brand attacks on companies. In their findings, the authors argue that online platforms enhance the use of word of mouth to increase consumer power and develop company accountability. They conclude that negative social media communication between consumers can be detrimental to the sales of a company as well as reducing their ability to attract new customers. Huete-Alcoer (2017) reviewed past publications on the impact of eWOM on consumer behaviour and reported that there is consensus among scholars and practitioners that negative brand reviews generate opposition against brands deemed to be substandard or brands that fail to meet consumer expectations. Most customers are not only likely to discourage other consumers, but share their negative experience with close friends and family members (Chang & Wu, 2014).

The negative impact of eWOM on brand tends to play out through four processes as noted from the current research. One of the main approaches is through discouragement when consumers have a negative experience with a brand. Results from the oil and gas industry show that this negative experience through eWOM is likely to trigger oppositional brand loyalty especially when frustrated customers discourage their friends and close relatives from purchasing some products or services in the market. The other negative impact can result from reduced enthusiasm to buy some products as a result of individual experience or due to consumer feedback on social media concerning a product. Interview results pointed out that social media messages shared via eWOM can change positive prospects by potential consumers to avoid some products. Past literature findings by Chang and Wu (2014) and by Hussain et al. (2017) agree that eWOM shared on social media sites about a product is likely to

persuade the opinion of most people and inform their purchase decisions, where influence is greater when eWOM about a product is negative than otherwise. Further, interview results revealed that negative feedbacks through eWOM substantially contribute negatively to the success of any brand. The same correlation was also noted from the survey results where negative eWOM feedback about a specific product contributed to oppositional brand loyalty. A third factor that contributes to oppositional brand loyalty includes negative consumer posts about a product. Hutter et al. (2013) remarked that consumers who share negative experiences about a brand on social media via eWOM create inauspicious brand awareness, which hinders brand loyalty. Finally, negative experience with a brand is likely to generate negative engagement where consumers may resolve never to try out products from some brands. Daugherty and Hoffman (2013) shared that negative consumer experienced informed by eWOM feedbacks contributes to product reject in the market, an aspect that can be interpreted to mean oppositional brand loyalty. Having examined some of the potential negative impacts of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar, the next section discussed the third research objective which attempted to examine possible approaches that can be adopted to reduce the negative impacts of eWOM on B2B marketing.

6.16.3. Objective 3 — solving the Effects of eWOM on B2B Marketing

Objective 3 attempted to establish a possible solution to the adverse effects of eWOM in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. Solutions to potential adverse impacts resulting from eWOM on social media can be addressed by taking into consideration customer concerns. First, as evident from the survey results and interview feedbacks, costumers tend to be loyal to products and services that meet their expectations, confidence, satisfaction, reflect honesty, compensation, and brands that make deliberate efforts to meet consumer needs. Thus, the oil and gas industry needs to reflect these central aspects of their products and also work towards ensuring that consumers have authentic brand knowledge and awareness. The ability to deliver products that meet customer need is key to ensuring positive brand engagement between companies and

their target consumers; embracing such measures will go a long way in solving potential negative impacts which might result from consumer reviews on social media sites through eWOM.

Second, companies in the oil and gas industry in Qatar can solve the adverse effects of eWOM during B2B marketing by availing all the essential information about their products and services for consumer assessment and evaluation to ensure potential customers make informed decisions. Regular communication and consistent engagement with customers through social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Huete-Alcocer (2017) reveals that companies that take early proactive initiatives to communicate with consumers position themselves against the potential negative backlash. In contrast, companies that delay providing provisional information about customer complaints sleep into a dungeon they might never recover from once negative consumer feedbacks via eWOM start spreading through social media sites. Thus, the oil and gas industry in Qatar need to invest in social media communication strategies as a way of providing regular insights to its clients about available products and services, while addressing negative customer experience before such experiences turn out to be a smear campaign through eWOM. BP used such a strategy during the 2010 oil spill to a higher success where Facebook was a reliable platform for engaging consumers and addressing their fears (Ye, 2014). As discussed in the literature, the study found that eWOM from consumers was more favourable to the company when there was no third party involved in bolstering the image of BP. Thus, if applied to the oil and gas industry in Qatar, eWOM can be a positive approach in addressing potential adverse impacts resulting from consumers' negative experience with specific products and services.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Future Research

7.1 Summary of the Research

The aim of the current research was to investigate the effects of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. Chapter seven presents the conclusions and future research aspects after examining findings from the analysis of both interview and questionnaire data. Interview and questionnaire data are triangulated to enhance understanding of the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry. The objectives of the study included (1) to determine the positive effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and (2) to find out the negative effects of negative electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and (3) to establish the possible solution to the negative effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar. As stated in the research methodology, this research utilised semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data regarding the effects of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector in Qatar so as to identify variables associated with eWOM effects in B2B marketing. This was aimed at developing appropriate research constructs that will be relevant for the Qatar context to gain a statistical understanding of the identified effects of eWOM strategy in B2B marketing. To collect quantitative data, questionnaires developed in chapter four were used and the number of participants who completed the questionnaires was 143 employees from the oil and gas sector. This was aimed at examining the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in Qatar's oil and gas sector which was the main aim of this study. Inferential statistics were used to aid in the testing of the hypothesis developed in chapter five to accomplish the aim.

From the qualitative data analysis, various positive effects associated with eWOM marketing identified include increase in brand knowledge and awareness, brand trust, brand loyalty. The interviewees acknowledged that many consumers seek knowledge about a given brand on social media sites and if the firms in the oil and gas sector utilize

those sites, consumer knowledge on the brand is increased. This could include engaging more consumers to offer positive comments and feedback concerning the brand and in this view more and more customers will get to understand the target brand. Regarding brand awareness, as customers go through the feedback and comments about a given brand, they get to be aware of the past brand experiences to enable them to make good decisions. With numerous comments and feedback in more than one social media site, more consumers will be aware of the brand and all questions attached to it are answered. As highlighted from the quantitative data analysis, there is a statistically significant linear relationship ($B = .477$, $p = .000$) between the use of eWOM and brand knowledge and awareness in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector. The findings indicated that application of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector increases knowledge and awareness of the consumers about the brand significantly.

An increase in brand trust was also identified as one of the positive effects of eWOM. Regular exposure of consumers to the online brand, the newsfeed posts, visiting the brand community, viewing brand reactions and giving responses to other customers, their trust in a given brand is increased. Customers get to trust a brand more when their worries are addressed in time and this is mostly achieved when consumers learn from the experiences of others in the use of the brand. This was confirmed with the quantitative data. The linear relationship between enhanced brand trust and the eWOM application was positive and strong ($B = .832$, $p = .000$). In this regard, increase in the use of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector improves brand trust among consumers.

Brand loyalty was also identified as a positive effect of eWOM in B2B marketing in the gas and oil sector. Being able to trace and observe the vast amount of information from the community members of a brand using their newsfeeds, there is an increase in the number of brand purchases since they become more informed about the brand, its benefits, and disadvantages. This mostly enhances their behavioural loyalty to the given brand since their needs are addressed accordingly. From quantitative data, a strong and positive linear relationship between eWOM and improved brand loyalty was

established ($B = .622$, $p = .000$). This means that when eWOM is used in B2B marketing many consumers become loyal to the brand since they are informed fully about the brand.

Lastly, eWOM was also found to have a negative effect on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector. Negative feedback and comments about a given brand will always attract negative feelings about the brand and the chances of buying it are limited. The negative feelings trigger low levels of trust in the brand and this motivates consumers' reluctance in purchasing or even referring the brand to friends and families. Quantitative analysis confirmed this finding in that a statistically significant linear relationship ($B = .477$, $p = .000$) between brand oppositional loyalty and eWOM was established. This implies that an increase in the use of eWOM with many negative feedbacks emerging will lead to decreased brand loyalty.

In conclusion, brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand knowledge and awareness are the three most important areas that eWOM marketing strategy is helping the firms operating in the oil and gas sector to overcome competition. With the use of eWOM strategy, firms are enhancing customer loyalty, trust, knowledge, and awareness associated given brands. Overall, eWOM is among the best tools of social media marketing in this era of digital marketing to help firms achieve and sustain their competitive edge.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

The aim of the current research was to investigate the effect of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing through an investigation of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. The major contribution of this research study is that it has contributed to the understanding of ways in which eWOM done through social media influences B2B marketing. The study has highlighted the number of effects eWOM can have on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector including increased brand loyalty, trust and knowledge, and awareness. Previous eWOM literature indicated contradicting findings since some researchers found anonymity problem to be beneficial

in meeting marketing objectives while others expected contradicting results (Park et al., 2007; Moran and Muzellec, 2017). The latter researchers expected eWOM done through social media to have a significant effect on marketing outcomes since information is shared between people who know one another. However, this idea had not empirically been tested to confirm their anticipations. The current research has tested the idea and marketing outcomes including brand loyalty, brand knowledge, and awareness as well as brand trust were found to be significantly affected by the use of eWOM in B2B marketing. These results are vital for researchers from both groups, particularly those neglecting the idea of eWOM in social media due to anonymity issues to reconsider their stand. Moreover, the current research study offered common constructs associated with marketing outcomes in the oil sector that were later examined empirically to determine the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing. This added to the current literature on eWOM since few studies examine the topic on social media as indicated by Cheung and Thadani (2012).

The first stage of this research study was to identify the negative and positive effects of eWOM on B2B marketing. The findings, therefore, contribute to the theory associated with effects of eWOM on social media marketing in B2B firms that has received minimal attention and mixed findings. For instance, the findings add to the knowledge about negative feedback or reviews about firms that affect them significantly. For instance, Schindler and Bickart (2005) posited that communication between consumers on different products through the internet presents an opportunity for organisation to benefit while also creating challenges for these firms. Negative online exchanges among consumers lead to negative results for a company. The negative criticism from consumers through online platforms was an important factor in determining the productivity and performance of a company (Lin and Lu, 2010; Torlak, Ozkara, Tiltay, Cengiz, and Dulger, 2014; Ye, Law, and Gu, 2009; Yin, Feng, and Wang, 2015). These conclusions and findings contradict the assertions of Fang et al. (2011) on the insignificance of word of mouth in the oil and gas sector. Another effect of electronic word of mouth on oil and gas companies is reduced revenues due to negative feedback. This is suggested by Rauschnabel et al. (2016), who assessed the effects of

collaborative social media brand attacks on companies. In their findings, the authors argue that online platforms enhance the use of word of mouth to increase consumer power and develop company accountability. They conclude that negative social media communication between consumers can be detrimental to the sales of a company as well as reducing their ability to attract new customers.

Also, the findings contribute to minimal knowledge pointing out that social media is used to seek information about brands, which a positive effect. In this regard, the use of eWOM in social media is to avail all necessary brand information for consumers to use in making decisions. Currently, one of the social media platforms used by consumers to seek and find information about products and services is Facebook. A study by Ye (2014) investigated the effects of Facebook use in the 2010 BP oil spill as indicated in the literature review. The study established that eWOM from consumers was more favorable to the company when there was no third party involved in bolstering the image of BP. The researchers concluded that positive eWOM was possible in a crisis for an oil company when trustworthiness and credibility were present for the consumers. In addition, negative feedback was associated with drops in stock prices and revenue for the gas company (Ye, 2014).

7.3 An industrial specific element in theoretical contributions

From the research findings, it is evident that social media sites such as microblogging, video sharing, as well as social networking have completely changed the ways in which individuals are expected to undertake their daily activities. eWOM being a part of social media has been able to attain attention from academic as well as managerial perspective and have instigated the researchers to adopt investigation on the same delineating its differential impacts under various contexts. This in return helps in demonstrating the significance of eWOM in business. The present study investigated the hidden motives of the consumers behind the utility of eWOM and found three primary drivers which are blogging sense, reputation, and encouragement in assisting other consumers. The same findings have been demonstrated by various other studies.

The study further establishes theoretical evidence in the light of factors determining the utility of eWOM by consumers and indicated that variables such as trust, social capital, as well as vulnerability to influence interpersonal relationships of high significant nature in the assessment of eWOM use by the consumers. Research evidence even showed social media product reviews to possess both positive as well as negative biases in relevance to the product reviews made in regards to attain consumption objectives (Lashgari *et al.* 2018). Other aspects of the brand including brand image and equity have been seen to even draw attention in the present research.

Backed up by certain studies which showed that eWOM influences even the purchase intention of the consumers and the brand image therefore indicating a direct impact of the considered variables in Qatar's business of gas and oil sector. In addition, the studies latter revealed that consumer's intention in relevance to the procurement of products and services is even indirectly facilitated by eWOM. All these support of theoretical evidence as forwarded by several other studies developed the base for the present research findings in stating B2B and industrial specific element in the contribution to marketing strategies (Magno and Cassia, 2019). Though there is less availability of the number of theoretical evidence conducted in the oil and gas sector in the context of the same, a lot of significant researchers comprising of different fields such as education, finance, tourism, and as such have delineated the significance of eWOM in those sectors. Investigation on the influence of eWOM in consumer behavior has demonstrated that much can be revealed about the behavior of the consumers in the modern setting through the utility of EOM. In addition, eWOM is expected to provide both archived as well as real-time data regarding the consumer intentions in the oil and gas sector of Qatar. The present research even stated the theoretical understanding that eWOM can be utilized to emphasize more on online proximity as it is believed to be a key factor in influencing the factors of marketing in the considered sectors (Tajvidi and Karami, 2017). The same has been supported by studies examining the factors influencing the behavior of the consumers through the utility of social media platforms, which form to be an important aspect in the context of the same.

7.4 Empirical findings in support of the emerged theoretical evidence

With the emergence of social media as exhibited in the business of oil and gas sector in Qatar, the same instruments of social media are being used as channels that would add value as well as allow the organizations to accommodate factors of connectivity, transactions, the flow of information, as well as minimization in the costs of communication. Since the social media is considered as the most constructed platform for global B2B business marketers potential look for utilizing the platform for generating value in regards to their brand engaging into a consistent attempt associated with an improved form of communication, knowledge, e-commerce, as well as strengthening of relationships (Wang *et al.* 2017). Research findings delineated that in the modern world of increasing social media usage to make advancements in the field of B2B commerce, certain primary value addition approaches are taken into consideration which is relational exchange, rich approach, and strategy to implement joint learning. Studies have further delineated the essential role that social media plays in the process of developing customer relationships within a B2B business environment and has even dictated social media to be a significant channel for advancing strengthened relationships in aspects of marketing. Therefore, it can be said that social media serves as a commercial form of context that provides huge benefits that further seek to increase the economic aspects of the business (Zhang and Li, 2019). Studies investigating the crucial link between social media platforms and B2B business organizations have illustrated that social media serves as a crucial platform in the enhancement of competition among large businesses and also serves as a significant element for the survival of small businesses. Research in this regard, however, can still be indicated to focus more on ethics, privacy issues, as well as generation of revenue through the same channel. Furthermore, B2B businesses are still considered to have a long way to go to acknowledge social media engagement in the enhancement of consumers' intention to purchase and brand promotion in comparison to that of B2C businesses. In addition to the same, a strong B2B business in the channel of distribution is said to improve the negotiation factor of the business and further open wide

opportunities of licensing, also, the accumulated loyalty from the consumers is likely to strengthen the B2B brand which is likely to generate more referrals from the consumers.

7.5 Implication for Practices

From the practical perspective, the current research to examine the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector offers a framework to understand eWOM's influence in the social media platforms on different consumer aspects including brand loyalty, trust and awareness, and knowledge. Comparative and contextual studies associated with research in B2B marketing provide valuable insights for marketing personnel. The first stage of this research that involved qualitative data collection and analysis highlights significant implications for managerial purposes. This is because it offers explanations on the determinants of eWOM aspects that enhance the overall B2B marketing ambitions. This research showed that social media sites are important for the marketing team in the oil and gas sector owing to the large number of community of users and the fact that they are considered the best eWOM platforms (Park and Kim, 2008; Liu et al., 2015; Yoo, Kim, and Sanders, 2015; Zhang, Craciun, and Shin, 2010). In this regard, the effects identified in this research allow the marketing team to have an adequate understanding of the dynamics associated with eWOM in the social media platforms to be able to develop better strategies to capitalize on the strategy for improved B2B marketing objectives. In addition, the second phase of this research indicates that eWOM aspects identified in stage one are influential on the consumers in social media platforms in the oil and gas sector. This finding shows that the marketing team should spend a lot of time on social media to promote eWOM aimed at achieving marketing goals of improving loyalty, trust, and awareness as well as knowledge. Also, this research highlights eWOM aspects marketers consider most to improve B2B marketing.

From a thorough analysis of the data, therefore, the following are the specific implications of this research for practice: first, as it has been proven that B2B marketing

through social media aided by eWOM has a significant effect on customer aspects, it can be utilised as the marketing tool. Since most firms have presence on almost all social media platforms it is vital to ensure they are different to achieve their B2B marketing goals. In addition, advertisements should be made unique as well as attractive and they should be customized based on the likes and dislikes of consumers. Particularly, firms should utilize images when posting brand information on social media to make text-based advertisements more compelling to significantly increase click-through. Similarly, the firms should include their e-retailing website to enable some of the consumers who wish to send links to friends and relatives on social media. As such, it is advisable that firms should include a link to the page with the product post and its image. Also, social media buttons should be embedded within marketing communications as well as websites to motivate customers in sharing their views. Lastly, firms should leverage product reviews on social media to automate eWOM.

Second, since brand trust is important in social media advertisements among consumers, genuine adverts that are simple should be used to draw a real picture of the brand that can be shared. Third, from literature, it is indicated that the majority of people spend more time on social media network sites including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram among others (Kim, Sung, and Kang, 2014; Leeflang et al., 2014). In this regard, firms should engage consumers often connected in real-time at every point addressing their needs appropriately. Fourth, social media through eWOM has been shown to affect all consumers and as such firms should come up with strategies that will enhance realization of marketing objectives for each consumer segment. Fifth, consumers are more likely to move from one website to the other in search of information about a given brand. In this view, firms should track eWOM marketing strategies of competitor websites. Sixth, firms should use multiple social media sites to enhance their B2B marketing efficiency. This is because the use of multiple channels will improve targeted advertisements and development of ads that are more appealing to attract positive feedbacks and views that will further promote marketing objectives including enhancing brand knowledge and awareness, loyalty, and trust.

Seventh, firms should come up with strategies to inspire social media users to self-express through photos with given brands in social media networks. Visual stimuli acting as reminders or gamification techniques as well as rewards including special offers of complementary products may motivate users to self-express in social media. The contacts to such users who are in a position to view such photos will have an urge to seek for more information about the brand to try it out. Moreover, these users will become the starting point of displaying brand experiences that will keep others following for more information. Eighth, firms should incorporate entertainment and communication services in social media sites to attract consumers to given products as they promote them through eWOM. Ninth, firms should use oil and gas sector-related applications for post-purchase to enable users to share their views with closed private groups.

Tenth, gaining positive results from eWOM depends on the capacity of a firm to harness electronic word of mouth as a marketing tool. Websites, blogs, sites for social networking, emails, and discussion boards should be used to offer advice and information to other consumers about a product. This triggers the need for marketers to enhance their capacity to use these tools to increase sales and attract customers. Moreover, it is also important to do away with negative eWOM to promote increased firm competitiveness. In this regard, preventing negative eWOM effects requires firms to thoroughly manage information flow from the beginning. Firms should initiate viral marketing content, which can be spread by consumers online to enhance marketing for the company. In this arrangement, the intended effects of the eWOM can be easily achieved while shifting the attention of the consumers from negative publicity. Firms should also develop strategies to help in turning their customers into forces for marketing their goods and services while avoiding the generation of negative information on social media. The affected firms should also endeavour in changing the negative attitude of customers to enhance customer retention and attraction for the firm following a given negative eWOM. They should also improve their brand image after negative eWOM using accommodative response strategies to avoid defensive strategies associated with lowered customer loyalty as well as satisfaction. In

conclusion, organisations need to ensure that their strategies for response in the event of negative word of mouth online should be accommodative and not defensive.

Eleventh, firms should develop procedures that can effectively deal with complaints from online consumers in order to reduce the negative effects. They should also seek strategies to ensure consumers share their experiences with products and companies with other consumers to influence the attitude of others towards a particular firm. Therefore, creating and supporting effective procedures for handling complaints should be aimed at satisfying customers to enhance customer loyalty as well as retention. In this regard, companies should place value on creating eWOM complaint procedures to mitigate adverse effects of consumer feedback online for improved marketing outcomes. Additionally, in the prevention of damaged brand reputation in the face of negative eWOM, dealing with the negative effects of electronic word of mouth is important as proposed by Lindenblatt (2014). This involves the development of an effective crisis management strategy to deal with negative eWOM. Firms should emphasise the need to have a good online reputation and being professional at all times to ensure their resilience in case of negative electronic word of mouth instances. Twelfth and Final, firms should offer training to all employees to increase their awareness of eWOM and its effects to ensure that they can deal with such effects positively. Besides, being prepared as a company can effectively prevent repetitions of the same mistakes and reduce the occurrence of negative publicity as indicated by Lindenblatt (2014).

7.6 Limitations of the Research

This research study has provided both practical and theoretical implications. However, there are still limitations that could only be addressed if further research is conducted. First, the purposeful sampling method was used in the selection of interview participants. Purposeful sampling was applied to select participants from the oil and gas sector of Qatar to examine the effect of eWOM on B2b marketing in the region. However, purposeful sampling has limitations including research bias if judgments in research are poorly considered. Also, it becomes difficult to defend a sample's

representativeness of the target population (Etikan et al., 2016). In this view, findings were only limited to Qatar's oil and gas sector among the readers since the 143 participants that took part in the research were purposefully selected from this region. This limited generalizability to findings to this region only.

Another limitation of this research study is examining eWOM application across all social media platforms instead of focussing more on a particular social media platform such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook. There is a higher likelihood that different results could be obtained depending on the social media platform examined. Additionally, this research focussed more on understanding how eWOM affects B2B marketing, which is one section of the marketing mix that entails promotion/marketing, prices, and distribution (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Armstrong et al., 2015). Moreover, this raises questions such as should the firms use specific social media platforms to spread advertising information about brands and others for communication purposes? Or should marketing campaigns be integrated and coordinated across all social media platforms? Finally, this research did not capture the aspect of comparison of the different social media platforms or different consumer segments. As such, there is no knowledge on which platform brings more marketing returns in the oil and gas sector or which consumer segment is affected most by eWOM marketing in the oil and gas sector.

There was also a limitation associated with financial resources. This study applied the mixed research methodology that entailed the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Combining the two methods became expensive, as the researcher was required to use extra resources in obtaining the data as well as analysing it to achieve the aim of the study. Similarly, the researcher experienced time constraints while using the mixed method research in examining the research phenomenon (the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing) that could have been achieved with the use of quantitative data only. Finally, text-based eWOM is dominating social media marketing as compared to visual-based eWOM despite visual-based eWOM growing daily. Visual and text-based eWOM strategies are important since perceptions of consumers are obtained. However, this

research study did not focus on either visual-based eWOM or text-based eWOM and this implies no knowledge about how the two are comparable was not offered.

7.7 Directions of Future Research

Following the above limitations, future research should increase the number of participants by introducing other regions as well to reflect the broader target population. By doing this, there will be an increase in understanding about the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector. This could be further improved if random sampling is used and more regions integrated into the study to gain participant views about eWOM effect on B2B marketing. Besides, future research should explore the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector across individual social media platforms. This way there will be an opportunity to understand the extent to which the strategy has achieved the marketing objectives. Similarly, there is a need for further research to understand the consumer segment that is most affected by eWOM so as to offer appropriate recommendations. Most importantly, there is a need to conduct a study that will only focus on one brand to help in knowing how specific firms are using the strategy to overcome competition in the oil and gas sector.

It is vital to overcome the time and financial challenges experienced during this research project. In this regard, future research should only focus on using quantitative research methods to examine the effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector. This will save on the costs of the project and time for collecting analysing and compiling the dissertation. Finally, future research should examine the effect of eWOM in B2B marketing putting more emphasis on the comparison between different formats including text, visual or a combination of both in marketing to determine the format with more significant effect. Since the effect of eWOM can vary based on previous knowledge of consumer, social media platform differences and product type, future research is required to put into account these factors while analysing the overall effect of eWOM on B2B marketing in the oil and gas sector.

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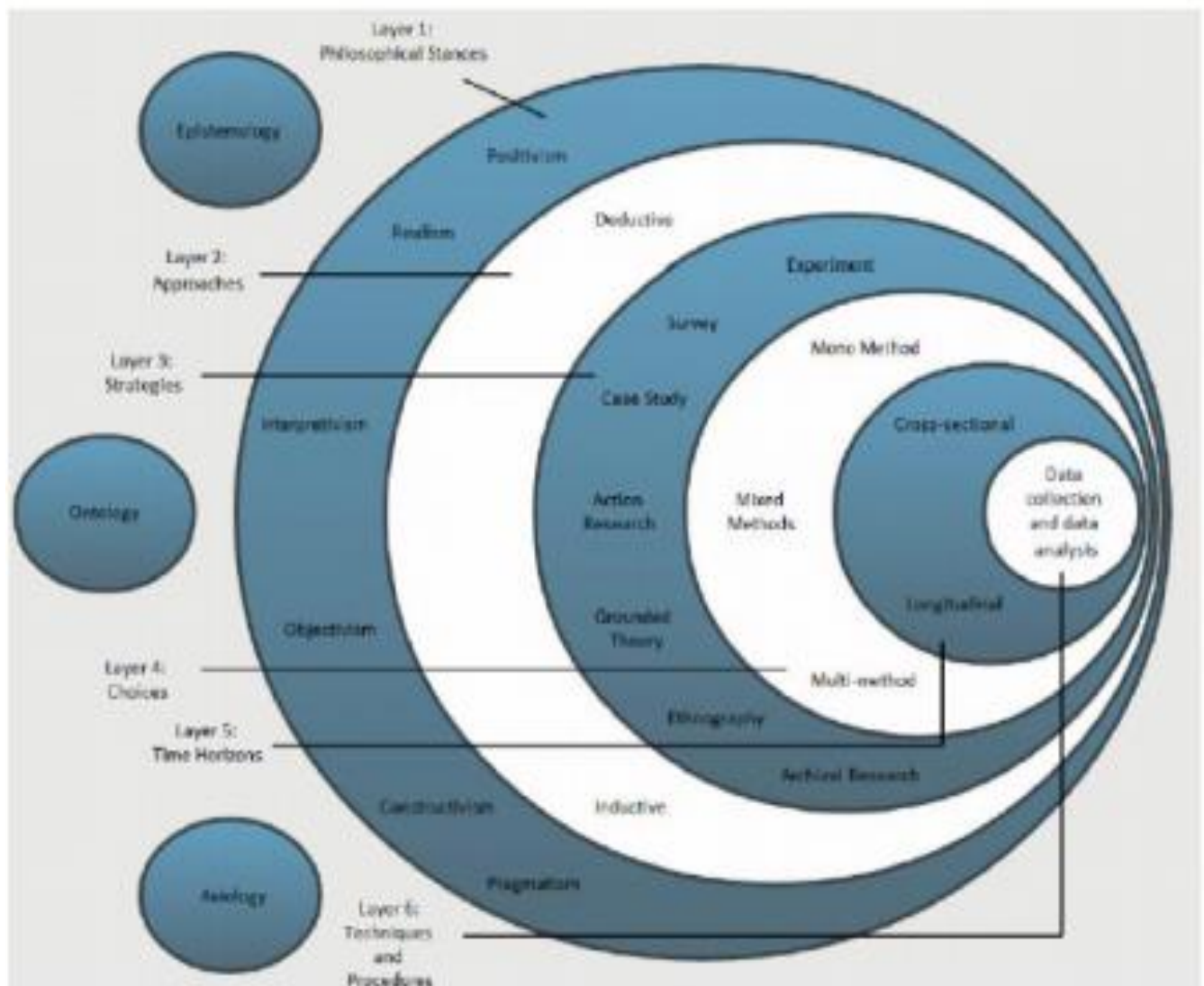
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Onion Model



(Source: Saunders et al., 2009)

Appendix 2: Sample interview guide

Section one: questions about demographic information

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your education level?
3. What type of company do you work for?
4. What is your employment level in your department?
5. What is your level of experience in the marketing of oil and gas products?

Section two: questions about eWOM in B2B marketing

6. Do you think electronic word of mouth strategy nurtures teamwork when promoting marketing of products and goods?
 - How does the strategy ensure brand community members offer the required support and advice to one another?
7. Do you think the application of eWOM in the oil and gas sector affects knowledge and awareness of the brand?
 - If yes, how does it help in ensuring the members gain appropriate knowledge about the brand? How does it also help in supporting awareness of events associated with the brand?
8. Using the strategy, how can brand owners ensure the consumers get to trust their brands?
 - How can they ensure negative issues with the brands are addressed to increase trust towards the brand?
 - How can the brand owners ensure the trust increases their loyalty to the brands?
 - What happens if negative statements about a brand get to reach the community of brand members comprising of members from opposing brands?
 - Can there be an increase in the purchase of those brands? Kindly state your reason.

Thank you so much for your time and effort in participating in this interview to enable me to accomplish the objective of the study.

Appendix 2: Operationalization of constructs

Construct	Item	Source
Brand knowledge and awareness	I want more information about the products of this brand. I like to seek more information about how to	Interviews Ye (2014)

			use this brand from other members.	
			I obtain more information about a brand from brand owners	Interviews
			Am eager to refer the brand to family members and friends.	Ye (2014)
Reliability dimension of brand trust			This brand meets my anticipations.	Yahya et al (2014)
			Am confident about this brand.	Yahya et al (2014)
			Am satisfied with this brand.	Interviews
			Am never disappointed with this brand.	Yahya et al (2014)
Intentions dimension of brand trust			My concerns regarding products and services of a brand are addressed honestly by this brand.	Yahya et al (2014)
			My problems with products and services of this brand can be solved using this brand.	Interviews
			The brand makes initiatives to get me satisfied.	Yahya et al (2014)
			Am compensated by this brand when I experience issues with its services.	Interviews
The attitudinal dimension			I purchase products	Wolny and Mueller (2013)

of brand loyalty	associated with this brand only.	
	Am loyal and committed to this given brand.	Interviews
	Am not loyal and committed to this given brand	Interviews
	I buy this brand's products and services regularly.	Wolny and Mueller (2013)
Oppositional brand loyalty	I will often discourage friends and families from using products from opposing brands.	Torlak et al. (2014)
	I can never purchase goods and services from opposing brands regardless of their capacity to satisfy me.	Torlak et al. (2014)
	I will often post negative views regarding products of opposing brands.	Interviews
	I can never try services and products from opposing brands.	Torlak et al. (2014)

Appendix 3: Survey

Section one: Demographic information

1. What is your gender"

- Male

- Female
2. How old are you?
 - 23-27
 - 28-32
 - 33-37
 - 38-42
 - Over 43
 3. What is your educational level?
 - College diploma
 - Undergraduate
 - Masters
 - PhD
 - Other (specify please)
 4. How long have you worked in the marketing department
 - 2-6
 - 7-11
 - 12-16
 - 17-21
 - Over 21

Section two: eWOM outcomes

Please complete the remaining part of this survey.

Item	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Brand knowledge and awareness

I want more information about the products of this brand.

I like to seek more information about how to use this brand from other

members.

I obtain more information about a brand from brand owners

Am eager to refer the brand to family members and friends.

Brand trust

This brand meets my anticipations.

Am confident about this brand.

Am satisfied with this brand.

Am never disappointed with this brand.

My concerns regarding products and services of a brand are addressed honestly by this brand.

My problems with products and services of this brand can be solved using this brand.

The brand makes initiatives to get me satisfied.

Am compensated by this brand when I experience issues with its services.

Brand loyalty

I purchase products associated with this brand only.

Am loyal and committed to this given brand.

Am not loyal and committed to this given brand

I buy this brand's products and services regularly.

Brand oppositional loyalty

I will often discourage friends and families from using products from opposing brands.

I can never purchase goods and services from opposing brands regardless of their capacity to satisfy me.

I will often post negative views regarding products of opposing brands.

I can never try services and products from opposing brands.

Application of eWOM

I often read what other members post.

I use the brand page to seek other member's opinions.

I share information associated with a given energy brand.

I share brand posts to the community members and others.

Thank you so much for your time and effort in completing this survey to enable me to accomplish the objective of the study

