

**Conference Paper**

# Effect of Social Media in B2b Marketing: Invertigation of Ewom Effect in Oil and Gas Sector in Qatar

Soud Al-khinji<sup>1</sup>, Weifeng Chen<sup>1</sup>, and Tillal Eldabi<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences, Brunel University London, UK

<sup>2</sup>College of Business & Finance, Ahlia University, Bahrain

## Abstract

The radical growth of the internet is a factor affecting different sectors of the business environment, including changes in the marketing sector. The importance of social media communications in the marketing environment cannot go unnoticed. An important element of social media communication greatly influencing marketing is electronic word of mouth (eWOM) - involving consumer to consumer communication about products and brands- which influences consumer purchase decisions. Nevertheless, research on the importance of eWOM in the marketing of oil and gas is limited. The purpose of this research is 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. Possible solutions to the negative effects of eWOM will also be determined.

**Keywords:** Social Media, eWOM, Oil and Gas, B2B.

Corresponding Author:

Soud Al-khinji

Soud.al-khinji@brunel.ac.uk

Received: 22 July 2019

Accepted: 16 September 2019

Published: 19 September 2019

Publishing services provided by  
**Knowledge E**

© Soud Al-khinji et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the PwR Symposium Conference Committee.

## 1. Background of Marketing and Communication

The definition and understanding of marketing has evolved over time. In broadening the understanding of marketing, Kotler (1972) defines marketing in terms of value creation and transaction leading to achievement of the desired goal for the parties involved. A more recent definition of marketing is provided by Baines, Fill, and Page (2013), who define marketing as both an activity and a process of management. The intention of marketing involves meeting the needs of consumers and value creation while at the same time attaining the goals of the organisation. Therefore, marketing is carried out by an organisation with the intention of achieving their set goals while meeting the needs of consumers. It is also important to consider the value that an organisation seeks to create for their consumers in their marketing processes and activities when defining marketing (Baines, Fill, & Page, 2013; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

 **OPEN ACCESS**

Traditional marketing strategies involved the use of traditional means of communication to pass information about products and brands from marketers to consumers. According to Killian and McManus (2015), these methods gave marketers and business firms the upper hand in deciding the information that reached consumers. The practices used in marketing involved the use of formal methods that were impersonal and unidirectional, which limited the capacity of consumers to influence product development or provide feedback to firms (Armstrong et al., 2015; Moran, Muzellec, & Nolan, 2014).

The traditional communication means are undergoing revolutionary changes, which are not only affecting communication but also influencing marketing (Leite & Azevedo, 2017; Stone & Woodcock, 2014). Leeflang et al. (2014) argue that the internet is the main factor fuelling changes in the marketing sector. The use of the internet is instrumental in shifting control of information from the hands of the marketer and the firm to the hands of the consumer. According to Mulhern (2009), digitalization plays an important role in enhancing consumer communication while expanding the speed at which consumers and marketers can transmit information about products to other users. As a result, marketing efforts are changing to include and invest more in digital technologies and digital marketing than before. The table below presents an illustration of the use and penetration of the most used social media platforms in the United States.

TABLE 1: Social media use in the United States.

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
Source: Chaffey (2016)		

An important factor changing the marketing environment is the use of social media. The use of social media to communicate is increasing leading to rapid changes in transferring information from one user to another (Miller, 2013; Tuten & Solomon, 2017). According to Ashley and Tuten (2015) and Miller (2013), using social media can be beneficial to both the consumer and the marketer. Killian and McManus (2015) add that marketers can use social media to expand communication with consumers through enhancing feedback from these consumers about their products, which can be used to enhance customer experience. One of the ways through which social media significantly influence marketing is the use of word of mouth (Chu & Kim, 2011; Killian & McManus,

2015; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2014). With the internet, word of mouth has evolved to include the use of electronic platforms to communicate, leading to the emergence of electronic word of mouth eWOM.

Electronic word of mouth involves communication between consumers through the use of digital technologies, which in marketing includes the transmission of information on products and brands (Alboqami et al., 2015; Breazeale, 2009; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Doh & Hwang, 2009). Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) add that eWOM is an informal communication between consumers, which involves advice and information about the features of a product and their personal experiences with these products. The information and advice received through eWOM communications is used by consumers to make purchase decisions (Park & Kim, 2008; You, Vadakkepatt, & Joshi, 2015). Therefore, the importance of eWOM in marketing cannot be overlooked or overemphasised. Marketers and firms are challenged by the use of electronic social communication by consumers, which denies them the power to control the information that reaches consumers. This often puts marketers in the defensive position with threats to customer loyalty (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013).

Several factors have been established to influence the use of electronic word of mouth by consumers. According to Goldsmith (2008), the two main social communication features of eWOM are information and advice. Consumers in eWOM seek for information pertaining to particular products and brands from other consumers. In addition, consumers with experience with different products can help other consumers by providing advice to them on the features of products. This kind of advice highlights the positive and negative characteristics of products, which is intended to either encourage or discourage other consumers from making purchases (Hung & Li, 2007; Park & Kim, 2008; Phelps et al., 2004).

The effects of eWOM on different measures of marketing have been established by several authors in different business areas (Park & Kim, 2008; Torlak et al., 2014; Yoo, Kim, & Sanders, 2015). A study by Park and Kim (2008) sought to establish the association between eWOM and knowledge processing among consumers. Their results indicate that consumers with more expertise with reviews from other consumers were significantly affected by eWOM. The information they received was instrumental in affecting their decision to purchase a given product. A different study by Cheung and Thadani (2012) assessed the effects of eWOM on consumers and found that electronic word of mouth was essential in affecting the attitudes of consumers towards products and brands. As a result of the effect on consumer attitude, eWOM affected their intentions to purchase a product. These studies and other research have been

instrumental in illustrating the important impact of eWOM in changing the intentions of consumers to purchase products from different firms (Baber et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2015; Fan et al., 2013; Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013).

An important aspect that has been investigated- and is essential for marketers- is how eWOM affects a brand and the components of branding. Torlak et al. (2014) argue that communication between consumers is a factor that significantly influences consumer factors that are related to marketing a brand. Specifically, eWOM affects brand image leading to an eventual effect on the intentions of consumers to purchase a specific brand (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014; Pauwels, Aksehirli, & Lackman, 2016). In agreement to these findings, the results of a study by Severi, Ling, and Nasermodeli (2014) indicate a correlation between eWOM and measures of brand equity, including brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, brand association, and quality perceptions. In summary, electronic word of mouth can positively or negatively affect brand perceptions of consumers leading to an effect on their association with that particular brand (Beneke et al., 2015; Eisingerich et al., 2015; Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013; Lin, Wu, & Chen, 2013).

A different relationship important to this study is the influence of eWOM on sales and revenues. Babić Rosario et al., (2016) investigated how eWOM affects the sales of a company. Their results indicate a positive association between positive eWOM and sales for a company. These findings are supported by results from other studies, which relate sales to eWOM (Baek et al., 2014; Lu, Ye, & Law, 2014). The spread of positive sentiments about a product or service using electronic communication platforms can enhance the sales of a company leading to increases in their revenues. On the other hand, negative eWOM can reduce sales and revenues for a company unless redemptive measures are put in place to rectify the problem created (Kim, Lim, & Brymer, 2015; Marchand, Hennig-Thurau, & Wiertz, 2017; Tang et al., 2016).

The discussion above highlights the importance of eWOM in marketing. It also details previous research on the effects of eWOM on different aspects of a business. However, the findings discussed are based on studies carried out in sectors that are not the oil and gas industry. Therefore, it is imperative to explore how previous researchers have investigated eWOM in the oil and gas industry, as well as Qatar in general. An interesting finding is that there is a limitation in the number of studies that have explored electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry, and particularly in the context of Qatar. Studies that have explored the oil and gas industry have considered social media in general and have not been specific in eWOM. In addition, these studies have explored crisis management and public relations from the perspective of the company and not from the

consumer's perspective (e.g. Chewning, 2015; Choi, 2012; Harlow, Brantley, & Harlow, 2011; Maresh & Williams, 2010; Muralidharan, Dillistone, & Shin, 2011).

The study by Harlow, Brantley, and Harlow (2011) highlight the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which led to public condemnation of British Petroleum Company. The author argues that the use of social media by BP was not significant in the management of the crisis as expected by the company. On the other hand, Muralidharan, Dillistone, and Shin (2011) used content analysis to assess the use of social media in the BP oil spill crisis and how it worked in repairing its image. Their conclusions suggest that the use of social media by the company were not effective in maintaining or elevating the company's image. Consequently, these studies postulate that social media use might not be an important tool in crisis management in the context of oil and gas companies.

Despite inadequacies in previous research in examining social media use and eWOM effects in the oil and gas industry, other researchers have been effective in establishing eWOM in other sectors. For instance, several researchers have determined the positive and negative results of eWOM in the tourism and hospitality sectors (Bronner & De Hoog, 2011; Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b; Jalilvand et al., 2012; Jeong & Jang, 2011; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Researchers have also explored eWOM in the finance and education sectors in details (Alexandra, 2015; Bataineh, 2015; Yang & Mutum, 2015). These researches increase the need for further research in other sectors to determine whether eWOM has the same effects in these sectors and the possible solutions to these effects- when the effects are negative.

### **1.1. eWOM and its effect in B2B marketing**

Many individuals around the world are increasing the amount of time they spend in the cyberspace searching for information and connecting with friends and acquaintances among others. The social media such as microblogging sites, video sharing sites, and social networking sites, undeniably, have altered the manner in which individuals around the world undertake their routine activities. eWOM, as part of social media, has attained increased academic and managerial attention among researchers who have sought to investigate its various effects in different contexts – hence demonstrating eWOM's significance in business (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Lee, Noh, & Kim, 2013; Thoumrungrroje, 2014; Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010).

Cheung and Lee (2012) investigated the motives behind consumers' use of eWOM and found three drivers namely sense of belonging, reputability, and delight in assisting other consumers. Chu and Kim (2011) sought to find out the factors determining consumers'

use of eWOM and found that trust, social capital, and vulnerability to interpersonal influence determined eWOMs use. An investigation on product reviews posted by consumers online also revealed both negative and positive biases with regard to reviews made on products related to promotion consumption goals (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Various aspects of brand, in relation to eWOM, such as brand image and brand equity have also received much attention in research. Jalilvand and Samiei (2012a) investigated the eWOMs impacts on purchase intention as well as brand image and found that eWOM has significant impacts on brand image and further possesses direct effects on purchase intention in the Iranian automobile business. In addition, the same latter study finds that eWOM indirectly facilitates consumers' intention to procure goods and services. A study conducted by Severi, Ling and Nasermodeli (2014) on the mediatory role of eWOM on brand equity dimensions such as brand association, loyalty, and awareness among others in Malaysia found that eWOM significantly affects perceived quality of products, and brand image. Brand image also mediated the relationship between perceived quality and eWOM.

Significant amount of research have been undertaken on eWOM in different sectors such as education, finance, and tourism. An investigation into eWOMs potential in influencing consumer behaviour in the tourism sector demonstrates that much can be revealed about tourist consumer behaviour in the modern setting (Harris & Prideaux, 2017). In addition, eWOM provides both archived and real-time data about tourists. Moreover, through eWOM, rising significance in electronic proximity is emphasised (Harris & Prideaux, 2017). While reviewing the effects of eWOM in tourism and hospitality, Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2017) found eWOM as a key influence in the hospitality and tourism sectors and will remain to play a vital role in marketing in the same sectors. Sotiriadis and van Zyl (2013), while examining the influencers of consumer behaviour among the tourists, found three critical factors impacting tourists' decision-making in relation to eWOM use, and they include reliability, expertise, and extent of involvement in the social media platform used. In the education sector, various eWOM studies have focused on students' purchase decisions and academic achievement among others. Themba and Mulala (2013) sought to investigate social media brand-associated eWOM and its impacts on decisions to procure goods and services among Botswana students. The study revealed that opinion and brand-related eWOM contributed significantly to students' decision to procure goods and services. In addition, engagement in the latter was also found to be relatively low. Moreover, eWOM was depicted as a credible source of information pertaining to brands and products. An investigation into the role played by eWOM communication in facilitating connections and further enhancing

student academic standings revealed that eWOM communication positively impacted students' motivation to accomplish tasks through the enhancement of self-efficacy (Vivekananthamoorthy, Naganathan, & Rajkumar, 2016).

Various studies have, further, focused on the impacts of social media on the oil and gas industry. Yin, Feng, and Wang (2015) investigated the social media communication impacts on an oil spill by a multinational firm and found that the negative online exchanges made by consumers contributed significantly to the firm's productivity. Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016) also found that negative communications facilitated on the online platform by consumers can lead to adverse effects on the firm's sales and customer attraction. Moreover, Ye (2014) also found the same results through his study of the Facebook impacts on a British oil company oil spill. The negative online feedback resulted in reduced revenues and stock prices for the gas company (Ye, 2014). Omar, Dahalan, and Yusoff (2016) study of social media impacts on knowledge sharing behaviour in a Malaysian oil and gas company found that social media advanced knowledge sharing behaviour in the organisation.

In as much as eWOM has attained significant attention in research in different sectors and contexts, limited exploration of eWOM in the gas and oil industry is evident. Moreover, research that focus on eWOM in Qatar's oil and gas industry are limited – if not lacking. The current study, therefore, seeks to fill in the gap generated through the limited research conducted in Qatar and in the oil and gas industry. The current study will, hence, investigate the effects of social media in B2B Marketing. Emphasis shall be placed on examining the effects of electronic world of mouth on Qatar's oil and gas industry. The study will also provide the possible solutions for mitigating the negative impacts of eWOM in Qatar's oil and gas industry.

## 2. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the current research is 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.

### 2.1. Objectives of the Research

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.
3. To establish the possible solution to the negative effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar.

## 2.2. Research Questions

1. What are the positive impacts of electronic word of mouth on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar?
2. What negative effects does negative electronic word of mouth have on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar?
3. How can the negative effects of negative electronic word of mouth on B2B marketing in the oil and gas industry in Qatar be solved?
4. How could ewom effect the relationship between Qatar Petroleum and it is Joint Ventures?

## 3. Literature Review

Marketing has traditionally involved the use of strategies that are impersonal, formal, and one-sided. These strategies have included advertisements, promotions, and publicity campaigns that have been developed to inform the consumer about the product of a given organisation. Currently, advances in technology and communication have led to the evolution of marketing efforts to include consumers as active participants. As a result, social media and platforms have become important elements in marketing the products and services of firms, organisations, and industries. An important element of social media marketing is the use of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to communicate issue pertaining to a given product. Electronic word of mouth involves two-way communication between consumers and can influence the purchasing decisions of the client. This review of literature aims at presenting an understanding of social media marketing and its advantages. More importantly, the review discusses previous research on electronic word of mouth, its benefits, and its disadvantages for a business. A deeper analysis of the effects of electronic word of mouth in the oil and gas industry in Qatar and worldwide is presented. Finally, recommended solutions to the negative effects of eWOM on the oil and gas industry are discussed based on previous literature.



### 3.1. Social Media

The term social media is a combination of two words. The term social refers to devoted to, pertaining to or characterized by the friendly relationship or companionship (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Media, on the other hand, refers to an avenue of communication such as the television, magazines, newspapers, and radios among others that reach individuals widely (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Reuben, 2008). Social media can, therefore, be a social instrument for facilitating communication (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010). In addition, it can be an internet platform used for discussing and sharing information among individuals (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010). Social media provides an avenue for networking in a manner that promotes trust among communities and parties involved. Any platform, therefore, that allows the users to share their opinions, contents, views, and further facilitates interactions can be categorized as social media (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). Many quotas have confused social media with other related terms such as social news, social networking, wikis, and web 2.0 among others (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media exists in various forms (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Microblogging is a type of social media, content-based in nature, that limits the characters any user can publish or type in each entry. The most popular network for microblogging is the Twitter. It is also ranked as the fourth worldwide in traffic volume. The user profile for Twitter users is between 21 and 35 years and incorporates users who are highly interested in new technologies (Ramos, 2013).

Social news sites are also part of social media platform that enables any user, registered on the site, to vote for and send articles or news. The most popular social news sites encompass Technorati, Digg, and Reddit. Articles or news that are mostly voted for may appear on the website's homepage and can further generate a large volume of traffic to the original source (Ramos, 2013).

Users can save web links through the social bookmarking sites. The latter type of social media platform organizes the same web links by categories or tags. The most popular bookmarking sites include StumbleUpon and Delicious (Ramos, 2013). Xiang and Gretzel (2010) posit that some social networks are also considered to be mainstream as opposed to others. A social network allows for virtual interaction as well as private and public communications between individuals. They also facilitate both content and information sharing between people. Some of the mainstream social media include Facebook, Google+, and Twitter (Ramos, 2013).

Professional network is also another category of social media platforms that facilitate both professional and business networking. The most popular social networks under the professional network category encompass LinkedIn, Xing, Viadeo, and Yammer (Ramos, 2013). Multimedia social networks are also another category of social media that permits users to create and share visual contents such as video, photos, and audios. The major potential in the latter contents is the viral nature of the shared content (Ramos, 2013).

### 3.2. Social Media Marketing

According to Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012), social media is a platform for pursuing marketing over the internet to attain branding and social marketing communication goals. Social media marketing mainly encompasses activities that focus on sharing videos, contents, and images for marketing purpose. It is, therefore, a simple way in which businesses reach out to customers. In simple terms, social media marketing can be referred to as the utilization of social media avenues and channels to facilitate product promotion (Safko, 2010). Social media marketing is, therefore, a type of marketing that can be categorised under online marketing activities, which compete with the traditional web-centred strategies for promotion such as the online advertisement campaign and email newsletters (Heymann-Reder, 2012; Kaur, 2016; Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

### 3.3. Strategic opportunity and social media marketing

Consumers have become more sophisticated and have adopted new techniques and tactics for undertaking searches, choosing, and evaluating their purchase action for services and goods (Heymann-Reder, 2012). Research has revealed new trends among customers entrenched on the use of social media. For instance, the demand for tailored products and customers' willingness to be actively involved in the product development process are increasing. Furthermore, clients' interest in presenting their say at different stages of the business process is increasing (Safko, 2010).

Such revelations impact the manner in which marketers operate and adopt marketing practices on tactical and strategic levels, hence, exposing the same marketers to different challenges and choices (Winer, 2009). Marketers, therefore, adopt the idea of providing consumers with the products and services that are customized in line with their desires and wishes. In addition, the same marketers become open to the idea of co-creation with customers. In this case, the marketers develop conditions that

permit co-operation with consumers in the development and testing of new products (Safko, 2010). Moreover, many businesses have embarked on heavy investment in the social media due to the increased competitive pressure and the acknowledgement by marketers that they need to acquire some control over the consumer-controlled social media space (Heymann-Reder, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

### 3.4. Benefits of social media marketing

Various social media marketing merits have been brought forward through research and they take into consideration the different areas of easing business. First, social media marketing benefits businesses since its cost consequences are favourable. The financial barriers associated with the same online marketing type are low when compared with other forms of marketing. Most of the social media platforms are free to access and business entities can post information they find relevant to their customers and can increase traffic to their business enterprises (Hensel & Deis, 2010; Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Second, one of the most apparent features of any new media is its ability to create and increase new platforms for social interaction. Social interactions allow individuals to engage in chatting, sending emails, and creating social networks among others. Evidence from market research reveals that social media is used for establishing relationships with customers, identify new opportunities in business, and creating communities with the aim of advancing their brand. Social media marketing will, therefore, provide a platform where marketers can collect feedback and relevant information from perceived customers in a manner that facilitates interaction and relationship development (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sashi, 2012).

Third, social media marketing facilitates interactivity, which in this case refers to user engagement with the messages, machines, and other users. In a social networking context on an online platform, interactivity is one of the vital features of any new media technology. Interactivity increases access to information and further supports improved user engagement and control with social media content (Hensel & Deis, 2010; Heymann-Reder, 2012).

Fourth, social media provides an avenue for marketers to target consumers and audiences while focusing on their personal interests. Advertisements will, therefore, be channelled to customers based on their likings. Fifth, innovation and technological progress have changed the nature of social networks. Specifically, there is a significant departure from traditional social networks. More complex computer-mediated networks

have been established on the online platform and further encompass a greater degree of heterogeneity. Problems associated with geographical location and time have, therefore, become less important with the emergence and use of the computer-mediated social networks (Heymann-Reder, 2012; Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

### 3.5. Disadvantages of social media marketing

Social media being an interactive process entails exchange between two parties. Such exchange between parties requires time commitment. Since focus on social media marketing has been changing over time and is channelled towards advancing long-term relationship, a significant time investment is apparent, which businesses may not be willing to undertake. Businesses that market their products on social media utilize their trademarks to enhance the authenticity of the same product. Copyright issues in most cases may arise when businesses promote their products and brands or when they use their trademarks through third-party outlets. Marketers, therefore, regularly engage in a continuous process of monitoring the use of their copyrights and trademarks (Kaur, 2016).

The receipt of negative feedback from the clients also poses a significant demerit of social media marketing. The same platform provides the customers with an avenue to present their views about the quality of the product and service as well as the image of the companies. In the event that a company receives negative feedback from its clients, the same company will be subjected to intense market pressure, which may work towards elevating its competitors. Social media, therefore, keeps the image of companies at stake in their day to day dealings with clients (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Furthermore, being a new technology, B2B firms may find social media marketing unattractive. Previous research has found barriers, both external and internal, to the acceptance of new technologies by B2B firms (Järvinen et al., 2012; Keinänen & Kuivalainen, 2015; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). A significant portion of firms have been found to be slow in new technology adoption because of perceived barriers such as negative perceptions about social media usefulness, lack of funds and time resource to facilitate training, and unfamiliarity with a specific technology. The adoption of any social media technology will, therefore, depend on the perception of the firm with regard to the specific technology in question (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). In addition, the adoption of social media marketing is also dependent on the personal innovativeness of the chief executive officer of the firm as well as the level of innovativeness of the specific

organisation. Studies have also suggested that the size of a firm significantly determines the adoption decision of social media marketing. In addition, smaller firms have been found to be more receptive to new technologies for brand improvement as opposed to their larger counterparts. On the latter basis, therefore, early adoption of social media marketing can be achieved by small and medium B2B firms that are innovative.

### 3.6. The Role of the Internet and Social Media in B2B Branding

Previous studies have established the significance of branding for B2B firms (Lindgreen, Beberland & Farrelly, 2010; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). In the current era of increased commoditization, branding works for B2B firms in a manner that facilitates product differentiation by creating consistent identity and uniqueness. The strength of B2B brand, therefore, enhances a firm's perception of quality in the market and further allows firms to extend brand equity to its other categories. Such extensions increase the barriers to entry and further leads to higher demand, which enables firms to command a premium price (Ohnnemus, 2009). In scenarios where competitive biddings is the norm, especially in industrial markets, the consensus in decision-making units can be attained through branded products (Wise & Zendnickova, 2009). In addition, a strong B2B brand in the distribution channel will improve a firm's negotiating power and further open up licensing opportunities (Ohnnemus, 2009). Moreover, higher loyalty from buyers is also likely to be associated with a strong B2B brand, which will further initiate more referrals from customers.

With the emergence of the internet and social media use in business, the same enterprises have appreciated the tools as avenues or channels that add value and allow firms to accommodate connectivity, transactions, circulation of information, and further the reduction of communication costs (Kärkkäinen, Jussila, & Väisänen, 2010). Since the internet has become the most crucial avenue for global B2B commerce, marketers have resorted to the use of the internet for value generation for their brands through a consistent effort to improve conversations, knowledge, e-commerce, and relationships (Järvinen et al., 2012; Keinänen & Kuivalainen, 2015). In the use of the internet to advance B2B commerce, three value addition strategies are advocated for and they include relational exchange, rich strategy, and joint learning strategy. Studies that have examined the vital role played by the internet developing customer relationships in a B2B context have found the internet as an important avenue for advancing relationship marketing (Järvinen et al., 2012; Keinänen & Kuivalainen, 2015; Steyn et al., 2010).

In general, network participants significantly benefit from social networks to advance the use of resources and promote their activities. Social networks, therefore, in a commercial context, provide enormous benefits that seek to enhance the economic value of a firm (Stephen & Toubia, 2010). Studies that have investigated the links between the social networks and B2B firms have found that social networks are crucial in facilitating competition among large firms. In addition, the social media link was found to be crucial for the survival of smaller firms (Brennan & Croft, 2012; Kärkkäinen, Jussila, & Väisänen, 2010; Stephen & Toubia, 2010).

Technological innovation and progress have developed the social media networks through the use of the computer, which has been vital in addressing the challenges posed by geographical locations and time (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). Various solutions from different locations globally can, therefore, be sought through the availed social networks. In light of the significance of the internet and social networks, which enhances direct unmediated inter-firms communication, different studies have argued that social media marketing supports brands by establishing and maintaining relationships in a B2B context. New sources of online information such as photo and video sharing podcasts and websites, blogs, and social networking sites among others have provided an education platform for brands and products. Specifically, Facebook has been considered as the most popular social media platform, which marketers have come to appreciate their potential in assisting the achievement of brand objectives. Michaelidou, Siamagka, and Christodoulides (2011) argue that given the wide acceptance of social media by the general public, it has become a vital internet marketing tool. Research, however, in social network sites and social media is still in the embryonic phase and much focus has been directed to the B2C context. In the same context, social media research has focused on ethics and privacy issues, social networking sites' prevalence among groups, drivers to the use of social media, and revenue generation through the same platform among others. Furthermore, B2C firms seem to have acknowledged the social media potential in brand promotion much earlier than B2B firms.

## References

- [1] Alaimo, C., 2014. *Computational Consumption: Social media and the construction of digital consumers* (Doctoral dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)).

- [2] Alboqami, H., Al-Karaghoul, W., Baeshen, Y., Erkan, I., Evans, C. and Ghoneim, A., 2015. Electronic word of mouth in social media: the common characteristics of retweeted and favourited marketer-generated content posted on Twitter. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 9(4), pp.338-358.
- [3] Alexandra, D.A., 2015. The influence of electronic word of mouth on retail bank customers share of wallet using the theory of planned behaviour. *The Business & Management Review*, 7(1), p.52.
- [4] Armstrong, G., Kotler, P., Harker, M. and Brennan, R., 2015. *Marketing: an introduction*. Pearson Education.
- [5] Ashley, C. and Tuten, T., 2015. Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), pp.15-27.
- [6] Baber, A., Thurasamy, R., Malik, M.I., Sadiq, B., Islam, S. and Sajjad, M., 2016. Online word-of-mouth antecedents, attitude and intention-to-purchase electronic products in Pakistan. *Telematics and Informatics*, 33(2), pp.388-400.
- [7] Babić Rosario, A., Sotgiu, F., De Valck, K. and Bijmolt, T.H., 2016. The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales: A meta-analytic review of platform, product, and metric factors. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(3), pp.297-318.
- [8] Baek, H., Oh, S., Yang, H.D. and Ahn, J., 2014. Chronological Analysis of the Electronic Word-of-Mouth effect of Four Social Media channels on Movie Sales: Comparing Twitter, Yahoo! Movies, YouTube, and Blogs. In *PACIS* (p. 65).
- [9] Baines, P., Fill, C. and Page, K., 2013. *Essentials of marketing*. Oxford University Press.
- [10] Bataineh, A.Q., 2015. The Effect of eCRM Practices on eWOM on Banks' SNSs: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction. *International Business Research*, 8(5), p.230.
- [11] Beneke, J., Mill, J., Naidoo, K. and Wickham, B., 2015. The impact of willingness to engage in negative electronic word-of-mouth on brand attitude: a study of airline passengers in South Africa. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 9(2).
- [12] Berger, J., 2014. Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(4), pp.586-607.
- [13] Breazeale, M., 2009. An assessment of electronic word-of-mouth research. *International Journal of Market Research*, 51(3), pp.297-318.
- [14] Bronner, F. and De Hoog, R., 2011. Vacationers and eWOM: Who posts, and why, where, and what?. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(1), pp.15-26.

- [15] Cantalops, A.S. and Salvi, F., 2014. New consumer behavior: A review of research on eWOM and hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36, pp.41-51.
- [16] Chaffey, D., 2016. Global social media research summary 2016. *Smart Insights*, 8.
- [17] Chen, C.H., Nguyen, B., Klaus, P.P. and Wu, M.S., 2015. Exploring electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the consumer purchase decision-making process: the case of online holidays—evidence from United Kingdom (UK) consumers. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 32(8), pp.953-970.
- [18] Cheung, C.M. and Lee, M.K., 2012. What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms. *Decision support systems*, 53(1), pp.218-225.
- [19] Cheung, C.M. and Thadani, D.R., 2012. The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision support systems*, 54(1), pp.461-470.
- [20] Chewning, L.V., 2015. Multiple voices and multiple media: Co-constructing BP's crisis response. *Public Relations Review*, 41(1), pp.72-79.
- [21] Choi, J., 2012. A content analysis of BP's press releases dealing with crisis. *Public Relations Review*, 38(3), pp.422-429.
- [22] Chu, S.C. and Kim, Y., 2011. Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International journal of Advertising*, 30(1), pp.47-75.
- [23] Correa, T., Hinsley, A.W. and De Zuniga, H.G., 2010. Who interacts on the Web?: The intersection of users' personality and social media use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(2), pp.247-253.
- [24] Doh, S.J. and Hwang, J.S., 2009. How consumers evaluate eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) messages. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12(2), pp.193-197.
- [25] Eisingerich, A.B., Chun, H.H., Liu, Y., Jia, H.M. and Bell, S.J., 2015. Why recommend a brand face-to-face but not on Facebook? How word-of-mouth on online social sites differs from traditional word-of-mouth.
- [26] Fan, Y.W., Miao, Y.F., Fang, Y.H. and Lin, R.Y., 2013. Establishing the adoption of electronic word-of-mouth through consumers' perceived credibility. *International Business Research*, 6(3), p.58.
- [27] Goldsmith, R.E., 2008. Electronic word-of-mouth. In *Electronic Commerce: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 2143-2149). IGI Global.
- [28] Groeger, L. and Buttle, F., 2014. Word-of-mouth marketing influence on offline and online communications: Evidence from case study research. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 20(1-2), pp.21-41.



- [29] Harlow, W.F., Brantley, B.C. and Harlow, R.M., 2011. BP initial image repair strategies after the Deepwater Horizon spill. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), pp.80-83.
- [30] Harris, A. and Prideaux, B., 2017. The potential for eWOM to affect consumer behaviour in tourism. *Handbook of Consumer Behaviour in Tourism*.
- [31] Hensel, K. and Deis, M.H., 2010. Using social media to increase advertising and improve marketing. *The Entrepreneurial Executive*, 15, p.87.
- [32] Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G. and Gremler, D.D., 2004. Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet?. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 18(1), pp.38-52.
- [33] Heymann-Reder, D., 2012. *Social Media Marketing*. Addison-Wesley Verlag.
- [34] Hollensen, S., 2015. *Marketing management: A relationship approach*. Pearson Education.
- [35] Hung, K.H. and Li, S.Y., 2007. The influence of eWOM on virtual consumer communities: Social capital, consumer learning, and behavioral outcomes. *Journal of advertising research*, 47(4), pp.485-495.
- [36] Jalilvand, M. and Samiei, N., 2012a. The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 30(4), pp.460-476.
- [37] Jalilvand, M.R. and Samiei, N., 2012b. The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB). *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 22(5), pp.591-612.
- [38] Jalilvand, M.R., Samiei, N., Dini, B. and Manzari, P.Y., 2012. Examining the structural relationships of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention: An integrated approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1), pp.134-143.
- [39] Jeong, E. and Jang, S.S., 2011. Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(2), pp.356-366.
- [40] Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M., 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business horizons*, 53(1), pp.59-68.
- [41] Kärkkäinen, H., Jussila, J. and Väisänen, J., 2010, October. Social media use and potential in business-to-business companies' innovation. In *Proceedings of the 14th international academic mindtrek conference: Envisioning future media environments* (pp. 228-236). ACM.
- [42] Kaur, G., 2016. Social Media Marketing. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(7).

- [43] Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P. and Silvestre, B.S., 2011. Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business horizons*, 54(3), pp.241-251.
- [44] Kietzmann, J. and Canhoto, A., 2013. Bittersweet! Understanding and managing electronic word of mouth. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 13(2), pp.146-159.
- [45] Killian, G. and McManus, K., 2015. A marketing communications approach for the digital era: Managerial guidelines for social media integration. *Business Horizons*, 58(5), pp.539-549.
- [46] Kim, E., Sung, Y. and Kang, H., 2014. Brand followers' retweeting behavior on Twitter: How brand relationships influence brand electronic word-of-mouth. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, pp.18-25.
- [47] Kim, W.G., Lim, H. and Brymer, R.A., 2015. The effectiveness of managing social media on hotel performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 44, pp.165-171.
- [48] King, R.A., Racherla, P. and Bush, V.D., 2014. What we know and don't know about online word-of-mouth: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(3), pp.167-183.
- [49] Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G., 2010. *Principles of marketing*. Pearson education.
- [50] Kotler, P., 1972. A generic concept of marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, pp.46-54.
- [51] Ladhari, R. and Michaud, M., 2015. eWOM effects on hotel booking intentions, attitudes, trust, and website perceptions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 46, pp.36-45.
- [52] Lee, S.H., Noh, S.E. and Kim, H.W., 2013. A mixed methods approach to electronic word-of-mouth in the open-market context. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(4), pp.687-696.
- [53] Leeflang, P.S., Verhoef, P.C., Dahlström, P. and Freundt, T., 2014. Challenges and solutions for marketing in a digital era. *European management journal*, 32(1), pp.1-12.
- [54] Leite, R.A. and Azevedo, A., 2017. The Role of Digital Marketing: A perspective from Porto Hotels' Managers. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*, (2).
- [55] Leonardi, P.M., Huysman, M. and Steinfield, C., 2013. Enterprise social media: Definition, history, and prospects for the study of social technologies in organizations. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(1), pp.1-19.
- [56] Lin, C., Wu, Y.S. and Chen, J.C.V., 2013. Electronic word-of-mouth: The moderating roles of product involvement and brand image. *TIIIM 2013 Proceedings*, pp.39-47.

- [57] Litvin, S.W., Goldsmith, R.E. and Pan, B., 2008. Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism management*, 29(3), pp.458-468.
- [58] Litvin, S.W., Goldsmith, R.E. and Pan, B., 2017. A retrospective view of electronic word of mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, (just-accepted), pp.00-00.
- [59] Liu, S., Jiang, C., Lin, Z., Ding, Y., Duan, R. and Xu, Z., 2015. Identifying effective influencers based on trust for electronic word-of-mouth marketing: A domain-aware approach. *Information Sciences*, 306, pp.34-52.
- [60] Lu, Q., Ye, Q. and Law, R., 2014. Moderating effects of product heterogeneity between online word-of-mouth and hotel sales. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 15(1), p.1.
- [61] Mangold, W.G. and Faulds, D.J., 2009. Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business horizons*, 52(4), pp.357-365.
- [62] Marchand, A., Hennig-Thurau, T. and Wiertz, C., 2017. Not all digital word of mouth is created equal: Understanding the respective impact of consumer reviews and microblogs on new product success. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(2), pp.336-354.
- [63] Maresh, M. and Williams, D.E., 2010. Oil industry crisis communication. *The handbook of crisis communication*, pp.285-300.
- [64] Miller, P., 2013. *Social media marketing* (pp. 86-104). New York and London: Routledge.
- [65] Moran, G., Muzellec, L. and Nolan, E., 2014. Consumer moments of truth in the digital context. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 54(2), pp.200-204.
- [66] Mulhern, F., 2009. Integrated marketing communications: From media channels to digital connectivity. *Journal of marketing communications*, 15(2-3), pp.85-101.
- [67] Muralidharan, S., Dillistone, K. and Shin, J.H., 2011. The Gulf Coast oil spill: Extending the theory of image restoration discourse to the realm of social media and beyond petroleum. *Public Relations Review*, 37(3), pp.226-232.
- [68] Nadaraja, R. and Yazdanifard, R., 2013. Social media marketing: advantages and disadvantages. *Center of Southern New Hampshire University*.
- [69] Nicholas, D. and Rowlands, I. eds., 2008. *Digital consumers: reshaping the information professions*. Facet Publishing.
- [70] Omar, M.K., Dahalan, N.A. and Yusoff, Y.H.M., 2016. Social Media Usage, Perceived Team-Efficacy and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among Employees of an Oil and Gas Organisation in Malaysia. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 37, pp.309-316.

- [71] Park, D.H. and Kim, S., 2008. The effects of consumer knowledge on message processing of electronic word-of-mouth via online consumer reviews. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 7(4), pp.399-410.
- [72] Pauwels, K., Aksehirli, Z. and Lackman, A., 2016. Like the ad or the brand? Marketing stimulates different electronic word-of-mouth content to drive online and offline performance. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(3), pp.639-655.
- [73] Phelps, J.E., Lewis, R., Mobilio, L., Perry, D. and Raman, N., 2004. Viral marketing or electronic word-of-mouth advertising: Examining consumer responses and motivations to pass along email. *Journal of advertising research*, 44(4), pp.333-348.
- [74] Ramos, J., 2010. *Social Media Marketing for Business: An Essential Guide*. Booktango.
- [75] Reuben, R., 2008. The use of social media in higher education for marketing and communications: A guide for professionals in higher education.
- [76] Safko, L., 2010. *The social media bible: tactics, tools, and strategies for business success*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [77] Saravanakumar, M. and SuganthaLakshmi, T., 2012. Social media marketing. *Life Science Journal*, 9(4), pp.4444-4451.
- [78] See-To, E.W. and Ho, K.K., 2014. Value co-creation and purchase intention in social network sites: The role of electronic Word-of-Mouth and trust—A theoretical analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 31, pp.182-189.
- [79] Severi, E., Ling, K.C. and Nasermoadei, A., 2014. The impacts of electronic word of mouth on brand equity in the context of social media. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 9(8), p.84.
- [80] Sheth, J.N. and Sisodia, R.S., 2015. *Does marketing need reform?: Fresh perspectives on the future*. Routledge.
- [81] Sotiriadis, M.D. and Van Zyl, C., 2013. Electronic word-of-mouth and online reviews in tourism services: the use of twitter by tourists. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 13(1), pp.103-124.
- [82] Stone, M.D. and Woodcock, N.D., 2014. Interactive, direct and digital marketing: A future that depends on better use of business intelligence. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 8(1), pp.4-17.
- [83] Sweeney, J., Soutar, G. and Mazzarol, T., 2014. Factors enhancing word-of-mouth influence: positive and negative service-related messages. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(1/2), pp.336-359.
- [84] Tang, C., Mehl, M.R., Eastlick, M.A., He, W. and Card, N.A., 2016. A longitudinal exploration of the relations between electronic word-of-mouth indicators and firms'

- profitability: Findings from the banking industry. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(6), pp.1124-1132.
- [85] Themba, G. and Mulala, M., 2013. Brand-related eWOM and its effects on purchase decisions: an empirical study of university of Botswana students. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(8), p.31.
- [86] Thoumrungroje, A., 2014. The influence of social media intensity and EWOM on conspicuous consumption. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, pp.7-15.
- [87] Torlak, O., Ozkara, B.Y., Tiltay, M.A., Cengiz, H. and Dulger, M.F., 2014. The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An application concerning cell phone brands for youth consumers in Turkey. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 8(2), p.61.
- [88] Tuten, T.L. and Solomon, M.R., 2017. *Social media marketing*. London: Sage Publications.
- [89] Vivekananthamoorthy, N., Naganathan, E.R. and Rajkumar, R., 2016. Determinant factors on student empowerment and role of social media and eWOM communication: Multivariate analysis on LinkedIn usage. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 9(25).
- [90] Winer, R.S., 2009. New communications approaches in marketing: Issues and research directions. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23(2), pp.108-117.
- [91] Xiang, Z. and Gretzel, U., 2010. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism management*, 31(2), pp.179-188.
- [92] Yang, H.P. and Mutum, D.S., 2015. Electronic word-of-mouth for university selection: Implications for academic leaders and recruitment managers. *Journal of General Management*, 40(4), pp.23-44.
- [93] Ye, L., 2014. *Is Facebook an effective crisis communication tool for companies?: An analysis of BP's Facebook usage after the oil spill in 2010*. The University of Alabama.
- [94] Yoo, C.W., Kim, Y.J. and Sanders, G.L., 2015. The impact of interactivity of electronic word of mouth systems and E-Quality on decision support in the context of the e-marketplace. *Information & Management*, 52(4), pp.496-505.
- [95] You, Y., Vadakkepatt, G.G. and Joshi, A.M., 2015. A meta-analysis of electronic word-of-mouth elasticity. *Journal of Marketing*, 79(2), pp.19-39.
- [96] Zhang, J.Q., Craciun, G. and Shin, D., 2010. When does electronic word-of-mouth matter? A study of consumer product reviews. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(12), pp.1336-1341.