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MSc Digital Marketing

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STUDENT NAME:

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KEYWORDS: Digital Marketing (DM), Small/Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Social Media, performance measurement, digital marketing strategy, Email, Website, Return On Investment (ROI).

ABSTRACT

The adoption of technology for marketing practices is crucial for the development and sustainable growth of SMEs (Alford and Page, 2015). However, SMEs do not harness benefits of technological advancements due to several barriers, including; lack of knowledge and skills, lack of resources, manager-owner's incapability or unwillingness to utilise technology, environmental factors as well as inability to measure return on investment (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010; Simmons et al., 2008; Barnes et al., 2012; Street and Cameron, 2007). Thus, this paper aims to investigate the factors that inhibit successful adaptation of digital marketing (DM)/channel strategy in SMEs. Thereby, in order to achieve research objectives, current study utilised qualitative data collection method thought semi-structured interviews of 6 marketing experts within 2 SMEs based in the UK and in Saudi Arabia.

It research study found that companies have a strong understanding of the importance of digital marketing strategy and digital channels in today's age. However, the ability to capitalise opportunities presented by digital marketing are constrained by lack of skill, knowledge and assumption that IT department is responsible for adaptation of digital marketing strategy. Although, SMEs' inability to measure ROI was confirmed. However, in order to consider it as a barriers, it would require further research. While environmental factor (B2B context) was confirmed playing a critical role in DM strategy adaptation. Additionally, it was identified that companies utilised digital marketing channels: email, social media and website. However, none of these channels are utilised to full extend. Therefore, companies do not harness benefits from technological advancements.

Nevertheless, current study's limitation is sample, which cannot be generalise. Thus, research study can be explored further by deploying sample that can be generalised, which would require larger number of participants.

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GLOSSARY

Abbreviations used in the text

SMEs = Small Medium Enterprises

DM = Digital Marketing

SERP = Search Engine Results Page

SEO = Search Engine Optimisation

CRM = Customer relationship management

UX = User/Customer Experience

SMM = Social Media Marketing

UGC = User Generated Content

WOM = Word-of-Mouth

ROMI = Return on Marketing Investment

ROI = Return on Investment

WA = Web Analytics

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Need of the Study

Digitalisation brought greater change than the Internet, which has changed business landscape significantly and re-shaped traditional ways in which customers and businesses interact with each other (Damian, 2014; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Ernst and Young, 2011). Since customers have been introduced to digital devices and social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). It has transformed customer behaviour, which forced businesses to adapt and re-shape marketing strategies (Kannan and Hongshuang, 2017; Forbes, 2016 and Muntinga et al., 2011) by implementing digital marketing (DM) channels such as: search engine optimisation (SEO), pay-per-click advertising (PPC), display advertising, affiliate marketing, content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing and mobile marketing (Digital Vidya, 2018). Consequently, digitalisation has created two major opportunities for businesses, access to vast array of data and digital channels and tools, which enable to collect, process and report data as well as measure the effectiveness of marketing activities (Jarvinen et al., 2012).

However, while larger organisations have necessary resources to utilise marketing technology to satisfy consumer expectations. SMEs are in early stage of adoption of technology and therefore struggle to maintain a pace with rapidly evolving technological developments (Bordonaba-Juste et al., 2012; Davies, 2014; Reijonen, 2010). Although, European Commission (2011), asserted that in Europe 99% of companies are SMEs, of which 92 percent are micro-enterprises. They provide more than 75% employment in private sector and therefore play a crucial role in economic growth. Thus, SMEs play a significant role in country's' economy, which makes it even more vital to grow their sales. SMEs are sales driven and therefore their major aim of their marketing is to create awareness (Reijonen, 2010). However, consumers are more demanding, discerning and acknowledgeable (Kotler et.al, 2009 and Newman, 2015). Times of "push" and "one-size-fits-all" marketing have passed as today customers choose when, how or if they will engage with a company (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016 and Solomon, 2015). Thus, in order to achieve sustainable

success and growth, SMEs have to embrace change and incorporate digital marketing (DM) into their marketing activities, which will ultimate lead to increased market share and revenue (Stankovska et al., 2016). Although, Brenner (2017) argued that DM channels and tool have become accessible to anyone. However, it also requires skills and knowledge in order to leverage those tools effectively (Brenner, 2017), which seems that SMEs do not possess (Kim et al., 2011). Besides, SMEs also seems to be not embracing digital marketing due to inability to measure and achieve ROI due to the lack of knowledge about DM advantages, lack of holistic strategy and inability to understand the overall picture (Brenner, 2017). SMEs also face numerous barriers to adaptation of DM strategy, including; owner-managerial, resources and environmental (Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010). Consequently, SMEs' perception of digital marketing is limited to company's promotion via e-mail, on web-site (Statista, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2008; Taylor and Murphy, 2004) and social media (Stankovska et al., 2016).

1.3 Aims and objectives

This dissertation will investigate the factors that inhibit adaptation of digital marketing/channel strategy in SMEs. Thereby, there are the following objectives:

N°	Objectives
1	Identify the knowledge and understanding of importance of digital marketing strategy/channel strategy adaptation in SMEs.
2	Identify what digital channels SMEs utilise for their marketing activities and for what purposes.
3	Identify how SMEs measure their online marketing performance.
4	Explore the factors that inhibit the adaptation of digital marketing strategy/ channel strategy of SMEs.

Table 1.1 Summary of Research Objectives

1.4   Chapters' Outline

The purpose of this section is to provide an outline of dissertation, which consists of five chapters, as follows in a Table 1.2:

Chapter 1: *Introduction*	The main purpose of Chapter 1, is to introduce reader to the research topic, provide research background and define research problem and need of current research. It also presents research question aims and objectives. This chapter is finalised by defining a structure of the dissertation by splitting it into chapters.
Chapter 2: *Literature Review*	The literature review chapter demonstrates frameworks and theories that have been deployed in current study. The chapter begins with the notion of evolution of digital marketing and its importance, and then examines in depth digital marketing strategy, its importance and how SMEs adopt digital marketing strategy and digital channels. Subsequently, the chapter examines the channels that SMEs utilise for their marketing activities, which are: social media, web development and performance measurement. The evaluation of this specific channels was justified with the ration in the beginning of the "digital marketing channels utilised by SMEs" section. Afterwards, chapter analyses the factors that inhibit adaptation of digital marketing strategy in SMEs.
Chapter 3: *Research Methodology*	Current chapter comprises methods utilised in the research study as well as describes and justify employment of specific research philosophy and strategy. Consequently, current dissertation deployed qualitative data collection method though semi-structured interviews in order to gain in-depth insights of research problem. Additionally, data analysis and tools that will be utilised to analyse finding of primary research also will be described and evaluated in this chapter. Thus, the explanation of NVivo software will be provided to the reader. Besides, this chapter will present the explanation, justification and design of semi-structured interviews, sampling choice, reliability and validity of research, ethical issues as well as limitation of this research study.
Chapter 4: *Research Findings and Analysis*	This chapter analyses finding and results from primary research, which is semi-structured interviews. Findings will undergo thematic analysis in NVivo software, which will enable researcher to identify key themes of the research

	findings. Subsequently, findings form primary research will be compared with finding in literature review (Chapter 2), which subsequently will enable research to draw a conclusion of the dissertation.
Chapter 5: *Conclusion*	Final chapter of the dissertation will identify the relationship between the knowledge from theoretical framework (Chapter 2), and the insights gained form primary research. It will also demonstrate whether or not dissertation met successfully its aims as well as limitations will be acknowledged in this chapter. It will also suggest (if appropriate) further study that might require for current topic, in order to explore it further. Consequently, it will summarise the insights and opinion gained during the research study, summarising and comparing both primary and secondary research.

Table 1.2 Chapters' outline of the dissertation

Chapter 2: Literature Review
2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

The purpose of literature review is to answer research objectives by developing a theoretical framework, which will enable researcher to understand the research problem that is being studied (USC Libraries, 2018). Thus, this chapter will foremost examine evolution of digital marketing followed by digital marketing strategy, relevant frameworks, its importance and its implementation in SMEs. Furthermore, channels that SMEs utilise for their marketing purposes will be analysed. Lastly, barriers of DM strategy adaptation in SMEs will be evaluated.

2.2 Evolution of Digital Marketing (DM)

The Internet and emerging technologies has significantly transformed the way businesses operate. Subsequently, the approach to marketing also went through significant change and has taken new forms (Damian, 2014; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Ernst and Young, 2011). Over the past years, new trends and technological innovations have emerged that has re-shaped conventional perception of marketing. As a result, many traditional marketing techniques have become less efficient and superseded in digital age. Besides, technological advancements have transformed costumer behaviour by introducing such devices as smartphones,

tablets, laptops and social-media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other technologies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Thus, interconnected and interactive digital environment allows customers to access, create, publish and consume information quickly and on-demand (Damian, 2014). As a result, customers willingly share their opinion and express themselves online, which led to customer empowerment (Damian, 2014). Thus, since consumers are more demanding and acknowledgeable (Kotler et.al, 2009 and Newman, 2015). Times of "push" and "one-size-fits-all" marketing have passed as today customers choose when, how or if they will engage with a company (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016 and Solomon, 2015). Thus, due to interactive approach, digital marketing allows reaching wider audience, while allowing a precise targeting of specific segment (Damian, 2014).

Although, many traditional marketing methods became outdated and therefore less effective (Forbes, 2016). However, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) argued that digital marketing involves traditional marketing as it allows not to miss an opportunity and plan campaigns in integral manner. Accordingly, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016), defined DM as the employment of the internet and digital technologies in combination with traditional communications to attain marketing objectives. Furthermore, Kannan and Hongshuang (2017) explained that DM term has evolved over time from marketing products and services through digital channels to an umbrella term describing the process of utilisation of digital technologies to promote brands, acquire customers and build customers preferences.

Although it might be challenging to embed digital culture due to rapidly evolving technology. However, in order to stay competitive in digitalised and customer-centric environment, organisations have to face the implication of digital change (Marketing Week, 2018). In order to deal with challenges organisations should develop digital marketing strategy (Ernst and Young, 2011).

2.3 Digital Marketing Strategy / Channel Strategy

Digital marketing strategy consistently directs organisations' online marketing activities in such manner, thus it integrates with other marketing activities and supports overall business goals (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). While determining how to manage its weaknesses and exploit its strength (Strauss, 2014;

Strauss and Frost, 2012).

Primarily, DM strategy is channel strategy, which determines how organisation should set channel-specific goals and create differential channel proposition and channel specific communications correlating with channel specific characteristics and end user requirements. It also differentiates digital channels and identifies the most effective channels to directly communicate with customers at different touchpoints in multichannel context (Kaufman and Horton, 2015; Gay et al., 2007). As per Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, p. 190)

"The key question is not whether to deploy Internet technology – companies have no choice if they want to stay competitive – but how to deploy it".

Thus, it is vital to establish strong online presence, which can be achieve by adapting digital marketing strategy. Digital marketing strategy concerns with the following: marketing automation tools in order to establish customer relationship (CRM systems). Development of seamless multichannel customer experience (UX). Measurement of the effectiveness of each channel as well as harnessing social media marketing trough user-generated content (Thomas and Housden, 2011; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). For instance, Amazon has successfully embraced change and adopted digital marketing strategy by putting main focus on customers. Amazon continuously outperforms its rivals in ACSI customer satisfaction rating, which they achieve though personalisation and excellent UX. Thus, today Amazon gains largest revenue per unique user amongst such giants as eBay and Google (Chaffey, 2018). Besides, Amazon's share of DM advertising industry is projected to be over 10% by 2020 (Tredgold, 2018).

Furthermore, Porter (2001) asserted that digitalisation increased the importance of strategy due to the rapidly evolving digital media and technology, which makes it more challenging to sustain competitive advantage. Thus, Porter (2001) suggested six fundamental to DM strategy principles, which are: goal, unique value proposition, distinctive value chain, willingness to trade-off and tailor business activities to outperform rivals as well as outline of what firm does, where it wants to be and what are available resources while ensuring continuity and consistency in strategy.

Consequently, Smart Insights (2018) asserted that businesses without strategy are

directionless as they do not have strategic goal and therefore do not know what they want to achieve. Accordingly, digital marketing strategy is essential as it allows to set clear goals, gain an insight about customers, allocate resources, forecast and gain online share and develop online proposition (Smart Insight, 2018). It is also advantageous due to its cost effectiveness (The UK Domain, 2014), and measurability (Smart Insights, 2018).

2.3.1 SOSTAC and RACE strategic models

Smart Insights (2018) argued that 50% of businesses do not have plan to grow and engage their audience as they do not know where to start. Hence, Chaffey (2017) introduced SOSTAC and RACE frameworks for structuring an effective digital marketing strategy. SOSTAC is widely utilised for strategic marketing planning (Chaffey, 2017).

SOSTAC (Figure 2.1) stands for Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). It is planning system for establishing and managing DM strategies, plans and campaigns (PR Smith, 2018). Thereby, it enables to assess, structure and control the key tactics, strategies and actions of an organisation (Chaffey, 2016; PR Smith, 2018).
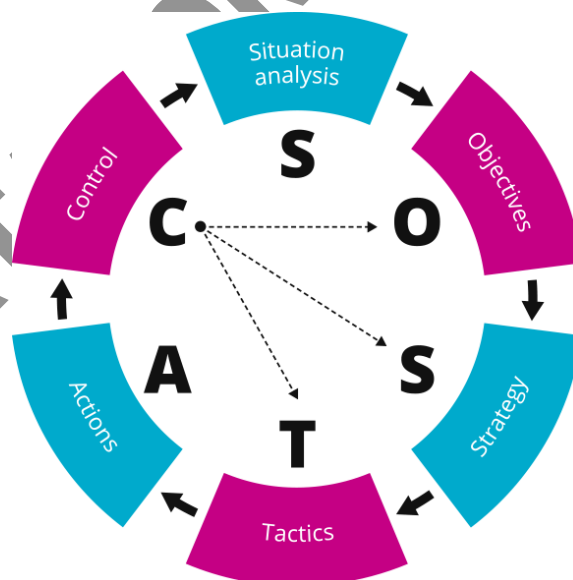
Figure 2.1. SOSTAC Planning Framework (2016). Source: Chaffey (2016)

Phase	Question	Planning activities
Situation Analysis	Where are we now?	✓ Internet specific SWOT analysis ✓ Internal capabilities and resources ✓ Customer insight ✓ Macro-environment Analysis ✓ Competitor Analysis
Objectives	Where do we want to be?	5 Ss objectives: ✓ Sell – customer acquisition and retention targets ✓ Serve – customer satisfaction targets ✓ Sizzle – visit duration, site stickiness ✓ Speak – number of engaged customers ✓ Save – quantified efficiency gains ✓ Each 5Ss objective must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, relevant, Time-orientated) ✓ KPIs
Strategy	How do we get there?	✓ Proposition, segmentation, targeting ✓ Online value proposition (OVP) ✓ Sequence (credibility before visibility) ✓ Tools (web functionality, email etc.) ✓ Integration (consistent OVP) and database
Tactics	How do we get there?	The details of the strategy ✓ E-marketing mix (communications mix, social networking), what happens and when ✓ Details of contact strategy ✓ E-campaign initiative schedule ✓ CRM
Action	How exactly do we get there?	Who does what and when ✓ Structures and responsibilities ✓ Internal resources and skills ✓ External agencies

Control	How do we monitor performance?	✓ 5Ss, web analytics and KPIs ✓ Usability testing, mystery shopper ✓ Customer satisfaction survey ✓ Site visitor profiling ✓ Frequency and reporting ✓ Process of reporting and actions

Table 2.1. The SOSTAC planning framework applied to digital marketing strategy development. Source: (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Haughey, 2018).

On the other hand, the RACE planning system (Figure 2.2) enables development of digital marketing strategy and management of activities in more structured way. RACE main focus is customer-centric content marketing, with the major goal to reach and engage customers to meet business objectives. Subsequently, RACE allows to map the customer journey across all potential touchpoints (Chaffey, 2018). RACE planning also developed relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) that company should track at each planning stage (Chaffey, 2017).

Figure 2.2. RACE Planning Framework (2017). Source: Chaffey (2017)

The RACE framework consists of four stages of engagement throughput the customer lifecycle (Chaffey, 2017).

Stage	Planning activity	Action	KPIs

Reach	➢ Build agile strategic approach of digital marketing ➢ Build brand awareness to drive traffic ➢ Optimise digital channels against defined targets SMART and KPIs	✓ Publish and promote content, ✓ Segmentation and targeting ✓ Acquire followers ✓ Social media engagement	➢ Value per visit ➢ Unique visitors ➢ Followers/fans
Act	➢ Encouragement of interaction and participation thought relevant and useful content ➢ Persuading visitors and/or prospects to take action on their journey when they initially visit website or social media site	✓ Online value and brand proposition ✓ Interaction tools ✓ Generate leads through seamless customer journey ✓ Create relevant and compelling content on: website, blog, social media and other channels	➢ Leads ➢ Conversion rate ➢ Time on site ➢ Social media actions: like/comments/shares
Convert	➢ Persuade visitors and/or prospects to take desired action and convert into customer ➢ Generate leads, sales and fans	Capitalising on marketing investment with conversion rate optimisation (CRO) ✓ Landing page and home page optimisation ✓ Marketing automation ✓ Remarketing ✓ Price, product, promotion	➢ Sales ➢ Profit ➢ Unique visitors/fans ➢ Audience share ➢ Revenue ➢ Goal value per visit
Engage	➢ Customer retention ➢ Build customer loyalty though ongoing communication on a website, e-mail and social media to ➢ Enhance customer life time value (LTV)	✓ E-newsletters ✓ Promotion ✓ Enhancing customer experience UX ✓ Integrated communication ✓ Content marketing strategy ✓ Customer advocacy ✓ Repeat sales and referrals	✓ Loyalty ✓ Advocacy ✓ Repeat purchase (LTV)

Table 2.2. The RACE Planning Framework (2017). Source: (Chaffey, 2017 and Cowman, 2017)

The RACE is more adapted for DM scenario, focusing on customer engagement. While SOSTAC's main purpose is to develop a strategy, considering micro and micro environments (Chaffey, 2017).

2.3.2 Multichannel Marketing

Multichannel marketing refers to interaction with customers utilising the combination of online and offline communication channels (Table 2.3) (Orendorff, 2018). Since customers use multiple channels in their buying processes (Marketing School, 2018), marketing efforts should be put towards channels where customers are (SAS, 2018). The following consists of digital and physical channels, which are available in Multichannel Marketing:

Channel	Category	Digital	Physical
Affiliates	Partners	✓	
Amazon/eBay store	Web	✓	
Blog/microblog	Social	✓	
Content marketing	Content	✓	✓
Desktop app	Desktop	✓	
Digital banners and signage	Advertising/Stores	✓	✓
Display remarketing	Advertising	✓	
Email	Email	✓	
Email Newsletters	Email	✓	
Events	Events		✓
Social media	Social	✓	
TV advertising	Advertising	✓	
Influencer outreach	Social	✓	✓
Loyalty Cards	Stores	✓	✓
Mobile marketing/App	Advertising	✓	
Pay per Click PPC	Search marketing	✓	
Exhibitions	Event	✓	✓
QR codes	Store	✓	✓
Relationship marketing	Content	✓	✓
RFID tags	Store	✓	✓
Search engine Optimisation	Search Marketing	✓	
Billboard adverts	Advertising		✓
Call centre	Telephone		✓

Celebrity endorsement	Advertising/Influencers	✓	✓
Direct Marketing	Advertising		✓
Magazine adverts	Advertising		✓
Radio advertising	Advertising		✓
Retain/In store advertising	Store		✓

Table 2.3. List of Digital and Physical Marketing Channels = Multichannel Marketing. Source: Chaffey (2018).

Consequently, there is previously unimaginable variety of channels (SAS, 2018). However, it would be not practical to utilise all of them (Marketing School, 2018). Thereby, it is crucial to prioritise resources on the most relevant channels for business with the highest ROI (Smart Insights, 2017).

Consequently, Chaffey (2017) developed the *Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel* (MMGW) framework, which combines the SOSTAC model and RACE planning system in one framework. The purpose of the framework is to achieve business goals through customer interactions and demonstrate broader goals in the RACE lifecycle (Chaffey, 2017; Swan, 2018). Figure 2.3, visualises the key planning activities that are required as part of the process of developing an integrated multichannel digital marketing strategy, which will allow to select the most relevant channels based on segmentation, targeting, positioning, business objectives and so on (Chaffey, 2017). For more detailed description of both SOSTAC and RACE frameworks, refer to the beginning of this sub-section.

Figure 2.3. Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (MMGW) framework (2017). Source: Chaffey (2017)

The RACE framework located in the centre of the wheel with the main purpose to achieve defined targets in digital marketing with the aid of SOSTAC model stages (Bosomworth, 2012 and Chaffey, 2017).

Subsequently, multichannel marketing strategy allows to create and maintain seamless UX across all channels (SAS, 2018). Besides, multichannel customers spend three times more money in comparison to single-channel customers (Marketing School, 2018), which ultimately increases business revenue by 38% of every additional channel (Orendorff, 2018). However, in multichannel marketing it is more challenging to create personalised content, deliver seamless UX across channels and marketing attribution. Amazon is an example of successful

implementation of multichannel marketing. Amazon, has highly personalised accounts based on previous purchase behaviour and delivers seamless UX across channels (Schieber Research, 2018; Lewis, 2017).

2.3.3 Digital marketing strategy in SMEs

Company's size has a significant impact on the adoption of digital marketing strategy. There is a large difference between marketing activities of larger corporations and SMEs. While SMEs are in early stage of adoption of digital channels and therefore digitalisation seems to be more challenging. Larger organisations are more likely to possess required resources and knowledge for successful implementation of DM strategy (Bordonaba-Juste et al., 2012; Davies, 2014). Unlike larger organisations, SMEs are sales driven and therefore their major aim of their marketing is to create awareness (Reijonen, 2010).

Hence, SMEs do not apply marketing theory to their marketing practices as typical SMEs' marketing activities are spontaneous, reactive and informal (Hill, 2001 and Parrott et al, 2010). As they undertake "doing" approach rather than formal planning (Alford and Page, 2014). As a result, SMEs do not have both, set objectives and strategy (The Guardian, 2014). Alternatively, SMEs tend to utilise the most cost effective channels in order to promote their products and services (The Guardian, 2014). Consequently, SMEs' perception of digital marketing is limited to company's promotion via e-mail, on web-site (Statista, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2008; Taylor and Murphy, 2004) and social media (Stankovska et al., 2016), which is due to the assumption that their customers do not spend time online (Gilmore et al., 2007). However, Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) argued that adaptation of digital channels by SMEs depends upon the perceived benefits, which can be related to usefulness, personal notion of importance and tangible benefits that company has identified in its organisation. Although DM has provided SMEs with channels to create awareness of their products and services at relatively low cost. However, it appears that SMEs do not utilise digital marketing channels and tools to its full potential (Stankovska et al., 2016); Gilmore et al., 2007), which is due to perception that DM is lacking of strategic importance (Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007), which is due to lack of understanding of how technology can add value, what are the benefits and full cost

(Simmons et al., 2008; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011).

2.4 Digital Marketing Channels utilised by SMEs

Since the field of digital marketing is broad and continuously evolving (Damian, 2014; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). It is difficult, if not impossible to cover all of the elements of digital marketing in a single theses. Consequently, the scope of this study is limited to the most effective and relevant to SMEs DM channels, including company website, social media platforms and measurability (Analytics). Although, it was identified that e-mail is used for several marketing purposes such as: promotion, sharing information, maintaining and building customer relationship (Statista, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2008; Taylor and Murphy, 2004). However, e-mail is eliminated from current study (Jones et al., 2012).

2.4.1 Web development and websites in SMEs

Leinbach-Reyhle (2014) asserted that a web-site is company's home in online environment and without online presence, company will lose an opportunity to be found by prospects. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) added that if company cannot be found on Google it would mean that it does not exist. As per Business Wales (2016), 93% of purchase decision starts with search engine search. Consequently, web visibility is crucial, which can be achieved through high-ranking position in organic searches (Fishkin, 2018). Hence, search engine optimisation SEO plays a crucial role in optimising organic search leading to company's web visibility (Chris, 2017; Shelton, 2017). There are key factors that determine high ranking, visibility and enhancement of SEO such as: relevant content (Damian, 2014). Backlinks from different and authoritative domains. Mobile friendliness as Google shifted to mobile-first indexing (Barysevich, 2017), which is due to 42% of customers coming from mobile devices (Maxwell, 2017). It is also vital to ensure that keywords are matching searchers' queries (Fishkin, 2018). Speed should be optimised as 47% of users expect the page load in two or less seconds, otherwise the abound (Kissmetrics, 2018). Nevertheless, user experience UX plays vital role in SEO as website cannot be optimised if it does not deliver positive UX, while on the other hand UX cannot be positive if search engine is not optimised (Flint, 2018). Thus,

both SEO and UX have to be viewed collaboratively.

Furthermore, UX plays a central role in web design. UX is primarily about a comprehensive understanding of users, specifically their abilities and limitations, needs and values. Thereby, UX best practices consist of improvement of user interaction and user perception of brand (Unger and Chandler, 2012). The key elements of an effective website design includes the following: usability, credibility, usefulness, accessibility, findability and SEO (Steward, 2015).

Usability refers to several factors, primarily to user-friendliness, which involves content clarity and ease of navigation. Usability also refers to availability, which involves mobile-friendliness and SEO (Issa and Turk, 2012; Nielsen 2000). Credibility refers to website's validity (up to date content), trustworthiness (protection of website SLL certificate and by other means) and authenticity (Iding et al., 2018 and Harvard Business Review, 2016). Usefulness refers to relevancy of content (content have to answer user's enquiry) and customer service (website have to be engaging and interactive) (Olenski, 2016). Accessibility refers to the ease of use of a website for all people with different kind of abilities and disabilities (Thatcher, 2006 and Craven 2008). Thus, all users (including with sensory, physical and/or cognitive disabilities) have equal opportunity to access content and functionalities (W3C, 2018; British Standart Institution, 2018).

Although 81% of small businesses do have a website. However, 80% of websites do not fit purpose of today's digital age. Due to micro-businesses' limited abilities and skills to build and maintain high quality website. As a result, they cannot perform essential marketing tasks, such as publishing customer testimonials or posting photos (Karibian, 2013; Business Wales, 2016). While, Iding et al (2009) added that testimonials is an effective way to demonstrate credibility.

Consequently, websites rank low on SERPs, and even if they do attract visitors, they are less likely to convert. Due to lack of dynamic and relevant content, professional design and layout including limited amount of pages leading to low user-friendliness. Thus, small businesses deliver low UX and customer satisfaction (Karibian, 2013). However, Karibian (2013), added that it is essential for small businesses to be visible to their prospects. As per Alford and Page (2015), those SMEs with strong online presence grow twice quicker in comparison to those who have no or minimal presence.

O'Donoghue (2016), asserted that users are highly sensitive to web performance and the smallest change in page load time or weight alters traffic noticeably, increasing bounce rates. Consequently, web analytics and metrics are required to analyse and investigate problematic areas and monitor overall performance (Chaffey and Smith, 2013).

2.4.2 Social Media Utilisation in SMEs

Social media plays a central role in digital marketing strategy due to the rising number of users and therefore increasing absolute reach of customers, which increases brand recognition, inbound traffic and subsequent conversion (DeMers, 2014). Social media introduced two-way communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kannan and Hongshuang, 2017), which led to customer empowerment where users decide what content to engage with and when and which content to ignore (DeMers, 2017 and Leeflang et al., 2014).

User-generated content (UGC) is a fundamental aspect of social media as it encourages users to create and share content by generating word-of-mouth WOM, "buzz", and referrals, where customers spread the word by passing information to peers (Luca, 2016). However, WOM can be as positive as well as negative, the latter seems to be the most challenging for businesses to manage (Chaffey Smith, 2013). As 82% of customers trust WOM from their peers (Forbes, 2017), versus 14% who trust advertising (Ernst and Young, 2011). Consequently, businesses have no control over their brand reputation and health on social media platforms (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, social media marketing (SMM) is specifically advantageous for SMEs due to their higher need to restrain marketing communications costs (Pentina and Koh, 2015). As per Walker (2017) social media as a "powerful tool" for small businesses as it can enhance productivity and online presence. It also can enhance customer loyalty through customer engagement and relationship building (Walker, 2017 and Stankovska et al., 2016). Besides, two-way communication is the key aspect of social media as it allows to communicate effectively in real time as well as keep customers up-to date on recent offers and products updates (Walker, 2017). Jones (2015) noted that social media not only allows to communicate to customers,

but also listen to them and learn from them in a way that companies were not able before, which can also increase market share. Besides, social media is a powerful way to engage with customers as it creates interactivity and dialog, leading to long term relationships with customers and brands. Additionally, social media is extensively utilised for the promotional purposes, which is more cost effective (Jones, 2015).

Although, SMEs acknowledge the importance of SMM and recognise value in social media by increase social media budget (Vertical Response, 2012). However, it is challenging for SMEs to manage additional workload added by social media due to limited human resource and time (DeMers, 2014). The most popular social media channels are the following: Facebook (90 percent), Twitter (70 percent), and LinkedIn (50 percent) (Vertical Response, 2012). However, 85% of SMEs are uncertain about what effective social media tools are (DeMers, 2014; Rishika et al (2012) and therefore employ channels based on assumption and intuition (Vertical Response, 2012).

2.4.3 Performance Measurement and Value Creation

Since, customers are increasingly interacting online, thus companies acknowledged the necessity to measure digital marketing strategy effectiveness/performance (Jarvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). For this purpose, Web analytics (WA) is utilised, which enables collection, measurement, analysis and reporting of a website and the internet data. The major purpose of WA is to identify measures (metrics) based upon organisation user goals and utilise website data to determine the success or failure of those goals. WA also informs future strategy (for this purpose metrics must be aligned with strategy) and aims to enhance UX (Web Analytics Association, 2008). Alignment of DM strategy with WA metrics has demonstrated an improvement in DM performance, which subsequently increased ROMI (Jarvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, (Usability.gov (2018), added that in order to develop an effective WA, it is crucial to primarily create goals and identify KPIs and differentiate them form other granular metrics (Usability.gov., 2018; Chaffey and Patron, 2012). However, many marketing managers remain doubtful towards the utilisation of performance measurement data and instead rely on experience and intuition in

decision making (Germann et al., 2013). Livingston (2017) and Coursera (2018) argued that in order to gain competitive edge over competitors, it is vital to keep marketing decisions data-driven. As companies that do engage in data-driven decision-making, experienced 6% increase in the output of the company.

2.4.4 The Key Metrics to Track the Success of a Website

According to Quarton (2015), there are the following the most important metrics to tract website's performance: website traffic, traffic source, bounce rate, top pages, conversion rate, conversion by traffic source and demographics.

Website traffic indicates the growth of a website and the performance of recent campaign. Traffic sources, where visitors are coming from. Bounce rate refers to visitors leaving a website immediately after visiting, indicating negative UX (Kay, 2018). Top pages are the pages that drive the most traffic. Conversion rate is directly interrelated with profit, which indicates the extent to which page encourages visitors to perform a desired action. However, depending upon company's goals, conversion is not necessary related to sales as it also can be subscriptions, social share and so on (Quarton, 2015). Customer lifetime value LTV estimates the monetary value customer brings to the business during the relationship period (Quarton, 2015; Tutorial Point, 2018; Geisler, 2018). Moreover, demographic information enables businesses to gain an insight of visitors' age and gender (Tutorial Point, 2018).

2.4.5 Performance Measurement and Value Creation in SMEs

Although, SMEs attempt to utilise WA tools, however due to lack of human resources and knowledge they fail to do it effectively (Dlodlo and Dhurup, 2010). Stankovska et al (2016), stated that SMEs' inability for immediate ROI is considered as the major reason they do not adopt new technology. Brenner (2017), noted that SMEs struggle to measure and achieve ROI due to the lack of knowledge about digital marketing advantages, lack of holistic strategy and inability to understand the overall picture. SMEs are focusing merely on one or two aspects of a strategy. SMEs might have capabilities to run a powerful social media campaign, while on the other hand have poor landing page. Consequently, 40 percent of SMEs do not have insights about their ROI (Brenner, 2017).

Subsequently, those SMEs that have merely website and social media accounts are not experiencing desired success with lead generation, customer acquisition and retention. Although, 79 percent attempted to generate leads on their website, however merely 13 percent seen noticeable difference in business performance (Brenner, 2017). Nevertheless, Hegde (2016), argued that those SMEs that are not utilising Google Analytics losing an opportunity to increase sales and get credible information from digital data. Google Analytics can enable SMEs to shift from intuition based to data-driven decision making. The major advantages that SMEs can gain from Google Analytics are the following: effective business goals, which are tied to a key performance indicators (KPIs) and thus can be measured. Key customers can be identified and thus targeting can be personalised (Hegde, 2016).

2.5 The Factors that Inhibit the Adaptation of Digital Marketing Strategy

Since utilisation of DM strategy in SMEs seems to be challenging, it is vital for current study to establish the major factors that inhibit the adaptation. Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) grouped the relevant factors into three groups: owner-managerial and firm-specific, resource-related and environmental factors.

2.5.1 Owner-Managerial and Firm-Specific Factors

Owner plays a central role within small business and has a strong influence over the whole company (Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010). Owner-manager and firm-specific factors play a critical role in determining business strategy of SMEs. Those factors include: motivation, capabilities, experience and background. Owner-managers' personal factors are intertwined with the company such as aspirations, values and attitudes (Delman and Wiklund, 2008). Thus, lack of technical skills and Information Technology (IT) knowledge leads to slower adoption to digital technologies (Chao and Chandra, 2012).

Besides, Alford and Page (2014) identified that that owners' competency and intention to adopt technology greatly depends upon the extent to which competitors and customers are using the internet technology. However, extended range of technologies including: application programme interface, mobile apps, social networks and analytics makes it more challenging for owner-manager to navigate.

Therefore, lack of experience, knowledge and inability to measure ROI, constrains owner-managers from adopting DM (Jones et al., 2012). Alford and Page (2015) added that another determinant is based upon managers' and employees' attitude towards certain DM channels and motivation to utilise these channels, based on perceived benefits. Such benefits can be related to the usefulness and ease of use of certain technology (Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007).

2.5.2 Technology Acceptance Model

Davies et al (1989) developed the technology acceptance model (TAM), which attempts to understand why individuals decide to adopt or reject a certain technology (Wallace and Sheetz, 2014). TAM anticipates and evaluates user behaviour based on three theoretical concepts such as: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and intention. Davies (1989), defined perceived usefulness as:

"The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance."

Thus, employing certain technology an individual should perceive it advantageous. While perceived ease to use was defined as:

"The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort."

In order to be accepted by user, system should be free from difficulty to use (Davies, 1989). Besides, the intention to utilise technology depends upon the stage of pre-implementation and post-implementation.
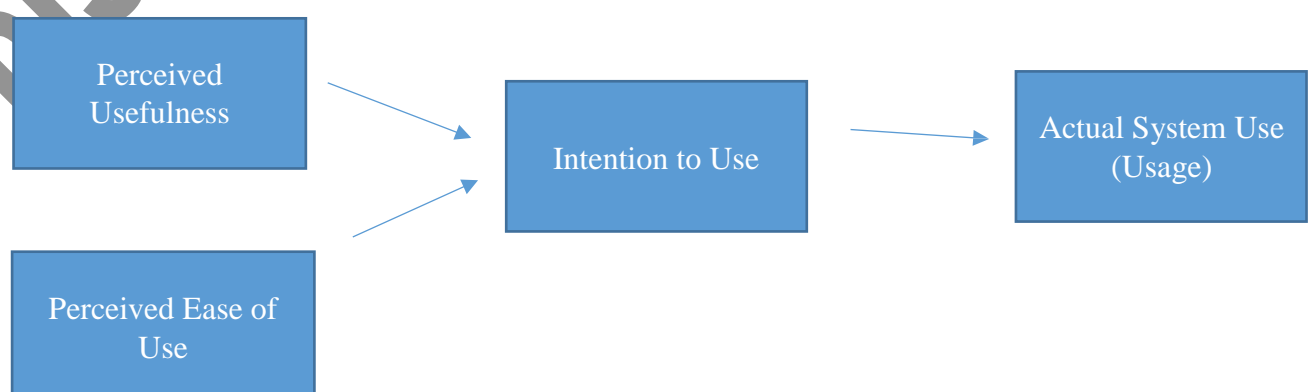
Figure 2.4. Technology Adaptation Model (TAM) - Pre-implementation stage. Source: (Szajan, 1996 ; Davies et al., 1989 ; Davies et al., 1996)

Pre-implementation (Figure 2.4), is when user forms intention based upon the concise introduction to the technology, where both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are depicted as having a direct impact on intention of adaptation of technology.
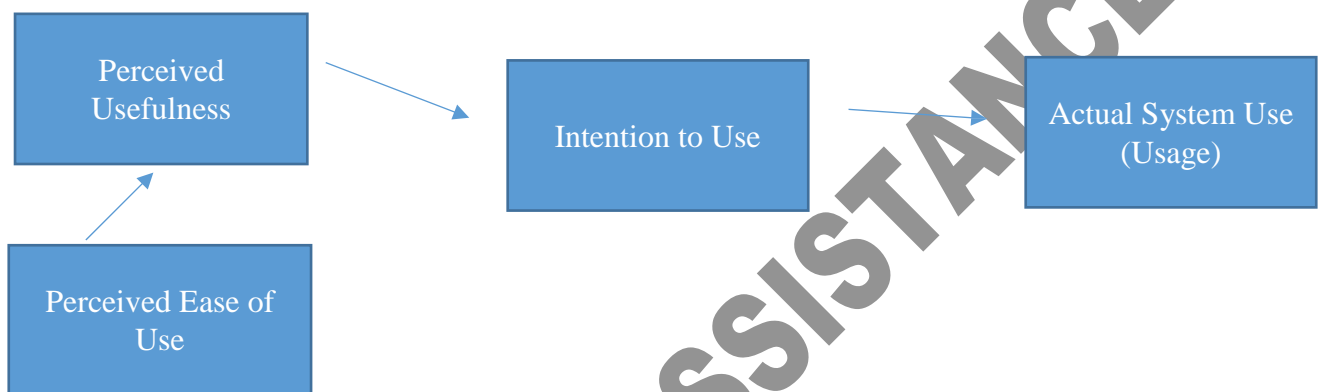
Figure 2.5. Technology Adaptation Model (TAM) - Post-implementation stage. Source: (Szajan, 1996 ; Davies et al., 1989 ; Davies et al., 1996)

In post-implementation (Figure 2.5), user forms intention based upon perceived usefulness of the technology, where ease of use have indirect impact on intention (Szajan, 1996 and Davies et al., 1989).

2.5.3 Resource-Related Factors

Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) referred resource-related factors to financial, human and technological resources in micro firms as it is limited and therefore might inhibit the adoption of digital marketing strategy.

Additionally, Jarvinen et al (2012) asserted that SMEs lack sufficient human resource and time, which is due to one person being responsible for many activities and therefore have limited amount of time that can be dedicated for each task. Besides, employees' lack of skills and expertise is the major barrier of the utilisation of DM channels (Barnes et al., 2012; Street and Cameron, 2007). Consequently, lack of

financial resources lead to inability to invest in employees training (Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010).

Moreover, SMEs do not integrate digital marketing with traditional marketing due to the cost and assumption that it is not compatible with the existing technology (Simmons et al., 2008). However, Stankovska et al. (2016), argued that the technology have become easily accessible and interactive, standardised, cost effective and user-friendly, which significantly diminish the SMEs' barriers of technology adoption, specifically lack of knowledge, skills and financial resources.

2.5.4 Environmental Factors

Environmental (external) factors relate to the factors such as industry and market in which business operates, which affects the need and implementation of digital marketing. Since, in business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts operations and communications greatly vary. Thus, DM adoption will also differ in those firms due to the different communication channels and approaches (Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010). For instance, in B2B personal face-to-face selling might be more effective approach in complex and long-lasting B2B buying processes. (Jarvinen et al., 2012). While in B2C approach would be completely difference, since customers shifted to digital platforms (Jarvinen et al., 2012). Consequently, SMEs' major concern is that in B2B context, the internet-based technology is not always readily accepted by target audience (Stankovska et al., 2016).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology
3.1 Introduction to Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods used in research study, which involves, data collection and data analysis methods (Bryman, 2007). Thus, this chapter will examine the philosophical perspective that current study will employ, analyse and select research methods, select sampling, analyse and select tools and techniques for data analysis. Furthermore, ethical issues, reliability and validity also will be analysed. Lastly, limitations will be acknowledged and evaluated.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Primarily research philosophy refers to belief about the methods that should be utilised to collect and analyse data about a phenomenon (Bryman, 2007). Additionally, research philosophy refers to a system comprising assumptions and beliefs about knowledge development (Research Methodology, 2018). Thus, it is vital to understand research philosophies and differences between them due to the following reasons: it enables to identify and refine research methods, which subsequently allows to gather evidence to answer research question. It also allows researcher to be more time efficient as it enables selection of the most appropriate methodology, thus eliminating unrelated works (Saunders et al., 2016).

Additionally, Saunders et al (2016), argued that at every stage of research, whether consciously or not, researcher makes numerous assumptions. These involve assumptions about the extent to which researcher's values impact the research process (axiological assumptions), about the realities researcher comes across in the research process (ontological assumptions), and about human knowledge (epistemological assumptions). Consequently, in order to establish a credible research philosophy, it is essential to have consistent set of assumptions, which ultimately will underpin the way researcher understands research questions, methodological choices, research strategy, data collection and analysis techniques. Thereby, it will enable to design a coherent research project, where all elements fit together (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Furthermore, Saunders et al (2016), asserted that there two extremes related to philosophical assumptions: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism refers to the facts, thus it is either absolute right or absolute wrong. In objectivism social reality that is being researched is external to social actors (people). Objectivism considers social entities as physical entities of the natural world. While subjectivism (also known as constructivism or interpretivism) asserted that social reality consist of the perceptions and subsequent actions of social actors (people). Thus, social phenomena are in continues revision, which requires researcher to study a situation in details in order to gain insights of how realities are being experienced (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015). Besides, Research Philosophy (2018) asserted that constructivism can be defined as ontological perspective as it states that social

phenomena and their meanings are constantly accomplished by social actors. Thereby, current study falls under epistemological perspective of subjectivism (constructivism) (Research Methodology, 2018). Epistemology examines which information is acceptable and can be collected to form a knowledge about a certain subject (Bryman, 2012). Besides, Gray (2009), added that epistemology takes ontology a step further by analysing existing information and subsequently deciding which categories of information are useful, relevant and acceptable. Thus, it will enable researcher to gain personal perspectives, knowledge and experience about adaptation of DM strategy and subsequently analyse gained data in the most efficient manner.

Nevertheless, there are four main philosophies in business and management: realism, positivism, pragmatism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2016), where each philosophy has its own ontological and epistemological assumptions that has significant impact in methodology (Gray, 2009). However, due to the scope of current study. It will merely focus on the explanation of philosophy, which will be adopted in this study, which is interpretivism philosophy.

Interpretivism is relevant philosophy as its approach is based on naturalistic approach (qualitative) of data collection that includes interviews, which is the method that will be utilised in current study (Gray, 2009). Interpretivism arose as opposition to positivism. The ontological consideration of interpretivism means that social reality is socially constructed and subjective (Saunders et al., 2016). The epistemology consideration of interpretivism asserted that knowledge comes merely from subjective meanings, interpretations, language and instruments (Research Methodology, 2018). Besides, oxiology consideration of interpretivism is that researcher being part of a study cannot be separated, where researcher interacts with phenomena under the study (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015). However, researcher must acknowledge that due to research study being subjective, the findings can be biased (Gray, 2009). Moreover, interpretivism overlaps with constructivism, which argues that the social world could not exist if people would not have knowledge about it. In other words, interpretivism attempts to gain knowledge in particular field of study (Cryer, 2006). Subsequently, interpretivism philosophy will enable researcher to gain individuals' opinions and perspectives, which is vital for current research. As research study seeks to understand marketing experts' opinion

about how they utilise DM strategy and if they utilise it at all. It also seeks to understand their perspective towards barriers of adaptation of DM strategy.

3.3 Primary Data Collection Methods

There are two primary data collection methods available to researchers; quantitative (deductive) and qualitative (inductive) (Bryman and Bell, 2015). According to Saunders et al (2016), the most efficient way to differentiate qualitative research from quantitative research is to distinguish between numerical data (quantitative) and non-numerical data (qualitative). Quantitative research consists of objective measurements and statistical or numerical analysis (Hair et al., 2009). It involves data collection through questionnaires, surveys and polls, which allows to survey a large number of participants (Saunders et al., 2016). Although, quantitative approach might be highly advantageous for some researchers due to its ability generalise to broader population and provide numerical and statistical data. However, the major limitation of quantitative approach is its inability to identify untouched phenomena (Rhodes, 2014). While qualitative approach enables more in-depth description of phenomenon due to more flexible research structure (Saunders et al., 2016). Hence, qualitative data is collected through interviews, open-ended-questions and focus-groups (Collis and Hussey, 2014). The major advantage of qualitative research is its capability to identify untouched phenomena and gain deeper insights of researched problem (Cassell and Symon, 2004). However, qualitative data has number of limitations; due to being small scale, it is more complicated to generalise to larger population, biased, lacking rigor and it might be difficult to determine reliability and validity. However, if it is conducted correctly, it is in-depth, credible, unbiased and rigorous (Anderson, 2010).

Consequently, for the purpose of current study, qualitative approach will be undertaken as it requires collection of more subjective data where researcher can learn perceptions, opinions and point of views of interviewees. It is exploratory research and therefore it will enable to dive deeper into problem, providing more in-depth results (Patton, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Rhodes, 2014).

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. In order to collect data, researcher will conduct interviews with managers of two SMEs. The data will be collected from both convenience and snowball samples, where researcher will interview 3 managers and 1 CEO from marketing and sales departments in Salima Trading Corporation (based in Saudi Arabia) and 1 marketing manager and 1 CEO in SRK International Trading Limited (based in the UK). Both SMEs are distributers in medical healthcare. Participants that were targeted for current study are experts in marketing and possess first-hand knowledge, experience and skills. Thus, they will provide practical and valuable insights into research study.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews, where interviewees answer open-ended questions, which prompt discussion and therefore might open unconsidered areas that can add significant insights (Jamshed, 2014). Hence, it will provide interviewer with an opportunity to explore particular themes or responses further. Thus, in order to achieve optimum results from semi-structured interviews, it will be based on interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions that have to be explored by researcher. Questions are related to themes identified in literature reviews, research question and objectives (Jamshed, 2014). The order of questions may vary, depending upon the flow of the interview, which will allow researcher to add or omit questions during the interview. The researcher will capture data by taking notes on "Word" document on the laptop, which subsequently will be saved on a specifically assigned file (Saunders et al., 2016; Collis and Hussey, 2014).

Besides, depending upon the location and accessibility, interviews will be conducted either via "Skype" or face-to-face. The duration of interviews is expected to be around 30minutes. Furthermore, it is essential to set a positive, friendly and non-threatening environment without any kind of pressure for interviewees. Thus, the interview guide, interview consent form and participant information sheet will be sent to participants one week prior the interview. Thus, participants will familiarise themselves with the research topic and will understand what themes researcher expects to explore (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Keller and Conradin

(2018) asserted that semi-structured interviews are required thorough planning and preparation. Thereby, prior interviews the researcher will undertake the following actions:

- ✓ Identify respondents who possess required knowledge and expertise in marketing.
- ✓ Analyse secondary data and identify key themes (in literature review), which subsequently will determine interview guide questions.
- ✓ Contact participants in advance and explain them the objectives of the interview.
- ✓ Follow up conversation by emails with interview guide, consent form and participant information sheet.
- ✓ Obtain consents.
- ✓ Schedule interviews and agree where and when interviews will be take place.
- ✓ Prepare the file where all transcripts will be saved (Keller and Conradin, 2018).

Consequently, semi-structured interviews are highly advantageous for current study as it gives participants a freedom to express themselves in their own way. However, the major limitations of semi-structured interviews are that that it is time consuming as it requires arranging an appropriate time with interviewees and managing to conduct all interviews within specific time frame. Besides, the risk of researcher's bias during the interview process might compromise the reliability of the research results (Keller and Conradin, 2018; Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4 Secondary Data

Secondary data is existing and published data that was collected for other purposes and by other researchers (Saunders et al., 2016). Secondary data is a prime source of information that has been collected from external sources and that provided themes for further primary research (Saunders et al., 2016).
Although secondary data provides a number of benefits, including avoiding issues in data collection in comparison with primary data, its cost and time efficiency (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). However, the major limitation of secondary data is that it provides insufficient information to answer research question (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Consequently, in order to support primary data and write literature review, secondary data was obtained from available literature such as recent academic journals, well-known books, professional and trusted publications and articles. Thus, it enables researcher to collect data about the research topic from trustworthy authors who possess expertise in DM.

3.5 Pilot Study

The purpose of pilot study is to test a specific research instrument, which is semi-structured interviews (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). Thus, in order to ensure the feasibility of study design, pilot study was performed on two participants who were appointed due to their capability to provide a critical feedback. The pilot study enabled feedback regarding the procedures of the research, relevance of the questioning.

Besides, the fundamental purpose of pilot study was to ensure validity (Arksey and Khight, 2009). It also was crucial to address geographical distance, which means that interviews with participants who are based in Saudi Arabia must be performed via Skype. Consequently, pilot study enables researcher to ensure that research design is equally valid for both face-to-face and "Skype" interviewees.

3.6 Sampling

In selecting sample for current study, researcher employed both convenience and snowball sampling methods, which belong to non-probability sampling that do not involve random selection (HRDAG.org, 2013 and Saunders et al., 2016). Foremost, researcher employed convenience sampling, which also known as availability sampling as researcher had access to primary source of data which is SRK International Trading Limited. It will allow researcher to conduct 2 face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). However, 2 interviews are insufficient to gain reliable results for current study. Therefore, researcher deployed snowball sampling method by getting a referral to Salima Trading Corporation who kindly agreed to participate in current study, which will enable researcher conduct

another 4 interviews (Cooper and Schindler, 2014 and Saunders et al., 2016). In selecting sample it was crucial to target participants who will possess required knowledge about marketing in order to ensure the effectiveness of forthcoming interviews (McLeod, 2014).

Consequently, current sampling (non-probability) entails number of benefits that researcher will gain, which is time and cost efficiency (Research Methodology, 2018; Surbhi, 2016) as well as effortless implementation (Saunders et al., 2016). However, the major limitation is a lack of representativeness of the whole population, thus lower level of generalisation of research findings as well as potential of bias (Saunders et al., 2016). Although, ideally sample size could be larger in order to gain even more reliable data. However, due to limited resources such as time and word limitation (transcripts have to be analysed), 6 interviews will be sufficient for the scope of current study (Research Methodology, 2018).

3.7 Data Analysis Method

There is no certain approach to conduct qualitative data analysis (Wilson, 2010). Consequently, after conducting and transcribing interviews, researcher will undertake three main steps: developing and applying codes, identifying themes and summarising data. Hence, researcher will employ thematic analysis approach, which involves analysing interview transcripts by assigning a code (key word or phrase) to each answer and identifying themes (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010; Research Methodology, 2018). Coding play critical role in qualitative data analysis as it reduces the amount of data by excluding irrelevant data to the research subject (Robson, 2011). Thus, thematic analysis will be undertaken on NVivo software, which will allow coding and subsequent themes identification (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Consequently, transcribed data will be imported into "NVivo 11" software where researcher will undertake the following steps: foremost employ "Auto Coding" feature to gather all responses to each question in one place by using "Heading Style" technique (McNiff, 2016). Secondly, organise data by themes using "Node" system. "Nodes" in NVivo represent themes. Thus, parent nodes will represent key themes to the study while child nodes will represent sub-themes (McNiff, 2016; Cain, 2017).

Subsequently, data will be summarised in Chapter 4, where researcher will link gained results to research objectives and compare interview results against findings in literature review.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity play a critical role in research study as it enables researcher to collect and subsequently analyse trustworthy study results (Lakshmi and Mohideen, 2013). Thus, evaluating data for validity and reliability assesses both credibility and objectivity of the research. Reliability relates to consistency and reproducibility, while validity relates to genuineness and honesty of the research data (Saunders et al., 2016). Consequently, results will be considered reliable merely when repetitiveness and consistency can be achieved. For instance, results will be considered reliable when research continuously gains the same score (Lakshmi and Mohideen, 2013). However, interviews are frequently being criticised for having low reliability (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Noble and Smith, 2018). Due to being exposed to a number of bias including subject or participant bias and/or researcher's bias (Robson et al., 2011). Alshenqeeti (2014), argued that interview reliability is "illusive" and "no study reports actual reliability data".

Besides, validity can be measured by extent to which the findings are accurate representation of the phenomena they are projected to represent. In other words, measures what supposed to measure. For instance, current research will be valid if it will answer research question and objectives (Lakshmi and Mohideen, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, validity can be achieved by ensuring that interview guide reflects research question and objectives. Besides, as aforementioned, current study utilised pilot study that ensured that participants understand questions clearly, which significantly contributes toward face validity (meaning that questions are sensible) (Saunders et.al, 2016; Lakshmi and Mohideen, 2013).

However, as aforementioned the limitation of qualitative interview is that research can be influenced by researcher's bias and idiosyncrasies. Besides, rigour is more difficult to demonstrate, assess and maintain when undertaking qualitative research (Noble and Smith, 2018; Creswell, 2009; Anderson, 2010). Consequently, in order to ensure reliability and validity of interviews, the researcher will ensure the following:

- ✓ Avoid asking leading questions (merely additional questions can be asked from cues) (Alshenqeeti, 2014).
- ✓ Conduct pilot study (Alshenqeeti, 2014).
- ✓ Do not interrupt respondents and give them chance to clarify and sum up points they are making (Alshenqeeti, 2014).
- ✓ Keep meticulous record of transcripts. In case when researcher does not understand a certain comment made by respondent, the researcher will kindly ask to repeat in order to ensure accuracy and credibility (Noble and Smith, 2018).

3.9 Ethics

Interviews are considered as interruption into participants' personal or professional lives where they have to allocate their time and answer question based on their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge; thus high standards of ethical considerations must be considered. Hence, access to each SME was granted to the researcher in person and via telephone/Skype (Cohen et al., 2007; Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Participants also were informed about the research topic (Appendix No2) and will be given informed consent forms (Appendix No3) prior interviews, where participants will be assured about anonymity and confidentiality as well as voluntarily nature of the participation and that they have right to withdraw at any point. Participants also were informed about the data collection. All of the data will be collected, processed and stored in accordance with general data protection regulation (GDPR) 2018. GDPR is a regulation in European Union law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) (GOV.UK, 2018). For more details of how researcher will ensure compliance with DGPR and ethical considerations, please refer to Appendix No2 and No3.

Consequently, to avoid ethical issues, researcher must avoid misleading and false subsequent reporting of the research findings and remain objective. Thereby, ensure that questions are answered fully, leaving no room for assumptions and subjectivity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

3.10 Research Limitations

The field of DM is broad and continuously evolving (Damian, 2014; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Thus, it is difficult, if not impossible to cover all of the elements of DM in a single theses. Consequently, the scope of this study is limited to the most effective and relevant to SMEs DM channels, including company website, social media platforms and performance measurability. As it was identified that SMEs' uilise the following channels: e-mail web-site (Statista, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2008; Taylor and Murphy, 2004) and social media (Stankovska et al., 2016). However, e-mail is eliminated from current study as researcher deemed evaluation of measurability in SMEs is more important. As it was identified that inability to measure ROI is one of the major reasons for not adapting DM (Jones et al., 2012). Consequently, in order to achieve research objectives it is vital to explore the adaptation of those channels further in primary research.

Furthermore, as aforementioned current study has a possibility of researcher's bias. As a result, it is more challenging to achieve reliability of current study, which is a major limitation of qualitative study (Noble and Smith, 2010). Alshenqeeti (2014), argued that interview reliability is "illusive" and "no study reports actual reliability data". However, if data is interpreted correctly and in balanced manner, researcher's bias is not necessary a limitation of a study (Simons, 2009).

Nevertheless, sample cannot be generalised and cannot represent the entire population, which is due to fewer participants (Saunders et al., 2016). However, the major focus of current study is not generalisation, but gain an in-depth knowledge of phenomenon.

3.11 Conclusion to Methodology

To conclude, for current study qualitative methodology will be employed. It also falls under epistemological perspective of subjectivism (constructivism) (Research Methodology, 2018), and interpretivism philosophy was determined to be the most relevant for qualitative study (Gray, 2009). Subsequently, primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. In order to analyse collected data, NVivo software will be deployed (NVivo, 2018). In terms of reliability and validity; validity will be achieved without major obstacles (Lakshmi and Mohideen, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). While reliability is one of the limitations of current study.

Lastly, number of limitations of current study also were analysed.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis
4.1 introduction

The purpose of current chapter is to present, discuss and analyse research finding derived from the interviews. Thus, findings will be presented in terms emerged themes, which subsequently will be compared against literature review. The interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 5. Table with themes in Appendix 6.

4.2 Research Findings, Analysis and Discussion

The interview guide consisted of 4 main parts which reflect research objectives, where each part consisted of a number of sub-questions, which allowed to understand participant's perceptions and opinions. In order to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality, participants were assigned codes.

4.2.1 The importance of digital marketing strategy/channel strategy

In the first interview part it was vital to understand participants' perception and understanding of digital marketing in order to evaluate how knowledge and understanding impacts on subsequent implementation. All 6 participants continuously referred to DM strategy as to vital aspect in today's age as INT14 asserted:

"*Recent years digital marketing has a vital role, I hope in future all sale and*

marketing will be digitalised"

The results clearly demonstrate that companies acknowledge the importance of integration of digital marketing strategy due to its vital role in today's world. Indeed as argued by Porter (2001), digitalisation increased the importance of strategy due to the rapidly evolving digital media and technology. Nevertheless, it is important to note that respondents encourage the usage of DM after acknowledging the importance, saying that businesses should utilised digital marketing strategy.

4.2.2 Importance of implementation

When participants were asked to describe the importance of implementing DM in SMEs and integrating it with traditional marketing. Interesting sub-themes emerged: reach customers (4), improve relationship (3), promote products (1), and still in the beginning (1). 3 participants several times pointed out that DM strategy is importance as it enables reaching customers, where INT15 stated:

"…very important to connect the clients through digital marketing to reach each corner of the country and each requirements of the clients"

Alongside, 2 participants said that DM strategy can assist in enhancing customer relationship, where INT15 asserted that:

"Digital marketing will help us to become closer to our clients and also more transparent to explain our products through social media and web links."

It can be speculated as a recognition of a need to be transparent, which supports O'Brien (2018) statement that transparency is vital due to rapidly evolving customer expectations and requirement and market conditions. It also correlates with Damian (2014) statement that due to interactive approach, DM allows reaching wider audience, while allowing a precise targeting of specific segment. As Kotler et al (2009) and Newman (2015) argued that since consumers are more demanding, discerning and acknowledgeable. Times of "push" marketing have passed (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016 and Solomon, 2015), which seems to be appreciated by

SMEs when participant INT15 argued that DM can help in becoming more transparent with customers.

Similarly, INT17 asserted that digital marketing strategy/channel strategy is a method to promote their products, which supports literature as Reijonen (2010) argued that SMEs are sales driven and therefore their major aim of their marketing is to create awareness. Although participants acknowledged the importance, it is also essential note that INT15 stated that digital marketing is in the beginning phase. Thus, it is consistent with literature as Bordonaba-Juste et al (2012); Davies (2014) and Reijonen (2010) asserted that SMEs are in early stage of adoption of technology and therefore struggle to maintain a pace with rapidly evolving technological developments.

4.2.3 The effectiveness of DM strategy

Participants were asked to describe effectiveness of digital marketing strategy. Interesting themes emerged: easy and fast (8), opportunity (3), accuracy of reporting (1), and less expensive (1). It indicates that companies are well aware about opportunities and benefits of digital marketing strategy, which clearly contradicts the findings in literature where Stankovska et al (2016) argued that SMEs do not utilise DM channels and tools to its full potential, which is due to perception that DM is lacking of strategic importance (Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007), which is due to lack of understanding of how technology can add value and what are the benefits (Simmons et al., 2008; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011). However, 5 participants stated that digital marketing is easy and time effective, INT14, INT17 and LOC25 asserted that digital marketing is more convenient method of marketing as it saves time and other resources. Besides, Participant LOC24 recognised an opportunity by saying:

"*While digital marketing allows to show products on larger scale in their convenient time*"

It could be interpreted as recognition of specific benefits of digital marketing and seeing the opportunity to grow business globally while being available to customers on their demand. Similarly, IN15 said that digital marketing would reduce personal

visits, which is currently the main marketing activity to promote and sell products. Nevertheless, 2 participants see potential in digital marketing, LOC24 think that digital channel have potential to improve and ease their marketing practices. Similarly, IN17 thinks that by adapting right digital marketing strategy it is more profitable as it can enable to create new networks and therefore increase sales, especially for small company like theirs. Besides, case companies acknowledged the fact that digital channels are increasing in popularity amongst customers. Moreover, INT14 asserted that digital marketing is highly effective since it is less expensive and more accurate in reporting (documents do not get lost).

Although it contradicts with literature review in terms of SMEs' perception of benefits of digital marketing/channel strategy. However, the results further indicate clear understanding of value that DM strategy can add to the business like theirs, which is surprising and unexpected. However, Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) argued that adaptation of digital channels by SMEs depends upon the perceived benefits, which can be related to usefulness, personal notion of importance and tangible benefits that company has identified in its organisation. Thus, it is clear from the above results, that companies have a strong perception about benefits and usefulness. In terms of tangible benefits, participants expressed it in terms of opportunity to growth globally and increase profit, save costs, save resources such as time and increase efficiency by reducing physical visits to clinics. Thereby, gained results make it very interesting as SMEs recognise the most common benefits that digital marketing possess, which correlate with literature. The benefits of digital marketing channels to SMEs were explained by Stankovska et al (2016) stating that by adopting digital marketing channels into SMEs' marketing activities, it will ultimately lead to increased marketing share and revenue. Besides, since companies mentioned that digital marketing is the most effective, easy and time effective way. Although, case companies' perceive digital marketing as important, however it is vital to understand whether they re-shaped their marketing practices accordingly.

4.2.4 Digital Marketing Strategy Implementation

Researcher asked participants how they plan their marketing activities and if they have a strategy. As Hill (2001) and Parrot et al (2010) noted that SMEs do not apply

marketing theory to their marketing practices as typical SMEs' marketing activities are spontaneous, reactive and informal. However, interesting themes arose: do utilise (3), have targets (1), have vision (1), and do not utilise (1). This shows that half of the companies have strategy and half do not have. As vision and target are equivalent to not having a strategy as it is merely small part of a strategy or a plan. INT16 stated that company has a vision that they want to accomplish in forthcoming years, which however is neither plan not strategy as it is something that they are aiming to achieve in a future but current marketing functioning without plan, which confirms above literature. INT14 stated that they have targets that they have to achieve while also stating that they know what they have to do. It correlates with Alford and Page (2014) statement that SMEs undertake "doing" approach rather than formal planning. On the other hand other companies said that they have a strategy, however did not provide any details or specifics of their planning activities, instead they merely said that they plan in advance their marketing. And merely INT15 stated that:

"*Our strategy to reach our clients frequently through phones, emails and social media and also sometimes to visit them personally*"

Consequently, the results partially confirm and partially contradict literature stating that SMEs do not have both, set objectives and strategy (The Guardian, 2014). Alternatively, SMEs tend to utilise the most cost effective channels in order to promote their products and services (The Guardian, 2014), which clearly demonstrated in statement made by INT15.

4.2.5 Digital Marketing Channels utilised

Participants were asked what channels they use to interact with customers online and promote their products. These themes emerged: e-mail (6), social media (6) and website (6). This is indeed in accordance to Stankovska et al (2016); Statista (2015); Eriksson et al (2008); Taylor and Murphy (2004) stating that SMEs' perception of digital marketing is limited to company's promotion via e-mail, on web-site and social media. However, Brenner (2017) added that those SMEs that have merely website

and social media accounts are not experiencing desired success with lead generation, customer acquisition and retention.

4.2.6 Purpose of a company website

Participants were asked about the purpose of company's website. Interesting sub-themes emerged: provide information (8 references) and promote products (5 references). 5 out of 6 participants stated that the main purpose of their website is to provide information, where INT17 asserted that:

"….our website consist of all the information of our products and services. The main purpose of our website is to make accessible for our clients to reach out our latest products and fulfil their requirements whenever possible"

Thus, this indicates that companies' websites hold informative nature rather than commercial or transactional. Similarly, LOC25 said that the purpose of their website is to refer customers to product catalogues to get more information if required. Besides, 3 out 6 participants said that the main purpose of their website is to promote their products. This indicates, that website is merely utilised for marketing purposes, which was highlighted by Reijonen (2010) that SMEs are sales driven and therefore their major aim of their marketing is to create awareness.

However, it is crucial to note that none of the respondents mentioned that they sell products on their websites, which indicates that companies are not using website effectively and might not be fully exploiting the potential of their websites (allowing people to complete transaction or submit order), which is in line with Stankovska et al (2016) stating that SMEs do not utilise digital marketing channels to its full potential. And therefore as Kim et al (2011) argued that SMEs do not reap benefits from increased web-traffic and ultimately increased conversion rate. It seems that companies do not convert any customers as it is not the purpose of their websites.

4.2.7 Quality of case companies' websites

In order to gain participants' perception of their company's website quality; they were

asked to describe it. Researcher gained some interesting and surprising insights. The following themes emerged: good quality (3) and under development (3). 3 participants stated that their website is a good quality because it provides full information that customer might require, as LOC25 asserted that:

"….our website is good quality as it provides all the information, customer might need for product or contact details"

This results could be portrayed as a little doubtful, since it is participants' perception which although must be respected. However, for the purpose of this study, it is important to gain rational results. Thus, it is assumed that website is not as good quality as participants perceiving it. It is due to the website's informative nature, and participants' responses where they refer to the good quality as to the ability to provide necessary information about products, which however does not determine high quality of a website. As Karibian (2013) stated that SMEs' websites lack dynamic and relevant content, professional design and layout including limited amount of pages leading to low user-friendliness. However, other 3 participants stated that website still requires improvement or is under development as INT15 asserted:

"We have our website, but it is still in the beginning stage"

This results show that companies admit their websites being low quality. This indeed in accordance to Karibian (2013) and Business Wales (2016) stating that small businesses' websites do not fit purpose of today's digital age. Due to micro-businesses' limited abilities and skills to build and maintain high quality website. As a result, they cannot perform essential marketing tasks, such as publishing customer testimonials or posting photos. Thus, results gained in previous sub-section about the informative nature of websites, indicate that it is not fully optimised. Thus, small businesses deliver low UX and customer satisfaction. Besides, websites rank low in SERP, and even if they do attract visitors, they are less likely to convert (Karibian, 2013).

4.2.8 Purpose of social media accounts

It was identified that all 6 participants have social media accounts (work related), which is in line with literature by (Walker, 2017; Jones, 2015 and Vertical Response, 2012). Subsequently, participants were asked about the purpose of their social media accounts. Interesting themes were identified: communication (7), easy and fast connection (4), sales opportunity (3), market updates (2) and promote (2). Consequently, 5 out of 6 participants stated that the main purpose of their social media is communication. As Participant LOC 25 asserted:

"To be closer to our customers and be more transparent with them as much as we can. Also to get in touch with our manufacturers and suppliers and possibly find new customers or even suppliers. Now everyone is on social media, and if someone wants to contact us via their social media accounts, we have to be there and be open for dialog…."

This demonstrates that companies perceive social media as an effective tool to actively engage and initiate dialog with customers and brands. The results are in line with the primarily purpose of social media, which is two-way communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kannan and Hongshuang, 2017; Walker, 2017 and Stankovska et al., 2016). It is in line with Jones (2015) statement that social media is an important channel for companies as it enables communication with customers, listen and learn from them in a way that companies were not able before, which can also increase market share. Similarly, 3 participants stated that ease and time effectiveness of social media encourages them to utilise social media, which confirms literature by Walker (2017). Besides, sales-centric nature of SMEs was clearly evident from the results where customers said that the main purpose of social media is sales opportunity (Reijonen, 2010). Another pattern was identified when participant stated that the main purpose of their social media is to promote products, which also reflects nature of SMEs, to create awareness (Reijonen, 2010). Findings also correlate with literature where Jones et al (2015) asserted that the most important for business to utilise social media is that promotion on social media is less expensive with the potential to target user more effectively. Lastly, participants stated

that they use social media to keep up to date, which is in line with Jones (2015) stating that social media provide an opportunity to companies to learn about customers effectively and easily.

4.2.9 The most important channel mix

Participants were asked what digital channels they consider the most important to use. All 6 participants stated that email is the most important channel while 3 participants stated both: email and social media. Merely 1 participant stated both email and website. The results demonstrate that email is regarded as the most important channel, which is primarily used to communicate internally and externally with customers. As INT14 stated:

"I think it is email, because we communicate to clients vial email. We can also update our clients on new products"

The results indicate that email is used for multiple purposes including: keeping customers up-to date with new products (product promotion), arrange meetings, it is also regarded as secure method for the official communication. The results are in line with Eriksson et al. (2008) stating that e-mail is used for several marketing purposes such as: promotion, sharing information, maintaining and building customer relationship. Furthermore, 3 participants stated that social media is the most important channel as it is part of each person's live and is checked frequently, which makes communication more effective. Participant INT17 said that social media is convenient way to arrange meeting, while Participant LOC25 said that they use social media to show their availability, promote products and communicate as it is much more time effective. The results correlate with Walker (2017) stating that communication is the key aspect of social media as it allows to communicate effectively in real time as well as keep customers up-to date on recent offers and products updates as well as it is time effective. Since merely one participant stated that website and email is important mixture for their company. It is assumed that if companies do not perceive website as important channel they less likely to utilise it to its full potential and therefore this indicates missed opportunity to attract more prospects. As Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) argued that if company cannot be

found on Google it would mean that it does not exist. Thus, it can be speculated that companies do not employ multichannel strategy as they merely stated utilising email and social media as the main communication and promotion source.

4.2.10 Performance Measurability

Participants were asked if they use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of their online presence. 5 out of 6 participants said they do not track performance, while 1 participant said that they do track performance. Although, results clearly show that companies do not track performance, which is in line with Germann et al (2013) stating that many marketing managers remain doubtful towards the utilisation of performance measurement data and instead rely on experience and intuition in decision making. However, the results also demonstrate an appetite to implement performance measurement tools where LOC24, IN15 demonstrated aspiration by saying that they should begin to measure performance and that it would be useful. However, such predisposition hindered by lack of knowledge and skills about what tools to utilise and how as well as time (Alford and Page, 2015). Participants asserted that IT department should implement it as stated INT16:

"No it would be useful to trach effectiveness, but our computer science department did not implement it yet"

Merely one participant INT17 said that they tract performance but could not give much details since IT department is responsible for measurability and are using such tool as Google Analytics. However, it can be speculated that although SMEs attempt to utilise Web Analytics, however due to lack of human resources and knowledge they fail to do it effectively (Dlodlo and Dhurup, 2010), which seems to be trustworthy statement as both companies are micro and most likely to have lack of such resources as time and employees. Therefore, case companies losing an opportunity to gain competitive edge over competitors (Livingston, 2017), increase sales and get profitable information from digital data as stated by (While Hegde, 2016).

Subsequently, participants were asked if they know their goals and KPIs for their marketing activities. 3 out of 6 participants use KPIs to measure customer

satisfaction and customer value. While other 3 participants said they do not use KPIs. However, in order to develop an effective Web Analytics, it is crucial to primarily create goals and identify KPIs (Usability.gov (2018).

4.2.11 Measuring Return on Investment (ROI)

Participants were asked how they measure ROI from their marketing effort. It was identified that none of the participants measure ROI. Most of the participants had no idea, where IN15, INT16 clearly stated that they "have no idea", while INT17 and LOC25 stated that IT department is responsible for measuring ROI. Thus results can be interpreted, as participants do not know how to measure it and perhaps do not know that it is even possible to measure ROI. The results are in line with Brenner (2017) stating that significant amount (40%) of SMEs do not have insights of their ROI. Consequently, SMEs' inability for immediate ROI is considered as the major reason they do not adopt new technology (Stankovska et al., 2016).

4.2.12 Barriers to digital marketing strategy/channel strategy adaptation

Participants were asked what stops them from utilising digital tools and channels and why. Interesting themes emerged: lack of knowledge (3), lack of understanding of importance (2), lack of human resources (1) and customers (1).

4.2.12.1 Lack of knowledge

3 participants asserted that they do not implement digital marketing strategy due to lack of knowledge. INT14 said that many is unknown about digital marketing and therefore they continue to use traditional marketing. LOC25 said:

"We do use digital channels, but to use more channels it is require time and knowledge to implement it."

The results are clear that companies do not utilise digital channels and tools due to the lack of knowledge and time. The findings are in line with previous research

Jarvinen et al (2012); Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010); Simmons et al (2008); Barnes et al (2012); Street and Cameron (2007); Brenner (2017), stating that knowledge and time are great barriers to adopting marketing technologies.

4.2.12.2 Lack of understanding of importance

INT17 said that they merely utilise channels and tools with the greatest value to their business in terms of increasing revenue. Thus, since companies' utilisation of channels is limited it can be assumed that they perceive currently utilised channels as the most profitable. As it was asserted by LOC25:

"I think we are happy with channels we use at the moment and there is no demand to use more channels".

It can be speculated that participants do not perceive digital marketing strategy being important and having a capability to add value to their business. The results are consistent with Bharadwaj and Soni (2007) stating that SMEs perceive digital marketing is lacking of strategic importance, which is due to lack of understanding of how technology can add value, what are the benefits (Simmons et al., 2008; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011). It is in line with TAM model (Davies 1989) stating that technology adaptation greatly depends with perceived usefulness.

4.2.13.3 Lack of human resources

Participant LOC24 said that they do not have resources such as IT department, which can be articulated as lack of human resources. It is in line with Jarvinen et al (2012) stating that SMEs lack sufficient human resource and time, which is due to one person being responsible for many activities and therefore have limited amount of time that can be dedicated for each task.

4.2.13.4 Customers

Additionally, INT15 asserted that nothing is stopping them, however:

"Only thing we have to check that our clients does not mind if contacted through digital channels"

The results demonstrate that companies' environment in which they are trading plays a critical role. It is in line with Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) stating that in B2B context personal face-to-face selling might be more effective approach in complex and long-lasting B2B buying processes, while digital channels play supportive role by creating synergy in attaining sales objectives (Jarvinen et al., 2012). Consequently, SMEs' major concern is that in B2B context, the internet-based technology is not always readily accepted by target audience (Stankovska et al., 2016). Nevertheless, results do not confirm neither lack of financial resources Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) nor assumption that technology is not compatible with the existing technology Simmons et al (2008) to be barriers to adaptation.

4.2.13 Responsibility for digital marketing strategy adaptation

Participants were asked who is responsible for digital marketing strategy formation. The answers were rather mixed where following themes emerged: director or owner (3), IT department (2), marketing department (1) and head of department (1). 3 participants stated that director is responsible for strategy formation, LOC24 specified that:

"The director of the company as it requires time, money and additional resources"

The results show that respondents perceive director as the main person who is responsible for developing digital marketing strategy. Indeed, as argued by Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010), owner plays a central role within small business and has a strong influence over the whole company. In micro-firms owner is usually a director. This is in line with Delman and Wiklund (2008) owner-manager determines business strategy of SMEs, which depends upon the following factors: motivation, capabilities, experience and background. INT15 and LOC25 asserted that marketing department and head of department. It confirms Alford and Page (2015) stating that employees' attitude toward a certain channel and its adaptation

plays a critical role. 2 participants asserted that IT department is responsible for digital marketing formation, as INT16:

"It has to be approved and implemented by IT department"

The findings show that respondents rely on IT department for adaptation of digital marketing strategy thinking that technology adaptation belongs to them. This trend was identified by researcher throughout the interviews. Thus, such perception can be considered as one of the major barriers of digital marketing adaptation.

4.3 Summary of this chapter

To summarise, current research brought insightful perceptions and opinions in regards to barriers to adaptation of digital marketing strategy in SMEs. Foremost, it was identified that companies have a strong understanding and knowledge of the effectiveness and importance of digital marketing strategy, which contradict literature by (Stankovska et al., 2016; Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007). Although SMEs' "doing" approach rather than planning and developing strategies was confirmed (Alford and Page, 2014).

Secondly, the study confirm the assumption that SMEs do not utilise digital marketing channels and tools to its full potential (Stankovska et al., 2016; Gilmore). Instead, literature by Stankovska et al (2016); Statista (2015); Eriksson et al (2008); Taylor and Murphy (2004) stating SMEs' perception of digital marketing is limited to company's promotion via e-mail, on web-site and social media, was confirmed.

Thirdly, it was identified that participants do not track their online presence effectiveness or performance, which is indeed in accordance with findings by Germann et al (2013). However, companies expressed a strong appetite to implement performance measurement tools. Fourthly, current study, in common with Brenner (2017) highlighted that SMEs do not have insights of their ROI, which is considered as the major reason they do not adopt new technology (Stankovska et al., 2016). Fifthly, this study identified the following barriers to DM strategy adaptation; lack of knowledge, lack of technical skills, lack of perceived importance, lack of human resources and environmental factors. The findings are in line with

literature (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki, 2010; Simmons et al., 2008; Barnes et al., 2012; Street and Cameron, 2007; Brenner, 2017; Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011; Stankovska et al., 2016). However, results did not confirm neither lack of financial resources Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) nor assumption that technology is not compatible with the existing technology (Simmons et al., 2008). Lastly, essential pattern emerged, where participants continually stated that IT department is responsible for development and implementation of digital marketing strategy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of current chapter is to summarise the research study results from previous chapter and compare it against literature review. Subsequently, in order to draw a conclusion, each objective of the current research will be will be individually revisited and analysed to establish key points and conclude whether or not each objective was achieved. Furthermore, a concise sub-section will present recommendations to SMEs. Finally, study limitations will be addressed alongside with suggestions for further research. In overall the research study was successful in terms of achievement of all research objectives.

5.2 Research Objectives: Summary of findings and conclusions

Objective 1: Identify the knowledge and understanding of importance of digital marketing strategy/channel strategy adaptation in SMEs.

It was identified that companies have a strong understanding and knowledge of the importance and effectiveness of digital marketing strategy. The findings do not support Stankovska et al (2016), stating that SMEs do not adopt digital technologies due to perception that DM is lacking of strategic importance (Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007), which is due to lack of understanding of how technology can add value and what are the benefits (Simmons et al., 2008; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011). On the contrary, companies perceive DM strategy advantageous, beneficial and vital in today's digitalised environment (Porter, 2001), associating it with opportunity to

engage with their customers at more deeper and interactive level, promote products, ability to reach wider audience and improve customer relationship. This indeed, demonstrate the acknowledgement of change in customer behaviour and business landscape that was brought by digitalisation and recognised need to adapt as it was argued by (Damian, 2014; Kotler et al., 2009; Newman, 2015; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Solomon, 2015).

The researcher also found that despite SMEs' sales driven nature and therefore need to raise awareness (Reijonen, 2010). Companies associate digital marketing strategy not only with ability to reach wider audience and promote products as it has been explained by (Damian, 2014), but most of all emphasising an opportunity to build and improve relationship with customers. Indeed, digital marketing strategy concerned with establishing customer relationship, which can be enhanced by utilising CRM systems and improving UX (Thomas and Housden, 2011; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Consequently, case companies acknowledged the effectiveness of DM strategy, perceiving it as convenient and time effective communication tool and asserted that it can save time but also other resources such as cost, which SMEs tend to lack. Interviewees also perceive digital marketing strategy as an opportunity to grow business globally as well as opportunity to enhance effectiveness of marketing practices by reducing traditional marketing activities. It is also critical to note that respondents interconnected adaptation of right channel strategy with increased sales and enhanced networks. The findings are in line with Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) stating that adaptation of digital channels by SMEs depends upon the perceived benefits, which can be related to usefulness, personal notion of importance and tangible benefits that company has identified in its organisation. It is also indeed in accordance with Stankovska et al (2016) stating that by adopting digital marketing channels into SMEs' marketing activities, it will ultimately lead to increased marketing share and revenue, which seems to be recognised by case companies.

To conclude, despite the contradiction with literature in terms of how small companies perceive digital marketing strategy. The findings clearly demonstrate the recognition and acknowledgement of values that DM strategy can add to the small businesses and importance of digital marketing strategy in today's digitalised

environment. However, knowledge of importance does not have a positive impact on digital marketing strategy adaptation, which will be discussed in Objective 4.

Objective 2: Identify what digital channels SMEs utilise for their marketing activities and for what purposes.

It was identified that companies utilise the following digital channels: e-mail, social media and website, which confirms literature by (Stankovska et al., 2016; Statista, 2015; Eriksson et al., 2008; Taylor and Murphy, 2004). However, none of these channels were utilised actively, which is perhaps due to unfamiliarity with different channels and how they are used. The major purpose of all utilised channels is to promote products and communicate with customers. This is in line with Stankovska et al (2016) and Gilmore et al (2007) stating that SMEs do not utilise digital marketing channels and tools to its full potential. It also confirms literature by Reijonen (2010), stating that SMEs are sales driven and therefore their marketing purpose is to create awareness. Although, despite being sales driven, companies did not mention selling products via identified channels.

Email is regarded as the most important channel, which is used for multiple purposed; primarily it is perceived as an effective and secure way to communicate internally and externally as well as manage official arrangements and documentation. It is also considered an effective way to keep customers up-to date with new products. Indeed it is in line with Eriksson et al. (2008) stating that e-mail is used for several marketing purposes such as: promotion, sharing information, maintaining and building customer relationship.

Social media is regarded as second important channel as participants indicated that in today's digitalised world it is most effective way to connect with customers and receive a rapid reply (easy and time effective), since every person is connected through social media channels, which also makes is an effective platform for product promotion. Thus, companies perceive social media as an effective tool to actively engage and initiate dialog with customers and brands. The results are in line with the primarily purpose of social media, which is two-way communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kannan and Hongshuang, 2017; Walker, 2017 and Stankovska et al., 2016). It also confirms literature by Walker (2017) stating that communication is the

key aspect of social media as it allows to communicate effectively in real time as well as keep customers up-to date on recent offers and products updates as well as it is time effective. Findings are also in line with Jones et al (2015) stating that social media is a powerful way to engage customers as it creates interactivity and dialog, leading to long term relationships with customers and brands.

Furthermore, the most concerning findings emerged about companies' website and participants' perceptions of those websites. It was identified that interviewees regard websites as least important channel. Additionally, it was identified that purpose of companies' website is to promote firm and its offerings while providing necessary information, which means that websites hold exceptionally informative nature, which is highly concerning. Although SMEs are sales driven Reijonen (2010), they do not attempt to sell products via their website. This indicates that companies are not using website effectively and might not be fully exploiting the potential of their websites, thus missing an opportunity to convert visitors to paying customers. Further, it was identified that companies' websites are low quality due to the informative nature. Although, half of the respondents stated that websites are good quality, researcher deemed appropriate to doubt respondents' perception as they refer good quality to websites' ability to provide information about products. Other half of respondents stated that websites are under development. This, is indeed in accordance with Karibian (2013) and Business Wales (2016) stating that SMEs websites lack dynamic and relevant content, professional design and layout including limited amount of pages leading to low user-friendliness. Therefore, small businesses' websites do not fit purpose of today's digital age due to their limited abilities and skills to build and maintain high quality website. Case companies also lose an opportunity to grow as they cannot be found on SERP as websites are not optimised (Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

To conclude, the literature was confirmed that SMEs do not utilise channels to its full potential and therefore they are not exploiting the opportunities that those channels can bring. Case companies utilise the most essential channels in digitalised environment. However, they use merely basic functions, companies do not utilise social media tools to analyse customer behaviours, they do not utilise CRM for email automation and personalisation. And the most importantly, although literature was

confirmed that SMEs website are low quality and do not utilise it for the right purpose, which is attract visitors, make them stick to the website by providing excellent UX and ultimately make them convert, while utilising Web Analytics to track behaviour. Thus, it is the most concerning finding as companies lose opportunities and fail to achieve the major goal of online presence.

Objective 3: Identify how SMEs measure their online marketing performance.

It was identified that companies do not track their online presence performance, which is indeed in accordance with Germann et al (2013). Although, companies expressed a strong appetite to implement performance measurement tools. However, such predisposition hindered by lack of knowledge and skills about what tools to utilise and how as well as lack of time (Alford and Page, 2015). Although companies recognise a need of performance measurement implementation (Chaffey and Patron, 2012). The findings confirm literature by Germann et al (2013) stating that many marketing managers remain doubtful towards the utilisation of performance measurement data and instead rely on experience and intuition in decision making. Additionally, it was identified that companies do not have insights of the ROI (Brenner, 2017). Most of the participants did not know what ROI is and how to measure it. Besides, interviewees sated that IT department is responsible for measuring ROI. Although it is in line with Stankovska et al (2016), stating that inability to measure ROI is the major reason why SMEs not adapt technology for marketing. However, in order to fully confirm this statement, further research would require.

To conclude, despite having a strong appetite to employ measurability tools. Companies do not possess required knowledge and skills as well as they have no time to learn it and do not know how to implement it. As a result, companies do not measure online presence performance as well as do not measure ROI due to lack of knowledge.

Objective 4: Explore the factors that inhibit the adaptation of digital marketing strategy/ channel strategy of SMEs.

There are the following factors that inhibit the adaptation of digital marketing strategy/ channel strategy in case companies: lack of knowledge, lack of understanding of the importance, lack of human resources and environmental factors. Lack of knowledge is the major barrier to adaptation, which is in line with Jarvinen et al (2012); Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010); Simmons et al (2008); Barnes et al (2012); Street and Cameron (2007); Brenner (2017), stating that knowledge and time are great barriers to adopting marketing technologies. Lack of understanding of the importance relate to the participants' satisfaction with currently utilised channels and not recognising the need to implement new channels. Indeed as it was identified by (Simmons et al., 2008; Sellitto et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2011; Bharadwaj and Soni, 2007). Additionally, it was identified that companies' environment in which they are trading plays a critical role. This is in line with Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) stating that B2B and B2C contexts operations and communications greatly vary. While in B2B face-to-face selling might be the most effective, in B2C on the other hand approach would be completely difference, since customers shifted to digital platforms (Jarvinen et al., 2012). Thus, SMEs' major concern is that in B2B context, the internet-based technology is not always readily accepted by target audience (Stankovska et al., 2016).

Consequently, the findings are in line with literature by Jarvinen et al (2012); Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010); Simmons et al (2008); Barnes et al (2012); Street and Cameron (2007) and Brenner (2017), stating that SMEs do not harness benefits of technological advancements due to several reasons and barriers, including; lack of knowledge and skills, lack of resources, manager-owner's incapability or unwillingness to utilise technology, environmental factors as well as inability to measure return on investment. However, inability to measure ROI is a subject for further confirmation, since this study merely identified that companies do not measure it. Furthermore, results did not confirm neither lack of financial resources Karjaluoto and Huhtamaki (2010) nor assumption that technology is not compatible with the existing technology to be barriers to adaptation (Simmons et al., 2008).

However, interesting pattern emerged, which is participants' believe that IT department is responsible for technology implementation for marketing, which can be

considered as one of the major barriers to DM strategy adaptation of interviewed companies.

To conclude, the majority of the inhibitors identified in literature were confirmed, except financial and technology compatibility. Additionally, ROI as major barrier to digital marketing adaptation, requires further confirmation as currents research aimed to identified whether companies measure ROI or not. It was also identified that B2B context plays a critical role, since participants believe that their customers might not approve technology usage in targeting them, which confirms literature. Besides, interviewees' perception of IT department being responsible for implementation is considered as a major barrier, which is new to this study. Thus, companies' predisposition towards digital marketing technology is hindered by aforementioned barriers. As a result, literature is confirmed that companies do not harness benefits from technological advancements.

5.3 Recommendations to SMEs

Based on primary and secondary research. Firstly SMEs would be recommended to move away from experience and intuition based decision making and engage in data-driven decision-making as it can increases profit by 6% (Livingston, 2017; Germann et al., 2013). For that purpose, companies would be recommended to utilise Google Analytics, which allows obtaining credible data about consumer behaviour and gain the following advantages: effective business goals, which are tied KPIs and thus can be measured. Key customers can be identified and thus targeting can be personalised (Hegde, 2016). Google Analytics can also enable ROI measurement which (although was not fully confirmed) is considered as one of the major inhibitors of digital marketing strategy adaptation.

Secondly, SMEs are highly recommended to establish digital marketing strategy. Smart Insights (2018) asserted that businesses without strategy are directionless as they do not have strategic goals and therefore do not know what they want to achieve. Accordingly, digital marketing strategy is essential as it allows to set clear goals, gain an insight about customers, allocate resources, forecast and gain online share and develop online proposition (Smart Insight, 2018). For that purpose, companies would be highly recommended to deploy Multichannel Marketing Growth

Wheel (MMGW), which will enable to identify the most appropriate to the companies channel mix while evaluating micro and macro environments.

Thirdly, SMEs are strongly recommended to commercialise their websites and allow users to place orders. SMEs also should improve SEO in order to be found on SERPs, which can be achieved by primarily investing in PPC. SEO will contribute into UX improvement, which play crucial role in overall website performance. As visitors are very sensitive to web performance and even a minimal change in website weight or loading time will have a significant impact on UX and might lead to increased bounce rate. Besides, there are numerous templates available for website development that are cost effective and can be utilised by SMEs, such as: WIX.com and Shopify.com. Thus, with available tools, SMEs can develop professional, functional, easy to navigate and with relevant and quality content. Lastly, since SMEs utilise email as the major communication mean, they would be recommended to employ CRM system and email marketing automation which enables customer-centricity. SMEs could automate Newsletters email, which would be more time efficient and more effective to promote product and up-date customers.

5.4 Limitations

Several limitations emerged during this study. First, the scope of study was limited to the most relevant channels to SMEs; website, social media and performance measurability. Although, e-mail plays critical role in small companies, therefore it should be analysed more in-depth. Besides, ROI should also be investigated in-depth, in order to analyse how inability to measure ROI impacts on digital marketing adaptation in SMEs. However, it could not be achieved due to the second point of study limitations: time constraint and word limitation did not allow to investigate all of the topics related to the problem. Third, as with many interviews and qualitative studies (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Noble and Smith, 2018), it is complicated to achieve research reliability due to being exposed to a number of bias including subject or participant bias and/or researcher's bias (Robson et al., 2011). Fourth, due to small sample, results cannot be generalised and cannot represent the entire population, which is due to fewer participants (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, it should be considered in further research. Fifth, case companies are micro firms and operate in medical field and in domestic markets, which could have an impact on results. Sixth,

participants were responsible for marketing activities, but most participants' roles also include sales, which might have impacted the results. Seventh, prior the research, the author should have ensured that all of the participants possess accurate knowledge about digital marketing to avoid lack of familiarity. As researcher believe that if participants knew more about the subject, study would have been more effective in terms of responses (it would be more comprehensive and descriptive, perhaps), and perhaps it would be less time consuming as in average interview took more than 70 min.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

Current study identified few potentially interesting questions for further research that would enhance understanding of digital marketing strategy adaptation and help to enhance practice in this area. Firstly, it would be valuable to analyse how unfamiliarity of different channels effect adoption of digital marketing channels. This of course would depend on technical skills of small companies, which brings a second question: how can small companies acquire knowledge and skills in order to utilise digital marketing channels to its full potential. The major purpose of this study would be not only explore how small firms can acquire necessary skills and knowledge, but also how they can sustain it in the longer term. As this is especially essential given the rapidly evolving technology. Thirdly, identify how inability to measure ROI impact digital marketing channel adaptation. Lastly, the extent to which performance measurability impact on sales growth of SMEs. Subsequently, given the limitation of inability to generalise sample. All of the above suggested research would be recommended to conduct employing larger number of sample.

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Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:
An investigation into factors that inhibit the adaptation of digital marketing strategy/channels and tools in small/medium enterprises (SMEs)

I am conducting current research as part of my final project (dissertation) of MSc in Digital Marketing at Northumbria University. Thus, I would like to invite you to participate in current study as I belief that you possess required for a current study expertise regarding research topic. However, before you decide whether or not to take part. I would like to provide you with the information regarding current research and what contribution would be required from you. Please take time to read information provided below. If you require further information or clarification. Please do not hesitate to ask/contact me.

Purpose of a study:
The main purpose of current study is to investigate how small/medium enterprises are using digital marketing strategy (digital marketing channels and tools). It also seeks to investigate the major barriers of adaptation of digital marketing strategy (digital marketing channels and tools).

Study background:
Digital marketing strategy consistently directs organisations' online marketing activities in such way, so it integrates with other marketing activities and supports overall business goals. While determining how to manage its weaknesses and exploit its strength. Digital marketing strategy is primarily channel strategy, which determines how organisation should set channel-specific goals and create differential channel proposition and channel specific communications correlating with channel specific characteristics and end user requirements. It also differentiates digital channels and identifies the most effective channels to directly communicate with customers at different touchpoints in multichannel context. Thus, it is difficult if not impossible to undertake the right actions without a solid plan or a strategy.

However, researcher identified that both larger organisations and small/medium enterprises (SMEs) are struggling to adopt digital marketing strategy. Although, SMEs might have more obstacle than larger firms due to limited resources.

Consequently, during the interview you will be asked questions relevant to the research topic. The interview will last 30 minutes (approximately).

Ethics statement:

The University of Northumbria have reviewed the study proposal in order to ensure that research in not harmful in any way to participants, and have granted approval to conduct the study.

All of the data will be collected, processed and stored in accordance with general data protection regulation (GDPR) 2018. GDPR is a regulation in European Union law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). Thus, in order to ensure the compliance:

➢ The data will be collected by taking notes during the interview on word document.

➢ You will not be asked any sensitive personal data.

➢ All of the information you provide is highly confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. Thus, every participant will be assigned a "code" in order to ensure anonymity, while differentiating participants during the data analysis.

➢ The data will be stored in password protected folder on researcher's personal laptop, which only researcher has access to.

➢ Data will be used merely for academic purposes and will not damage firms' reputation. The data will be deleted immediately after dissertation is being marked, which is estimated to be in December.

➢ The data will not be given to third parties.

➢ The researcher might require to show data to supervisor. However, your identity will not be disclosed.

➢ You also have right to request a copy of transcripts and/or summary of study findings. Thus, you can ensure the objectivity of research findings as well as ensure that researcher avoided misleading or/and false reporting of research findings.

➢ Although current study is low risk. However, should you feel any discomfort, you have right to withdraw at any point during the interview and/or withdraw your data. You also have right not to answer whichever questions for whatever reason.

Appendix 3

Interview Consent Form

Research Study Title:

An investigation into factors that inhibit the adaptation of digital marketing strategy/channels and tools in small/medium enterprises (SMEs)

Thank you for reading participant information sheet. If you are happy to participate in current study, please carefully read the form below and sign if you agree with every point.

By signing this form I agree to the following:

> I read the information sheet and asked questions to clarify certain points. I also understand that I can contact researcher if I have further questions.

> I voluntarily agree to participate in current study.

> I understand that I can stop the interview at any point and withdraw data without providing any reason or without causing any negative consequences. Additionally, should I wish not to answer whichever question, I have right to decline.

> I understand that my words might be quoted directly in order to highlight the major point I might make during the interview.

> I understand that my name will not be disclosed and data will be kept confidentially and my identity will not be identified or identifiable in the report of the research study.

> I understand that I am entitled to request a copy of transcripts and other data collected during the interview.

> I do not expect to receive any monetary benefits for my participation.

_____

Printed name

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   **date**

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   **date**

Appendix 4

Interviews Guide

1. How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

2. How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

3. How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

4. What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

5. If you have a website, what is the main purpose of your website?

6. How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

7. Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

8. Do you have social media account? And if yes,

9. What is the main purpose of your social media account?

If no, what is the reason?

10. *What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?*

11. *Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page*

12. *Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?*

13. *How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?*

14. *What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?*

15. *Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?*

Appendix 5

Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 Transcript – Participant INT14

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy

Researcher:

> *How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/channels?*

INT 14:

Recent years digital marketing has a vital role, I hope in future all sale and marketing will be digitalised.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

INT 14:

Digital Market is easy and fast process then Traditional Market.

As it systemised less consumption of hard copy documentation.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

INT 14:

It is a Time Consumption, less expense & No miss use of documentation (accuracy of document reporting)

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

INT 14:

We do not have a specifically written strategy to follow. But we have targets that we have to achieve. For marketing, we know what we have to do to approach a client without a specifically articulated plan or strategy.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

INT 14:

Website, E-mails & Social Media.

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the purpose of the website?

INT 14:

To let people know about our company and to promote our product. Customer will know all the details of our company by website,

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

INT 14:

Good.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

INT 14:

It is the Director of the company

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

INT 14:

Yes

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

INT 14:

Easy and fast way of connection with Buyers and end users. Social media is the fastest way of communication with wide range regarding business etc., with customer.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

INT 14:

I think it is email, because we communicate to clients via email. We can also update our clients on new products. Via email we can approach new customers with the description of our products. E-Mails can be generated safety & Secured way of communication as it is encrypted.

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

INT 14:

No, we do not use any tool to measure performance of our online presence

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

INT 14:

Customer Satisfaction in all ways

Researcher:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

INT 14:

Analytics, but we only starting to use so it is difficult to say if we measure it

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

INT 14:

Many are unknown about digital marketing, so we still follow the traditional marketing.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

INT 14:

Director. He makes investment decisions

Interview 2 Transcript – Participant LOC24

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy

Researcher:

How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/digital channels?

LOC 24:

In today's age, digital marketing have given broad perspectives to companies like us to improve and ease our marketing practices through different channels. So, I think digital marketing is an effective way to broadcast our products without any barriers

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

LOC 24:

I still believe that traditional marketing cannot be replaced, as it allows personal contact with company and end user. While digital marketing allows to show products on larger scale in their convenient time.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

LOC 24:

Digital marketing is somehow important for the SME's depending upon their sectors. Though for our company we use digital marketing platform to endorse a new product or provide more detail specifications to interact our customers.

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

LOC 24:

We plan in well advance for our marketing strategies starting with the traditional method by personally engaging and interacting with our customers and then using social media platforms to follow up the protocols.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

LOC 24:

LinkedIn, Website, Emails.

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the purpose of the website?

LOC 24:

To provide in-depth information of our company and product specifications.

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

LOC 24:

We are still working on our website to develop it more and to make it more user friendly as we just recently went live.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

LOC 24:

Our Director of the company.

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

LOC 24:

Yes. On LinkedIn.

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

LOC 24:

To interact and get updates from the market and people working with and around us and to seek opportunity for sales as well.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

LOC 24:

Emails, as it is the more convenient and secure method for the official communication to update everyone from the director to the end-user.

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

LOC 24:

Not at the moment may be in the future.

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

LOC 24:

Yes.

Researcher:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

LOC 24:

No. We don't.

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

LOC 24:

We don't have resources at the moment. Such as IT department.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

LOC 24:

The director of the company as it requires time, money and additional resources.

Interview 3 Transcript – Participant INT15

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy

Researcher:

How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/digital channels?

INT 15:

We can say that digital marketing is in the beginning era in our country as most of us using traditional marketing. But as said above it is in beginning, we are interacting with our clients via digital channels like emails, which already started a decade ago. And now it is what's up etc.,

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

INT 15:

Integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing is today need of it. As traditional marketing was included with the personal visits and personal relations with the clients and digital marketing will help to reduce the personal visit to more strong personal relationship with the clients as there is not required to seek prior appointments and also no need to check their availabilities. Digital marketing will help us to become closer to our clients and also more transparent to explain our products through social media and weblinks.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

INT 15:

For the small/medium enterprises as there will be lack of employees to cover the maximum customers it is very important to connect the clients through digital marketing to reach each corner of the country and each requirements of the clients. This strategy can be set up through an IT department who can collect all the customers data and include in the mailing list to provide latest developments and update products list. Also IT department can set up and create the groups of the

customers interested in the similar products to give them more confidence to buy the products and they can be used as our reference clients.

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

INT 15:

As informed we are currently marketing through our personal visits and emails but started using social media to communicate our clients but also we are careful that those clients who do not mind to communicate through social media we includes them in the list. Few clients are more sensitive and do not want them to contact out of office hours.

Our strategy to reach our clients frequently through phones, emails and social media etc., and also some time to visit them personally.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

INT 15:

We are using currently email and sending them web-links of our manufactures to update the new products and providing them new references.

Most of our clients using themselves our manufacturers website to check exact requirements of their products and if they have any further clarifications we are providing them all the required information.

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the main purpose of your website?

INT 15:

We have our website but it is still in the beginning stage. The main purpose of our website is to provide all the information of our complete range of products, contacts, address etc.,

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

INT 15:

It is still needed to improve. Our IT department still working on to improve it as it should be user-friendly.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

INT 15:

Our IT department is responsible to develop our website, maintenance and each department is responsible to provide complete information of their products, manufacturers etc., to IT department for the contents of the website.

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

INT 15:

Yes,

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

INT 15:

Initially it was to connect with family and friends but now it is being included to contact our business clients.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

INT 15:

Emails, linked in, tweeter, facebook and whatsup.

As the above digital channels are being part of the each person if he/she is employee, businessman/woman. Each day several times they use to open and check these digital channels for one or other reasons.

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

INT 15:

No yet. But it should be in near future.

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

INT 15:
No. We will advise our IT department to add KPIs.

Researcher:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

INT 15:

Frankly speaking have no Idea

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

INT 15:

Nothing. Only thing we have to check that our clients does not mind if contacted through digital channels.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

INT 15:

IT department and head of the each department are responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy as they will be aware of the technical use, collect customers data and products information to be shared with the clients.

Interview 4 Transcript – Participant INT16

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy

Researcher:

How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/digital channels?

INT 16:

The effectiveness of Digital Marketing is much more in our company as all our on-line customers are connected to us through Digital Channels, by emails, on phone and our website.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

INT 16:

Digital marketing is very much important than traditional marketing as it is today's need because each and every business is connected with the digital marketing.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

INT 16:

Small companies should use the digital marketing and apply their marketing strategies through advertisements on facebooks, twitter, linkedIn and whatsup to reach all the customers.

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

INT 16:

Our company has a vision of what we want to accomplish in forthcoming years, to offer our best services to all the existing customers of our manufacturers.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

INT 16:

Emails and websites

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the main purpose of your website?

INT 16:

We have website which provide our customers all the information required of our manufacturers and their products.

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

INT 16:

It is very good and user friendly. It provide full information.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

INT 16:

Our computer department are fully responsible for the website development, maintenance and contents.

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

INT 16:

Yes

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

INT 16:

To reach all the clients immediately to answer their questions.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

INT 16:

Emails as it enables direct communication with clients, we can inform them via email, arrange meetings and promote our products

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

INT 16:

No it would be useful to trach effectiveness, but our computer science department did not implement it yet

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

INT 16:

No, we do not have set KPIs

Research:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

INT 16:

Have no idea to be honest

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

INT 16:

It has to be approved and implemented by IT department. Because marketing specialist work on developing business by different means and we don't have enough knowledge to use highly digitalised tools.

If IT department utilised it and taught us how to use it then we willing to use it to reach customers

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

INT 16:

Our computer section department are responsible for the formation of digital marketing strategies.

Interview 5 Transcript – Participant INT17

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy
Researcher:

How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/digital channels?

INT 17:

Digital marketing channels is one of the best ways to drive customers to company's website and ultimately drive sales. Digital channels are becoming more and more important because of technological advancements, companies try to use these channels to reach customers. As digital channels are increasing in the popularity among customers who spend a lot time online as shop online.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

INT 17:

Nowadays digital marketing is at its peak. Sellers are more focused on targeting end-users by social media network which is more convenient and time saving method for new products and broadcasting their features and services. Along with that traditional marketing is also in a way essential where the seller meets the buyer to demonstrate and convince the buyers for the purchase.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

INT 17:

It is important for the small and medium sized businesses as it can save resources and time by targeting the customers and connecting with them through digital channels. Moreover, adapting a right strategy is more profitable for a company to create new network and increase their sales especially for companies like us.

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

INT 17:

Yes, we do have a strategy as mentioned earlier. Our company's policy is simple and straight we try to connect with our customers with the easiest methods and focus our targets areas.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

INT 17:

Firstly, it's our company website which holds all our products and services information. Then we connect with our customers through emails and social media networks such as LinkedIn and WhatsApp. All our products promotions are updated on our company's website and broadcasted through emails by categorizing clients through Mail chimp.

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the main purpose of your website?

INT 17:

As I said in previous answer our website consist of all the information of our products and services. The main purpose of our website is to make accessible for our clients to reach out for our latest products and fulfil their requirements whenever possible.

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

INT 17:

Our IT department update and fix bug for our website and they do their best to keep it online 24/7 without any errors. Their main task is to maintain the high standard visuals and make available all the information needed for our clients making it as much as user friendly and intractable.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

INT 17:

As mentioned earlier our company's IT department.

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

IT 17:

Yes.

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

INT 17:

To keep my self-updated with the market and be available for customers and potential customers who may be interested if our business all the time.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

INT 17:

Emails – to connect and send all the official documents. LinkedIn – to keep posted about new conferences and meetings. WhatsApp – Available to customers 24/7 and make them feel connected more personally. Mail marketing (Mail Chimp) – Direct marketing.

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

INT 17:

Yes such as google analytics and others which are monitored by our IT department.

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

INT 17:

Customer Value.

Researcher:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

INT 17:

It's the IT persons Jobs.

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

INT 17:

We only use channels and tools which can help in increasing revenue and business we take a step ahead to use those channels.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

INT 17:

The company's CEO.

Interview 6 Transcript – Participant LOC25

Q.1. Importance of DM strategy

Researcher:

How much and/or what do you know about effectiveness of digital marketing/digital channels?

LOC 25:

I possess extensive knowledge about digital marketing as I it is my speciality. I can say that, technology is taking over many business sectors. Digital marketing is online marketing that enables reaching wider audience and enhancing communication and relationship between organisation and end user.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of integrating digital marketing strategy with traditional marketing?

LOC 25:

The Internet and digital networks are the easiest ways to learn, search, buy, and even marketing and sell products. So the digital marketing strategy is more effective than the traditional. Because we do not communicate to our customers via letters, instead we send them an email. But in our company we still have to use traditional because of our customers preferences. We have to visit doctors in clinics and communicate to them in person, this is inevitable part of our business. To promote our products we also use brochures and product catalogues. So you can say that both digital and traditional are important, both have to be integrated.

Researcher:

How would you describe the importance of an appropriate digital marketing strategy and its implementation for a small/medium enterprise (SME) like yours?

LOC 25:

It is very important because it can possibly change a local company to a global one through the digital marketing.

Q.2. Utilisation of DM strategy

Researcher:

How do you plan your marketing activities? Do you have any strategy?

LOC 25:

At the moment we have a databases of our customers and new potential customers who we would like to target. We visit them, ring them and send them an email introducing us and our products.

Q.3. Channels

Researcher:

What channels do you use to interact with customers online and promote your products?

LOC 25:

Email most of the time as everyone is using email and you can't go wrong with that. It is also efficient way to promote products by sending updates of products. We also use website, to refer our customers to product catalogues to get more information if required and social media platforms.

Researcher:

If you have a website, what is the main purpose of your website?

LOC 25:

To demonstrate our products and provide as much information about each product as possible. Also let them know about our company and promote products and our company.

Researcher:

How would you describe the quality of your website? In terms of content and user-friendliness?

LOC 25:

I think there is always room for improvement. But in general our website is good quality as it provides all information customer might need for the product or contact details.

Researcher:

Who is responsible for website development, maintenance and content?

LOC 25:

IT personnel is mainly responsible for maintenance and content of the website as they know how to upload and chance anything on our website.

Researcher:

Do you have social media account? And if yes,

LOC 25:
Yes

Researcher:

What is the main purpose of your social media account?

LOC 25:

To be closer to our customers and be more transparent with them as much as we can. Also to get in touch with our manufacturers and suppliers and possibly find new customers or even suppliers. Now everyone is on social media, and if someone want to contact us vialtheir social media accounts we have to be there for them and be open for dialog. We also promote our products on social media by posting catalogues. When doctors are searching for new supplier they might refer to social media.

Researcher:

What digital channels do you consider as the most important to use and why?

LOC 25:

For us it is email because it is the main mean of communication with our customers. Website to promote our products and provide more information to customers. And social media to show our availability to our customers, promote our products and communicate to our customers. It enable to publish products faster than other channels

Q.4. Measurability

Researcher:

Do you use any tools to track performance/effectiveness of online marketing? For example: website inbound traffic, number of users who convert into paying customers, number of users that leave your website after just visiting one page

LOC 24:

No, not at the moment

Researcher:

Do you know your goals and KPIs for marketing activities?

LOC25:

I didn't use it before but the most important goals for us are to evaluate the level of sales and customers value and know which of the marketing methods are most effective for my products.

Researcher:

How do you measure the return of investment (ROI) from your marketing efforts?

LOC 25:

We don't measure it (I believe). May be IT department does, but I am not sure.

Q.5. Barriers to adaptation

Researcher:

What stops you from utilising digital tools and channels? And why?

LOC25:

We do use digital channels, but to use more channels it is require time and knowledge to implement it. I think we are happy with channels we use at the moment and there is no demand to use more channels

Researcher:

Who is responsible for formation of digital marketing strategy and why?

LOC25:

Marketing department because they must have a good background about the products and know the best marketing strategy for each one

Appendix 6

Themes derived from Interviews (exported from NVivo)

Themes/Sub-themes	Sources (number of responses)	References (number of quotes allocated to each theme)
BARRIERS	6	15
Customers	1	1
Lack of human resources	1	1
Lack of knowledge	3	3
Lack of understanding of importance	2	2
Responsibility for implementation	6	8
Director or owner	3	3
Head of department	1	1
IT department	2	3
Marketing department	1	1
CHANNELS	6	18
E-mail	6	6
Communication	5	7
Promote products	5	6
Safe and secured communication	2	2
Social Media	6	6

Themes/Sub-themes	Sources (number of responses)	References (number of quotes allocated to each theme)
Communication	5	7
Easy and Fast connection	3	4
Market updates	2	2
Promote	1	2
Sales Opportunity	3	3
The most important channels	0	0
E-mail	6	7
Social media	3	4
website	1	1
Website	6	6
Good quality	3	3
Under development	2	3
Promote products	3	5
Provide Information	5	8
DM IMPORTANCE	6	19
DM is Important	6	10
DM Effectiveness	6	18
Accuracy of reporting	1	1
Easy and Fast	5	8

Themes/Sub-themes	Sources (number of responses)	References (number of quotes allocated to each theme)
Less expensive	1	1
Opportunity	2	3
Improve relationship	2	3
Promote product	1	1
Reach customers	3	4
Still in the beginning	1	1
DM UTILISATION	3	3
Do utilise	3	3
Do not utilise	1	1
Have targets	2	3
Have a vision	1	1
MEASURABILITY	6	9
Do not track performance	5	5
KPIs	3	3
ROI	0	0
Do not measure	6	6
Measure	0	0
Track performance	1	1

Appendix 7

LOGBOOK

LOG OF FIRST MEETING

ETHICAL CLEARANCE - All relevant links are on the Blackboard site

It is ESSENTIAL that ALL STUDENTS complete this 15 point checklist in consultation with their supervisor. The completed checklist MUST BE SUBMITTED along with the dissertation.

All relevant links are on the Blackboard site

	ACTION	Date Completed
1	Consider ethical issues in the design of your research and discuss with your supervisor how you propose to deal with them. Record the outcome of this discussion in your logbook.	19/06/2018
2	Consider whether there is a need for formal Risk Assessment for your research.	19/06/2018
3	Submit the Faculty Student Ethical Issues Form (available from the eLP) to your supervisor for approval by an independent reviewer. Record the date that you receive approval.	09/06/2018
4	If necessary, obtain Organization Consent (using the Faculty Organisational Informed Consent Form) before beginning any primary research in an organizational setting.	20/06/2018
5	Show your supervisor the signed Organisational Consent Form	20/06/2018
6	If necessary, obtain Individual Consent (using the Faculty Individual Informed Consent Form) before beginning any qualitative primary research in an organizational setting.	10/08/2018
7	Show your supervisor all signed Individual Informed Consent Forms.	19/08/2018
8	If conducting primary qualitative research establish participant codes for your subjects and store these codes manually in a secure place.	20/08/2018
9	If conducting primary qualitative research and you decide to transcribe the data then transcribe the data you have collected using participant codes for subjects.	20/08/2018
10	Use encryption software to protect files in which you store your research data.	20/08/2018
11	When writing up, ensure that anonymity and confidentiality are respected if requested by research subjects.	20/08/2018-16/09/2018
12	Include appropriate ethical declaration in Dissertation.	20/08/2018
13	Discuss Ethical issues in your Methods chapter including measures taken to secure ethical approval, consent(s), data collection, storage and destruction and whether there was any need for formal risk assessment.	25/08/2018
14	Include the signed Faculty Student Ethical Issues Form in an Appendix to your dissertation. Include unsigned ethics forms (Individual Informed Consent & Organisational Informed Consent) in an Appendix to your dissertation and state that your Supervisor has seen the original signed	08/09/2018

	forms. Keep the original, signed forms with your Working Papers.	
15	Confirm that all data collected for the purposes of the dissertation will be destroyed after the completion of assessment, unless otherwise agreed with your supervisor and research subjects (state reasons for this in your Methods chapter).	10/08/2018

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