MARKETING MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Volume 22, Issue 2
Fall 2012

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FROM THE EDITORS

Marketing Management Journal, first published in Fall 1991, is dedicated as a forum for the exchange of ideas and insights into the marketing management discipline. Its purpose was and continues to be the establishment of a platform through which academicians and practitioners in marketing management can reach those publics that exhibit interests in theoretical growth and innovative thinking concerning issues relevant to marketing management.

Submissions to *Marketing Management Journal* are encouraged from those authors who possess interests in the many categories that are included in marketing management. Articles dealing with issues including, but not limited to marketing strategy, ethics, product management, communications, pricing, distribution, sales management, buyer behavior, marketing information, and international marketing will be considered for review and possible inclusion in the journal. In addition, MMJ will feature a special section in the fall issue each year that focuses on specific topics of interest within the marketing discipline. Empirical and theoretical submissions of high quality are encouraged. The general approach of MMJ will continue to be the publication of articles appealing to a broad range of readership interests.

This issue contains the first of what will be a fixture of the fall issue each year, a special section of articles featuring research on a topic of interest to marketing scholars. Attendees of the Marketing Management Association 2011 fall conference provided input on a topic for the 2012 special section. Social media marketing was selected to be the focus of the inaugural special section. We are pleased to publish five articles in the special section on social media marketing. Thanks to all who were involved in giving input on the special section focus, submitted papers, and served as reviewers.

The Marketing Management Association Publications Council approved a policy revision that affects authors of papers accepted for publication in MMJ. A requirement that at least one author be a member of Marketing Management Association (or join if not a member already) has been dropped. But if you are not an MMA member, please consider joining our active community of scholars engaged in research and teaching innovation.

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MANUSCRIPT AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
MARKETING MANAGEMENT JOURNAL
January 2013

Scope and Mission

The mission of the *Marketing Management Journal* (MMJ) is to provide a forum for the sharing of the academic, theoretical, and practical research that may impact the development of the marketing management discipline. Manuscripts that focus upon empirical research, theory, methodology, and review of a broad range of marketing topics are strongly encouraged. Submissions are encouraged from both academic and practitioner communities.

Submission Guidelines

Manuscripts that do not conform to submission guidelines will not be distributed for review. Authors should submit manuscripts via email to mmjjournal@gmail.com. Each submission should consist of two files:

1. A file containing the cover page listing the manuscript title, each author's name, institution affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, and email address. If there are multiple authors, the editor will consider the author originating the manuscript submission the contact author unless otherwise noted.
2. A file containing the manuscript title, an abstract of no more than 150 words, keywords, and manuscript. Author identification or affiliation should not appear anywhere in this file.

Manuscripts should be submitted using 12-point Times Roman font and should not exceed 30 typewritten pages inclusive of body, tables and figures, and references. Margins must be one inch. Preparation of the manuscript should follow style guidelines in the most recent *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 6$^{\text{th}}$ edition. Tables and figures used in the manuscript should be included on a separate page and placed at the end of the manuscript. Authors should insert a location note within the body of the manuscript to identify appropriate placement. Tables and figures should be constructed in table mode of Microsoft Word.

The MMJ editorial board interprets the submission of a manuscript as a commitment to publish in MMJ. Editorial policy prohibits publication of a manuscript that has already been published in whole or in substantial part by another journal. Each manuscript is first assessed by the editor to determine its potential for successful completion of the review process. A manuscript that goes beyond the initial review goes through a double-blind review conducted by members of MMJ's review board. Feedback from reviewers and the editor team's evaluation are used to make a decision on whether a manuscript will be accepted for publication in MMJ.

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1. Authorize copyright protection for MMJ prior to manuscript being published. Manuscripts accepted become the copyright of MMJ.
2. Make payment of page fees. Page fees are currently $15 per page of the final manuscript.

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PURCHASE PROFESSIONALS' CYNICISM ABOUT COOPERATING WITH SUPPLIERS: DOES IT IMPACT TOP MANAGEMENT EFFORTS TO INDUCE RELATIONAL BEHAVIORS IN BUYER-SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS?

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In today's relationship marketing era companies seem to be focusing on relationships with their suppliers to a great extent. Following the trend, scholars have shown a significant interest exploring antecedents, especially 'trust' related variables that may predict relationship outcomes. Extending this literature, the current study examines predictors beyond trust, and views relationship building from a perspective of organizational change initiative. We seek to investigate the impact of managers' cynicism towards cooperative business paradigm. A model was tested using survey data collected from purchase managers who are members of National Association of Purchase Managers in USA. Results of the study suggest that organizational support dimensions: (i) Relationship Implementation Infrastructure and (ii) Interfunctional Interaction Satisfaction have positive influence on External Relationship Behaviors. Also, findings support the hypothesis that purchase managers' Relationship Cynicism impacts top management efforts to induce relational behaviors. Results also reconfirmed the positive link between relational behaviors and relationship performance.

INTRODUCTION

In order to remain competitive, firms are increasingly moving away from traditional adversarial relationships with a multitude of suppliers to one of forging longer-term relationships with a few select suppliers (Hansen, 2009). One of the determinants of success in such relationships is the way an organization deals with its alliance strategy (Fugate, Sahin, & Mentzer, 2006). Inter-organizational cooperation as a strategic choice to create value has been acknowledged as a key driver reshaping the alliance between buyer and sellers (Wilson, 1995). There has been a series of studies that looked into aspects of buyer-supplier relationship strategy formation and success factors (Moller & Wilson, 1995; Ford, 1997; Hsu et al., 2008; Hansen, 2009). Findings from researchers in this field appear to conclude that success of relationship marketing strategies relies on their effective execution not just at the buyer-seller level but also at the intraorganizational level (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006).

Understanding issues and opportunities in buyer-supplier relationships has attracted much attention from academia. Researchers have paid special attention to study the role of trust at interorganizational as well as interpersonal levels (Andersen & Kumar, 2006, Fang, Palmatier, Scheer, & Li, 2008)). This stream of research contributes to the literature extensively; however, more diverse approach is needed to further upgrade our knowledge. This argument was echoed recently by scholars stating that "while this (trust) is undoubtedly an important variable in governing the interactional dynamics it is by no means the only variable" (Andersen & Kumar, 2006, p. 522; parenthesis added).

It has been argued that contribution of factors internal to a business unit to the success of buyer-supplier relationships needs more attention (Hsu et al., 2008). Underscoring such needs, recently, scholars have called upon more

empirical research investigating significant managerial level factors that are internal to organizations and related to successful business -to-business relationship (Rajamma, Zolfagharian, & Pelton, 2011). This issue assumes further importance given the high failure rate of alliances and the attribution, in general, of failure of relationship marketing strategies to poor application by relationship managers. Findings of a meta-analysis study in this area suggest that "RM (relationship marketing) may be improved by taking a more fine-grained approach in which managers target RM strategies at specific relational weaknesses" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 150; parenthesis added).

Therefore, we propose this research to understand how the factors internal to the organization affect cooperative relationships between firms. Specifically, the primary objectives of this research are to (1) develop and test a model involving the organizational support dimensions (i.e., top management advocacy and infrastructure for cooperative relationship), interfunctional coordination, and the external relationship performance in buyer-supplier relationships; (2) comprehend whether and how the support extended by organizations is impacted by cynicism towards cooperative buyer-supplier relationships held by functional managers in buying organization.

Buyer-Supplier Cooperation: An Organizational Change Initiative

Studies on relationship marketing strategy execution have taken a systems view of inter-functional interaction focusing on factors internal to the organization and their effective coordination (e.g., Kothandaraman & Wilson, 2000; Reukert & Walker, 1987). However, shifting from an adversarial to a cooperative relationship mode in dealing with suppliers is often a reflection on changing the way business organizations conduct business. This in many ways is similar to other change initiatives involving phenomenon such as quality improvement, customer service, right-sizing, teamwork etc. Management literature is copious

on organizational change initiatives such as TQM (e.g., Powell, 1995) and has also focused on challenges accompanying such initiatives. Typical challenges that get highlighted include the role played by organizational members' beliefs and behavior and institutional structures that impact the organizational change initiatives (Barley, 1986; Orlikowski, 1992).

Marketing scholars have studied organizational change initiatives by looking at how companies transform from a product driven to market-driven organizations (e.g., Day, 1994). In their efforts to become market-driven, companies often face resistance from employees. When IBM redesigned their customer relationship management process to focus major efforts on the more profitable clients and not just any client, the company's sales-force resisted. As Day (1994) reports, the mindset of the sales-force was, "…that all business is good, that all sales opportunities are good, and that all revenue is good". Individual employees are an important part of implementing change initiatives and the role played by employees as partners in the change process has been acknowledged. For example, studies using the perspective of psychological contracts highlight the important role played individual organizational members' beliefs in embracing change initiatives (Connell & Waring, 2002). This perspective which has its critics (Guest, 1998) argues that change initiatives often fail because frontline employees view changes as a breach of some unwritten understanding with the employers that covers transactional and relational or socio-emotive elements of their jobs. In the realm of buyer-supplier relationships, an adversarial model of purchasing often allowed buyers to keep the suppliers at a distance and play one supplier against the other.

With the emergence of service dominant logic that underlines the need for value creation in buyer-seller relationships (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) the cooperation between organizations involved in value creation chain is highly critical (Rundh, 2011). The new cooperative model of buyer-supplier relationships call for

buyers to change their ways and prepare to enter into an open and trust-based relationships. In order for such changes to succeed, the buyers need to buy-in to the new order. Their mental models have to recognize suppliers as partners and not view the changing business model as an "idea of the month" or "bend over here it comes again" (Connell & Waring, 2002). This notion of employees being reluctant or dysfunctional part of the change initiatives has been incorporated in an emerging stream of research dealing with cynicism about organizational change (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin 1997; Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005; Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 2000).

Studies on cynicism about organizational change have found that employees charged with implementing change initiatives tend to see them as "… necessary evils or as the incomprehensible actions of a top management group out of touch with day-to-day operations" (Reichers et al., 1997). Thus cynicism is an important barrier to change in general and could also come in the way of organizations trying to execute buyer-supplier relationship strategies. Consequently, in the current study we explore the execution of relationship strategy from a perspective of organizational change initiative and its accompanying employee cynicism. Specifically, we seek to understand the impact of managers' cynicism towards cooperative business relationships.

The growing trends of business partner's opportunism (or anticipated transaction costs) has fueled the employees' cynical attitudes and distrust in business relationships (Hawkins, Wittmann, & Beyerlein, 2008). Although employees should be cautious as organizations want to remain vigilant about business relationships, a greater level of cynicism about organizational change adversely impacted employees' commitment, satisfaction and motivation to work (Reichers et al., 1997). Further, such cynicism also leads to lack of employee support to an organization's change initiatives and results in disillusionment regarding good performance contributing to

better rewards (Wanous et al., 2000). Cynicism towards cooperative relationships is especially important because managers' expectations and perceptions arguably influence the 'customer value from a strategic point of view' (Rundh, 2011).

Relationship Cynicism

Cynicism as a construct has long been studied in the organizational behavior area both as generic human nature and as an attitude towards specifics such as one's organizations and superiors (Anderson & Bateman, 1997; Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). There has been a renewed focus on this construct in its application to managing organizational change (Wannous et al., 2000; Qian & Daniels, 2008). Considering the fact that trust plays an important role in sustaining and implementing relationships, it is important to note that scholars distinguish between the concepts of cynicism and trust (Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky 2005; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In the context of organizational changes, it has been posited that cynicism and trust may very well share some common antecedents; however, they cannot be treated as synonymous (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Moreover, it has been argued that even if "either cynicism or skepticism alone would be sufficient to cause mistrust, neither can be considered redundant with trust" (Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005, p. 437).

Recently, researchers have attempted to explore the concept of cynicism in different contexts. For example, Naus, Iterson, & Roe (2007) found evidences suggesting that cynicism is linked to role conflict, low autonomy, and low assertiveness. In another study, Kim et al. (2009) proposed that top management's credibility (i.e., trustworthiness and competence) relates to different dimensions of employee cynicism (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral). Authors' further argue that various dimensions of cynicism differentially influence employees' organizational commitment.

Companies have recognized this problem of cynicism in work place and have tried to engage 'cynics' among its employees. They often found cynics to have an uncanny ability to sniff out the downside of things and exaggerate them. They do it in a way and in forums that can not make positive contribution (Cutler, 2000). Thus, the consequence of organizational cynicism associated with change initiatives appear to be real and worth managers' attention. In many organizations, the switch from an arms-length contractual association with the sellers to a cooperative business relationship based on trust and commitment is a legitimate organizational change as perceived by the members of the purchasing function. Some have addressed this issue at a descriptive level as political consideration in implementing alliances (Lorange & Roos, 1991). Personal purchase philosophies of purchase managers on multiple suppliers have negatively impacted firms' ability to shift to single source supply (Leenders & Blenkhorn, 1988). The essence of this dilemma is captured in the following response by one of the executives as reported in Lyons, Krachenberg, and Henke (1990):

> *"We've had to outplace or retire some of our most experienced, veteran buyers. It was just too much to expect them to change from playing poker with suppliers to cooperating with them. The old ways and the new games just didn't match."*

Campbell (1998) reported that buyers who described supply partnerships as "just a buzz word" often followed competitive supply partnership norms. Thus, there appears to be a strong need to examine the prevalence of cynicism about cooperative buyer-supplier relationships amongst purchase managers and explore its consequence to buyer-supplier relationships.

Cynicism has been conceptualized as a personality trait (Pope, Butcher, & Seelen, 1993) and as an attitudinal orientation (Reichers et al., 1997). In this study, we adopt the latter conceptualization for three reasons. Firstly, attitudes can be influenced more easily than

personality and it is important that we focus on variables that are actionable. Secondly, the object of cynicism that we focus in this study is cooperative business relationships and not merely interpersonal cooperation among individuals and hence negative attitude towards cooperative relationships would better able to capture cynicism than a negative trait-based disposition towards cooperation itself. Finally, studies of cynicism about organizational change have already conceptualized cynicism as an attitude in their context and thus there is precedence in doing so. Thus we propose a preliminary definition of cynicism about cooperative buyer-supplier relationships as *a negative attitude towards cooperative buyer-supplier relationships*.

Our conception of cynicism about cooperative buyer-supplier relationship is based on the assumption that a phenomenon such as cooperative buyer-supplier relationship could be an object of attitude and is consistent with earlier formulations of cynicism about organizational change as attitudes towards organizational policies and processes (Reichers et al., 1997). Although, purchase managers' perceptions that marketers or their salesmen are not worthy of entering into cooperative relationships may be based on their experience with a few individuals from supplier organizations, perception that all cooperative partnerships are doomed to fail can only be attributed to their enduring and widespread opinion about the entire supplier community. Further, some of the perceptions upon which individuals' cynical attitudes are based upon may have their roots within their own organization. Therefore, these individuals from the buyer side may find it hard to identify it with specific individuals from the supplier side as both sides have distinct organizational environment.

Therefore, we argue that buyers can form attitude towards the relationship phenomenon based on the observed behavior of people at the buyer and sellers end. It is important to appreciate the distinction between cynicism and the associate dimensions of job satisfaction and

trust (Anderson & Bateman, 1997). Cynicism is an attitude that is outwardly directed, while satisfaction is retrospective and self-focused (Stanley et al., 2005). While trust involves beliefs based on future expectation about a specific promise, cynicism is a broader attitude that stems from, among other things, a disillusionment based on distrust and disbelief (Anderson & Bateman, 1997).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

A grounded theory approach was utilized to get at the dimensions of organizational support. This approach is aligned with the marketing literature that incorporates qualitative methods to address the complex research questions (Houston &Venkatesh, 1996; Goulding, 2002). Marketing researchers underscore the importance of the "theory that is grounded in the words and actions of those individuals under study" and suggest the need for "a balancing act between drawing on prior knowledge while keeping a fresh and open mind to new concepts as they emerge from the data" (Goulding, 2005, p. 296).

We conducted field interviews for the purpose of gaining further insights. In the first phase of the study, we interviewed executives to develop an understanding of organizational factors that managers feel may impact an organization's external relational behavior and performance in external relationships. Randomly selected executives from the list of National Association of Purchase Managers were contacted to gain permission for recorded interviews. The premise of research study was clearly explained to them. Specifically the focus was on trying to understand dimensions of organizational support in implementing buyer-supplier relationships and managers' cynicism towards cooperative business relationships that carry flexibility, information exchange, and solidarity as key requirements.

The analysis of eleven field interviews suggested the key dimensions of the organizational support that are essential to the successful execution of the strategy: i) the top

management advocacy of the relationship paradigm and ii) the availability of the infrastructure to implement alliances. Additionally, in line with the earlier work (Kothandaraman & Wilson, 2000), we also consider the extent of the internal alignment of value-creating functions captured by managers' satisfaction in cross-functional interactions to create and deliver value in buyer-supplier relationships. Finally, we focused on the managerial cynicism that could hamper relationships.

Purchase managers' cynicism towards a cooperative business paradigm seemed to frustrate top executives constantly as they try to maintain the cooperative relationships with suppliers. Senior executives, however, were vague on the nature of impact of cynicism on relationship strategy execution. One executive expressed the following comment:

> *"When the guys who need to take the baton and run remain convinced that cooperating with sellers was bad for a buyer's business, you have a problem; We tried hard to change their mindset; it was clear to me that we were spending more to get our folks see a new point of view."*

Another top executive expressed his frustration as follows:

> *"I know I have to champion new business ideas so that others follow; but that's not my only job as I need to run a business here."*

The above statements and our other interactions suggested a scenario where organizational resources needed to implement strategies were consumed by efforts to neutralize cynicism of managers towards cooperative relationships. This also is in line with the earlier work on cynicism at work places suggesting that cynical employees do not actively participate in the organizational change process (Wanaus et al., 1994). On the other hand, it is expected that less cynical managers are likely to put more effort into building the relationship. Thus, in our case, less cynical managers may readily

embrace a paradigm of cooperative buyer-supplier relationships thereby resources directed at them may be utilized somewhere else. Any effort directed towards cynical managers may pay dividends in bringing down the level of cynicism resulting in enhanced overall positive outcomes. This suggests a moderating role for cynicism and thus in our study, we incorporate cynicism towards cooperative relationships as a moderator variable.

We first outline our indicator of successful relationships: external relational behavior. Then we describe the three independent variables that capture the organizational support dimension and their relationship with external relationship

behavior. Next, we expand on the internal satisfaction dimension and its relationship with the dependent variable. Finally, we describe the moderating effects of cynicism towards cooperative relationships on the relationship between organizational factors and external relationship behavior. Figure 1 contains all the variables and proposed relationships among them.

External Relational Behavior

Successful execution of relationship strategy usually can be discerned from managers' positive, open and non-adversarial behavior towards its relationship partners. Relational behaviors performed by the seller impact

FIGURE 1:
Hypothesized Model
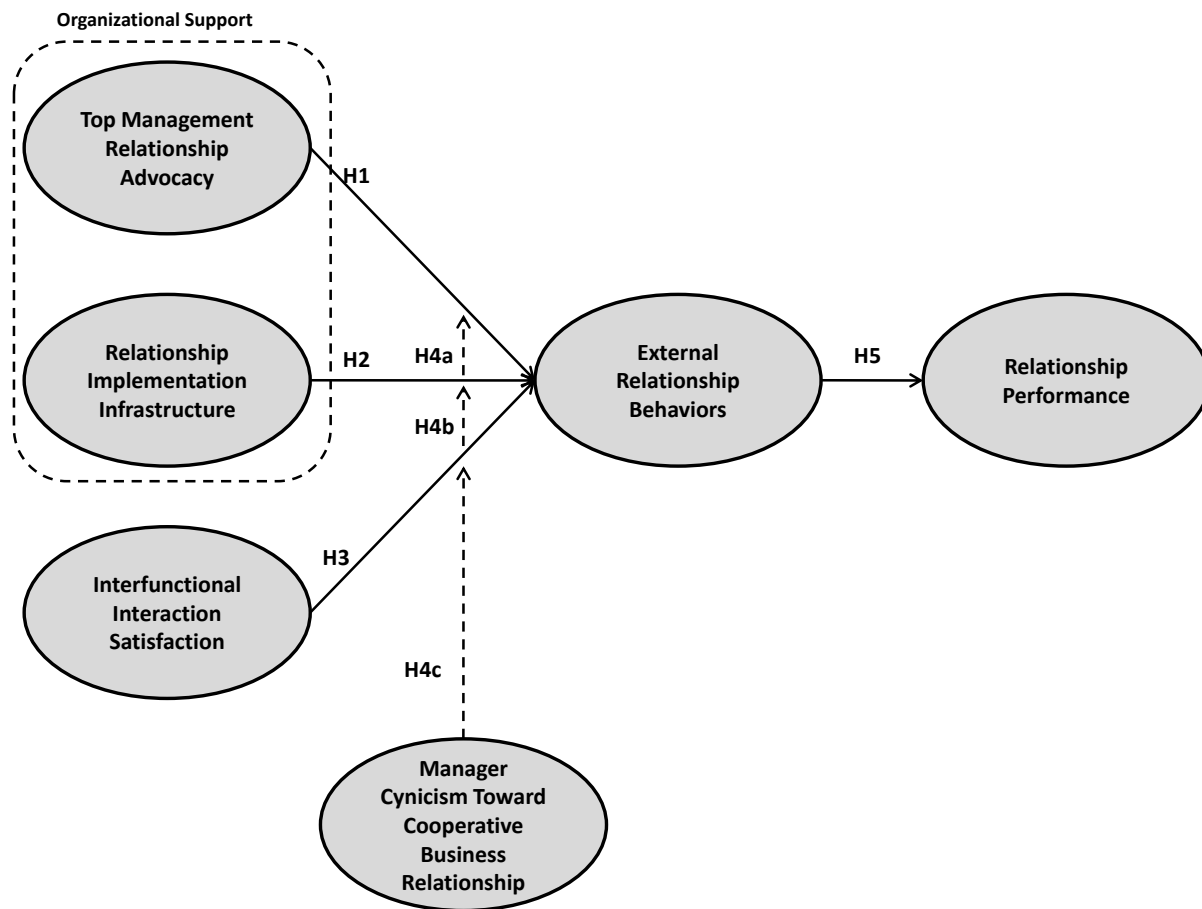
buyers' relational perceptions such as social and economical satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Ivens, 2004). However, there is no general consensus within relational exchange literature on what specific components should be included when assessing relational behaviors (Ivens, 2002).

To understand what constitute relational behavior in inter-organizational settings, we draw from studies that have explored relational norms in many marketing channel and buyer-supplier contexts. Based on Macneil's (1980) relational exchange theory, relational norms relate to how partners to an exchange behave under a particular type of contract. Ivens (2004) performed an empirical test based on Macneil's exchange framework and concluded that five variables that are solidarity, mutuality, flexibility, role integrity, and long-term orientation are being mainly researched as relational behaviors.

For our purpose, we adopt the three norm types developed by Heide & John (1992): flexibility, information exchange and solidarity. We believe that the three components are particularly appropriate for buyer-supplier relationship settings and also note that they have been used to measure relational behavior in similar studies (Lusch & Brown, 1996). Marketing scholars, specifically in the context of channel partners, highlight the relevance and importance of such relational norms (Hewett & Bearden, 2001). For example, Kim (2000) posits that through solidarity an organization gains "a firm's sense of unity that binds it to the exchange partner firm" (Kim, 2000, p. 396). Lusch and Brown (1996) argued that smooth functioning of logistical services between partners primarily rely on the correct anticipation of changes in the channel and the environment and therefore, flexibility and information exchange between channel partners are essential to sustain relationship.

Top Management Advocacy of Relationship Paradigm

For the purpose of this study top management relationship advocacy is defined as the efforts of the firm's top management to emphasize the importance of relationships as a business philosophy. This definition is aligned with Croteau and Li's (2003) work on CRM technology implementation where they argue that the top management's commitment to adopt CRM initiative as a business philosophy is critical for its success. Recent research in this area provides empirical evidences supporting the link between top management advocacy and organizations' relational capabilities (Rapp, Trainor, & Agnihotri, 2010). Explicit and public support of cooperative business relationships, commitment, and governance by the top management of the organization is important to the success of a supply chain alliance (Fawcett et al., 2006). It has been posited that "the presence of constructive leadership capable of stimulating cooperative behavior between participating firms" is essential to business relationships (Mentzer et al., 2001, p. 14). Therefore, top management advocacy of cooperative relationships will offer the critically needed direction and motivation to managers to perform external relationship behaviors.

If managers in the company realize that doing relationships is top management's chosen way of conducting business whenever possible, they will pay more attention to alliance success factors and will be on the lookout for relationship opportunities. It has been suggested that for companies to be market oriented and to value relationships, top management needs to play an emphatic role (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Another stream of literature that reinforces this point is in the corporate governance area where top management executives as "champions" were found to be crucial to external relationship success (Burgelman, 1983). Thus we propose the following,

> H_1: *Top management advocacy of relationship paradigm will be*

positively related to an organization's external relationship behavior in buyer-supplier relationships.

Infrastructure for Relationship Implementation

We define infrastructure for relationship implementation as the specific set of organization-wide support systems that enable functional managers to initiate, develop be trained for inter-organizational relationships or alliances (Sawhney & Zabin, 2002). In order to succeed in relationships firms need to create infrastructure that will support these relationships. Several organizations (e.g. UNISYS) have separate alliance management functions to help functional unit managers with forming and implementing alliances. Some companies such have gone one step further and launched virtual universities to impart training in doing buyer-supplier relationships to both internal managers and suppliers (e.g. Boeing Virtual University).

It has been noted that resource allocation and organizational support systems are essential requirements for organizations to become market oriented (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Researchers argue that for strong channel relationships, organizations need to follow 'upstream market orientation' that is developing and utilizing an infrastructure to explore "the know-how and skills of suppliers" (Langerak, 2001, p. 223). Moreover, it has been suggested that external market oriented actions can only be realized if organizations have a clear internal market orientation that is developing internal capabilities to attain external market oriented goals (Gounaris, 2006; Lings & Greenley, 2009). Thus, we propose the following:

> *H₂: Infrastructure available for implementing relationships will be positively related to an organization's external relationship behavior in buyer-supplier relationships.*

Satisfaction with Inter-Functional Interaction

We define satisfaction as the feeling described by the functional managers with respect to the interactions and working relationships with other functional departments in connection with managing a focal relationship. In marketing, satisfaction has long been recognized as a key variable to judge external dealings with customers. Internal linkages between departments have been suggested to be important for task effectiveness in organizations (Reukert & Walker, 1987). The research stream that focuses on 'internal market orientation' suggest that organizations expecting to perform market oriented actions in the market place first need to make sure there exists internal capabilities aligned with external market objectives (Gounaris, 2006; Lings & Greenley, 2009). Recent research provide evidence suggesting that if employees perceive that different functional units understand the organization's objectives, coordinate with each other, and perform internal market oriented behaviors, they feel motivated to realize external marketing success (Lings & Greenley, 2009).

In the buyer-supplier relationship context, Campbell (1998) found that in firms involved in cooperative buyer-supplier relationships, key personnel in marketing and purchasing expressed satisfaction with inter-functional interaction. It does appear that satisfaction with inter-functional interactions will result in positive behavior in external relationships as buyers satisfied with their interactions with other functions expressed cooperative buying expectations (Campbell, 1998). Thus, we propose the following:

> *H₃: Satisfaction of functional managers with inter-functional interactions with respect to implementing a buyer-supplier relationship will be positively related to an organization's external relationship behavior in that relationship*

Moderating Role of Cynicism to Cooperative Business Relationships

A factor that limits organizations ability to implement alliances is the orientation of the functional managers towards relational interactions as opposed to "arm's length" interactions that characterized the exchanges of the past. Anecdotal evidence suggests that buyer-seller interactions of the past were dominated by mutual distrust and a constant need to maintain a balance of power (Wilson 1995). Companies such as the Ford Motors and General Motors often encouraged their supplier management professionals to pitch one supplier against another in order to keep them in check and get better prices. Major changes in product and process technologies led to realization that no single company could, on their own, master all of the technologies required maintain competitive leadership in their respective industries (Wilson 1995; Hansen, 2009). Consequently, companies began supplier management initiatives that emphasized long-term cooperation. Multiple supplier norms began to give way for strategic single source development. These changes, though initiated by the top management, often ran counter to purchase managers' long held convictions about the need to treat suppliers as adversaries.

Cynicism often arose among managers as they perceived new directions from the top management as conflicting and insincere. Thus the possible mechanics of the underlying of cynicism of its managers points to the need for top management to explain their perceived 'change of heart' and champion the cause of cooperative buyer-supplier relationships. In instances where personal conviction levels of functional managers are low, top management may be required to try harder and make more direct efforts towards implementing relationship strategies. In instances of higher "buy-in" from the functional departments charged with implementing relationships, top management advocacy of relationship paradigm may still be needed as constant reinforcement ensures high degree of compliance. However, the later situation calls for lesser proportion of

their advocacy effort to keep the cynicism in check as opposed to the former situation where considerable effort goes into changing underlying beliefs of the cynical managers. Therefore, when, managers' cynicism towards cooperative buyer-seller relationships is low, we argue that most of their advocacy efforts are directed to impact external relationship behavior rather than battling cynicism. Thus, top management advocacy has a higher impact on external relationship behavior under lower levels of managers' cynicism as opposed to situations where managers exhibit a higher level of cynicism towards cooperative buyer-seller relationships. Similar effects of cynicism can be expected for the other two organizational support variables of infrastructure. Thus, we propose the following:

H_{4a}: *The impact of top management advocacy of relationship implementation on an organization's external relational behavior will be lower when functional manager's cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is higher compared to when cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is lower*

H_{4b}: *The impact of infrastructure available for implementing relationships on an organization's external relational behavior will be lower when functional manager's cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is higher compared to when cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is lower*

Satisfaction with inter-functional interactions could be viewed as a motivating factor that could prompt a manager to do a good job of implementing buyer-supplier relationships. However, cynicism is known to be associated with disillusionment about organizational policies. Further, cynicism also dampens managers' motivation to participate in an organization's change initiatives (Wanous et al., 1994). Consequently managers with higher

cynicism may not get motivated by factors such as satisfaction with inter-functional interactions to perform external relationship behaviors. On the other hand, managers with low cynicism towards cooperative business relationships will be motivated by their satisfaction with inter-functional interactions resulting in more positive external relationship behaviors compared to those with higher levels of cynicism. Thus,

> *H₄c: Satisfaction of functional managers with inter-functional interactions with respect to implementing a buyer-supplier relationship will have a more positive impact on an organization's external relational behavior when functional manager's cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is lower compared to when cynicism towards cooperative business relationships is higher*

Relationship Performance

We examine the relationship performance according to the rational goal model that views organizations as striving for efficiency and productivity (Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). This approach leads to six aspects of efficiency and productivity: sales growth, profit growth, overall profitability, liquidity, labor productivity, and cash flow. It would be ideal to measure these performance items with respect to a focal relationship under investigation. However, it may be difficult to collect data in practice because this information (other than sales) may not be available in all organizations. Lusch and Brown (1996) argue that the strength of the focal relationship between buyer and supplier is perhaps 'understated' if the empirical results show a statistically significant relationship between the external relational behaviors and the relationship partner's overall business performance. In line with past studies (e.g., Kumar et al., 1995; Lusch & Brown, 1996) we propose to use subjective measures of "objective" performance. Specifically, we measure the relationship performance by

assessing the perception of success in achieving goals set for that particular relationship.

Higher levels of external relational behavior (i.e., higher levels of information exchange, flexibility, and solidarity in relationships) will be a good thing for inter-organizational relationship performance (Hsu et al., 2008; Lusch & Brown, 1996). The more organizations exchange information with each other, the better they are able to anticipate and respond to each others' needs. Relationships where partners are able to fulfill each others' needs, level of performance of individual and dyadic performance in relationships will be high. Similarly, greater flexibility among relationship partners enables them to adapt more rapidly to environmental changes. The quicker they can respond to these changes, the greater will be their performance. A strong relationship structure between buyer and supplier leads toward enhanced supplier responsiveness (Handfield & Bechtel, 2002).

When relationship partners behave toward each other with solidarity, they jointly try to solve both individual and common problems. They also attempt to improve the relationship as a whole. By working together in the relationship, organizations pool their talents, skills, and financial resources to achieve higher levels of performance than would be possible without such solidarity in their actions. Thus, by freely exchanging information, remaining flexible in their dealings, and acting in solidarity with each other, relationship partners can achieve higher levels of performance. Thus, we propose the following:

> *H₅: The greater the external relational behavior of the organization, the higher its performance in buyer-supplier relationships.*

Methodology

Sample and Measures

To collect the data, a survey was conducted using a database of managers from a professional association representing a key

functional area of business. Specifically, we use survey data from a sample of purchasing executives and managers to empirically test the proposed model. For this purpose, we requested and got a random sample of 1000 members from the membership list of the National Association of Purchase Managers (NAPM). After adjusting for undelivered surveys, we got a response rate of 23%. Using the method suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977), we examined for non-response bias. There were no significant differences between early and late respondents for each of the constructs included in the research study.

We measured all the variables except individual managers' satisfaction with inter-functional interaction and managers' cynicism towards cooperative business relationships at the organizational level. All the variables measured at the organizational level were anchored around a particular relationship. This was achieved by asking the respondent to think about a specific relationship with a major supplier organization that he or she was involved in, in order to respond to the survey.

Established or slightly adapted measures were used to collect the data. The final scales used in the study along with the reliability estimates for each scale are provided in Table 1. For all the measures Cronbach's Alpha values were greater than 0.70, therefore acceptable levels of internal consistency was established (Nunnally 1978). For independent variables, AVE (average variance extracted) values were higher than 0.50, thus satisfying the convergent validity limit as suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981). Discriminant validity was tested by making sure that no single item loaded more highly on another variable than it did on the concerned variable (Fornell & Larker, 1981). None of the variables showed excessive skewness and kurtosis as they fell within acceptable limits as suggested by Avlonitis and Panagopoulos (2006).

One of the key dependent variables, *External Relationship Behaviors* was measured using a three-item scale (e.g., *we are flexible when*

dealing with our major supplier) adapted from Lusch and Brown (1996). In the original scale authors' took a dyadic approach involving wholesaler and supplier. For the current measure, respondents were representing buyer side only. The scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.94$). Moderating variable, *Managers' Cynicism towards Cooperative Business Relationships* was measured using a three-item scale (e.g., *the idea of cooperative alliances is another business fad*) adapted from Wanous et al. (2000). The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Top Management Relationship Advocacy was measured by three-item scale (e.g., *top managers in the firm are frequently the most ardent champions of forming new relationships with other companies*) adapted from Croteau and Li (2003). This measure demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$). Another independent variable, *Infrastructure for Relationship Implementation* was adapted from Sawhney and Zabin (2002). The three-item scale (e.g., *we have a separate alliance function that informs us about best practices in engaging in alliances and helps us with implementing relationships with our partners*) demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.72$). *Interfunctional Interaction Satisfaction* scale was adapted from Campbell (1998). The three-item scale (e.g., *how would you describe the level of interaction, do departments have in your organisation*) demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Analysis and Results

We tested the hypotheses using OLS regression models. In model 1, we tested the relationship between organizational support (i.e., Top Management Relationship Advocacy, Infrastructure for Relationship Implementation), Interfunctional Interaction Satisfaction and External Relationship Behaviors. In model 2, we tested the relationship between External Relationship Behaviors and Relationship performance. Finally, in model 3 and model 4, we tested the

TABLE 1:
Items from Key Measures Used in the Study

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
External Relationship Behaviors (Adapted from Lusch and Brown, 1996) *…We are flexible when dealing with our major suppliers* *…We keep our major supplier informed about events or changes that may affect them* *…When our major supplier incurs problems, we try to help*	0.94
Top Management Relationship Advocacy (Adapted from Croteau and Li, 2003) *…Top managers in the firm are frequently the most ardent champions of forming new relationships with other companies* *…Supplier relationships are considered as a high priority by top management* *…Top management perceives cooperative business relationships with supplier to be part of organization's vision*	0.88
Relationship Implementation Infrastructure (Adapted from Sawhney and Zabin, 2002) *…We have a separate alliance function that informs us about best practices in engaging in alliances and helps us with implementing relationships with our partners* *…There are set clear priorities for separate supplier alliance function involved in implementing relationships with our partners* *…We have a formal strategic plan for supplier relationship initiatives*	0.72
Managers' Cynicism towards Cooperative Business Relationships (Adapted from Wanous *et al.*, 2000) *…The idea of cooperative alliances is another business fad* *…The people responsible for implementing cooperative relationship initiatives around here do not try hard enough to achieve success.* *…The people responsible for implementing cooperative relationship initiatives around here do not have the resources they need to get the job done.*	0.74
Interfunctional Interaction Satisfaction (Adapted from Campbell, 1998) *…. How would you describe the level of interaction, do departments have in your organisation?* *…How flexible is your organizational structure in allowing personnel to interact or job-switch between departments?* *…How would you describe your working relationship with other relevant departments*	0.89
Relationship Performance *….Compared to the goals we set for ourselves for this relationship, our actual performance can be described as…*	0.90

moderation effect of Manager Cynicism towards Cooperative Buyer Relationships.

The results of the analysis are given in Table 2. The results of our analysis suggest that the overall model (Model 1) is significant ($R^2=0.308$, $F_{(5,121)}=7.384$, $p<0.000$). Our data provide support for a strong positive effect of infrastructure on external relational behavior ($\beta=0.184$, $t=2.519$, $p<0.014$), (H_2) and satisfaction with interfunctional interaction ($\beta=.224$, $t=3.049$, $p<0.003$), (H_3). However, contrary to expectations, we find no significant

effects for effects of top management relationship advocacy ($\beta=0.05$, $t=0.731$, ns), (H_1) on external relational behavior, although the coefficient is positive as hypothesized. We also find external relational behavior positively impacting relationship performance ($\beta=.210$, $t=2.130$, $p<0.05$), (H_5) and model 2 is significant ($R^2=0.311$, $F_{(1,124)}=43.351$, $p<0.000$).

To test for moderation, we estimated the model 1 separately for groups with high and low cynicism towards cooperative buyer relationships. We did a mean split of the scale

TABLE 2:
OLS model parameters (and t-statistics)

Relationships	Antecedents to External Relationship Behaviors (ERB)	Outcome of ERB	Moderation test- High Cynicism	Moderation test- Low Cynicism
Relationship Advocacy-- ERB	Ns		.209* (2.120)	ns
Infrastructure for Relationship Implementation-- ERB	.184* (2.519)		.203* (2.206)	ns
Interfunctional Interaction Satisfaction-- ERB	.224** (3.049)		ns	0.262* (2.538)
ERB—Relationship Performance		.210* (2.130)		
R^2	.308	0.311	0.320	0.296
F-statistic	$F_{(5,121)}=7.384$	$F_{(1,124)}=43.351$	$F_{(5,52)}=4.489$	$F_{(5,64)}=3.777$
p	<0.000	<0.000	<0.003	<0.006
*p<.05; ** p<0.005				

mean of cynicism towards cooperative business relationships to categorize the data into the two groups. This approach is aligned with the literature (e.g., Bone, 1995) where researchers testing a moderating variable divides the data in to low and high groups through mean split. Responses scoring above the mean get assigned to the 'high cynicism' group, whereas subjects scoring below the mean were assigned to the 'low cynicism' group. In the "high cynicism" group (model 3), we find the overall model of organizational support and satisfaction variables impacting external relational behaviors significant ($R^2=0.320$, $F_{(5,52)}=4.489$, p<0.003). Data suggests positive influence of top management relationship advocacy (β =.209, t=2.120, p<0.042), and infrastructure (β =.203, t=2.206, p<0.035) on external relational behavior. None of the other variables are significant in the model. In the "low cynicism" group (model 4) too we find the overall model of organizational support and satisfaction

variables impacting external relational behaviors significant ($R^2=0.296$, $F_{(5,64)}=3.777$, p<0.006). Data suggests positive main effects only for satisfaction with inter-functional interaction on external relational behavior (β =0.262, t=2.538, p<0.015). None of the other variables are significant in the model.

Discussion and Implications

Exploring the issues involved in the development and maintenance of buyer-seller relationships remains an important research area for scholars and the topic of 'trust' greatly dominate the discussion in this area. Although trust is a basic factor needed to build and shape introrganizational relationships, researchers have asked more research that diversify the efforts in recognizing some intraorganizational variables that may play important roles in shaping buyer-seller relationships (Andersen &

Kumar, 2006; Kothandaraman & Wilson, 2000).

We recognize the need to improve our understanding of the factors that contribute to the buyer-supplier relationships (Hsu et al., 2008; Rajamma et al., 2011). Therefore, our study seeks to explore some intraorganizational factors critical for business relationships. Specifically, we study the impact of an organization's effort to implement buyer-supplier relationships viz. purchase managers' cynicism toward cooperative business relationships with suppliers. The results highlight the importance of organizational support to successfully implement buyer-supplier relationships and point to the role played by cynical attitudes held by managers in draining the vital resources that an organization allocates to support its efforts to ensure relationships.

The study has several key implications for managers. Achieving and maintaining an alliance is a complex task and failure is not always the result of faulty management process. For example, the parting of ways between GM and FreeMarkets Online showed the fragility of partnerships that did not have a strong founding logic (Anderson & Frohlich, 2001). Similarly, Ford's choice of the Lear Corp as a partner for manufacturing flexible hi-technology seats for Taurus resulted in a lot of difficulties leading to considerable project delays (Walton, 1997). These examples demonstrate the problem in strategic choices primarily because organizations differ in their abilities to implement alliance strategies. When Genentech, a Northern California-based biotechnology firm entered into an alliance with Hoffmann La Roche of Switzerland, the synergy between each company's strengths and weaknesses suggested a strong logic for the alliance. However, both companies failed to foster a culture of flexibility and adaptability within their respective organizations leading to the failure of the alliance (Doorley, 1993). This example suggests a process failure (Doorley, 1993) and deals with issues that govern inter-organizational relationship strategies.

The results of this study suggest that top management relationship advocacy, a key ingredient of organizational support, on its own is not a predictor of external relationship behavior. However, along with the other key factor i.e. infrastructure for relationship implementation, top management advocacy matters more when there is still cynicism among functional managers towards cooperative business relationship paradigm than when such cynicism is less prevalent. This is an important empirical finding and confirms what practitioners have feared all along. Notably, larger organizations tend to rely on established systems to make sure strategies are executed successfully and the top management's time available to champion various causes is quite limited. Under such scenario, our results suggest that if the top management does a good job of communicating the rationale behind pursuing a cooperative relationship path, for instance, with their suppliers, and reduce the level of cynicism among its managers, the systems and processes themselves will insure the success of relationships. Our study also suggests that having dedicated infrastructure in place for conducting inter-organizational relationships does lead to successful execution of relationship marketing strategy.

Organizations understanding the importance of inter-organizational relationship should try to encourage their executives by dispelling fears that the partnerships were designed to take away jobs or that partner will exploit the sensitive information. The concerned firm should introduce structural changes that support a new relationship paradigm of doing business. An organization that attempts to get into a relationship with its suppliers may decide to concede the relationship in public. This step may send positive signals to its own executives and managers to view supplier firm as a partner rather an adversary. In summary, companies should view successful execution of relationship strategy as the cornerstone of their overall alliance strategy.

Certainly, like any other research study, our investigation also has its own set of limitations.

For example, the sample methodology reflects a number for trade-offs. The study's sample comprises the professionals from different organizations. While this helps gain the generalizability, it does not control for different organizational factors in various firms. The research presented here offers only a snapshot in time. Also the study is cross-sectional in nature and therefore, it is difficult to comprehensively realize the order of effects. This constraint left us to assume some level of causality. Future researchers may study these variables in a longitudinal setting and provide a better understanding of the relationships between them. Similarly, an opportunity exists to further expand upon our study. Further, we have looked at cynicism on the buyer side only. It may be equally interesting to look at attitudes on sellers' side and its consequences to relationship success. In terms of measurement limitations, we measured external relational behaviors as one global construct. However, there could be different types of relational behaviors and their relevance would also depend on different industries. For future research, it would be interesting to incorporate a multidimensional construct and explore links with organizational support dimensions.

Some of the theoretical arguments that we adapted to develop our hypothesized framework could prove complex to implement in practice. For example we align with a theoretical viewpoint that external relational behaviors will lead to relationship performance. However, if partnering firms exchange too much information then say firm 'A' can do what firm 'B' does and there could be no need for a relationship. Similarly, increased flexibility may come with increased costs which then might lead to lower relationship performance. A firm's external relational behaviors, therefore, are good up to a point. Beyond that optimal point there could be diminishing returns or even negative effects. Therefore, it would be interesting to evaluate this relationship in different situations and different formats (e.g., linear vs. inverted U effects). Future studies could examine different contingency factors, involving those for the

market environment, organizational culture and most importantly reward mechanisms. Reward system has been traditionally considered as an element of strategy and as such has been studied in the context of attaining "congruence" with other strategic elements (Balkin & Gomez-Mejia, 1990). There has been evidence that middle managers are not motivated to implement corporate strategies that conflict with their own self-interest (Guth & MacMillan, 1986). However, due to data limitations, we were unable to include this construct. Future studies could include the reward system or control mechanism to better assess the impact of organizational support.

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CONSUMER VALUES AND THE TENDENCY TO USE THE BRAND NAME IN PURCHASE DECISIONS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

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This work analyses the relationship between personal consumer values and the tendency to use the brand name in consumption decisions. We hypothesized that the tendency to use brand name is influenced by consumer values and that there are differences between countries. Although brand name is an important issue in business strategies and brands are very important in the consumers' lives, there is a little literature about their antecedents.

A Web-based survey of two samples in Spain and Russia was carried out. Results show that nine of eleven values have significant effect on the tendency to use brand name. There is no difference between Spaniards and Russians in terms of the degree by which the values contribute to this explanation. There are differences in the values shown by consumers having high and low tendency to use brand name. Some personal values are antecedents of the tendency to use brand name –where there is a void in the literature– and it can help businesses recognize which ones can help in the design of marketing strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Gardner and Levy (1955) pointed out the importance of the brand name and established it as a complex system of symbols representing ideas and attributes. Since then, the brand name has been thoroughly studied and it is accepted as being crucial in identifying the product, differentiating it from the competition, and creating association with the brand (Del Rio, Vazquez & Iglesias, 2001).

Recent literature has dealt with its influence upon product recognition (Lerman & Garbarino, 2002), upon positioning when the identity it offers can compensate for consumer ignorance (Zhou & Hui, 2003; Strizhakova, Coulter & Price, 2008), or as an indicator of product quality (Brucks, Zeithaml & Naylor, 2000), among others. Moreover, the brand name is more important when there are few attributes to assess (Degeratu, Rangaswamy & Wub, 2000), and it affects the decision-making

process in all phases (e.g. McEnally & De Chernatony, 1999).

Various authors (e.g. Pitts, Canty & Tsalikis, 1985; Quester, Beverland & Farrelly, 2006) claim to know the link between personal values and selection criteria that permits a more complete consumer vision. Pitts et al. (1985) found that consumers perceive those brands that "fit" their value systems to be more attractive. Just the same, Kim, Boush, Marquardt & Kahle (2006) demonstrate that communication that links brands with personal values is more effective. However, little is known about (that we know of) that analyses the role of values in the tendency to use the brand name and, as such, it seems that it is relevant to figure out whether these values serve as antecedents for this tendency.

Our objective is to find out whether consumer values influence use of the tendency to use brand name, if the influence is homogenous between countries, and whether there are values where differences exist between consumers with high/low tendency to use brand name. First, the hypotheses development being assessed is presented. Second, the methodology

used is described to subsequently evaluate the quality of the measurements utilized, to conduct the analyses and discuss the findings. The work finishes with an exposition about future lines of investigation and the limitations of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

What does 'Brand Name' mean?

Brand name is one of the most important components of branding and could be defined as the element of the brand that is verbalized by consumers, and may contain words, numbers and other symbols (Bennett, 1988). As Aaker and Keller (1990) point out, any brand name must be descriptive, suggestive and distinctive as ideal criteria, and should build associations with the product and company. Consistently with the associative network memory model (Anderson,1993), has been suggested that brand name is a connection between what the corporation wants the consumers realize and the associations they built in their memory (Urde, 1999). Thus, brand name can be related to the consumers' perceptions, expectations and feelings about a product, reflecting the associations, consumers build in their minds.

When is the brand name used? It is used when: (1) the consumer wishes to show it off as an signal of status/quality; (2) the brand name "absorbs" other criteria –due to consumer ignorance or the existence of few relevant criteria; (3) it transforms into a generic term (e.g. aspirin) to determine an entire product category (e.g. analgesics); and, (4) the consumer decision is subordinated to what the brand transmits, this being determinant in the decision output.

In general, brand names provide symbolic meanings which assist in the consumer decision -making process (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993) and can simplify for consumers their decision–making process and their shopping (McNeal & Zerren, 1981). The associations generate value to the consumer, although it will depend on the

consumers' perception and expectation of value.

The Tendency to Use the Brand Name

The tendency to use brand name, as a selection criterion, has been studied principally from the perspective of brand equity (e.g. Jung & Sung, 2008), and from a relational focus (e.g. Aggarwal, 2004). Bengtsson (2003) affirms that frequent interactions with brands can make the consumers more dependent upon them, and it has been affirmed that the consumer-brand relationship can be seen as a dependent and interdependent relationship (Bradley, Maxian, Laubacher& Baker, 2007). Brands are everywhere we look, we must pronounce them when soliciting them and we think about them during the purchasing process. Then, it is normal that a positive or negative susceptibility can be produced towards the use of the brand name. Furthermore, tendency to use brand name or the brand name as the principal or sole reference of the product is due to it acting as a facilitator and transmitter of its image, its culture, its values and quality (Brucks et al., 2000).

Bristow, Schneider & Schuler (2002) state brand dependence as "the tendency of an individual to use brand name in the purchase decision" (p. 346). Therefore, they equate the 'dependence' with the 'tendency to use'. It seems a "light" vision from the 'dependence' concept, just as it is used in psychology or in the organizational areas. In psychology, this has been defined as the necessity of being close to another/others, the inclination of being a recipient of their approval, or the tendency to be in a position of inferiority (Miele et al, 1990). In organizational area, it refers to the situation of subordination where the inputs and outputs are controlled by another/others (Pfeffer, 1992). Therefore, in following the definition of Bristow et al. we will speak about '*the tendency to use the brand name*' and not of Brand Dependence.

To conclude, Hui (2010) points out that there is little attention paid to the role that the brand

name takes in consumers' decision–making, although it is well known the consumer's propensity to use the brand name to deciding which product to buy (Bristow et al., 2002).

Brand Name and Consumer Values

It has been shown that consumers make decisions considering their values, ideas, and personal and cultural symbols (e.g. De Mooij, 2004). That is normally understood as those beliefs that guide the selection of products and decision-making from a desired point of view (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987).

Kim, Forsythe, Gu & Moon (2002) and other authors defend that the brand strategy cannot be developed behind the backs of consumer values, and Pitts and Woodside (1983) indicate that these values are related with the importance given to the selection criteria. Rose, Shoham, Kahle & Batra (1994) find that, in general, social values are positively associated with the use of the brand name for clothing. Tarka (2008) reaches a similar conclusion by affirming that the values of '*Sense of Belonging*' and '*Being Well–Respected*' are those most associated with the brand name and the product style (clothing especially). From an international perspective, cultural values can influence the policies based on brand name as much as they do in the consumer response before the brand name.

Regarding how these affect the preferences and judgments of consumers and how the values guide product selection, it is coherent to maintain that a relationship between the values and the tendency to use brand name can exist. This is more important by how much Lotz, Shim and Gehrt (2003) affirm that this relationship does not seem to be influenced by the situational context. Therefore:

> *Hypothesis 1: There is a significant impact of the consumer values on the tendency to use the brand name in purchase decision making.*

One interesting question in cross-cultural studies is to check whether consumers from

different countries or cultures tend to behave similarly (or not) in an ever-more globalized world. The convergence in the behaviors as consumers and in their antecedents (e.g. values, technology) is important because it affects the policies of brand, distribution and advertising (De Mooij, 2003). This author concludes that the consumers in different countries (European) tend to diverge in how they use and consume products, although the value structure is invariant (Davidov, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008).

Yeh, Kim, Chompreedac, Rimkeeree, Yaud & Lundahla (1998) found that Chinese, Koreans, and Thai respond differently than Americans concerning hedonism, but that there is homogeneity in the Asian countries. However, Kim et al. (2002) find cultural differences between Chinese and Korean consumers born from different consumer values and necessities. Consumer values affect attitudes and behavior as well as the hierarchy of necessities in purchasing situations for specific products (e.g. Kim et al., 2002). Given that values differ between cultures, it is expected that the effect of the values upon the tendency to use brand name would be distinct in different countries.

> *Hypothesis2. Consumers from different countries display values whose contributions on the tendency to use the brand name are different.*

The literature and business practices show that the brand name is one of the greatest assets of any business or product.

It is normal for consumers to use the brand name, but the tendency to use it in excess, like the principal or almost lone criterion, does not seem to be a desirable situation if it is advisable for the functioning consumer to utilize more adequate criteria for each purchase situation. Therefore, it appears coherent to propose that a high tendency to use brand name would increase the vulnerability of the consumer to reduce the impact from the functional criteria. Now then, do consumers with tendency to use brand name score higher or lower in some specific values? We have not found previous studies, so therefore we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Consumers with high tendency to use the brand name possess differences in the values with respect to those that possess a low tendency to use the brand name.

METHODS

Countries and product category

The study was conducted in Spain and Russia because it is of interest to contrast two markets with different cultures, and additionally, many Spanish businesses are interested in the Russian market due to it being emerging and having the highest perspectives for growth among the Eastern European economies (World Bank' Report, 2009).

We have focused on footwear as a reference product because: (a) it is a universal product; (b) many brands develop their brand strategies based on the brand name; and, (c) there are strong economic interests in this. Spain is the second-largest European manufacturer, and exports more than 70% of its production. Presently, Spain is confronted by strong Chinese competition, and is in need of information and innovation in its products as well as in its marketing strategies.

Sampling and Data Collection

A Web–based survey was administered. In order to create the questionnaires in Spanish and Russian, the *back–translation* methodology was followed. The first translation of English to Spanish/Russian was made by university academics, and subsequently revised by a translation business by inverse translation. Finally, both translations to Spanish/Russian were supervised by users whose native tongues include these two languages.

The sampling is not strictly random, as the answers obtained are owed to successive efforts made by the authors and their respective social networks to transmit the URL, with advertising at workplaces and at two Spanish and Russian universities. The sampling design is comparable

to an *Adaptive Web sampling method* (Bao & Bakker, 2010). In order to improve the representation, quotas of sex, relative income, age and habits were required. We eliminated those questionnaires completed: (a) by persons over the age of 80 and under 18; (b) in less time than that estimated as a minimum in the pre-test; and, (c) with systematic, extreme or inconsistent answers.

Table 1 lists the sample profiles for each country; they are made up of young individuals with average ages of 33.5 (Spanish) and 31.3 (Russian), whose difference in absolute terms, 2.2, is not relevant.

TABLE 1:
Descriptive from Samples

Variable	Levels	Spain	Russia
	Samples	321	375
Gender (%)	Male	47.4	33.3
	Female	52.6	66.7
Age (%)	Q1(18 – 23 years old)	15.9	28.0
	Q2 (24 – 27)	19.9	20.0
	Q3(28 – 33)	22.8	18.9
	Q4(34 – 41)	22.4	15.0
	Q5 (age > 41)	19.0	18.1
Relative income (%)	Well above average	6.2	2.7
	Above average	12.5	15.2
	On average	52.3	62.1
	Below average	25.2	17.6
	Well below average	3.7	2.4
Habitat (%)	> 4 mill. inhabitants	1.9	65.1
	1.1 to 4 mill. inhabitants	5.9	6.9
	501 th. to 1 mill. inhabitants	11.5	20.8
	100 th. - 500 th. inhabitants	45.2	2.4
	< 100 th. inhabitants	26.7	2.7
	Scattered	9.6	2.1

Scales

Brand dependence. Bristow et al. (2002) scale of seven items with answers having 6 points (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree). Zarantonello (2008) points out that items 2, 3 and 6 present their statements by mentioning a single brand name. Items 1, 4, 5 and 7 "*alternative and competing brand names are indicated as well*" (Zarantonello, 2008, p. 202). Therefore, the former understand it as one-

dimensional and the latter as two-dimensional, without any previous studies existing confirming either one of the positions.

Consumer values: We used the *Portrait Values Questionnaire* –PVQ– (Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, Harris & Owens, 2001) that while different from those proposed by Khale or Rokeach it raises non-abstract items. So the survey must point out to what degree a person is perceived as being equal or not similar. This system is utilized in the European Social Survey, and here it is proposed in the same way.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Bristow's et al. Scale Reliability and Validity

Tendency to use the brand name (TBN) is analyzed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and maximum likelihood estimation. The reliability is confirmed by Cronbach's α, the composite reliability coefficient and the average variation extracted (AVE). In order to check the discriminant validity of the latent variables, it is verified when in all cases the AVE is superior to the square of the correlations with other constructs as well as when none of these includes the value "1" in the confidence interval test.

Because there are two proposals with respect to its dimensionality, we first verified the adjustment for the different options (Table 2). It was observed that none of them offered satisfactory results, so we proceeded to regroup

the items. The best adjustment considers two dimensions:

Dimension 1 (TBN_D1: items 1, 2, 3): namely "the role of brand name as a criterion to make a selection", and

Dimension 2 (TBN_D2: items 4, 5 and 6): namely "the dependence of brand name to choose between two or more brands".

The seventh item of the scale of Bristow et al. (2002) was deleted due to its reduced factor loading.

It was observed that the scale shows the best adjustment when a dimension centred on the role of the brand name is considered as a criterion for the decision, and another centred on the use of the brand name as the most important criterion in making a purchase decision. From here on, all the analyses are performed for the dimensions offering the best adjustment (Scale C in Table 2).

Reliability. Cronbach's α of 0.95 for TBN_D1 and 0.92 for TBN_D2, with a rho coefficient of 0.98, is well above the minimums fixed by the literature. The extracted variance is superior to 50% in all cases, although it is maximized for the best adjustment.

Validity. For the convergent validity, the confirmatory factor loadings must be superior to 0.70 and all must be significant. The discriminating validity is estimated by comparing the AVE and the squared correlation (SC) in such a way that the AVE is greater than the second for each pair of concepts. Our

TABLE 2:
Tendency to use the brand name scale: Fits for global sample (Spain and Russia)

Scale	χ^2	χ^2/df	CFI	IFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA	IFC	AVE
A	171.944*	12.281	0.974	0.974	0.961	0.017	0.127	0.962	0.786
B	171.944*	13.226	0.974	0.974	0.958	0.018	0.133	0.953(D_1) 0.932(D_2)	0.872(D_1) 0.593(D_2)
C	29.019*	3.627	0.996	0.996	0.993	0.008	0.061	0.965(D_1) 0.978(D_2)	0.902(D_1) 0.830(D_2)
* p<0.000; A= Scale from Bristow *et al.*; B=Zarantonello's Proposal; C=Our better fit D_1 and D_2 are the dimensions of construct									

results show that the lowest factor loading is 0.925 for TBN_D1 and 0.901 for TBN_D2. The AVE ranged from 0.660 to 0.526, while the SC ranged from 0.465 to 0.238. These results suggest that the validity and reliability conditions are observed (Table 2).

Invariance. This is proven by multi-group analysis using EQS 6.1, following Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998). Firstly, the 'configural invariance' does not set restrictions between the two samples in order to study whether the same factorial structure is presented. Next, we set the equality restriction in the 'factor loadings' for each sample and verify that with the simultaneous estimation of the model in both samples the number of factors is the same and that the adjustment is good (Table 3). Upon adding the equality restriction of factor loadings in both samples, the adjustment of the model does not worsen, confirming the metric invariance.

TABLE 3:
Test of measurement invariance of tendency to use the brand name scale in Russia and Spain

	X^2	df	ΔX^2	Δ df	ρ	RMSEA (90%CI)	SRMR	CFI	NNFI
Single Group Solution									
Spain (n=321)	23.68	8			0.003	0.078 (0.043, 0.115)	0.017	0.993	0.987
Russia (n=375)	12.88	8			0.116	0.040 (0.000, 0.079)	0.004	0.999	0.998
Measurement Invariance									
Equal form	36.57	16			0.002	0.061 (0.035,0.087)	0.012	0.997	0.994
Equal factor loadings	45.57	22	9.001	6	0.002	0.056 (0.032, 0.078)	0.103	0.996	0.995

TABLE 4:
Descriptives and F, t and z statistics for consumer values

Value	Spain		Russia		F statistic [a]	t–value	K–S z score
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Power	2.89	1.32	3.39	1.47	22.56***	4.71***	2.73***
Achievement	3.26	1.26	3.57	1.37	9.38***	3.04***	1.76***
Hedonism	4.54	1.08	4.10	1.47	21.12***	4.49***	2.17***
Stimulation	3.44	1.36	3.57	1.41	1.43	1.20	0.73
Self–direction	4.62	1.02	4.58	1.16	0.28	0.53	0.47
Universalism	5.04	0.88	3.99	1.42	142.20***	11.52***	4.46***
Benevolence	5.10	0.81	4.69	1.09	33.56***	5.66***	2.71***
Tradition	3.88	1.21	3.51	1.42	13.51***	3.63***	1.42**
Conformity	4.09	1.23	4.71	1.24	43.24***	6.58***	3.39***
Security	3.80	1.41	4.27	1.37	20.40***	4.53***	2.17***
[a] Used Brown–Forsythe test if Levene's statistic is significative *** p<0.001 ; ** p<0.01 ; * p<0.10							

Consumer Values

Table 4 shows the descriptives (average and standard deviation), as well as the results of comparing the two countries with respect to consumer values. Different behavior was observed in both the average value (calculated by a t-statistic) as well as in the distribution (proven with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov Z test).

Except for the values of 'Self–direction' and 'Stimulation', the distributions of the remaining values are different for the two countries under study. The Spanish sample is characterized as being more hedonistic, traditional, wanting to help third parties, and wanting justice for all. In the Russian sample, the desire is for power, the search for success and showing it, greater respect for rules (Conformity) and the desire for Security for their country. With this, it is concluded that the two countries reveal values with a different statistical mean and distribution.

Research Findings

Hypothesis 1. We hypothesized that consumer values influence the tendency to use brand name, and was tested it with linear regressions for the global scale and each subscale where the independent variables are the values and the dependent variables are the consumer's tendency to use brand name. Table 5 shows the adjusted R^2, the regression standardized coefficients (betas) and F statistics. The existence of collinearity was verified by the '*variance inflation factor –VIF–'*. As all VIF < 2.01, we can conclude that there is no multicollinearity (the rule of Kleinbaum shows there is collinearity if VIF > 10).

By applying F-test of R^2 significance (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003), it is observed that the values significantly contribute to the tendency to use brand name, except in the regression for Dimension 1 in Spain, where p=0.109. In general, the Russian sample presents more significant values than does the Spanish one (5 against 1 for the general scale, while for Dimension 2 there are 2 against none

– by being the non-significant R^2– in dimension 1). Thus, although we have found that five of six regression have significant R^2, our hypothesis is partially supported.

Why our hypothesis fails when Spaniards are considered for Dimension 1 and not the same for Russians? Based on the results of the Table 5 we can conclude that the only difference between Spaniards and Russians is that the last ones present significant beta for the value "stimulation" while the same not occurs for Spaniards. This value is directly related to risk-taking and, therefore, the difference between the two regressions resides in the role that this value plays: For Russians, risk-taking is positively related to the use of brand name as a criterion to make a decision, while the Spaniards, being more cautious, do not express such risk-taking and, therefore, there is no positive impact on the tendency to use the brand name.

More specifically:
   By countries, the Spanish sample only reveals a maximum of two contributing significant values to the tendency to use brand name (positive for Tradition and negative for Universalism –it is alone for Dimension 2). In the Russian sample, there are more values which have an influence upon the tendency to use brand name, some positive (Achievement, Stimulation, Tradition), while there are others negative (Hedonism, Benevolence).
   Considering the construct dimensions, Dimension 1 (role of the brand name) is that seen influenced less by consumer values, while the use of the brand as the most important criterion (Dimension 2) does show more values that are significant.

Hypothesis 2. We hypothesized that consumer values must show a distinct contribution towards the tendency to use brand name in function of the country. We applied equivalence analysis of the regression

TABLE 5:
Results from regression analyses for H$_1$

Brand Name Tendency	Scale (global)		TBN_D1		TBN_D2	
	Spain	Russia	Spain	Russia	Spain	Russia
Adjusted R^2 F Test (R^2) ANOVA	0.072 2.405*** 3.47***	0.087 2.954*** 2.66***	0.049 1.597 2.66***	0.075 2.514*** 4.01***	0.086 2.917*** 4.00***	0.096 3.292*** 4.97***
Betasà	$\beta_{(Spain)}$	$\beta_{(Russia)}$	$\beta_{(Spain)}$	$\beta_{(Russia)}$	$\beta_{(Spain)}$	$\beta_{(Russia)}$
Power	0.088	0.021	0.072	0.018	0.099	0.023
Achievement	0.082	0.137**	0.084	0.116	0.074	0.155**
Hedonism	−0.066	−0.127**	−0.040	−0.106	−0.090	−0.146**
Stimulation	0.065	0.148**	0.039	0.125**	0.088	0.168***
Self–direction	−0.045	0.021	−0.045	0.032	−0.042	0.009
Universalism	−0.096	−0.013	−0.072	−0.024	−0.116*	−0.001
Benevolence	−0.051	−0.108*	−0.047	−0.091	−0.052	−0.124**
Tradition	0.201***	0.280***	0.186***	0.274***	0.204***	0.280***
Conformity	−0.081	0.048	−0.074	0.050	−0.084	0.044
Security	0.108*	−0.066	0.097	−0.057	0.113*	−0.073

*** p<0.001 ; ** p<0.01 ; * p<0.10

coefficients in two independent samples where for each consumer value the obtained betas must be significantly different in the two countries. This would imply that persons from different cultures respond differently to the tendency to use brand name.

We utilized the proof of Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle & Piquero (1998), that starts from the null hypothesis $\beta_{(Spain)} = \beta_{(Russia)}$. Table 6 shows the results of the test for equality of coefficients, where the betas obtained are compared for each country and by the tendency to use brand name dimension. We did not find the predicted differences in the value coefficients that were significant, concluding that in Spain and Russia the values which do significantly influence the tendency to use brand name do not show statistically different standardized coefficients of regression and, as such, convergence exists in their contribution to the tendency to use brand name.

Based on the above-mentioned, we conclude that H$_2$ is not supported.

Hypothesis 3. The final hypothesis considers that consumers with high and low tendency to use brand name must show significantly different values. In order to differentiate between high and low tendency to use brand name, we divided the sample into three levels (tertiles) to compare tertil 1 (T1) with tertil 3 (T3). By applying the t-test (Table 7), we observed that the consumers with high tendency to use brand name score significantly higher in Power, Achievement, Stimulation, Tradition and Security. Therefore we accept H$_3$.

CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this work is to expand the knowledge about the tendency to use brand name, focused on consumer values and the relationships between these values and the tendency to use brand name in Russia and Spain. Why in these countries? The are limited empirical evidence within actual Russian vs. European consumers and many companies need greater knowledge of both 'new consumers' (from countries that are joining to

TABLE 6:
Z(dif.betas) scores from Paternoster's *et al.* test

Values	Scale (global)	TBN_D1	TBN_D2
Power	0.867	0.697	0.983
Achievement	0.674	0.394	0.989
Hedonism	0.689	0.748	0.637
Stimulation	1.074	1.112	1.028
Self–direction	0.660	0.767	0.511
Universalism	0.804	0.460	1.114
Benevolence	0.484	0.369	0.608
Tradition	0.960	1.060	0.916
Conformity	1.492*	1.435*	1.477*
Security	2.249**	1.993**	2.408**

*** p<0.001 ; ** p<0.01 ; * p<0.10

TABLE 7:
Descriptives and t–values for T1 and T3 groups

Consumer Value	T1 Mean(SD)	T3 Mean(SD)	t–value
Power	2.96(1.48)	3.35(1.40)	−2.903***
Achievement	3.21(1.37)	3.53(1.32)	−2.534**
Hedonism	4.24(1.40)	4.17(1.31)	0.598
Stimulation	3.36(1.48)	3.58(1.31)	−1.684*
Self–direction	4.60(1.08)	4.57(1.09)	0.225
Universalism	4.47(1.42)	4.36(1.36)	0.832
Benevolence	4.89(1.07)	4.84(1.08)	0.497
Tradition	3.35(1.42)	4.02(1.26)	−5.399***
Conformity	4.40(1.31)	4.58(1.31)	−1.513
Security	3.98(1.50)	4.26(1.30)	−2.113**

Samples: n(T1)=231 ; n(T2)=228
*** p<0.001 ; ** p<0.01 ; * p<0.10

the society of consumption, like Russia) and 'experienced European consumers' (like Spain). We have concluded that Russian and Spanish consumers differ in their values, but the contribution of each value to the tendency to use brand name is fairly similar in both countries. There are also significant differences between consumers having high and low tendency to use brand name with respect to the cited values.

These results suggest that the values are variables that contribute in a significant way (although reduced in absolute contribution) in explaining the tendency to use brand name.

This is important for businesses by offering information that can improve the communication and the product focus, above all in a market –the Spanish one– that is suffering through two crises (the present recession and that produced by competition from Chinese footwear), as well as in the other –the Russian– that is emerging.

Finally, we recommend that companies come up with a strong knowledge about consumers personal values and their connection with brand name if they want to gain their clients, because it not only has the ability to reduce their perceived risk (Srinivasan & Till, 2002) but has

become means for consumers to express themselves as well. Even more if we consider, that the largest worldwide footwear competitor is China, which competes with low prices and by copying designs. This makes it a priority for China's competitors to learn about other elements that allow for differentiation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

By our judgment, our study has three limitations. First, it deals with a study of exploratory character that must be expanded and deepened in the study of the relationships between decision-making criteria (a person's core values and other more practical values) and brand importance, as well as in the study of the relationships between the dependence the consumer has in many cases upon the brand name and the consumer's values. Second, we utilised values that could be considered 'classic' and positive in focus. Despite coming from the universal list of values, we believe that other "postmodern" values should be included (e.g. independence, globalization, sustainability, social identity, diversity) in addition to anti-values (e.g. conformism, aversion/hostility, insecurity, consumerism) that refer to aspects closer to that recognized as '*the dark side of consumer behavior*'. Finally, the sample does not have a strictly random nature because it was obtained by the authors' efforts and the collaboration with their social and professional networks. Although the samples formed by an adaptive *sampling method* are accepted in the literature, they can include non-random biases that must be controlled.

There are two primary lines for future research. Firstly, the introduction of other modern values and anti-values in the analysis to confirm whether the reduced explanation of the values is due to its own nature or due to not analyzing those that could certainly affect the behavior more. Marketing literature has focused on classical personal values using Schwartz's, Kahle's or LOV's proposals. The majority of values are positive and someone are negative (materialism, ethnocentrism). Nevertheless, the

emergency of new values and anti-values may be include in future research due to consumers and societies are changing (Voinea & Filip, 2011).

Secondly, the objective of our line of investigation is to figure out what other values can be antecedents of the tendency to use brand name, like for example, perceived risk or expertise. Managers know that brand name is an important concept in obtaining differential advantages, and a necessary tool for product policy (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Knowing the influence of other modern and postmodern values and their role to increase the tendency to use the brand name may be an interesting contribute to our understanding of consumers' response to brand names.

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A GENERATIONAL COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC-BASED AND WAR-BASED CONSUMER ANIMOSITY: THE CASES OF U.S. CONSUMER ANIMOSITY TOWARDS CHINA AND VIETNAM

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Marketing literature suggests that unique marketing strategies are needed for each American generation (Moschis, 2003). The current research examines how unique generational formative experiences affect the American consumer's animosity towards China (economi-based animosity) and Vietnam (war-based animosity). The research responds to the Amine et al. (2005) call for the examination of consumer animosity in a historical context. The generational age cohorts are used as a proxy for values and dispositions that help determine a consumer's animosity towards China and Vietnam and the willingness to buy Chinese and Vietnamese products. The contribution of the research is to place American consumer animosity in a historical context in order to shed light on how environment and context lead to differences in attitudes towards foreign countries and their products. Results indicate that economic-based animosity is more temporary and less likely to be passed from generation to generation compared to war-based animosity.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing literature suggests that unique marketing strategies are needed for each American generation (Moschis, 2003). The differences between the Depression (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomer (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976), and Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1994) (Hawkins et al., 2003) age cohorts are based upon values, preferences, and behaviors unique to each generation and were developed based upon individuals' formative experiences shared as a generation (Smith & Clurman, 1997). While age has been identified as a factor to the development of consumer animosity (Klein & Ettenson, 1999), the questions remain: Do older consumers harbor more animosity towards foreign nations? Is it the environment in which each person forms his or her values, preferences, and behaviors that helps determine one's level of animosity?

The current research examines how these unique generational formative experiences affect the American consumer's animosity towards China and Vietnam. The current research responds to the Amine, Chao, and Arnold (2005) call for the examination of consumer animosity in a historical context. The generational age cohorts are used as a proxy for values and dispositions that help determine a consumer's animosity towards China and Vietnam and the willingness to buy Chinese and Vietnamese products. The contribution of the research is to place American consumer animosity in a historical context in order to shed light on how environment and context lead to differences in attitudes towards foreign countries and their products.

First, a review of the consumer animosity and generational differences literature is provided. Next, Study 1 examines the relationship between the United States and China. The study focuses on the environment of the U.S. during each generational age cohort and the U.S./China relationship during those years. Based on the literature review and historical

examination hypotheses are developed. The methodology and results are then provided for Study 1.

Next, Study 2 examines the relationship between the United States and Vietnam. The historical examination focuses on the U.S./Vietnam relationship during each of the American generations. Based on the literature review and historical examination hypotheses are developed. The methodology and results are then provided for Study 2. Finally, a discussion of both studies is provided focusing on the differences between war-based and economic-based animosities. The paper concludes with the study's limitations and suggested future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Animosity

Previous literature has defined animosity as anger directed at a particular country due to political, economic, diplomatic, or military events (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998). Regardless of the cause of the animosity, the overall consensus is that a firm's sales can be damaged by consumers' animosity towards the firm's home country (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Klein et al. (1998) was the first study to suggest that consumer animosity leads to a lower willingness of the consumer to purchase products from the nation for which the animosity is focused. Using the background of the Nanjing massacre in which the Japanese killed thousands of Chinese, Klein et al. indicated that animosity had a negative impact on Chinese consumers purchasing Japanese products.

The Klein et al. (1998) study also suggested that animosity affected the willingness to purchase separately from product quality judgments. The finding that animosity affected purchase decisions separately challenged the findings from previous country-of-origin (COO) literature (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Previous COO literature had suggested that COO affects purchase decisions through

product judgments (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Liefeld, 1993). Therefore, consumer animosity may act as a direct independent variable instead of a moderating variable of product quality perceptions.

Since Klein et al.'s (1998) study subsequent research has studied animosity in other contexts. Much of the research studied animosity in less extreme contexts (Shin, 2001; Klein, 2002) because the Nanjing massacre is such an extreme antecedent to the development of animosity. Also, Amine et al. (2005) reviewed animosity research with a focus on managerial implications instead of focusing on the conceptualization or measurement of the animosity construct. Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) categorize previous consumer animosity studies into three categories. The first group of research is the original papers that contributed to the theoretical foundation of the animosity construct. The second group of research consists of replications of the original animosity research provided by Klein et al. (1998) that sought to validate the behavioral impact of the consumer animosity construct. The third group of research focuses on extending the applicability of the animosity construct. For example, Hinck (2004) studied "domestic animosity", looking at the impact of inter-border tensions on buying behavior. Also, Shoham (2006) studies inter-ethnic animosity between Jewish and Arab Israelis. These more recent studies that attempt to extend the animosity construct supports our suggestion of a need of a broader consumer animosity model.

The Nanjing massacre study (Klein et al., 1998) is a demonstration of stable animosity (Ang, Jung, Kau, Leong, Pornpitakpan, & Tan, 2004). The Chinese have had a long lasting, enduring animosity directed at Japan for more than 50 years (the Nanjing massacre took place in 1937). A more recent longitudinal study (Ettenson & Klein, 2005) provided evidence for situational animosity (Ang et al., 2004). The Ettenson and Klein research measured animosity levels of Australian consumers at two points in time. The first time point was during

France's nuclear testing in the South Pacific which caused tensions between the two nations. The second measurement of animosity took place one year later after the nuclear testing had been stopped. The findings showed that the level of consumer animosity had decreased within the one year period. Not only did the Ettenson and Klein study demonstrate that temporary animosity exists, providing evidence that Ang et al.'s (2004) refinement of the animosity construct was warranted, it also provided evidence that Amine et al.'s (2005) suggestion that a historical perspective and contextual understanding is needed in order to distinguish between the different types of consumer animosity.

The Klein et al. (1998) study showed that war-based, economic-based, or overall animosity (animosity measured without distinguishing the sources of the negative feeling) all have an negative impact on the willingness of the consumer to purchase a product from the country in which the consumer has feelings of animosity. However, the study also suggested that consumers were able to objectively evaluate the quality of the product as earlier mentioned.

Multiple antecedents to the development of consumer animosity have been shown in previous literature. The antecedents can be classified as war-, economic-, social/ cultural-, and personal-based (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Along with consumer animosity antecedents, subjective norms such as patriotism, nationalism, and collectivism have been shown to affect how consumers use their animosity in their purchase intentions (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Shoham, Davidow, Klein, & Ruvio, 2006).

War-based indiscretions may be war atrocities committed by a country such as the Nanjing massacre (Klein et al., 1998). War-based consumer animosity is a more stable, long lasting animosity that can be passed down from generation to generation (Jung, Ang, Leong, Tan, Pornpitakpan, & Kau, 2002; Ang et al.,

2004). Therefore, American animosity towards Vietnam developed due to the Vietnam conflict would be long lasting and passed down from generation to generation.

Economic animosity is concerned with a country's economic policies, power, and suffering caused by these policies and power. Furthermore, economic animosity may be more situational and shorter in duration compared to war-based animosity (Ang et al., 2004). Therefore, American animosity, based on the increasing economic power of China, may not be passed down from generation to generation thus will be shorter in duration.

Additionally, subjective norms or reference group influences affect behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). Marketers have generally accepted that reference group influence is important in at least some types of consumer decision making (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Witt (1969), in a consumer brand choice study, found that group cohesiveness, which cultural beliefs such as patriotism, nationalism, and collectivism are closely tied, influences behavior (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). The more group cohesiveness a consumer believes to be involved, the more influence the group has upon brand choice decisions. By using prominent reference group members, or alluding to reference groups in persuasive marketing attempts, marketers demonstrate the belief that reference groups generate pressure for conformity to group, or subjective norms. A consumer whose cultural beliefs include a high group cohesiveness, such as being highly patriotic, nationalistic, and highly collective in evaluating a behavior, will consider the reference group influences, or subjective norms more than a consumer who is less patriotic, nationalistic, or collectivistic. As consumers we regard possessions as a part of ourselves (Belk, 1988). Consumers use their possessions as an extension of themselves. Consumers allow their possessions to reflect who they are. So, if a consumer has the ability to purchase or not purchase a product, they have the ability to shape how others see them by shaping their extended self. The consumer's evaluation of

the consequences of a behavior due to social pressures, or subjective norms, help determine a consumer's behavioral intention. Thus, a consumer, as a member of a certain generation may use others within their generation as a reference group in order to make purchase decisions towards products from foreign countries.

Generational Differences

The development of beliefs about countries-of-origin, cultural beliefs, and pressures provided by subjective norms are affected by the environment for which a person is exposed. American consumers differ in the individuals' formative experiences shared as a generation (Smith & Clurman, 1997). For example, the environment experienced by those of the Depression generation differs considerably from the environment experienced by the Generation Y cohort. Therefore, individuals of different generations may have considerable differences in their cultural beliefs, in their beliefs about foreign countries, and in their beliefs about the appropriateness of purchasing certain products.

While the current research is the first to investigate generational differences in consumer animosity, previous studies have focused on differences in consumer behavior between generations. Williams and Page (2011) indicate that while it is possible to market to multiple generations, it is of upmost importance to be sensitive to each individual generation. The authors find that in order to market to multiple generations a firm must take into account the unique experiences, such as war and terrorist attacks, that have had a significant and unique impact on each generation. Furthermore, Schewe and Meredith (2004) found that while many firms perform segmentation based on birth age, a much more rich method of performing age segmentation is to study each generation's experiences during their "coming-of-age" period. By examining environmental experiences of each generation a firm may be able to more readily uncover purchase motivations.

A classic article by Belk (1985) indicated that there are differences in the level of materialism between generations. Related to Belk's findings is more recent research by Eastman and Liu (2012) that found that there are differences in status consumption between generations. The authors found that Generation Y consumers were significantly more interested in status consumption than were consumers in the Baby Boomer generation. These findings may be an indication that the younger generations', such as Generation Y, purchase decisions are influenced more by their cohort peers than are older generations, such as the Baby Boomer generation.

The generations are grouped because of their unique shared experiences. As marketing literature states, consumers in each generation interpret products, at least partially, by using their prior experiences with the products or similar products (Smith & Clurman, 1997), the unique environmental experiences that have influence them (Schewe & Meredith, 2004; Williams & Page, 2011), and the felt influence of their peers (Eastman & Liu, 2012). Therefore, it is not the age of the consumer, or whether a consumer is older or younger, but an individual's formative experiences that leads to their product interpretations.

STUDY 1

A Generational Perspective of the U.S./ China Relationship

The Depression Generation

Born from 1925 to 1945 (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2003), the Depression Generation's formative years were in an environment of economic depression and then of war. By the late 1920s the U.S. had become a consumer society where not only could individuals afford the means of subsistence but also discretionary goods and services (Brinkley, 1993). However, in October of 1929 the stock market crashed sending the United States into the Great Depression for which the nation would stay for more than ten years. The American gross

national product fell from $104 billion in 1929 to $76.4 billion in 1932. Unemployment skyrocketed throughout the nation. For instance, Ohio's major cities had unemployment rates as high as 80% (Brinkley, 1993). However, the economic struggles did not change the teachings of a "success ethic," that every individual can work hard and advance in the American Society (Brinkley, 1993). International trade was a major factor that was blamed for the Great Depression. The international demand for American exports had dropped. Also, trade with China that had existed prior to 1929 started to dwindle as China's markets began to close to the outside world. In response to a growing Chinese nationalism, the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek came to power and started to reclaim many trading ports, cutting back on any privileges enjoyed by foreign traders (Huntsman, Jr., 2002).

World War II ended the Great Depression. The war caused a major increase in patriotism and pride in the United States as American citizens banned together to fight off communist movement (Brinkley, 1993). The result of World War II left the United States as the most powerful country in the world (Brinkley, 1993).

The formative years of the depression generation included a rejuvenation of both the economic and military power of the United States, along with experiencing the pains of economic depression and war. After fighting off the advancement of communism in World War II, Americans took notice as Chinese Mao's Communist Party rose to power in 1949 slamming the door shut completely on trade with the United States until the 1970s (Huntsman Jr., 2002).

The Baby Boomer Generation

The birth rate in the U.S. greatly increased after World War II resulting in the Baby Boomer Generation (Born between 1946 and 1964) (Hawkins et al., 2003). Also, around 1948 the third phase of globalization began due to the development of GATT (General Agreement on

Tariffs and Trade) lowering barriers to international trade, and the Marshall Plan that was meant to rebuild Europe and repel communism after World War II (Cavusgil, 2007).

U.S. consumers welcomed imports but were warned against the evils of communism. While there are differences in opinion to who caused the Cold War, whether or not Soviet expansionism or American imperial ambitions were at fault, a distinction was made between the Western "free" world and the communist world which included China. The Cold War had profound effects on American domestic life producing the most corrosive outbreak of antiradical hysteria in the history of the country (Brinkley, 1993). The Baby Boomer generation's formative environment was made up of a dichotomy of the prosperous expansion of international trade and increased globalization against the protectionism of antiradical thinking produced by the fear of the communism. In fact, as the Mao communist party came to power in China in the mid to late 1940s, the U.S. government did little to stop the takeover, instead investing in a strong Western-influenced Japan. The vision of an open, united Asia was replaced with the acceptance of communism along side a pro-American influenced Japan (Brinkley, 1993). While China and the United States never fought a war directly, they did fight indirectly during the Korean War as China backed the communist North Korea and the U.S. fought on the side of the South Koreans. The prosperity that followed World War II has been thought of as a result of the struggle against communism that encouraged Americans to look approvingly at their own society compared to the communist societies of the Soviet Union and China. The growth of the middle class that resulted in the United States achieving the highest standard of living of any society in the history of the world (Brinkley, 1993) drove discretionary spending. U.S. imports totaled over $30 billion for the first time in 1965 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Generation X

As the Vietnam War began Generation X consumers were being born (born between 1965 and 1976) (Hawkins et al., 2003). The Vietnam conflict along with the Civil Rights movement began the social revolution against the authoritative figures made up of previous generations. Generation X consumers grew up in an environment of domestic social change and liberalization and continued globalization and international trade. For the first time the balance of trade of the United States (Balance of Payments) became negative. The U.S. was importing more than it was exporting by 1971 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

In 1971 China was admitted to the United Nations. The next year Richard Nixon paid a formal visit to China, erasing much American animosity towards China (Brinkley, 1993; Huntsman, Jr., 2002). In 1972, China accounted for just 0.7% of world trade. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping formally launched Chinese economic reform and by 1985 China accounted for 2.0% of world trade (Huntsman, Jr., 2002). Chinese economic power had begun to increase as the U.S./China relationship had begun to warm.

Generation Y

The beginning of Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1994) (Hawkins et al., 2003) coincides with the opening of the Chinese markets. U.S. imports exploded from $149 billion in 1976 to $1.45 trillion in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Imports from China alone increased from approximately $3.8 billion in 1985 to $321 billion in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). During their formative years Generation Y consumers have become quite accustomed to imported goods especially Chinese imports. Along with China opening markets, the 4th phase of globalization began during Generation Y's formative years which was driven by increased technological abilities, the Internet, and emerging markets (such as China) (Cavusgil, 2007). Communications and

technology had brought the world closer together.

Also, communism is no longer the great fear of Western society. Fear and mistrust have migrated from the communist nations such as China to the "terrorist nations" of North Korea and Iran. Generation Y consumers no longer read news stories, or hear Presidential speeches on the evils of communism, the subject is now the evils of terrorism (Bush, 2005).

Hypotheses

Based on the American environment during each of the Generations formative years and the consumer animosity literature review the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{1a}: *The Depression Generation consumers have significantly higher levels of animosity towards China than all later generations.*

H_{1b}: *The Depression Generation consumers are significantly less willing to buy Chinese products than all later generations.*

H_{2a}: *The Baby Boomer Generation consumers have significantly higher levels of animosity towards China than all later generations.*

H_{2b}: *The Baby Boomer Generation consumers are significantly less willing to buy Chinese products than all later generations.*

H_{3a}: *The Generation X consumers have significantly higher levels of animosity towards China than Generation Y consumers.*

H_{3b}: *The Generation X consumers are significantly less willing to buy Chinese products than Generation Y consumers.*

Methodology

A sample of American consumers was gathered by undergraduate business students at a medium sized Midwestern university in connection to a class project on developing

marketing strategies for different generations. Each student was asked to collect a sample of two respondents from each of the four generations (one male and one female). Each respondent, while being kept confidential, was asked to also give a telephone number or an email address. After surveys were collected 10% of respondents were contacted to verify that they did indeed complete the questionnaire. This procedure has been used in previous marketing literature to provide confidence in the sample and avoid students simply filling out the questionnaires themselves (Bitner, Booms, & Tetrault, 1990).

The respondents in each generation completed a questionnaire using a modified animosity measure using both economic-based and general animosity items developed by Klein et al. (1998) focusing on China. Along with the animosity instrument, demographic items (gender, household income, and level of education) that have been found to affect consumer animosity levels (Klein et al, 1998; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007) were also included in order to control for confounding variables and create homogenous groups. While the collection procedure may not be conducive to providing external validity, it is only necessary to provide internal validity in a rigorous theoretical test. Controlling for, instead of varying and examining, background factors is encouraged for theoretical research (Calder,

Phillips, & Tybout, 1982). The data collection procedure resulted in 174 useable questionnaires with generation group sample sizes of 30 or more allowing the use of ANCOVA and post hoc analysis to examine the differences between each specific generation. A one-way ANCOVA allows researchers to examine group differences while controlling for confounding variables. The research design uses generation membership as the independent categorical variable and the mean scores of the animosity measure as the dependent variable.

Results

First, the internal reliability of the economic-based animosity measurement was tested and was found to be satisfactory with a Cronbach's Alpha of .85. Next, an examination of the means took place. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of each generation including means, standard deviations and group sample sizes. The mean of each generation's animosity decreases as proposed.

The ANCOVA for generations effect on animosity level is significant *(F=5.715, p = .000)* indicating that there is at least one significant difference of animosity level between the generational age cohorts. Also, the ANCOVA for generations effect on willingness to buy is significant *(F=3.880, p<.05)*. Furthermore, post hoc pairwise comparisons were used to test the hypotheses. The Least

TABLE 1:
Study 1 Descriptive Statistics

	Generation	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
TotalAnim	Depression	30.7778	6.45473	36
	Baby Boomer	28.6667	6.39592	48
	Generation X	27.2647	6.54267	34
	Generation Y	24.2857	5.24219	56
	Total	27.4195	6.51205	174
TotalWilltoBuy	Depression	9.3611	2.91942	36
	Baby Boomer	9.2917	2.88767	48
	Generation X	8.7941	3.23597	34
	Generation Y	6.9821	2.96336	56
	Total	8.4655	3.14146	174

Significant Difference (LSD) procedure was used to test individual hypotheses. Tables 2 and 3 show the results of the pairwise comparisons.

The results indicate that the Depression generation does harbor significantly higher levels of animosity towards China than does Generation X and Generation Y. However, Hypothesis 1a is only partially supported based on there is not a significant difference between the animosity level of the Depression generation and the Baby Boomer generation. In support of Hypothesis 2a, the Baby Boomer generation does have significantly higher levels of animosity towards China than all later generations. There is also a significant difference between Generation X and Generation Y, in support of Hypothesis 3a. Therefore, it looks as though economic-based animosity towards China was not passed down from generation to generation. There was no significant difference between the willingness to buy Chinese products between the Depression, Baby Boomer, and Generation X cohorts. However there was a significant difference between Generation Y and all earlier generations. Thus, Hypothesis 3b is supported while Hypotheses 1b and 2b are partially supported.

Furthermore, a linear regression was run to examine the effects of the level of consumer animosity and the consumer's willingness to purchase products from China. The regression was significant *(F=226.16, p=.000)* with an R squared of .486, indicating that there is a strong relationships between the two variables. This finding coincides with previous findings (Klein et al., 1998; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007)

TABLE 2:
Study 1 Pairwise Comparison of Consumer Animosity by Generation

Group	Mean	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Depression	30.78	--			
2. Baby Boomer	28.67	1.93	--		
3. Generation X	27.26	3.38*	1.45	--	
4. Generation Y	24.29	6.38*	4.45*	2.97*	--

*p<=.05, Least Significant Difference

TABLE 3 STUDY 1:
Pairwise Comparison of Willingness to Buy by Generation

Group	Mean	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Depression	9.36	--			
2. Baby Boomer	9.29	-.24	--		
3. Generation X	8.79	.7	.3	--	
4. Generation Y	6.98	2.3*	2.53*	2.23*	--

*p<=.05, Least Significant Difference

STUDY 2

A Generational Perspective of the U.S./ Vietnam Relationship

The Depression Generation

There was not a well known relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam within the United States during the Depression Generation.

The Baby Boomer Generation

France and the communist led Viet Minh had fought an eight year guerilla war until a cease fire agreement was signed in 1954. While the United States witnessed the agreement they did not sign the agreement which split the country of Vietnam at the 17th parallel into the Communist north and the Republic south (U.S. State Department, 2008). In the late 1950s the North reactivated a network of communist guerillas in the South referred to as the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong led an armed campaign against Southern officials and villagers. At the request of the South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, U.S. President John F. Kennedy sent military advisors to South Vietnam to help the government deal with the Viet Cong. Due to increasing political turmoil in the south, U.S. military increased its presence in 1963 (U.S. State Department, 2008).

Generation X

As earlier stated Generation X consumers were being born (born between 1965 and 1976) (Hawkins et al., 2003) as the Vietnam Conflict began. In 1965, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson sent the first U.S. combat troops to Vietnam. The peak number of U.S. troops reached 534,000 in 1969. The Paris Peace Accords was signed in 1973 ending the official American combat role in Vietnam. Finally, as Saigon fell in 1975 the last U.S. soldier is killed in the Vietnam conflict and Vietnam falls under the control of the communists (U.S. State Department, 2008). Approximately three to four million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans

were killed during the conflict (vietnamwar.com, 2008). The Vietnam conflict, along with the Civil Rights movement, began the social revolution against the authoritative figures made up of previous generations.

Generation Y

During Generation Y's (born between 1977 and 1994) (Hawkins et al., 2003) formative years the U.S. placed an embargo against Vietnam in 1979 then eventually lifted it in 1992 (U.S. State Department, 2008) even though Vietnam was still led by the Communist Party. However, communism is no longer the great fear of Western society. Generation Y consumers no longer read news stories, or hear Presidential speeches on the evils of communism, the subject is now the evils of terrorism (Bush, 2005). In the 1990s the U.S. started to invest and trade again with Vietnam.

Hypotheses

Based on the American environment during each of the generation's formative years and the consumer animosity literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed. We find that outside the Vietnam conflict there is little perceived link between U.S. consumers and Vietnam. Since war-based animosity is long lasting and passed down from generation to generation (Jung et al., 2002; Ang et al., 2004) we hypothesize that age, or generational age cohort, has little effect on American's level of animosity towards Vietnam. Therefore:

H_{1a}: *The Depression Generation consumers do not have significantly higher levels of animosity towards Vietnam than later generations.*

H_{1b}: *The Depression Generation consumers are not significantly less willing to buy Vietnamese products than all later generations.*

H_{2a}: *The Baby Boomer Generation consumers do not have significantly higher levels of*

animosity towards Vietnam than later generations.

H$_{2b}$: *The Baby Boomer Generation consumers are not significantly less willing to buy Vietnamese products than all later generations.*

H$_{3a}$: *The Generation X consumers do not have significantly higher levels of animosity towards Vietnam than Generation Y consumers.*

H$_{3b}$: *The Generation X consumers are not significantly less willing to buy Vietnamese products than Generation Y consumers.*

Methodology

The same data collection procedure used in Study was duplicated for Study 2. The respondents in each generation completed a questionnaire using a modified animosity measure using both war-based (economic-based was used in Study 1) and general animosity items developed by Klein et al. (1998) focusing on Vietnam. Along with the animosity instrument, demographic items (gender, household income, and level of education) that have been found to affect consumer animosity levels (Klein et al, 1998; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007) were also included in order to control for confounding variables and create homogenous groups. The data collection procedure resulted in 197 useable questionnaires with generation group sample sizes of 30 or more allowing the use of ANCOVA and post hoc analysis to examine the differences between each specific generation. The research design uses generation membership as the independent categorical variable and the mean scores of the animosity measure as the dependent variable.

Results

First, the internal reliability of the animosity measurement was tested and was found to be satisfactory with a Cronbach's Alpha of .89. Next, an examination of the means took place. Table 4 shows descriptive statistics of each generation including means, standard deviations and group sample sizes. The mean of each generation's animosity does decrease until Generation Y. Generation Y actually harbors a higher level of animosity than the generation before it.

The ANCOVA for generations effect on animosity level is significant *(F=6.427, p = .000)* indicating that there is at least one significant difference of animosity level between the generational age cohorts. Also, the ANCOVA for generations effect on willingness to buy is significant *(F=7.754, p=.000)*. However, post hoc pairwise comparisons were

TABLE 4:
Descriptive Statistics

	Generation	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TotalAnim	Depression	12.0870	5.48058	46
	Baby Boomer	10.3958	5.15603	48
	Generation X	8.5094	4.50906	53
	Generation Y	8.8400	4.17162	50
	Total	9.8883	5.00079	197
TotalWilltoBuy	Depression	10.1739	4.36809	46
	Baby Boomer	7.0625	3.80037	48
	Generation X	6.0566	3.63961	53
	Generation Y	6.1800	3.62919	50
	Total	7.2944	4.16431	197

used to test the hypotheses. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) procedure was used to test individual hypotheses. Tables 5 and 6 show the results of the pairwise comparisons.

The results indicate that the Depression generation does harbor significantly higher levels of animosity towards Vietnam than does Generation X and Generation Y. However, in partial support of Hypothesis 1a, there is not a significant difference between the animosity level of the Depression generation and the Baby Boomer generation. In support of Hypothesis 2a, the Baby Boomer generation does not harbor higher levels of animosity towards Vietnam than all later generations. Also, there is also no significant difference between Generation X and Generation Y, in support of Hypothesis 3a. Therefore, the results indicate

that animosity towards Vietnam was passed down from generation to generation since Generation Y was born after the Vietnam conflict had ended. However, Hypothesis 1b is not supported as there is a significant difference between the Depression Generation's willing to buy Vietnamese products and all later generations. Finally, Hypotheses 2b and 3b are supported as there are no significant differences in willingness to buy Vietnamese products between the generations.

Furthermore, a linear regression was run to examine the effects of the level of consumer animosity and the consumer's willingness to purchase products from Vietnam. The regression was significant *(F=126.442, p=.000)* with an R squared of .515, indicating that there is a strong relationships between the two variables. This finding coincides with previous

TABLE 5:
Pairwise Comparison of Consumer Animosity by Generation

Group	Mean	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Depression	12.09	--			
2. Baby Boomer	10.40	.55	--		
3. Generation X	8.51	2.18*	1.64	--	
4. Generation Y	8.84	2.2*	1.66	.02	--

*p<=.05, Least Significant Difference

TABLE 6:
Pairwise Comparison of Willingness to Buy by Generation

Group	Mean	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Depression	10.17	--			
2. Baby Boomer	7.06	2.47	--		
3. Generation X	6.06	3.34*	.86	--	
4. Generation Y	6.18	3.38*	.9	.04	--

*p<=.05, Least Significant Difference

findings in the consumer animosity literature (Klein et al., 1998; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007).

Finally, a linear regression was run to examine the effects of whether or not having known a person who fought in the Vietnam Conflict affected a consumer's level of animosity towards Vietnam regardless of generation. The regression was significant *(F=4.418, p<=.05)*, indicating that knowing a soldier did indeed effect a consumer's level of animosity. This finding suggests that it is the experiences of the consumer, not the age of the consumer that affects the consumer's level of animosity.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While age has been identified as a determinant of consumer animosity (Klein & Ettenson, 1999), the reasons behind *why* age is a determinant have yet to be established. According to Smith and Clurman (1997) consumers develop values, preferences, and behaviors based upon individuals' formative experiences shared as a generation. Following the suggestion for the investigation of the historical contexts surrounding the development of consumer animosity (Amine et al., 2005), the presented research looked to examine how the environment each generation encountered during their formative years help shape their feelings of animosity towards China and Vietnam. As consumer animosity has been shown to have a direct effect on purchase intentions for products from the country in which the animosity is directed (Klein et al., 1998), we find that it is important to uncover the reasons behind why and how animosity is developed.

Consumer animosity is based on specific events, such as the Nanjing Massacre or the Vietnam Conflict, thus an examination of animosity must be placed in context. While previous literature has found that older consumers have higher levels of animosity, our findings suggest that age has a spurious relationship with consumer animosity. Our findings suggest that it isn't the age of an individual, but the experiences of the individual that leads to the development of animosity.

The current study examines and compared generational differences between economic-based and war-based animosity. Using the context of American consumer animosity towards China (economic-based) and American consumer animosity towards Vietnam (war-based) the study results suggest that economic-based animosity is more temporary than war-based animosity. In fact, with war-based animosity age seems to not matter. Results indicate that Generation Y consumers harbor as much animosity towards Vietnam as earlier generations. Further examination indicated the level of animosity was due to personal experiences. Specifically, knowing someone that fought in the Vietnam Conflict led to a higher level of animosity towards Vietnam regardless of generational cohort membership.

While this study focused on American consumer animosity, future studies should study differences in consumer animosity between generations in other countries. Previous research has shown that there are cultural differences between countries and the effect of generational membership on consumer behavior (Fukuda, 2010). Furthermore, future research should investigate other sources for the development of animosity while embedding the empirical findings within a historical examination. The current research focuses on the development of consumer animosity based on war and economic factors. However, consumer animosity can be developed based on other factors. For example some would argue that the consumer animosity felt by Amercian consumers towards France and the French consumer animosity felt towards the United States is based more on cultural differences than on any war or economic factors (Amine et al., 2005). Finally, future research should investigate psychological antecedents to the development of animosity such as dogmatism, and national level cultural values such as Hofstede's masculinity-femininity dimension shared as a generation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This future research suggestion builds

upon the latter suggestion. While different external (to the consumer) factors may lead to the development of consumer animosity and thus differences between generations, internal psychological factors may also influence the development of consumer animosity and create differences between the level of consumer animosity between generations.

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CONSUMERS' USE OF BLOGS AS PRODUCT INFORMATION SOURCES:
FROM NEED-FOR-COGNITION PERSPECTIVE

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This study investigated the potential influence of word-of-mouth (WOM) and need-for-cognition (NFC) on consumer information search in the blogosphere. This study, in particular examined how consumers perceive corporate and consumer-generated blogs as product/brand information sources. The results of an online survey indicated that NFC and susceptibility to WOM influenced consumer's information search process, ultimately leading to purchase intent. The findings also showed that while high NFC individuals showed more favorable attitudes toward consumer-generated blogs over corporate blogs as an information source, low NFC individuals did not have a specific preference for either type of blog. In addition, participants reported greater purchase intent for products addressed in consumer-generated blogs than corporate blogs. This difference in purchase intent existed even when their attitudes toward both types of blogs and the brands/products mentioned there were regarded similarly.

INTRODUCTION

Conventional wisdom holds that the first, second, and third rules for successful real estate sales are location, location, location (e.g. RealEstateabc.com 2003). A similar idea can apply to consumer decision making and its relationship with effective marketing communication planning. Placement of messages in an appropriate context/ environment might also be the first, second, and third rules of all successful marketing communication (Sissors and Baron 2002). Marketers should not rely on marketing communication to activate or prompt consumers to initiate a product search; marketers should focus their communication efforts in places where already actively searching consumers look for information— which is increasingly in online media vehicles. Court *et al.* (2009) reports that two-thirds of the most important consumer interaction with product information, when the consumers are in an active search and \ alternative evaluations,

involved in word-of-mouth communications. Only one-third of that consumer interaction is said to take place through company-driven marketing efforts like traditional advertising and sales promotions. With regards to consumers' use of blogs, BlogHer's Social Media Matters Study (Collins 2011) reports that nearly half of adult consumers (47%) surveyed reported that they turn to recommendations found on Web logs or blogs for new ideas and trends instead of traditional promotions; over half (53%) of the same population reported buying a product that was recommended on a blog; those blog recommendations were also preferred over celebrity endorsements. These findings suggest that marketers would do well to concentrate on creating and maintaining communication vehicles of their own (*i.e.*, blogs, social media) that attract consumers when they are actively searching instead of merely placing traditional promotions amidst media that attracts consumers looking to be entertained.

Academics have also begun to explore the potential of this medium. Previous efforts in relation to advertising and blogs have been made mainly in the area of messages (Chu and Kamal 2008) and bloggers (individuals

maintaining blogs) as message senders (Chu and Kamal 2008; Huang, Shen, Lin and Chang 2007). However, very few attempts have been made to learn exclusively about the *audiences* of blogs and their motivations to use the medium as a source of product/brand information. More knowledge on consumers' intent to use blogs as an information source is called for in order to utilize the benefits of blogs as a marketing communication tool.

In this study, we examine how perceptions toward two different types of blogs as information sources, namely corporate and consumer-generated blogs, may differ based on individual personality traits. Specifically, the study pays attention to the roles of need-for-cognition (NFC) and susceptibility to personal influence as predictive factors of consumer information search using blogs. Because searching for online product information requires a certain degree of involvement, need-for-cognition may play an important role in identifying the types of consumers who may utilize blogs as product information sources. Susceptibility to personal influence is identified as another potential indicator of information search via blogs because consumers may regard blogs as more personal sources than other product information sources.

The findings from this study will not only help advertisers understand consumer perceptions on this new medium and develop effective communication strategies, but also provide researchers with insights for future research examining the effectiveness and potential of blog advertising and advertising on other user-generated media. Because blogs----particularly those written by consumers about their own experiences with products/services-- can be regarded as a closer-tie information source than other marketer-dominant sources including corporate blogs by other consumers, it is worthwhile to shed light on perceptions toward different kinds of blogs as product information sources and how such perceptions may be influenced by NFC and susceptibility to WOM influences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blogs as a Product Information Source and Types of Blogs

Blogs are diary-style web sites generally offering observations and chronologically listed news that allow readers to leave comments and place recommendation links and/or trackbacks (Johnson and Kaye 2004). As a part of user-generated media, blogs enable both marketers and consumers to express/communicate their ideas on products/brands; with trackback, links, and comment functions.

Classifications of blogs as product information sources can be made mainly in two types: corporate and consumer (-generated) blogs. Corporate blogs are owned and operated by marketers as a way to provide content to their customers. In contrast, consumer- blogs are not affiliated to marketers of the products being reviewed, but instead they are administrated by consumers and provide an arena for them to voice their opinions and experiences about brands and their associated products and services. While corporate blogs do offer consumers opportunities to express their opinions and share their product/service experiences with other customers online through trackbacks and comments, the ultimate control of information is in the hands of marketers because they are the administrator of such blogs.

Consumer Information Search on the Internet

Consumer information search has been a popular topic, and various studies have been conducted in hopes of better understanding the potential behavioral outcomes in the context of interpersonal communication and word-of-mouth (e.g. Gilly et al. 1998; Bloch et al. 1986), traditional market-dominant sources (e.g. D'Rozario and Douglas 2000), and online resources (e.g. Jepsen 2007). Information search can be classified into: 1) internal information search that involves memory and takes place prior to external search, such as

memory; and 2) external information search that relies on all other sources except memory, such as media, store visits, trials, and references (Peterson and Merino 2003).

A number of classifications of external information sources for product selection have been proposed. For example, Duhan et al. (1997) classified recommendation sources based on the proximity of a decision maker to the information source and defined strong-tie sources as sources that a decision maker personally knows well. Weak-tie recommendation sources, then, are merely acquaintances or those who do not know the decision maker. They stated that weak-tie sources can go beyond the social circle of the decision maker, and therefore, the decision maker can find more and better information about the product (Duhan et al. 1997). For Internet-related studies, the importance of weak-tie sources was found in the ability to create connections and close-knit social groups for people with limited or no personal interaction (Smith et al. 2007). In the context of blogs, readers may or may not personally know the bloggers behind the consumer-generated blogs; however, if consumers identify with an author of a consumer-generated blog as a "typical" consumer, these readers might feel as if they were in close proximity to the consumer-generated blog author. Although both types of blogs may be generally classified as weak-tie recommendation sources by the definition of Duhan et al. (1997), consumer-generated blogs may be regarded as stronger-tie information sources than corporate blogs.

On the other hand, corporate blogs can be regarded rather a weaker-tie source (than consumer blogs), and company-created sources can be seen as lacking the credibility of third-party sources (Duncan 2005). Perhaps it is the perceived authenticity that leads consumers to prefer online recommendations of other consumers over online recommendations of experts (Huang and Chen 2006). As sources of information without an overtly vested interest in the success or failure of a product or corporation, neutral and interpersonal sources offer more believability. This believability, or third-party credibility, leads to more persuasive arguments. Bickart and Schindler (2001) found that consumers who used online discussion forums as a product information source showed greater interest in the studied product than those who relied on marketer-dominant sources to acquire product information. In the case of the current study, consumer-generated blogs are likely to be regarded as either neutral or interpersonal information sources with the associated credibility that is lacking in a marketer-dominant blog with its overt vested interests. In addition, consumer-generated blogs can be regarded as a stronger-tie information source compared to marketer-dominant blogs; stronger-tie information sources tend to influence consumer perceptions and behaviors than weaker-tie sources (Duhan et al. 1997). As a result, consumers' perceptions toward consumer-generated blogs may be more positive compared to corporate blogs and thus influence behavioral intentions such as purchase intent. Hence, the following set of hypotheses is proposed:

H$_{1a}$: *Consumers' attitudes toward consumer-generated blogs as a product information source are more positive than corporate blogs.*

H$_{1b}$: *Consumers purchase intention is greater for products addressed in consumer-generated blogs than corporate blogs.*

Predictors of Information Search (1): Susceptibility to Personal Influence and Word-of-Mouth

Various factors have been identified as influencers of information search, such as (but not limited to) search cost (Jepsen 2007), perceived risk (Perry and Hamm 1969; Mourali et al. 2005; Murray 1991), credibility of advertisers (Dabholkar 2006), consumer expertise (Gilly, et al. 1998; Mourali et al. 2005), and product involvement (Nelmapius et al. 2005; Park, Lee and Han 2007). In addition to these predictors, a few personality factors emerge as key indicators of attitudes and use of

blogs, such as susceptibility to personal influence (Bearden, Natemeyer and Teel 1989) and need-for-cognition (Cacioppo and Petty 1982).

Bearden and his colleagues (1989) defined susceptibility to personal influence as one's likelihood of learning about products and services through observations of others and/or search information from others (p.474). The concept consists of two elements: 1) *normative influence* as one's willingness to conform to expectations from others; and 2) *informational influence* as one's tendency to accept information from others (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975; Bearden et al. 1989). The combination of these elements are said to influence consumer behavior including purchase (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975) and information search (Park and Lessig 1977). In the current study, consumer susceptibility to information may explain one's likelihood of information search on blogs.

Information search on blogs can be regarded as a reflection of word-of-mouth (WOM). In marketing, WOM is referred to as the action of passing information verbally, such as recommendations, in an informal manner (Arora 2007), as well passing along e-mail to others (Phelps et al. 2004) and posting product reviews (Huang and Chen 2006). In blogs, the act of pass-along information takes place through linkage. Consumers' opinions can be connected to another blog entry via trackbacks, and other consumers may leave their opinions using comment functions. Considering this characteristic, the definition of WOM on the Internet suggested by Thorson and Rodgers (2006) and Graham and Havlena (2007) appears more applicable for blogs: statements made about products, organizations, or individuals that are widely available to the public online. Blog readers may not always initiate WOM; however, as the audience, they may consult with product information available on blogs. In conjunction with susceptibility to personal influence, one can argue that if this tendency is high, an individual will refer more to WOM on blogs as product information. In

other words, interpersonal influence such as susceptibility to personal influence can enhance the likelihood of behavioral intentions such as product information search based on consumers' opinions (Chu and Choi 2011).

Recent empirical research suggests that susceptibility to personal influence can affect both consumer attitudes and behavior, including one's tendency to search and accept product information online. For example, Bailey (2005) found that consumer susceptibility of informational influence has an impact on perceptions of product review Web sites; the higher the degree of susceptibility, the more positive one finds product review Web sites. Also, Thorson and Rodgers (2006) found electronic WOM on a political candidate's blog influenced the evaluation of the candidate's web site, impressions of the candidate, and voting intentions. Moreover, Graham and Havlena (2007) found that online WOM can generate offline brand advocacy. As these findings show, consumers' information search on blogs can be strongly related to the degree of individual's susceptibility to WOM on the Internet.

Predictors of Information Search (2): Need-for-Cognition and Consumer Information Search on Blog

While it appears that consumers' susceptibility to WOM may influence his/her product information search, WOM is also closely related to high-order cognition and effects (Brown, Broderick and Lee 2007). In this regard, need-for-cognition (NFC) emerges as an indicator of motivation for thinking (Cacioppo and Petty 1982).

NFC stems from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) that specifies conditions in which persuasion will be mediated by the amount of message relevance to the thought that an individual undertakes (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Karson and Korgaonkar 2001). In the case of blogs, individuals who tend to be engaged in information search are likely to be actively involved in the search amongst

numerous information sources available online, and therefore, they may process product information in blogs through the central route rather than the peripheral route. However, this tendency may vary by individuals, and NFC may be one possible explanation for the variance.

Essentially, NFC identifies differences among individuals in their likelihood of engaging in and enjoying thinking (Cacioppo and Petty 1982; Das et al. 2003). Lord and Putrevu (2006) identify five factors in this construct -- enjoyment of cognitive stimulation, confidence in cognitive ability, preference for complexity, commitment of cognitive effort, desire for understanding, and trust in the consequence of cognition -- and suggest that researchers can select the dimensions that are relevant to their research objectives to measure NFC, if not using all of the factors. In this study, three among five dimensions of NFC proposed by Lord and Putrevu (2006) -- preference for complexity, desire for understanding, and/or commitment of cognitive effort-- may serve better as an indicator of NFC because consumers face a tremendous amount of blogs, as well as other online communities addressing product reviews/experiences during the online search. One needs to be willing to find blogs with particular product/brand information among other blogs and Web sites. Such activities require willingness to understand issues and commitment for processing complex and multiple information sources.

NFC is also believed to predict one's preference for information types. Generally, a high NFC individual is supposed to prefer information-oriented media and tends to be more engaged in verbal over visual information processing (Martin, Sherrard and Wendzel 2005). In the context of the Internet, Das et al. (2003) found that as individuals' NFC increased, their attitudes toward the web as an information source became more positive. Also, individuals with higher NFC tend to be engaged in more extensive information search than those with lower NFC, because they enjoy and tend to process information more thoroughly

(Mourali et al. 2005). Therefore, such individuals may spend more time looking for blogs with product and/or brand information than those with lower NFC.

Additionally, because it requires more effort to find consumer-generated blogs with specific product/brand information as compared to corporate blogs (which are likely to be generally listed near/at the top of results in search engines), higher NFC individuals may be more committed to search product information via consumer-generated blogs than lower NFC individuals.

> **H$_2$:** *Individuals with a high NFC will report more positive attitudes toward consumer-generated blogs than individuals with a low NFC.*

Similarly, when comparing corporate vs. consumer-generated blogs, higher NFC individuals may prefer consumer-generated blogs over corporate blogs, while lower NFC individuals may prefer corporate blogs over consumer-generated blogs to avoid excessive search effort. Therefore, the following set of hypotheses is proposed:

> **H$_{3a}$:** *Individuals with a high NFC will report more positive attitudes toward consumer-generated blogs than corporate blogs.*
> **H$_{3b}$:** *Individuals with a low NFC will report more positive attitudes toward corporate blogs than consumer-generated blogs.*

Consumer Information Search on Blogs and Attitude and Behavioral Changes

All of the key variables discussed here are known to influence consumer behavior. As stated earlier, NFC has been identified as a key predictor of extensive information search (Mourali et al. 2005).

> **H$_4$:** *Consumers' level of NFC positively influences the likelihood of information search on blogs (BIS).*

In addition, high NFC individuals are also known to have more positive attitudes toward

ads with complex information (Putrevu et al. 2004; Lord and Putrevu 2006). Because blogs can provide rich information, the degree of NFC in general can positively affect evaluations of blogs. It is also known that individuals with high NFC favor implicit information compared to low NFC individuals (Sicilia, Ruiz and Munuera 2005; Kao 2007). NFC is also known to be related to favorite attitudes toward complex information/message (Putrevu, Tan and Lord 2004), and therefore, the degree of NFC positively affects attitudes toward blogs as information sources due to the medium's capability of delivering in-depth and complex information which is not necessarily simple to understand,

> **H₅**: *Consumers' level of NFC positively influences attitudes toward blogs as a product information source.*

Additionally, susceptibility to WOM influence can enhance the development of product knowledge while affecting both consumer attitudes and behavior, including one's tendency to search and accept product information online.

> **H₆**: *Susceptibility to WOM positively affects the likelihood of information search on blogs (BIS).*

Also, it is widely known that susceptibility to WOM can significantly influence behaviors such as product selection and purchase intent (e.g. Arora 2007; Das et al. 2003; Keller 2007), as well as voting intentions (Thorson and Rodgers 2006).

> **H₇**: *WOM influence positively influences purchase intentions of products/brands mentioned in blogs.*

In terms of the relationship with information search and perceptions toward blogs, it is possible to argue that consumers who are actively engaged in information search via blogs may have a positive perception toward blogs, because information search through blogs may enhance the positive perception

toward the medium (Mathwick and Rigdon 2004). Also, attitudes toward ads is known to influence purchase intention of advertised brands (Mackenzie et al. 1986). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> **H₈**: *Consumers' likelihood of information search using blogs (BIS) positively influences attitudes toward blogs as a product information source.*

> **H₉**: *Attitudes toward consumer-generated blogs as a product/ brand information source positively influences purchase intentions of products/brands mentioned in blogs.*

Sample and Data Collection

For the current study, the population is defined as consumers between the ages of 18 and 30, as, according to the Pew Internet and Life Project, the majority of blog users (54%) fall under this category (Lenhart and Fox 2006). Anderson Analytics' study on Generation X to Z also shows that college students tend to blog four times more frequently than all adults online, and particularly, female college students tend to blog three times more than male college students (Marketing Vox 2008). This means that it is appropriate to collect data from the college student population. Also, college students are a prime consumer group for online businesses (McAllister and Turow 2002); Harris Interactive (2002) reports that it is estimated that college students' economic potential can be as high as $200 billion, and with regards to direct marketing (which is often the method online marketers use), the National Mail Order Association (2009) also indicates that college students make up a market worth $100 billion for direct marketers. Thus, the use of student sample is valid for the current study.

Undergraduate students in a large introductory mass communication class at a large state university in the Southeast were recruited for an online survey. A recruiter visited the class to explain the nature of the survey and provided the URL of the survey. With the consent from

the instructor, respondents were given extra credit as an incentive. The URL first directed participants to the consent form, and participants were then randomly assigned to one of the two kinds of questionnaires that asked about either 1) corporate or 2) consumer-generated blogs. Because the goal of the research was to study *general* perceptions toward blogs as information sources, no specific manipulation/blog was used as treatments for the study. Participants were asked to share their general opinions toward these two types of blogs without being exposed to any specific examples. Thus, the data collection method was not based on an experimental design. All of the items on the questionnaires were identical, the difference being that one version asked about corporate blogs and the other asked about consumer blogs. 99 responses were collected from the corporate blog questionnaire, and 102 responses were collected from the consumer-generated blog questionnaire. The questions on the survey focused on general perceptions associated with blogs as a product information source (corporate or consumer-generated blogs), direct marketing, Internet use, and psychological tendency of need-for-cognition and word-of-mouth.

The sample consists of 74 males (38 percent) and 121 females (62 percent). The average age is 20. Juniors are the largest group (34 percent) followed by sophomores (32 percent), seniors (19 percent) and freshmen (15 percent). They have been Internet users for approximately 9.1 years on average and use the Internet for about 3.2 hours per day. All participants have experience in reading blog entries written by others; approximately 70 percent of the respondents read blog entries written by other individuals on a regular basis.

Measures

Independent Variables:

Need for cognition (NFC) was measured by the seven-point Likert-type scale by Lord and Putrevu (2006) (α=.91). From the scale with 18

items, six items were selected based on the results of exploratory factor analysis with a varimax rotation. The items include questions such as "Thinking is my idea of fun (*preference for complexity*)," "I find great satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours (*commitment of cognitive effort*).," and "I seek out situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something. (*desire for understanding*)," and each item has a factor loading of .7 or above, which is regarded sufficient for convergent validity (Hair et al. 1998).

Consumer susceptibility to WOM was measured by the ten-item seven-point Likert-type scale created by Bearden et al. (1989) anchored by items such as "If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product," and "I often consult with other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class" (α=.81). Similar to NFC construct, items with a factor loading greater than .75 were used to form this construct to assure convergent validity.

Dependent Variables:

Intention of blog information search (BIS) was measured by a modified Likert-type scale originally created by Moorman (1995) with 10 items such as, "product reviews on blogs enrich my basic understanding of products" and "the process of researching products on blogs really enlightens my understanding of consumer products" (α=.85). Each item loaded highly (>.73). Attitudes toward blogs as a product information source was measured with a modified semantic differential scale originally created by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) with the following items: "good/bad," "favorable/unfavorable," "interesting/not interesting," "informative/uninformative," "convincing/unconvincing," and "like/dislike" (α=.84), and all items had high factor loadings greater than .7. In addition, purchase intention of products mentioned in blogs was measured by three items from a modified Likert-type scale of Putrevu and Lord's (1994) purchase intension

scale anchored with questions such as "it is very likely that I will buy a product/brand mentioned in blogs" (α=.84). All items loaded highly (>.8).

The questionnaire first asked questions on general perceptions about shopping online, followed by attitudes toward corporate/ consumer blogs in general and brands advertised on either type of blogs. Then the purchase intention about products addressed in corporate/consumer blogs was measured. Following these measurements, questions on perceptions toward product review on blogs, susceptibility to personal influence, and general perceptions toward product review websites were presented. At the end of the questionnaire, several variables on demographics, usage of the Internet and blogs and other media usage (including traditional media) were also included in the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Prior to hypothesis and model testing, several statistical procedures were undertaken. To test construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed for all of the constructs using a first-order confirmatory factor model. All of the items that loaded on each specified factor were highly significant (p<.01), and the goodness-of-fit indexes suggested a good fit: NFC (CFI=.961, NFI=.952), susceptibility to WOM (CFI=.952, NFI=.950), intention for information search (CFI=.964, NFI=.950), attitudes toward blogs (CFI=.987, NFI=.970) and purchase intent (CFI=.968, NFI=.961). The estimated correlation between these variables were lower than .85 (r=.43; ρ<.01), which met the criteria for discriminant validity of these variables (Kline, 2005). In addition, descriptive statistics of the key variables were also computed (Table 1). The standard deviations ranged from .86 to 1.18. (The low value of the standard errors for these variables—a range between .05 and .07— mitigates concerns about the size of the standard deviations.)

Hypothesis Testing

The first set of hypotheses compare consumers' perceptions toward corporate and consumer-generated blogs as information sources and purchase intent of products mentioned in such blogs. Three t-tests were conducted (Table 2). The results show that consumers' purchase intent of products addressed in blogs (H_{1b}) differs between consumer-generated (M=3.85) and corporate blogs (M=3.38, $t_{(184)}$=3.29 ρ<.01). However, there was no significant difference between consumer-generated and corporate blogs with regards to attitudes toward blogs as an information source (H_{1a}). Therefore, the data partially support H_1.

To test H_2-H_3, a median split of NFC is used (M=4.5). High NFC is classified as the scores above 4.50, and low NFC is defined as scores below 4.49. To test H_2, a t-test was conducted with responses on consumer-generated blogs. The independent variable is NFC median split, and the dependent variable is favorability toward consumer-generated blogs as an information source. There is no significant difference between high (M=4.25) and low NFC individuals (M=4.27) with regards to their attitudes toward blogs ($t_{(82)}$=1.44 ρ>.05).

H_{3a} was tested with a t-test using the cases from high NFC individuals, and the independent variable is blog types (corporate or consumer-generated blogs) and the dependent variable is attitudes toward blogs as an information source. The result shows that high NFC individuals tend to favor consumer-generated blogs (M=4.74) more than corporate blogs (M=4.26) as a product/brand information source ($t_{(84)}$ =2.25, ρ<.05). Therefore, the data support H3a. Likewise, focusing on low NFC respondents, another t-test was performed, but the result does not indicate a significant mean difference between corporate (M=4.33) and consumer-generated blogs (M=4.13) regarding attitudes toward these blogs as an information source ($t_{(78)}$=1.04, ρ>.05). Thus, H_{3b} is not supported by the data.

TABLE 1:
Descriptive Statistics

	M	SD	Std. Error
Acceptance of WOM	4.40	.95	.06
NFC	4.90	.86	.05
BIS	3.63	1.02	.07
Attitudes toward Blogs	4.38	.88	.06
Purchase Intent	3.62	1.18	.07

TABLE 2:
Mean Scores and Results of H_{1a-c}

Dependent Variables	Consumer Blog Means	Corporate Blog Means	t	*df*	ρ
Attitudes toward Blogs	4.46	4.27	1.37	177	.17
Purchase Intent	3.85	3.38	2.69	184	.01*

*Significance at ρ<.01

A path analysis was conducted to test H_{4-9}, and model's fit using AMOS 7.0 with maximum likelihood estimation model. The exogenous variables were WOM and NFC, and the three endogenous variables were BIS, attitudes toward blogs as a product information source, and purchase intent of products featured in blogs.

In the initial analysis, five of six hypotheses were supported by the data. However, the model's fit was poor (χ^2=28.60, *df*=2, ρ<.01; CFI=.83; NFI=.83; RMSEA=.26; AIC=64.60) because comparative fit index (CFI) and normed fit index (NFI) are both below .95 and too low to be considered a good fit (Bryne, 2001). Also, the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) was greater than .08; in order to be considered a good fit, RMSEA should be lower than .08 (Bagozzi and Yi. 1988). Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) was 64.60.

According to the findings, individuals' willingness to accept WOM information positively affects his/her tendency to be engaged in product information search on blogs

(BIS), meaning that the more consumers are susceptible to WOM, the more likely that they will be engaged in information search on blogs (H_6). Likewise, individuals with high need-for-cognition are more likely to be engaged in product information search in blogs (H_4). NFC is not directly related to attitudes toward blogs as a product information source (H_5); however, WOM tends to influence purchase intentions of products mentioned in blogs (H_7). Information search tendency is positively related with attitudes toward blogs (H_8), and attitudes toward blogs as a product information source is positively associated with purchase intentions (H_9).

As an ad hoc analysis, three tests of mediation were conducting using the bootstrapping method using the SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). First, the mediating effect of intention for information search on the relationship between NFC and attitudes toward blogs was tested. The result indicates that the indirect effect of NFC through information search (mediator) on attitudes toward blogs was .09 with a bootstrap SE of .04. The 95 percent confidence interval ranges from .03

TABLE 3:
Proposed Structural Model Estimation and Final Model Summary

	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Expected Sign	Unstand-ardized Weights	Standard-ized Weights	Stand-ard Errors	*p*
H_4	NFC	BIS	+	.18	.15	.08	.03*
H_5	NFC	Attitudes toward Blogs	+	.04	.04	.60	.55
H_6	WOM	BIS	+	.37	.34	.07	.001**
H_7	WOM	Purchase Intent	+	.36	.29	.08	.001**
H_8	BIS	Attitudes toward Blogs	+	.42	.34	.06	.001**
H_9	Attitudes toward Blogs	Purchase Intent	+	.51	.38	.08	.001**

*Significance at $\rho < .05$
** Significance at $\rho < .01$

(lower end) to .18 (upper end) If a zero is not between the lower and upper bootstrap confidence interval (95 percent), one can claim that the indirect effect is not zero, hence the mediation exists between the independent and dependent variables. In this case, intention for information search on blog mediates the relationship between NFC and attitudes toward blogs.

A similar test was performed on the mediation effect of information search on the relationship between WOM and attitudes toward blogs, and the result suggests that information search also mediates this relationship (indirect effect =.13; SE=.03; 95% LLCI=.07; ULCI=.20).

Additionally, the mediation effects of information search and attitudes toward bloggging on the relationships between WOM and NFC were tested. While the relationship between WOM and purchase intent was mediated by information search (indirect effect =.16; SE=.04; 95% LLCI=.08; ULCI=.25) and attitudes toward blogs (indirect effect =.09; SE=.04; 95% LLCI=.003; ULCI=.12), the relationship between NFC and purchase intent was mediated only by information search (indirect effect =.05; SE=.04; 95% LLCI=.11; ULCI=.18), not by attitudes toward blogs (indirect effect=.002; SE=.01; LLCI=-.03; ULCI=.04).

DISCUSSION

The findings from the current study illustrate the positive influence of personal influence acceptance and NFC on information search. The results also show consumers' purchase intent of products differs between the blog types. As a practical implication, consumer-generated blogs have the potential to reach consumers with a high NFC (content-focused) and high susceptibility to personal influence (source-focused). In this time of niche markets and splinter media, the chance for advertisers to reach multiple personality types through one message and one media vehicle is a welcome anomaly. From the analysis, these key areas of findings emerge blog types and attitudes and antecedents of information search.

Attitudes toward Corporate and Consumer-Generated Blogs and Related Outcomes

Although there was not a significant difference in perceptions toward consumer-generated and corporate blogs, purchase intent of a product addressed in consumer-generated blogs was higher than in corporate blogs. Such disconnection between affect and behavior should be further explored, but does not negate the importance of the behavioral finding because consumers routinely seek out information online without making a purchase.

The disconnection between search and purchase suggests that a favorable opinion of online product information is not enough to ensure product purchase or purchase intentions. The non-significant attitudinal difference between consumer-generated and corporate blogs could be a result of search engine tendencies to provide both consumer and corporate blogs on the same display. As a result, respondents can be exposed to both types of blogs during information search and perceive them similarly. Additionally, corporate blogs, a form of marketer-dominant information source, are still novel enough to be seen as non-traditional and distinct from traditional one-way promotional media, which may give them the sense of credibility.

Effects of Susceptibility to Personal (WOM) influence and NFC on Blog-related Variables

Overall, the results confirmed the strong effect of susceptibility to personal influence on information search and purchase intentions for products introduced in blogs. Susceptibility to personal influence is also a stronger antecedent than NFC on these dependent variables. However, unlike the previous findings, NFC only directly predicted consumer information search on blogs. While high NFC individuals preferred consumer-generated blogs to corporate blogs, low NFC individuals did not show a preference for either corporate or consumer-generated blogs. This may be explained by the claim of Sicillia et al. (2006) indicating that in an online environment,, the dual mediation hypothesis of ELM does not take effect unless an individual has an intrinsic nature to think. Because low NFC individuals do not necessarily prefer to think thoroughly, neither the peripheral nor central route of information processing takes place online (Sicillia et al. 2006). In the current study, because low NFC individuals may have not made an intensive effort to evaluate information sources over all, no preference for corporate blog may have been found. On the other hand, the effect of NFC became very apparent for individuals with high NFC because of their

tendency to enjoy more elaborated thinking via central route of persuasion. The influence of NFC on attitudes toward blogs was seen indirectly through the information search variable. Future research in an experimental setting with a specific product/brand would better clarify the effect of NFC on attitudes toward different types of blogs.

WEAKNESS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the current study confirmed the effect of susceptibility to personal (WOM) influence and NFC on information search on blogs and related variables, more research is encouraged to further investigate consumers' use of blogs for product information. Some suggestions can be made based on this study. With regards to samples, even though the use of student sample for this study was considered appropriate due to their Internet usage patterns, different demographic or socioeconomic groups should be also examined in future studies as such factors may influence consumer information search online.

Another suggestion, as mentioned earlier in the discussion, is to investigate the effects of NFC and susceptibility to WOM on information search in an experimental setting using different product categories. Consumers' tendencies in product information search situations may depend on the level of product involvement. It will be worthwhile to examine how the influence of features available in blogs (e.g. interactivity, trackbacks etc.) may interact with product involvement in terms of information search on blogs, susceptibility to WOM, and NFC.

Also, it is recommended that future research include other types of online platforms, such as social networking services and product review Web sites and compare how information search behaviors may differ across a variety of online platforms. As these examples indicate, there is an unlimited possibility to extend this line of research in the context of Internet advertising,

and it is hoped that future research will pursue the effort to enhance the knowledge of online WOM.

IMPLICATIONS

Practical Implications

The results from the current study provide both practical and academic implications. From the practical perspective, the findings confirmed the clear effect of susceptibility to WOM influence on the use of blogs and purchase intentions. Thus, marketers can benefit from setting up blogs as a part of marketing communication efforts and provide consumers a forum to interact with other consumers to facilitate and encourage (possibly) positive WOM. In this way, marketers can refer to consumers' inputs and opinions with a minimum time lag to develop more effective advertising and/or communication campaigns and market research.

Also, in this study, consumers had stronger purchase intent of products mentioned in consumer-generated blogs compared to corporate blogs while attitudes toward either type of blogs did not differ. Hence, consumer endorsement by bloggers can be a potentially effective means of communicating about products/services.

These findings suggest that the recent changes in the U.S. Federal Trade Commission regulations may be justified. Some critics have argued that the revisions set a higher standard of disclosure for blogs and other social media than for traditional media like magazines. The FTC has expressly articulated that these revisions are necessary because the statements on blogs appear to be "word of mouth" (Goldman 2009) and are held to higher standards because average consumers would not expect bloggers to have relationships with advertisers like magazine publishers might (Booker 2009). Therefore, when consumers are more likely to accept WOM endorsements (and if the FTC is correct in assuming that consumers see blogs as WOM communication),

the increased ability to influence consumers through consumer-generated blogs could make it easier to deceive the average consumer. As the model in this study indicates, acceptance of WOM endorsements actually worked through three different paths to influence purchases intentions; this suggests that the influence of WOM should not be underestimated.

Theoretical Implications

This study confirms the strong relationship between susceptibility to WOM, information search, and purchase intentions in the context of blogs, as well as the effect of NFC on one's likelihood of information search. However, the findings also suggest that unlike other forms of media (including Internet media), the influence of WOM as well as NFC is not directly present for attitudes toward blogs as a product information source, which indicates that this medium may involve a different cognitive processing pattern in consumer information search. This calls for more research to add a new dimension of knowledge to consumer information search literature.

Confirmation of the effects of NFC and WOM on information search on blogs is also an important finding. Although replications and/or extensions are valued in social science, they are not usually published in advertising and consumer behavior journals (Berthon et al. 2003; Madden, Easley and Dunn 1995; Murgolo-Poore et al. 2002; Reid, Soley and Wimmer 1981). It should not be assumed that previous results concerning traditional media would automatically replicate in research on new media unless it is tested in a systematic manner. Successful replications/extensions can defend confidence in the consistency of the results and generalizability of the findings (Hubbard and Armstrong 1994). In this regard, this study contributes to the existing knowledge on information search.

CONCLUSION

The increase of blog use by consumers will continue in the future, and as an advertising

medium, blogs hold a great potential to be effective resources for both consumers and advertisers. The feature Internet offers an unlimited amount of opportunities for advertisers to reach consumers around the world, thus allowing consumers to communicate and interact with other consumers both domestically and internationally while sharing opinions about products/brands with ease. This means that blogs can generate international business opportunities for marketers. Therefore, it is crucial for both academics and advertisers to rigorously investigate motivational factors influencing blog use by consumers and the perceptions of blogs as a product information source. In this sense, is hoped that this study made one step toward understanding the potential of this new form of advertising.

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IMPROVING SALES PERFORMANCE
WITH SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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Superior training is required to develop a sales force with the expertise to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in the tumultuous global marketplace. The use of self-directed learning (SDL) has been shown to be an effective method for providing essential training that individualizes employee learning to achieve organizational goals. Salespeople in careers where self-direction is vital for success (e.g., financial services) benefit from using self-directed learning projects (SDLPs) to acquire the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to excel. This study shows that sales managers can have a positive influence on the self-directed learning efforts of salespeople by providing them with self-management training and supervisory support. In addition, use of non-obligatory self-directed learning projects—where salespeople can chose the projects they feel they need—lead to higher levels of perceived performance.

INTRODUCTION

"We don't need another consultant or business professor preaching to us that we need to develop our salespeople… Instead, we need to know what the best training methods are and why we should use them… So, if you cannot explain specifically to me what our sales managers need to do to improve their training efforts and why we should even invest the effort to change, then don't waste your time or mine by writing it down. I won't read it, and I sure as hell won't recommend it to our sales managers." *The comments of a Vice President of a Fortune 500 Corporation on the role of sales training research.*

Sales executives, researchers and training experts agree that the creation of a world-class sales force can provide a firm with a sustainable competitive advantage (Lambert, Ohai & Kerhoff, 2009), but there is disagreement on what role sales training should play in accomplishing this (Borna & Sharma, 2011; Chonko, Dubinsky, Jones & Roberts, 2003; Harris, Ladik, Artis & Fleming, 2013; Jantan, Honeycutt, Thelen & Attia, 2004; Pettijohn, Pettijohn & Taylor, 2009). As is evident in the quote above, practitioners often find that many of the recommendations provided by researchers are oversimplified, impractical, and often ineffective (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Chonko, Tanner &Weeks, 1993). Sales executives want specific, tangible direction that is supported by evidence so they know what to do and how it will benefit their organizations (Cron, Marshall, Singh, Spiro & Sujan, 2005; Honeycutt, 1996). Self-directed learning offers a promising new avenue for executives because it allows salespeople to craft their own learning efforts around their specific needs. Hence, the use of SDL provides a more efficient and effective approach to sales training. The purpose of this article is to explain one way to develop a highly competitive sales force with training that promotes individual self-directed learning (SDL) by salespeople, and to provide tangible evidence to justify the use of self-

management training and supervisory support to increase SDL.

Self-directed Learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) is an adult education teaching technique that shifts the loci of control for learning from trainer to salesperson. It advocates that when adult students receive greater control over selecting the educational topic, content, study method and evaluation criteria they will customize their learning behaviors and self-regulate efforts and emotions to effectively solve the most pressing and important problems within their lives (Edmondson, Boyer & Artis, 2012; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Speck, 1996). This method can also be used for career development. Self-directed learning as a means of improving professional training has been shown to be highly effective (Boyer & Lambert, 2008; Bromfield-Day, 2000; Guglielmino & Murdick, 1997; Middlemiss, 1991; Yu, 1998). Its success derives from empowering the employee to manage his/her personal learning actions and attitudes, and simultaneously allowing the employee's supervisor to evaluate how well an employee's learning serves the organization's goals. It contrasts with traditional, standardized workplace training methods in two important ways. First, SDL allows adult learners to customize their expertise by deveolping skills, knowledge, and abilities to meet their unique needs and workplace situations. Second, it is a way to maximize organizational learning by decentralizing the training function and requiring individual employees to take charge of their professional development within guidelines set by supervisors.

Self-directed learning has been recommended as an alternative approach to training sales professionals due to their distinctive job requirements and personal characteristics. First, salespeople often require high levels of autonomy, as they operate with minimal supervision on the outer boundary of the organization (Boyer & Lambert, 2008). Second, salespeople typically need to be highly creative

to provide innovative and customized solutions to the unique problems of their clientele (Marshall, Moncrief & Lassk, 1999). Third, salespeople need to learn to continually cope and adapt to turbulent and competitive environments (Chonko, Jones, Roberts & Dubinsky, 2003). Finally, salespeople tend to already have a natural tendency to use SDL either because it is a pre-existing innate characteristic or because their work environment causes them to adopt it (Durr, Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 1996). Therefore, SDL can be used to tailor the training and development of salespeople to effectively achieve organizational goals (Hurley, 2002).

Self-directed learning projects. Self-directed learning *projects* are used within adult education to implement and measure this form of training. An SDL project is a series of intentional learning episodes conducted by an adult designed to obtain skills, knowledge or abilities that create a lasting change in the person. Tough (1967; 1971) stipulated that an SDL project needed to be a minimum of seven hours over a six-month period. While the general definition of SDL projects successfully encompassed most of the different types of autonomous learning, researchers were unable to explain why similar antecedents led to different results. Subsequent research showed that the conflicting results can occur when all SDL projects are treated as the same. We have come to learn they are not.

Two seminal works have rectified this problem and have generated renewed interest in SDL. First, Clardy (2000) recognized that there were different types of SDL projects being used in the workplace after he conducted in-depth interviews with employees in diverse jobs at multiple firms. His classification system showed that different actions were required by the trainer and trainee depending on which type of SDL project was being used, and it explained why previous research was often contradictory when the type of project was not taken into account. Second, Artis & Harris (2007) applied Clardy's classification schema to the sales domain. They identified the different actions

required by both the salesperson and the sales manager for different types of SDL projects. They argued that sales managers have to vary their support and assistance depending on the type of SDL project pursued by the employee, and that salespeople need diverse skills and incentives to effectively use the different SDL projects to achieve organizational goals.

The different types of SDL projects are classified based on the salesperson's ability to identify what needs to be learned and why it is important in a particular selling situation: this is referred to as "contextual understanding" (Artis & Harris, 2007). In general, when the contextual understanding of the salesperson is low he/she must rely on the sales manager to provide topics, content and evaluation of his/her learning. When the salesperson's contextual understanding is high, he/she can rely on his/her own judgment to choose an SDL project, find content, and evaluate his/her own learning. In these cases, the role of the sales manager is more of a coach or mentor. In all cases, it is important that the manager ensure that employee learning efforts are directed toward achieving organizational goals. However, because manager involvement varies depending on which type of SDL project is being used by the salesperson, it is important that sales managers be able to recognize the four types of SDL projects: induced, synergistic, voluntary and scanning. Actual examples from the real estate industry are used here to show how salespeople (agents) and managers (brokers) used various types of SDL projects to achieve professional and organizational objectives within a single industry where salesperson self-sufficiency is essential for success.

First, induced and synergistic SDL projects tend to be *exploitive learning*—existing skills, knowledge and abilities are transferred to the salesperson (March, 1991). Induced SDL projects give the salesperson the least amount of control over content. These projects tend to be required (e.g., certification programs, proof of minimal job skills, etc.). The content is prepared by an expert, and the evaluation is measured by others. Typically, the only control

given to the salesperson is the pace of learning, and sometimes the location (e.g., at home), to study the assigned materials. The salesperson needs only nominal contextual understanding to conduct an induced SDL project because it is provided by a manager, a company, a trainer and/or a regulatory agency. For example, real estate agents identified their studying independently and taking their state's real estate licensing examination as a typical induced SDL project. The role of the various brokers was to specify job requirements, how to acquire licensing, and stimulate action (e.g., one real estate broker pledged to reimburse the fee to take the exam once the agent passed it, a second one gave tips for taking the exam, and another provided study materials).

Second, synergistic SDL projects are similar to induced projects because the topic contents are also prepared by someone other than the learner, but there is an important difference: salespeople have more freedom to choose to participate. Hence, these types of SDL projects are not required, but a salesperson has enough contextual understanding to anticipate a benefit from completing the SDL project, and therefore he/she elects to participate. This subtle difference may have substantial benefits over induced SDL projects because when adult learners choose to participate in synergistic SDL projects they show increased motivation to initiate the process, greater perseverance in completing learning tasks, even when these tasks become tedious or strenuous, and are more likely to transfer what they learn into practice (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). For example, a licensed real estate agent reported that her broker encouraged her to take an optional training seminar on how to conduct "short sells" to improve her services to clients and value to her agency. The broker's role was to help identify a learning opportunity in line with the organization's goal (i.e., increase business by selling more distressed properties) and to secure an expert who would be appropriate to prepare the materials (a title company representative). The agent and broker attribute the knowledge gained from this self-directed learning project as directly leading to

increased work with local banks that prefer short sells to having to foreclose on residential properties.

Third and fourth, voluntary and scanning SDL projects are more advanced and tend to require more *exploratory* learning—the salesperson has to create the skill, knowledge and ability to be learned (March, 1991). Hence, these two types of SDL projects require that salespeople have progressively higher levels of contextual understanding, autonomous learning proficiencies, and motivation to act independently. For instance, successful implementation of voluntary SDL projects requires that salespeople: 1) understand their learning objective; 2) have the skills to acquire and use the information needed to fulfill that objective (a.k.a., information literacy); and; 3) the contextual understanding to determine when they have learned enough to apply it to improve their performance (Artis & Harris, 2007). An example of a voluntary SDL project was provided by a real estate agent who independently conducted an extensive property title search to determine the various parcel owners of a decaying city block within a downtown historic district. He then crafted a proposal to successfully attract a large retailer, a developer, financing from a local bank, and approval from local government authorities. The city block is now a revived economic area for shopping, entertainment, and urban living. This one voluntary SDL project has differentiated this salesperson: beyond the commissions he earned from the sell/purchase of the properties on the block, the retailer has asked that he look for other similar deals, the developer has asked that he identify additional opportunities, the bank has added him to its list of real estate agents, and the local historic district publicly recognized him with a civic award. Throughout this SDL project his broker acted as a coach who provided encouragement and ideas on how he might proceed during different phases of the project.

Scanning SDL projects require the greatest amount of contextual understanding, and the ability to scrutinize large amounts of

information to determine what is relevant and what is just distracting noise. "Unlike the other types of [SDL projects], scanning does not have a pre-identified learning goal but is a proactive process of monitoring the environment to identify and evaluate potential threats and opportunities" (Artis & Harris, 2007, p. 12). This type of SDL project is very important in professional selling because a valuable service provided to customers by world-class professional salespeople is to scan, identify and recommend countermeasures for threats and strategies to seize opportunities. An example of a scanning SDL project was provided by a real estate agent with over 30 years of experience who monitors the weekly discussion and actions of the local zoning board. She attributes her success with commercial clients to her ongoing scanning of the changes in the rules that govern the use of real estate in her community. Her extensive contextual understanding of local issues, zoning regulations, and the board's anticipated actions has allowed her to see potential opportunities and threats for her clients. As she openly admitted, "It is an easy thing to say to do, but to do it well you have to have a great understanding of our community and dedication to continuously staying on top of lots of issues." Her broker's role is minimal: the agent discusses with her broker her interpretation of the zoning board's staff reports, actions, and agenda items; he provides advice and monitors the board meetings when she cannot.

While the authors recognize the importance of all four types of SDL projects, synergistic SDL projects are of primary concern within this research for three important reasons. First, these projects can be used by all salespeople, even those with diverse experiences and different amounts of time spent within professional selling. So by addressing these types of projects, the adoption of SDL by a sales manager is more likely to have broad appeal to most of the members of a sales force. Second, the role of the sales manager is essential in providing support and motivation for these learning opportunities, which is the central point of this research. Sales managers who

understand how to use these types of projects can promote their organization's learning goals. Finally, the use of synergistic SDL projects act as "gateway opportunities" for both salespeople and their managers to become proficient at using higher forms of SDL projects (e.g., voluntary and scanning projects). Therefore, we have placed the construct of synergistic SDL project use at the very center of our model (Figure 1).

Self-management Training

Within professional selling literature, self-management is the combined use of behavioral, emotive and cognitive strategies that help the salesperson understand how to interact within his/her selling environment. Self-management skills are used to pursue and attain personal and organizational goals with effective planning, self-evaluation, self-motivation and resolve (Manz, 1986). For example, self-management training has been used as a tool to assist salespeople to more effectively manage their work efforts with goal setting, self-monitoring, self-regulation, maintenance, and relapse prevention (Frayne & Geringer, 2000; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron & Slocum, 1999). Therefore, we use the term "self-management" as an overarching construct that encompasses many similar skills investigated by many researchers: self-regulation (VandeWalle, Brown, Cron & Slocum, 1999); self-evaluation, self-monitoring, and self-reaction (Bandura, 1982; Kanfer, 1996; Leach, Liu & Johnston, 2005); self-motivation (Gist, Stevens & Bavetta, 1991; Wood & Bandura, 1989); directing focus of effort (Bandura, 1982; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989); and goal planning (Gist, Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989).

Self-management skills can be acquired without training, and not all self-managed behavior results in constructive outcomes. Karoloy (1993) points out that adults may practice dysfunctional self-management. For example, procrastination is a negative form of time management, and avoiding long-term planning is an ineffective way to achieve personal goals, but both are common self-management

methods (Castaneda, Kolenko & Aldag, 1999). Hence, sales managers want to provide self-management training that models the approaches thought to improve performance. For example, Frayne and Geringer (2000) provided self-management training—self-assessment, goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, written contracts, maintenance, and relapse prevention—to half of a sample of insurance salespeople. Twelve months after the training was provided, the treatment and control groups were compared. Those who received the self-management training, on average, made 50 percent more calls, sold twice as many policies, generated 150 percent more in sales revenues, and scored much higher on performance appraisals than those who did not receive the training.

Further, while self-management skills are beneficial by themselves, we intend to show that these skills can achieve greater performance outcomes if they are used to pursue synergistic SDL projects. Self-management is a necessary skill for effective implementation of SDL projects (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). For example, Oddi (1984) found a correlation between the use of SDL projects and an adult's ability to self-regulate his/her learning efforts. Artis and Harris (2007) advocate that self-management skills can be "acquired through study, and therefore, salespeople can be encouraged to be more autonomous learners by being taught the tools necessary for self-directed learning" (p. 13). Therefore, salespeople should be taught appropriate self-management techniques for effective use of SDL.

Perceived Supervisor Support for Synergistic SDL Projects

Adult education scholars emphasize that self-management training may not be enough for effective SDL. Artis and Harris (2007) argue that "teaching these skills is important, but creating a safe environment where salespeople feel comfortable in practicing those skills may be an additional requirement for [effective use of] self-directed learning methods" (p. 14). For

instance, it is of paramount importance that sufficient motivation be provided for SDL projects to be used to achieve meaningful results. Artis and Harris (2007) point out that motivation is the over-riding factor: with it salespeople will overcome many barriers, but without it even those with superior SDL skills may not invest sufficient effort. Hence, salespeople have to believe that their sales managers will support (e.g., provide tools, resources, etc.) and will reward (e.g., recognize, appreciate, compensate, etc.) their use of synergistic SDL projects.

Kottke and Sharafinski (1988) define perceived supervisory support as an employee's global beliefs that his/her supervisor values the employee's contribution and cares about his/her general welfare. Previous research has shown a positive relationship between perceived supervisory support and job satisfaction (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2004), organizational commitment (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2004), and performance (Chan, 2006). Predominantly, two theories have been used to explain and predict how perceived supervisory support influences employee behavior: social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity.

First, social exchange theory states that employees use a simple cost-benefit analysis: if the employee perceives that the benefits (i.e., recognition, compensation, personal fulfillment, etc.) to be received from the relationship will exceed the costs incurred (i.e., effort, time, commitment, etc.) then the employee will remain in the relationship (Emerson & Cook, 1978). Second, the norm of reciprocity states that employees feel obligated to repay favorable treatment (Eisenberger, Lynch, Aselage & Rohdieck, 2004). Hence, when supervisors treat their employees well, those employees feel an obligation to act in ways that benefit the supervisor (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001). Both theories emphasize the employee's need to try to obtain a balance between the treatment they receive and the performance they give. Hence, if salespeople perceive that their supervisors are

increasing their support for SDL projects, then salespeople will increase their adoption of those projects.

Perceived Performance

Sales managers are concerned with justifying the expense and effort invested in sales training, and they require measures to show how specific sales training leads to desired outcomes. Traditional training metrics tend to be provided by those who provide the training, and are inclined to be inadequate. For example, a criticism of this approach is that human resource departments have a tendency to measure the amount of training delivered (e.g., number of participants, number of seminars provided, number of hours of training, etc.), instead of reporting on the personal or organizational results achieved as a result of the training (Tobin, 2000). It is therefore left up to the sales managers and the salespeople who participate in training to evaluate its effectiveness.

It is a goal of this research to determine the impact of synergistic SDL projects on a salesperson's perceived performance. Therefore, the most meaningful evaluation of sales training requires that salespeople who receive it evaluate how it influences their performance. As obvious and straightforward as this may sound, not all salespeople may have had enough experience to effectively evaluate the benefits of different forms of training. To combat this weakness, salespeople can be asked to compare their perceived sales performance to their peers and to report their use of SDL projects to measure a correlation between the two. Professional selling is a competitive endeavor, and salespeople have to be able to assess their own performance against their peers.

Hypotheses

As depicted in Figure 1, we propose that self-management training and supervisory support follow a mediated path through the use of synergistic SDLPs to perceived performance.

We hypothesize the mediated paths based on the following logic. Previous research provides support for the positive relationship between self-management training (SMT) and performance (Leach, Liu & Johnston, 2005) and between perceived supervisory support (PSS) and performance (Chan, 2006). However, organizational climate and employee training do not result directly in performance; rather they influence salesperson behaviors which, in turn, lead to the performance improvements sought by the firm (Artis & Harris, 2007). The model we propose is one that fully mediates the relationships between SMT and performance, and PSS and performance, through the behavior of using synergistic SDL projects to create the desired performance outcomes. Therefore we propose the following hypotheses:

H₁: Higher levels of self-management training will lead to greater use of synergistic self-directed learning projects.

H₂: Higher levels of perceived supervisory support for synergistic self-directed learning projects will lead to greater use of synergistic self-directed learning projects.

H₃: Use of synergistic self-directed learning projects will lead to higher levels of perceived performance.

These can be seen graphically in Figure 1.

Research Method

Sample

Salespeople within the insurance industry were selected to test the model because individual learning and self-management are highly valued and considered essential for successful performance (Frayne & Geringer, 2000). A North American-based provider of insurance training, information and research sent an e-mail to 5,000 of its clients, requesting they complete an on-line survey, and 392 completed surveys were returned for a 7.8% response rate. If a survey was returned lacking a response to any of the items for SDL project use or more than two items from the reflective scales, the response was eliminated; for those responses missing 1 or 2 items from the reflective scales, a mean score replacement method was used on the missing data. This resulted in 381responses that were used for statistical analysis (7.6% usable response rate). Due to our research agreement, the provider maintained control of the client email list. Because of this, we were unable to use software that would provide information about whether the email was viewed, bounced back, or received. Therefore, we report the lowest response rate, assuming all emails reached the intended party, even though the provider mentioned that email addresses often change and that mass emails, like the one sent, often get marked as spam and do not reach

FIGURE 1:
Synergistic SDL Projects Mediated Model of Performance
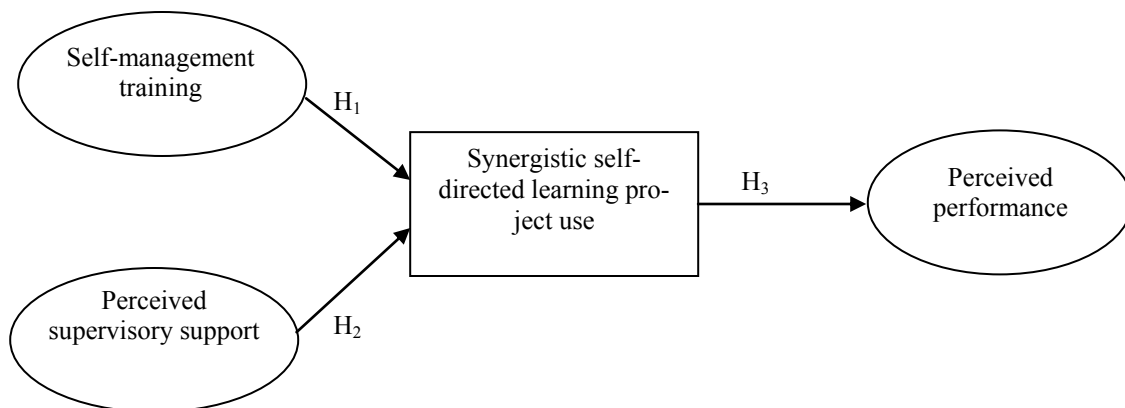
the intended party. Of these respondents, 62.5 percent were male, while 37.5 percent were female. Most participants fell between the ages of 36 and 55 years. The majority of the sample had been in their current position for over four years (68.4%). Average income for the sample fell between $50,000 and $100,000 (44%). On average, the salespeople in the sample had worked in sales for over 13 years (58.9%). Typically, participants had completed at least a four-year degree (55.1%).

Measures

The scale to measure the types of self-management training obtained by salespeople was developed based on Leach et al. (2005). Additional items were added to cover goal formation, self-assessment, motivation, time management, anticipation of problems, and personal resolve which resulted in a total of ten items. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). This scale showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .970.

The items used to operationalize perceived supervisor support for synergistic SDL projects were modified from Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa's (1986) perceived organizational support scale. This resulted in six items that reflect the employee's perception of supervisory support of synergistic SDL projects. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .963.

The outcome measure of performance was based on the participants' assessment of their performance relative to their peers within their industry. Items included personal sales objectives and organizational goals from scales provided by Leach et al. (2005), Behrman and Perreault (1982), and Sujan, Weitz & Kumar (1994), such as standard questions about selling volume, exceeding sales quotas, acquiring market share, increasing profit margins, identifying new accounts, and assisting the

sales supervisor in meeting organizational goals. This resulted in a scale consisting of seven items measured on an eleven-point Likert type scale (from -5 to +5 with 0 as a midpoint). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .941. Salespeople reported no problems in comparing their performance to peers in their industry during interviews held prior to data collection.

The measure of synergistic SDL project use is not conducted as a reflective measure; rather, it is a count of the number of these projects the respondents have engaged in over the last six months. The participants were given a list of the five most commonly used synergistic SDL projects based on interviews with highly autonomous salespeople across multiple industries (e.g., real estate, pharmaceuticals, financial services, manufacturing, etc.).They were then asked to estimate how much time they had spent on that particular activity. If their response met the minimum threshold of seven hours, as defined by Clardy (2000), then it was scored as a "1"; if not, then it was scored as a "0." The final measured variable for use of each type of SDL project was calculated by summing each of the five items to give a count of the number of different synergistic SDL projects the respondent had engaged in over the past six months (Mean 1.48, Median 1.00, Mode 0, Std. Deviation 1.612). This is an observed count variable, thus no internal consistency data is available. As expected, insurance salespeople reported extensive use of synergistic SDL projects. In the six months prior to completing the survey, 60.8 percent of the sample reported completing at least one synergistic SDL project: used company education materials, sales materials, optional seminars, intranet, or training seminars. Of these respondents, 21.6 percent used only one synergistic SDL project, 14.2 percent used two, and 25 percent used three or more.

To establish face validity and content validity, we asked 10 salespeople to read the definitions of the self-directed learning projects and identify the activities that fit each category. We later asked five different salespeople to match the activities with the type of self-directed

learning project. All salespeople categorized the activities in the same way. Next, a team of seven academic researchers familiar with psychometric properties reviewed all scales used in the study. At least two researchers were familiar with each of the literature bases from which the psychometric measures were drawn. Finally, the scales were reviewed by five individuals from the sample population. In addition, the reflective scales were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis to further assess their psychometric properties, including convergent and discriminant validity, which is discussed in the analysis section below.

Analysis/Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. In order to confirm the psychometric properties of the reflective scales to measure SMT, PSS, and relative performance, all were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis. The results support the unidimensionality of the scales as well as provide evidence of the convergent and discriminant validities of the measures. Table 1 outlines the measurement model fit, standardized loadings of the items, and correlations between the constructs. In terms of overall fit, the model performed extremely well with the standard fit indices well above the .90 mark and with RMSEA below .06 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). According to Bagozzi, Yi & Phillips (1991), for evidence of discriminant validity, correlations between constructs should be significantly different from 1.0. There is some concern in the measurement model about convergent validity due to some statistically significant correlations between the constructs; however, the significant correlations between PSS, SMT and performance can be discounted given that they are expected to be related in the nomological network of the hypothesized model. The main cause for concern is the significant correlation between PSS and fashion consciousness in the measurement model. Fashion consciousness was included as a marker variable to test for common method bias based on the recommendation of Lindell & Whitney (2001). The fact that this construct, which should be

nomologically distinct from the other variables in the model, shows correlation may indicate the existence of some common method bias, but giving the small magnitude of of the relationship, the significance is more likely due to the large sample size. As an additional test of common method bias all reflective measures were loaded on to a single construct to see if the model and standardized loading revealed any common method bias. The model fit statistics were awful with most below .5 and RMSEA above .19. Additionally, the standardized loading of the items outside of those expected to be related to the item used to set the scale by fixing its loading to 1.0 were between .441 and .095 which provides further evidence of both discriminant validity and a lack of common method bias. For evidence of convergent validity, the standardized loadings of each item on the hypothesized measurement model must be greater than .5 on its respective construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and each of the factor loadings are well above this threshold with the lowest being .732. Given the preponderance of the evidence in the CFA for each model, it appears that each scale works well and is psychometrically sound, which allows them to be used in the next phase of the analysis.

Structural Model. The next phase in the analysis was to test the hypotheses via structural equation modeling. The models were tested using AMOS 19 with a maximum likelihood extraction technique. While this is not the typical technique utilized for analysis involving count variables, it was selected to allow the analysis of all constructs simultaneously to examine how they work as a system, to avoid inflated error that would result from running separate regressions and for ease of interpretation. The data was also analyzed using Poisson and negative binomial regressions for the links involving count data as is typical, and the same results and interpretations were found; therefore only the results of the SEM analysis are presented here. The first result of note is that the model failed to pass the Chi-square test of model fit; however, this can be attributed to the large

TABLE 1:
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Fit Statistics

Chi Square	692.111
df	293
Chi/df	2.362
NFI	0.929
RFI	0.915
IFI	0.958
TLI	0.949
CFI	0.958
RMSEA	0.059
ECVI	2.194

Factor Loadings

Self-management Training		*Perceived Supervisor Support*	
Item	standardized loading	Item	standardized loading
SRT1	0.836	PSSS1	0.944
SRT2	0.907	PSSS2	0.842
SRT3	0.807	PSSS3	0.925
SRT4	0.800	PSSS4	0.827
SRT5	0.909	PSSS5	0.927
SRT6	0.911	PSSS6	0.935
SRT7	0.893	*Perceived Performance*	
SRT8	0.918	Perf1	0.867
SRT9	0.906	Perf2	0.816
SRT10	0.836	Perf3	0.903
Fashion Conscientiousness		Perf4	0.809
FC1	0.732	Perf5	0.774
FC2	0.850	Perf6	0.864
FC3	0.781	Perf7	0.811

Interfactor Correlations

Relationship	Correlation	p-value
SMT $\leftrightarrow$ PSS	0.419	0.000
SMT $\leftrightarrow$ Perf	0.313	0.000
SMT $\leftrightarrow$ FC	0.093	NS
PSS $\leftrightarrow$ Perf	0.213	0.000
PSS $\leftrightarrow$ FC	0.146	0.017
Perf $\leftrightarrow$ FC	0.031	NS

sample size employed, and the ratio of Chi-square to degrees of freedom is below 3.0, which typically indicates good model fit. Additionally, all of the standard fit indices for each model are well above the suggested .90 minimum cut off and the RMSEA is well below the suggested maximum of .08 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Taken together, the implication is that each model is a good fit for its respective data set. To test the hypotheses, each path in the model was examined for significance. The path in support of each hypothesis was significant at the .01 level of significance. The results of the structural model can be seen in Table 2.

Limitations

As with any research, this study has its flaws. The first is that, like many other studies, it is cross-sectional, so it is not possible to draw any causal conclusions from the findings. In addition, this makes it impossible to determine the impact these antecedent variables have overtime on performance (i.e., is it a short term

boost to performance or is it more enduring as managers would hope). A second limitation to this study is that it is concentrated in one industry (financial services), and this limits the generalizability of the findings to other sales or services personnel. Because a cross industry study is beyond the scope of this initial foray into this topic in business (specifically marketing), it is up to future researchers in this area to explicate the usefulness of these findings across industries. A final limitation of this study is the low response rate which raises the question of whether these findings are reflective of the population or the result of a self-selected subsample of the population. Future research on the topic should elucidate the answer to this; however this concern seems minor as noted in the sample section. Overall, the results of this study present an interesting story and even with the flaws are compelling. The meanings and implications of these findings are discussed below.

Discussion/Implications

An assessment of the current state of sales training suggests that firms can generate greater profits by developing a smarter sales force via improved sales training methods (ASTD, 2009). Adoption of effective employee learning strategy is likely to be an organizational strength and can evolve into a core competency that is valued by customers and difficult for competitors to duplicate (Calantone, Cavusgil & Zhao, 2002; Lambert, Ohai & Kerhoff, 2009). Self-directed learning allows for that strategy to be highly tailored to the needs of individual salespeople, sales force departments, and clientele (Artis & Harris, 2007). Hence, a culture and climate has to be created and maintained by different stakeholders for a SDL strategy to be effective.

First, to create a supportive culture for SDL, top management needs to openly embrace SDL strategy and establish expectations that it must be linked to improved organizational performance. For example, executives have to recognize that organizational learning derives

TABLE 2:
Structural Model Results

Model Fit Statistics

Chi Square	718.065
df	250
Chi/df	2.872
NFI	0.923
RFI	0.908
IFI	0.949
TLI	0.938
CFI	0.948
RMSEA	0.069
ECVI	2.209

Structural Paths

SMT à SDLPU	**0.169 (p<.01) H$_1$**
PSS à SDLPU	**0.304 (p<.01) H$_2$**
SDLPU à Perf	**0.166 (p<.01) H$_3$**

from the collective learning behaviors of individual employees. Executive training is needed to show how to use existing policies and procedures to adopt all four types of SDL projects—induced, synergistic, voluntary and scanning. For instance, managers need to learn how to implement the various types of SDL projects as part of an employee's annual review/goal setting process.

Second, the role of the human-resources department needs to be clarified, and how its efforts are measured need to be redefined. Human resources professionals need to be instructed to support the use of SDL projects by providing skills that empower independent learning efforts by employees: teach employees how to design, implement and diagnose their own SDL projects. Appropriate metrics and procedures are needed. Traditional training is often measured by how many seminars were conducted; results of the training are not typically measured. However, by inserting the evaluation of SDL into the ongoing employee performance review process, managers can assess the salesperson's effort and progress toward individual and organizational goals. Human-resource training can be evaluated based on feedback from employees and managers who rely on the training provided to use SDL projects.

Third, evaluation and incentives are needed to get sales managers' actions aligned with organizational learning goals. Sales managers have to be encouraged and rewarded for the independent learning and success that their subordinates achieve. Traditional top-down command-and-control models that restrict the downward flow of information to a "need to know basis" will restrict SDL. For example, sales managers have to be willing and able to relinquish control to salespeople (Artis & Harris, 2007). Therefore, reward systems need to recognize the valuable input of sales managers—facilitating, coaching, and mentoring—to the successful use of SDL projects by members of their sales force.

Fourth, new training efforts have to be directed at sales managers. They need to learn how to provide both supervisory support for SDL and self-management training to salespeople. In addition, sales managers need to be trained to use the four types of SDL projects. They then need to be taught how to be coaches and mentors who can show salespeople how to implement SDL projects. Sales managers will need to learn how to find each salesperson's natural level of independent learning. Research into the use of SDL projects should guide the training efforts targeted at sales managers. For example, the findings reported here support the idea that salespeople who used synergistic SDL projects report better performance outcomes than those who did not, but the amount of time invested in these types of SDL projects may need to meet only a minimum threshold to maximize effectiveness. For example, those who invested 1-6 hours in synergistic SDL projects reported lower performance than those who invested between 7-12 hours per project, and there was a slight dip in performance as projects required more time (i.e., 13+ hours). Therefore, sales managers should promote synergistic SDL projects that require sufficient mental involvement and dedication by the salesperson, but these projects need not be overly long to achieve desired performance outcomes (approximately 7-12 hours). Hence, it may be more helpful to design many smaller, but targeted, SDL projects instead of a few large ones.

Fifth, it is imperative that salespeople be empowered and not abandoned as organizations implement SDL projects (Tobin, 2000). Salespeople need to see that sales managers support SDL projects, and they need to understand how their efforts help to achieve organizational goals. Foundational training in SDL skills (e.g., self-management training) will help to remove initial barriers. For instance, self -management training that requires salespeople to develop a personal mission statement, a list of performance goals, and a comprehensive learning plan to achieve those goals are ideal steps to enable employees to see how they can own the process and achieve outcomes

beneficial to themselves, their clientele, and their organizations. Sales managers can then use the four types of SDL projects to set salespeople up for success by moving individual salespeople from less sophisticated SDL projects to more complex ones.

Finally, researchers and professional sales trainers need to continue to provide a stream of research to support the development and adoption of new SDL methods. As reported by ASTD (2009), the amount of traditional training provided to salespeople drops considerably after the third year. Research is needed into how SDL projects and strategies can be used to complement traditional training methods so that once salespeople have maximized the gains from lecture-based training methods they can continue their individual career development by mastering the use of SDL projects. Specifically, researchers need to develop and test practical methods to help executives and salespeople to understand the potential benefits of SDL, to see the ease with which SDL methods can be adopted, and to aid salespeople to realize that they have the potential to be their own best teacher.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SELLING: SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS, ACTIVITIES AND PERFORMANCE

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Despite the evolution of social media and its increasingly significant impact on the marketing environment, research examining how social media relates to the critical area of sales is lacking. To create an improved framework of the strategic usage of social media, this paper presents a profile of B2B sales professionals who employ social media. Importantly, the results reveal salespeople who use social media typically have key differences from sales professionals who don't utilize this tool. Users of social media have discovered social media impacts overall sales performance. While the study found users of social media are typically from younger generations, this age dynamic creates interesting implications for managers desiring to integrate this tool into their strategic marketing mix. This study therefore advances the sales literature in the understanding of social media as a strategic sales tool that influences sales performance.

INTRODUCTION

Social media technology has been accepted as part of the marketing strategy and culture of operations within a variety of companies. For example, searches of employment data bases regularly demonstrate marketers are using social media as part of their strategic package, and are continuing to search for marketing professionals to start and manage these programs. The growth of tools such as Twitter and Facebook underscores that social media is becoming a mainstream strategy for many marketers.

Social media has seen the most exposure in consumer markets, yet business-to-business (B2B) marketers have also expanded their efforts and are beginning to develop social media strategies. Thus, because of the uniqueness required to reach B2B target audiences via social channels, and its continued growth as a strategic choice, this study specifically focuses on the use of social media

within B2B sales. B2B buyer segments tend to be fundamentally distinctive from their business-to-consumer (B2C) counterparts. For instance, B2B buyers purchase products for their business and to fulfill their customers' needs. These buyers face higher risk in higher value sales, making it important to have information that allows for the "best decision." There is a tendency for smaller niche markets with fewer vendor options (Hansen, 2012), creating a need for lengthy, close relationships with more vendor contact points than in consumer markets. As a result, social media holds enormous potential for companies to become more connected to clients and, by doing so, increase revenue, reduce costs and improve efficiencies. Yet, despite the structure of the marketplace, the utilization of social media for reaching business-to-business clients is a relatively new phenomenon and has gone largely unexplored in the literature.

It is interesting that 99% of surveyed business managers believe social media will have a significant impact on their business yet almost two-thirds report they are not sure of its meaning (Safko, 2011). The power of social media is expected to impact marketing and

sales, and as noted by Seley and Holloway (2008), this will require a cultural overhaul. In an environment where numerous businesses offer similar products and services while maintaining similar values, the salesperson has an opportunity to provide unique advantages through social media that are particularly useful in the B2B marketplace. For example, blogs may be used by salespeople to leverage industry knowledge and influence sales, while Twitter can be used to seek out new business opportunities and build professional relationships. Salespeople who participate in such methods should be able to improve business by helping build customer loyalty, reducing support costs, fostering additional sales opportunities, and providing an additional customer feedback loop (Hansen, 2012).

Evidence of the incorporation of social media into sales in B2B firms demonstrates its importance. For example, Sanbolic Inc. provides clients with distributed data management software for critical enterprise workloads, virtual desktop infrastructure and cloud computing deployments through a network of value-added resellers. Management at Sanbolic has shifted their strategy to provide their partners, customers, resellers and prospects with educational materials via blog posts, and is automatically tweeting to connected LinkedIn accounts which are tied to Salesforce.com for tracking, resulting in increased leads stemming from building credibility and trust (Bannan, 2011). GridGain Systems provides a Java-based cloud application development platform. GridGain found its technical customers responded through the personal connection capability provided by Twitter to exchange ideas and links, resulting in a 20% increase in Web traffic (Bannan, 2011). IBM has successfully studied the exact language that IT buyers used in their searches about software topics and then custom designed instructional videos which resulted in sales leads (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Molex Inc., a manufacturer of connectors for use in electronics, utilizes blogs, Twitter, and YouTube to extend its sales opportunities overseas (Callahan**,** 2012).

Combining the literature and practitioner applications, this study analyzes differences between B2B salesperson users and nonusers of social media. The research provides management with an understanding of differences between these two groups. The next section will provide proposed hypotheses, followed by a discussion of the research method and results. Finally, managerial implications, study limitations and directions for future research are offered to advance knowledge of social media for the sales and social media literatures.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Social Media Usage in Critical Sales Activities

Social media is any tool or service that uses the Internet to facilitate conversations. Given sales rests on exchanging information between buyers and sellers, the process of facilitating conversations that exists within social media underscores its potentially critical relationship to sellers and its opportunity for strategic usage by the sales organization. The basis of sales social media can be defined relative to conventional advertising on television and in magazines in that traditional marketing media offers a mass media method of interacting with customers, while social media offers more one-to-one methods to meet and interact with prospects and customers (Safko, 2011).

Curtis and Giamanco (2010) suggest there is a new sales approach that is more of a mindset change than using the latest technology. The goal of this approach is to embrace the appropriate technology that will best help create efficiency and effectiveness in the sales operation. The contention is that social selling allows sellers to attract, interact and close business with buyers. When properly managed, these inexpensive social media tools can quickly deliver marketing messages through interactive discussion and rapid word of mouth which can create measurable results (Owyang, 2009).

There are important selling activities that B2B salespeople engage in every day (Ingram et al., 2012). They obtain leads, build awareness, prospect, maintain good business relationships, obtain referrals to other potential prospects, communicate thoroughly, and connect with customers to keep them feeling important. The research question that remains to be answered in this environment is if social media is being applied to these selling activities. While definitive conclusions remain unclear about specific usage, the literature about social media usage indicates that it may be used in early stages of a customer relationship where awareness, lead building and prospecting take place (Curtis and Giamanco, 2010). While salespeople need to become adept at successfully navigating the first few critical phases of the sales process (i.e., investigating and qualifying prospects), it appears social networking might save considerable time during this aspect of the sales cycle (Seley and Holloway, 2008).

Business social networking tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Hootsuite, Foursquare and Twitter could be used to maintain relationships with customers and identify potential leads (Safko, 2011). Better information leads to better qualification of sales opportunities, suggesting social media can be used for established customers to maintain positive business relationships and retain necessary communication. Additionally, the expectation that salespeople may use social media such as Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. as a path to ask for referrals to other prospects, leads to the first hypothesis:

  H₁: B2B sales users of social media are more likely than not to use social media to maintain good business relationships,
  (a) obtain leads,
  (b) build awareness,
  (c) connect with customers and keep them feeling important,
  (d) prospect,
  (e) obtain referrals to other potential prospects, and
  (f) communicate thoroughly.

The importance in understanding this hypothesis from a practitioner or academic view rests with the idea that before a tool can be successfully integrated into an organization, managers must understand who uses the tool, and how it is utilized. Understanding this hypothesis ensures social media is not simply implemented, but its usage is maximized and the greatest organizational value of usage is realized. For example, if this study determines social media enhances relationships between buyers and sellers, it can be strategically included in relationship building programs incorporated by salespeople.

Social media Usage and Sales Performance

Marketing executives from Inc. 500 companies report that social media tools are important for brand awareness, company reputation, generating web traffic, lead generation and customer support programs (Barnes and Lescault, 2012). They indicate they use and have had overall marketing success with tools such as message/bulletin boards, blogging, mobile apps, online video, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Texting, Facebook, Podcasting, and Foursquare (Barnes and Lescault, 2012). The platform most utilized is Facebook with 74% of companies using it. Virtually tied at 73% is the adoption of the professional network LinkedIn. Approximately a quarter of the managers studied report that Facebook or LinkedIn is the single most effective social networking platform they use.

Specifically, in the B2B arena, a fundamental shift in the method that buyers and sellers communicate has occurred, requiring salespeople to adapt their process and approach. In B2B buying exchanges, the sales cycle is built on relationships and trust, often established through face-to-face interaction. Yet, in a social sales world, B2B buying decisions frequently initiate, move forward and are often closed online or over the phone with limited face-to-face meetings. In this environment, salespeople must recognize, participate in and leverage the emphasis that buyers now place on recommendations,

comments and the reviews of others (Seley, 2011).

While the research addressing social media usage in B2B sales is lagging behind that of marketing in general, it appears social media usage in the sales function is important, particularly if its usage can be linked to sales outcomes. In a similar framework, Robinson et al. (2005) tested a model linking technology acceptance to adaptive selling and job performance of field salespeople. They provided evidence that behavioral intentions to use technology positively affect salesperson performance. Onyemah et al. (2010) also confirmed that usage of sales technology has a positive influence on salesperson performance, and a broad study of sellers from the U.S., U.K., Brazil and China found social media has become critical to achievement, with the most successful salespeople reporting social media being integral to sales success (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010). Given that social media is perceived by salespeople to improve their success, coupled with the positive relationship between sales technology and salesperson performance, we propose:

> H_2: B2B salespeople who use social media are more likely than nonusers to perceive that social media improves their sales success.
>
> H_3: B2B salespeople who use social media have higher levels of overall sales performance than nonusers.

The importance of these hypotheses to researchers and practitioners both focus on why someone would (or would not) utilize social media. The specific importance of H2 determines if any bias exists in who is likely to utilize social media, which could restrict the ability of a marketing organization to utilize this tool. For example, if nonusers are not likely to perceive social media will improve their individual performance, this allows managers to understand that the implementation of any social media tools may be restricted or "fought" by nonusers who simply don't believe in its success. Findings from testing the third hypothesis (H3) underscore that if social media

actually enhances performance, it in turn should be a valued strategic effort by management.

Social Media Usage and Generational Differences

As social media technologies are used in business-to-business sales environments, questions will continue as we attempt to understand human factors that impede or generate its success. One such factor that may explain social media usage is generational impact. Understanding generational differences may assist managers in adopting new technologies that appeal to each generation (Marston, 2011), and in turn, recognizing how these generational differences impact business is important (Bartley, Ladd and Morris, 2007; Kritz and Arsenault, 2006; Walker, 2003).

Currently, there are three distinct generations in today's salesforce: Millennials born 1980 to 1993, Generation Xers born 1965 to 1979, and Baby boomers born 1946 to 1964. Millennials constitute the bulk of the potential replacement labor (Bartlett, 2005). They are entering the salesforce in large numbers and they play by different rules (Howe and Strauss, 2000). A key question we often hear is do the youngest members of today's salesforce differ considerably from their predecessors?

Among Millennials who see their generation as unique, technology use is a response that separates them from other groups. Millennials see their generation as unique in their ability to understand and use technology. Roughly a quarter (24%) of those surveyed who were under age 30 say technology is what sets their generation apart (Abate 2010). Examples of social media usage in sales are occurring at industrial giant General Electric, where Millennials helped create a social media presence through sites such as Pinterest and Instagram (Callahan, 2012). Millennials are helping other B2B companies such as CREE and Mandiant Corporation to go from literally no social media presence to surpassing companies 100 times their size, such as RSA and Symantec, in terms of Klout Score and

other metrics (**Callahan,** 2012). Marketing executives are finding that this younger generation's social media expertise and easy familiarity with the digital world make them particularly valuable employees.

Yet, despite anecdotal evidence referencing high usage patterns, research has not addressed the connection between generations and the usage of social media in B2B sales. There have, however, been studies exploring whether or not generations will determine the use of technology (three studies found no evidence of a direct relationship). For example, Hunter and Perreault (2007) found salesperson experience shared no direct relationship with using technology to access, analyze or communicate. Similarly, Ko and Dennis (2004), Johnson and Whitehorn (1997) and Mathieu, Ahearne and Taylor (2007) failed to find a significant relationship between age (and experience) and technology use. Older salespeople see technology as offering both advantages and presenting complexities (Speier and Venkatesh, 2002), and boomers tend to see themselves as open to new technology and will use it if they can see its value (Glass, 2007).

Several studies have concluded younger salespeople tend to use technology more than older salespeople (Harris and Pike, 1996; Hunter and Perreault, 2006; Rapp, Ahearne and Forbes, 2007; Senecal, Pullins and Bueher, 2007). Not surprisingly, because Millennials already use social media in their personal lives, it is expected that they will push for their corporate learning experiences to employ them as well (Cisco, 2011). Cisco, for example, revealed that one in three young professionals consider the Internet to be as important as fundamental human resources such as air, water, food and shelter (Cisco, 2011). These and numerous other findings provide insight into the mindset, expectations, and behavior of the world's next generation of workers and the increased likelihood that these salespeople will want to incorporate social media in their sales efforts. It may be that younger salespeople will be more comfortable with technology than Boomers (Lancaster and Stillman, 2003) and

that the newer generations of salespeople will have shorter learning curves, and higher levels of technology tools usage (Delvecchio, 2009). Boomers thus far may have been resistant to adopting social media due to issues described in the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1989), and some salespeople may be threatened or not clear about the benefits of new technology (Curran and Meuter, 2005). Equally, there are salespeople who will consider the costs of learning new technology, and switching to using it, to be too great to be worthwhile (Gatignon and Robertson 1991). Hence, although the evidence is mixed, the predominant view suggests that

H_4: B2B users of social media are more likely than nonusers to be Millennials or Generation Xers. Nonusers are more likely to be Baby Boomers.

The practical and research importance of H4 rests with providing a more in-depth understanding of comprises sales users of social media in the B2B marketplace. Through an understanding of the generational compartments most likely to employ such tools, marketers can gather a better understanding of how to integrate social media into their own organization as part of their strategic package. Equally important, these findings are likely to provide indirect information about buyers who use social media. From that information, sellers can craft strategies designed to use (or not use) specific social media efforts among different ages of buyers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

A leading data collection organization was used to administer a national electronic mail survey of business-to-business sales professionals. An email was sent to salespeople in this organization's database inviting them to participate in the survey. As a result, 1,989 sales professionals accessed our electronic survey via the Web. An initial screening

question was used to determine if respondents were a business-to-business salesperson. This eliminated 1,680 respondents, leaving 309 respondents to continue with the survey. After examining the data for incomplete responses, a final sample of 273 remained. A time-trend extrapolation test (Armstrong and Overton, 1977) using demographic, classification and measurement variables was performed to estimate nonresponse bias. Results (F = 1.22, significance F = 0.270) suggest that nonresponse bias is not likely a problem.

The sample consists of mostly males (60.1%) who average 43.3 years of age. The study includes 21.2% (aged 18-31; born 1980 to 1993) Millennials, 35.9% Generation X (aged 32-46; born 1965 to 1979) and 42.9% Baby Boomers (aged 47-65; born 1946 to 1964). Respondents average 17.9 years of sales experience and most (67.8%) have a college degree. Respondents report their primary means of compensation as salary (42.1%), commission (21.2%) or a combination of salary, commission and bonus (36.7%). These salespeople sell for services (45.4%), wholesaling (25.6%), manufacturing (26.4%), and nonprofit (2.6%) organizations in a variety of industries.

Operationalization of Study Variables

To determine respondents' *social media usage* (SMU), they were asked to respond using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree" to the following statement, "I use social media for selling." Those who responded with a 1, 2 or 3 were classified as nonusers of social media (N = 110), while those who responded with a 5, 6 or 7 were classified as social media users (N = 115).

The extent to which salespeople believe that *social media improves sales success* (SMSS) was based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree" using an average of two items: "I feel social media is important to my success in

sales" and "Social media has helped increase my sales."

Sales performance (SP) was measured as an average of seven items (shown in Table 1) intended to assess the extent to which salespeople achieve their sales objectives. Using a scale ranging from (1) "much worse" to (5) "much better", salespeople rated their current level of performance by evaluating how well they believe they performed on seven performance items relative to other salespeople in their organization at the time of their last performance review. Originally developed from Behrman and Perreault's (1982) "achieving objectives" dimension of their performance measure, this scale, or a slight variation of it (i.e., one item more or less), has been used frequently to measure sales performance (e.g., Evans et al., 2007; Jaramillo et al. 2009).

Social media sales activities (SMSA) were measured with seven items (shown in Table 2) on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." Respondents indicated as "users" of social media who answered 1, 2, or 3 were grouped as not using social media for the specific sales activity, while those who answered 5, 6, or 7 were considered to be users of social media for that sales activity.

Generations was determined by grouping respondents into three categories based on their age. Respondents aged 18-31 are classified as Millennials, those aged 32-46 make up Generation Xers, and those aged 47 to 65 comprise the Baby Boomers.

Both the reliability and validity of the two measurement scales utilized in this study were assessed. Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha is .93 for SMSS, and .90 for sales performance indicating that each measure is reliable (Nunnally, 1978).

The convergent and discriminant validity of the measures was assessed via confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 16 (Arbuckle, 2007).

The fit statistics indicate that the model fits the data well (X^2 = 70.07, df = 26, p = 0.000; CFI = .968, TLI = .956, RMSEA = .079). Table 1 summarizes results from the confirmatory factor analysis. Evidence of convergent validity is found in the statistically significant t-values (greater than 2.0) for the parameter estimates (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The findings also show that the proportion of variation in the indicators captured by the underlying construct is higher than the variance due to measurement error, offering additional support for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). For each construct, the average variance extracted exceeds a suggested critical value of .50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Discriminant validity is evidenced by the finding that the average variance extracted by each construct is greater than the shared variance between the two constructs (shared variance = 0.04) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, evidence of discriminant validity is offered by the fact that the two constructs are distinguishable from one another given that the 95 percent confidence interval for the correlation between the constructs does not contain the value of 1.0 (confidence interval = -0.14 to 0.22) (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Analysis and Results

To assess hypothesis one, only users of social media were considered. Support is provided for H_1 (see Table 2) confirming that social media is more likely to be used than not with regards to each critical sales activity. The activities were ranked based on the highest percentage of users who agreed they use social media for that sales activity. The results indicate that social media is used by 91.8% to maintain good business relationships, 91.1% to obtain leads, 90.4% to build awareness, 88.9% to connect with customers and keep them feeling important, 86.0% to prospect, 84.2% to communicate thoroughly and 84.0% to obtain referrals to other potential prospects .

T-tests and Chi-square analyses were conducted to test the remaining hypotheses. Comparisons were made between those B2B salespeople who indicated they used social media and those who indicated that they did not use social media.

TABLE 1:
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Variable	Factor Loading	t-value	Average Variance Extracted
Social Media Sales Success			0.87
I feel social media is important to my success in sales	0.97	-------[a]	
Social media has helped increase my sales	0.89	5.73	
Sales Performance			0.56
Contribution to your company's market share	0.80	-------[a]	
Selling high profit margin products	0.72	12.62	
Generating a high level of dollar sales	0.84	15.40	
Quickly generating sales of new company products	0.70	12.20	
Identifying and cultivating major accounts in your territory	0.60	10.13	
Exceeding sales targets	0.77	13.84	
Assisting your sales supervisor in meeting his or her goals	0.80	14.39	

TABLE 2:
Social Media Sales Activities (SMSA)

H$_1$:	Percent of social media users:		X^2	P-value
"I use social media in my selling efforts to:"	*Disagreed	agreed		
maintain good business relationships.	8.2%	91.8%	68.61	0.000**
obtain leads.	8.9	91.1	68.21	0.000**
build awareness.	9.6	90.4	61.45	0.000**
connect with customers and keep them feeling important.	11.1	88.9	59.89	0.000**
prospect.	14.0	86.0	48.27	0.000**
obtain referrals to other potential prospects	15.8	84.2	44.47	0.000**
Communicate thoroughly.	16.0	84.0	46.24	0.000**

*Only users were included n = 115
X^2 **analysis -**Comparison made between those who reported 1, 2, or 3 = "disagreed to using activity" vs. 5, 6, or 7 = "agreed to using activity"
*p $\leq$ 0.05; **p $\leq$ 0.001

TABLE 3:
Hypothesized Differences of Business-to-Business Salespeople
Social Media Nonusers vs. Users

	Non-users		Users			
I use social media for selling - SMU	40.3% N = 110		42.1% N = 115			
Hypothesis	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t-Value**	**P-value**
H$_2$: Social Media Sales Success -SMSS	1.79	1.01	**5.35**	1.18	-24.36	0.000**
H$_3$: Sales Performance - SP	3.75	0.71	**4.05**	0.58	-3.54	0.000**
	Percent		**Percent**		X^2	**P-value**
H4: Generational Differences						
Millennials	27.1		**72.9**		24.57	0.000**
Generation X	40.2		**59.8**			
Baby Boomers	**67.4**		32.6			
Pairs Comparison						
Millennials vs. Boomers					20.82	0.000**
Generation Xers vs. Boomers					13.07	0.000**
Millennials vs. Generation Xers					2.29	0.130

Bold indicates higher values if SIGNIFI-CANT

*p $\leq$ 0.05; **p $\leq$ 0.001

The results of hypotheses two through five are summarized in Table 3.

As anticipated in hypothesis two, users (Mean = 5.35, sd = 1.18) of social media are more likely than nonusers (Mean = 1.79, sd = 1.01) to believe that social media directly improves sales success (t = -24.36, p = 0.000). In addition, support for hypothesis three was found. Users (Mean = 4.05, sd = 0.58) of social media showed higher levels of overall sales performance than nonusers (Mean = 3.75, sd = 0.71) (t = -3.54, p = 0.000). Finally, hypothesis four proposing that younger generations are more likely than Baby Boomers to be social media users is supported with a significant overall Chi square (X^2 = 24.57, p = 0.000). Millennials (72.9%) had a higher percentage of social media users than Baby Boomers (32.6%) (X^2 = 20.82, p = 0.000). Similarly, Generation Xers (59.8 %) are more likely to use social media than Baby Boomers (X^2 = 13.07, p = 0.000). However, no statistically significant differences exist between the two youngest generations, Millennials and Generation Xers with regards to social media usage.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

This study allows managers and researchers to develop an initial understanding of how social media is being utilized at the salesforce operational level. While attention is being given to the strategic, academic and practical usage of social media, knowledge about its usage by salespeople remains very limited, and mostly observational. Importantly, business-to-business salespeople were selected to investigate in this study because relational selling has become a growing strategic component of the marketing structure within this marketplace. As a result, client connectivity and the retention of clients through enhanced communications with buyers (the foundation of social media) provide an excellent opportunity to study the application of this marketing strategy by salespeople.

The significance of hypothesis one underscores the application of social media to sales activities that are critical for most sellers (Geiger and Finch 2011) such as client relationship establishment, client retention and ongoing relationship building actions. The majority of social media users in this study indicate they use social media in different stages of the sales process. For instance, social media is used in early stages of a customer relationship where awareness, lead building and prospecting take place. A total of 88.9% of respondents indicated they employ social media to connect with customers, while 91.8% indicated they apply social media to established customers to maintain good business relationships and important communications. It was found that 84.0% of the B2B salespeople make use of social media such as Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. as a path to ask for referrals to other potential prospects. Hence, these B2B sellers use social media for common, but important aspects of the sales job. Sellers who understand how to use social media, therefore, are likely to be able to determine the most appropriate contact method(s) (traditional or social media) to enhance desired outcomes. From an organizational perspective, this finding suggests that selling organizations may need to explore how to include social media as part of their training programs and management development programs. If social media is able for example, to enhance client relationships, selling organizations would be wise to incorporate this tool as part of their overall efforts, and not allow its usage to be piecemeal among salespeople.

In hypothesis two, B2B professionals who already use this tool have a perception that it improves their success. This also indicates that nonusers are more likely to not believe in its success, and in turn, suggests management will find it more difficult to install social media programs in organizations or among marketers if usage does not already exist. Equally, it will likely be easier to begin social media programs where usage has already begun. Hence, if an organization is considering beginning such social media programs, it seems reasonable to begin to hire and strategically place salespeople who are already users of social media. Related

to this issue, hypothesis three found that salespeople who utilize social media are likely to experience higher levels of overall sales performance than those who do not use social media. These findings suggest that management can send signals of levels of support for salespeople through resource commitments directed specifically to social media activities. Therefore, business-to-business salespeople will see social media as not just a tool for personal social involvement, but as a way to improve productivity, which in turn means support should grow to provide resources to sellers such as training in its usage, software designed to assist in its usage by salespeople, and social media mentors assigned to the salesforce. B2B marketers will need to realize their existing and potential salespeople may be more attracted to firms that demonstrate support for such sales tools. When managers provide (or do not provide) social media organizational support, these actions send signals of a firm's willingness and level of support to assist the salespeople in obtaining sales objectives (quotas).

The findings revealed in hypothesis four indicate social media is being mostly utilized by younger workers who have likely developed these skills from their personal usage. This is disconcerting given the positive relationship found between using social media across various selling activities and sales performance, and the large number of older workers who are not using social media. Fetherstonhaugh (2010) reported that only a small percentage (approximately nine percent) of salespeople indicate they are being trained by their own firms in the use of social media for sales. This suggests there is a gap between what is needed and provided in terms of social media training. Salespeople who do not receive professional development are not likely to utilize such technical tools to enrich their positions.

Organizations who seek social media skills are going to have to make decisions as to how their personnel will receive the knowledge to utilize social media. For instance, will they train salespeople on the usage of social media, or

accept that the usage of social media will be limited to certain (younger) employees, and perhaps seek recruits who already have social media skills? GE for example is harnessing the digital know-how of Millennials with a "reverse mentoring" program in which executives are mentored by a Millennial who teaches them about social media and other elements of the interactive world (Callahan, 2012).

It seems practical that organizations would want to customize their social media tools to reflect their own customers, salespeople, and marketplace. Such an approach, suggests that simply "buying employees with previous skills" may have limited long-term appeal for many sales organizations.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

By restricting the sample to only B2B salespeople, this study was able to reduce extraneous sources of variability and test for differences related to social media usage. To some degree this may lend credence to the importance of these specific distinctions. However, the study does not pretend to address all of the challenges of social media usage in the sales environment. There are other legitimate constructs that could be included to provide a more complete understanding of these complex issues.

This study was one of the first to empirically compare B2B salespeople on their perceptions of usage and importance of social media in the sales arena. It therefore provides an initial understanding of workforce differences to the sales management literature, as well as suggests applications to the broader marketing literature. Considerable opportunities exist to expand the investigation to foster a wider perspective of the marketing usage of social media. For instance, as social media becomes more widely integrated into sales, it is important to determine the qualities of customers who embrace the usage of social media in building relationships, how they see the construction of such relationships and their perceptions of what

comprises a successful social media relationship.

Statistically significant differences between social media users and nonusers uncovered in this study offer important insights. As an exploratory study, this work highlights the importance of supplementary research in this area. Development of multi-item multidimensional constructs could prove useful in such analysis. As a result, these variables could then be assessed with other critical sales performance issues (e.g., customer-oriented selling -Saxe and Weitz, 1982), in addition to manager and seller impacts on salesforce outcomes and the use of technology (e.g., Mathieu, Ahearne and Taylor, 2007).

The findings of this research indicate social media is being used and that it helps contribute to increases in sales. Future research could be expanded to explore additional challenges and opportunities that may arise from the use of this new technology. Future research should attempt to examine the underlying facets of salespeople's perception that social media improves their success. It would also be helpful to analyze specific differentials between social media users and nonusers. For instance, do the users of social media prospect more

efficiently? Are they the recipients of more referrals? Table 4 provides several research questions that remain to be answered.

In conclusion, managerial and research implications indicate the value of this topic. Future research into new constructs can extend the understanding of how social media usage impacts important workplace actions and decisions. Thus, if properly positioned, social media technologies clearly represent opportunities to enhance new and meaningful approaches in sales. While social media is only at the beginning of its strategic lifecycle, it is important to determine how marketers can best integrate these tools into existing (e.g., relationship building) and new strategic efforts as skills, technologies, customers, and sales organizations evolve.

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TABLE 4:
Social Media in Sales: Future Research Questions

- What objectives are executives and managers pursuing when they adopt social media, and how do these vary, if at all, across context?
- What counts as social media success (or failure) from the perspective of the various internal (salesperson, sales manager, senior manager) and external (vendor and customer) stakeholders?
- What impact does social media have on customers and on supplier–customer relationships?
- Which technology, people and process factors are important components of social media implementations, and what impact do they have on outcomes?
- Does social media deliver competitive advantage and, if so, is the advantage sustainable?
- When should salespeople get involved in social media, and to what extent?
- What combination of social media tools (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Foursquare and Yelp) should be used?
- What training and resource strategies are required to implement a social media strategy?
- How does social media usage make salespeople more effective or efficient?

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MULTIVARIATE TIME SERIES USE FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTS

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By providing a shift from the traditional one-way communication to an expanded dialogue between an organization and its publics, social media platforms are changing the way they connect with each other. This manuscript presents a methodology that will help measure the social media effort as part of an organization or company's marketing efforts. Specifically, this exploratory approach uses time series analysis to measure the impact of various social media activities for a non-profit organization. The results of the analyses are encouraging and suggest the model as conceptualized is able to establish which social media activities exhibited a significant relationship to the web metrics of the organization.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several years, social media has arrived as an important part of many organizations' and companies' communication strategies. Just two years ago, over $2 billion was spent on social media advertising and predictions indicate that spending may reach $8.3 billion by 2015 (MarketingProfs 2011). Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, for example, have rapidly grown in size and importance. With now over 800 million active users on Facebook and upwards of 175 million registered users of Twitter, social media has not only been integrated into the makeup of consumers' daily lives but is changing the way companies and organizations connect with their consumers (Protalinski 2011; Kirkpatrick 2011).

Seventy-nine of the top 100 companies in the Fortune Global 500 index are using at least one social media platform to interact with their consumers. Of the Fortune Global 100 companies, 65% have active Twitter accounts, 54% have Facebook fan pages, 50% have YouTube video channels and 33% have corporate blogs (Burson-Marsteller 2010). Non -profit organizations as well have embraced use

of social media with 92% of their websites including at least one social media link (Mashable Social Media 2011). As many companies presently use these various social media platforms to build stronger consumer-brand relationships non-profits are finding that social media provides a great opportunity to foster conversations and interactions.

Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Halenlein 2010). The various formats of social media include: blogs, video sharing, photo sharing, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, micro-blogging and social bookmarking sites, among others. By providing a shift from the traditional one-way communication to an expanded dialogue between an organization and its consumers, social media platforms are changing the way brands connect to their consumers (Qualman 2009).

These social tools have offered brands and organizations a communication channel that delivers a massive audience and it also allows them to communicate in a way not possible before. Social media provides the ability to listen or directly track what kind of response their communication produces. For a business, it eventually all comes down to generating

revenue, so every marketing activity is tracked back to how much it costs and intuitively how much it returns: How much should a brand spend on building a social presence? Does that investment turn into producing a more engaged customer and, by extension, more revenue? A company creates a Facebook page or a Twitter presence because they believe it is going to positively impact the bottom line and increase revenue more than before they had it. In other words, a company must make decisions about the effectiveness of their social media as a communication medium or of their marketing campaign based on their social media.

Unlike most social media studies that are focused on online users' attitudes and behaviors to examine a brand's perception or an organization's communication effort, this manuscript presents an exploratory study that will examine the impact of social media on an organization's website metrics. While users' behavioral studies use either cross-sectional data (i.e. survey methodology) or controlled experiments to identify the possible factors influencing users' perception in social media, this study uses aggregated time series data rather than individual user data. A time-series analysis has an advantage to determine which if any social media variables are related to an organizations website exposure or popularity over time. From a marketers' perspective, social media activities represent opportunities to communicate its marketing message. Therefore, organizations' web site pageviews through social media activities are a good indicator of its web page's exposure in order to measurably increase potential revenue and ultimately, profits for an organization. By the use of this multi-disciplinary approach – time series analysis – various social media variables are included in a regression analysis to determine which if any are related to an organizations' website pageviews and website visitors over the time.

LITERITURE REVIEW

A brief review of the effectiveness of traditional advertising media measurement

helps clarify the problem posed by definition/ measurement for the new medium of social media. Understanding the impact advertising and other marketing communications have on consumer behavior is a much discussed area of inquiry for communication researchers. From qualitative indicators to sophisticated marketing mix modeling, researchers have attempted to determine the best ways to understand and predict what impact media and messages will have on the consumer. While each method has been shown to be valuable in its own way, the ability of a company to compare how various communication activities perform over time remains an increasingly important topic. This is so important the CEO of one of the world's largest ad companies WPP Group's Marin Sorrell notes, "There is no doubt in my mind that scientific analysis, including econometrics, is one of the most important areas in the marketing-services industry" (Patrick 2005). Mr. Sorrell believes that econometrics can help solve one of the biggest challenges facing the ad industry: how to measure the effectiveness of various communication efforts.

Studies applying a rather long-standing econometric and financial procedure – time series analysis – to measure the impact of advertising expenditures by media type such as traditional electronic advertising (i.e. TV, radio), print advertising (i.e. magazines, newspapers), Internet advertising, etc. have been commonplace in the literature for decades. From Borden's (1942) to Palda's (1964) early innovative work investigating the relationship between sales and advertising, researchers have discussed the various elements and procedures for creating sales response models.   For example, Clarke (1976) listed almost 70 econometric sales-advertising studies published between 1962-1975 when the interest in this subject was at an all-time high. In the early 1980s, multivariate time series was developed as a popular alternative to the pure econometric approach for modeling sales response and earned a place as a valuable research tool in marketing for the ensuing years (Leone 1983).

Social media shares many characteristics with traditional media even though it is obviously a new and a unique medium. Both traditional advertising and social media advertising have similar fundamental goals (Pavlou and Stewart, 2002), thus the existing measures of the effectiveness of advertising and other marketing communication may be cautiously applied to social media in an increasingly interactive context. Unlike traditional advertising, consumers now actively participate in the advertising and marketing process through interactive media (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). For example, consumers using social media and other online communication have a different memory span for recalling content such as an RSS feed or a web blog, so traditional measures have become less relevant. Since social media interactivity for the emerging marketplace requires a greater understanding of the process, there needs to be an alternative way to conceptualize measures of advertising effectiveness. At the same time, traditional measures need to be viewed with caution even though they may not be fully applicable in an interactive context because they are based on a more static paradigm than social media.

Most of the academic and industry research on advertising in digital environments has focused on measuring changes in consumer behavior such as brand awareness, brand attitudes and purchase intentions as a function of exposure (Hoffman and Fodor 2010; Thorsten et al.). Such research is usually done with field surveys or laboratory experiments that use individual level data. However, this study builds on a long tradition in advertising effectiveness models with brand-level time series data. While using time series to determine the impact of advertising media expenditure on sales is a relatively commonplace procedure, the application of this technique to the measurement of social media is yet untested. Ultimately this procedure may be applied in a similar fashion using either sales or website metrics as a dependent measure and social media metrics as the predictor variables. Thus, the focus on understanding the effects of social

media marketing communication activity on the brand/organization may logically shift to website metrics. The next section provides a discussion of this exploratory methodology and theoretical underpinnings and concludes with the research questions examined in this manuscript.

Measurement and Theoretical Issues

Discussions from traditional media research models regarding advertising measurement focused on two primary concepts – reach and frequency. Reach has generally been defined as the number of individuals, households or audience members that are exposed to the media vehicle. Frequency traditionally refers to the average number of times the audience is exposed to the vehicle. Both of these terms have been measured over a specified time period such as monthly or quarterly (Sissors and Bumba, 1996).

For companies and organizations seeking measurable results from social media, traditional advertising effectiveness models offer only fundamental guidance. Social media possess a unique characteristic not found in these traditional models – interactivity or engagement. With the emergence of online advertising in the 1990s, media researchers attempted to add this new component – interactivity – to reach and frequency. Quickly becoming a major theme of the research in advertising and marketing communication literature in the late 1990s, many scholars examined the concept of interactivity as a major construct of interactive advertising effectiveness (Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Lombard and Snyder-Duch, 2001; Macias, 2003; Cho, 1999; Cho and Leckenby, 1997). These studies illustrated the importance of interactivity or engagement in measuring communication effectiveness in an interactive advertising environment.

Sohn and Leckenby (2002) described interactivity in terms of social communication. They suggested that interactivity is a process-dependent concept, not a static attribute-based

concept: individuals' active participation in the interactive communication processes is a crucial factor for increasing the perceived interactivity of the Internet. This change from one-way communication to two-way interaction suggested that the use of traditional measures of consumer effectiveness of marketing communications must be altered in an interactive environment (Stewart and Pavlou 2002). Today the consumer who receives information via the Internet is able to interact or engage with the message and therefore the assessment of social media effectiveness must include not only elements of traditional media such as reach and frequency measures, but also incorporate an interactivity or engagement component as well. While engaging with companies or organizations may not be a user's primary reason for participating in social media, they connect many times for news and information about an organization or a company's products and promotions.

In an attempt to capture the engagement present with social media, Murdough (2010) presents an effectiveness model for social media that includes five phases: concept, definition, design, deployment and optimization. The concept phase includes the specification of the goals and measurement of desired outcomes. The definition and design phases presents where the strategy is determined and the tactics are specified. Execution of the communication program is undertaken in the deployment phase. Finally, the optimization phase examines performance indicators and identifies opportunities for program adjustment. Murdough (2010) emphasizes the importance of a commitment to social media that must include active participation in the social media space. He notes that organizations' and companies' resources should be "thoughtfully planned for and deployed" to effectively manage an organization's social media presence. Essential to this process is a continual measurement of performance indicators and subsequent adjustment of messages to achieve the communication goals.

As Murdough (2010) notes, because of the process-dependent nature of this interactivity or engagement, an ongoing measurement is necessary. Trying to capture this engagement at just one point in time is probably not the most effective and thorough strategy. Therefore, a social media measurement model must include the following dynamic characteristics measured over time: (a) frequency, which measures the rate of occurrence of the communicators' activities, (b) reach, the size of the network and (c) engagement by the audience.

Reach and frequency are terms familiar to media researchers, but interactivity or engagement is a relatively new concept especially in social media. Today, examples of social media engagement may include being a Facebook fan of a brand or organization to "following" a brand on Twitter for discounts and promotions. From a company's perspective, brand managers are obviously interested in knowing if engagement impacts sales and/or website traffic. One survey has reported that 51% of Facebook fans and 67% of Twitter followers reported that they were more likely to purchase a brand after connecting with the brand on Facebook or Twitter (Solis, 2010). Fisher (2009) also discovered that of the 70 percent of consumers who had visited a social media site to get information, 49 percent of these customers made a purchase decision with the information they found and 60 percent of the respondents reported they are likely to pass information they find online to others. Those results support that marketing efforts in social media can result in extremely effective marketing.

Research Questions

The major goal of this exploratory study is to provide an assessment of the use of a times series model as a tool for the measurement of social media effectiveness. Based on this goal two research questions were identified: (1) can the model identify reach, frequency and engagement variables that are related to audience response? and (2) can the model

provide insight in to the importance of those variables? If the model is able to identify social media activities and the relative importance of those activities that are related to audience response, then it could play an important role in the ongoing optimization phase of Murdough's model (2010).

METHODOLOGY

Data Set

An inter-disciplinary communication department in a large southwestern university was used for testing the social media measurement model research questions. The department is one of five in a large College of Communication. The department offers undergraduate and graduate level coursework (both MA and Ph.D) and was established in the mid-1970s. The department has been operating a website since the early 1990s and has been actively engaged in social media since Spring 2010.

Social media vehicles included in this project were Facebook and Twitter. Facebook and Twitter data were collected and tabulated by Spredfast, a social media management company

(Spredfast 2012). The data were collected on a daily basis beginning October 2010 and ending April 2011. Two hundred and twelve days of continuous data was used in the sample. At the beginning of the period, there were 970 Facebook Friends and 984 Twitter Followers. At the end of the period, there were 1271 Facebook Friends and 1708 Twitter Followers.

Two website metrics were employed as the dependent variables in the analyses – website pageviews and website visitors because of the unavailability of sales information for the non-profit organization used in this study. A pageview is an instance of a page being loaded by a browser. A visitor is uniquely identified by a Google Analytics visitor cookie which assigns a random ID to the user and combines it with a time stamp of the visitor's first visit (Google 2012). While these metrics are not equivalent to sales, both pageviews and visitors are two of the first commonly used metrics employed by companies around the world to track how much interest there was in their website. (Kaushik 2010). During the period examined the department website averaged almost 2000 pageviews per day (Figure 1) with an average of 613 visitors per day (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1:
Website Pageviews
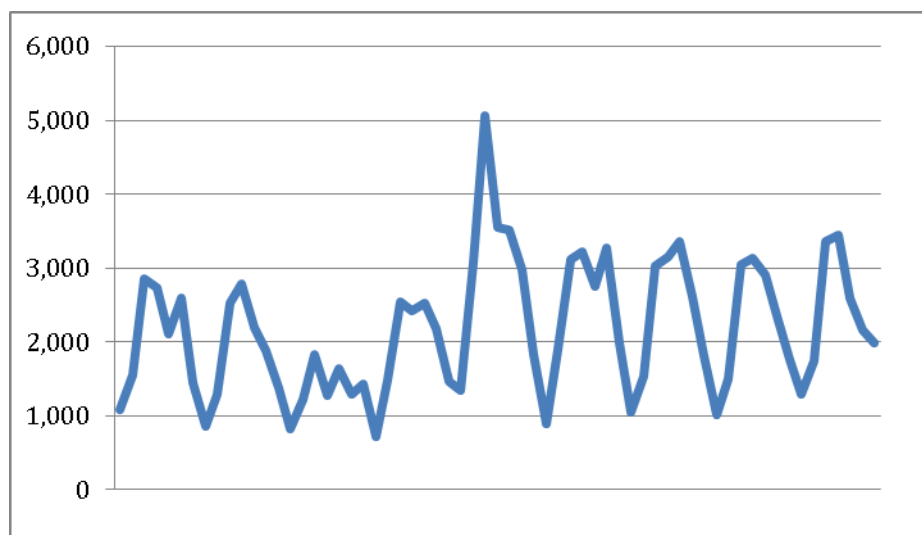
FIGURE 2 :
Website Visitors
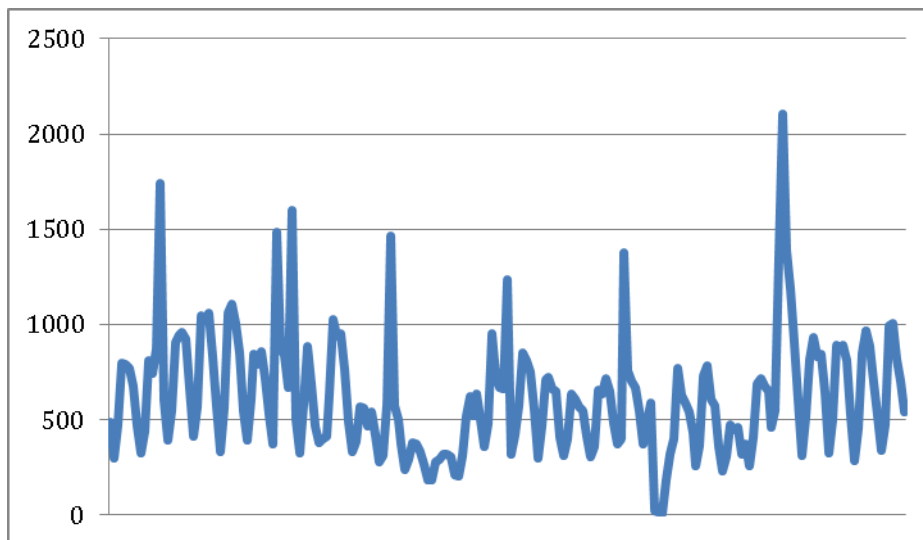
The predictor variable categories were reach, frequency and engagement and are listed in Table 1 as described below. Reach is defined as the size of the community accessed through social media activity (Kaushik 2010). A key aspect of reach in the social media context is the multi-level characteristics whereby a company is able to reach a secondary level of users when people from the first point of contact share information in their networks. However, in this paper, the focus is on only the primary level of users, which would include Facebook friends/fans and Twitter followers.

Frequency is defined as the specific amount of outbound activity that was published to online users (Kaushik 2010). In a social media context, frequency includes reactive and responsive activity that is sent to and from social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Frequency includes posting Facebook messages, tweeting department information, responding to questions, or acknowledging users for sharing feedback. For the purposes of this paper, frequency is measured by counting the total number of Facebook posts and Twitter tweets on a daily basis.

TABLE 1:
Summary of Data Sources (Oct 1, 2010 – April 30, 2011)

Variables	Indicators	Data Description	Sources of Data
Page views	Pageview	Total Pageviews	Google web analytics
Visitors	Visitors	Total Visitors	Google web analytics
Frequency	FB Posts	Number of Posts	Facebook
Engagement	FB Like	Clicks of Like Button	Facebook
	FB Comments	Number of Comments	Facebook
	FB Bit.ly	Clicks of Bit.ly link	Facebook
	TW Replies	Number of Replies	Twitter
	TW Retweets	Number of Retweets	Twitter
	TW Bit.ly	Clicks of Bit.ly link	Twitter
Reach	FB Friends	Number of Friends/Fans	Facebook
	TW Followers	Number of Followers	Twitter

Engagement is defined as the overall interactions that department is experiencing in social channels (Kaushik 2010). The measurement of engagement included sources such as comments, the Like button, the number of click-throughs that include a Bit.ly link in posts on Facebook, the number of replies and retweets, and the number of Bit.ly link click-throughs in tweets on Twitter. Varieties of sources were used to obtain daily data for as many variables as possible and all data used in this study are presented in Table 1 as well as the data sources.

Empirical Model

Time Series analysis is used by many different disciplines from economic forecasting to census analysis to theoretical biology. Time series is an ordered sequence of values of a variable at equally spaced time intervals. There are generally two uses of time series analysis: (1) to obtain an understanding of the underlying forces and structure that produced the data and (2) fit a model and proceed to forecasting or monitoring (U.S. Commerce Department 2010). Times series analysis began with univariate

modeling based on a single variable and has advanced to multivariate models that examine the interrelationships between several variables. In this manuscript, a multivariate approach is used to determine the relationship of two social media – Facebook and Twitter on website pageview and website visitors.

Two time series models were created to examine the relationship of frequency, engagement and reach to website pageviews and visitors. In the first model, the database consisted of one pageview variable expressed in the actual number of pageviews and ten social media variables – Facebook Posts, Twitter Tweets, Facebook Friends, Twitter Followers, Facebook Comments, Facebook Likes, Facebook Bit.ly Clicks, Twitter Bit.ly Clicks, Twitter Replies and Twitter Retweets. In the second model, visitors were used in place of pageviews with the ten social media variables. Each of the ten social media variables was reported in actual number of occurrences or clicks. Although these variables may not reflect total social media efforts, they are the best measures that were currently available (See Figure 3).

FIGURE 3:
Empirical Model
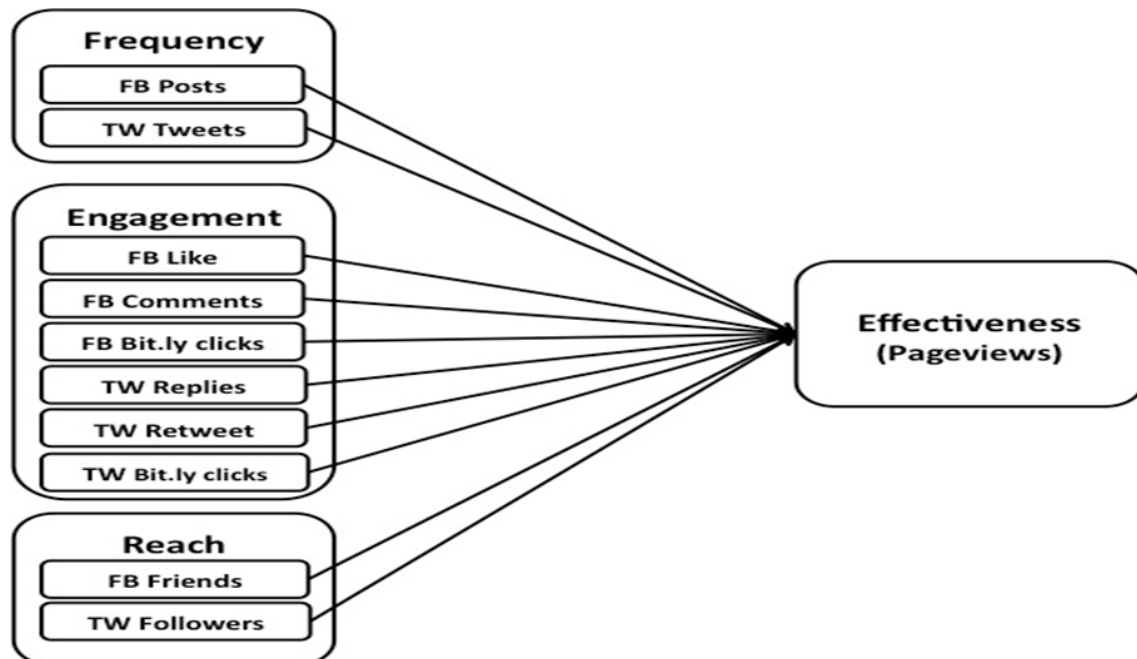
The model may be represented by the following form: P = *f* (Frequency (FB$_{Post}$, TW$_{Tweets}$), Engagement (FB$_{Like}$, FB$_{Comments}$, FB$_{Link}$, TW$_{Replies}$, TW$_{Retweets}$, TW$_{Link}$), and Reach (FB$_{Friends}$, TW$_{Followrs}$). P represents numbers of pageviews, FB$_{Post}$, TW$_{Tweets}$ represent the frequency variables, FB$_{Like}$, FB$_{Comments}$, FB$_{Link}$, TW$_{Replies}$, TW$_{Retweets}$, TW$_{Link}$ represent engagement variables, and FB$_{Friends}$, TW$_{Followrs}$ represent the reach variables. In order to transform this model into a regression equation format the following was used:

$$P = b_0 + b_1 FB_{Post} + b_2 TW_{Tweers} + b_3 FB_{Like} + b_4 FB_{Comments} + b_5 FB_{Link}$$

$$+ b_6 TW_{Replies} + b_7 TW_{Retweets} + b_8 TW_{Link} + b_9 FB_{Friends} + b_{10} TW_{Followers}$$

Data Analysis

The predictor variables described above were used in two different generalized least-squares regression equations with website pageviews and website visitors as the dependent variables. A stepwise regression analysis with backwards elimination of non-significant predictors was used in determining which variables were significant predictors of the pageview and visitor series. For each model, the least significant predictors were dropped and additional regression analyses were performed until a final model for each dependent variable was obtain with all variables significant (p < .05).

Because of the serious problems autocorrelation can present in analysis of time-series data, a generalized least-squares regression approach that uses estimates of autocorrelation in the model's residuals in estimating structural parameters and significance levels was used. The SAS AUTOREG procedure (SAS Institute 2010) was used taking into account significant autocorrelation at lags of one and two days.

RESULTS

Both of the full regression models using all social media variables and the final regression models with the statistically significant variables are presented in Table 2 (Website

Pageview) and Table 3 (Website Visitors). Because interpretation focuses on the final models with the non-significant predictors dropped, the full models with all predictors are not discussed.

Taking into account significant autocorrelation at lags of both one and two days, for Website pageviews, one frequency variable –Twitter Tweets, one reach variable –Twitter Followers, and three engagement variables – Facebook Clicks, Twitter Replies, and Twitter Retweets – exhibited a statistically significant relationships with pageviews. The direction of all of the relationships was positive except Twitter Replies, which was negative. The final model explained 57% of the variance of the given predictor variables (R^2=.57) for Website Pageviews.

Taking into account significant autocorrelation at lags of both one and two days, for Website Visitors, two reach variables – Facebook Friends and Twitter Followers and one engagement variable – Twitter Retweets – exhibited a statistically significant relationship with visitors. The direction of all of the relationships was positive except Facebook Friends, which was negative. The final model explained 37% of the variance of the given predictor variables (R^2=.37) for Website Visitors.

The intercept represents the baseline pageviews and visitors when all independent variables used in the analysis assume the value zero. Since none of the independent variable parameters assumed the value zero in the current study, interpretation of the intercept has no substantial relevance to understanding the relationship and is thus not discussed.

DISCUSSION

The results of the exploratory analysis are encouraging and suggest that the reach, frequency and engagement variables were all significantly related to the website pageviews and visitors. The findings of the study support the first research question in that the model

TABLE 2:
Full and Final Model – Website Pageviews

Predictor	Full Model (R^2=0.28, df=201)			Final Model (R^2=0.57, df=203)		
	B Value	t-ratio	*p*-value	B Value	t-ratio	*p*-value
Intercept	4951	7.96	.0001	3540	4.56	.0001
FB Posts	46.5	.91	.3665			
TW Tweets	37.3	3.02	.0029	21.9	2.93	.0002
FB Friends	-14.6	-6.18	.0001			
TW Followers	1.9			1.1	3.48	.0006
FB Comments	-14.6	.40	.0001			
FB Likes	-3.8	-.53	.5990			
FB Bit.ly	5.6	-.83	.4070	4.7	2.84	.0049
TW Bit.ly	-.04	1.54	.1242			
		-.04	.9644			
TW Replies	-39.8	-		-43.5	-2.50	.0130
TW Retweets	96.4	1.26	.2101	42.6	2.92	.0039
		4.51	.0001			

TABLE 3:
Full and Final Model – Website Visitors

Predictor	Full Model (R^2=0.26, df=201)			Final Model (R^2=0.37, df=207)		
	B Value	t-ratio	*p*-value	B Value	t-ratio	*p*-value
Intercept	1745	7.84		1368	4.49	.0001
FB Posts	13.2	.72	.0001			
TW Tweets	9.4	2.13				
			.4736			
			.0345			
FB Friends	-2.0	-6.25		-1.29	-3.90	.0001
TW Followers	.64	4.44	.0001	.43	3.22	.0015
FB Comments	.08	.01				
FB Likes	-.08	-.49	.0001			
FB Bit.ly	1.9	1.44				
TW Bit.ly	-.13	-.47	.9939			
			.6240			
			.1510			
			.6420			
TW Replies	-10.8	-.96				
TW Retweets	40.6	5.32	.3398	33.3	5.22	.0001
			.0001			

successfully identified reach, frequency and engagement variables related to website pageviews. When relating to website visitors, the model identified two reach variables and one engagement variable.

The direction of the relationships were positive in all but two cases – for pageviews – Twitter Replies demonstrated a negative relationship with pageviews and Facebook Friends demonstrated a negative relationship with visitors. Also, the R^2 values associated with

each model indicate that the explanatory variation in the time series data is robust given the organization's use of other factors used to drive website pageviews. For example, this analysis would exclude website pageviews and visitors that were generated with reference to search engines and other referring sites.

For website pageviews, one of the predictor variables was related to frequency, one to reach, and three to engagement. For website visitors, two of the predictor variables were related to reach and one related to engagement. Twitter Followers and Twitter Retweets were the only two variables that were significantly related to both pageviews and visitors indicating that both reach and engagement are important predictor variables. It is also interesting to note that in this case Twitter outperformed Facebook for both dependent measures.

The B (beta) value produced by the regression analyses provides insight by revealing the importance of each of the significant predictor variables on website pageviews and was used to answer the second research question – can the model provide insight into the importance of the variables? The beta value is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the dependent variable and is measured in units of standard deviation. The higher the beta value the greater the impact of the predictor variable on the dependent variable. As an example for Website Pageviews, Twitter Tweets and Twitter Retweets clearly exhibited the most impact on pageviews while Twitter Retweets showed the most impact on website visitors.

Two of the variables in the model exhibited negative relationships with the dependent variables. The relationship of Twitter replies to pageviews was negative indicating that increases in Twitter replies were related to decreases in pageviews. Facebook friends exhibited a similar relationship with website visitors suggesting as Facebook friends increased, website visitors would decrease although the relationships strength was weak.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

As noted in Murdough's (2010) model of social media effectiveness, the active measurement of the social media space is critical to the success of the communication effort. Performance indicators must be identified and adjustments made to maximize an organization or company's social media presence. The specification of the multivariate time series model described in this manuscript has demonstrated the ability to isolate reach, frequency and engagement variables associated with the specific website metrics. The pageview model exhibited the best-fit explaining 57% of the variation in pageviews even though the visitor's model explained a satisfactory 37%. Considering other contributors to pageviews and visitors such as search and external website links, the R-square levels were encouraging.

One reach, one frequency and two engagement variables were positively associated with increased website pageviews. This finding implies that the traditional media variables of reach and frequency are still important in the social media space. As expected, the two engagement variables are also a critical part of the social media experience. From a media strategy perspective, all three components – the number of messages and the size of the audience appear to work with active audience participation to produce effective communication in the social media environment.

Managing the social media presence by altering messaging tactics based on performance measures may be accomplished using results from the model as well. For example, when website pageviews are the primary goal, a strategy that included increased emphasis on Twitter messaging instead of Facebook would make sense given the significance and Beta values of Tweets and Retweets. A similar strategy might also be applied if the goal was website visitors as Retweets exhibited a strong, positive relationship with website visitors.

The model also identified one Twitter variable (replies) and one Facebook variable (friends) that were negatively related to the desired metrics of increased pageviews and website visitors.   Managerial implications of this finding would likely lead to a re-examination of use of these tactics for future social media efforts. This analysis examined what occurred on a daily basis over a seven-month period using both Twitter and Facebook messaging and appears to be useful as an evaluation tool of executed social media strategy. It also provides a scientific understanding that would be useful for future direction and strategic discussions of the social media planning process that Murdough has identified.

The objective of this exploratory research was to produce good explanations of the dependent variable so future research can build on these findings by examining 1) a longer time period, 2) additional organizations or companies and 3) evaluating possible control strategies and/or hypotheses testing. Additional analyses should be conducted with several types of companies and organizations in the future to determine if the social media measurement model is valid and reliable. It would also be interesting to use the model in a setting where the dependent measure is sales, similar to the traditional advertising research that has been conducted so successfully in the past. With more research being conducted in this area and the social media community having an opportunity to gain an understanding of the process, the multivariate time series model approach shows promise for future social media measurement.

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DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING
USAGE IN B2B INDUSTRIAL SECTION

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This study contributes to the emerging B2B digital marketing literature by providing a realistic overview of the usage, measurement practices, and barriers surrounding digital marketing in the era of social media. Investigating 145 B2B firms from various industries reveals that despite the interest in social media, companies continue to focus on one-directional communications with established digital tools. Furthermore, the results indicate that the advances in digital measurement tools remain largely unexploited, and the firms lack the human resources and know-how to make the most of opportunities provided by the developing digital environment. The implications of the study suggest that B2B companies should update their capabilities with respect to digital marketing usage and measurement in order to adapt current practices to fit the characteristics of today's digital media landscape.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in the midst of a new communications landscape (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011) as the roles of customer interaction and user-generated content are emphasized in marketing communications facilitated by the digital environment and social media platforms (Dennis, Merrilees, Jayawardhena, & Wright, 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Liu, Karahanna, & Watson, 2011). From the marketing perspective, the expanding role of the digital environment has created two important opportunities for companies of all kinds: Firstly, firms now have access to a vast array of new digital tools that can be utilized for marketing purposes, and secondly, the digital environment has made marketing more measureable by improving marketers' ability to access, collect, process, and report data on marketing activities (e.g., Pauwels et al., 2009; Pickton, 2005; Russell, 2010).

It is often noted that personal face-to-face selling works best in complex and long-lasting B2B buying processes, while non-personal communications channels, such as advertising and digital channels, play supportive roles by creating synergies in achieving sales objectives (e.g., Ballantyne & Aiken, 2007; Long, Tellefsen, & Lichtenthal, 2007; Rosenbloom, 2007; Singha & Koshyb, 2011). While this statement is still likely to hold true in the majority of B2B companies, only a proportion of communication can happen face-to-face, and personal selling is not the most suitable tool to deliver marketing objectives other than those around generating direct sales, such as branding. Unquestionably, the role of digital channels has increased over the years to support traditional offline marketing in the B2B sector, but B2B marketers have still encountered problems in integrating the newly emerged social media tools as part of a firm's marketing efforts. Jussila, Kärkkäinen, and Leino (2011) state that a great gap remains between the potential and actual use of social media by B2B firms, and academic research is limited in terms of the use of social media in the B2B sector.

The emergence of social media has highlighted the role of objectives related to enhancing

customer relationships, and ideally, social media tools should be used to generate viral effects, consumer evangelism and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) advocacy (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Even though these objectives might be ideal for social media, they may be difficult to achieve in the B2B sector, because B2B firms tend to have fewer customers and enthusiasts to share WOM or create viral effects. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity regarding what the ideal business goals for social media in the B2B sector may be, and more importantly, regarding how the emergence of social media has affected digital marketing objectives as a whole.

One of digital marketing's major advantages over offline marketing is that its impact is more easily measured. Measurability has been improved by the advent of visible and traceable digital communications (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Moreover, the advances in technology have largely automated data collection and distribution within an organization (Pauwels et al., 2009). Subsequently, marketers are in a better position to measure the effectiveness of their marketing activities in the digital environment. Again, however, there can be no certainty regarding the extent to which B2B firms that usually sell their products only following lengthy negotiations may be able to exploit digital measurement solutions.

Finally, because many digital marketing initiatives fail (Weber, 2009), it is vital to understand the underlying reasons for failure. Earlier research lists various barriers that have compromised the benefits expected from digital marketing in the B2B sector. These barriers have been related to poorly defined goals and a lack of expertise, resources, and management support to complement the use of digital tools (e.g., Ahearne, Jelinek, & Rapp, 2005; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005; Buehrer, Senecal, & Pullins, 2005). Moreover, since B2B firms have been slower to adopt digital tools than B2C firms (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011), it is likely that B2B

companies encounter particularly daunting barriers to the utilization of digital marketing.

To sum up, the literature to date has largely discussed the opportunities brought by the digital environment in the era of social media from the B2C perspective. Consequently, the extent to which B2B companies have successfully exploited the advances in digital media remains unclear. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to contribute to the emerging B2B digital marketing literature by providing an overview of digital marketing tools, objectives, measurement solutions and barriers to usage. To achieve the objectives of the study, the following four research questions are proposed:

How widely are social media tools used in the B2B sector as part of the digital marketing mix? (RQ1); What are the most important objectives of digital marketing for B2B firms in the era of social media? (RQ2); How widely are digital measurement solutions utilized by B2B firms? (RQ3); What are the major barriers to the utilization of digital marketing in the B2B sector? (RQ4)

This paper proceeds as follows: In the next section, we discuss the use of digital and social media tools and review the literature on the setting of objectives, the measurement of and the associated barriers to digital marketing. This will be followed by a discussion of the study methodology and presentation of the results of the empirical study. Finally, we draw conclusions, present the limitations of the study, and suggest avenues of future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing Tools in the Social Media Era

Digital marketing and its related terms, such as Internet/online marketing, are commonly used to describe the use of technologies in marketing efforts. However, there is no agreement on what is encapsulated in each term, and in

practice the terms are often used interchangeably. For example, Farrah (2010) discusses Internet marketing under the topic "Understanding digital marketing," whereas Melewar and Smith (2003) present the barriers of Internet usage under the topic "The contentious issues with online marketing." In this study, *digital marketing* is used as an umbrella term, while admitting that the concepts are tightly related and intertwined. The reason for the selection is that the concept of digital marketing is arguably the most comprehensive. As Wymbs (2011) notes, digital marketing is much more than merely communication through the Internet. Digital marketing includes a wide range of digital channels, including the Internet, mobile, and wireless communications, as well as digital television (c.f. Li, Li, He, Ward, & Davies, 2011).

In addition to the challenge of differentiating digital, Internet, and online marketing from each other, it is difficult to draw a clear line between digital and social media concepts, as the social elements are increasingly integrated into the established interactive digital media environment (e.g., discussion forums, sharing buttons, and blogs embedded on websites). In fact, social elements of digital marketing, such as growing interactivity and fostering conversations via the Internet, were discussed long before the emergence of the term *social media* (see, e.g., Sharma, 2002). Therefore, we consider social media to represent an enhancement to, rather than a replacement for, other digital media, and accordingly, we regard social media as integrated elements, platforms, and tools of digital marketing that facilitate social interaction between businesses and customer networks. Accordingly, *digital marketing* refers to the use of all kinds of digital and social media tools that allow companies to foster interactions with customers.

Although B2C firms have been faster adopters of digital marketing tools, B2B firms' investments in digital marketing have surpassed those of B2C firms for some considerable time

(Barwise & Farley, 2005; Sharma, 2002). Subsequently, it is clear that the longer-established digital marketing tools, such as e-mail marketing, digital newsletters, and sales support materials, have found a place in the B2B sector. However, B2B companies often find it difficult to identify tools appropriate to their digital marketing mix among the host of newly available social media tools. The well-documented social media successes of certain B2C companies (e.g., Blendtec, Dunkin' Donuts, Ford Motor Company, KLM, Procter & Gamble, Starbucks) are of limited help to B2B marketers wondering how they might exploit social media to support the achievement of B2B firms' business goals. In order to illustrate the potential of social media tools for marketing purposes in the B2B sector, Table 1 lists a number of examples of social media tools which B2B firms have utilized successfully in their digital marketing. It is notable that the examples do not offer an exhaustive categorization of B2B social media tools, but rather an illustration of the platforms that have attracted attention in the B2B social media literature (e.g., Bodnar & Cohen, 2012; Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011; Handley & Chapman, 2011; Powell, Groves, & Dimos, 2011).

Social media tools are utilized for various B2B marketing objectives (see Table 1). In addition to the marketing objectives recorded in the table, B2B companies utilize social media to deliver search engine optimization benefits and drive traffic to their homepages and/or landing pages. In particular, the tools provide novel ways to attract new customers and to keep the conversation active with the existing customer base. For example, Indium Corporation and Cree have attracted an active reader base for their blogs, which are interactive and full of balanced content in different forms (text, video, and graphics). Once the customers are comfortable with active interaction, the tools offer opportunities to improve customer engagement, customer service, and lead generation. Besides blogging, the likes of Salesforce.com, Cisco, and HP utilize Facebook, Flickr, and open discussion forums/communities to achieve these objectives. IT

TABLE 1:
Social Media Tool Usage by B2B Companies

Social media tool	Examples of marketing objectives	Company
Blog	Increasing awareness, showing expertise, lead generation	Cree, Indium Corporation, The Switch
Facebook	Customer engagement, branding	Cisco, Ernst & Young, Neenah Paper, Salesforce.com, SteelMaster Buildings
Flickr	Customer engagement, branding	Cisco
Open discussion forums/ communities	Crowdsourcing, customer engagement	Dell, GE, HP
Twitter	Customer service, PR, sales generation	Avaya, Dell, Intel, Oracle
YouTube	Increasing awareness, branding	Corning Incorporated, Microsoft, Salesforce.com, Wärtsilä
Webinars	Customer service, lead generation, showing expertise	Professional service providers (Accenture, eMarketer, Forrester Research, HubSpot)

giants, Dell, Intel, and Oracle actively use Twitter for customer service, PR, and to generate sales. Many B2B firms use YouTube as a platform for webpage video integration and as a channel to boost viral marketing effects. One good example of viral-oriented usage is provided by Corning Incorporated and their video series *A Day Made of Glass… Made Possible by Corning*, which, as of October 2012, has attracted more than 20 million views on YouTube.

As the examples show, B2B firms from various industries are able to exploit social media tools as part of their digital marketing mix. However, it is not clear how widely the tools have been adopted and how important their role in the B2B sector is perceived to be. B2B companies, with a few exceptions such as the IT industry and professional service providers, are slower to adopt social media tools (Michaelidou et al., 2011). We would anticipate that the more established digital tools, such as newsletters, e-mail marketing, and digital customer magazines, are still regarded as more important than social media tools by B2B firms of all sizes. However, as large companies are more likely to have adequate resources to exploit social media, and the majority of success stories regarding B2B firms' social media usage are linked with them, we presume that company

size affects the use of social media tools. On this basis, we propose that:

> *Proposition 1: B2B firms perceive the use of longer-established digital tools, such as newsletters, e-mail marketing, and digital customer magazines, to be more important than social media tools.*
> *Proposition 2: Social media tools are more important for large-sized B2B companies.*

Business Objectives of Digital Marketing

Prior research has shown that the digital environment can be used to achieve a variety of goals in the B2B sector. First, the digital environment allows B2B firms to decrease costs by increasing the efficiency of exchanges in terms of communications and transactions (Sharma, 2002; Walters, 2008). Second, digital tools enable B2B companies to provide brand and product-related information (Berthon, Lane, Pitt, & Watson, 1998; Welling & White, 2006), and in that way, digital marketing can be used to build brands in terms of creating awareness, improving brand attitude, and increasing purchase intentions (Drèze & Hussherr, 2003; Manchanda, Dubé, Goh, & Chintagunta, 2006). Certainly, increasing sales is another possible goal of the digital marketing efforts made by B2B firms. Sales to existing

customers can be increased, for example, by facilitating the transaction process (Sharma, 2002), whereas sales to new customers can be boosted by driving traffic to a website and thereby generating sales leads (Welling & White, 2006). Finally, the digital channels have created new platforms through which to interact with customers and develop customer relationships (Bauer, Grether, & Leach 2002).

Recently, literature on B2C marketing has discussed the role of social media tools in the marketing mix and the marketing objectives that these new interactive instruments might advance. Compared to the other, more established forms of digital marketing, social media tools are better for having conversations with customers and strengthening and enhancing customer relationships (e.g., Bernoff & Li, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The major rationale behind this idea is that social media has induced a new trend in marketing communications that considers customers active participants in the communication process (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). For this reason, social media is not regarded as an effective tool for broadcasting one-directional messages to wide audiences, but rather is seen as useful for attracting customers into interactions around brands and then maintaining their activity level (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Ideally, the interaction would be prompted by first listening to and monitoring, and then participating in, relevant discussions (Bernoff & Li, 2011; Töllinen, Järvinen, & Karjaluoto, 2012).

With respect to B2B marketing, Kho (2008) suggests that B2B companies might pursue many similar objectives to B2C firms. Specifically, social media can work for B2B companies in strengthening and enhancing customer relationships through fostering meaningful interactions between the company and its customers. Listening to customer concerns and responding to them will certainly intensify customer dialogue, and resolving customer concerns and problems improves customer satisfaction and enhances customer

loyalty. Michaelidou et al. (2011) similarly find that cultivating customer relationships is one of B2B firms' key goals in using social networking sites (others being attracting new customers and increasing brand awareness). Furthermore, in contrast to discussion around social media opportunities, which has been brand-centered, Bodnar and Cohen (2012) state that the B2B sector's social media utilization should focus more on generating leads and moving customers along the sales funnel.

In summary, it seems that B2B companies' objectives for employing digital marketing and social media are in line with the general objectives of marketing, namely acquiring new customers and enhancing current customer relationships. However, literature regarding digital marketing objectives has largely been published either before or in the early phases of the emerging social media environment, and it is not clear whether the wider adoption of social media has altered the main purposes for which B2B organizations utilize digital marketing. Social media has instigated a new trend in marketing communications that focuses more on developing customer relationships by engaging them in interactive discussions over brands and products than on attempting to directly drive sales (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kho, 2008; Michaelidou et al., 2011). On this basis, we propose that the main objectives of B2B digital marketing in the social media era are related to the "soft" side of general marketing objectives, namely creating awareness and enhancing brand image:

> *Proposition 3: The main digital marketing objectives pursued by B2B firms in the social media era relate more to enhancing brand image and creating awareness than to driving direct sales.*

Measurement of Digital Marketing

There is widespread agreement that performance measurement should always be based on pre-defined strategic objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; McCunn, 1998; Neely & Bourne, 2000). Similarly, marketing

performance measurement must track the progress of the objectives set for marketing (Clark, 2001; Clark, Abela, & Ambler, 2006). With respect to measuring digital marketing performance against objectives, advances in technology have provided companies with new digital solutions which are likely to outstrip traditional measurement techniques, such as surveys and interviews. Indeed, as the importance of digital marketing grows in the B2B sector and firms shift investment from traditional marketing communications to digital channels, they have to update measurement practices accordingly to be able to measure digital marketing efforts' contributions to meeting objectives.

The measurement of digital marketing performance can be improved through at least two distinct digital solutions: Web analytics (WA) and social media monitoring (SMM) software. First, WA software can be used to track visitor behavior on a company website via click-stream data. Click-stream data enables firms to track how exposure to a specific digital marketing action on a particular platform contributes to website traffic generation and customer actions, such as a decision to purchase, downloading a brochure, or abandoning the visit (Wilson, 2010). In this way, firms are able to assess the short-term outcomes of a specific digital marketing campaign; in addition, by analyzing visitors' navigation paths, companies are better able to optimize their website structure and content. Finally, if firms have the means to couple the click-stream data with personal information (e.g., via registration or subscription), they can follow interactions with a specific visitor over time, assess his/her engagement and plan further precise marketing actions directed at the visitor in question (Phippen, Sheppard, & Furnell, 2004).

To complete the information generated by WA, software developers have devised SMM tools which allow automated tracking and analysis of digital conversations (eWOM) with regard to specific keywords (Pang & Lee, 2008; Sponder, 2012). In practical business usage, SMM can be used for mining and listening to customer opinions related to relevant themes, such as the company itself, its products and brands, a specific marketing campaign, competitors, or an industry as a whole (Blanchard, 2011; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Thomas & Barlow, 2011). Opinion mining by SMM has become more feasible owing to the increasing amount of company-related eWOM which allows the tracking and collection of actual exchanges of information between individuals (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Liu, 2006), and the options for monitoring and analyzing have significantly expanded in the past few years (Sharma, 2011), leading to firms reportedly becoming increasingly interested in opportunities to mine Internet users' opinions on a particular company and its products (Bautin, Vijayarenu, & Skiena, 2008).

The advances in technology offer new effective ways to measure marketing performance. Nevertheless, as B2B companies have fewer customers, fewer transactions, and longer purchase decision cycles, they have typically struggled in their attempts to demonstrate the relationship between marketing and any resulting impact (Webster, Malter, & Ganesan, 2005). It is unclear if this situation has changed as a result of the emergence of the most recent digital measurement solutions. Preliminary research findings indicate that although the benefits brought about by WA and SMM are industry and product-category specific, even B2B companies from manufacturing industries have been able to improve their measurement ability with digital solutions (Järvinen, Töllinen, Karjaluoto, & Platzer, 2012). Therefore, we expect digital measurement solutions to be quite widely used in the B2B sector. Still, it is evident that firms selling products online are better able to track the route from marketing action exposure to transaction, and consumer products are more likely to be discussed by a wider audience. Consequently, even though we presume that usage level of digital measurement tools is relatively high, we propose that the ability of firms in the B2B sector to gain measurable benefits from the use

of digital marketing is limited. In this light, we propose that:

> *Proposition 4: The usage of digital measurement solutions is relatively high in the B2B sector. However, the ability of B2B firms to gain measurable benefits from the use of digital marketing is limited.*

Barriers to Digital Marketing

A notable number of digital marketing initiatives fail to reach their objectives and deliver the benefits expected of them (Weber, 2009). As the emergence of new digital tools accelerates, it is no wonder that B2B firms need time to comprehend which tools are apt for their industries and how they might best be utilized for marketing purposes. For instance, Michaelidou et al. (2011) report that a large portion of B2B firms views the use of social networking sites as irrelevant to the firm's particular industry. This finding indicates that the benefits derived from at least a part of the mainstream social media tools in the B2C sector are still unclear to various B2B firms. In particular, the difficulty of determining return on investment (ROI) has been noted as one of the major barriers to investing in digital marketing (Marshall, Sor, & McKay, 2000). Another issue closely related to obscure benefits derives from the perceived risks. In particular, the lack of control of marketing messages and their distribution is considered a major risk when using social media tools as part of the digital marketing mix (Cruz & Fill, 2008).

In addition to the risks arising from lack of control of the social media environment, companies might perceive risks connected to the expertise they have available to harness the new digital tools for marketing. As technology develops quickly, it is evident that many employees will have difficulty keeping pace with it. In fact, research has shown that one significant barrier to technology adoption is a lack of general technical knowledge and personal innovativeness among personnel (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005; Frambach &

Schillewaert, 2002; Mehrtens, Cragg, & Mills, 2001; Schillewaert, Ahearne, Frambach, & Moenaert, 2005). As the use of social media tools, such as blogs, open discussion forums, and social networking sites, requires new kinds of conversational approaches rather than one-directional marketing messages (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011), it therefore follows that companies from various industries are likely to encounter severe challenges in their ability to create proper content for social media.

When employees have limited capability to use digital and social media tools, the role of management is emphasized. Indeed, the lack of technical or management support has been highlighted as an important barrier to usage in several studies (Ahearne et al., 2005; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005). Managers need to set accurate expectations with regard to the use of a particular technology (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005) and clarify the responsibilities of each individual user to reduce role overload and stress (Honeycutt, Thelen, Thelen, & Hodge, 2005). The role overload and stress are further increased if the employees are not provided with adequate resources; research has indicated that the major barriers to technology use stem from a lack of resources (e.g., time, money, and workforce) to fully exploit the new technology (Buehrer et al., 2005; Mehrtens et al., 2001).

Judging from the wide range of barriers to digital marketing and technology use encountered by firms, we expect to find several important barriers that hinder the use of digital marketing in the B2B sector. However, since B2B companies have been reported to be slower to adopt new digital marketing tools, we propose that those barriers related to the firm's resources, expertise, and the perception that digital marketing does not drive business outcomes in the relevant industry are particularly important:

> *Proposition 5: The firm's resources, expertise, and perception that digital marketing does not support its business objectives are the major barriers to*

digital marketing utilization in the B2B sector.

Methodology

Data was collected from a random sample of Finnish B2B companies drawn from a Finnish contact information database. A link to the online survey was sent via e-mail to the general manager or marketing director of each B2B firm in the sample. To incentivize participation, we offered access to the survey results and the opportunity to participate anonymously in a lottery.

A total of 145 completed questionnaires were received, all representing different companies. To calculate the response rate, we compared the number of people who had opened the survey but not completed it to the number who had completed the survey. This process produced an incidence rate of 70%. Respondents represented various industries (e.g., engineering, metal, pulp and paper, energy, electricity, construction) and their firms varied in terms of employee numbers from 1 to 37,000 (median 25; mean 596), with a median turnover of EUR 3.5 million. The characteristics of the sample are illustrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2:
Sample Characteristics

Industry	n	%[a]
Services	26	18.2
Industrial commodities	25	17.5
Machinery and equipment	50	35.0
Components	42	29.4
Size (number of employees)		
Micro (n < 10)	54	37.5
Small (10 < n > 50)	36	25.0
Medium (50 < n > 250)	30	20.8
Large (n > 250)	24	16.7
Size (sales turnover)		
<€1 m	50	36.8
€1–10 m	36	26.5
€11–100 m	39	28.7
>€100 m	11	8.1

[a] Missing values; valid percentages used

The questionnaire had three main sections. The first inquired about the utilization and objectives of digital marketing in the respondent's company. The second part consisted of questions related to content development in various digital marketing applications such as social media tools, newsletters and e-mail marketing, and sales support materials. The third section focused on the barriers and measurement of digital marketing practices in the respondent's company. Thus, the unit of analysis is the company level. The items measuring the extent of B2B firms' digital marketing usage, objectives, barriers, and measurable benefits were derived from the literature (e.g., Buehrer et al., 2005; Michaelidou et al., 2011). A five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (not at all important) and 5 (extremely important) was used. In measuring the activity of digital marketing and barriers to utilization, the anchors were 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree).

Results and Analysis

Almost half of the respondents (43%) worked in a leading position in their firm (as general manager/chairman of the board); around a quarter (23%) were marketing or communications managers; 18% were production managers and 10% were sales managers.

In line with the first proposition, Table 3 shows that the most important digital marketing tools for B2B companies remain newsletters and e-mail marketing. The findings further suggest, irrespective of firm size, that the use of other long-established digital marketing tools, such as sales support materials, e-mail and SMS service alerts and notifications, and digital customer magazines, are perceived to be more important than social media tools. Our second proposition, that social media tools are more important for large-sized B2B companies, is also supported. Larger companies perceive YouTube, blogs, webinars, Twitter, and Wikis, in particular, to be more important than SMEs do.

In line with our third proposition the two most important objectives of digital marketing in the era of social media are related to the soft side of marketing: creating awareness and enhancing brand image (Table 4). Both objectives received a mean score of above 4.1 on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Specifically, over 75% of the respondents regarded creating awareness and enhancing brand image as "important" or "extremely important." Thus, the third proposition is confirmed.

Our fourth proposition states that the usage of digital measurement solutions would be relatively high in the B2B sector, but that the measurable benefits gained from digital marketing would be limited. Our results (Tables 5 and 6) partly confirm this. B2B companies are not actively measuring digital marketing performance, measurement is not considered to be important, and the firms' ability to gain measurable benefits from the use of digital marketing is limited in the B2B sector. However, the results are dependent on firm

TABLE 3:
The Perceived Importance of Digital and Social Media Tools by Firm Size

	Mean					
	All	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	sig.
Newsletters and e-mail marketing	3.18	2.57	3.39	3.40	3.88	.000
Sales support materials (e.g., white papers, digital product brochure)	2.95	2.32	2.94	3.57	3.54	.000
E-mail/SMS service alerts and notifications	2.89	2.61	2.92	2.77	3.54	.029
Digital customer magazine	2.57	1.89	2.72	3.00	3.33	.000
YouTube (or other video service)	2.15	1.76	1.56	1.77	2.37	.000
Open discussion forums	2.12	1.91	2.08	2.23	2.54	.153
Facebook	2.01	1.89	1.94	1.90	2.50	.115
Blogs	1.97	1.72	1.86	2.00	2.71	.003
Webinars, podcasts and live casts	1.90	1.46	1.75	2.23	2.75	.000
Twitter	1.69	1.44	1.56	1.77	2.38	.000
Flickr (or other photo service)	1.63	1.46	1.56	1.83	1.92	.091
Wikis	1.63	1.44	1.42	1.73	2.29	.000

Note: Scale ranging from 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important

TABLE 4:
The Main Objectives of Digital Marketing

	Mean					
	All	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	sig.
Creating awareness	4.15	3.96	4.14	4.30	4.42	.167
Enhancing brand image	4.12	3.83	4.17	4.33	4.42	.054
Growing sales/new customers	3.82	3.70	4.06	3.67	3.88	.470
Improving customer service	3.81	3.83	3.58	4.00	3.92	.412
Enhancing customer loyalty	3.78	3.70	3.75	3.73	4.04	.646
Improving customer satisfaction	3.77	3.76	3.64	3.97	3.79	.632
Growing sales/existing customers	3.57	3.35	3.75	3.37	4.00	.081
Decreasing costs	3.46	3.30	3.31	3.70	3.71	.242

Note: Scale ranging from 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important

size, as large firms are more active users of digital measurement solutions. Specifically, using a tool for following online discussions and news is a more common practice in large firms than in smaller firms.

In line with the fifth proposition, lack of resources and expertise were considered major barriers to the utilization of B2B digital marketing (Table 7). However, contrary to our proposition, the data reveal that the proportion of companies that think digital marketing an inappropriate means to deliver business objectives is a great deal smaller than expected.

The only statistically significant difference between firm sizes is management resistance, with micro firms perceiving the least management resistance. Management resistance is a noticeably more influential barrier in medium-sized firms than in others.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was to investigate B2B firms' digital marketing tools, objectives, measurement solutions and barriers of utilization. A thorough literature review of B2B digital marketing was conducted to provide

TABLE 5:
The Measurement of Digital Marketing by Firm Size

	Mean					
	All	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	sig.
Measurement of digital marketing is perceived as important in our firm	2.53	2.37	2.42	2.50	3.13	.060
Our firm measures the results of digital marketing against objectives	2.40	2.22	2.53	2.23	2.83	.105
The use of digital marketing has changed the measurement practice of our marketing communications effectiveness	2.12	1.78	2.14	2.07	2.92	.000
Our firm has obtained measurable benefits from the use of digital marketing	2.01	1.76	2.00	2.03	2.54	.024

Note: Scale ranging from 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important

TABLE 6:
The Measurement Activities of Digital Marketing by Firm Size

	Mean					
	All	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	sig.
We receive useful information from our website visitor analytics	3.16	2.93	3.28	2.80	3.96	.001
We follow online discussions about our industry sector	2.60	2.48	2.36	2.33	3.54	.001
We follow online discussions about our firm, our products and services	2.45	2.24	2.31	2.07	3.63	.000
We utilize web analytics (e.g., Google Analytics, Snoobi) to acquire new customers	2.35	2.30	2.47	2.13	2.58	.535
We use a tool (e.g., GoogleAlerts, Hootsuite, Radian6, Meltwater, mBrain) to follow online news and discussions	1.97	1.67	1.64	1.77	3.38	.000

Note: Scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

TABLE 7:
The Barriers to Digital Marketing Utilization by Firm Size

Mean

	All	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	sig.
Lack of human resources	3.70	3.65	3.64	3.80	3.79	.904
Lack of time	3.37	3.54	3.44	2.93	3.42	.240
Lack of know-how	3.34	3.46	3.25	3.67	3.17	.734
Challenges in content creation	3.10	3.00	3.22	3.33	2.88	.415
Unclear ROI	2.95	2.91	2.92	3.03	3.00	.969
Uncontrollability	2.91	3.07	2.86	2.93	2.58	.413
Lack of money	2.83	2.94	2.75	2.77	2.75	.864
Does not support the objectives of our business	2.63	2.74	2.44	2.70	2.54	.771
Lack of technical support	2.58	2.67	2.39	2.57	2.67	.674
Management resistance	2.03	1.74	2.03	2.63	1.96	.007

Note: Scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

answers to the research questions and meet the study objective. On the basis of the literature review, five propositions were developed to guide the analysis of study data. The propositions were tested in an empirical investigation of B2B firms (N=145). The empirical data provides support for most of the propositions.

Theoretical Contributions

The first proposition, that traditional digital marketing tools, such as newsletters and e-mail marketing, would be considered more important than social media tools, was confirmed. B2B marketers prefer to use one-directional and push-oriented digital channels like e-mail marketing, white papers, and digital customer magazines in their marketing communication. Furthermore, our study confirms the findings of a recent study (Michaelidou et al., 2011) which showed that B2B companies are slow to adopt social media. We did not find much evidence for collaborative marketing tactics or customers acting as content creators in the B2B sector, as the literature had suggested we would (Dennis et al., 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Marketing communications in the digital world should ideally be based on a two-way dialogue and

aimed at creating a presence, relationships, and mutual value with customers and other stakeholders (Rowley, 2004; Wertime & Fenwick, 2008), but our findings imply that B2B sector is still some way from that ideal.

We were able to find support for our second proposition arguing that social media tools are more important for large-sized B2B companies, this being in line with the success stories of social media utilization from the B2B sector (Bodnar & Cohen, 2012; Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011; Handley & Chapman, 2011; Powell et al., 2011). It is noteworthy that none of the social media tools were seen as important, and even the long-established digital tools were not seen as crucial, regardless of firm size. This suggests that digital channels still play a supportive role in lengthy and complex B2B buying processes (Long et al., 2007).

We contribute to the literature by showing that the most important objectives of B2B digital marketing (Proposition 3) are related to creating awareness and enhancing brand image (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Kho, 2008; Michaelidou et al., 2011). Kho (2008) stated that social media can work for B2B companies by strengthening and enhancing customer relationships, through fostering meaningful interactions between a

company and its customers. Our study partly confirms this, but at the same time suggests that B2B companies are primarily concentrating on attracting new customers rather than enhancing existing customer relationships. It seems that B2B firms have not fully realized and leveraged the interactive nature of the digital media environment, which arguably offers great opportunities for cultivating existing customer relationships and enhancing customer engagement (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). As an aside, one interesting observation was that the respondents considered decreasing costs the least important objective. It appears that despite digital channels offering notable cost efficiencies (Sharma, 2002; Walters, 2008) other objectives are perceived to be more important than cost saving.

In testing our fourth proposition, we add to the literature on the measurement of the effectiveness of digital marketing by showing that digital measurement solutions are not widely used and the measurable benefits gained from digital marketing are limited in the B2B sector. Contrary to our expectations, the usage of digital measurement solutions was not high. However, we found that larger firms are significantly more active in tracking website visitor behavior and following online discussions about the company, its products, and its industry sector. While the majority of large firms track online discussions and website visitor behavior, considerably fewer use specific software (WA and SMM) for this purpose. This might be due to unfamiliarity with the software or a lack of resources available to buy it. Although the digital environment has offered new opportunities to measure the effectiveness of marketing (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Phippen et al., 2004; Wilson, 2010) and brought new ways to listen to customer opinions (Blanchard, 2011; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Thomas & Barlow, 2011), the study results indicate that B2B companies have not widely exploited these developments. Indeed, digitalization has not significantly reformed measurement practices, and moreover, the measurement of digital marketing is not set against objectives or even

considered important. However, judging from the limited use of WA and SMM tools, it may be that the companies have not fully understood the opportunities offered by digital measurement solutions and are still seeking new ways to measure the effectiveness of digital marketing. Another possible explanation stems from the notion that B2B firms with fewer customers, fewer transactions, and longer purchase decision cycles find it still difficult to demonstrate the relationship between marketing and its resulting impact (Webster et al., 2005). Therefore, B2B firms may not consider measurement to be worth the effort.

Finally, we show that a lack of resources is seen as the largest barrier to B2B digital marketing usage, a finding that partly confirms our fifth proposition. Resources were seen as inadequate in terms of human resources, time, and expertise, which have been noted as major barriers (Buehrer et al., 2005; Mehrtens et al., 2001). Contrary to our expectations, however, remarkably few B2B firms consider that digital marketing does not support their business objectives. Together, these findings indicate that there is a belief that B2B digital marketing offers opportunities to drive business outcomes, but a lack of resources restricts the B2B firms' ability to harness them. Management resistance and a lack of technical support were not perceived as significant barriers to digital marketing usage, a finding that contrasts with those of several other studies on technology adoption (Ahearne et al., 2005; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005; Marshall et al., 2000). However, this finding might relate to the fact that almost half of the respondents occupied senior management positions in their firms.

Managerial Contributions

Our study offers three suggestions to improve the use and measurement of B2B digital marketing. First, as we found that B2B firms still prefer using one-directional communications with digital tools, such as e-mail marketing and newsletters, we argue that companies should move towards more collaborative communications in the social

media era. Our suggestion is supported by literature according to which today's communications landscape is better suited to bi-directional information exchanges and interactive conversations with customers (e.g., Bernoff & Li, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Moreover, digital marketing content must be customer-driven, responding to customers' needs and offering solutions to their problems. For instance, customer feedback, inquiries, and frequently asked questions are good sources for the creation of relevant and interesting content that supports the customers' own business. It is noteworthy that marketing content must be available when a customer is willing to receive and respond to it, not when a firm wants to produce and communicate it. When a company is able to create relevant content for customer needs, social media tools can be effective channels to drive traffic to a company website and eventually generate leads.

Second, B2B companies should invest in acquiring human resources with the capability to utilize digital marketing tools; that might be through training or recruiting or, indeed, may involve outsourcing to expert agencies. Our study clearly shows that B2B firms lack people with expertise in the effective use of digital marketing. This is likely to be one important explanation for the minor role played by social media tools in the digital marketing mix.

Finally, B2B companies should update their knowledge with respect to marketing performance measurement and the opportunities provided by digital measurement solutions so as to be able to assess the effectiveness of digital marketing. As the findings reveal, companies do not have the requisite capabilities to measure digital marketing performance, and advances in digital measurement solutions, such as WA and SMM software, are not yet being widely exploited in B2B firms. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the findings indicated that companies have set high-priority goals connected to their digital marketing, but they do not measure the results against those goals. In line with performance

measurement literature (see, e.g., Kaplan & Norton, 1996; McCunn, 1998; Neely & Bourne, 2000), we suggest that marketing performance measurement should always start with the setting of measurable goals. Subsequently, WA and SMM can provide ways to evaluate the effectiveness of different digital marketing tools at driving traffic, increasing interactivity, and generating leads. Naturally, the digital measurement solutions should be linked with the firm's CRM system in order to form a complete picture of digital marketing effectiveness.

Limitations and Further Research

In any research project, with the benefit of hindsight, it is prudent to consider limitations and potential improvements. As the data were collected at one point in time, common method bias might be present. While attempts were made to mitigate the common method variance problem through our survey design and within the analysis, its impact could only be conclusively ruled out if data were collected from different sources or via longitudinal methods. Furthermore, although the respondents were from different firms, the sample size was relatively small (N=145) and geographically restricted to a single country. Future research could focus on international comparisons of digital marketing usage in B2B firms and enhance our knowledge by commissioning longitudinal investigations of B2B companies' adoption and actual use of digital marketing.

In addition, as research in this area is in its infancy, our scale development relied heavily on two literature sources, both of which used single item scales to assess the extent to which B2B firms use digital marketing and social media, and related questions. Therefore, future research should focus on multi-item scale development and the factor analysis approach to enhance knowledge in this area.

Attitudes towards technology are constantly changing in B2B firms due to consumerism and new generations entering the business. Thus, as

Michaelidou et al. (2011) suggest, future research could also examine the link between attitudes to technology and the adoption of digital marketing in B2B firms.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SALES FORCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL COOPERATION AND TRAINING ON PERFORMANCE

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In this paper, the authors use hierarchical regression analysis to empirically test the antecedents and consequences of social media usage by sales forces. . Given the scant empirical evaluation of social media use in business-to-business relationships, this research analyzes a sample size of 1,699 respondents to aid in the understanding of several factors. Significant relationships between intra-organizational cooperation and social media usage are found, as well as a positive relationship between social media usage and sales performance. Furthermore, the moderating factor of training on social media's effect on performance is uncovered and provides important implications for how managers may best implement a firm's social media strategy among its sales force.

INTRODUCTION

Encouraging sales personnel to use available technological resources during the sales process continues to be an ongoing concern for practitioners and academics. Over the past decade, a large body of research in the sales and marketing areas has emerged examining the antecedents and consequences of technology adoption by a sales force. Researchers have used a number of theoretical perspectives including self-efficacy theory (Speier and Venkatesh 2002), the theory of planned behavior (Jones, Sundaram, and Chin 2002; Schillewaert, Ahearne, Frambach, and Moenaert 2005) and goal orientation theory (Jelinek, Ahearne, Mathieu, and Schillewaert 2006) to help explain the technology adoption process. New technological advancements, specifically the development of Web 2.0 and social media applications, are different and more public compared to prior technologies. This suggests that established models for adoption may not be appropriate for these applications.

The current paper integrates theoretical developments in the area of strategic management, namely the concept of intraorganizational cooperation (Tsai 2002), to examine potential antecedents and consequences of social media usage by a sales force. Social media represents a wide spectrum of internet-based applications where users (i.e., customers or firm representatives) create content, thus becoming the center of a network of coproduction (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner 2010). At the core, social media is a tool that "provides a way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online" (Scott 2009, p. 38). The customer-centric nature of social media suggests that it can be a valuable tool for sales professionals.

The research questions posed in this paper address how organizations handle social media within the firm and the implications this has on sales performance. Since social media usage is a relatively new tool for many salespeople, the authors' intent is to understand the antecedents to a sales person's use of social media, as it relates to cooperation across departments within the organization. Ultimately, the effect social media usage has on sales performance is of vital importance. Finally, this paper

investigates the effect that levels of training have on the efficacy of social media usage by a sales team. The conceptual model developed in this paper is tested by performing hierarchical regression analysis on data collected from a cross-industry sample of 1,699 sales professionals. Prior to presenting the conceptual model and developing the study's hypotheses, a brief overview of social media use among firms is presented.

Social Media

Social media has been defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61). As the definition suggests, technological advances now allow online users to collaborate and co-create content on the World Wide Web (i.e., Web 2.0). An important underpinning of social media is the idea that individuals are connected via social networks and tend to communicate with other individuals in their network (Kozinets et al. 2010). The co-creation of content and lack of centralized control is what makes social media unique from other technological resources available to the sales force. Unlike customer relationship management software (and other sales force automation technologies), organizations do not possess complete control over the content created and distributed via social media applications. Rather, they must learn to leverage a resource in which they have limited control and the customer has greater influence.

The term Web 2.0 was coined in 2004 to describe a new method of how internet users collaborate and co-create online content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). This term emerged largely because of the development and speedy diffusion of social networking sites such as MySpace (launched in 2003), LinkedIn (launched in 2003) and Facebook (launched in 2004). While social media has existed for nearly a decade, the leveraging of these communication channels by for-profit companies is still in its infancy, but is a growing phenomenon. The sales areas within these business organizations have been relatively slow to adopt the medium (Lager 2009), which may be a result of general skepticism among salespeople. Reporting on a study by the sales consultancy ES Research Group, Tsai (2009) notes that only a small percentage of sales representatives believe social media can be used to help win sales. For example, approximately one-third believe LinkedIn helps win sales; only 10% said the same about Facebook, and less than 5% believe that Twitter can be leveraged to secure sales. Nevertheless, there is growing recognition that social media applications are useful for monitoring a firm's brand image and engaging customers (Aquino 2012). In 2011, approximately 61% of Fortune 500 companies used Twitter, while 58% used Facebook, and 23% used Blogging (Barnes and Andonian 2011).

Among business-to-business (B2B) companies - which rely heavily on personal selling and relationship building to achieve corporate objectives (Belonax, Newell, and Plank 2007) - social media use has an even lower level of penetration. One study revealed that roughly 27% of B2B firms in the U.K. currently use social media (Michaelidou, Siamagka, and Christodoulides 2011). Interestingly, this study also found that while attracting new customers and cultivating relationships are potential opportunities garnered from social media, the lack of staff familiarity and technical skills are major hindrances of social media adoption.

While actual adoption has been slow, there is a growing appreciation for the relevance of social media in B2B sales. Searcy (2012) argues social media is a valuable tool to gather information to help build a profile on prospective buyers. This perspective mirrors the developing concept of *Social selling* which suggests that the engine driving sales is changing from "who the salesperson knows" to "what the salesperson knows about who they know" (Sexton 2012). Responding to the notion that "chance favors the prepared mind," social

CRM tools like InsideView help sales teams understand potential customers better and allows them to "know before they go," which leads to (among other things) more accurate proposals (Ostrow 2011).

According to Aquino (2012), social media applications are moving up the value chain from being simply novelties to viable communication mechanisms. Several services have emerged, providing a variety of solutions along the continuum from social media monitoring to social media engagement. Sprout Social, InsideView, Sysomos, Cymfony, and Attensity are just some examples (Aquino 2012). Broadly, these providers span popular social media websites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest to present consolidated information and analytics in a usable format. These solutions are gaining traction in the B2B space. For example, InsideView has several B2B customers including Trinet – an HR outsourcing company – and the business software/ hardware provider ORACLE. Similarly, Sprout Social counts among its clients the computer components manufacturer AMD and software developer Adobe.

Despite the growing appreciation for the potential value of social media in the B2B space, adoption has been slow. Additionally, the factors that lead to social media usage among the sales force, as well as the performance implications of social media usage, remain unclear. This paper attempts to fill this void by presenting and testing a model which proposes collaboration within organizations is a way to share knowledge, diffuse skills, and ultimately enhance the use of social media among a sales force. In the following section, the conceptual model is developed (Figure 1) and subsequent hypotheses are provided.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Interdepartmental Cooperation and Social Media Use

Organizations are faced with many challenges, including facilitating the exchange of knowledge and the sharing of scarce resources across multiple departments (Tsai 2002). Firms that successfully allocate resources and share knowledge across units are at a distinct competitive advantage in the market (Guenzi and Trolio 2007; Grant 1996). The level of

FIGURE 1:
Model of Social Media Use Among the Sales Force
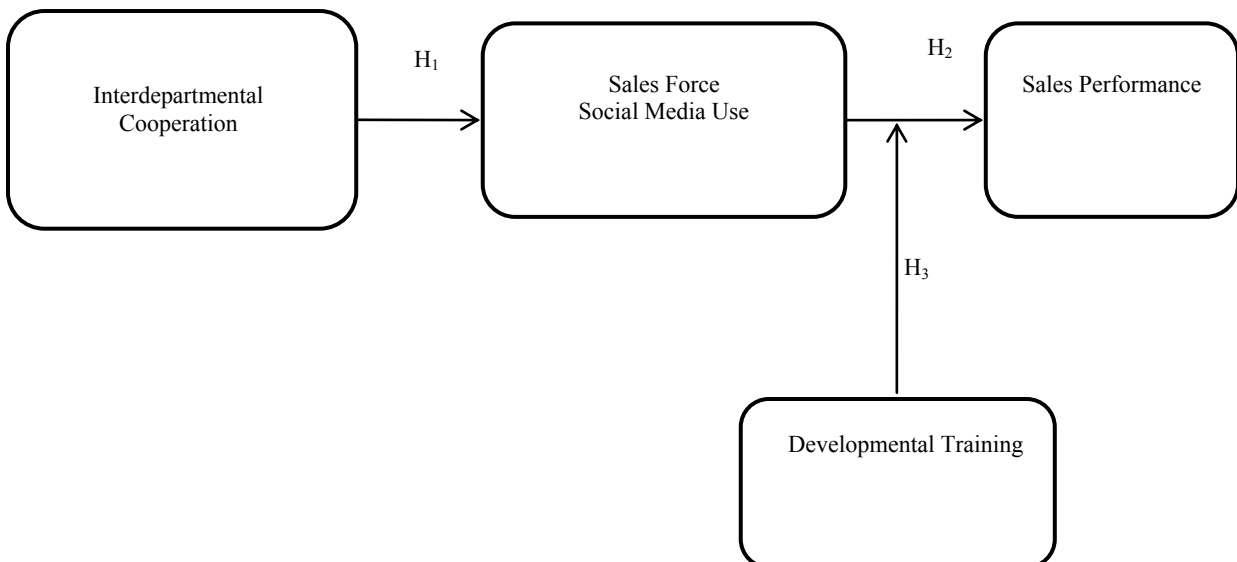
cooperation across business units is a key factor influencing this knowledge exchange (Dawes and Massey 2005). Inter-departmental cooperation is defined here as the degree to which different departments within a firm cooperate to achieve business objectives (Luo, Slotegraaf, and Pan 2006). The idea that cooperation within a firm is important for overall performance is largely grounded in the knowledge-based theory of the firm (Tsai 2002). According to this theory, individuals and departments within organizations develop unique knowledge structures that are immensely valuable to the firm (Grant 1996). This knowledge is most valuable when there is a high level of cooperation and sharing of knowledge across individuals and across departments.

Cooperation within firms enhances market performance because firms that have a high degree of inter-departmental cooperation are better able to process, use, and share market information. The *esprit de corps* that is fostered through cooperation facilitates a "quick exchange of customer and market information" (Menon, Jaworski, and Kohli 1997, p. 188). In addition to this intra-firm knowledge transfer, cooperation can also lead to the sharing of competencies and other resources (Lado, Boyd, and Hanlon 1997). Different departments within firms have varying competencies and available resources. A firm's marketing department, for example, may have access to market level data and maintain a keen understanding of product development, while the firm's sales force likely has substantial customer knowledge. Bridging the gap between these knowledge structures has important and positive firm performance implications (Homburg and Jensen 2007).

Social media applications are resources that are available to the organization as a whole, and often available to individual members within the organization. As stated above, social media usage is relatively new, which suggests individuals may not be thoroughly versed at how to best leverage these resources. Additionally, companies often grant access to

their "official" social media applications to a small number of employees, such as those in the marketing or new media departments (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). As a result of the newness of social media and traditional organizational structures, the sales force may not feel comfortable with or have the knowledge to leverage these tools. However, the sales force within an organization that has a high degree of inter-departmental cooperation will likely be more aware of the firm's overarching social media strategy and be more comfortable with the resources as a whole. By collaborating with fellow employees who may be more knowledgeable about social media, the sales force will be able to absorb that knowledge and use it in their individual sales processes. Considering this, it is proposed that social media use among a sales force will be highest in organizations where there is a high level of inter-departmental cooperation.

H₁: *The greater the interdepartmental cooperation, the more the sales force will utilize social media.*

Social Media Use and Sales Performance

The sales function of an organization encompasses numerous boundary-spanning agents. The close relationship a firm's sale force has with its customer base suggests that the sales force is the ideal source from which to gather customer information (Gordon, Schoenbachler, Kaminski, and Brouchous 1997). Gathering customer information is an important characteristic of a customer-oriented organization (Saxe and Weitz 1982), and a large body of research indicates customer-orientation leads to overall firm performance (Franke and Park 2006). Social media can be useful in collecting and internally sharing this valuable customer information.

In addition to being able to collect customer-generated information, social media also facilitates a collaborative, two-way communication between customer and company. Through social media, customers can communicate directly to companies, and companies can then respond to customers in

real-time. Importantly for marketers, social media allows customers to co-create value, collaborate in the innovative process, and provide suggestions for service and product improvements (Bijmolt et al. 2010). Research indicates that customers often develop loyalty to salespeople as opposed to the company itself (Palmatier, Scheer, and Steenkamp 2007). This suggests that customers may be more willing to communicate with and share valuable information with their sales representatives as opposed to an unfamiliar anonymous company employee. Through the use of social media, the sales function can facilitate valuable customer supportive behaviors which should also help enhance firm performance.

The social networking capability can be one of the most valuable characteristics of social media to organizations (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels 2009). Individual users (i.e., customers) within the social media world are linked to other users through their "personal network". This social network likely consists of other like-minded individuals who are, at least in some capacity, attracted to similar product and service offerings. Social media use allows the sales force to access customers' social networks to generate potential leads and ultimately help them to expand their business. Considering these arguments, it is predicted that a sales force that uses social media will be more effective in terms of sales performance than those that do not.

> **H₂:** *Social media use by the sales force will positively influence a firm's sales performance.*

The Moderating Effect of Training

While it is expected that social media use will have a direct and positive effect on sales performance, there is likely an important factor moderating this relationship. Similar to any technological innovation, social media represents a relatively complex resource which can be difficult for individuals to successfully adopt. Researchers have even suggested that implementing complex technological innovations may in some instances adversely

affect performance in the short term (Grise and Gallupe 2000).

The successful implementation of a resource, especially a resource that is technologically complex, requires specialized knowledge and skills. Developmental training, defined here as the time management devotes to training the sales force, is one method to enhance this knowledge (Ahearne, Jelinek, and Rapp 2005). During developmental training sessions, management can communicate to the sales force the firm's overarching social media strategy and how the sales force can help execute the strategy. Additionally, training can be a useful platform to teach individual sales representatives how best to utilize social media to grow their sales. That is, developmental training is an ideal way to share social media "best-practices" with the sales force. It is thus predicted that training will enhance the effectiveness of social media use in terms of the effect on sales performance.

> **H₃:** *Developmental training moderates the effect of social media use on sales performance; the positive effect strengthens as training levels increase.*

METHOD

Data to test the hypotheses was gathered with the cooperation of Miller Heiman, a global leader in sales performance consulting. Study participants were business executives in revenue-generating roles across job functions, notably different levels in sales and marketing, including executives at the highest levels of firms. Data was collected by emailing a link to an embedded online survey. In addition to the original message, two follow-up reminders were sent via email. In all, 15,110 individuals clicked on the link; 1,699 respondents completed the survey, yielding an 11.2% response rate. To assess non-response bias, early and late respondent means were compared (Armstrong and Overton 1977). This process did not reveal any significant differences between the respondents.

Respondents were from various industries including consulting, professional services, technology-software, and business services. Table 1 lists the proportion of study participants in each of the more than twenty-five represented industries. The data consisted of respondents in over forty countries. The largest group hailed from the U.S. (51% of the sample), with the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Canada also being significantly represented. A majority of the respondents (77%) were male.

Measures

Interdepartmental cooperation was assessed using a three-item 7-point Likert scale measure (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The items included: (1) "Sales and marketing are aligned in what our customers want and need," (2) "Our organization collaborates across departments to pursue large deals", and (3) "Our organization regularly collaborates

TABLE 1:
Sample Industry Data

Industry	Percent
Aerospace and Defense	2.2
Business Services	7.1
Construction	2.6
Consulting and Professional Services	11.3
Consumer Products	1.8
Education	1.6
Oil/Gas	2.8
Energy	1.7
Finance and Banking	3.9
Insurance	2.1
Government	1.7
Healthcare – Capital	3.8
Healthcare – Consumables	6.0
Healthcare – Services	3.2
Hospitality and Food Service	.8
Food Service	1.4
Industrial and Chemical	4.3
Manufacturing	9.0
Media	.6
Pharmaceuticals	2.4
Technology – Hardware	5.9
Technology – Software	7.3
Technology – Services	4.8
Telecommunications – Equipment	2.0
Telecommunications – Services	3.4
Transportation	2.0
Utilities	.6
Wholesale	1.5
Missing	2.1
Total	**100.0**

across departments to manage strategic accounts" (α=.72).

Three items were used to assess the time the organization devotes to training the sales force (1=not applicable, 8=5+ hours). Each question began with the following stem: "In an average week, how much time do you allocate to this activity?" (1) "…skill development for sales team members," (2) "…product training for sales team members," and (3) "…personal professional development" (α=.69).

The degree to which the sales force uses *social media* was measured with a three-item, 7-point Likert scale measure (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The items included: (1) "Our use of social media has significantly increased as a tool to identify new business opportunities," (2) "Our use of social media has significantly increased as a tool to identify decision makers," and (3) "The use of social media for business purposes in our organization is encouraged" (α=.88).

To measure sales performance, respondents were asked to compare their organizations' current performance to last year's performance (on an 8-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=More than 10% decrease, 8=More than 20% growth) for the following items: (1) new account acquisition, (2) the number of qualified opportunities/leads, (3) customer retention rate, and (4) quota achievement for our sales force (α=.77).

A number of variables were collected to control for possible firm- and industry-level variations in social media usage and/or sales performance.

First, to control for any effect organizational size may have on social media usage and/or sales performance, respondents were asked the size of their organization in terms of the total number of full-time salespeople. Next, to control for possible differences between domestic and international firms, the location of corporate headquarters was gathered. The variable *"U.S. Firm"* takes the value 1 if the company is headquartered in the United States and the value of 0 otherwise. Finally, to account for any possible variance between product-versus service-oriented companies, the variable *"Services Firm"* was added to the model. This variable takes the value of 1 if the company primarily operates in a services industry and the value of 0 otherwise. These variables are used as controls in the subsequent analysis.

Analysis and Results

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to analyze the survey data and test the study's hypotheses. First, Model 1 includes the effects of the control variables and interdepartmental cooperation on social media use. Next, Model 2 includes the effects of the control variables, interdepartmental cooperation, and training on sales performance. In Model 3, social media use is included as an additional antecedent of sales performance. Finally, the interaction between social media use and training is added in Model 4. An overview of the results is detailed in Table 2.

In support of H_1, the effect of interdepartmental cooperation on social media use is positive and significant (b=.38, p< .01). The analysis also supports H_2: social media use has a positive and

TABLE 2:
Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Reliabilities and Correlations

	M	SD	CR	1	2	3	4
1. Interdepartmental cooperation	4.88	1.19	.72	1			
2. Social Media Use	3.52	1.59	.88	.30	1		
3. Training	3.19	1.30	.69	.18	.12	1	
4. Performance	4.59	1.30	.77	.32	.21	.13	1

Note: All correlations significant at p < .01

significant effect on sales performance (b = .11, p < .01). In H₃, it was predicted that training would positively moderate the relationship between social media use and sales performance. The significant interaction yielded in Model 4 (b=.03, p< .05) lends support to this prediction. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction effect that high levels of training amplify the positive effect social media use has on sales performance. When training is low, social media use has a relatively small effect on performance.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

This study utilizes the knowledge-based theory of the firm to provide a better understanding of social media usage by a sales force. Specifically, based on the concept of intraorganizational cooperation, it was predicted that sales force social media usage

would be greater within firms that have a high degree of cross-departmental cooperation. The empirical results support this hypothesis: interdepartmental cooperation in the company positively influences the use of social media among the sales force. In addition, the results indicate that sales performance is positively affected by the use of social media, and this effect can be further enhanced through developmental training in the organization. For many companies, the results are indicative of their experiences with social media. That is, there are gains to be made in using social media as part of sales and marketing programs; yet, the lack of education or training could be curtailing some of those gains (Hosford 2012; Constant Contact 2011).

A survey by Forrester Research, Inc. noted that only 46% of companies conducted "social media best practices training for employees",

FIGURE 2:
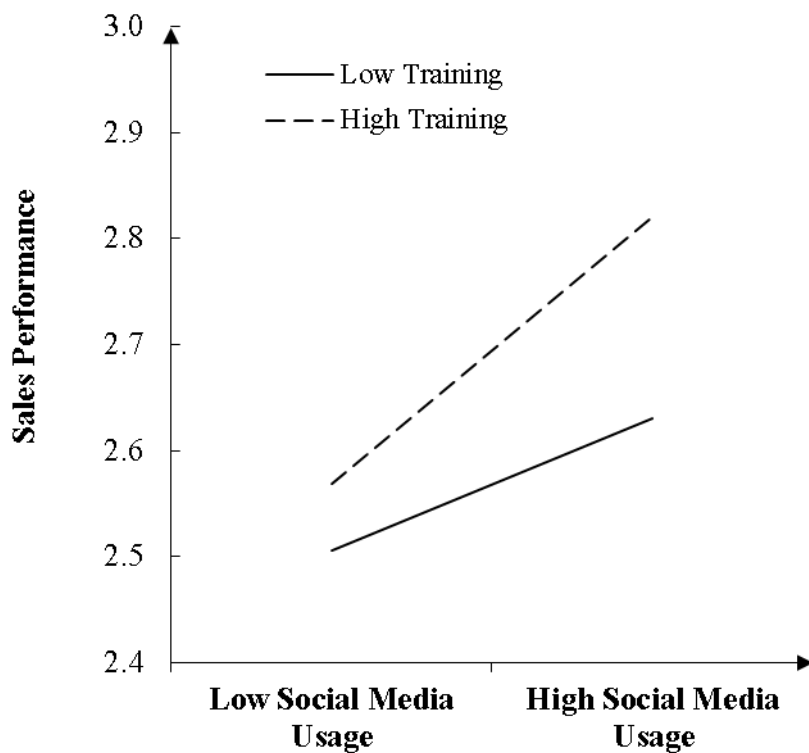**Interaction Effect of Social Media Use and Training on Sales Performance**

TABLE 3:
OLS Estimates for Antecedents of Social Media Use and Sales Performance

Dependent Variables	Social Media Use		Sales Performance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	1.46** (.174)	2.81** (.152)	2.67** (.153)	2.69** (.153)
Control variables				
Size of organization	-.01 (.018)	-.01 (.015)	-.01 (.015)	-.01 (.015)
U.S. Firm (0/1)	.00 (.075)	-.03 (.062)	-.034 (.062)	-.03 (.062)
Services Firm (0/1)	.46** (.076)	-.15** (.063)	-.20** (.063)	-.20** (.063)
Main effects				
H_1: Interdepartmental cooperation	.38** (.031)	.34** (.026)	.30** (.027)	.30** (.027)
Training		.08** (.024)	.07** (.024)	.07** (.024)
H_2: Social media use (SMU)			.11** (.020)	.11** (.020)
Interaction effect				
H_3: SMU*Training				.03* (.014)
Adjusted R^2	.11	.11	.12	.12
F (Statistics)	50.71	39.81	38.34	33.65

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
Note: Unstandardized coefficients reported; numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
Sample size = 1,699.

while another 36% had "no plans" to do so (Corcoran 2011). This held true even when 75% of the respondents in the Forrester study claimed to currently use or plan to "pilot a long-term social marketing plan" (Corcoran 2011). In the study conducted for this paper, there is clear evidence that training could significantly increase the sales performance results for many companies. While companies continue to design their social media strategies, it is imperative that training be a large part of the implementation of the program. For example, before turning on a social platform for sales efforts, all involved must understand that this will no doubt change information exchange. Who will be expected to provide content, manage the community, and extract feedback to measure usage and value? What happens if the conversation turns negative? What are the triage steps to subtly regain order within the community so it remains a valuable exchange environment?

Furthermore, interdepartmental collaboration was a key antecedent for the use of social media by the sales force. This finding suggests that companies seeking to implement social media programs should determine the extent of internal collaboration that is occurring in the firm. Ensuring that collaboration is present will go a long way in supporting the gains that could be made through the use of social media by a sales force. Social media represents a complex, multifaceted resource that can be leveraged by many individuals within the firm. This suggests that collaboration and cooperation across departments is critical to ensure everyone within the company is clear in regards to the firm's overarching social media strategy. The potential advantages of forming a positive social media culture within the sales force are just beginning to be understood. This is one of the first studies to focus on the dynamics of social media use. The inclination of sales forces to be pro-social, share ideas, and further strengthen relationships with clients is perhaps

what they do best—engage and educate. Obviously, social media is not a panacea. In fact, one must caution that social media alone might easily become a distraction or additional "noise" introduced into a pipeline operating at full capacity.

The results from this study contribute to the small body of research that has focused on social media and B2B sales performance, and is one of the first to also address training effects. With the landscape of selling ever-changing and accelerating due to technology advances, the use, and misuse, of social media by sales forces should be a priority for sales management and sales strategy. With buyers looking for credible selling partners (Peterson and Lucas 2001), face-to-face interaction may be giving way to some degree of social media. The significance of developing relationships with prospects and customers via the use of social media cannot be emphasized enough. As this study has noted, using social media is associated with increased sales performance and is moderated by the training received. While these relationships have been empirically tested with a robust sample size and industry diversity, it is one of the early examinations of social media in a business-to-business setting.

LIMITATIONS AND
FUTURE RESEARCH

As is generally the case with cross-sectional data, the results represent the status of the respondents at the specific point in time when the study was conducted. Due to the dynamic nature of social media use by companies, differences in responses from one year to the next could exist. However, given that there have been similar descriptive findings in the practitioner/consulting arenas, the authors are confident that the study's results are valid and informative. In fact, the study clearly points out what are concerns of many in the field who are attempting to implement social media strategic plans for their companies; particularly with respect to education/training/retraining personnel (Barnes and Lescault 2012; Constant Contact 2011; Corcoran 2011). This stream of

research is in its infancy and there is such a lack of information on this topic that even common demographics regarding social media tendencies such as age, education, and any gender effects would be of great interest.

Nevertheless, one significant future direction for this research is to examine longitudinal data to study the dynamic nature of social media use over time. With longitudinal data, the results could offer insight into potential lag effects between the key factors in the model. For instance, would training be more beneficial before or after implementation of a social media program? And, does interdepartmental collaboration continue to affect the use of social media by a sales force over time? In sum, future researchers should continue to consider the dynamic nature of interdepartmental cooperation and social media usage.

Finally, a key question that was not examined, but could be helpful to practitioners, is the extent to which certain social media platforms are the most impactful on sales performance. As much of the practitioner literature has determined, some platforms are used more than others. For instance, Facebook was found to be used by 95% of respondents in the *Constant Contact* study (2011), but only 82% found the tool effective. Similarly, 60% used Twitter yet only 47% found it to be effective for their companies (Constant Contact 2011). Which platforms are the most critical for B2B firms? And, which are likely to be the best in terms of sales performance?

Overall, many in the marketing and sales arenas are hard-pressed to find the right measure to determine social media's return on investment (Barnes and Lescault 2012). The current study demonstrates a positive relationship between the use of social media and sales performance, and indicates that training plays an important moderating role in this relationship. This finding provides initial evidence that social media, if managed properly, can in fact have a positive return on investment. Future research must continue to identify additional measures of social media's return on investment. Also,

future studies should consider additional moderating factors that affect the social media usage and firm performance. Uncovering such factors would provide additional insight to management in terms of how best to manage a company's social media strategy in order to maximize performance.

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SELF-PERCEIVED BRAND RELEVANCE OF AND SATISFACTION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Branding efforts represent the promise of consistency and quality an organization makes to its constituents, typically through traditional media such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and sponsorship. Focus on social media marketing was initially viewed as yet another way for organizations to tell their story. With the explosive growth of social media networking sites, however, social media is now viewed as the 'glue' that holds together an organization's marketing campaign because it touches across each promotional medium. The purpose of this study is to investigate the self-perceived brand relevance of and satisfaction with social media as a brand. In this study, the social media site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) represents both the brand and the brand community. We found that frequency and duration of use, gender, and other activities positively impact self-perceived brand relevance, however, these relationships change somewhat when social media is examined as high/low self-presentation and self-disclosure. Integration of the individual into a brand community positively impacts satisfaction with the brand on many levels: brand image, marketing communications, overall marketing strategy, relationships built through social media, and with social media in general.

INTRODUCTION

A company's brand is often nearly as valuable as the products or services that they offer (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). Branding efforts represent the promise of consistency and quality an organization makes to its constituents, typically through traditional media such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and sponsorship. Focus on social media marketing was initially viewed as yet another way for organizations to tell their story. With the explosive growth of social media networking sites, however, social media is now viewed as the 'glue' that holds together an organization's marketing campaign because it touches across each promotional medium. For example, LEGO fans are united worldwide through forums, web pages, and services on lugnet.com that enhance their relationship with the brand and facilitates online shopping for LEGO products. The

purpose of this study is to investigate the self-perceived brand relevance of and satisfaction with social media as a brand. In this study, the social media site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) represents both the brand and the brand community. Respondents were asked to consider the social media brand they use most frequently in relation to how they engage in this brand community. This study represents the first time an established brand community scale has been used to investigate a community in the social media brand context.

Theoretical Background

Branding. Researchers have long accepted that brand image may serve as a halo which influences consumers' beliefs of individual attributes (Beckwith and Lehman, 1975). Given the competitive forces facing most firms today, branding strategy is an important 'clutter buster' of differentiation in saturated, global markets.   A brand, or "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate

them from those of competition" (Keller, 2003, p. 3), represents a promise of consistency and quality. Literature supports that a strong brand is correlated with improved brand loyalty, brand-based price premiums and higher margins, improved new product introductions, greater shareholder and stakeholder returns, and clear, valued and sustainable points of differentiation as well as the simplification of consumer decision making, the reduction of consumer risk, and the establishment of expectations (Davis, 2000; Keller, 2003).

Brand Communities. Initially, marketers envisioned a brand community as geographically bound. Earlier ethnographic fieldwork of subcultures of consumption among bikers (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and skydivers (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh, 1993) provided greater understanding of how consumers organize their lives and identities. However, Muniz, Jr. and O'Guinn (2001) subsequently envisioned a brand community as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand." McAlexander, Shouten, and Koenig (2002) state that, "A brand community from a customer-experiential perspective is a fabric of relationships in which the customer is situated. Crucial relationships have typically included those between the customer and the brand, between the customer and the firm, between the customer and the product in use, and among fellow customers." (McAlexander et al., 2002, p. 38)

Devasagayam and Buff (2005, 2008) later proposed that a limited conceptualization of community may not be congruent with modern technological advances. Their research illustrated that brand communities may be conceived and nurtured in the virtual world as well as the physical world. Just as physical brand communities meet in predetermined locations to share their affinity for Harley-Davidson, for example, a virtual brand community can meet online at Kleenex.com to share their photos and emotions at the "Just Let It Out" web page. The virtual community

develops its own rituals beyond the control of the brand owner, and the brand identity establishes its own existence. In both cases (physical and virtual), strong brand communities exist when customers form relationships with fellow customers that all center on the brand.

Virtual Brand Communities. Brand communities in which individuals interact online (non-geographically bound) offer many advantages to organizations as compared to physical brand communities (geographically bound). For example, some geographically bound events are choreographed by the brand owner and necessitate infrequent gatherings due to the overwhelming logistics of organizing the event as well as the extensive commitment of resources. Virtual participation usually is less resource dependent and might facilitate more frequent participation in the community. When Mattel launched BarbieGirls.com in 2007, this microsite represented the first ever online, global site designed exclusively for bringing girls around the world together ("Barbie Launches…", 2007, April 20). As another example, Nintendo supports an online rewards program that rewards participants for sharing information about their products. The Club Nintendo coins earned online can be used to purchase more Nintendo games. The very nature of the brand, the culture of the firm or organization, characteristics of the products or services produced, and attendant consumer behavior may also determine the frequency of member participation. The two extreme ends can be conceptualized according to the 'Exchange' continuum: Transactional and Relational.

Delanty (2010) studied the work of three notable social and philosophical theorists who draw similar conclusions regarding the virtual community medium as 'complementary' to the physical community. The first theorist, Howard Reinhold, believes that virtual communities are separate from the physical entity and represent a new space where people come together. A second theorist, Manual Castells, views virtual communities as a complementary channel for

users of similar interests, but views the relationships as 'thin' as opposed to physical community where relationships are 'thick' (or closer) due to personal bonding. The third theorist, Craig Calhoun, views virtual community as strengthening already existing communities more than connecting diverse individuals to create new platforms. While the adoption of the products may increase the likelihood of membership in a brand community, the virtual community appears to be viewed as 'complementary' which may further increase the adoption of the preferred brand products.

Just as marketers can strengthen brand communities among consumers by facilitating shared experiences among their consumers (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koening, 2002), the same could potentially serve to strengthen brand communities using social media. Because an organization's consumers must accept a mental association of the brand on their own terms, it becomes very important for them to socially negotiate the brand. A virtual brand community within an organization could potentially enhance the consumer social negotiation process. Thompson and Sinha (2008) found that higher levels of participation and longer-term membership in a brand community increased the adoption of the preferred brands' new products and also decreased the likelihood that they would adopt products from the competition. Thus, it is likely that a virtual brand community for consumers may lead to greater allegiance and in turn, increased customer retention. For this reason, Ford has syncmyride.com where consumers can interact and share information about the Sync product found in Ford automobiles, and owners of the Mini Cooper and Subaru have online brand communities to voice their comments.

Social Media.   Although the Internet has represented a society of communicators from its onset, the concept of 'social media' is derived from a paradigm shift that took place during the web 2.0 evolutional phase of the Internet. The emergence of web 2.0 led to the rapid growth of social media and mobile internet use over the

course of the last several years (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr, 2010; Ruzic and Bilos, 2010). This shift enabled social media to become interactive and provide constituents with a 'voice.' For this reason, social media is often referred to as consumer-generated media or user-generated media.

Ahlqvist, Back, Heinonen, and Halonen (2010) describe this paradigm shift as road maps comprised of three thematic areas: society, companies, and local environment. The major shifts have crystallized into five development lines: (1) greater transparency in society, (2) a ubiquitous participatory model, (3) reflexive empowerment citizens, (4) the duality of personalization/fragmentation vs. mass effects/integration, and (5) new relations of physical and virtual worlds. Evans (2008) defines social media as, "The democratization of information, transforming people from content readers to content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers." (Evans, 2008, p.1) These conversations bring to mind the customers who are making sense of information and attempting to accept the brand promise.

Kaplan and Haelein (2010) provided a classification of social media by grouping applications as collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. These social media are classified on a matrix according to two key elements: (1) high/low self-presentation and self-disclosure and (2) high/medium/low social presence and media richness. These key elements are derived from the work of Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) on the social presence theory which states that the higher the social presence, the more likely communication partners are to influence each other's behavior. The key elements are also derived from the work of Daft and Lengel (1986) on the media richness theory in which the goal of any communication is to resolve ambiguity and reduce uncertainty.

Social Media Branding. As consumers seek to resolve ambiguity and reduce uncertainty about brands, social media has been taking branding to new heights due to faster deployment and turnaround of information (Chordes, 2009). Social media is a catalyst that works most effectively when it is finely woven into the brand's other promotional activities (Allison, 2010). For example, when Progressive organized a Twitter 'pet chatter' with a pet expert, it was more about branding the company name than providing their customers with an opportunity to talk about pet insurance coverage (Chordas, 2009). Time spent thinking about Progressive when you are chatting about pets translates into powerful brand engagement. Social media can serve as a catalyst for brand engagement by driving the consumer to the 'pet chatter' via a link on Facebook, a pin on Pinterest, a video on YouTube, or a tweet on Twitter that a friend and fellow dog-lover might have shared just because they find the 'pet chatter' helpful.

Technology-assisted branding initiatives reinforce the brand promise with greater consumer empowerment, authenticity, and transparency. Rapid technological changes have altered expectations for communications significantly among individuals across all demographics. These changing expectations have been reflected in popular social networking sites, blogs, text messaging, and video postings on YouTube (Cooke and Buckley, 2008). The degree of brand awareness and engagement can intensify from basic salience-identity or recognition of the brand, to resonance-intense, active, loyal relationship (Keller, 2008). Achieving resonance is no simple task given the growth in social media tools: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, GoogleDocs, Delicious, Flickr, SecondLife, World of Warcraft, YouTube, Farmville, etc. Utilizing current technology to regularly communicate brand messages could significantly enhance brand loyalty, developing into brand allegiance, or resonance. Through technologically-progressive branding initiatives, organizations can seek to achieve brand resonance.

Digitally-supported communications offer personalized, relationship marketing opportunities and greater brand engagement through interactive communities. Innovative methods, including Facebook group pages, YouTube videos, Webinars, Podcasts, Tweets, or text messages, can be tailored to individual recipients. While return on paid social media advertising on Facebook has been reported as low by powerful companies such as General Motors (Hanlon, 2012), a social media presence appears to be increasingly important to an overall promotional campaign. Social media impacts a brand by generating goodwill, increasing brand engagement, and driving momentum and thus, analysts are searching to define how these constructs will be assessed (Tuten and Soloman, 2012). Professional groups use LinkedIn to network (Cashmore, 2006), friends stay in touch through Twitter (York and Bush, 2010), and political campaigns garner contributions through blogs (Hall, 2008). Interactive media and web 2.0 techniques yield advantages that include broad reach, continuous availability, greater brand engagement, and the ability to micro-target at a relatively low cost per interaction.

For this study, we examined these relationships facilitated by social media according to the individual's perception of brand relevance (H_1 – H_{1B}) and the individual's perception of satisfaction with the brand following integration into the brand community (H_{2A} – H_3):

H_1: Frequency of visitation and the duration of unique visits to a social media site positively impact the self-perceived relevance of the social media to the respondent.

H_{1A}: Respondent characteristics will have a significant impact on self-perceived relevance of social media.

H_{1B}: An increased level of self-presentation and self-disclosure will have a positive impact on the level of self-perceived relevance of a social media.

H_{2A}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher level of self-perceived relevance of the social media

H_{2B}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the brand image of the social media

H_{2C}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the marketing communications received from the social media

H_{2D}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the overall marketing strategy of the social media

H_{2E}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the relationships built with others that like the social media

H_{2F}: Integration in social media brand communities will lead to a higher overall satisfaction with the social media

H_3: An increased level of self-presentation and self-disclosure will have a positive impact on the above mentioned (H2A to H2E) hypotheses.

Methodology

The survey was administered to undergraduate students from two large, public Midwestern universities. Students were selected as the sample because of their familiarity with and frequent use of social media. A study conducted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research examined social media adoption rates of university students at four year accredited institutions. In 2007-2008, their findings reflected that 61 percent of respondents used social media. In 2010-2011, the Dartmouth study concluded that 100 percent of the respondents used social media (Miller, 2011). All students were business majors, in either

their junior or senior year at the university. A total of 515 respondents completed the survey and 432 surveys were deemed to be usable. Following data collection, the data were de-identified by a certified researcher before any data analysis took place. Instructors were notified of student participation for the sole purpose of awarding extra credit and did not have access to the respondents' survey responses at any time.

Respondents were asked at the beginning of the survey to read through a list of social media brands and indicate the social media brand they use most often. The comprehensive list included fifteen popular social media sites: Wikipedia, BookCrossing, GoogleDocs, SlideShare, Delicious, Flickr, Facebook, SecondLife, MySpace, World of Warcraft, LinkedIn, EverQuest, YouTube, Farmville, and Twitter. Respondents were then instructed to answer the remaining questions based on their use of that particular social media brand. For the purposes of this study, we examined (1) users of Facebook/Twitter which reflects high self-presentation and self-disclosure and (2) users of YouTube which reflects low self-presentation and self-disclosure (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

With their primary social media brand in mind, the respondents were first asked how relevant the brand was to them and then how integration into a brand community impacted their satisfaction of various aspects of the brand (brand image, marketing communications, overall marketing strategy, and the relationships they build through the brand community), as well as overall satisfaction with social media.

Findings

Brand community was assessed using eleven items (Table 2), each measured with a five point Likert scale verbally anchored with "Strongly agree" and "Strongly disagree." The brand community integration scale was tested for reliability and validity. It was found to be robust with an Alpha value of 0.867 with all items exhibiting high inter-item correlations,

TABLE 1:
Sample Profile

CHARACTERISTIC	N	%
GENDER		
Male	189	37.3
Female	318	62.7
CLASS		
Freshman	0	0
Sophomore	4	0.8
Junior	397	78.5
Senior	103	20.4
Graduate	2	0.4
AGE		
<18	0	0
18-19	6	1.2
20-21	310	60.9
22-23	118	23.2
24-25	28	5.5
26+	46	9.0
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE: Frequency		
Over 5 times a day	145	28.5
4-5 times a day	72	14.1
2-3 times a day	122	24.0
Once daily	47	9.2
4-5 per week	49	9.6
2-3 times per week	36	7.1
Once weekly	18	7.5
Once every two weeks	7	1.4
Rarely	13	2.6
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE: Duration per visit		
Over 3 hours	151	29.7
2 – 3 hours	115	22.6
60 - 119 Minutes	92	18.1
31 - 59 Minutes	65	12.8
21-30 Minutes	49	9.6
11 - 20 Minutes	22	4.3
1-10 Minutes	15	3.0

the psychometric properties of this scale are in line with those witnessed in past use of this scale (Devasagayam and Buff, 2005; 2008; Devasagayam, Buff, Aurand, and Judson 2010). This is in line with prior research that based on Nunnally's (1978) recommendations. The results are especially gratifying in light of

the fact that this is the first time this established scale has been used in the social media context.

Relevance and Composite Data. The personal relevance of a social media to the respondent was measured on a seven point Likert scale ranging from "Extremely Relevant" to "Not at

TABLE 2 :
Brand Community Integration Scale

	Disagree				Agree
a. I love this social media ………………….………………………	1	2	3	4	5
b. I am proud of this social media ………………….……………….	1	2	3	4	5
c. I value this social media's heritage ……………..………………	1	2	3	4	5
d. I value the traditions that this social media upholds ………………	1	2	3	4	5
e. I admire this social media ……………………………………..	1	2	3	4	5
f. I would recommend this social media to my friends..…………..….	1	2	3	4	5
g. This social media is of the highest quality ……………………	1	2	3	4	5
h. I have met wonderful people because this social media ….………	1	2	3	4	5
i. I feel a sense of kinship with others in this social media …………..	1	2	3	4	5
j. This social media understands my needs ………………………	1	2	3	4	5
k. This social media cares about my opinion ……………………	1	2	3	4	5

All Relevant." We found that the perception of relevance of a given social media to the respondent is dependent on frequency of use and the duration of each visit. Both are significant and in the expected positive direction, and the overall model is significant as well (F=51.347; p: 0.0001, df 2) with an adjusted R-square of 0.190. We further looked at the relevance of a given social media in terms of gender, age, and other activities that respondents undertake (sports, theater, etc.), and found the results to be compelling. We discovered that 'gender' and 'other activities which respondents undertake' have a significant impact on their reported relevance of a social media (F=6.433; p: 0.012; F=2.736; p: 0.029, respectively), the mean response to relevance of social media was higher for females (mean 5.28) as opposed to males (mean 4.98). The age of the respondent did not significantly impact their perceived relevance at the 0.05 level (F=2.166; p: 0.072).

Relevance and High Self-Disclosure: Facebook/Twitter. Perception of relevance of a given social media to the respondent is dependent on frequency of use and the duration of each visit. The overall model was significant

(F=40.906, p: 0.0001, df 1) with an adjusted R-square of 0.257. Both variables display relationships in the expected (positive) direction, however only the frequency of visit to the site had a significant impact. The duration of time one stayed on the site was not significant (t=0.497; p: 0.620) at the 0.05 level. One possible explanation for this could be that the sites are visited fleetingly throughout the day.

We further looked at the relevance of a given social media in terms of gender, age, and other activities that respondents undertake (sports, theater, etc.). Results were interesting as we discovered that gender (mean females= 5.41 and males=5.03) and other activities respondents undertake have a significant impact on their reported relevance of a social media (F=6.665; p: 0.010; F=2.891; p:0.025, respectively), while the age of the respondent did not significantly impact their perceived relevance at the 0.05 level (F=1.150; p: 0.334). This is in line with our findings that the composite data has both high and low levels of self-presentation and self-disclosure attributes.

Relevance and Low Self-Disclosure: YouTube. Perception of relevance of a given social media to the respondent is dependent on frequency of use and the duration of each visit. The overall model was significant (F=18.700; p: 0.0001) with an adjusted R-square of 0.152, which is significantly lower than the explanatory power displayed in the previous two models. Both variables display relationships in the expected (positive) direction, however, this differs from the high self-disclosure model.

We further examined the relevance of a given social media in terms of gender, age, and other activities that respondents undertake (sports, theater, etc.). We found the results were interesting because gender (mean females= 5.09 and males=4.93) of the respondent did not have significant impact on their self-perceived relevance of the social media site (F=0.660; p: 0.418). This differs from the composite model and the high self-disclosure models. Similarly, other activities respondents undertake did not have significant impact on their reported relevance of a social media (F=0.574; p: 0.633), which was different from the previous two models. In low self-disclosure model we found that contrary to the other two models, age of the customer had a significant impact on their self-perceived relevance of the social media (F=2.198; p:0.071). These findings are not in line with findings from composite data that has both high and low levels of self-presentation and self-disclosure attributes, or the high self-disclosure model.

Integration and Composite Data. We then proceeded to examine the impact consumer integration in brand community of the social media has upon the variables mentioned in H2A through H2E. All results were significant and supported our hypotheses in the expected (positive) direction. Integration of the individual into a brand community positively impacts satisfaction with the brand on many levels: brand image, marketing communications, overall marketing strategy,

relationships built through social media, and with social media in general.

Integration and High Self-Disclosure: Facebook/Twitter. Analysis of the high self-presentation and self-disclosure data was undertaken to examine the impact consumer integration in brand community of the social media has upon the variables mentioned in H2A through H2F, this time for social media that has a high level of self-presentation and self-disclosure. All results were significant and supported our hypotheses in the expected (positive) direction.

Integration and Low Self-Disclosure: YouTube. Analysis of the low self-presentation and self-disclosure data was undertaken to examine the impact consumer integration in brand community of the social media has upon the variables mentioned in H2A through H2F, this time for social media that has a low level of self-presentation and self-disclosure. All results were significant and supported our hypotheses in the expected (positive) direction.

To further explore differences in respondent perceptions across the two levels (high and low) of self-presentation and self-disclosure, we conducted an Analysis of Variance. Results further confirmed that the frequency of visits to the social media site was significantly different between the two groups (F=60.074; p:0.0001), the high self-disclosure group reported a higher frequency. The amount of time spent during these visits was also significantly different across the two levels (F=7.062; p: 0.008), the low self-disclosure group spent slightly more time per visit. However, the personal relevance of the social media brand missed the 0.05 mark with a p value of 0.061 (F=3.527). The level of integration into the brand community was not statistically significantly different for the two groups (F=0.706; p: 0.401). Similarly, the level of satisfaction with the overall brand image of the social media was not influenced by the two levels of self-disclosure and self-presentation (F=0.012; p: 0.912). The two groups did significantly differ on their satisfaction with the brand communications of the social media

TABLE 3:
Composite Model

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statistics	Coefficient of Determination (adjusted)	Conclusion
H_{2A}. Self-perceived relevance of social media	F = 101.838 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.191$	Supported*
H_{2B}. Satisfaction with brand image	F = 249.792 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.368$	Supported*
H_{2C}. Satisfaction with marketing communications	F = 143.626 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.250$	Supported*
H_{2D}. Satisfaction with overall marketing strategy	F = 150.434 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.259$	Supported*
H_{2E}. Satisfaction with relationships built with others that like the social media	F = 143.264 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.250$	Supported*
H_{2F}. Overall satisfaction with the social media	F = 369.418 p: 0.0001	$R^2 = 0.462$	Supported*

*0.001 level of significance; df 1.

(F=4.577; p: 0.033), the high self-disclosure group was more satisfied in this area. Regarding satisfaction with the overall marketing strategies employed by social media brands, the high self-disclosure group exhibited a higher level of satisfaction (F=4.870; p: 0.028). Finally, when asked about the overall satisfaction with the relationships built with others that visit the social media site, the high self-disclosure group was significantly more satisfied than the low self-disclosure group (F=29.140; p:0.0001).

Implications

In this study, respondents consistently indicated that social media delivers a high level of brand relevance which reflects that social media may be very important for resolving ambiguity and reducing uncertainty. The high levels of relevance indicate the new perception that social media is not just another promotional option, but is indeed the 'glue' necessary to strengthen any communication strategy. Across all industry sectors, it appears that some very

TABLE 4:
High Self-presentation/Self-disclosure Model

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statistics	Coefficient of Determination (adjusted)	Conclusion
H_{2A}. Self-perceived relevance of social media	F = 60.181 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.205	Supported*
H_{2B}. Satisfaction with brand image	F = 140.255 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.377	Supported*
H_{2C}. Satisfaction with marketing communications	F = 86.342 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.271	Supported*
H_{2D}. Satisfaction with overall marketing strategy	F = 75.806 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.245	Supported*
H_{2E}. Satisfaction with relationships built with others that like the social media	F = 143.264 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.307	Supported*
H_{2F}. Overall satisfaction with the social media	F = 193.625 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.456	Supported*

*0.001 level of significance; df 1.

real benefits exist for organizations to implement social networking tools: (1) acquiring new customers, (2) gathering feedback from consumers, (3) raising awareness of community efforts and connections, (4) building a community network, and (5) fund-raising (Blakeman and Brown, 2010).

With high self-presentation and self-disclosure, duration was not significant possibly due to frequent checks (of shorter duration) on the social media brand. This finding suggests people multi-task while on social networking sites and communicate with others intermittently. This finding is supported by a

recent study conducted by Innerscope Research for Time Inc. in which 'digital natives' (consumers who grew up with mobile technology) were found to switch media every two minutes (Steinberg, 2012). On average, young consumers switch media platforms 27 times per hour as compared to 'digital immigrants' (consumers who learned about mobile technology during their adult lives) who switch media platforms 17 times per hour. The Innerscope study also reflected constraints on emotional engagement with the content when multiple platforms are used simultaneously. Thus, our study affirms the challenges social media content creators face in attaining emotional engagement. The data from this

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TABLE 5:
Low Self-presentation/Self-disclosure Model

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

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Hypothesis	Statistics	Coefficient of Determination (adjusted)	Conclusion
H_{2A}. Self-perceived relevance of social media	F = 42.989 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.175	Supported*
H_{2B}. Satisfaction with brand image	F = 111.223 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.358	Supported*
H_{2C}. Satisfaction with marketing communications	F = 56.388 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.219	Supported*
H_{2D}. Satisfaction with overall marketing strategy	F = 73.762 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.269	Supported*
H_{2E}. Satisfaction with relationships built with others that like the social media	F = 55.319 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.216	Supported*
H_{2F}. Overall satisfaction with the social media	F = 179.503 p: 0.0001	R^2 = 0.473	Supported*

*0.001 level of significance, df 1.

study suggest that social media content must allow 'digital natives,' such our respondents, to grasp the story or message in an intuitive, non-linear manner. For advertisers on social networking sites, perhaps value should be based on metrics that are less concerned with how long someone engages with the brand and more concerned with frequency of interaction. In other words, an argument can be made within the social media context for quantity (of brand reminders) rather than quality (of brand engagement). With this in mind, organizations are encouraged to explore their social media initiatives more systematically, recognizing that network analysis techniques are only as good as the data they assess (Hansen, 2011).

For low self-presentation and self-disclosure social media (YouTube) users, brand relevance by gender and other activities was not significant. This finding supports the notion that gender and other activities are less important because YouTube consumers are not disclosing much information on themselves, unlike high self-presentation and self-disclosure social media (Facebook/Twitter) users. As consumers increasingly seek a 'voice,' YouTube could become their preferred social media tool because greater communicative autonomy encourages the development of media citizens (Pierson and Heyman, 2011). In 2009, a disgruntled airline passenger produced a YouTube video titled "United Breaks

Guitars" after United allegedly smashed his $3500 guitar. This consumer-generated video garnered nation attention and was rated by Time magazine #7 in the top ten of all videos for 2009 (Fletcher, 2009). Yet in spite of the immense negative publicity on United Airlines, Dave Carroll was relatively unknown to most viewers at the time.

The findings also suggest that respondents who engaged in high self-presentation and self-disclosure social media sites were more likely to be satisfied with the brands' marketing strategies and the relationships built while interacting on these sites. This seems to support the notion that the more you give to a community, the more you can expect in return. Visits to high self-presentation and self-disclosure sites (Facebook and Twitter) were significantly higher in frequency while visits to low self-presentation and self-disclosure sites (YouTube) were significantly higher in duration. In accordance with the Psychological Continuum Model (Funk and James, 2001): if 'creating awareness' is the promotional objective, Facebook and Twitter may be the best promotional investment, but if 'creating allegiance' is the promotional objective, YouTube may be the best promotional investment. This area provides an opportunity for future research.

How individuals use social media tools presents another opportunity for future investigation. For example, one may 'use' YouTube (interact with it) very often by watching many videos, but he or she may have never personally posted a video to YouTube. This individual's use of YouTube would be very different from that of someone else who regularly posts videos to YouTube. Is it possible that someone uses Facebook very frequently – but he or she does not post anything about himself or herself? Could they be simply 'using' it or integrating into the brand community to see what others are saying about themselves?

Integration into brand community enhances satisfaction of the brand on many levels: brand image, marketing communications, overall

marketing strategy, relationships built through social media, and with social media in general. Thus, social media appears to provide a critical link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, which in turn, drives revenue growth and profitability according to the Service-Profit Chain (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, and Schlesing, 1994). In the future, we can expect to see social media branding strategies guiding organizations' relationship marketing initiatives. We can also expect to see a continued increase in job opportunities in the area of social media marketing.

CONCLUSION

While the emergence of web 2.0 has led to rapid growth of social media among teens and young adults in the past several years (Lenhart et al., 2010), we know that increasing numbers of older adults are using social media sites. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, senior citizens are the fastest growing segment of Facebook users in the U.S., and could number 55 million by 2020 ("How to appeal to Facebook's fastest growing demographic…", 2011, October 4). A limitation of this study is the young adult age demographic of the respondents. Now that social media is being increasingly adopted by older age groups, a study comparing the differences as it relates to self-perceived brand relevance and satisfaction upon integration into the brand community is recommended. Another study could examine social media comparing social presence/media richness in addition to self-presentation and self-disclosure. For example, Pinterest is now the number three social networking site behind Facebook and Twitter (Wasserman, 2012). Clearly, Pinterest users could offer insight into media exhibiting high levels of media richness which would expand our study.

This study was the first to implement an established brand community scale to investigate a community in the social media context. We learned that social media provides a high level of self-perceived relevance to the brand. In addition, integration into the brand

community reflects higher levels of satisfaction with a brand. Customer satisfaction with a brand is important to firms because as the familiar mantra states, if you are not moving forward, you are moving backward. Thus, it is extremely important for organizations to establish a strong digital presence through the use of brand community in the social media context.

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