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*Assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi large companies : antecedents and consequences*

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**Assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi large  
companies: antecedents and consequences**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine social media marketing through the lens of organisational innovation, therefore the research adopts an innovation-assimilation perspective regarding social media marketing in large Saudi companies. It aims to study the post-adoption stage of social media marketing, which is rarely examined in IT and marketing literature, with the goal of understanding how large Saudi companies use and assimilate social media marketing, including the most relevant factors that motivate them to assimilate social media marketing and the overall impact of social media marketing on their marketing capabilities.

In order to obtain the best viewpoint of this phenomenon, mixed methods with both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to study the assimilation of social media marketing in a Saudi context. The first phase of the study involved conducting nine qualitative interviews with social media marketing participants in the Saudi market. As a result, based on the literature review and the analysis of the qualitative data, the conceptual framework of the research was established. This framework addressed both the antecedents and the consequences of the assimilation of social media marketing. Two dimensions of the assimilation of social media marketing were identified (strategic and tactical levels), thus reflecting the variety and intensity with which an organisation is engaged in social media marketing.

Subsequently, a cross-sectional survey design was presented as the second quantitative phase of this study to test the research framework and its hypotheses. The online questionnaire was distributed to 315 large Saudi companies by using social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and email; 82 responses were returned. After the data were screened, 75 responses were prepared for analysis. Partial least squares path modelling (PLS-SME) analysis was used to assess measurement and structural models.

The results show that relative advantage, top management support and organisational readiness have positive impacts on aggregate assimilation. However, competition intensity was found to have no impact on aggregate assimilation. Finally,

the  $R^2$  value for the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing explains 61% of the variation in marketing capabilities, which indicates that, as long as assimilation of social media marketing increases, large Saudi companies are more likely to leverage their marketing capabilities.

Overall, this research offers a multi-perspective framework for the assimilation of social media marketing amongst large Saudi companies, and identifies the factors and effects of social media marketing assimilation. It presents insights into various issues that influence the assimilation of social media marketing in this little-explored area, which will be of interest to researchers, practitioners of social media marketing.

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## **Chapter One: Research Introduction**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a brief outline of this study. This chapter begins with a background about the context of the research and the online environment in Saudi Arabia. Then, the motivations for this study, and the aims and objectives of this research are presented, followed by a brief discussion of the research methodology. Finally, it presents the organization of this thesis.

### **1.2. Background**

In recent years, social media marketing has emerged as an organisational innovation that has resulted in a tremendous improvement in the marketing effectiveness and has enhanced organisational marketing capabilities (Akar and Topçu, 2011). Currently, thousands of businesses are embracing social media not only as a marketing tool, but also as a strategic tool that helps organisations to cope with market changes and gain competitive advantages (Eyrich et al., 2008; Akar and Topçu, 2011; Ab Hamid et al., 2013). Social media marketing has pushed the marketing landscape from focusing on consumer interests to focusing on the relationship with consumers in order to satisfy their values, culture, and experience (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2009; Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Social media marketing has also motivated organisations to consider issues such as reputation and brand-identity management (Jara et al., 2013). The applications of social media marketing can be easily learnt (Hsu and Lin, 2008; Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012). They are typically free (Kietzmann et al., 2012; Venkataraman and Das, 2013) and support consumer-generated content (Goh et al., 2013). Social media marketing

enhances business interaction with consumers using multiple web-based communication channels. It also helps businesses to gather consumer perceptions towards their products and services.

Acknowledging the importance of social media marketing, organisations intend to integrate it with the traditional marketing communication tools (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012). Stelzner (2013) conducted a survey involving 3000 marketers from different countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India, to show that 97% of them have been participating in social media marketing activities, and 86% believe that social media marketing is an important communication tool for their businesses. Moreover, marketers have reported numerous benefits of using social media marketing, such as increased exposure of their business (86%), increased traffic to their websites (75%), improved marketplace intelligence (69%), and increased development in consumer loyalty (65%).

Despite the popularity of social media marketing, the organisations are different in terms of their utilisation of this tool. Some organisations use social media as an additional marketing tool, while other organisations use it as strategic tool in which involves different marketing activities such as branding, advertizing, customer relationship management (CRM), and customer service and crisis management. Therefore, this thesis focuses on exploring the assimilation of social media marketing as an organisational innovation, embedded in multiple levels of marketing strategies and activities within an organisation. Moreover, this study will closely refer to the Saudi market and observe how Saudi companies respond to emerge of social media as marketing tool.

### **1.3. Online environment in Saudi Arabia**

In 1999, Saudi Arabia allowed the public to access the Internet. Since then, Saudi Arabia has had the fastest growing rates of Internet use. According to the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) (2017) the users of the Internet rose from one million in 2001 to 24 million in 2017, which accounts for 76% of the 31 million people living in Saudi Arabia. The Total Country Connectivity Measure results for 2017 revealed that Saudi Arabia is one of the highest adopters of telecommunication services in Arab world (Arab Advisors, 2015).

Saudi people not only have a high accessibility to the Internet, but they are also ranked as heavy users of different social media platforms. According to Arab News (2015), Saudi Arabia has been ranked seventh globally in terms of individual accounts on social media platforms, with an average of seven accounts for each individual and more than 11 million active users of social media (Al-Dosari, 2016). Saudi people account for 40% percent of all active Twitter users in the Arab world (Abdurabb, 2014). Moreover, Saudi Arabia has the highest viewership of YouTube in the world, having almost 90 million views every day (Morrison, 2014).

In order to exploit this phenomenon of growing use of social media among the people of Saudi Arabia, Saudi companies seek to improve their presence on social media websites and employ these platforms as a tool in their marketing activities (Askool, 2012). Many of these companies have millions of followers on social media websites, and thereby spend millions to maintain their image in online platforms (thesocialclinic, 2014). According to Tamer (2013), the companies in the Middle East were spending approximately 4% of their global spending (\$11 billion), which is approximately \$450 million, on social media marketing in 2013. Moatasem (2016) states that experts in the Saudi market have estimated that the Saudi companies have



spent between 15–20% of their marketing budget on social media marketing and online advertising in 2016. In general, the approximate figure of money spent on advertising in Saudi Arabia is about 4–4.5 billion riyals (\$ 1.6 to 2.1 billion). Therefore, the spending on social media marketing and online advertising comes roughly to a sum of one billion riyals (\$ 266 million).

This thesis focuses on an area that has a great influence on the Saudi business environment, yet has been neglected in academic research – the assimilation of social media marketing by Saudi companies.

#### **1.4. Motivations for the Study**

Three motivations drive this study, the first motivation is to apply the assimilation perspective to context of social media marketing. prior studies have used various terms to describe social media marketing within business environment, such as social media marketing use (Baccarani et al., 2014), social media marketing strategy (Felix et al., 2016) and social media marketing adoption (Snyman and Visser, 2014). These “use”, “strategy” and “adoption” terms cannot appropriately capture the nature of social media marketing as an organisational innovation. Therefore, this study adopts an innovation assimilation perspective, which the deployment of social media marketing diffuses across organisational communications process and becomes routinized into marketing activities.

Assimilation research has been developed to address this gap between the initial adoption and the actual use of technology (Fichman, 2000). The assimilation concept has been described as the post-adoption (Karahanna et al., 1999; Papastathopoulou et al., 2007) or the advance-diffusion stage (Zhu and He, 2002). Innovation assimilation is referred to as “the process within organisations stretching from initial awareness of the innovation to potentially formal adoption and full-scale deployment” (Fichman, 2000). The assimilation perspective is used in comprehensive approaches that study the innovation from the initial adoption to the post-adoption

stage, by focusing on technology-related activities and their effects on business performance (Pikkarainen et al., 2007).

The second motivation, this study attends to examine social media marketing generally to provide a comprehensive picture of its usage in an organisation. The empirical efforts provide useful insights of usage of social media marketing on specific contexts without introducing the factors that lead to such categorisation or the impact of use of social media marketing on organisational capabilities (e.g. Pentina and Koh 2012; Yang and Kankanhalli, 2012; Taufique and Shahriar 2013; Deepa and Deshmukh, 2013; Ananda et al., 2016; Felix et al., 2016). Thus, This study seeks to understand how the different strands of organisational innovation research contribute to three issues: assimilation of social media marketing, factors that lead to assimilate social media marketing and its impact on organisation's marketing capability.

The final motivation is that most current theories and models were devised in the developed world. However, Zhu and Kraemer (2005) pointed out that theories and frameworks that have been developed in the context of western countries should be re-examined for use in developing countries. This is suggested because some issues that might appear insignificant for developed countries may play an essential role for social media marketing adoption in developing countries. For example, adoption literature has indicated that profitability, effectiveness and usefulness within a marketing strategy can be the determining factors for the adoption of new technology by western business, while in developing countries these assumptions cannot be upheld (Al-Shohaib et al., 2010; MacGregor and Kartiwi, 2010). Moreover, there is a dearth of studies with a focus on the application of social media as a marketing tool in Saudi businesses (Abeysinghe and Alsobhi, 2013; Al Ghamdi and Reilly, 2013). Therefore, this study will attempt to explore assimilation of social media marketing and its antecedents and consequences, in the Saudi business environment.

## 1.5. Research Aim and Objectives

Despite the popularity of social media as a marketing tool in the Saudi business environment, there is a dearth of studies with a focus on exploring the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi businesses (Abeysinghe and Alsobhi, 2013; Al Ghamdi and Reilly, 2013). By examining social media marketing through the lens of organisational innovation, this research adopts an innovation assimilation perspective regarding social media marketing in large Saudi companies. It focuses on the post-adoption stage of social media marketing, which is rarely examined in IT and marketing literature (Yang and Kankanhalli, 2012; Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al., 2013).

The overall aim of this study is to shed some light on such a phenomenon, by investigating the assimilation of social media marketing in developing countries at an organisational level, taking large Saudi companies as a case study. Taking into account different perspectives, the objectives of this study are:

- 1) To review and develop a coherent framework that can be used to examine the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
- 2) Create a research instrument that specifically targets the post-adoption stage (assimilation) of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
- 3) To critically examine the factors that affect the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
- 4) To empirically test the impact of social media marketing on marketing capabilities.
- 5) To provide managerial implications that will help Saudi companies to improve of their assimilation of social media marketing
- 6) To understand the assimilation of social media marketing within the context of progression in a high-income developing country such as Saudi Arabia.

The current research attempts to extend IT innovation, marketing and strategic literature in developing countries and evaluate the applicability of innovation theories by providing a comprehensive view of assimilation of social media marketing among

large Saudi companies. Studying social media marketing and assessing its usage and implementation is essential not only to disclose challenges that Saudi companies are facing, but also to provide an accurate picture to throw up solutions and highlight recommendations that would help in guiding the improvement and implementation of social media marketing. Evaluating components and requirements related to social media marketing can assist companies in determining their possible strengths and weaknesses, which in turn can help them, with proper planning, to assimilate and utilise social media marketing to achieve its benefits.

This study attempts to contribute to the knowledge by presenting new measurements of assimilation of social media marketing at the organisational level that will be of interest to researchers, business managers and policy makers.

#### **1.6. Overview of methodology**

In order to develop a better understanding of the assimilation of social media marketing in a little-explored region such as Saudi Arabia, the data for this study was collected using mixed methods in two stages: Starting with a qualitative study to explore the domain of interest and following it up with a more concentrated quantitative study. The initial stage is used to provide an in-depth understanding of the assimilation of social media marketing among Saudi large companies to provide additional support and insights for the research framework. The second stage follows with a focused examination of the key constructs proposed to study the antecedents and consequences of the assimilation of social media marketing. This combination of qualitative and quantitative stages was adopted in order to draw strength from these approaches and minimise their weaknesses and increase the study's validity (Jick, 1979; Greene et al., 1989; Morgan, 1998; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

### ***Phase 1: Qualitative Study***

With very little available literature relating to assimilation of social media marketing in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, it is appropriate to begin this research with a qualitative exploratory study of the assimilation of social media marketing, prior to commencing with a quantitative research. It is essential to ensure that the study's constructs are in fact relevant to the Saudi context of the assimilation of social media marketing. This qualitative phase serves to generate a deeper understanding of the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi market environment based on literature and the preliminary framework. The results from the qualitative data are used to support and reform the conceptual research framework. Moreover, the qualitative data was used to guide the development of measurements for the survey instrument used in the quantitative phase.

Semi-structured interview was determined to be the most effective source of case study information (Tellis, 1997), as in the case of this research that intends to explore organisations' usage of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia. This method allows for probing detailed information and a complete focus to investigate and develop the conceptual research framework. The semi-structured interview is focused on current Saudi large companies' usage of social media marketing and why they use it and what its impact is on their marketing capabilities.

### ***Phase 2: Quantitative Study***

The qualitative phase was selected to identify themes related to the assimilation of social media marketing. In The quantitative study, a cross-sectional survey design was selected as the best method to collect data in order to test the research framework and its hypotheses, which was built on literature review and

findings from qualitative interviews with social media marketing practitioners in the Saudi business environment.

The survey research will employ an online self-administered questionnaire, which offers many advantages for this study's context. First, this study aims to understand the use of social media marketing among the majority of Saudi large companies, and this requires targeting a large number of companies. Therefore, a survey can be an effective way to collect data from large sample, which serves to increase the generalisability of the findings (Burns and Burns, 2008). Second, this study will investigate a large number of variables that relate to the assimilation of social media marketing, antecedents and consequences, beside the control variables. The survey design is an efficient method to measure these variables. Chapter 6 provides more details regarding the quantitative phase of the research.

### **1.7. Organisation of Thesis**

**Chapter one:** *Research Introduction* – This chapter provides makes a brief outline of this study. This chapter begins with a background about the context of the research and the online environment in Saudi Arabia. Then, the motivations for this study, and the aims and objectives of this research are presented, followed by a brief discussion of the research methodology. Finally, it presents the organization of this thesis.

**Chapter two:** *Literature Review* – This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and critical review of relevant literature in order to develop a research framework that purports to address research aim and objectives.

**Chapter three:** *Research Methodology*- The first part of this chapter starts with a general discussion of research paradigms. Following by demonstration of research approaches, then it intends to justify the mixed methods approach that

adopted for this research. The second part of this chapter describes the research design discussing techniques and methods of data collection and analysis in each phase of this research. Finally, validity, reliability and ethical issues will be addressed.

**Chapter four:** *Findings of Qualitative Research-* This chapter is organised in two sections. The first section highlights study methodology and administration. Which includes: sampling process, Sample description, interview process and organisation of qualitative findings. The second section presents data and results and the summary of findings and conclusions

**Chapter five:** *Conceptual Research Framework and Hypotheses-* This chapter starts by presenting the major findings raised from exploratory study in the previous chapter. This is followed by the refined research framework and the definition of research constructs. Then, the relationship will be established between the antecedents of assimilation and the strategic and tactic levels of the assimilation of social media marketing and the relationship between these levels and the consequences of assimilation. In addition, to linking aggregate assimilation of social media marketing to marketing capabilities.

**Chapter six:** *empirical setting for quantitative Study -* This chapter presents a cross-sectional survey design for the quantitative phase of this study to test the research model and its hypotheses. The data is collected via online questionnaire from large Saudi companies. the chapter starts with scale development and measures. Then, the following section presents operationalization of constructs. Finally, a detailed description of the pilot study, applied sampling method is given.

**Chapter seven:** *Quantitative Study Results-* This chapter begins by presenting demographic characteristics and Descriptive Statistics for study constructs. Then, two

steps of Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis was details. The first step is to assess the measurement model in order to determine the validity and reliability of the theoretical constructs. The second step is to evaluate the structural model and test the hypotheses.

**Chapter eight:** *Discussion and Conclusion*- this chapter aims to provide interpretations and inferences of analysis results and a detailed discussion on the research findings. First, the summary of the study is detailed. Then, the findings of study are discussed in terms of their effects and significance. Then, theoretical contributions and practical implications as well as limitations are discussed. Suggestions for future research and development are also considered.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and critical review of relevant literature in order to develop a research framework that aims to address the research aim and objectives. This chapter begins with providing an overview of social media marketing concept and definition. Following by the section that focus on social media marketing strategy definition, types and development process. The next section examines the concept of assimilation of social media marketing and theories and typologies related to the use of social media marketing. This is followed by an overview of diffusion and adoption theories and frameworks related to antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing. Then, the state of social media marketing research in Saudi Arabia is explored. This chapter also identifies the research gaps and to fill the gaps, a preliminary research framework is outlined.

## **2.2. Social Media Marketing**

As a starting point of the effort towards achieving an understanding of assimilation of social media marketing and its impact on organisations, social media marketing as an umbrella term should be clearly defined. Since various terms are being used to describe social media marketing, it is not surprising that there is a lack of universal definition of social media marketing. The discussion below will review previous studies in order to give a definition of social media marketing for this study. Further, this section will address social media marketing as an organisational innovation.

### **2.2.1. Definition of Social Media Marketing**

With a focus on younger terms that emerged as a result of extension of Web 2.0 and social media platforms, which originally appeared during O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference of 2004 (Berthon et al., 2012), the previous studies introduced many descriptions and definitions of social media marketing from different perspectives, which can be divided into three views. The firstly view, many studies have used several terms as synonyms for social media marketing, such as word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, viral marketing, guerrilla marketing, and social networking sites. Kozinets et al. (2010) stated that word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing 'is known as social media marketing, viral marketing, buzz, and guerrilla marketing'. Dulik et al. (2013) indicated that WOM or social media marketing are the same concepts in terms of interactivity.

However, the WOM is defined as 'the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques' (Kozinets et al., 2010). WOM marketing in general is companies' attempt to control consumer behaviour by using social media marketing strategies, such as viral marketing, referral programs, and community marketing (Trusov et al., 2009). Moreover, social media marketing enables organisations to monitor customer-to-customer interactions to learn consumers' perception about their products and services, subsequently allowing

organisations to take proper actions (Larson and Watson, 2011). From this perspective, social media marketing is more general than WOM marketing. Similarly, viral marketing and guerrilla marketing are also used to describe some social media marketing activities. According to Van der Lans et al. (2010), viral marketing can be described as a concept 'by which consumers mutually share and spread marketing relevant information, initially sent out deliberately by marketers to stimulate and capitalise on word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviours'. On the other hand, guerrilla marketing can be described as an unconventional advertising campaign aimed to achieve conventional goals and targets to draw the attention of large number of social media users at little cost (Bradley, 2007; Hutter and Hoffmann, 2011). These terms can be viewed as a part of social media marketing functions, which present some sort of marketing strategies that use social media platforms to achieve specific marketing objectives.

Acar and Polonsky (2007), Assaad and Gómez (2011), and Pentina et al. (2012) use social network marketing (SNM) as an alternative term for social media marketing. SNM was suggested to describe the usage of the most popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to create company fan pages that contain messages to promote products, share information and cooperative designs, and make product launch announcements. Social networking sites allow for viral marketing and WOM marketing to be more effective because of their high level of engagement with consumers (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). However, SNM is focused on studying one type of social media's platforms (Bharati et al., 2013). Thus, the term 'social network marketing' is limited to a certain type of social media platforms. On the other hand, social media marketing can be used a different taxonomy of social media platforms (Kim et al., 2010) such as media sharing, content publishing, gaming, etc. According to Deepa and Deshmukh (2013), 'the emerging of social media sites as the new marketing/promotion platform that is also known as social media marketing'.

The second view, in recent years, the term ‘social media marketing’ has been getting more popularity in marketing research (e.g. Yang and Kankanhalli, 2012; Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al., 2013; Baccarani et al., 2014; Scott Rader et al., 2014; Snyman and Visser, 2014; Ananda et al., 2016; Felix et al., 2016; Huhmann et al., 2016; Kodippili et al., 2016; Valos et al., 2016). These studies introduce different views about the concept of social media marketing based on their context. For example, Yang and Kankanhalli (2012) view social media marketing as a channel that helps businesses directly connect and communicate with consumers. Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al. (2013) observed social media marketing as a system that is strategically adopted by an organisation to ‘allow marketers to engage, collaborate, interact and harness intelligence crowd sourcing for marketing purposes’. Baccarani et al. (2014) perceive social media marketing as a multi-way interaction approach, in which the roles of the sender and the receiver are mixed and which uses a pull-marketing strategy; this means that the companies use social media marketing to communicate information, knowledge, and values about their services or products to interact with the consumers and establish a relationship with them. Kodippili et al. (2016) view social media marketing as a cost-effective way to increase consumer loyalty.

The last view, the intensive literature review shows that several previous studies (e.g. Steyn et al., 2010; Neti, 2011; Nakara et al., 2012; Snyman and Visser, 2014) conducted on social media marketing adopted a definition suggested by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). They defined social media 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’. This definition can be limiting because it focuses on technological functions without accounting for the marketing function of social media. It also seems that social media sites such as Facebook, twitter, YouTube, etc. are the fundamental base for this definition, as it demonstrates characteristics of social media sites within Web 2.0 environment. Therefore, this definition can be considered as a description of social media, which is

a broad term than social media marketing. Social media can be generally understood as all the activities conducted on social media sites in both individual and organisational levels. On the other hand, social media marketing is simply a term that describes the actual organisational acts and behaviours conducted using social media platforms for the purpose of marketing (Karjaluoto et al., 2015). From a broad perspective, companies use social media marketing to support a variety of marketing activities (e.g. public relations, promotion, and sales), which aim to connect the internal capabilities of the companies to their external environment. The interactivity- and engagement-oriented social media marketing activities help organisations establish a long-term relationship with potential consumers, end-consumers, social media users, and the entire value chain (Ananda et al., 2016) with activities such as engaging with consumers, sharing experiences and information, and harnessing collective intelligence (Mohammadian and Mohammadreza, 2012; Deepa and Deshmukh, 2013; Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al., 2013).

Based on the above discussion, it appears that social media marketing refers to organisational behaviour of using social media platforms to apply strategies and actions in order to achieve marketing objectives. Therefore, as suggested by Ananda et al. (2016), this study has adopted the following definition of social media marketing: ‘the integrated means and set of actions by which a company or organisation expects to achieve its marketing objectives and meet the requirements of its target market through the use of social media tools’.

### **2.2.2. Social Media Marketing as Organisational Innovation**

Organisational innovation is a sequential process that involves generating, developing, and implementing of new ideas, technology, and behaviour within a particular organisation (Rogers, 1995). One of the most important determinants of competitiveness of organisations, organisational innovation reflects on a firm’s performance (Frambach and Schillewaert, 2002; Weerawardena, 2003). There are two types of organisational innovation, technical and administrative, and both types can

significantly affect a firm's performance (Han et al., 1998). Most of the literature examines each type of organisational innovation separately (Battisti and Stoneman, 2010). However, with regard to the nature of social media marketing as a multi-functional organisational innovation, that implying changes in technology, strategy and organisation. This consideration is important because although social media marketing is heavily supported by the growth of the internet and information communications technologies (ICT), it is less appropriate to simplify social media marketing as an ICT innovation and neglect its business side. In fact, social media marketing has significant implications in various aspects of an organisation, such as organisational communication, marketing innovation, and consumer relationship (Langer, 2014). Moreover, social media marketing is a new technology that brings new managerial style into the marketing systems by the use of social media in internet-based platforms. social media marketing can be considering as a multi-functional organisational innovation based on three aspects:

Firstly, social media marketing was considered as one of the applications of Enterprise 2.0. According to McAfee (2009), 'Enterprise 2.0 is the use of emergent social software platforms, or ESSPs, by an organisation to pursue its goals.' The ultimate goal of Enterprise 2.0 is to help companies become more efficient, deploy new business opportunities, and gain a competitive advantage (McAfee, 2006; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). Assimilation and the use of social media marketing within Enterprise 2.0 model embodies a fundamental move in information technology (IT) towards a social business (Koch, 2008). Organisations mainly use social media platforms to facilitate co-operation, communication, and sharing of data internally and externally (McAfee, 2006).

Secondly, social media marketing implies the transformation of an organisation in many aspects, including marketing strategy, production development, customer service, and innovation. The emerging of social media applications and platforms within Web 2.0 environment brought a dramatic change to marketing practices and a shift from a market-driven (outbound marketing) push model to

various user-driven (inbound marketing) social media platforms (Evans et al., 2014). According to Constantinides (2014), organisations use social media actively as a direct marketing tool for customising products and creating platforms for collaboration and ‘customer-generated innovation’. On other hand, organisations use social media marketing in a passive approach as ‘customer voice’ and ‘market intelligence’. With the growing use of social media marketing, the implementation of social media marketing initiatives usually involves connection and collaboration through different functional units within an organisation. For example, social media marketing implies reconstructing company relationships with customers; its customer-oriented applications enable organisations to strengthen communication and interaction with customers (Constantinides, 2014). Consumers can easily and instantly communicate with a company through social media platforms as compared to traditional methods, which are attaining more power in doing transactions with companies. Companies need to identify these dramatic changes in their relationships with consumers and work out how to leverage these changes (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Thirdly, social media marketing is fundamentally a strategic innovation to attain sustainable competitive advantages, opening opportunities to develop strategies and business models (Bharati et al., 2015; Effing and Spil, 2016). In a dynamic shifting environment, organisations need to regularly adjust their decisions and strategies regarding the requirements of surrounding environment in order to reach their business goals (Vincent et al., 2004; Herrera and Martínez, 2013; Heath, 2014). The diffusion of social media marketing allows organisations to strategically engage in social media platforms to encourage directed actions aligned with organisational goals (Heath, 2014; Effing and Spil, 2016). Implementing social media marketing, according to Heath (2014), allows companies ‘to marshal intelligence from strategically important stakeholders in social media and attune their strategic focus to their ideas, issues and perspectives’. Based on the feedback and intelligent information obtained from this engagement, social media marketing can have an

impact on the design of products and services, and more importantly, help organisations to be proactive and solve problems collaboratively (Sashi, 2012; Bowen and Zheng, 2013).

### **2.3. Social media marketing strategy**

The use of social media marketing is growing rapidly, which, in turn, is changing the business environment and is forcing companies to respond to these changes. Both the companies and the customers have adopted social media on a massive scale (Effing and Spil, 2016). Furthermore, competitive pressure influences organisations to have a presence on various social media platforms since their consumers expect them to be there (Larson and Watson, 2011). However, using social media marketing or having a presence on social media platforms is not enough. Companies are oftentimes seen to struggle to implement social media marketing effectively. According to Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012), companies “without a correct plan and social media strategy, they have no chance to stand out in the rapidly changing digital freedom.” They should use social media marketing strategically to gain its benefits (Distaso and McCorkindale, 2013). This section will focus on social media marketing strategy and look closely at its definition, typology, strategy contexts, and developmental process.

#### **2.3.1. Definition of social media marketing strategy**

Before demonstrating different social media marketing strategies from literature reviews, it is important to construct a definition of social media marketing strategy and explore a few definitions of the underlying terms. In general, a “strategy” is defined as “the match an organisation makes between its internal resources and skills, and the opportunities and risks created by its external environment.” (Grant, 1991).



Porter (1996) defines “strategy” as the “creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities.” According to Ananda et al. (2016), the term “strategy” has a long-term progressive horizon and comprises an extensive amount of resources and commitment. However, social media marketing is a particular part of a marketing strategy that is based on online resources, more precisely a group of the Internet platforms (Chanthinok et al., 2015). Marketing strategy is defined as “a process that can allow an organisation to concentrate its limited resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.” The ultimate goal of marketing strategy is to realise how companies gain and sustain a competitive advantage, and this can apply to all organisations that are present in a competitive environment (O’Cass and Voola, 2011). Similarly, Effing and Spil (2016) define social media marketing strategy as “a goal-directed planning process for creating user-generated content, driven by a group of Internet applications, to create a unique and valuable competitive position.” This definition suggests that social media marketing strategy is extendable and a part of marketing strategy. Another definition was articulated by Chanthinok et al. (2015), which defined social media marketing strategy as “the scope of marketing activity, sales, public relations, and customer service through social networking, online communities, or any online collaborative media to gain superior performance achievement.” However, there is a significant difference between the marketing strategy and social media marketing strategy. While a marketing strategy concentrates mostly on targeting consumers, endorsing brands, and promoting products or services, a social media marketing strategy is framed in a general managerial perception, “revealing and boosting the organisational goals in a set of pre-identified business valuable areas” (Oliveira and Figueira, 2015).

Given the definitions above, social media marketing strategy can be assumed as the frame plan that organises and monitors the interaction of organisations on social media platforms in order to achieve the pre-set marketing objectives.

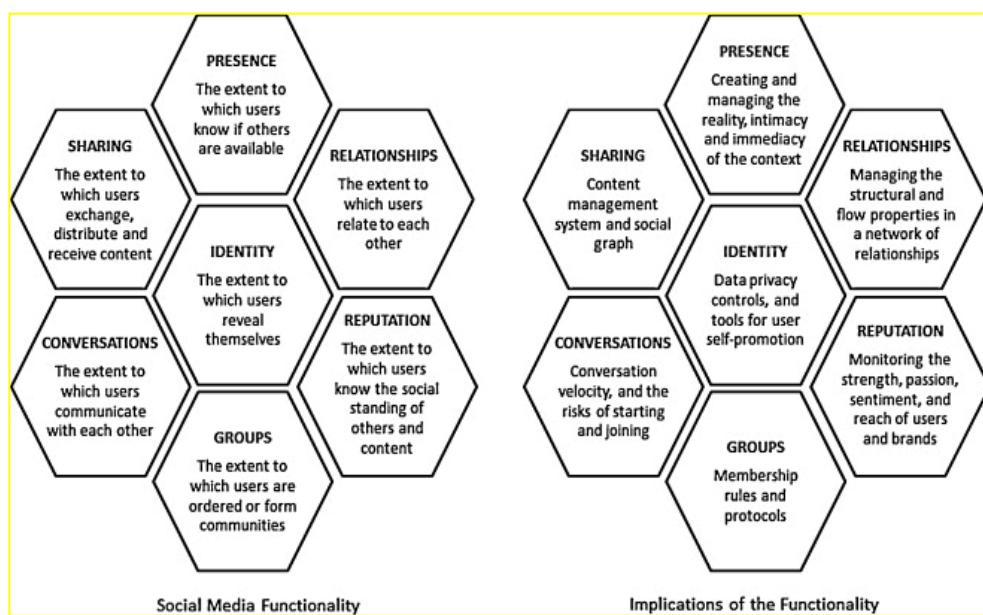
### 2.3.2. Social media marketing strategies

Previous studies suggest that there are different views regarding social media marketing strategy. These views can be classified into three types of studies. First, studies that tend to suggest general typologies of social media marketing based on the overall social media marketing activities which are conducted by different types of organizations. Second, prior studies that focus on social media marketing strategy which responds to a specific context or a particular type of organisation. Finally, previous studies that attempted to suggest frameworks in order to create successful social media marketing strategy.

#### 2.3.2.1. Typology of social media marketing strategy

The initial typology of social media marketing strategies can be found in Kietzmann et al. (2011) and is known to be a honeycomb of seven functional building blocks for social media marketing. It is composed of seven social media marketing functions as shown in Figure (1). They identified social media marketing strategy based on its functions on social media platforms, and they suggested honeycomb structure to help marketers understand the strategic use of social media marketing.

Figure 1: A honeycomb framework (Kietzmann et al., 2011)



Another study attempting to develop a typology for social media marketing strategy was conducted by Felix et al. (2017), who employed a discovery-oriented, theory-in-use approach to suggest a holistic framework of social media marketing strategy based on the level of assimilation of social media marketing among organisations. This framework covers four dimensions of social media marketing strategy: culture (ranging from conservatism to modernism), structure (ranging from hierarchies to networks), social media marketing scope (ranging from defenders to explorers), and governance (ranging from autocracy to anarchy). They state that these strategies can guide the decision-making capabilities of managers while developing and improving their strategic social media marketing activities (Table 1).

Using multiple cases from practice, Effing and Spil (2016) distinguished three stages of maturity for social media strategy development, namely, initiation stage, diffusion stage, and maturity stage. Companies in their initiation stage focus on choosing social media platform and selecting their target audiences. However, they usually have no plan or a clear strategy. In the diffusion stage, companies tend to have a moderate implementation of social media strategy. They have policies, goals, and resources, yet they have not paid attention to the key element of monitoring, which is necessary for the allocation of future resources. The last phase is the maturity stage. Companies in this stage have a clear action plan, and they monitor the increasing number ratio and monthly changes on their social media platforms. In this study, both the activities of planning and monitoring were described as essential elements of a social media strategy.

Table 1: typology of social media marketing strategy (Felix et al.,2017)

Dimensions	Meaning	Sub-dimensions definition
Scope	Answer the question whether companies use social media marketing predominantly for communication with one or a few stakeholders or comprehensively (both externally and internally) as a genuine tool for collaboration	<p><b>Defenders</b> use social media marketing primarily as a one-way communication tool to entertain consumers or to inform stakeholders, rather than integrating employees or community groups.</p> <p><b>Explorers</b> are interested in an authentic social media marketing collaboration based on reciprocal interactions with many different stakeholders such as clients, employees, suppliers, and government agents.</p>
Culture	Culture distinguishes between conservatism and modernism	<p><b>Conservatism</b> is represented by an encapsulated, traditional, mass-advertising approach to social media marketing.</p> <p><b>Modernism</b> is characterised by a more permeable, open, and flexible social media marketing culture.</p>
Structure	It addresses the organisation and departmentalisation of the social media marketing assignment in the organisation	<p><b>Hierarchies</b> stand for a centralised approach with a defined social media marketing assignee.</p> <p><b>Networks</b> represent an organisational structure in which all employees are responsible for social media marketing, and, thus, a dedicated social media marketing director is no longer necessary.</p>
Governance	Refers to how the company establishes rules and guidelines, and how the company controls social media marketing responsibilities.	<p><b>Autocracy</b> describes a situation with precise regulations on who in the company is allowed to interact on social media platforms.</p> <p><b>Anarchy</b> represents a situation without any such rules or guidelines.</p>

### *2.3.2.2. Different strategies for different contexts*

Although typology studies present a general view of social media marketing strategy, they do not indicate how social media marketing strategies respond to a particular situation or work in a certain sector. Therefore, several studies focus on social media marketing strategies in particular contexts, such as sales (Stephen, 2016; Lindsey-Mullikin and Borin, 2017), customer relationship management (Gao and Feng, 2016; Wang and Kim, 2017), reputation management (Dutot et al., 2016; Floreddu et al., 2016), and crisis communication strategies (Husain et al., 2014; Derani and Naidu, 2016; Lin et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2017). Moreover, some studies focus on social media marketing in a particular sector, such as Healthcare (Scott Rader et al., 2014) food organisations (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015), and sports (McCarthy et al., 2014). However, these studies focus on an essential element of using social media marketing, which is engagement with consumers (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Castronovo and Huang, 2012). Companies that engage with consumers tend to achieve many marketing objectives, which include creating relationships with customers, building the company's brand, improving the organisation's reputation and image, increasing sales, and responding to a crisis and bad publicity. For example, Floreddu et al. (2016) investigated social media marketing strategy that is able to promote corporate reputation. They found that social media marketing which adopts conversational strategy can increase the engagement and relationship with consumers. During the crisis, Lin et al. (2016) suggested that actively engaging in dialogue online was one of best practices. Moreover, social media marketing can affect the level of engagement with consumers in each of the three components of traditional customer relationship management (CRM)—acquisition, maintenance, and termination (Malthouse et al., 2013).

Engaging with consumers in social media platforms can increase sales and generate revenue. Lindsey-Mullikin and Borin (2017) indicated that companies could increase their sales by increasing communication among consumers and providing information about the number of purchases by other consumers or use ending sales

dates to create purchase urgency. While Floredu et al. (2016) suggested that in order to increase corporate reputation, organisations should adopt a supportive strategy, which shares information about offers and products and helps customers during all stages of the purchase process. On top of that, McCarthy et al. (2014) indicated that football clubs should focus on social media marketing strategy, which leads to brand building instead of sales and revenue generation by diffusing website and increasing social media marketing engagement.

Businesses often attempt to engage with consumers to respond in situations of crisis or to avoid bad publicity. Several studies suggest that a number of strategies are adopted which aim to increase corporate reputation and reduce the damage to an organisation's image. Based on longitudinal multiple case studies, Floredu et al. (2016) recommends three strategies which can help companies deal with a crisis and bad publicity. First, organisations should be selective and respond only to every positive comment that are shared with customers. Second, organisations should improve their openness and transparency during company-customer conversations. The last strategy is a secretive strategy, which was designed to manage conflict that occurs within the social media platforms through other private channels, such as emails, calls, or direct messages. Multinational companies can avoid reputational damage by a quick response to the crisis (Zhu et al., 2017). In short, it can control conversations and bad publicity by the potential hijacking of online conversation by rival supporters (McCarthy et al., 2014). Overall, Derani and Naidu (2016) suggested that exploiting social media marketing during pre-crisis and post-crisis situations can reduce the adverse impact on a company's image and reputation.

Another emerging area for social media marketing strategy is to provide engaging content. Having a strong and well-planned content was found to be a successful strategy in many contexts, such as in customer relationship management (CRM) (Malthouse et al., 2013), brand management (Gao and Feng, 2016), crisis situations (Derani and Naidu, 2016). By generating content that is tailored for various social media platforms and updating that content at the right times enables

organisations to have a unique opportunity to engage deeply with consumers and build more permanent digital relationships (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015).

Gao and Feng (2016) classified the content strategies for brand management into three types: 1) Brand content, such as news and information about the brand and its product and services. 2) Brand and brand-extended content, which include: brand-related knowledge, news, and product category information. The purpose of this kind of content is to make consumers learn about products and brands and link these brands to current happenings. 3) Social-oriented content, which is not related to brands or products, but which can lead to social interactions with consumers. However, according to Lindsey-Mullikin and Borin (2017), companies should continually create strong content that might be selected and spread by consumers. Rather than using a random approach, companies should monitor social media platforms to see which content works best for creating a positive word of mouth and social interactions for them. Once they recognise a successful content strategy, they can replicate it.

The last important issue related to social media marketing strategy is monitoring social media platforms. The ability of companies to monitor social media platforms has been identified as important for the early development of social media initiatives (Culnan et al., 2010). To build a brand among business companies, Cawsey et al. (2016) indicated that monitoring is “an essential and ongoing aspect of managing a social media presence,” and it is important at the start-up phase to conduct a valuable market research and have a knowledge of the customer base. This can be done by listening to user-to-user conversations and the opinions of people about a brand.

Social media listening is the first step to engage with consumers on their environment, in their conditions, and in their voice (Porter et al., 2011). In a pharmaceutical marketing study, three basic steps are summarised to create the success of a social listening strategy: 1) Developing and managing keywords that can be relevant to a company’s industry, brand, or products. 2) Utilising these keywords

to conduct continuous searches in social media for relevant consumer conversations, which can lead to discovering alternatives of keywords. 3) Capturing these keywords, categorising them, and developing and maintaining them in categories through persistent routing rules and cross-functional organisational efforts.

Moreover, since social media channels are becoming a primary source of information for consumers, companies tend to underline reputational effects (positive or negative comments). Consumers tend to engage with brand names, which, in turn, can support organisational alertness (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). Also, monitoring positive and negative comments about a company or reviewing a company's brand can be an indicator of customer satisfaction (Chanthinok et al., 2015).

### ***2.3.2.3. Approach to develop and evaluate social media marketing strategy***

Social media is a strategic marketing tool that can help companies to meet many of their marketing objectives. However, it is not always very obvious for companies to understand how to utilise social media marketing or which of its strategy can best fit with the company's overall marketing strategy, especially with a wide range of new platforms and strategies available for these companies to use. So, the question that arises now is how do the marketers know which is the best social media marketing strategy which can be used to meet the company's goals?

Previous studies advise marketers to begin with a plan – companies should fix a strong social media marketing plan that aims to accomplish the highest number of goals (Chanthinok et al., 2015). According to Karimi and Naghibi (2015), companies need to have a plan when they use social media marketing. Since social media can be employed in marketing in various ways, not only one strategy fits all. few studies articulated different guidelines to develop and leverage social media marketing strategies involving several steps. Regardless of the type of business or purpose in which social media marketing is used, Effing and Spil (2016) used systematic literature review to define more refined and comprehensive ways of comparing and



evaluating social media strategies. They derived a list of key elements in a social media strategy. These key elements are a target audience, channel choice, goals, resources, policies, monitoring, and content activities. Similarly, Keegan et al. (2017) developed a social media marketing framework to better understand the decision-making process associated with social media marketing strategies. Their framework has six stages: setting evaluation objectives, identifying key performance indicators (KPIs), identifying metrics, collecting and analysing data, reporting generation, and managing decision-making.

To sum up, the fundamental purpose of the strategy is to increase the effectiveness of social media marketing. Social media marketing strategy is distinct from marketing strategy, which is drawn for an overall business strategy (Keegan et al., 2017), Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) argued that social media communication strategies should be integrated with corporate and organisational communication in order to maintain a coherent brand and send out consistent messages. Without having a clear strategy or goals, companies are unable to determine whether they are working along with their business and marketing strategy or are simply wasting their time (Chanthinok et al., 2015; Karimi and Naghibi, 2015).

## **2.4. Assimilation of social media marketing**

The following section will examine the concept of assimilation of social media marketing and the theories and typologies related to its use. It will begin with a discussion related to assimilation stages and will be followed by the researches related to assimilation of social media marketing.

### **2.4.1. The Concept of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

The term “assimilation” is a common concept in management and information technology literature to describe the phenomenon that is related to adopt, use, and implement new technologies or systems (Voelker, 2001). In management literature, Meyer and Goes (1988) defines the term as “an organisational process that (1) is set in

motion when individual organisation members first hear of an innovation's development, (2) can lead to the acquisition of the innovation, and (3) sometimes comes to fruition in the innovation's full acceptance, utilisation, and institutionalisation." Similarly, in information technology (IT) literature, the assimilation process can begin from the initial awareness of the innovation to a sustained implementation (Fichman, 2000) or the evidence of its impact on business performance (Chatterjee et al., 2002). Bharati et al. (2015) used social media assimilation to "describe the extent to which social media are deployed and used by organisations." However, many recent studies emphasise assimilation as a post-adoption stage. For instance, Purvis et al. (2001) indicated that assimilation is "the extent to which the use of technology diffuses across the organisational projects or work processes and becomes routinized in the activities of those projects and processes." This definition suggests that the social media marketing being assimilated has become a routine part of an organisation's communication activities and "is no longer perceived as something out of the ordinary" (Cooper and Zmud, 1990). Following a similar definition by Chatterjee et al. (2002), which defined the assimilation as "the extent to which the use of a technology diffuses across organisational work processes and becomes routinized in the activities associated with those processes". Therefore, the assimilation of social media marketing begins when organisations embed it strategically within their marketing communications plan. In other words, social media marketing offers organisations the opportunity to restructure marketing communication process, enter new markets, and improve effectiveness and efficiency in interactions within and outside the organisation. However, this is unless an organisation can align its social media marketing strategy with its marketing and corporate strategy. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) maintained that the social media communication strategies should be integrated with corporate and organisational communication to maintain a coherent brand and send out consistent messages. The assimilation of social media marketing has two distinct dimensions: the strategy assimilation, which indicates the importance of social media

marketing emphasised by an organisation when the organisation makes strategic decisions; and activity assimilation, which is the extent to which the organisation uses social media marketing in its marketing communications activities and day-to-day procedures. These two dimensions can offer a unified understanding of assimilation of social media marketing at both the strategic and tactical levels of an organisation.

#### **2.4.2. Stages of Assimilation**

The assimilation process can begin from the initial awareness of the innovation to a sustained implementation (Fichman, 2000) or the evidence of its impact on business performance (Chatterjee et al., 2002). An organisation must go through sequential phases before achieving an adequate advantage of the new technology (Cooper and Zmud, 1990; Rogers, 1995; Zaltman et al., 1973). Each stage has a different set of factors and measurements that are articulated by different models.

The study of these stages has not been balanced in innovation literature. Most of the studies focus on factors that affect the early stage of adoption or non-adoption decision, while lesser work is known for conceptualizing post-adoption stages (Frambach and Schillewaert, 2002). There are two major stages of innovation process: initiation and implementation (Rogers, 1995; Zaltman et al., 1973). These stages can be distinguished by the decision to adopt. The intention phase embodies pre-adoption, and the implementation phase reflects post-adoption (Damanpour and Schneider, 2009). Zaltman et al. (1973) developed the first model that divided these two broad stages into five sub-stages. The sub-stages in the intention stage include knowledge awareness, formulation of attitudes towards innovation, and decision. In the knowledge awareness phase, a firm starts becoming aware of the importance of a new technology. In the next phase, various factors can formulate the attitude of the firm's members towards innovation. The final stage of the intention phase is completed once an organisation develops a favourable or unfavourable attitude and decides to adopt or

reject innovation. The implementation stage is divided into two phases: initial implementation and continued-sustained implementation. Initial implementation is the first time a firm uses the new technology. If this phase is positive and the new technology is assimilated successfully, firms can proceed to the final sub-stage.

Rogers (1995), agreeing with Zaltman et al.'s (1973) model, said that the intention stage is an important stage for innovation in order to assimilate it in an organisation. However, Rogers (1995) in his model "The Innovation Process in Organisations", having a deep understanding of intention and implementation stages, conceptualized these two stages into five sub-stages. The intention stage begins with agenda setting, which occurs when an organisation's problems are perceived, and that gives rise to the demand for innovation. The second sub-stage refers to matching the organisational problems with an innovation. The reorganizing sub-stage comes after the decision of adoption is made once an organisation allows innovation to meet its needs by making a number of organisational changes in most situations. The fourth sub-stage involves clarifying that "the relationship between the organisation and the innovation is defined more clearly" (Rogers, 1995). Finally, the sub-stage is when the innovation becomes consistent with the organisation (Table 2).

Other theories attempted during the process of innovation present the same perspective and concepts. For example, Hage and Aiken (1970) suggested evaluation, intuition, implementation, and reutilisation. On the other hand, awareness, selection, adoption, implementation, and reutilisation were proposed by Klein and Sorra (1996). Moreover, Van de Ven et al. (2000) suggested initiation, development, implementation, and termination.

Table 2 : Summary of assimilation process stages

	(Zaltman et al., 1973)	(Cooper and Zmud, 1990)	(Rogers, 1995)
Intention	Knowledge awareness sub-stage	Initiation	Knowledge
	Formulation of attitudes towards innovation sub-stage	Adoption	Persuasion
	Decision sub-stage	Adaptation Acceptance	Decision
Implementation	Initial implementation	Reutilisation	Implementation
	Continued sustained implementation	Infusion	Confirmation

Despite the existence of several stages of assimilation of innovation, it does not mean that organisations will continue to move from one stage to next during the process of innovation. Organisations after making the decision to adopt may stop or slow down the process for various reasons. Fichman and Kemerer (1999) described this situation as an “assimilation gap.” They stated that “A new technology may be introduced amid great enthusiasm and enjoy widespread initial acquisition, but nevertheless still fails to be thoroughly deployed among many acquiring firms” (Fichman and Kemerer, 1999). A gap in social media usage, in general, can exist between users who register in a social media application (initial adoption) and those who continue to use social media actively (i.e. the assimilation stage) (Schwarz et al., 2011). In a study of assimilation in the virtual world, Schwarz et al. (2011) reported that even though the virtual world ‘Second Life’ has 50 million registered users, in 2010, there were approximately just 800,000 monthly users. The additional side of assimilation gap of social media is that some organisations attempt to enforce the traditional communication strategy into these sophisticated digital platforms, which leads to a reduction in effectiveness.

Assimilation is very important because it presents the success of innovation integrated into organisation by committing to use it continuously for a period of time (Parthasarathy and Bhattacharjee, 1998). Moreover, only the consequences of

adopting innovation can be measured. The assimilation gap occurs as a result of various factors, one of which can be the lack of organisational knowledge and the readiness to impress the innovation to an advanced level (Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012).

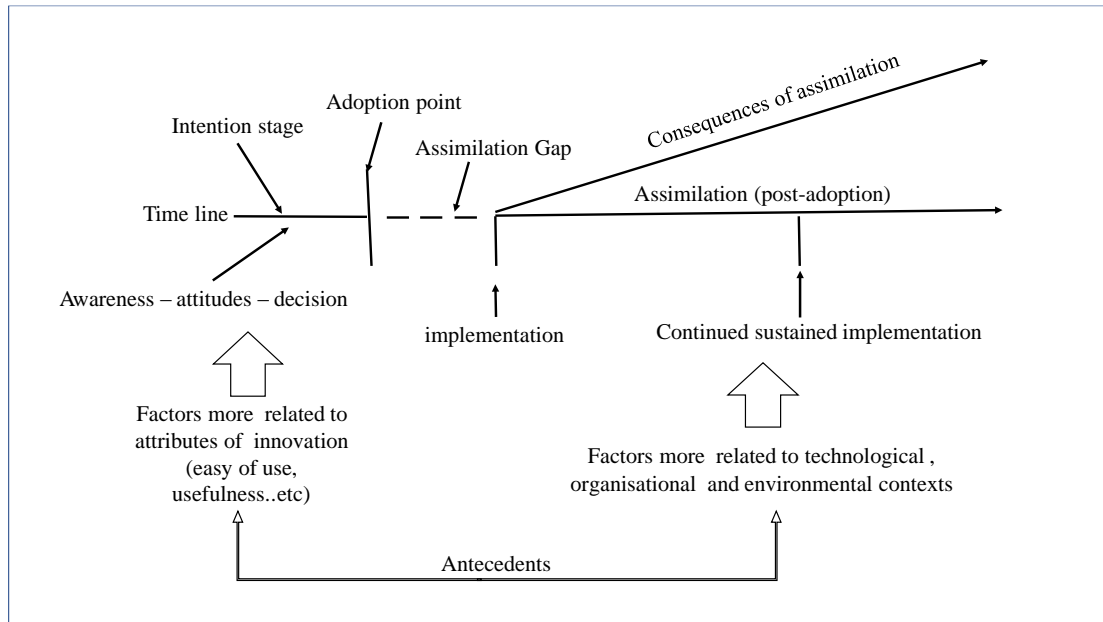
#### **2.4.3. Research on Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

A growing body of research has paid attention to the assimilation of innovation by organisations in recent years. However, according to Ranganathan et al. (2004), previous researchers did not distinguish between ‘internal assimilation’ and ‘external diffusion’. In general, they used the term ‘diffusion’ to describe the process and the several stages in the assimilation of technology by organisations. Many studies on organisational innovation have focused on intention or the initial decision to adopt social media marketing (e.g. Curtis et al., 2010; Kim, 2011; Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012; Mandal and McQueen, 2012). This perspective provides sufficient information about the attitudes towards adopting social media marketing. However, it does not mean that organisations can use, routinize, and institutionalize social media marketing pervasively and intensively in their marketing strategies. Initial adoption simply describes a nominal difference between adoption and non-adoption (Meyer and Goes, 1988). In several cases, no actual use accrues after the initial adoption, which is considered as an ‘assimilation gap’ (Fichman and Kemerer, 1999).

Assimilation research has been developed to address the gap between the initial adoption and the actual use of technology (Fichman, 2000). The concept of assimilation has been described as the post-adoption (Karahanna et al., 1999; Papastathopoulou et al., 2007) or the advanced-diffusion stage (Zhu and He, 2002). Innovation assimilation is referred to as ‘the process within organisations stretching from initial awareness of the innovation to potentially formal adoption and full-scale deployment’ (Fichman, 2000). The assimilation perspective (Figure 2) has been used in comprehensive researches that studied innovation from the initial adoption to the

post-adoption stage, by focusing on technology-related activities and their effects on business performance (Pikkarainen et al., 2007).

Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of assimilation perspective



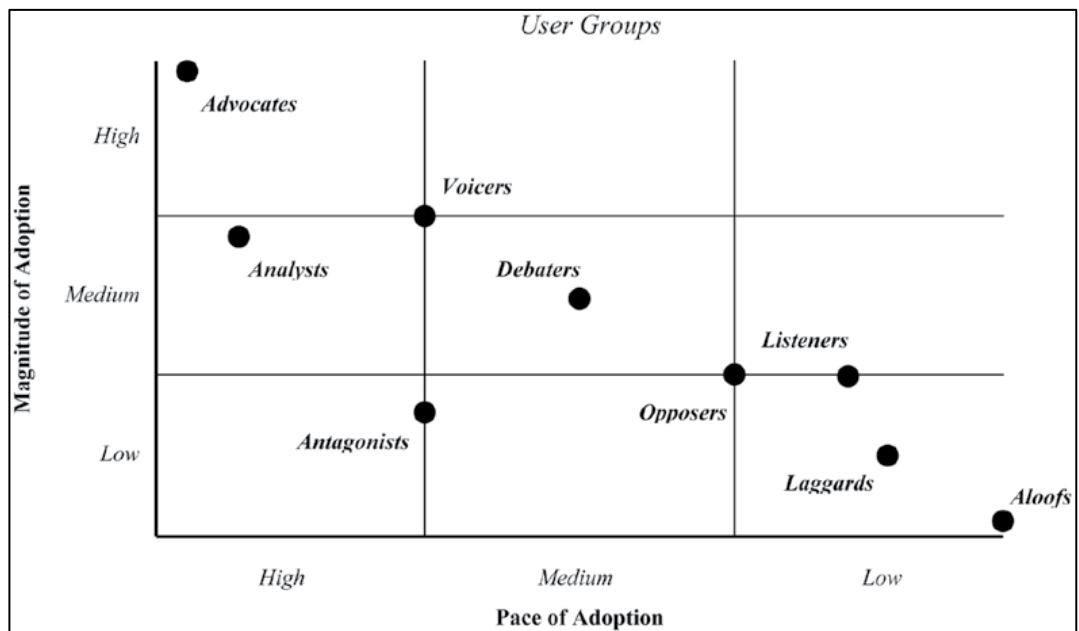
The assimilation of social media in business environments has received significant research attention. However, previous studies have used different terminologies (e.g. use, usage, adoption, utilisation, strategies) to describe the assimilation of social media marketing, which could lead to an inconsistent understanding of the phenomenon of assimilation. For example, Baccarani et al. (2014) applied the term ‘use’ to describe the activities, challenges, and results of the use of social media marketing in the wellness industry. Nah and Saxton (2012) suggested that the utilisation of social media marketing in non-profit organisations can be measured by the frequency of the use of social media and the dialogic engagement with the organisation’s supporters. Tsitsi Chikandiwa et al. (2013) used the term ‘adoption’ when studying the implementation of social media marketing in South-African banks. On the other hand, many studies have explored and investigated social media marketing by using the term ‘strategies’ to identify and classify social media marketing strategies and actions within different industries and in both large

and small business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) companies (e.g. Yang and Kankanhalli, 2012; Deepa and Deshmukh, 2013; Ananda et al., 2016; Felix et al., 2016). These terms may not appropriately reflect the comprehensive perspective of social media marketing as well as the extent to which social media marketing is incorporated or assimilated into various of organisational marketing efforts. To clearly differentiate post-adoption stage of social media marketing from initial adoption, a consistent conceptualisation of assimilation of social media marketing is required to foster the understanding of social media marketing and its impact on organisations.

In addition, some social media marketing related studies confine their attention on creation of typology for social media marketing and related platforms usage . For example, Taufique and Shahriar (2013) attempted to establish an adoption of innovation typology for social media marketing users, which would integrate not only the timeline of adoption but also the level of adoption anticipated by different social media marketing groups. They suggested an ‘Adoption Spectrum’ by incorporating typology of social media users with diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory developed by Rogers (1995). They identified user groups and the pace and magnitude of adoption of social media marketing by symptomatically estimating their respective profiles (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Adoption Spectrum by Taufique and Shahriar (2013)



Pentina and Koh (2012) focused on developing a classification of social media marketing strategies among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) based on self-reported data collected from a small sample. They found three strategies of using social media marketing: calculative pragmatists, cautious watchers, and proactive strategists. Moreover, they indicated that these strategies are associated with industry type and firm size as well as companies' goals and reasons for using social media marketing. These empirical efforts provide useful insights of usage of social media marketing on specific contexts without introducing the factors that lead to such categorisation or the impact of use of social media marketing on organisational capabilities. Thus, it is also important to examine social media marketing generally to provide a comprehensive picture of its usage in an organisation. Although specific social media marketing applications are originally purposed to support specific functional activities, it is possible that they support and enhance each other and generate complementary benefits.

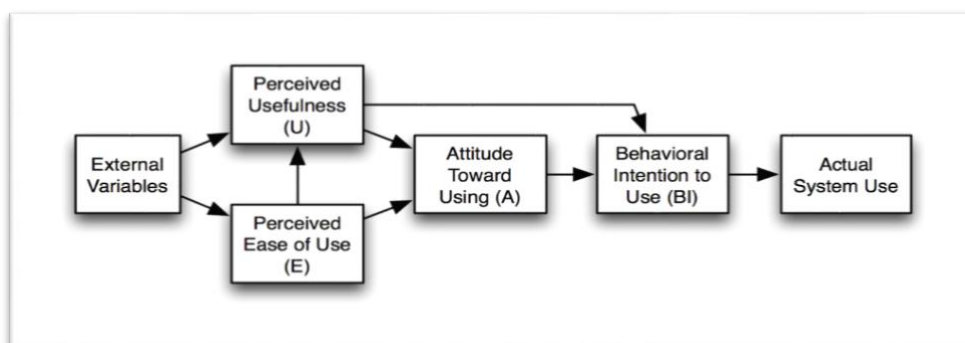
## 2.5. The Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing

The antecedents of assimilation of innovation have been studied from different perspectives. This section will focus on three potential perspectives that can be used to study the factors that lead to utilising social media marketing. These perspectives include technological adoption models, DOI (Rogers, 1983), and the technology–organisation–environment framework (TOE) (Tornatzky et al., 1990).

### 2.5.1. Technological Adoption Models

Technology adoption models are focused on individuals as units of analysis in order to investigate beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that dominate early stage of a technology’s adoption behaviour (Jeyaraj, 2008). In an early attempt to understand adoption behaviour, psychologists Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) posited the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), in which behavioural intention (BI) is influenced by two factors: 1) the individual’s attitude (A); and 2) the subjective norm (SN). Attitude refers to positive and negative feelings towards technology. Subjective norm refers ‘to the individual’s perceptions of the social pressures to adopt or not adopt technology’ (Davis, 1985; Karahanna et al., 1999). Davis (1985) had modified TRA to suggest the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Figure 4), which was designed as a ‘concise, complete, reliable and valid model for predicting user acceptance’ (Kamel and Hassan, 2003). TAM was articulated to measure the attitude towards new technology in order to address questions regarding why individuals accept or reject it (Davis, 1989).

Figure 4: *The technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989)*



TAM assumes that the basic drivers of the adoption of new technology are utilitarian contexts (Wakefield and Whitten, 2006), which are informed by two constructs: the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the new technology. Perceived usefulness is measured by the extent to which individuals within an organisation believe that using a specific technology improves the work environment (Davis, 1989), whereas perceived ease of use is measured by the extent to which the individuals within an organisation believe that using a specific technology would be effortless (Davis, 1989). Although the popularity of TAM in adoption technology has resulted in numerous validation tests, the model has also been criticised for its inability to provide enough information regarding adopters' opinions about a technology (Schepers and Wetzels, 2007). Therefore, many researchers have suggested that TAM needs additional constructs (Schepers and Wetzels, 2007) or that it should be integrated with another model to improve its ability to explore technology adoption (Zhou, 2008; Awa et al., 2010). New versions of TAM with new constructs were generated in order to prevent its related weaknesses. These versions include: TAM 2 (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000) and TAM 3 (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). TAM 2 assumes that determinants such as subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, and result demonstrability can influence perceived usefulness, whereas experience and voluntariness are proposed as moderating factors. In TAM 3, going beyond TAM 2 constructs, Venkatesh and Bala (2008) added new determinants of ease of use, including computer self-efficacy, perceptions of external control, computer anxiety, computer playfulness, perceived enjoyment, and objective usability.

Although TAM and its extensions were mainly postulated to study adoption of technology at an individual level within organisations (Evans et al., 2014), few studies have attempted to study social media marketing within an organisational context by using TAM. Steyn et al. (2010) utilised TAM as a theoretical framework to study the factors that have an impact on bloggers in B2B companies to use social media. They found that perceived usefulness had a strong effect on attitude towards using social

media in terms of effectiveness of social media. Similarity, Veldeman et al. (2015) employed TAM to compare between B2B IT and industrial companies in terms of their attitude towards using social media marketing. They argued that IT companies are more motivated to adopt and use social media marketing because they estimate social media marketing's usefulness higher than industrial companies.

Pentina et al. (2012) added social influence to extend TAM to explore the use of social media marketing in small and medium companies. They found that social influence is the only strong factor that affects small companies to continue employing social media marketing in their marketing strategy.

In the same positivist domain, the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003) posited four factors in measuring the perception of technology by individuals: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. The UTAUT was based on comparing empirical similarities through eight adoption models and theorising four core factors (Table 3).

*Table 3: the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology summary*

Factors	Definition	Referred Constructs
Performance expectancy	The degree to which individuals in an organisation believe that using a particular technology will help them improve work performance	- Perceived usefulness (TAM and C-TAM-TPB). - Job fit (MPCU) - Relative advantage (DOI) - Outcome expectations (SCT) - Extrinsic motivation (MM)
Effort expectancy	The degree to which employees perceive the use of new technologies to be easy	- Ease of use (TAM) - Complexity (MPCU) - Complexity (DOI)
Social influence	The degree to which individuals perceive that important stakeholders believe they should use new technology	- Subjective norms (TRA, TPB, and C-TAM-TPB) - Social factors (MPCU) - Image (DOI)
Facilitating conditions	The degree to which individuals believe that their organisation and technical infrastructure support the use of new technology	- Facilitating conditions (MPCU) - Compatibility (DOI) - Perceived behavioural control (TPB, C-TAM-TPB).
These four factors are moderated by four variables: gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use		
<b>Eight models include:</b> The motivational model (MM); The theory of reasoned action (TRA); The technology acceptance model (TAM); The theory of planned behaviour (TPB); A model combining the technology acceptance model and the theory of planned behaviour (C-TAM-TPB); The model of PC utilisation (MPCU); The diffusion of innovation (DOI); The social cognitive theory (SCT).		

The application of UTAUT in the social media context has shown different results regarding the effects of moderating factors (e.g. age and gender) on attitudes towards adoption within organisations. For example, Alikilic and Atabek (2012) found that demographic factors did not have a considerable effect on the adoption of social media marketing among Turkish public relations professionals. In contrast, Curtis et al. (2010) conducted a survey to explore why public relation departments in non-profit organisations adopt social media marketing. The findings showed that men tended to utilise social media marketing more frequently than women did. They also concluded that organisations that have communication departments are more likely to adopt social media. Moreover, Mandal and McQueen (2012) found that the characteristics of small business owners, such as being motivated and talkative, had a significant influence on the adoption and use of social media. Moreover, they found that performance expectancy and effort expectancy played a significant role in the adoption of social media. In contrast, social influence and facilitating conditions did not affect the behaviour and intention to use social media in small companies.

### **2.5.2. The Diffusion of Innovation (DOI)**

Using a marketing perspective, Rogers (1983) formulated the DOI to understand the process of diffusion of new technologies by potential adopters, such as individuals and individuals within a particular organisation. The focus of this theory is on measuring adoption instead of assimilation according to the perception of five innovation attributes. First, relative advantage, which refers to ‘the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes’ (Rogers, 1983). Second, compatibility, which is defined as ‘the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters’ (Rogers, 1983). Third, complexity, which is ‘the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use’ (Rogers, 1983). Fourth,

element, which is trainability or ‘the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis’ (Rogers, 1983). And finally, observability, which is defined as ‘the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others’ (Rogers, 1983). However, previous studies (Tornatzky et al., 1990; Moore and Benbasat, 1991) found only three constructs (i.e. relative advantage, complexity, and compatibility) that were reliably relevant to the adoption of new technology. This finding is compatible with a previous study (Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012) on the adoption of social media by university communicators, which found that these three factors had a strong influence on the adoption process.

Similar to technological adoption models, DOI examines the technological determinants that may lead to adoption of social media marketing at an individual level. While offering a deep understand of technological aspect of innovation adoption, it addresses other dominant perceptions that are likely to have an impact on adoption such as organisational and environmental perspectives (Boateng et al., 2009).

### **2.5.3. The Technology–Organisation–Environment Framework (TOE)**

The main concept of the technology adoption models and the diffusion of innovation (DOI) are that each technology has a specific number of attributes or characteristics, and that these attributes influence adoption and assimilation. In general, technology with favourable attributes is adopted more easily than that with less favourable attributes (Thong, 1999). However, it can be argued that the use of social media marketing can be complex for small business owners who do not have the skills to create attractive content (Mandal and McQueen, 2012). This could lead to the perception that social media is neutrally and consistently complex to use by all kinds of organisations. Conversely, it could lead to the perception that social media marketing is too complex for companies that do not have sufficient resources and skills. Moreover, these theories indicate that social influence is essential to determine user behaviour in adopting technology. For example, according to TRA (Ajzen et al.,

1980), intentional behaviour to use technology is influenced by subjective norms in addition to attitudes. In contrast, social influence is at the core of DOI, in addition to IT characteristics (Rogers, 1983). DOI cannot predict the likelihood of the adoption of a technology (Flanagin, 2000). In a recent study, Bharati et al. (2013) investigated the effect of institutional pressure (i.e. social influence) on the assimilation of social media marketing by considering the mediating roles of two factors: absorptive capacity and top management. Their findings indicated that institutional pressures do not directly affect the assimilation of social media marketing. However, institutional pressures are directly connected to absorptive capacity and organisational learning capability.

To overcome the limitations of the traditional adoption models in determining the factors that affect the actual use of social media marketing, a theoretical model should examine factors that influence both, the tendency to adopt and the tendency to use the innovation. These factors are embedded particularly in the technological, organisational, and environmental contexts of a firm (Zhu et al., 2006). The Technology–Organisation–Environment Framework (TOE), which was suggested by Tornatzky et al. (1990), is popularly used to study the factors that affect the assimilation process (Yi, 2009). TOE catalogues these influential factors into three main groups: 1) technological factors, which identify the characteristics of exciting technologies and related skills; 2) organisational factors, such as size, age, and structure; and 3) environmental factors, which are related to competition, heterogeneity, and concentration (Li et al., 2010b).

Because the TOE framework employs both internal and external factors, it may be more comprehensive than intention-based models, such as TAM and diffusion innovation theory. Moreover, the TOE framework enables researchers to add different sets of factors according to the research context (Table 4).

Table 4: Factors in studies only used TOE framework

Year	Innovation	TEO Factors	Method	Author(s)
2003	e-commerce	<b>Technological Context</b> Perceived benefits (+) Perceived Compatibility (+) <b>Organisational Context</b> Size (+) Top management support (+) <b>Environmental Context</b> Competitiveness (+)	Survey	(Wongpinunwatana and Lertwongsatien, 2003)
2004	e-commerce	<b>Technology context</b> Technology resources (+) <b>Organisational context</b> Perceived benefits (+) Lack of organisational compatibility (-) Financial resources (+) Firm size (-) <b>Environmental context</b> External pressure (+) Government promotion (+) Legislation barriers (+)	Survey of 2139 firms	(Gibbs and Kraemer, 2004)
2006	e-Business	<b>Technological context</b> Technology readiness (+) Technology integration (+) <b>Organisational context</b> Firm size (-) Global scope (-) Managerial obstacles (-) <b>Environmental context</b> Competition intensity (+) Regulatory environment (+)	Survey	(Zhu et al., 2006)
2008	Website	<b>Technological context</b> Technology readiness (+) Technology integration (+) Security applications (+) <b>Organisational context</b> Perceived benefits of electronic correspondence (+) IT training programs (+) Access to the IT system of the firm (+) Internet and e-mail norms (+) <b>Environmental context</b> Website competitive pressure (-)	Survey of 637 large and 3155 small firms	(Oliveira and Martins, 2008)
2010	E-Business	<b>Technological Context</b> Relative advantage (+) IT capability (+) <b>Organisational Context</b> Ownership type (+) Learning orientation (+) <b>Environmental Context</b> Environmental uncertainty (+) Inter-organisational dependence (+)	Survey	(Li et al., 2010)

Although there are few studies that apply TOE framework as a theoretical base, the efficacy of TOE framework in determining the assimilation of social media



has been tested in both large companies (Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012) and small companies (Schaupp and Bélanger, 2013). Omosigho and Abeysinghe (2012) employed TOE framework to measure the organisation's readiness to use social media. Six factors within three contexts were suggested: technological (technology competence), organisational (organisational culture, definitive goals, policy of use, and monitoring strategy), and environmental (target audience). Omosigho and Abeysinghe (2012) used a case study to collect research data from three companies. Their findings concluded that all previously identified factors have a significant influence on social media assimilation, except policy of use. They also refined their model by adding two organisational factors: defining social media matrix and aligning goals with existing strategy. On the other hand, Schaupp and Bélanger (2013) applied TOE framework to determine the antecedents of using social media marketing in small businesses. They found that technological context (technology competence) and environmental context (pressure from clients and characteristics of the mobile environment) have a significant relation to using social media marketing.

Although the TOE framework has been proposed to investigate the adoption and assimilation innovations from multiple perspectives, there are other considerations that have not been captured by TOE, such as managerial factors and innovation attributes (Aldwsry, 2012). For example, Gibbs and Kraemer (2004) stated 'the TOE framework does not capture inter-organisational factors such as trust and trading partner readiness'. However, Boateng et al. (2009) argued that managerial factors can be addressed within the organisational context of the TOE framework, which makes inter-organisational factors less consideration by competing with other organisational characteristics.

Overall, each theory and model has its weakness and limitations. For instance, the technology adoption models focus more on at individual level than organisational level. While, TOE framework is less concentrated on innovation attributes than well-established technological adoption models. Therefore, to overcome such limitations, previous studies tended to incorporate different models and theories to build new

multi-perspective frameworks. For example, Zhu et al. (2006) combined innovation attributes from the DOI and contextual factors from the TOE framework to develop their framework to study the assimilation of e-business. Awa et al. (2015) integrated the constructs of TAM into TOE framework to reduce their theoretical gaps and examine the frameworks' effect on the adoption of e-commerce.

## **2.6. The Consequence of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Organisations use social media marketing for many functions in order to be able to gain substantial value. The first part of this section will highlight the value of social media as a marketing tool based on the theory of resource-based view (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984) to understand the impact of the assimilation of social media marketing on marketing capabilities. The second part will focus on the benefits of assimilation of social media marketing.

### **2.6.1. Resource-Based View and Social Media Marketing**

The fundamental assumption of RBV theory (Wernerfelt, 1984) is that an organisation pursues sustainable competitive advantage to attain the highest possible economic return. In order to gain a competitive advantage, a firm must transfer its resources to 'difficult-to-imitate' and 'valuable' capabilities (Lieberman and Dhawan, 2005). Resources are defined as the knowledge, assets, and strategic implications involved in the business process. In contrast, capabilities refer to the ability of firms to integrate, organise, and assemble resources in combination to boosting performance and gaining competitive advantage (Day, 1994).

RBV theory posits that a set of integrated resources or organisational skills provide synergies in value creation process (Tanriverdi, 2006). This suggestion concerns the fact that single resources may not enable an organisation to create a competitive advantage. No isolating bundles of resources can serve to sustain organisational competitive advantage without being complementary with other resources (Barney and Arian, 2001).

To apply resource complementarity approach, social media marketing needs to be separated out, and the interaction between social media marketing and other organisational resources needs to be investigated. However, with social media marketing increasingly getting deeply embedded in marketing efforts and becoming indistinguishable from outcomes, it seems difficult to discriminate social media marketing's contributions from other organisational resources. Moreover, organisations may likely pursue to learn what preferred capabilities are enabled by social media marketing, and how to maximise the outcomes of these capabilities, rather than how to isolate social media marketing value from other resources (Barney and Arkan, 2001; Schaupp and Bélanger, 2013).

One solution is to understand the capabilities that are desirable for organisations to achieve relevant marketing objectives. The key point here is that social media marketing links the most relevant capabilities to marketing resources, which are marketing capabilities (Nath et al., 2010). In other words, social media marketing within companies can be combined with other organisational resources to improve a company's performance, and it seems elusive to separate the role of social media marketing from other organisational resources. Therefore, by centralising marketing capabilities in this study, the question of social media marketing value can be translated to the issue of how assimilation of social media marketing enhances marketing capabilities.

Applying RBV theory to social media marketing, two concepts need to be clarified. Marketing resource and marketing capability are key concepts in strategic marketing literature. According to Ngo and O'Cass (2012), marketing resources refer 'to the extent to which a firm possesses knowledge and resources related to marketing mix activities (e.g. product, price, distribution, and marketing communication)'. Marketing resources can be all kinds of resource used by a company to design, communicate, and deliver products and services that provide value to the customers (Varadarajan, 2010). These resources can include financial resources that are exploited in marketing activities (e.g. advertising, online marketing, social media

marketing, and personal sailing), marketing infrastructure, and market-based relational assets (e.g. brand equity) (Dutta et al., 1999). On the contrary, according to Weerawardena (2003), marketing capabilities can be defined as ‘integrative processes designed to apply the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of the firm to the market-related needs of the business, enabling the business to add value to its goods and services and meet competitive demands’. Marketing capabilities are organisational abilities to perform marketing activities based on available resources in order to generate valuable outcomes. The resources’ contribution can involve market information and marketing strategy (Day, 1994; Vorhies and Morgan, 2005).

Resource complementarity is particularly relevant in the context of social media marketing, since having a technology resource such as social media marketing (Ananda et al., 2016) will not necessarily improve marketing performance unless social media marketing is integrated with other marketing communication resources, such as customer relationship management (CRM) (Trainor et al., 2013), advertising, and public relations (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012) to generate distinctive capabilities (Trainor, 2012). However, according to the literature, the integration of social media marketing within marketing efforts enhances marketing capabilities and improves a firm’s performance in general. For example, Assaad and Gómez (2011) pointed out that social media marketing can become the core of online marketing activities by creating communities for the products and services of firms, building the brand, and maintaining consumer loyalty. The combination of social media marketing resources and customer-centric management systems leads to a better understanding of consumer needs and improved CRM (Trainor et al., 2013). On the other hand, Schniederjans et al. (2012) argued that the integration of social media marketing with impression management strategies can enhance the financial performance of an organisation.

Because the notion of social media marketing is relatively new, its relevant impact on marketing capabilities is yet to be comprehensively catalogued. However, with a focus on small businesses, Schaupp and Bélanger (2013) attempted to classify

the impact of using social media marketing based on RVB theory on marketing capabilities into four categories: (1) internal operations, (2) marketing, (3) customer service, and (4) sales.

### **2.6.2. The benefits of assimilating of social media marketing**

Companies are assimilating social media marketing for different purposes and objectives to gain various outcomes of this process. However, the main objective is building personal relationships with consumers (Waters et al., 2009; Hvass and Munar, 2012; Mohammadian and Mohammadreza, 2012). In the marketing literature, many studies emphasise that the economic value of this objective and its direct link to companies is beneficial to the companies, as it enhances product selling or improves brand loyalty (Li, 2010; Castronovo and Huang, 2012; Pappasolomou and Melanthiou, 2012). Another objective is building the brand and brand awareness. According to Christodoulides et al. (2012), social media marketing could build a deeper relationship between consumers and brands. Furthermore, using social media marketing to create brand presence can generate brand awareness and familiarity within consumers (Kwon and Sung, 2011). Lipsman et al. (2012) indicated that marketers can benefit from fan dialogues about their brand in Facebook and build the brand or increase consumption. Moreover, Hays et al. (2013) pointed out that the most important benefits of social media marketing are accessibility and availability of information and publicity. However, marketers should shape their communication with consumers via social media marketing platforms in a way that is consistent with the organisation's goals (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Kirtiş and Karahan, 2011). Moreover, the objective of social media marketing is to determine its metrics (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). From a general perspective, Stelzner (2013) conducted a survey of 3000 marketers from different countries including the United States, the UK, Canada and India, shows that 97% of them have been participating in social media marketing activities, and 86% believe social media marketing is an important communication tool for their businesses. Moreover, marketers have reported

numerous benefits of using social media marketing, such as increased exposure of their business (86%), increased traffic to their websites (75%), improved marketplace intelligence (69%) and increased development in consumer loyalty (65%).

In businesses, the measurement of social media marketing outcomes is essential to compare with non-profit organisations (Romero, 2011). Marketers attempted to know their costs made in social media marketing against the results that can be obtained (Vuori, 2011). However, a host of researches agreed that it is fairly difficult to measure the outcome of social media marketing activities (Fisher, 2009; Grainger, 2010; Romero, 2011), since its objectives are established based on a particular business situation (Grainger, 2010). Moreover, the theories and metrics to measure outcomes and return on investment (ROI) on traditional marketing communication tools, such as TV, newspapers, and radio or online advertising, are not applicable to social media marketing (Fisher, 2009). Additionally, Romero (2011) pointed out that three levels of social media marketing need to be analysed: engagement, branding influence, and ROI.

### **2.6.3. Measurements for social media marketing outcomes.**

Many studies have offered various metrics to measure the assimilation of social media marketing outcomes. For example, Murdough (2009) presented a five-stage measurement process: concept (what organisation attempts to accomplish), definition (the social media marketing strategy), design (the social media tactics), deployment (proper execution and collection of accurate data), and optimization (adjusting social media marketing program according to data from previous four steps). Similarly, Weinberg (cited in Alkhas, 2011) suggested five metrics to measure ROI of social media marketing: 1) reach, referring to the number of connections that companies can reach, 2) frequency and traffic, referring to the number of visits to the company website, 3) influence, referring to the number of effective conversations, 4) conversions and transactions, referring to how often target market signs up as a

member on the website or makes purchases, and 5) sustainability, referring to how long people stay loyal to a brand.

Nevertheless, outcomes can be measured by three matrices or key performance indicators (KPIs): quantitative metrics, qualitative metrics, and ROI (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Quantitative matrices refer to statistical numbers such as the number of visitors, comments, likes, fans, tweets etc. depending on the social networking site's nature (Fisher, 2009; Castronovo and Huang, 2012). Qualitative metrics mainly measure sentiments (tone, opinion), quality (what they say), and impact (what they do) (Fisher, 2009). Finally, ROI refers to financial (e.g. sales) and non-financial (e.g. customers' loyalty, increased brand awareness) return of adopting social media marketing (Castronovo and Huang, 2012).

## **2.7. Social Media Marketing in Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is the largest country among the Gulf States, with an estimated population of 31 million in 2016 (SGAS, 2016). About 64% of the population uses the internet (Stats, 2016). Saudi Arabia has been ranked as seventh globally in terms of individual accounts on social media with an average of seven accounts per individual (ArabNews, 2015). There are more than 11 million social media active users (Al-Dosari, 2016). Saudi people account for 40% of all active Twitter users in the Arab world (Abdurabb, 2014). Moreover, Saudi Arabia has the highest YouTube viewing rate in the world, with almost 90 million views every day (Morrison, 2014). The growth in the use of social media among Saudi individuals has encouraged companies to improve their presence on social media websites and employing it in their marketing activities (Askool, 2012). Saudi Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) carried out an extensive study to evaluate the current situation of the social media usage among Saudi business organisations of different sizes and sectors. They found that almost 16% of 1124 Saudi companies use social media marketing in their business activities such as engaging in

advertising/marketing, communicating with customers, and providing product/service information to customers (CITC, 2014).

As a result of increased use of social media among people in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East in general, businesses have expanded their utilisation and spending on social media marketing. According to Tamer (2013), in 2013, the companies in the Middle East were spending approximately 4% of global spending (\$11 billion) on social media marketing, which is approximately \$450 million. The experts in Saudi market have estimated that the Saudi companies are spending on social media marketing and online advertising between 15–20% in 2016. The approximate advertising spending in Saudi Arabia in general is about 4–4.5 billion riyals (1.6 to 2.1 billion dollars). Therefore, the spending on social media marketing and online advertising has become roughly a billion riyals (\$266 million) (Moatasem, 2016).

Despite the growth in use of social media in Saudi Arabia, there is a dearth of studies that have paid attention on studying the application of social media as a marketing tool in businesses in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on using social media marketing in small businesses. Abeysinghe and Alsobhi (2013) studied the adoption of social media marketing among five small Saudi companies using the case study approach. Their study aimed to measure the organisational readiness by employing multi-stage framework, which consists of three main stages: before adopting social media marketing; process of adopting social media marketing; and after adopting social media marketing. Within these stages, three contexts were suggested: technological (technology competence), organisational (organisational culture, definitive goals, policy of use, and monitoring strategy), and environmental (target audience). This study indicated that most of these factors are applicable, whereas the compatibility of social media with the existing business strategy was found to be insignificant in small Saudi businesses. Moreover, such companies do not have a culture of openness, and they tend to not have the discipline necessary to drive their usage of social media.



Considering social media marketing as a brand-new type of e-commerce, Al Ghamdi and Reilly (2013) studied the usage of social media marketing among Saudi women entrepreneurs to sell their products via social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. By using content analysis and interviews, this study attempted to provide analysis, insights, and definitive guidelines on how social media marketing is helping women entrepreneurs promote their businesses in Saudi Arabia.

From the perspective of consequences of using social media marketing, Alotaibi (2013) used content analysis to analyse the messages of Twitter in the Saudi banking sectors. He found a significant relationship between Twitter messages and publishing information, which can be useful in terms of promotion, conversation, and spreading news among Saudi banks' potential customers to promote their products. However, this study was limited as it studied two Saudi banks' interactions on Twitter in terms of publishing information and did not contribute insights into how social media marketing impacts other aspects of marketing effort.

## **2.8. Knowledge Gap**

Although studies conducted on assessing the adoption and assimilation of social media marketing in the business environment have significantly improved our understanding of social media marketing as an organisational innovation, several gaps can be identified in the literature. Firstly, it has been relieved that the assimilation of innovation is a multi-stage process, which begins from the initial awareness of the innovation to its sustained implementation (Fichman, 2000) or the evidence of its impact on business performance (Chatterjee et al., 2002). Although some inquiries have been carried out to address these assimilation stages, most have been focused on the intention or the initial decision to adopt social media marketing (e.g. Curtis et al., 2010; Kim, 2011; Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012; Mandal and McQueen, 2012). The implementation of social media marketing and realising its importance should be perceived far beyond simple technology adoption (Richter et

al., 2013). Arguing that social media marketing may have a different impact on various assimilation stages, an in-depth inquiry is necessary to highlight its post-adoption stage.

Secondly, the assimilation perception is mainly developed in information technology to measure the process from the initial awareness of the innovation to a sustained implementation of it. Previous IT studies have posited that several distinguishing factors determine the degree of organisational assimilation of technology, such as volume, diversity, breadth, and depth (Zmud and Massetti, 1996). However, social media marketing requires a different set of dimensions that are more related to patterns of marketing communication than patterns of organisational technology. Also, when organisations align their social media marketing strategy with their marketing and corporate strategy, social media marketing offers organisations the opportunity to restructure marketing communication process, enter new markets, and improve effectiveness and efficiency in interactions within and outside the organisation. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this limitation by suggesting new measurement for assimilation of social media marketing that relies on the strategic and tactical level. And promote social media marketing strategy as important element on the assimilation process.

Thirdly, companies use social media marketing to support a variety of marketing activities (e.g. public relations, promotion, and sales), which aim to connect the internal capabilities of companies with their external environment (Vrontis and Pavlou, 2008). Social media marketing is a new technology that brings new managerial style into the marketing systems by the use of social media and internet-based platforms. More specifically, there are two types of organizational innovation, technical and administrative, and both types can significantly affect the firms' performance (Han et al., 1998). Most of literature has examined each type of organisational innovation separately (Battisti and Stoneman, 2010). However, with regard to the nature of social media marketing, it is a multi-faceted organizational innovation that implies changes in technology, strategy, and organisation. This

consideration is important because although social media marketing is heavily supported by the growth of internet or ICT, it is less appropriate to simplify social media marketing as an ICT innovation and neglect its business side. In fact, social media marketing has significant implications in various aspects of an organisation, such as organisational communication, marketing innovation, and consumer relationship (Langer, 2014). Despite the potential of social media marketing as an organisational innovation, there is a limited and fragmented understanding of the impact of social media marketing on organisations. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the impact of social media marketing on an organisation's in particular its marketing capability.

Fourthly, even though studies in innovation theories and models have endorsed several perspectives (e.g. technological, organizational, and environmental contexts), they usually focus on a single adoption stage (Molla and Licker, 2005). Although interactionism approach has been considered to determine innovation at an organisational level (Molla and Licker, 2005), further issues and considerations have not been captured by such theories and models. To overcome such limitations, there is an absolute need to consider a multi-perspective framework to incorporate elements from different theories and models in order to provide a broader understanding of assimilation of social media marketing as an organisational innovation. Such a trend is consistent with previous studies in assimilation of innovation, such as e-business (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005) and e-commerce (Awa et al., 2015).

Lastly, a majority of current theories and models have been devised in the developed world. However, Zhu and Kraemer (2005) pointed out that theories and frameworks that have been developed in the context of western countries should be re-examined for use in developing countries. This has been suggested because some issues that might appear insignificant for developed countries may play an essential role for social media marketing adoption in developing countries. For example, literature on innovation's adoption has indicated that profitability, effectiveness, and usefulness within a marketing strategy can be the determining factors for the adoption

of new technology by western businesses, while in developing countries, these assumptions cannot be upheld (Al-Shohaib et al., 2010; MacGregor and Kartiwi, 2010). Therefore, a study of actual use of social media marketing and its antecedents and consequences could possibly allow a deeper understanding of social media marketing in Saudi market.

To better understand these considerations, the present study aims to improve our understanding of assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi environment businesses by suggesting a comprehensive framework that comprises different theoretical perspectives since each exacting theory and model inherits its weakness and strengths.

## **2.9. Theoretical Development**

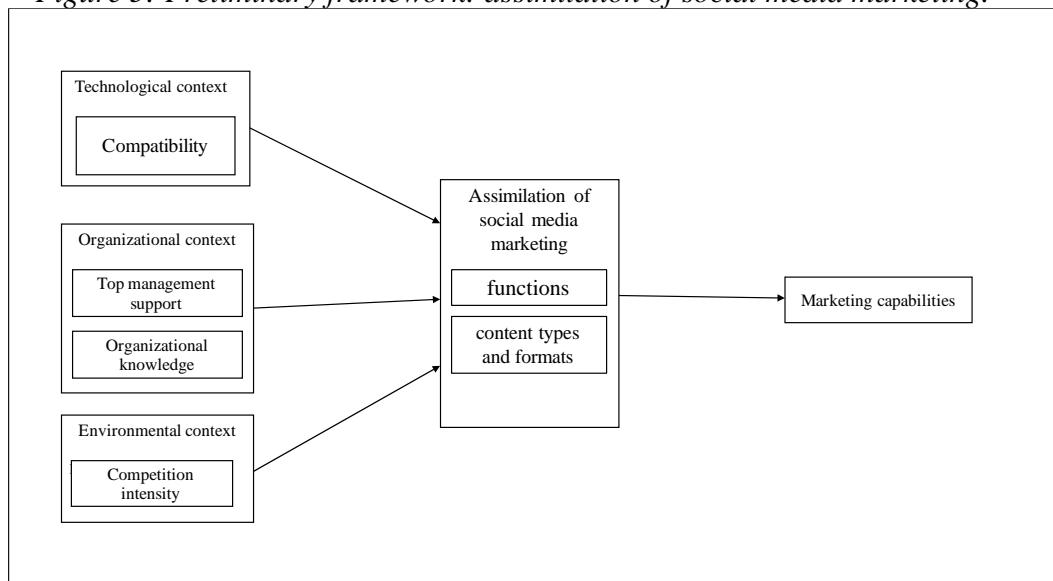
Unlike prior studies that focused on initial adoption stage and a single domain, this study addresses assimilation of social media marketing as organisational innovation by considering a multi perspective approach and examining other aspects related to the assimilation process. To provide a wider understanding of assimilation of social media marketing, this study integrated TOE framework (Tornatzky et al., 1990), DOI theory (Rogers, 1983), honeycomb framework (Kietzmann et al., 2011), and RBV theory (Wernerfelt, 1984). It can be argued that these perspectives can account for a wider understanding of assimilation of social media marketing at an organisational level (Molla and Licker, 2005), whereas the concept of assimilation in the context of developing countries can provide a new perspective for understanding the global assimilation and use of social media marketing.

This study intends to offer insight into how large Saudi companies assimilate social media marketing regarding three issues; these issues can be analysed on the basis of above three theatrical perspectives, namely, (1) antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing, (2) assimilation of social media marketing, and (3) the consequences of assimilation of social media marketing. As this study aims to

develop a preliminary framework that will further guide and enhance the first exploratory qualitative study, the chosen constructs will be based on three well-established TOE frameworks (Tornatzky et al., 1990), DOI theory (Rogers, 1983), honeycomb framework (Kietzmann et al., 2011), and RBV theory (Wernerfelt, 1984). Specifically, the preliminary framework (Figure 5) will encompass contextual factors from the TOE framework, innovation attributes from DOI, assimilation level from honeycomb framework, and marketing capabilities from RBV theory.

The proposed preliminary framework is to guide an exploratory study in order to extend and confirm the relative constructs, which are worthy for further investigation. As many constructs may emerge and other may be eliminated from the research framework, further discussions of these constructs will be addressed in Chapter 5.

*Figure 5: Preliminary framework: assimilation of social media marketing.*



### **2.9.1. Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

The integration of DOI theory (Rogers, 1983) with the TOE framework (Tornatzky et al., 1990) will offer a fundamental base for identifying the antecedents of innovation assimilation. This study will investigate the potential factors affecting assimilation of social media marketing based on the specific technological, organisational, and environmental circumstances of large Saudi companies. Previous

studies have suggested a variety of factors that could possibly affect assimilation of social media marketing. However, this study will only consider the factors that are seen as critically relevant to the context of social media marketing.

#### ***2.9.1.1. Technological Context***

DOI theory defined compatibility as ‘the extent to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the values, experience and needs of potential adopters’ (Rogers, 1995). Within this study, the suggested definition of compatibility of social media marketing includes the integration of social media marketing use with existing business strategies and objectives. Trainor et al. (2013) suggested that using social media marketing as a resource technology in combination with the existing system would more likely support a company’s strategies. Previous assimilation studies based on TOE suggested that the high level of compatibility of new and existing technologies would more likely lead an organisation to assimilate the new technology (Damanpour, 1991; Liang et al., 2007).

#### ***2.9.1.2. Organisational Context***

In organisational context, two factors can affect the assimilation of social media marketing, namely, top management support and organisational knowledge. Firstly, top management support refers to the degree to which the top management of a firm is involved in, and encourages, social media efforts (Rai and Bajwa, 1997). The support by top management can improve the assimilation of social media marketing within an organisation by creating a favourable attitude towards innovation and reinforcing the confidence of the organisation’s members (Damanpour, 1991). Previous studies have shown positive correlations between top management support and technology, such as the following: web technology (Chatterjee et al., 2002), executive information systems (EIS) (Rai and Bajwa, 1997), and enterprise systems (Liang et al., 2007). The findings of Bharati et al. (2013) indicated that top management support has a direct impact on the assimilation of social media marketing.

Secondly, organisational knowledge can be referred to as the extent to which marketers possess knowledge specific to social media, which is needed to adopt and assimilate social media marketing (Lederer et al., 1997; Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2001; Kietzmann et al., 2011). In general, companies have to gain knowledge about the features of the technology (factual knowledge), the application of the technology (application knowledge), and the evaluation of the benefits of the technology (evaluative knowledge) (Lederer et al., 1997). Previous studies indicate that technological knowledge can lead to higher levels of technology assimilation (Bloch et al., 1996). Moreover, the level of assimilation could depend on the extent to which the organisation understands social media marketing (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Therefore, top management support and organisational knowledge are considered in the preliminary framework within the organisational context.

#### ***2.9.1.3. Environmental Context***

Competition intensity can be defined as the extent to which a firm is influenced by its competitors in the marketplace (Porter, 1979). In highly competitive environments, companies increase the usage level of social media marketing in response to their competitors. Previous empirical studies have indicated different results regarding competition intensity. For example, Li et al. (2010b) found that environmental uncertainty (competition intensity) is not related to the assimilation of e-business by international firms. In contrast, deterrents to environmental uncertainty were found to play a significant role in the assimilation of e-business in large companies (Hsu et al., 2006). A previous study on the organisational adoption of executive information systems (EIS) indicated that greater environmental uncertainty has a positive relationship with the greater use of EIS (Zhu et al., 2006).

#### **2.9.2. Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Assimilation is defined as ‘the extent to which the use of a technology diffuses across organisational work processes and becomes routinized in the activities associated with those processes’ (Tornatzky and Klein, 1982). The definition by

Armstrong and Sambamurthy (1999) further considers the degree of success that is achieved in improving an organisation's capabilities and performance through the use of technology. The suggested definition of assimilation of social media marketing within this study is as follows: the degree to which social media marketing is used to enhance and achieve marketing strategies and objectives. Previous studies have posited that several distinctive factors determine the degree of organisational assimilation of technology, such as volume, diversity, breadth, depth (Zmud and Massetti, 1996), strategies, and activities (Awa et al., 2010). However, as a communication tool, social media marketing requires a different set of dimensions that are more related to patterns of communication than to patterns of organisational technology. Therefore, this research will suggest two dimensions: functions and content types and formats.

Regarding social media marketing functions, Kietzmann et al. (2011) suggested the social media honeycomb of seven functional building blocks to help marketers understand the strategic usage of social media marketing: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. These seven functions can be utilized to recognize the degree of assimilation of social media marketing within a marketing communication mix.

Identity is defined as the extent to which firms can describe and reveal themselves online. Conversations reflect the extent to which businesses communicate with their consumers through social media marketing tools. The sharing function is the extent to which organisations distribute, exchange, and receive content from their consumers.

The extent to which a firm is available to its customers that use social media sites is reflected by presence. The relationship function concerns the extent to which a company uses social media marketing to maintain its relationships with its customers. The reputation function refers to the degree to which social media can allow firms to identify their reputation by measuring the level of trusted engagement with customers.



Finally, the group function represents the ability of an organisation to form communities and sub-communities within the social media landscape.

Social media assimilation content refers to a firm's assimilation of social media marketing to communicate with its consumers by generating content, which is the core of the communication process. It has been argued that organisations that use a variety of formats for content in their social media marketing efforts are more effective in their marketing communications (Bucher et al., 2013; Eagleman, 2013). Therefore, the format (e.g. text, pictures, and videos) and type (e.g. brand, involvement, and engagement messages) of the content can determine the extent of usage of social media marketing.

### **2.9.3. The Consequences of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Based on RBV theory, social media marketing is one of the marketing resources that can contribute towards marketing capabilities of an organisation (Ananda et al., 2016). However, social media marketing needs to be integrated with other marketing resources in order to create distinctive marketing capabilities (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Trainor, 2012; Trainor et al., 2013). Therefore, prior studies indicated that the integration of social media marketing within marketing efforts can lead to enhancement of marketing capabilities and improvement of a firm's performance in general. For example, Assaad and Gómez (2011) pointed out that social media marketing can become the core of online marketing activities by creating communities for the products and services of firms, building the brand, and maintaining consumer loyalty. The combination of social media marketing resources and customer-centric management systems leads to a better understanding of consumer needs and improved CRM (Trainor et al., 2013). On the other hand, Schniederjans et al. (2012) argued that the integration of social media marketing with impression management strategies can enhance the financial performance of an organisation. Thus, the impact of social media marketing on marketing capabilities is to be considered within the preliminary framework.

## **2.10. Summary**

This chapter discussed the literature related to social media marketing. More specifically, it addressed the concept and strategy of social media marketing. Furthermore, it discussed the factors that lead to adoption and assimilation of social media marketing from different perspectives, including technological adoption models, DOI theory, and TOE framework. The impact of social media marketing is also addressed by RBV. This chapter also discussed social media marketing within the Saudi context.

Based on the interactionism approach, a preliminary framework has been suggested to guide an exploratory study, which is intended to enhance the conceptual research framework. The findings of exploratory investigation are intended to extend and confirm the selections of contextual elements of the research framework. A further discussion on study constructs will be addressed in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research methodology, beginning with a general discussion of research paradigms. It will be followed by a demonstration of research approaches, going on to justify the mixed methods approach that is adopted for this research. The second part of this chapter describes the research design, discussing the techniques and methods of data collection and analysis in each phase of this research. Finally, validity, reliability, and ethical issues will be addressed.

### **3.2. Research Paradigms**

In social science, the nature of the phenomenon under investigation is likely to affect the way in which research is conducted, which includes the research paradigms or research philosophy (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Neuman (2013) defined the paradigm as a whole system of thinking. It includes basic assumptions, the important questions to be answered or puzzles to be solved, the research techniques to be used, and examples of what good scientific research is like. In simple terms, the paradigm is a framework that specifies assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between researchers and how researchers observe that reality (epistemology), and the approaches that are used to examine the reality (methodology) (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2013; Saunders et al., 2009).

Research paradigms have been classified into three distinct categories as positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Gephart, 1999; Thomas, 2010). These paradigms work as a guide for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research designs.

In the positivistic philosophy, the researcher dictates an objective view of reality, in which inquiry is intended to create, measure, or explain the knowledge to generalise this knowledge across various people, organisations, times, and places

(Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Paradigmatically, researchers can generate knowledge based on the theory by using the deductive approach (testing of theories and hypotheses) (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In general, social media marketing studies can be classified as positivism if there is an indication of propositions formulation, quantifiable measurement of variables, testing hypotheses, and concluding a representative sample of a specified population (Klein and Myers, 1999). For instance, based on the uses and gratifications theory, Gao and Feng (2016) developed hypotheses and a design of the questionnaire to measure the impact of brand content strategies about the quality of brand-consumer communication via social media platforms.

In contrast, the interpretive researchers assume that the reality consists of an individual's subjective understanding of the external world (Creswell, 2013). Under the interpretive assumption, "multiple realities or multiple truths exist based on one's construction of reality" (Sale et al., 2002). It focuses on understanding behaviour rather than predicting it (Harrison and Reilly, 2011). In this paradigm, knowledge is acquired through the inductive approach, which is the discovery of patterns and associations derived from the observations of the world (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Ritchie et al., 2013). Interpretive paradigm emphasises the subjectivity of individuals' behaviours and interpretations based on their experiences which have meanings assigned to them (Klein and Myers, 1999). Social media marketing research can be classified as interpretive if it is assumed that the knowledge of reality can be gathered by "social constructions such as a language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artefacts" (Klein and Myers, 1999). For example, since social media marketing is a relatively new activity for business-to-business (B2B) companies, Cawsey et al. (2016) adopted an interpretive paradigm to provide a unique overview of the use of social media in brand building among business-to-business (B2B) companies.

The third paradigm is pragmatism, which has emerged as a common alternative for both the incongruity paradigms: positivism and interpretivism (Aliyu et

al., 2014; Creswell and Clark, 2011; Wheeldon, 2010). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), “we endorse pragmatism as a philosophy that can help to build bridges between conflicting philosophies.” In this paradigm, the knowledge is acquired through the abduction approach, which is “uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one’s results” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatic researchers are mostly motivated by the research questions, rather than controlled by philosophic assumptions (Harrison and Reilly, 2011; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This paradigm supports the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in one single inquiry (Johnson et al., 2007).

The current study seems to lie within the pragmatism paradigm as it tends to gain an understanding of assimilation of social media marketing in a poorly investigated region such as Saudi Arabia. Since this paradigm promotes a mixed methods approach, which seems to be the most suitable research approach that can be fitted with this study objectives, more details and justification will be presented in the following sections.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

The scholarly community has considered two general research approaches: qualitative approach and quantitative approach (Venkatesh et al., 2013). According to Creswell (1994) “A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” Also, he defines quantitative research as “an inquiry into social or human problems, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true.” More simplistically, Punch and Punch (1998) defined qualitative research as an “empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers” and quantitative research as an “empirical research

where the data are in the form of numbers.” From logical perspectives, qualitative research is associated with inductive logic, which uses particular premises to come to general conclusions. Whereas quantitative research is more likely to be related to deductive reasoning, which moves from general fundamentals to reach specific results (Wheeldon, 2010).

Qualitative research was established in social science to help researchers study cultural and social phenomena. They use different qualitative research strategy, such as action research, case study research, and ethnography (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Qualitative research is designed to enable researchers to understand people and social and cultural issues within their contexts (Myers, 1997). While the quantitative research was mainly developed in natural sciences, this approach is extensively used in social science (Myers, 1997; Vuori, 2011). Quantitative research uses surveys and experiments to gather data, which is revised and formulated in numbers that allow for the data to consider the use of statistical analysis (Hittleman and Simon, 1997).

Quantitative research is aligned with positivism paradigm (Rolfe, 2006). On the other hand, qualitative research can be considered to be an interpretive or positivist inquiry, depending on the adopted paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For example, in social media marketing literature, case study research can be interpretive (Berthon et al., 2012) or positivist (Effing and Spil, 2016). Some studies prefer to use mixed methods approach to benefit from the differences between quantitative and qualitative research, by combining these two approaches for utilising in a single inquiry (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Yauch and Steudel, 2003;).

The nature of the phenomenon under investigation is likely to affect the choice of the study approach. Within the pragmatism paradigm, the use of a single particular approach is most unlikely. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), the mixed methods that attempt to incorporate qualitative and quantitative research into one inquiry, which fits with the pragmatic paradigm that aims to suggest the best opportunities for answering important research questions. The mixed methods

combine qualitative and quantitative studies to gather strength from both these approaches and minimise their weaknesses (Yauch and Steudel, 2003).

Although mixed methods research has been used in the social sciences for more than three decades (Fidel, 2008), there is no universal definition other than an underlying assumption that used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same research inquiry (Venkatesh, et al., 2013). However, Creswell and Clark (2011) suggested a definition that focused on different levels of the mixed methods paradigm:

*“a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.”*

Incorporating a qualitative design with a quantitative approach can significantly strengthen any research project (Morgan, 1998). Combining two research methods for increasing a study’s validity has been identified as a convergent validation or triangulation (Greene, et al., 1989; Jick, 1979). Triangulation refers to “the classic convergence or corroboration concerning the same phenomenon” (Rocco, et al., 2003). While concentrating on the purposes of mixed methods, Johnson, et al. (2007) defined mixed methods as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.” Therefore, this research adopts mixed methods approach to

address the research aim and objectives for several considerations as the following section demonstrates.

### **3.3.1. Justification of using mixed methods approach**

Using the mixed methods approach is a common approach in social media research. Snelson (2016) conducted a systematic literature review to identify the trends in qualitative and mixed methods approaches that have been used in the emergent field of social media research between 2007 and 2013. He found that 24% of social media studies used the mixed methods. Therefore, this study has adopted mixed methods approach for several considerations. First, using a quantitative deductive design alone to study social media marketing in Saudi Arabia can lead to some weaknesses, such as the theories and constructs extracted from the literature not applying to Saudi business environments, and the results being obstructed and more generalised. Therefore, the qualitative approach will apply to identifying the construct that mostly relates to the use of social media marketing and provides rich information about a different set of research environments. It is important to begin by using an exploratory qualitative study to discover variables related to perceptions of using social media marketing in large Saudi companies. A quantitative approach will be utilised to test and validate the conceptual framework that is established based on literature review and qualitative interviews (Venkatesh, et al., 2013). Scandura and Williams (2000) suggested that in order to increase the dependent variables to support the theory and develop stronger conclusions, researchers might need to use more than one method in their research strategies. Moreover, using mixed methods can be limited by the influence of biases that are inherent in each single method of collecting and analysing data (Rocco, et al., 2003).

Second, a qualitative approach seems appropriate. Without much fundamental empirical support or established theory to study social media marketing in Saudi environments, it is essential to utilise a qualitative approach to facilitate the understanding of the assimilation of social media marketing and its related constructs



within the Saudi business environment. In some set of research situations, the qualitative approach is desirable and useful, especially when a phenomenon is complicated, and the existing body of knowledge is limited (Bonoma, 1985), as is the situation with the assimilation of social media marketing. While a quantitative method is suitable for theory testing, the qualitative approach is appropriate for generating theory and discovering new patterns (Bonoma, 1985; Hyde, 2000; Jorgensen, 1989; Miles, et al., 2013).

Third, since all research designs have their own weaknesses, utilising mixed methods can strengthen this study. “Mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (Creswell and Clark, 2011). By employing mixed methods, the weakness of any single method can be compensated by the strengths of the other methods (Jick, 1979). It is essential to have precise complementarity among research methods that are used in this research. Notwithstanding the apparent value of using the qualitative approach, it has significant weaknesses which can be addressed by combining it with a quantitative method. The quantitative approach can deal with weaknesses, such as difficulty in testing theories, making generalisations due to small, non-representative samples, and avoiding subjectivity in interpretation (Ormston et al., 2014). Without having findings from qualitative interviews, it can be difficult to find suitable constructs for studying the usage of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia. Also, based on the quantitative survey results, it will be possible to ensure that findings even gained from small sample sizes.

Finally, use and assimilation of social media is a popular topic in marketing and communication literature across the world, including both developed and developing countries (Khang, et al., 2012; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Designing and conducting research based on theories and models, which have been developed in a specific culture, and applying them without appropriate modification in other cultures can lead to several methodological issues (Kreiser, et al., 2002; Malhotra, et al., 1996), such as limiting the understanding of a phenomenon and obstructing the

development of the theory (Bilkey and Nes, 1982). Steensma, et al. (2000) indicated that existing theories might not be appropriate in every international research context because of differences in national culture. The challenges faced also include constructs that can be used, the instrument and the measures used by it to collect data, and the samples selected (Buil, et al., 2012).

In this study, the use of social media marketing is explored in the context of Saudi business environment. However, this study has been established based on theories and frameworks that were originally developed in western culture. Differences in an environment and cultural variables among different countries may have a significant influence on assimilation and use of new technology (Choi and Totten, 2012). The qualitative phase of this research aims to not only test well-developed theories and explore actual organisational behaviour in using social media marketing, but also to overcome any cultural obstructs and ensure the validity of the research.

### **3.4. Research design**

Punch (2013) defined research design as “the fundamental plan for a piece of research, which contains major ideas of the research, such as the framework of the research, and presents which tools and procedures the researcher will use to collect and analyse the research data.” The research design is a logical structure of the inquiry, which fits into the research process from problem formulation to finalise data analysis and report the findings (De Vaus and de Vaus, 2001). The research design demonstrates how the study will be conducted by following a systematic process to provide a reliable and valid outcome in a specified timeframe.

This study has adopted the mixed methods approach to integrate different qualitative and quantitative tactics in a single project to approach both theory and practical knowledge that attempts to study various standpoints, perceptions, positions, and viewpoints (Johnson, et al., 2007). The mixed methods design has more strength

than a single method design (Venkatesh, et al., 2013), not only due to the combination of two research approaches, but also because it offers more types of design that can be suitable for different research cases. According to Bryman (2006) and Creswell and Clark (2011), the typology of mixed methods research can be determined by the following:

- 1- The timing of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (simultaneous or sequential).
- 2- The priority of the quantitative or the qualitative data.
- 3- The function of integration in both approaches (such as triangulation, explanation, and exploration).
- 4- The stage at which integration occurs (which can be during research question formulation, data collection, data analysis, or data interpretation).

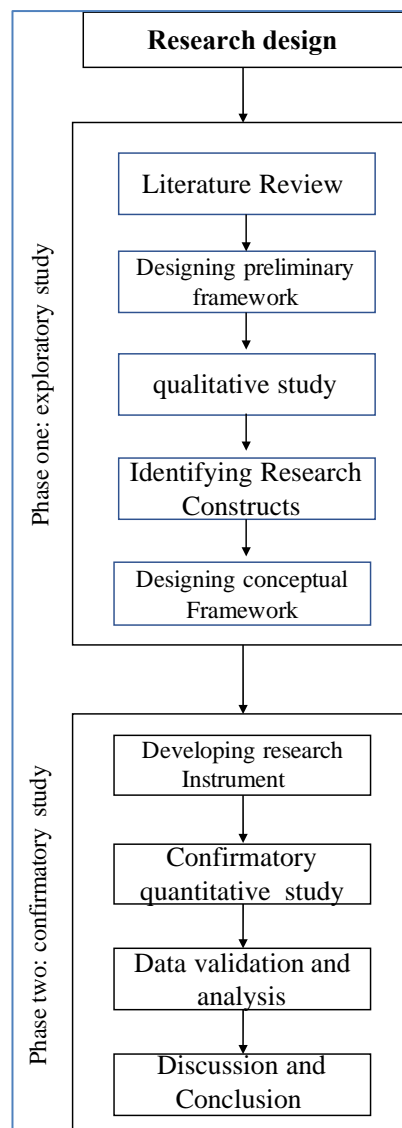
Therefore, Creswell and Clark (2011) suggested that there are many types of mixed methods, which include the convergent parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the embedded design, the transformative design, the multiphase design, and the exploratory sequential design.

However, the most popular mixed methods strategy is that of starting with a qualitative pilot study followed by a quantitative research (Morgan, 1998; Yauch and Steudel, 2003). This methodology promotes qualitative work as an exploratory phase which can be validated by quantitative criteria, such as exploratory, confirmatory factor analysis, validity, and reliability (Sale, et al., 2002). Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the exploratory design seemed to be an appropriate research design to guide this study. The exploratory study design is a valuable way to explore and understand a phenomenon, especially when the researcher is unsure about the nature of the problem (Saunders, et al., 2009). This exploratory design is used mostly to explore a phenomenon in order to achieve different research purposes, such as examining elements of a specific theory, generalising qualitative results, and developing measurements for a quantitative instrument (Terrell, 2012). The exploratory design has been used in social media marketing literature to develop

measurements for research instrument. For example, Hollebeek et al. (2014) conceptualise measurements for consumers' brand engagement construct by using exploratory qualitative research. Then, they used quantitative research to test and confirm the scale of consumer brand engagement.

In this study, the purpose of using an exploratory research is manifold. First, it is done to determine the most relevant constructs in order to consider social media marketing in the Saudi context. Second, the results of the qualitative phase will be tested and confirmed by using large-scale sampling in the second quantitative phase. Overall, the design of this study comprises two main stages: exploratory phase and the confirmatory phase (Figure 6).

*Figure 6: Research design*



### **3.4.1. Phase one: The exploratory phase**

In this study, the exploratory phase is the first stage to investigate the assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies. The objective of this stage is to develop a research framework and identify research constructs. This phase consists of two steps: a literature review and an exploratory qualitative study, which is described in the following sections.

### **3.4.2. Literature review**

According to Webster and Watson (2002), “a review of prior, relevant literature is an essential feature of any academic project. An effective review creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge. It facilitates theory development, closes areas where a plethora of research exists, and uncovers areas where research is needed.” In this research, the literature review is a critical stage in order to understand the topic under investigation, purify relevant issues, and introduce guidelines on how this topic is preserved and studied. It aids in identifying the theoretical perspectives that can be used to investigate the antecedents and consequences of assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies.

The primary objective of the literature review is to develop a research framework. Therefore, the preliminary framework that was developed in chapter 2 includes the groups of variables based on the literature review that is proposed to impact assimilation of social media marketing and marketing capabilities. Although a general framework has been outlined, it does not mean that all constructs of this study are well established and empirically tested in the literature review. Also, the preliminary research framework was developed in order to guide the qualitative study. Having the framework is essential to avoid a lack of concentration in the qualitative study (Miles, 1979).

### **3.4.3. Exploratory qualitative study**

The second step in the exploratory phase is to conduct a qualitative study. The qualitative method in social research typically applies an inductive reasoning that begins with observations for particular cases, then data collection, followed by data exploration for themes and patterns that emerge from the phenomenon under study to generate a theory and establish generalisations for a different sample (Hyde, 2000). In this study, the findings of the qualitative phase will enhance the modification and development measurements for these constructs, which are in line with Churchill's (1979) guidance to develop measures for marketing constructs (more details in chapter 6). Findings from the qualitative study led to a change in the framework's constructs and identification of some new measurements.

### **3.4.4. Phase two: The confirmatory study**

In the confirmatory phase, the quantitative approach is applied as the primary approach since it can be an efficient method to collect data from a large sample, which increases the generalisability of the findings (Burns and Burns, 2008). The aim of the quantitative phase is to introduce a positivist understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry by empirically testing the study framework, which has been developed based on literature review and qualitative study. In particular, this phase procedure incorporates an examination of the framework to identify the specific factors that would impact the assimilation of social media marketing and discover how the assimilation affects the marketing capability.

In this phase, the quantitative research method that is adopted is the survey method to gather data, which is revised and formulated in numbers. It allows for the data to be analysed using different statistical methods to provide an accurate research generalisation. In addition to quantitative study, the findings from the qualitative study may require being reconsidered to support and clarify the quantitative outcomes. Combining both results can be used to suggest theoretical and managerial implications related to the assimilation of social media marketing.

### **3.4.5. Time horizon**

Another important consideration in this research design is the decision to choose between a cross-sectional or longitudinal design. While a cross-sectional research design “examines a phenomenon by taking a cross section of it at one point in time” (Rubin and Babbie, 2010), a longitudinal study attempts to collect data from the same phenomenon at different points in time (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Although the adoption and use of social media marketing is a process that evolves over time, this study focuses on the assimilation or post-adoption stage, which is the single stage in the overall adoption and utilisation process. This emphasis on assimilation limits studying of the pre-adoption and post-adoption process over time. Moreover, time and cost restrict the ability to conduct a longitudinal study.

### **3.4.6. Risk assessment**

Just like any research, this study may face various difficulties and issues, which need to be considered and resolved. According to Al-Sudairy (2000), the attempt to obtain information and collect data from Saudi organisations have always encountered difficulties. Among such issues, something that was pressing in the first exploratory phase was recruiting participants for research interview. In this phase, after trying different techniques to recruit participants from Saudi companies, such as direct visits, email, and social media, it was discovered that snowball sampling or respondent-driven sampling would be an appropriate sampling technique to invite participants to take part in this study.

Another challenge that was faced was a low response rate of the survey in the second quantitative study, which is a typical problem faced in survey research (Harman, Brown, Widing, & Hammond, 2002). A low response rate can result in restraints on data analysis techniques from smaller sample sizes (Hatcher, 1994), potential threat for non-response bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977), and difficulty in generalising the study results. Therefore, this study has attempted to use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as distribution tools for the

research questionnaire since this study focuses on assimilation of social media marketing. Then, the researcher sent two follow-up messages to the targeted sample, which tends to help increase the rate of response. Another issue that can affect the data validity is getting multiple replies from the same company. To overcome this issue, the final section of the questionnaire was set to collect information about the name of a company, participant name, and job title, which helps during the data screening to check if there are any multiple responses from the same company. In such case, the researcher kept the response of the senior employee, who should have more experience, and eliminated the response from lower-ranking employees. In this study, all issues that are mentioned above have been considered to minimise their adverse effects.

### **3.5. Data collection methods**

Data collection is a vital part of any research project, and researchers typically rely on various communication methods used to gather primary research data, by questioning and surveying people about particular research phenomenon or observing events, people, conditions and processes (Cooper & Emory, 1995). In this study, semi-structured interview was selected as the data collection method for the first qualitative phase. On the other hand, survey was chosen as the data collection method in the second quantitative phase. In the following sub-sections, both methods will be detailed and justified.

#### **3.5.1. Qualitative data collection**

The qualitative approach designated is based on a semi-structured interview, that is used to provide insight into usage of social media marketing in Saudi business environment. To complement theory and the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, it is vital to rely on first-hand accounts by social media practitioners and experts to develop a conceptual research model. Moreover, semi-structured interviews can be a useful tool to discover underlying factors that have not been studied



previously about the assimilation of social media marketing in a developing country such as Saudi Arabia.

Since there are many research tools available for conducting the qualitative study, such as critical incident technique, focus groups, ethnography, participant observation, and interviews, it is vital to select the most appropriate tool for the research objectives related to this thesis. Interviews are determined to be the most efficient source of case study information (Tellis, 1997), as in the example of this research that intends to explore the organisations' usage of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia. This method allows for probing, collecting detailed information, and having a complete focus to investigate and develop the proposed research framework.

Possibly, the strongest argument for using the semi-structured interview is provided by Kerlinger and Lee (2000), who state that "the best instrument available for sounding people's behaviour, future intentions, feelings, attitudes, and reasons for behaviour would seem to be the structured interview." Interviews allow participants to respond in their words to the inducements provided by a researcher (De Ruyter and Scholl, 1998). Several prior studies used the semi-structured interviews in social media marketing (e.g. Hays et al., 2013; Snyman and Visser, 2014; Srinivasan and Damsgaard, 2013) to test existing theories and discover hidden issues at the same time. Schein (2014) stated that semi-structured interview is an appropriate approach in a situation where there is a limited understanding of the phenomenon, such as social media and how it is integrating into organisations. Therefore, the semi-structured interview can offer actual operationalisation and rich conceptualisation of the use of social media marketing in the Saudi business environment.

### **3.5.2. Quantitative Data Collection**

There are several research design options to collect data based on quantitative design, each with their advantages and disadvantages (Wheeldon, 2010). In this study, a cross-sectional survey design was selected as the method to collect data based on

the literature review and findings from qualitative interviews with social media marketing practitioners in Saudi business environment, for four considerations:

Firstly, Survey research employed a self-administrated questionnaire, which offers three advantages in this study context. First of all, this study aimed to understand the use of social media marketing among the majority of large Saudi companies, and this requires targeting large numbers of companies. Therefore, the survey can be an effective way to collect data from a large sample, which increases the generalizability of the findings (Burns and Burns, 2008). Second, this study investigated a number of variables related to the assimilation of social media marketing, antecedents and consequences, besides control variables. The survey design is an efficient method to measure these variables. Finally, a self-administrated survey has a low cost compared to quality and quantity of information from large samples.

Secondly, the survey uses questionnaires with standardised items that usually provide the lowest common denominator in evaluating organisational attitude and orientation towards the studied phenomena. This may lead to missing the most appropriate factor for the study's participants (Babbie, 2009). To overcome this concern, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to ensure that the survey concentrated on the key factors associated with assimilation of social media marketing, assimilation variables and consequences of assimilation.

Thirdly, the survey method typically collects self-report data through completion of the online or offline questionnaire. Unfortunately, a self-report survey is subject to potential issues such as social desirability. Social desirability occurs when the respondents attempt to present themselves in a socially desirable way (Schwab, 2013). This might lead respondents to portray a more attractive image of the organisation they represent, rather than provide truthful answers (Reus, 2004), which can cover the factual relationships between two or more variables (Ganster et al., 1983). Social desirability is a potential problem that might cause bias in the data collected. To limit the effects of social desirability bias, this research attempts to use

scales with established reliability and validity in most study constructs. Moreover, confidentiality was maintained to reduce the effect of social desirability bias (Collopy, 1996; Liang et al., 2007; Ayeh et al., 2013).

The last consideration, surveys also have some limitations: cross-sectional surveys cannot establish absolute causal relationships between study variables (Bryman and Bryman, 2003) because they lack a temporal order, which is a causality maker. Therefore, the conclusions can be established based on correlational relationships (Oppenheim, 2000; Rindfleisch et al., 2008).

With the consideration of all the benefits as mentioned above and drawbacks, a cross-sectional survey was selected as an appropriated method to achieve this research's objectives. A cross-sectional study allows for collecting a large amount of information from a wide range of organisations in effective time and cost. Additionally, a large number of variables can be examined in a natural setting (Gable, 1994).

### **3.6. Research population and sampling methods**

According to Wilson (2011), "The population of interest (sometimes referred to as the target population or universe) is the total group of people that the researcher wishes to examine, study or obtain information from." A sample should reflect "the segment of the population that is selected for investigation" (Bryman, 2012). This section discusses issues that are related to research population, which involve target population, sample frame, and sampling techniques.

#### **3.6.1. Target population and sampling frame**

The target population for this study is large Saudi companies which are active social media marketing users for last 12 months, besides the criteria of the sampling frame (Table 5). The sampling frame is "the listing of all units in the population from which the sample will be selected" (Bryman, 2012). The sampling frame works as a boundary that is used to limit the research population. The main criterion for selecting

a sample in the mixed methods approach is diversity, in which the recruitment process of participants is conducted based on the variety of their positions about the study topic (King and Horrocks, 2010). For this study, the population was made up of social media marketing experts and practitioners in large Saudi companies, including marketing and public relations managers, social media officers, digital marketing seniors and consultants, and participants having an experience in using social media marketing who would be able to provide richer information. Moreover, they were selected in a manner such that they could help the researcher gain a better understanding of the social media marketing landscape in Saudi Arabia. The target population for this study included all the large companies that were registered in Saudi Chambers. A List of 4545 companies was obtained from the Saudi Chamber of Commerce & Industry according to its database in 2014. The Council of Saudi Chambers (2014) considers a large company as any company that falls into any of the following categories:

- Joint stock companies
- Banking and Finance companies
- Limited Liability Companies (with capital more than SAR 5 million = 850,000 GBP)
- Contractors

This study focuses on the large Saudi business to consumer (B2C) companies that have already used social media marketing. These large Saudi B2C companies were selected as the sample population over small and medium companies for three reasons. First, it is common knowledge that large companies have slack resources requiring investment in assimilation of innovation (Rogers, 1995; Zhu et al., 2006), which enables large companies to facilitate assimilation of social media marketing and be more capable of bearing risk associated with implementing social media marketing (Zhu et al., 2003). Moreover, large companies are more likely to have experience with the adoption and assimilation in innovation, leading to building organisational innovation capabilities (Galunic and Rodan, 1998), which enhances

their ability to maximise their benefits from using social media marketing and absorb failure (Rosenbusch et al., 2011). Second, this study focuses on B2C companies since the usage of social media marketing is much more developed than the application of social media marketing in the business to business (B2B) setting (Lehmkuhl et al., 2013). Furthermore, large companies usually offer more products and services targeting different consumers, which requires the diversity of social media marketing strategy and activities in order to support marketing efforts of organisations. Finally, the number of large Saudi companies is limited according to lists from Saudi authorities, which made it possible to establish a valid framework for random sampling.

*Table 5: The sampling frame criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Include</b>	<b>Exclude</b>
<b>Sectors</b>	Telecommunication & IT Banks & Financial Services Retail Insurance Real Estate Development Transport Hotel & Tourism Agriculture & Food Industries Automotive Utilities Media and Publishing	Oil industry Multi-Investment Industrial Investment Building & Construction
<b>Nationality</b>	Saudi national	Multinational companies
<b>Target market</b>	Business to consumers	Business to business
<b>Social media usage</b>	At least used one form of social media marketing	No social media usage

### **3.6.2. Sampling techniques**

In general, sampling techniques are classified into two main categories, probability and non-probability sampling, which are also identified as random and non-random sampling. Several techniques from probability sampling and non-probability sampling are presented in the following sub-sections.

### **3.6.2.1. Probability sampling**

Probability sampling is a method that is used to randomly select a sample from a population. Thus, each unit within this population has a known chance of being selected (Bryman, 2012). By using this method, a sample is generated to be the representative of the research population (Babbie, 2010). A great benefit of using probability sampling is to eliminate bias and sampling error. Another benefit includes reducing the differences between the sample and the population (Terpening, 2011).

Probability sampling can be unrestricted or restricted. The unrestricted probability sampling is known as simple-random sampling, in which every element in the population has equal probability to be included in selecting a sample (Bryman, 2012). On the other hand, restricted probability sampling can be applied if a researcher has any knowledge about the heterogeneity of the sampling units. In that case, the population is divided into equal groups, and a sample is selected independently for each group (Agarwal, 2007). Restricted probability sampling has several complex probability sampling techniques, such as systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and multi-stage sampling (Bryman, 2012).

According to Ormston et al. (2014), “probability sampling is generally held to be the most rigorous approach to sampling for statistical research, but is largely inappropriate for qualitative research.” Mostly, statistical studies use probability sampling to enhance the generalisability of their finding (Bryman, 2012). In the second phase of this study, the random sampling method selects a sample from a list of large Saudi companies. The simple random sampling technique was used, since the quantitative part of this study targets to make generalisations (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). This sampling technique gives the opportunity for each case in the sampling frame to be chosen equally for this study.

### **3.6.2.2. *Non-probability sampling***

In non-probability sampling, the sample selection is a subjective procedure based on the personal judgment of the researcher or the availability of subjects (Babbie, 2010), “resulting in the probability of selection for each member of the population of interest being unknown” (Wilson, 2011). A large proportion of social media marketing studies uses non-probability sampling techniques to locate members of a small, scattered target group (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Chen, 2011; Gupta and Udupa, 2011; Nikou and Bouwman, 2014). Moreover, non-probability techniques are convenient and economical and can enable the research to be executed more quickly and easily (Ormston et al., 2014; Wilson, 2011).

Non-probability samples techniques are used mainly in qualitative research to select a sample, since it does not demand a sample that represents the whole population (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The non-probability sampling method includes many techniques, such as purposive sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling, snowball and its variation respondent-driven sampling (Babbie, 2010). In this study, non-probability sampling is used in the first qualitative exploratory phase, as the fundamental purpose of sampling is to evaluate the applicability of the proposed framework and generate a broad range of constructs which may be related to the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia. This qualitative approach requires subjects with widely deviating experiences and probing for themes and patterns that emerge from the data (Ormston et al., 2013).

The purpose of this exploratory study is to obtain insights into a social media phenomenon, rather than to generalise findings (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Two sampling techniques are utilised in this research project. First, the convenience sampling technique is used for the convenience of the researcher, in order to overcome the difficulty in retrieving the lists of existing social media marketing practitioners in Saudi companies. Convenience sampling technique is one of the main types of non-probability sampling technique; it is usually used for pilot studies or for larger exploratory studies that have more than one phase (Newing, 2010). Second,

snowball sampling (also known as purposive sampling) was used to expand the number of qualified participants with the aim of minimising the sample selection error in the convenience sampling method (Sum, 2007) since some potential population may be omitted during that process. Within the snowball sampling scheme, participants or participant candidates are asked to recruit other possible participants who could provide valuable information that could not be obtained through another choice (Maxwell, 2008; Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The integrated design enhances flexibility which can be included in the sample and is aimed to “focus more particularly on those units that seem most relevant” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

By using a mixed collection data methods to achieve research objectives, the analysis process will include both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, which are briefly discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.7.1. Qualitative data analysis**

Analysing and drawing results and conclusions from data are the most contentious and challenging task in qualitative research (Webley, 2010; Punch, 2013) According to Miles (1979),

*"The most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that methods of analysis are not well formulated. For quantitative data, there are clear conventions the researcher can use. However, the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific or policy-making audiences. How can we be sure that an 'earthy', 'undeniable', 'serendipitous' finding is not, in fact, wrong?"*

Researchers agree that although diversity and variety of analysis mark qualitative data's approaches, there is no single right approach or methodological structure to transform, interpret and "to make sense of qualitative data" (Elliott, 2005;



Folkestad, 2008; Punch, 2013; Morris, 2015). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) emphasise that "What links all the approaches is a central concern with transforming and interpreting qualitative data – in a rigorous and scholarly way – to capture the complexities of the social worlds we seek to explain". The approach to analysis needs to be systematic, integrated with other parts of research, and able to be described (Punch, 2009).

However, the underlying concept of the qualitative data analysis process is identifying common themes from raw data to generate conclusions and draw findings. Most methods of analysing qualitative data have several critical stages. The analysis process in this study is summarised in four steps including categorization, abstraction, dimensionalization and iteration (Spiggle, 1994). These four steps were utilised to guide the analysis process in this study. From each of these inferential processes, researchers "use to generate conclusions, Insights, meanings, patterns, themes, connections, Conceptual Frameworks, and theories—their representations of the reality described by the data" (Spiggle, 1994). Further discussion of the qualitative analysis will be addressed in the next chapter (Chapter 4).

### **3.7.2. Quantitative Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistical analysis such as means, standard deviations and range of scores were undertaken to produce data tables reporting and comparing responses using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 21). Then, the statistical processes for testing the hypotheses and the research model were done using SmartPLS 3.0 software. The statistical procedures used in this study involve the use of partial least squares (PLS) for structural equation modelling (SEM), which were used to evaluate the measurement models and test the hypotheses. PLS-SEM is a causal modelling method that seeks to maximise the variance among the latent dependent variables (Hair et al., 2011). Several social media's studies have used the PLS for many reasons such as model with formative indicators (Sánchez-Franco et al., 2011; Lu and Yang, 2014), to develop theories and prediction of data (Ayeh et al.,

2013; Bharati et al., 2013) and to assess psychometric properties (Cheung et al., 2011).

The PLS analysis involves a two-step process (Hair et al., 2011). The first step comprises the measurement model or an outer model, which examines the relationship of observed variables (constructs) to their latent variables (indicators) (Hair et al., 2011). The purpose of evaluating the measurement model is to determine that the indicators used in the analysis are valid and satisfactorily reflect the theoretical constructs. The evaluation of the measurement model includes the assessment both reliability and validity of constructs.

The reliability is to ensure that a measure would achieve the same outcome even when applied repetitively to the same object or stability of measures, which means the ability of a measure to remain the same over time (Sekaran,2003). The reliability assessment concentrated on composite reliability to estimate internal consistency rather than other assessments such as Cronbach's alpha. Since composite reliability assumes that not all latent variables (indicators) are equal regarding reliability, it is more appropriate for PLS analysis (Hair et al., 2011). While, validity is concerned with alignment between a theoretical construct and its operational measure (Rajagopalan and Spreitzer, 1997). The assessment of validity includes convergent validity and discriminant validity.

The second step was to evaluate the structural model, which includes standardised path coefficients, their significance, and the amount of variance ( $R^2$ ). Path coefficients indicate the strength of the associations between independent and dependent variables, and the  $R^2$  estimates the amount of variance explained by the independent variables. Together, path coefficients and the  $R^2$  value determine the overall model fit (Wixom and Watson, 2001).

### **3.8. Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are two elements that any research should consider through all the research stages such as study design, data collection, and analysis

(Patton, 2014). Validity in research estimates the extent to which a set of data or measures measure or reflect what it is intended to measure (Newman and Benz, 1998). According to Joppe (2000), validity can be explained as:

*"Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others."*

Reliability can be expressed as procedural trustworthiness, which is concerned with whether the research result conveys what had been observed (Stiles, 1993). In other words, reliability can be viewed as "a fit" between the data collected by the researcher and the real phenomenon that is being researched regarding level of accuracy and comprehensiveness of data (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Cohen, et al., 2013).

As mentioned before, Triangulation is one of the main ways to validate the qualitative research result. Using mixed methods to study the same phenomenon can help to counter the threats to validity (Hammersley, 2008). This method integrates multiple data sources, research tools and theoretical perspectives to increase confidence in study results (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Rheeder, 2012). Studies that use only one method are more subject to having errors, which relate to that particular method, such as biases and untrue responses, than using alternative methods that do not assign the same source of systematic error and provide different types of data, which can lead to more understating and reflect closer to the truth, thereby maximising validity and increasing reliability of the study (Patton, 1999).

Concerning this study, the data obtained through the semi-structured interview will be used to reform the research framework that will be tested by using the second quantitative phase. This combination of two methods can lead to more valid and reliable findings. Using mixed methods can offer to researchers a satisfactory way to validate their result. However, it means that using different inquiry approaches can

essentially yield the same result, while a different type of data can lead to different results since each research approach has its sensitivity to small differences in the real world (Patton, 1999; Thomas, 2010). According to Patton (1999), It can be argued that the inconsistencies in data should not affect the credibility of findings since it provides a broader understanding of the between-research approach and the phenomenon under inquiry. Moreover, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) state that "the 'security' that triangulation provides is through giving a fuller picture of the phenomenon, not necessarily a more certain one".

### **3.9. Ethical Considerations**

In research, the design should not only consider the ethical issues related to conducting research that is valid, reliable, and representative, but it also should show awareness of any ethical issues that relate to human interaction (Davis, et al., 2010; Marshall and Rossman, 2014). The interviews are interferences that can be barely ethical concerns as the quality interview "Evo evokes thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience" not only in participants but also in the researcher (Patton, 2014). The engagement between interviewer and interviewees can be framed as a friendship based on a necessity for trust and respect (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Therefore, this study attempts to follow the best practices that are safe and not harmful to participants. The key ethical issue was the privacy of participants who took part in these study interviews. They were assured that the findings of interviews would be reported anonymously. All the identifiers including individuals' names and company names were deleted and replaced with code. Moreover, confidentiality was ensured, and a declaration was made to all participants that the data would only be used in the research context.

Informed consent form was used to ensure privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, and to protect the rights and well-being of this research's participants. The consent was obtained from participants before interview and audio-recordings. These included verbally explaining to them the purpose of the study, the primary

objectives, and the extent of their involvement. If they agreed to participate in the research, they were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix B).

In term of the quantitative study, this research addressed ethical considerations for the study of social media marketing organisational level, which involved human participants. This study has ensured passable provisions to protect participants' privacy and maintain their confidentiality at all stages of this research. Participants volunteered to participate in this study. Their personal identification was not collected, and the concentration was on the organization's characteristics. Quantitative data was collected through Google forms, with the information sheet outlining the purpose of the research and informing participants of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time during the survey. Prior to data collection, a research ethics form was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts, Computing, Engineering and Sciences at the Sheffield Hallam University, and approval were granted (appendix E).

### **3.10. Summary**

In this study, a mixed approach of sequential qualitative and quantitative methods was adopted to investigate the assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies, with the quantitative method being the primary approach. The use of these two approaches permits a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. This chapter summarised the overall research design and methodology for both phases of this research, which includes sampling techniques, data collection methods, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

The qualitative research findings are now presented and discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. Then, Chapter 5 will discuss the research's framework that is reformed based on the findings from the qualitative phase. The constructs and hypotheses will also be determined.

## **Chapter Four: Findings of Qualitative Research**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The first qualitative phase in this research aims to explore the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies, in order to test the preliminary framework that developed in the end of the chapter on literature review. Moreover, the qualitative phase aimed to enhance the modification and development of measurements for this study's constructs and to generalise qualitative results by using large-scale sampling in the second quantitative phase.

This qualitative study explored perceptions and experiences of nine participants who work in the Saudi business environment, and this was carried out to gain an understanding of the assimilation of social media marketing, explore the factors that lead to more assimilation of social media marketing and discover consequences of assimilation of social media marketing. Qualitative analysis allowed access to participants' reflections and insights of their experiences to elicit emergent themes and interpretations. Themes that were found significantly related to the assimilation of social media marketing are discussed and supported with the participants' opinions. This chapter is a demonstration of information that allows presenting interpretation and drawing a conclusion. Examining the data in this way will enhance a clearer understanding of information found in the data.

This chapter is organised in two sections. The first section highlights study methodology and administration. Which includes: sampling process, Sample description, interview process and the organisation of qualitative findings. The second section presents data and results and the summary of findings and conclusions.

## **4.2. Study Plan and Administration**

this section proceeds to highlight the study methodology and administration. Which includes: sampling process, Sample description, interview process and organisation of qualitative findings.

### **4.2.1. Sampling process**

The main criterion for selecting the sample for the first qualitative phase is to ensure a sample with an inclusive variance experience and knowledge of using social media marketing. To achieve this variability, people who are working in social media marketing within Saudi companies were recruited to participate.

Candidate lists for both sampling techniques were retrieved from three sources: 1) referrals recommended by inexperienced respondents of emails sent in July 2014; 2) Referrals recommended by experienced respondents after interviews done in August 2014; and 3) Making calls and sending messages through Facebook pages of some Saudi companies' websites to collect contacts data. The criteria for selection were that they must be using one or more social media marketing tools in their organisation, or have research effort on social media marketing which is confirmed during the first contact with them. The final number of 32 potential candidates received emails and calls inviting them to participate in a face-to-face interview.

With the consideration, that in non-probability sampling method the size of the sample is not defined a priori, the interviews will continue until no new data were emerging, or information redundancy was achieved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ezzy, 2013; Patton, 2014). The redundancy was achieved after nine interviews. Despite the number of responses seeming to be small, Yin (2013) concludes that six to ten interviews can be sufficient for generating themes in qualitative research. Miles, et al.

(2013) states that "Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people". The evidence from published study in social media has used less than 12 respondents (e.g. D. Cox and McLeod, 2014).

#### **4.2.2. Description of The Sample**

As the aim of this research to understand the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi business context, the population needed to consist of experts or employees who are working in social media marketing within the Saudi business environment. The participants met the following inclusion criteria:

- executives who charge for managing social media marketing within large Saudi companies
- experts who have experience with implementation of social media marketing within the Saudi market. These experts can work in digital marketing businesses or act as consultants to Saudi companies.
- The interviews were conducting with the necessary number of participants to accomplish saturation and key phrase identification, which concluded on themes that addressed the phenomena. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Nine participants provided efficient data that satisfied the purpose of this study.
- Six individuals were employees of large Saudi companies while three individuals were consultants in the digital media field. All the participants are males, and five of them have a postgraduate qualification. Table (6) shows the demographics of the sample.



*Table 6: The demographics of participants*

Participants	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Type of organisation
P1	M	0–35	BA in marketing	Marketing Manager	Telecommunication
P2	M	0–35	BA in Computer Science	Marketing Officer	Technology solution
P3	M	0–35	MA Marketing	Marketing Manager	Manufacturing sector
P4	M	6–40	PhD in Information Technology	Social media adviser	Education
P5	M	6–40	MA in media and journalism	Specialist and consultant	Media and publicity
P6	M	5–50	High school	Marketing Officer	Internet and technology
P7	M	6–40	MA in Media	Digital marketing manager	Service sector
P8	M	5–30	MA in Marketing	Digital marketing specialist	E-commerce and digital marketing
P9	M	1–45	BA in mechanical engineering	Digital marketing manager	Telecommunication

#### **4.2.3. Interview’s Invitation and Process**

Calls and emails were used to invite potential candidates to participate in this research. Firstly, the researcher contacted potential candidates on the telephone. The call let the potential candidates know about the researcher, the purpose of the study, information related to the interview, and initial questions about the candidate’s experience on social media, and the convenient time and place to conduct the interview.

Each of the interviews started with a brief induction of the purpose of the study and the interview. The interview investigated the current usage of social media marketing in the Saudi market, explored what factors influence big

business to use and assimilate social media within their marketing compunctions effort, as well as how this impacts their marketing capability. Then, the participants were requested to provide demographic information such as age, gender, education level, study field and occupation.

Respondents were asked a series of questions in each interview. Participants were asked first about their current usage of social media marketing. After the usage question, respondents were requested to discuss their reasons for using and assimilating social media marketing. The interview questions also focused on the impact of using social media marketing on the marketing capability of their organisations. Although useful information and prompts were provided, the intent of the discussion during the interviews was to have participants describe in their own words, the varied facets of situations involving motivations, experiential consumption, and the use of social media marketing. By focusing on exploring the potential information among participants within each interview, the scope of the data collection increased. Interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted face-to-face in the Arabic language. All the nine interviews were digitally recorded.

An interview guide was applied to direct and lead the interview structure (Appendix A). The guide was designed to be flexible that allowed dealing with each participant separately and to investigate insights about his/her interests through the interview. Employing an active interview approach (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004), follow-up and probing questions emerged or were added as the interview was conducted. This method can lead to more elaboration (Qu and Dumay, 2011) and avoid “improvisational performance” within interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). The discussion was instinctive, but concentrated

and structured, with loose guidelines provided by the interviewer (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

The interview guide contains a set of questions that can or cannot be completely asked in each interview, considering the fact that not all participants are intended to answer all questions, because of some factors such as time consideration, misunderstanding, and lack of knowledge. The important issue in interviews was to keep the participant's responses close to the interviewing guide, and asking new questions was necessary to probe for details or carry out discussions.

#### **4.2.4. The Organisation of Qualitative Findings**

This chapter presents the findings from the semi-structured interview that was conducted with nine Saudi social media marketing practitioners and experts. All of these interviews were carried out in Arabic, and they were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. Initial categories and themes were developed through the data collection phase based on preliminary model and interview guidance.

Transcripts and notes of completed interviews were read many times by highlighting phrases and identifying emergent themes. Although each participant delivered thoughts and ideas differently, the analysis attempts to associate similarities between participants. Key phrases were located to identify themes related to the use of social media marketing and its antecedents and consequences.

There are different methods for analysing qualitative data. However, most methods include several essential steps. Spiggle (1994) suggested the inferential steps of categorisation, abstraction, dimensionalisation and iteration that link the outcome of research to its data. These four steps will be used to guide the data analysis for this study.

The data analysis began with categorisation, which refers to the process by which data units are classified or labelled. The classification procedures accrue within the coding process (Spiggle, 1994). Coding is employed to describe the concept of data and give a meaning to it (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, the coding was used to describe any particular case occurring in the data about the research purpose. Coding helps ‘generating rich theoretical categories that enable researchers to move beyond the identification of themes and unrelated constructs’ (Spiggle, 1994).

In this step, units of data identify as representing or belonging to a particular category of interest. Categorisation comprises a label, – a label gives a name to cases in the phenomenon. The categorised units of data can be a passage of a few words or many pages as long as it contains meaningful information (Spiggle, 1994). It also may be coded into one or many categories based on their similarities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Grover and Vriens, 2006). The categorisation stage was conducted both deductively (using a preliminary framework to locate priori ideas, themes and constructs within the data) and inductively (recognising evolving categories from the data) (Spiggle, 1994).

Once the data was coded, the second step of analysis data was the abstraction, which caught and assigned a higher level of patterns or more abstracted concepts within the data (Glaser, 1992). In the previous step, the identified concepts were grouped and classified into more general categories, Abstraction is more than that. ‘It collapses more empirically-grounded categories into higher-order conceptual constructs. Abstraction goes beyond the identification of patterns in the data’ (Spiggle, 1994). Also, abstraction can be described as sub-categories or themes to exemplify classifications of higher categories (Glaser, 1992). It can be constructed

from the preliminary model or newly emerged constructs that may be theoretically related to this study purpose.

The third step is a dimensionalisation of research categories. The goal is to establish dimensions or properties for each category or construct depending on the preliminary framework that has been suggested at the end of the literature review chapter. Also, the dimensionalisation step will identify any dimension that could be emerging through the data during the analysis phase. The dimensionalisation can be benefited from this research in two ways according to Spiggle (1994): 'By systematically exploring empirical variations across incidents representing a construct' and when 'the researcher clarifies and enriches its conceptual meaning'.

The fourth step is the iteration that moves through a collection of data and analysis in such a manner that prior operations shape the following ones (Spiggle, 1994; Grover and Vriens, 2006). In this step, the researcher does not perform precise analysis steps sequentially, but move back and forth between the previous stages to improve and enhance the research result. According to Merrick (1999) 'the iterative cycling between observation and interpretation or between dialogue with the text. It entails 'grounding' the interpretations by using individual examples in the data to support abstractions or higher-level theorising.'

The final qualitative analysis will report representative examples or quotations capturing the essence of a specific view that was translated and presented. Alongside the predefined themes, other concepts and issues have emerged from the qualitative data presented in detail in the following section.

### **4.3. Finding of Qualitative Research**

This section presents findings revealed from the qualitative study, which was designed to address the research aim and objectives. The key themes extracted from the data analysis for assimilation of social media marketing in the Saudi context are as follows:

- Antecedents for the assimilating of social media marketing are
  1. Relative advantages
  2. Top management support
  3. Organisational readiness
  4. Competition intensity
- Assimilation of social media marketing are
  1. Strategic level of assimilation
  2. Tactical level of assimilation
- Consequences of assimilation of social media marketing are
  1. Marketing capabilities

#### **4.3.1. Antecedents to Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

One of the primary objectives for qualitative interviews was to explore the reasons and factors that lead large Saudi companies to implement and assimilate social media marketing in their marketing communication efforts. Based on the preliminary framework (the details in chapter 2), these factors can be classified into three general categories: technological context, organisational context and environmental context. Within the technological context, participants have indicated that the relative advantage is more related to the assimilation of social media marketing than the compatibility with other existing systems. The organisational context consists of two themes: top management support and organisational readiness.

Finally, the environmental context has one theme, which is competition intensity. Each theme with its minor themes is discussed next.

#### **4.3.1.1. Relative Advantages**

Relative advantages have been found as the most frequent significant factor that leads to adopting and using technology (Malekpour and Norouzi, 2013) among the five characteristics of innovation diffusion theory developed by Rogers (1983). All participants indicated that the main reason for using social media marketing in their marketing strategy is its related technological advantages or benefits. Participants (P8) clearly emphasised that by the following statement:

***'Most Saudi companies from various sectors are using social media in marketing because of its benefits' (P8).***

The data indicated that there are four main technological advantages of using social media marketing: ease of use, accuracy in reaching targeted consumers, easy to get feedback and easy to measure social media marketing activities and its effectiveness.

#### ***Ease of Use***

Many participants indicated that the social media marketing is simple and easy to use as a technology compared to other technical attributes of traditional media. Employees can use it anywhere and access the social media platform using any device supporting the Internet and web 2.0 technologies. Usually, organisations attend to the need to use a particular technology; they compare if the need for training in technology use would be extremely cumbersome compared to the perceived usefulness of technology (Walczuch et al., 2007). In the case of social media marketing, the situation can be opposite: it is easy to use and does not need rigorous

training or deeper understanding of technology. Also, social media platforms are easy and available for consumers to use anytime as the participant (P1) indicated in following comment:

***'Social media can be distinguished by its usability or its ease of use for both companies and consumers as well, it is recognised by accessibility or how accessible it is for people to reach to social media' (P1).***

Social media marketing enables organisations to publish and share content with their consumers directly and easily as is shown in the comment made by participant (P5) in the following comment:

***'It has become very easy for companies to publish any information or news today. For example, a poultry company received complaints about the quality of its products. Previously, before diffusion of social media, the company needs a lot of money and time to publish the explanatory statement that all its products meet a good production standard. Now, just one tweet with this statement will do the job'. (P5)***

Many social media platforms make it easier for customers to interact with companies. Therefore, they can ask questions from anywhere and at any time, send a complaint and present reviews for other consumers. Participants noted that the companies use social media because it offers an easier method to carry out two-way communication with their customers, which enhances their ability to create value for their consumers, as described by the following comment:

***'One of the motivations that leads companies to use social media marketing is ease of use for their customers. Technically, now, ordinary consumers can just communicate with the company through social networking sites if they have any issue. While it was difficult for***



*consumers in the past (before the era of social media), if they want to communicate with the company, they have to visit the company's place or use traditional communication tools, such as email or phone, and there is no guarantee that they would get a response. However, the company should respond to the client in the event of the company's name being mentioned on social networking sites.' (P3)*

### **Accuracy to Reach Targeted Consumers**

Another technological advantage of social media marketing as a communication tool is its ability to target very specific consumers and even more precisely niche markets than other forms of traditional marketing tools, as the following comments illustrate:

*'Social media sites have analysis and measuring tools that help to identify target segments. For example, it is easy to obtain an accurate data from Facebook that shows the number of users in Saudi Arabia, their demographic information and their interests. I prefer to target 1,000 customers who are interested in my product, rather than spend more money in newspaper or TV advertising, which can be seen by thousands or even millions of non-interested costumers'. (P2)*

Using digital tools, such as social media marketing, a company's messages can target consumers with very specific demographics, and more importantly, the consumers who are interested in its products and services, as the following comment illustrates:

*'Social media marketing enables businesses to target their consumers based on their interests rather than demographics, such as age, gender, etc.' (P4)*

### ***The Lack of Third Party Control***

In social media platforms, there are no gatekeepers or a third party, such as advertising agencies, who can intervene in the type of published information or at the time of publishing. Companies can now expose everything that can be exposed, and they have a chance to engage with their consumers directly. The respondent (P1) emphasised this factor in the following comment point:

***‘We suffer from the monopoly of few companies on the advertising and marketing industry here in Saudi Arabia. Social media allows businesses to reach customers directly without falling at the mercy of advertising companies’. (P1)***

### ***Easy to Get Feedback***

Some participants indicated that the most important technological attribute of social media marketing enabled an instant interaction between companies and their consumers, which helped them to get immediate feedback about their products and service. Participants (P6 and P3) confirmed this view in the following comments:

***‘The reason that drives companies to adopt and use social media marketing is quick reach and response from the company to its consumers. Social media can deliver the information about products very fast as well as get feedback very fast’. (P6).***

***‘Social media marketing can give companies depth and broader analysis for its products’. (P3)***

Alternatively, participant (P7) confirmed the benefit of social media marketing in getting instant feedback by a comparison between the traditional media and social media marketing, as the following comments demonstrates:

*‘Social media has become an important tool, especially in Saudi Arabia, because the journey of the marketing message differs from what happened in the past; previously, companies sent marketing messages through the media, but there was no feedback. However, with the appearance of platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, the consumers' nature has changed from just listening or watching the companies' messages to talking and giving feedback.’ (P7)*

#### ***Social Media Marketing Supports Customer Service***

Participants raised another point that social media marketing as a web 2.0 technology offers significant opportunities for companies to engage and interact with their consumers and create a new method besides the traditional one for customer service. Companies not only use social media marketing to maintain consumer relationship and build their brand, but they can also use it as a customer service tool as is mentioned in the following comment by the participant (P8):

*‘The second thing is customer care; many companies use social media for the purpose of communication with their clients, reply to their questions and meets their needs’. (P8)*

#### ***Ability to Analyse Social Media Marketing Data***

Social media marketing as a technological tool enables companies to exploit other technologies, such as Big Data, regarding machine learning, data mining and context awareness. Moreover, it provides a post-analysis for the gathered data

feedback, such as experiences, opinions and expectations of the user, which is a greater potential for immersive and participative marketing. Participant (P4) explains that in the following comment:

*'The ability of social media to deal with what is known as 'big data', through many analytical tools that can be organised and provide a simpler form of data, which help companies to understand their consumer's experience and opinion about their brand and products. That can be lead the companies to be proactive and predict problems before they happen'. (P4)*

Using of the big date through social media marketing can increase the effectiveness of social media marketing and improve the overall effectiveness of the marketing strategy of a company. Participant (P1) emphasised that in following comments:

*'With social media marketing, the new term called big data has appeared. Through this data, I can know the consumer behaviour without meeting the consumer, but I can know if my campaign is successful or not from the next day, and I can change my marketing communication strategy according to the feedback from consumers. Getting instant feedback is one of the most important reasons that let companies use social media marketing'. (P1)*

#### **4.3.1.2. Top Management Support**

Top management support connects to the organisational context that can impact the assimilation of social media marketing. In the literature, this construct refers to the level of participative activities of top management that signify and legitimise the importance of assimilating new technology (Chatterjee et al., 2002).

Some Participants indicated that the top management support could be a critical construct since social media marketing is an extremely dynamic and a quick communication tool which requires higher independence in terms of performance strategies, task assignments and making decisions. Therefore, the level of support and leadership from the top management is critical to successful assimilation of social media marketing. Within this themes, two sub-themes have been emerged during the interviews: the importance of participants of top management and types of top management support.

### ***Impact of Top Management's Perceptions Of Using Social Media Marketing***

The level of top management support can be distinct by the perception of senior managers about social media marketing. Participants (P7) and (P6) emphasised that the importance of senior managers' perception and beliefs about the social media marketing can be the drive to the level of their support:

***'At the end of the day, based on the belief of the top management on social media, you will either get the support or not at all. If they believe that you will find all horizons open, they will give you all the power you need for the strong and organised use of social media marketing'. (P7)***

***'(From my experience) I was working in an organisation; I was always asked to activate social media marketing, but the rejection came from the top management. They had put many obstacles to the use of social media. So, they lost a very important opportunity; if they know its importance, they will put it in their priority list'. (P6).***

The participants indicated three reasons of a negative perception of Saudi's top management towards using social media marketing. These reasons can lead to a limited use of social media marketing or not any at all. The first reason is the

misunderstanding or the lack of knowledge about social media marketing, as the participant (P5) indicated in the following comment:

***‘Many managers in large companies believe that social media is not a marketing tool; they think that social media is only for young people and social communication, and can't be an alternative for traditional marketing tools.’ (P5)***

The second reason that makes the top management in large companies hesitant in term of using social media marketing is the lack of trust, as the following comments indicate:

***‘Until now, we have been suffering in large companies because of their lack of trust in social media marketing’. (P2)***

Thirdly, some senior managers have a great fear of using social media marketing because of relative risks, such as negative consumer reaction and bad publicity:

***‘There is a fear of using social media marketing because of the fear of consumer reaction’. (P6)***

Participants indicated many suggestions to change the senior managers' perception of using social media marketing. For example, marketing teams have a reasonability to change the negative perception of the top management by explaining the importance of using social media marketing in the marketing strategy of their organisations towards social media:

***‘Social media practitioners should educate the leaders in the company about the importance of using social media’. (P2)***

***‘Top management support is important, and the marketing team should explain the power and attributes of social media in marketing’.***  
***(P1)***

Another suggestion to change the negative perception of the top management towards social media marketing is to compel the senior managers to increase their knowledge about social media by taking proper training in social media marketing:

*‘It is necessary that managers now attend a training course in social media, to know the ABC of social media and its impact and importance of the company's presence in it and for many reasons, the first one is to know what happened and how to deal with it, and to know your marketing team is using social media marketing properly or not’.*  
(P5)

Also, the trial of the use of social media marketing can be lead to positive impacts on the top management’s perception and attitude towards social media marketing as the following example show:

*‘Convincing senior management is a task for the marketing team. I have had this experience with one of the large companies which specialises in perfumes; it spends a large amount of money every month in print advertising. I had gone to them and asked them to give me some money just for one month to create a marketing campaign through social media, and then see the result. The experience was successful, and they directed most of their marketing efforts to social media marketing’.* (P5)

However, participants (P9) indicated that top managements in business to consumer (B2C) companies hold a more positive perception about the use of social media marketing, as the following comment confirms:

*‘Many leaders of business to consumer companies believe in the importance of social media marketing, and many of them transform*

*their marketing strategy from the traditional method to social media marketing'. (P2).*

Also, when the top management is familiar with social media, it is easy for the marketing team to get a higher level of support in terms of using social media marketing:

*'There are some senior managers who support the use of social media marketing in their companies because they themselves use this technology. So, if you look at their organisations, you will find them very active in social media. Moreover, they support this usage by sharing and retweeting the organisational content in their personal accounts'. (P4)*

#### ***Types of Top Management Support***

Although the positive attitude of top management towards social media marketing is important to make a decision on whether to use it, it is not enough to determine the level of support that the social media marketing team can gain from top management. The level of assistance can include three aspects according to the participants' opinions: strategic aspect, executive aspect and financial aspect.

In the strategic aspect, the top management establishes a social media marketing plan and determine the strategic objective of using social media marketing for the whole organisation. The following comments illustrate that:

*'Top management who draw strategy for the company, can include the presence in social media and decide how the company will enter social media, in-house, outsourcing or both'. (P9)*

Moreover, top management is responsible for determining the monitoring strategy of social media marketing as the participant (P9) confirmed:



*'In our company, the top management puts on us key performance indicators (KPIs) for using social media marketing'. (P9)*

In an executive aspect, the top management provides the marketing team with all the power and freedom to manage social media marketing, as the following comment shows:

*The top management gives the autonomy to the social media team to publish and manage social media accounts. This autonomy is very important in social media because I can publish and engage with consumers without pre-permission'. (P8)*

The social media team needs this level of trust because of the nature of social media:

*'Customers in social media typically expect that the response to their messages will be quick. If there is no great autonomy for top management, I think the social media team cannot achieve any success'. (P8)*

*'The marketing team that uses social media must be having powers and privileges to deal with any problems and crisis because you need to quick action'. (P2)*

The senior management must be conscious of their role as a policymaker and mentoring the use of social media marketing but not responsible for managing the executive work of social media marketing:

*'The is a very important issue that I have faced during my work as a digital marketing manager. The top management believes in the importance of social media as a marketing tool, but they have some*

*concerns; so, they try to intervene in social media marketing work or its content, which result in many problems for marketing team'. (P3)*

The financial aspect one of the significant evidence for the level of support that top management can provide to the marketing team for successful assimilation of social media:

*'Another point is providing budgets; Always the first thing many companies sacrifice is the marketing budget. If the company does not do well, it starts by cutting the marketing budget. However, if the company believes in the importance of social media marketing, it will reserve a budget for it. (P8).*

#### **4.3.1.3. Organisational readiness:**

Organisational readiness was the second theme that emerged within the organisational context. In the adoption and assimilation literature, the organisational readiness refers to the level of sophistication of IT usage and financial resources available to an organisation to assimilation innovation. Social media marketing promotes an ease-of-use technology and does not need huge resources. However, based on the semi-structured interview, the organisational readiness can differ within the social media marketing context from other technologies, it focuses more on factors, such as employee experiences, proper outsourcing, usage policies and marketing budget.

#### ***Resources for Using Social Media Marketing***

Many participants indicate that the organisational readiness relies on the availability of intangible resources, such as social media knowledge, employees, experience and management skills as Participant (P4) stated in the following comment explained:

*‘The existence of technical support does not mean that social media can be used properly; the companies must plan and facilitate the tasks, because open accounts on the social media platform may be the biggest success story or the biggest story of failure. If a consumer communicates with you through your account, and you are not ready and not possess the knowledge, and not have enough teamwork, this will lead to adverse consequences for the organisation’ (P4).*

Moreover, participant (P6) indicated that knowledge is an essential element in organisational readiness since social media audience more selective about the published content:

*‘Companies must employ people who have enough knowledge about how to use social media marketing in a correct way, because Saudi consumers are smart and aware of the world around them; they are more accurate about what they publish in social media platforms’ (P6).*

Even for the organisation that uses outsourcing or consultants, social media marketing knowledge is necessary:

*‘There is a problem among many companies that they do not believe in consulting and using people who are specialists in social media marketing; therefore, they make some attempts of using social media, but they usually fail and may they face negative reactions from consumers. For that, they stop using social media marketing and close their accounts in platform’. (P2)*

Therefore, participant (P8) raised a dilemma that the Saudi organisations were facing when they started to use social media marketing, which was the availability of employees who have enough knowledge in using social media marketing:

*‘What is happening now is that the leaders of the company believe in the importance of social media. However, people who are responsible for a social medium in the enterprise are unqualified or does not have the experience. Because either their background come from traditional media or they do not have enough knowledge of social media. They can cause harm of the organisation more than that would benefit’ (P8).*

#### ***Understanding of Target Market***

Besides the knowledge and skills in social media marketing, the employees should have a good knowledge of the target consumers, and the ability to talk the same language. Participant (P9) demonstrated that in following example:

*‘If we follow the Saudi companies, we find that the unique ones who employ the local people are not international companies, because of the demography of consumers and the users' adoption of social media differs from country to country. For example, Twitter was the first social media platform in Saudi Arabia, while, Facebook was the first platform in Egypt. So, if you bring an Egyptian company to manage your social media marketing, it may not be working because they think all Saudi users use Facebook, and maybe they put all their efforts and budget in the wrong place. Understanding the local environment is a very important factor, and only a local company or an employee from the same environment can do that’. (P9)*

### ***Resource to Assimilate Social Media Marketing***

The organisational readiness involves preparation of all other departments in an organisation to provide enough resources to facilitate the assimilation of social media marketing:

***‘In our company, as there is a need to cope with our market and respond to the consultant team, our social media team has resided in the organisational structure of the company, and was presented in the human resources strategy’. (P9)***

Another element of organisational readiness is to provide the marketing team with all their needs of the established acceptable level of social media marketing.

***‘When the organisation is interested in using social media marketing, they facilitate the marketing team with all the requirements they need to start their work with social media marketing in a professional way’. (P6)***

The following comment explains some requirements that the social media team may need:

***‘The basic requirements of social media marketing before its use, includes readiness and strategic and executive plans, also drawing a scenario for most cases’. (P4)***

Using social media platforms for marketing is free. However, the size of the financial support for social media marketing activities (i.e. content creation, cost of outsources and marketing campaigns) indicated the level of assimilation of social media marketing that the following comment illustrates:

***‘Another measurement is the size of the budget that the company devotes to social media marketing. The company cannot reveal this***

*secret information. However, it is usually about 10–20% of the marketing budget'. (P9)*

#### **4.3.1.4. Competitive Intensity**

In a market with competitive intensity and increasing uncertainty, organisations need to be more flexible to adapt to any changes; the capabilities of adapting to the changing market can lead organisations to be more successful. Social media marketing has become a strategic tool to enhance such adaptability by allowing an organisation to redesign their marketing strategy, promote marketing communication techniques and reserve marketing resources (Hays et al., 2013). Different views from participants in terms of the impact of competitive intensity in the assimilation of social media marketing is described in the following sub-themes:

##### ***Role of Competitive Intensity***

The competitive intensity has a positive influence on the assimilation of social media marketing as the following comment describes:

*'In the case of many of my competitors using social media, I think the first and the important factor that leads me to use social media marketing will be competition insanity'. (P6)*

Alternatively, other participants indicated that organisations should use social media marketing with or without competition intensity:

*'Competition plays a significant role in the assimilation of social media marketing; competitors are always running marketing and advertising campaigns with new and innovative ideas to attract the largest number of potential customers and target the consumers' subconscious of keeping their products as the first choice. On the other hand, even without the presence of competitors, there must be a social*

*media assimilation of the businesses because it must be communicated to the customers in any way'. (P5)*

*'On another hand, in the immature market, such as restaurants and retailers, there is a significant opportunity for them to be the first initiator to start and enter the new market'. (P8)*

### ***Organisations' Reaction to Competition***

The participants indicated that companies from sector to sector can differ in terms of responses to competitive intensity; it does not lead to the use of social media marketing all the time as the following comment explains:

*'About the Saudi market, some sectors, such as the food and telecommunication industry lead companies to use social media, while in other sectors, there may be intensity of competition, but we could not find a significant role for social media marketing in these sectors. For example, there is a huge competition in the fashion market, but there is no impact on social media marketing in this sector. Another example is the automotive sector in Saudi Arabia. There is no momentum or interactivity for social media marketing. ' (P2).*

However, participants indicated that Saudi companies within the same sector attempt to imitate each other. The following quotations illustrate the organisational behaviour when one organisation within any sector attempts to use social media marketing:

*'Always, when any company invests in social media, other businesses in the same industry follow them directly'. (P8)*

*'Companies are jealous of each other, and they are competing to expand their share in the market or even in the social media platforms*

*to expand marketing activities to get the largest number of followers and views'. (P6)*

### ***The impact of competition on using social media marketing***

Participants believe that competition can help an organisation to improve their social media marketing strategy:

*'Social media marketing enables organisations to know what your competitors are doing, so you can distinguish your communication strategy via social media marketing from their strategies'. (P3)*

In some sectors, the level of competition intensity can be extended to the techniques of using social media marketing as an example from the following comment:

*'In some sectors, for example, in telecommunications, the competition among companies reaching for two large businesses can attract, firstly, one million followers in Twitter. They were using all the marketing techniques to achieve this target. The competition also led these companies being more transparent with their consumers to sustain a long-term relationship with them'. (P2).*

The competition intensity not only lead to use social media marketing, but it also lead to more assimilation and creative usage of social media marketing as the following comments show:

*'It is important to monitor the competitors' social media marketing activities to know the feedback they have gotten by using the analytic tools. After that, I can decide if I can do the same thing or do something different with more creativity. Social media is changing the advertising*



*map. For example, YouTube ads have about five seconds to catch attention'. (P1)*

*'At first, the existence of competition in social networks polished marketing team skills. Competition can make the team more innovative and bring out their best'. (P8)*

#### **4.3.2. Assimilating Social Media Marketing in Saudi Businesses**

A key aspect of the qualitative semi-structured interviews was to explore how Saudi businesses are assimilating social media marketing and what are the main themes that are related to the assimilation process. Participants spoke at length about the usage and the assimilation of social media marketing in the Saudi business environment. They suggested many determinants for the assimilation of social media marketing, including the awareness of the potential of social media marketing, strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing, and a tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing.

##### **4.3.2.1. The Awareness of Social Media Marketing in Saudi Market**

The awareness of social media marketing can be one of the most significant determinants of assimilation of social media marketing. Companies with a high level of awareness are more likely to have a higher rate of use and assimilation of social media marketing. However, several participants indicated that the awareness of the potential of social media as a strategic marketing tool is still low among many Saudi companies as a result of misunderstanding or a lack of knowledge. Therefore, many of the Saudi companies use social media marketing with an absence of a clear strategy and objectives, and several participants indicated that as following comments show:

*'The strategy for using social media marketing is still a shallow culture in the Saudi market'. (P2)*

*'Some companies may have an honorary presence in social media; they use social media as a bulletin without any interaction with the customers' (P5).*

*'In the earlier times, some Saudi companies used social media as an extra mile or for showing off and to be cool'. (P9).*

Moreover, the lack of understanding of social media marketing and how it works can be a barrier to a successful implementation of social media marketing; many participants indicated that in following comments:

*'Many companies treat social media as a communication tool, but it is not a tool. It is something more than a tool; it is a strategic choice and a must input in your marketing and sales strategy. If you use it as a publishing tool, please do not use it'. (P8).*

Another misunderstanding about social media results from comparing it with traditional media:

*'If you publish something in the traditional media, it does not mean that you should publish it again on your social media platforms, because social media audiences are different from traditional media audiences'. (P7)*

On the other hand, participant (P4) believed that some Saudi companies are more professional in terms of their use of social media marketing:

*'I think several Saudi big businesses who use social media are massive users and use it for many purposes'. (P4)*

#### **4.3.2.2. The Strategic Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Participants indicated that Saudi companies strategically use social media marketing for many purposes and functions. For example, participants mentioned a list of social media marketing features that are available for organisations to use, as stated by the following comments:

*‘Social media is one of the great communicative arms for companies; through social media marketing, a company can publish information and news and engage with consumers. Also, it uses a tool to attract customers to the official website’. (P7)*

*‘Now, there are many Saudi companies that use social media to listen to their consumers, and businesses use tools to identify any mention of their name in social media for knowing any problem and solving them at an early stage’. (P1)*

There are different views about how one can determine those organisations’ low utilisation or high utilisation of social media marketing. Many participants think that as companies used many social media marketing functions, their level of assimilation can be higher:

*‘The people who charge for social media marketing should practice many functions, such as PR, marketing relationship and selling. The social media marketing team understands that their job is not only publishing information about products, but also engaging with consumers, answering questions and even selling products in addition to collecting feedback from the consumer’. (P5)*

*‘Companies are different in terms of the purposes for which they use social media marketing; some companies use it only for one purpose. For example, they connect their RSS to the Twitter; they only*

*publish information without any engagement with consumers. On the other hand, there are companies that try to use social media marketing for many purposes'. (P6)*

Alternatively, one participant has a different view regarding too many functions, and indicate a higher level of assimilation:

*'I am against the use of a vast number of social media functions, and I have always been advised to focus on the use of one or two at the most, because it is, in the first place, related to the aim of using social media'. (P8).*

Functions of social media marketing can be decided based on the organisations goals of used as the following comments demonstrated:

*'The reasons that can be the impact of a companies' entry strategy or be choosing the functions of social media marketing are , in the beginning, you should be driven by your goals, and after that, you decide which platform you should go to'. (P1)*

A good example for choose social media functions:

*'One of the companies that I have worked with tells us that the aim of the presence in social media is to reinforce the loyalty of their employees to the organisation. We brainstormed and had too many options in front of us; one of these options was to use the Instagram account of this company and an uploaded photo of employees. Then, we let them talk for 15 seconds, including stating their names, job and declaration that they happy and proud to help consumers. We linked it to a hashtag and published it among than 50,000 accounts. By this option, we could achieve this aim' (P8).*

Moreover, the industry sector has an impact on the type of social media marketing functions that organisation can use:

*‘Some companies have an advanced strategy for their presence in social media. There are many reasons for that, such as the industrial sector and products or services that the company offers can impact the platform that can be used. Moreover, the content and the instructive strategy with consumers will be published. The industrial sector can decide if the company should have an active user or only use social media to publish trusted information for their consumers’. (P1)*

Also, the social media marketing functions can be determined by who charges the managing of social media marketing:

*‘One of the indicators is knowing if companies take social media seriously or not and analysing if the company conducts social media marketing in-house or through outsourcing, or companions between in-house and outsourcing’. (P9).*

The behaviour of organisations on social media platforms can be another determining factor for the level of social media marketing.

*‘In the first three months of entry into the social media, Our strategy was to listen to customers because the interaction will be slow. During these three months, we collected database about what our customers want from us and their needs. Then, we create guidance to explain how our team answers the consumer's enquiries’. (P7)*

Another participant summarises the stages that the organisation can experience during its assimilation of social media marketing:

*'In the first stage, the company only talks and publishes without listening; some companies may be using social media for a year just to talk, and they ignore any interaction with consumers. Then, the company starts being interactive with the consumers. Some businesses in this stage using social media as a research tool. It just listens to see what consumers said about them and collect feedback. Some companies do not prefer to use social media at this stage when there is bad publicity to avoid any escalation. After that, the company uses social media to communicate and interact with consumers on topics that are related to their business.*

*In the final stage, the company use social media to communicate and interact with consumers in general topics that are not related to their business. The example for that is two football teams play the final game of the league, and when one of them wins, we send our congratulations to the winner via social media. So, this can be called as joint conversations. Another example is during Eid, people greet each other and participate in their festival'. (P9)*

#### **4.3.2.3. Tactical Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Data from interviews show that the assimilation of social media marketing can be determined by how organisations practise social media marketing on a daily basis.

##### ***Diversity of Types and Formats of Content***

The first critical measurement of assimilation of social media marketing according to this theme is a variety of types and formats of content that are used by the organisation in the social media platform:

*‘Diversity in the use of formats and types of messages in social media is a good indicator of the extent to which the company can assimilate social media marketing’. (P7)*

*‘I agree that using diverse content formats lead to stronger social media presence. The evidence for that is Twitter enabling the appearing of a picture in a timeline and the add video feature, because, they believe that the picture and the video are more effective than plain text. Moreover, Twitter has developed the sharing of website links with a small description. In a study, the popularity of company website that use Twitter cards for website links increased by 40 %’. (P8).*

As the previous comment mentioned the critical importance of using visual content, many participants indicated that content formats, such as the images, pictures, infographics and videos could be a more efficient way to communicate with consumers and draw their attention, The following comments provide a better explanation:

*‘The tweet with a picture is more attractive to followers, and they focus on the picture more than the text’. (P6)*

*‘If you add your message photo or video, it is more likely to attract more attention and interaction’. (P4)*

*‘The video can be a very effective marketing tool for your company. Many studies that I have read emphasise that a short video can be summarised in many texts and provided in an attractive template for consumers. Moreover, during my experience in digital marketing, I found message videos and photos more effective than text. Usually when promoting new sales on one of our product ranges, we attempted to use*

*the photo because we believe that this way, we will attract our target market more'. (P5)*

*'There is a new art in social media, which is the infographics. These designs have summarised much text and attract the people. You educate individuals, and at the same time provide information about what the companies are doing to face any negative reaction from the public'. (P7)*

Using different types and formats of content can be beneficial or harmful for an organisation. Therefore, participants suggested many factors that impact the determination of formats and types of content. Participant P6 demonstrated some of these factors in his comments that follow:

*'In our company, we use only some formats and types of content, and not all of them, because using everything can lead to a bad result. There are many factors that can control the selection of formats and types of content, such as the nature of business, prestige of the organisation, the marketing team ability and the target market'. (P6)*

In terms of using visual content, the participant P2 believed that company strategy has a major role as the following comments demonstrates:

*'According to the strategy of the company, if I want to spread my products well, I will use images and videos, because customers will be more interactive with them'. (P2).*

Another participant indicated that the sector or the type of product impact the decision to choose between content formats:



*‘The content format depends on the company sector. For example, the best format for beverage companies is videos, because they can convey a more persuasive message, while using images can be enough for the insurance companies’. (P1)*

Alternatively, the availability of analysis tools for visual content can be another motivation to be used by companies, as the following comment indicates:

*‘If we talk about social media, images are the best format because it is more effective and easy to measure its impact. Now, the analysis tool in social media mostly analyses the pictures, such as the number of clicks on it, but they do not analyse the number of clicks on the text’. (P7)*

Moreover, it is necessary and beneficial for companies to use various types of content. The participant indicated that in the following comment:

*‘The good variation in the type of content can be lead to a stronger impact on consumers; in our company, we put a condition on ourselves to produce the weekly column containing the type of content that will be shared for the next week’. (P8)*

### ***Consumers’ Reaction to Content***

The diversity of the types and formats of content can be an evidence of the assimilation of social media marketing. However, it is not proof of content being influential. Therefore, it can measure a level of impact of content through the reaction of consumers. A good content can be the effect of the behaviour of consumers in social media platforms. Many participants indicate how consumers react to the content of an organisation:

*‘The loyalties of fans or followers; for example, if a company tweets good content, how many consumers will retweet this content without having any influence on them?’.* (P5)

*‘If you use a video and publish it on Twitter and YouTube and people like it, they will share and reuse it in other platforms, such as Facebook, Whatsapp and other platforms. Multimedia is more effective in the topic of diffusion. Text usually can be shared but not used again’.* (P2).

*‘In terms of videos, people like and make them their favourites, because sometimes they cannot watch them immediately and reserve them for watching them later. Most of the consumers are not interested in texts unless they have some valuable information or become viral. The website links are usually opened by people when they have nothing to do; for example, at night, when the social media traffic is quiet, and someone checks his timeline on Twitter. Then, he does not find anything to read, so he starts clicking on any website link he finds’* (P6)

However, a participant indicates the problem related to content that can be published by Saudi companies:

*‘There is a problem in the use of social media marketing in the Saudi market; we have a tiny original content compared to very high recycled content; also, we have very high spam’.* (P4)

#### **4.3.2.4. Interactivity:**

Engaging and interacting with consumers is one of the important dimensions of assimilation of social media marketing. An executive of a digital marketing company confirmed that with the following comment:

*'It can measure the level of usage of social media marketing based on the interaction of the consumers'. (P3).*

Gaining interactivity with consumers can be the ultimate result of using social media marketing, which are leading companies to be more creative:

*'The extent of creativity in content use in social media marketing is not just publishing information, which can increase the volume of engagement with consumers. So, some companies try to use more attractive content to engage with consumers. In my opinion, the engagement with consumers is one of the measurement factors of the level of assimilation of social media marketing'. (P8)*

#### **4.3.2.5. Social Media Platforms**

It has also lead companies to be more cautious in terms of the platforms and the contents they used:

*'The volume of using social media marketing can be determined based on my goals and strategies of using social media marketing, and this can help me to choose the proper social media platform with suitable content, which ensures the interaction between my consumers and me. It is not good that the company has an account on every social media platform without any interactivity'. (P2).*

The following example from a new media manager in a service company confirms how companies attempt to acquire engagement with consumers:

*'For example, if your goal is to engage with the consumer and you are a real estate company, it will be suitable for you to use Instagram because you will take photos for properties and create hashtags for consumers'. (P9).*

The number of platforms that the company can use has been suggested as an indicator for the assimilation of social media marketing. It is not only the number of platforms, but also the number of accents within each platform that companies use to serve their different purpose:

*‘Another measurement for assimilation social media is the number of company sub-accounts in social media; so, the company with a large volume of messages and interaction with consumers need to open more than one account. In our company, the first account was a specialist in consumer care. Customer care needs people with a specialisation and a certain knowledge that you cannot find in marketing an average employee. We also have an account specialist in business and target other companies. Account for life for an event’.*  
(P9).

Using many social media platforms can lead to many benefits for companies as the following comments show:

*‘Using many websites can help the company to diffuse, but it does not grant the consumer's acceptance of the company message’.* (P1)

*‘In my opinion, using more social media platforms is better because you can increase the company's reach. Moreover, these platforms connect with each other. For example, I can set up an account on Twitter, and automatically, it posts the same on Instagram and Facebook. This is not repetition; this is more about an increase in the cycle of my communication, and my effort should be to focus on creating a good content because publishing it becomes very easy’.* (P4)

However, other participants believe that using many platforms does have an effect on the level of organisational assimilation of social media marketing:

*‘Using many social media websites does not mean that you are using social media marketing properly’. (P1)*

*‘I am against the diversity in using social media platforms, because there are real-life examples of companies using a single platform, and succeeding in achieving what they want to from social media marketing’. (P8).*

*‘It important to focus on a limited number of platforms; three or five platforms are better than targeting every platform, which may lead to wasting time and money’. (P5)*

Alternatively, some participants thought that there are many factors that impact the choice of social media platforms:

*‘Before we choose the platforms, we ask what the goal of presence in social media platforms is? It can be increasing sales, gaining more followers, maximising the reach and increasing brand awareness. After we select our goals, we map them out on chances’. (P8)*

*‘A very important point before using social media marketing is why I will use it; there are many aspects of using social media, such as marketing, educating, news and social responsibility. In our company, we use one account for news and education people while we have separate accounts for customer service in each region to make our service faster’. (P2)*

In the Saudi market, companies attempt to use a few social media marketing strategies, as the following comments demonstrate:

*‘Most Saudi companies do not use more than five of these social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Google+’. (P6)*

*‘Most companies currently dedicated to use Twitter because of the obsession with achieving a significant number of followers, and this practice is not good because they focus only on a single platform and ignore the rest of the platforms. It supposes that the company must assimilate most of the platforms that most of their target customer segments are existent in. So, I should have a presence on most platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.’ (P5)*

#### **4.3.3. The Impact of Social Media Marketing On Marketing Capabilities**

Using social media marketing can lead to many benefits and consequences as a marketing tool for Saudi organisations, which can be improved and contribute to marketing capabilities. It can bring many expected outcomes for companies; if it does not, this can indicate a poor use of social media marketing as a social media marketing expert confirms:

*‘At the end of the day, you use social media to sell your products if not for bringing more consumers to you, if not for increasing your market share, if not for making it easy, effortless and less time-consuming for your consumers to communicate with you. If these things do not happen, this means there is a problem in your use of social media marketing’. (P5)*

##### **4.3.3.1. Reduce Costs and Increase Profits:**

In the beginning, the financial aspect of using social media marketing was raised as an essential element in terms of cost reduction and profit. Participants noted

that using social media marketing has a significant impact on the marketing budget. It is an effective tool with a lower cost compared to traditional marketing methods. The following comment gives a comparison between these two forms of media.

*‘The cost of social media is very low compared to traditional media. For example, the cost of a full advertising page is 40,000 SAR (£ 8000) in the biggest newspaper in Saudi Arabia. However, not more than 100,000 interested and non-interested people will see your advertising in a specific day. If you use social media platforms, you will target thousands of interested and potential consumers for just 10% to 20% of your traditional media budget.’ (P2).*

Social media marketing can reduce the cost of marketing communication because its new way of marketing is as the following comments described:

*‘There are many impacts of social media use on marketing capabilities such as promoting new techniques that can be reducing the cost of marketing’. (P7)*

The following comment described one of these new technologies, which helps companies promote their products without any further cost:

*‘Social media is word-of-mouth, which is the most effective marketing communication strategy. Social media, and because of its diffusion, power, easy access to people, any word or referral through social media platform about any product, the consumer becomes a marketing agent for a company for free. Because of that, social media marketing give companies the power of word-of-mouth’. (P1)*

Social media marketing not only reduces the cost of marketing communications, but also leads to increase the profits of companies, as the example in the following comment:

*‘Social media marketing can increase the profitability of business, and an example for that is one of the big fast food restaurant chains in Saudi Arabia released a social media marketing campaign during the world cup 2014, which promised consumers to get 1 SAR discount for each goal that scored in a match of the day. The result of the campaign was astonishing, and the company not only achieved profits but promoted their brand’.(P7).*

Moreover, using social media marketing can reduce the cost of research and development (R&D), since organisations can gain the feedback from consumers directly.

*‘Social media marketing provides a chance to companies to collect feedback from their consumers about their products and services for free.’ (P1).*

#### **4.3.3.2. Increase Marketing Communication Capabilities**

Many participants highlight the impact of social media marketing on the marketing communications capabilities. For example, participants noted that social media marketing could help companies to be more accurate in terms of targeting their consumers:

*‘Compared to traditional marketing and advertising tools, social media marketing can target your consumers exactly and make the message more visible because I can reach my target segment by using*



*many variables, such as age, gender, location and more important their interests'. (P1)*

Moreover, social media marketing can be giving companies opportunity to extend their marketing campaign and integrated between traditional marketing communication tools and social media marketing.

*'The high adoptability of social media platforms by users opens new opportunities for business to quickly reach the new consumers. For example, any company can replicate its advertising campaign in traditional media into their social media platforms to reach more consumers in an effective way. (P8).*

It also appears that the usability of social media leads to be adopted and used by a high volume of people and business, which allow companies to target more potential consumers

*'There are a large number of social media users in Saudi Arabia; this pushes a company to use social media to create their communities and promote their products. Any company that does not have a presence on the social media platform will lose its chance to reach large segments of consumers'. (P5).*

One participant indicated that social media marketing enables companies to target different consumer segments by using various content types and messages through social media marketing, which can lead to an increase in the market share or enter a new market:

*'Companies using several forms and types of communication messages across social media does not indicate the level of use of social media marketing; it allows you to target different segments. For*

*example, if you use funny messages, you will attract the youth segment. If you use a more formal language, you will attract many other stakeholders'. (P7)*

Another participant thinks that social media marketing can be a useful marketing tool because of its ability to overcome the geographic barriers and increase market share for companies.

*'Many virtual businesses able to take a percentage of market share of local brick-and-mortar companies by using influential social media marketing tools that help to overcome geographical boundaries and reach to target segments.'* (P3)

#### **4.3.3.3. Change Organisational Behaviour**

Another impact of using social media marketing is changing the role of the organisation within the communication process from formal message senders to be more sociable with their consumers, as the following comment describes:

*'Social media motivates the companies to transfer from the role of the sender of marketing messages to raising the social aspect of their business; it is an easy way to interact with people'.*(P1)

Several participants indicated that using social media marketing can change the organisational behaviour in the aspect of improving their business and products to gain the satisfaction and trust of their consumers, besides fearing the negative consumer's reaction. The following comments explain why the organisational behaviour has changed as a result of using social media marketing:

*'There is a radical shift in organisations' concepts and behaviour through the age of social media. Companies become afraid of their*

*reputation and business, so they always improve and change their way of business. Any company that wants to enter the social media must change because it has become open to the public and there has become an easier way to critique and offer criticism of their products'. (P6)*

*'One of the things that were produced by social media is that companies are keen on improving their products and services because they know that reactions of customers have become known to the public'. (P2)*

Regarding organisational behaviour change, social media marketing can lead companies to be more proactive and attempt to be alert by the market change; one participant indicated that in the following comment:

*'Even though social media companies can get feedback from people, they can precisely know and predict what their product or service problems are, and working immediately to solve these problems. So, they can get closer to their consumers'. (P2)*

#### **4.3.3.4. Help Organisations to Improve Services or Products**

Another use of feedback that can be collected through social media marketing is to develop and enhance services or products to respond to consumers' needs, as the following comments indicate:

*'In our company, we could improve the company's business by listening to our consumer and understanding their needs. Then, we provide this feedback to business leaders who usually interact with it and try to achieve the requirements and aspirations of consumers'. (P9).*

*'Companies started to listen to consumers, a phenomenon that is known as business intelligence. They collect the feedback from*

*consumers and send it to strategy department to analyse and create packages or products that commensurate with the customers' need'.*

*(P8)*

It does not matter how many consumers the company has, social media marketing allows it to interact with them and respond to their needs:

*'In our companies, we have more than seven million clients; social media enables reach out to hear their voice and know their needs and what exactly they expect from us; based on that, we start meeting their needs'. (P7)*

#### **4.3.3.5. Increase Prestige and Credibility of Organisations**

According to several participants, organisations strive to enhance its prestige and credibility, to improve their image and increase corporate reputation in the eyes of stakeholders. Therefore, companies attempt to use social media marketing in the first place to accomplish that, as the evidence provided in the following comments:

*'In bagging the social media revolution, companies use social media as a form of prestige, and the leaders attempt to publish their news and pictures. However, now we have a state of maturity in the use of social media' (P7)*

*'Some companies use social media for prestige and tell people that our business has a presence in social media'. (P6)*

Therefore, one participant indicated one of the techniques that help companies increase their prestige and credibility:

*'Now, there are companies that do not need to verify their account on social media platforms as their accounts on social media are well*

*known to the people. However, because of the prestige and credibility, they spend some time to verify their accounts'. (P5)*

#### **4.3.3.6. Gaining Competitive Advantages**

By using social media marketing as an instant communication tool, companies can gain competitive benefits and overcome their competitors:

*'The marketing model differed from social media as a direct response to other traditional means; companies that use social media marketing will, no doubt, sweep the competition and outperform their competitor'. (P3)*

Moreover, in the following comments, an example of how the companies can overtake their consumers is given:

*'One consumer has tweeted about the bad service during his stay in a hotel and advised people to not deal with this hotel, this hotel did not respond to consumer complaints, but one of the competitors of this hotel responded to this consumer and offered him better service with competitive prices to try their service. The technical advance of social media enables this hotel to be in a proper place and has the time to take advantage of this situation'. (P5)*

#### **4.4. Summary**

One of the obvious drawbacks of the qualitative analysis process is subjectivism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004); the guidelines were followed cautiously to make the analysis more objective and substantive. The selected quotes displayed were established on their competency to clarify important issues from the qualitative interviews.

The data revealed several themes and sub-themes related to the assimilation of social media marketing and its antecedents and consequences. First, the four themes that presented the antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing were relative advantages, top management support, organisational readiness and competitive intensity. Second, the result of the qualitative interview identified two sub-themes that can present assimilation of social media marketing, which are the strategic and tactical levels of assimilation. Finally, the marketing capabilities theme emerged as a consequence of assimilation of social media marketing.

However, these results are preliminary data based on exploring qualitative study, which needs to be tested again to ensure its validity. Therefore, the qualitative data will be used as a subsidiary with a literature review to build research framework in the next chapter and determine the measurements for assimilation of social media marketing in chapter 6.

## **Chapter Five: Conceptual Research Framework and Hypotheses**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The aim of this research is to explore assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies. It is an attempt to investigate the factors that affect the assimilation of social media marketing and its consequences. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to achieve the research objectives. The first phase of the research was to conduct qualitative interviews to explore the landscape of using social media marketing in Saudi market and establish a theoretical base to conduct the second quantitative phase of this research. The findings of the qualitative interviews were presented with many emerged themes and sub-themes in the previous chapter. Based on these results and literature review, in this chapter, the research framework has been refined, and relative hypotheses have been suggested. This chapter will begin with presenting the major findings raised from the exploratory study in the previous chapter, followed by the refined research framework and the definition of research constructs. Then, the relationship between the antecedents of assimilation and the strategic and tactical levels of assimilation social media marketing will be established, along with the relationship between these levels and the consequences of assimilation.

## 5.2. Qualitative Major Findings and Framework Refinement

The exploratory study provided insights of many issues related to assimilation of social media marketing, as shown in Table (7). Several findings were confirmed and raised other issues. In the technological context of antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing, this exploratory study highlighted the importance of relative advantage of assimilation of social media marketing. However, the compatibility factor has been excluded from the study framework, since the qualitative data is not enough to support this factor. In an organisational context, organisational knowledge was raised as one of the determinants of organisational readiness. Therefore, this construct was excluded and organisational readiness was confirmed instead. Within assimilation theme, strategic and tactical levels were raised as new constructs that determined assimilation of social media marketing. Apart from that, all the other constructs suggested for preliminary framework have been confirmed.

*Table 7: The major findings of qualitative exploratory study*

Major themes	Major findings
Relative advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main reason of using social media marketing as a marketing strategy is its related technological advantages or benefits.</li> <li>• Social media marketing is simple and easy to use as a technology compared to other technical attributes of traditional media.</li> <li>• Companies attempt to use social media because it offers an easier method to conduct two-way communication with their consumers.</li> <li>• Social media helps to target very specific consumers and more precisely, niche markets than other forms of traditional marketing tools.</li> <li>• No gatekeepers or third parties such as adverting agencies are involved who can intervene in the type of information published or in the time of publishing.</li> <li>• The most important technological attribute of social media marketing is to enable an instant interaction between companies and their consumers and get feedback.</li> <li>• Companies not only use social media marketing to maintain consumer relationship and to build their brand, but they can also use it as a customer service.</li> <li>• Social media marketing provides post-analysis of the gathered data feedback.</li> </ul>



Top management support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior managers' perceptions and beliefs about social media marketing are important determinants of the level of support.</li> <li>• Misunderstanding, lack of trust, and great fear to use social media marketing can lead to negative perceptions and beliefs among top management.</li> <li>• Top management in business to consumer (B2C) companies hold more positive perceptions.</li> <li>• The level of support can include three aspects according to participants' opinion: strategic aspect, executive aspect, and financial aspect.</li> </ul>
Organisational readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational readiness focuses on factors such as employee experience, proper outsourcing, usage policies, and marketing budget.</li> <li>• Organisational readiness relies on the availability of intangible resources such as social media knowledge, employees, experience, and management skills</li> <li>• Organisational readiness involves good understanding of the target consumers and the ability to talk in the same language.</li> <li>• Financial support for social media marketing is usually about 10–20% of marketing budget.</li> </ul>
Competition intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Companies from sector to sector can differ in terms of reaction to competition intensity.</li> <li>• Competition can help organizations improve their social media marketing strategies.</li> <li>• The level of intensity of competition can be extended to the techniques of use of social media marketing.</li> <li>• The competition intensity not only leads to use of social media marketing but also to its greater assimilation and creative usage.</li> </ul>
Assimilation of social media marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The awareness of potential of social media as a marketing tool is still low among many Saudi companies.</li> <li>• Many Saudi companies use social media marketing with the absence of clear strategies and objectives.</li> <li>• The lack of understanding of social media marketing and how it works can be a barrier for successful implementation of social media marketing.</li> <li>• Another misunderstanding about social media is that it equalises with traditional media.</li> </ul>
Strategic level of assimilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saudi companies are strategically using social media marketing for many purposes and functions.</li> <li>• The functions of social media marketing can be determined by goals, industry sectors, and who charge for managing social media marketing.</li> </ul>

Tactic level of assimilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of types and formats of content can be a critical measure of assimilation of social media marketing.</li> <li>• Organising content in various formats, such as images, pictures, infographics, and videos can be a more effective way to communicate with consumers and draw their attention.</li> <li>• Many factors affect the determination of content formats, such as the nature of business, prestige of the organization, marketing team ability, and the target market.</li> <li>• It can measure the level of impact of content through the reaction of consumers. Good content can affect the behaviour of consumers in social media platforms.</li> <li>• The number of platforms that companies can use are indicator of the assimilation of social media marketing.</li> <li>• However, other participants believe that using many platforms is not an evidence of the level of organizational assimilation of social media marketing.</li> </ul>
Marketing capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of social media as a marketing tool for Saudi organisations can have many benefits and consequences, such as reduced marketing costs, increased profits, increased marketing communication capabilities, changed organisational behaviour, improved services or products, increased prestige and credibility of organisations, and gaining of competitive advantage.</li> </ul>

### 5.3. The Refined Research Framework

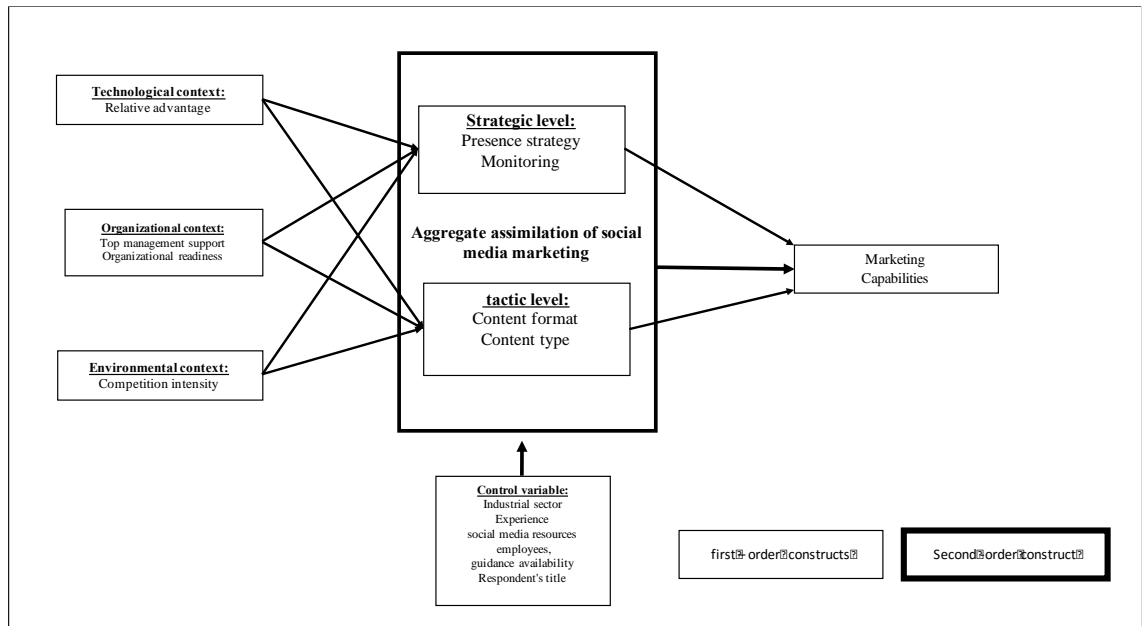
The findings of the qualitative exploratory study in association with the literature review enhanced the understanding and confirmed the choices of the contextual constructs. Therefore, the research framework had to be refined in order to gain an insightful exploration of the phenomenon under research. The research framework (Figure 7) is unique in the manner that both antecedents and consequences of assimilation of social media marketing are examined in an integrated approach, which is sparse in adoption and assimilation research (Neiger et al., 2012). Examining antecedents and consequences simultaneously would provide a greater understanding of innovation-related applications and their implications (Vincent et al., 2004; Zhu and Kraemer, 2005). Another distinct feature of this research model is that the process of development in this model was a combination of literature review and qualitative study in chapter four, which can provide useful insights into assimilation of social

media marketing in case of Saudi business. Moreover, this study employs a framework with multidimensional construct, which enables capturing of complex concepts related to assimilation of social media marketing in comparatively simple abstractions (Polites et al., 2012), and allows associating broad predictors with comprehensive outcomes and increasing explained variance (Edwards, 2001). According to Law et al. (1998), 'A construct refer as multidimensional when it consists of a number of interrelated attributes or dimensions and exists in multidimensional domains. In contrast to a set of interrelated unidimensional constructs, the dimensions of a multidimensional construct can be conceptualized under an overall abstraction.' According to Polites et al. (2012), multidimensional constructs consist of several orders. The first-order construct is unidimensional, which can contain one or more indicators. The second-order construct is multidimensional, which can have more than one dimension. Both construct orders can be either formatively or reflectively measured (Polites et al., 2012).

In this research, the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing is conceptualised as a second-order construct with two first multi-dimension constructs: the strategic level and the tactic level. The strategic level consists of two sub-dimensions: presence and monitoring strategy, whereas tactic level consists of two sub-dimensions: content format and content type.

The antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing were conceptualised as first-order unidimensional constructs, which include: relative advantage, top management support, organizational readiness, and competition intensity. Furthermore, the marketing capabilities were conceptualised as first-order unidimensional constructs to measure the assimilation of social media marketing consequences.

Figure 7: Refined research framework



### 5.3.1. Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing

Based on the TOE framework (Tornatzky et al., 1990), the factors that have an impact on the assimilation of social media marketing can be categorised into three contexts: 1) technological, 2) organizational, and 3) environmental. Technological context includes both internal and external technologies of the organisation. Organizational context is described as the organisation's size and capacity, characteristics of managerial structure, and the extent of its human and slack resources. Environmental context deals with organisation industry, stakeholders, and competitors (Tornatzky et al., 1990). However, the result of the qualitative study indicated that within these contexts, four factors have been found as the most relevant that can be applied to the Saudi business context: relative advantage (technological context), top management support, organizational readiness (organizational context), and competition intensity (environmental context).

### ***5.3.1.1. Technological Context***

#### ***Relative Advantage of Social Media Marketing***

Relative advantage is defined as ‘the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes’ (Rogers, 1983). In this research context, the concept of relative advantage has been expressed as the degree at which potential users perceive the benefits of social media marketing that may be provided to their organisations as technology. Therefore, both the terms, the relative advantage and perceived benefits, are used in IT adoption and use technology literature to convey the same concept (Vincent et al., 2004). As mentioned in the literature review, innovation diffusion theory proposes five innovation characteristics that can have an impact on the organisational assimilation of new technology: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trainability (Rogers, 1983). However, according to Malekpour and Norouzi (2013), relative advantage is the most significant factor that can lead to adoption and use of technology. Prior studies that employed the TOE framework indicated that relative advantage is the most important factor that leads organisations to adopt and assimilate various technologies, such as the internet (Law et al., 1998; Grandon and Pearson, 2004), e-business (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005; Hsu et al., 2006), e-commerce (Gibbs and Kraemer, 2004), and e-learning (Polites et al., 2012). Moreover, social media studies empirically found that relative advantages of social media drive organizations to adopt and assimilate social media and its platforms. Oliveira and Martins (2010) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) found that organisations using social media because of non-transactional nature, which is suitable for two-way conversations, developed a relationship and trust with their consumers and collected feedback from them. In a qualitative study conducted by Kelleher and Sweetser (2012), communicators in 26 US universities were drawn to use social media primarily because of its relative advantage, such as information sharing, saving cost, and convenience.

The qualitative findings are also consistent with these previous studies. They revealed that the assimilation of social media marketing within large Saudi companies may be a result of many relative advantages, such as ease of use, ability to reach targeted consumers, ease to collect feedback from consumers, and ease of measuring social media marketing compared to measuring traditional media.

Prior studies that employed the TOE framework found that relative advantage significantly affects the assimilation of different technologies, such as e-business (Li et al., 2010), e-commerce (Wongpinunwatana and Lertwongsatien, 2003; Gibbs and Kraemer, 2004), and websites (Oliveira and Martins, 2008). Therefore, it is highly possible that when large Saudi companies perceive the benefits mentioned above, they are willing to assimilate social media marketing more. The hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

**H1a: Relative advantage has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H1b: Relative advantage has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H1c: Relative advantage has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

#### *5.3.1.2. Organizational Context*

##### *Top Management Support*

Top management support refers to the degree at which the top management of an organisation is involved in, and encourages, new technological efforts (Rai and Bajwa, 1997) such as social media marketing. Senior managers are the individuals within an organisation who have the authority and responsibility to make a decision related to strategic planning, resource allocation, and tactics actions (Teo and Pian, 2003), which may essentially influence assimilation and consequences of social media marketing. According to Liang et al. (2007), the top management acts as

'human agency that translates external influences into managerial actions such as changing organisational structures and establishing policies based on their perceptions and beliefs of institutional practices'. Zhu et al. (2003) used top management beliefs and top management participation to present two stages of the top management support within an organisation. Top management beliefs refer to an individual's psychological state regarding the potential of innovation, whereas top management participation refers to the activities that are performed to facilitate the assimilation of innovation (Liang et al., 2007). The support by top management can improve the assimilation of social media marketing within an organisation by creating a favourable attitude towards innovation and reinforcing the confidence of the organization's members (Damanpour, 1991). Moreover, top management can encourage the implementation and assimilation by devoting time to social media marketing in proportion to its costs and potential, creating and reviewing plans, monitoring results, and facilitating solutions for any problems involved with integrating social media marketing with other processes of the business (Zhu, 2004).

Consistent with the literature review, the qualitative data in the previous chapter indicated the importance of top management support for assimilating social media marketing. Firstly, it revealed that the perception and beliefs of top management have a critical role in assimilating social media marketing. If top management have positive beliefs and perception for social media marketing, they usually tend to facilitate its assimilation. On other hand, the top management's negative beliefs and perception can prove to be an obstacle to proper assimilation of social media marketing. Secondly, the qualitative data showed that top management utilises its authorities to create codes of business conduct, strategic planning systems, and operating directives, which favour application of social media marketing in an organisation. Moreover, they are responsible for providing the financial aspect to cover all social media marketing expenses, such as manpower, content creation, marketing campaign, and analysis cost. Finally, top management support should be provide trust to the marketing team with all the power and freedom to manage social

media marketing, bureaucracy could be reducing the social media marketing effectiveness, as social media marketing is a dynamic and powerful social communication tool for discussing and disseminating various matters in a short time.

In summary, senior managers can create a climate that supports the assimilation of social media marketing by encouraging thinking about process innovation with social media marketing, overcoming organisational inertia or structural barriers, ensuring continuous attention to social media marketing initiatives, and facilitating strategic renewal to align social media marketing with organisational objectives.

Previous studies have shown a positive correlation between top management support and technology such as the following: web technology (Chatterjee et al., 2002), executive information systems (EIS) (Rai and Bajwa, 1997), and enterprise systems (Liang et al., 2007). According to Porter and Millar (1985), 'The available literature on top management support provides abundant evidence that leadership behaviour is an important factor, and perhaps the single most important factor, related to IT implementation success and failure.' The findings of Bharati et al. (2013) indicated that top management support has a direct impact on the assimilation of social media marketing. Therefore, this research argues that top management support is positively associated with assimilation of social media marketing.

**H2a: Top management support has a positive impact on strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H2b: Top management support has a positive impact on tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H2c: Top management support has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**



### ***Organisational Readiness***

Organisational readiness can be defined as the ability of organisations to adopt and use social media marketing effectively (Kim and Ko, 2012). An organisation's preparation to assimilate social media marketing in order to achieve higher marketing capabilities is critical to its readiness (King, 2009; Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012). In previous adoption and technology assimilation studies, organisational readiness was used to measure whether an organisation has a sufficient level of sophistication of IT usage and the financial resources available to assimilate innovation (Iacovou et al., 1995; Hsu et al., 2006). Law et al. (1998) identified three levels of organisational readiness: 1) the level of experience among professionals; 2) the level of knowledge among non-professionals; and (c) the level of the technology use within the organisation. However, organisational readiness is a multifaceted construct measured in several ways. According to qualitative study in the previous chapter, which contains the literature review, the indicators of organisational readiness for assimilating social media marketing include four forms: people, governance, technological competence, and financial resource. People in organisations, such as social media teams and top-executives, should have appropriate skills and experiences to support the implementation and use of social media marketing. The lack of social media knowledge and attitude may affect the assimilation of social media marketing (Law et al., 1998; Fichman, 2000; Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012; Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012). Moreover, qualitative findings emphasise not only on social media marketing know-how among internal and external expertise but also indicate that specific knowledge should be available among them, such as the knowledge about consumer culture, most appropriate social media platforms, and marketing content for potential target market. The second determinant of organisational readiness is social media governance. According to Bernoff and Li (2008), social media governance refers to 'the formal or informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an organization within the social web'. Social media governance offers a framework to

manage social media marketing activities, which can involve strategies, policies, guidance for teams, monitoring tools, and training of staff in social media (Bernoff and Li, 2008; Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012). Governance enables managing of social media marketing without being overly restrictive or manipulative to meet the organizational requirements such as privacy, security, regulatory compliance, control of data, and protecting intellectual property (Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012; Schultz and Peltier, 2013). Qualitative findings show that organisations should provide the marketing team with a well-defined governance framework in order to initiate professional social media marketing.

Technological competence is another assessment factor of organisational readiness. It can be referred to the level of exacting sophistication of IT usage and IT support in an organisation (Vincent et al., 2004; Schweidel and Moe, 2014), which can enhance an organization's access to tangible (e.g. hardware, computers, etc.) and intangible (e.g. technical skills, developers, etc.) resources for successful social media marketing assimilation (Culnan et al., 2010), and also the level of IT support for using social media marketing (Neiger et al., 2012). Finally, financial resources are 'available to pay for installation costs, implementation of any subsequent enhancements, and ongoing expenses during usage' (Iacovou et al., 1995). According to results of the qualitative study, financial resources can be measured by the organisation's annual social media marketing spending as a percentage of total marketing budgets. To use social media marketing, organisations need relatively limited financial resources required for their usage (Michaelidou et al., 2011). However, assimilation of social media marketing requires investment in generating content, sharing information, conducting market research, and analysing data (Fisher, 2009).

In some notable studies, the organisational readiness and its forms have been found to significantly impact the adoption and assimilation of various technologies such as the internet (Law et al., 1998; Alam, 2009), e-commerce (Grandon and Pearson, 2004; Murdough, 2009), and e-business (Zhu et al., 2006; Yi, 2009; Li et al.,

2010b). However, there is a lack of focus on organisational readiness in social media literature (Omosigho and Abeysinghe, 2012). Therefore, based on literature review, evidence for the impact of organisational readiness on assimilation of social media marketing was discovered during the interviews. It appears that organisational readiness is linked to the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies. The hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

**H3a: Organisational readiness has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H3b: Organisational readiness has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H3c: Organisational readiness has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

#### *5.3.1.3. Environmental Context*

##### *Competition Intensity*

Competition intensity is defined as the extent to which an organisation is influenced by its competitors in the marketplace (Hsu et al., 2006). The impact of competition intensity on adoption stage can differ from the assimilation stage; in adoption stage, competition intensity may contribute towards the decision of beginning the use of innovation. It has long been empirically suggested that the adoption rate of innovation is higher in competitive environments (Levin et al., 1987; Zhu et al., 2003). Competition intensity has been found to be positively related to adoption of various technologies such as e-commerce (Wongpinunwatana and Lertwongsatien, 2003; Grandon and Pearson, 2004), websites (Oliveira and Martins, 2008), and e-businesses (Oliveira and Martins, 2010). In the assimilation stage, organisations increase their usage of innovation to achieve competitive advantage in terms of cost reduction or differentiate themselves from the competitors (Porter and Millar, 1985; Teo and Pian, 2003). This argument can be applied in the context of

social media marketing. For example, assimilation of social media marketing may enable companies to reduce costs, as it allows organisations to engage directly and instantly with consumers at relatively lower cost and at a greater effective level than conventional forms of marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Tariq and Wahid, 2011). Moreover, assimilation of social media marketing enables organisations to differentiate themselves in several ways from the competitors who do not use social media marketing. For example, social media marketing may enable companies to customise their products and services to meet customer needs and expectations. Assisted by the interactivity features of social media marketing, an organisation can gather data, which may include consumers' feedback about current products and suggestions and potential demand for new products and services (Bernoff and Li, 2008). Another example of differentiation from the competitors, social media marketing provides two-way communication possibilities to organisations to help them build a relationship with their consumers (Lim et al., 2012), which may increase brand awareness and enhance the organisation's image. Better brand image can lead to consumer loyalty, which is helpful for organisations to capture more market share (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Tariq and Wahid, 2011; Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

With regard to qualitative data in previous chapter, participants emphasised that competition intensity is one of the factors that leads to maximization of use of social media marketing. It can contribute towards assimilation of social media marketing in two aspects: the strategic aspect in which the organization plans for social media usage by analysing the competitive environment and how competitors use social media marketing to grow their businesses, and the tactical aspect, in which an organisation analyses how its competitors use social media marketing to understand which social media marketing technique works or does not work within the industry. Furthermore, by analysing competitors' social media presence, an organization identifies and develops unique positioning within the social media landscape.

Based on the above discussion, it is highly possible that large Saudi companies with intense competition may increase their assimilation of social media marketing in order to maintain and gain competitive advantage. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

**H4a: Competition intensity has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H4b: Competition intensity has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

**H4c: Competition intensity has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.**

### **5.3.2. Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Assimilation is defined as ‘the extent to which the use of a technology diffuses across organizational work processes and becomes routinized in the activities associated with those processes’ (Chatterjee et al., 2002). The definition of assimilation by Armstrong and Sambamurthy (1999) further considers the degree of success that is achieved in improving an organization’s capabilities and performance through the use of technology. The suggested definition of assimilation of social media marketing within this study is as follows: the degree to which social media marketing is used to enhance and achieve marketing strategies and objectives. Previous studies have posited that several distinctive factors determine the degree of organizational assimilation of technology, such as volume, diversity, breadth, and depth (Zmud and Massetti, 1996). However, in this research, the assimilation construct is conceptualised as a second-order construct, which is measured by two first-order constructs: the strategic and tactical levels, as the research framework suggested that the assimilation of social media marketing as a marketing communication tool could have an impact on the marketing capabilities, since the marketing capabilities improved as a result of the strategic actions taking by the

organization and the day-to-day activities used to apply the organizational strategies (Grant, 1996). Among the social media marketing interactive activities performed by an organization concerned about creating value for their customers, improvement capabilities in market research, services and products development, promotional strategy, pricing, and distribution are essential to allow an organization to understand consumer needs (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Kim and Ko, 2012).

Moreover, as a communication tool, social media marketing requires a different set of dimensions that are more related to patterns of communication than patterns of organizational technology. Therefore, according to literature review and qualitative study in previous chapters, there are two distinctive levels of assimilation of social media marketing: strategic level and tactical level.

#### ***5.3.2.1. Strategic Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing***

The strategic level deals with planning of social media marketing's implementation and assimilation. The strategies in social media marketing are often actions planned by an organisation to achieve desired outcomes (King, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, social media marketing offers organisations the opportunity to restructure marketing communication process, enter new markets, and improve effectiveness and efficiency in interactions within and outside the organisation. However, this is unless an organisation is able to align its social media marketing strategy with its marketing and corporate strategy. Hallahan et al. (2007) defined organisational strategic communication as 'purposeful use of communication to fulfil its mission'. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) argued that the social media communication strategies should be integrated with corporate and organizational communication in order to maintain a coherent brand and consistent messages.

Within qualitative interviews, participants argued strongly that an organisation's plan for social media marketing should involve two elements: the

objectives of using social media marketing and measurability, or a way to measure how successful their social media marketing implementations have been.

Social media marketing objectives are the purposes of strategic presence on the social media platform, which contribute to the results that organisations attempt to achieve by their use of social media marketing. Extant empirical studies have investigated the possible social media marketing objectives, such as engaging with consumers and stimulating users to post or share content (Ashley and Tuten, 2015), to promote an organisation's products or services (Bernoff and Li, 2008) to improve brand awareness and image, and to generate traffic for an organisation's website (Neiger et al., 2012; Schultz and Peltier, 2013; Bianchi and Andrews, 2015). Besides these principle objectives, participants in previous chapter indicated that organisations can use social media marketing in a more reactive manner by monitoring and analysing social media activities to understand how their consumers view a company and its action. Therefore, the marketing team can react accordingly to this feedback. Schweidel and Moe (2014) emphasised on social media ability to present accurate information to decision makers based on how conversations in social media are measured within different social media platforms, which can be a valuable data source for both insights and forecasts.

Study by Kietzmann et al. (2011) presented the fundamental elements of using social media marketing to create value for users. They suggested that social media honeycomb of seven functional building blocks to help marketers understand the strategic usage of social media marketing: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. These seven functions can be utilized to recognize the degree of assimilation of social media marketing within a marketing communication mix. Identity is defined as the extent to which firms can describe and reveal themselves online. Conversations reflect the extent to which businesses communicate with their consumers through social media marketing tools. The sharing function is the extent to which organizations distribute, exchange, and receive content from their consumers.

The extent to which a firm is available to its customers who use social media sites is reflected by presence. The relationship function is concerned with the extent to which the company uses social media marketing to maintain its relationships with its customers. The reputation function refers to the degree to which social media can allow firms to identify their reputation by measuring the level of trusted engagement with customers. Finally, the group function represents the ability of an organization to form communities and sub-communities within the social media landscape.

The second element within the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing is the measurement of social media marketing effort. Without well-defined measurements of the consequences of social media marketing strategies, it can be difficult for organisations to align their social media marketing objectives with organizational goals and create business value (Culnan et al., 2010). Different measurements have been suggested, which include: the soft return of investment (ROI) of social media marketing (e.g. number of followers/fans, timing, engagement rate, page views, likes, shares) (Fisher, 2009; Larson and Watson, 2011; Schweidel and Moe, 2014); the hard ROI social media marketing (e.g. sales, revenue, and market share) (Enders et al., 2008); and key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that align with the objectives (Murdough, 2009; Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012; Neiger et al., 2012). It sets the stage for setting strategies of using social media marketing and developing measures of those social media marketing activities with a critical bearing on marketing capabilities (Murdough, 2009; Neiger et al., 2012; Deepa and Deshmukh, 2013).

Based on the above discussion, it is highly possible that large Saudi companies with well-defined objectives and monitoring strategies may increase their marketing capabilities. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

**H5: Strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.**



### ***5.3.2.2. Tactical Level of Assimilation Of Social Media Marketing***

It is clear that the successful social media marketing strategies reflect the values expressed in an organization's mission and contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's goal (Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012). To achieve these objectives, organisations should carefully craft their communication tactics via social media platforms with consumers that reflect their fundamental organizational values (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). An organisation's tactics or pathway for social media marketing daily use differs across a wide range and intensity of interaction, engagement, representation, and networking (Mergel, 2013). Unlike other forms of marketing communication tools, social media marketing due to 'its rapid availability, larger audience, and two-way communication capabilities' (Zaharopoulos, 2015) offers various communication tactics or touch points (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011; Castronovo and Huang, 2012). The nature of social media marketing enables organisations to use different types of platforms to create and share different formats and types of content (Neiger et al., 2012) in order to diffuse their marketing messages and target various consumer segments in low effective cost.

Organisations use social media marketing to communicate with their consumers by generating content, which is the core of a communication process. It has been argued that organizations that use a variety of formats in the content in their social media marketing efforts are more effective in their marketing communication (Bucher et al., 2013; Eagleman, 2013). Use of various formats (e.g. text, pictures, and videos) and types (e.g. brand, involvement, and engagement messages) of the content can help organisations get the attention and eventually, the retention of their consumers (Threatt, 2009).

Moreover, data from the interviews indicated that social media platforms can be one of the determinants of assimilation of social media marketing. In terms of social media marketing platforms, they are defined as 'complex and composed of disparate and fragmented networked systems that are the infrastructure on which

social networks create content, communicate and collaborate' (Srinivasan and Damsgaard, 2013). Thousands of online social media platforms can be divided into three broad categories: community platforms (Facebook, Google+, YouTube, etc.), network platforms (LinkedIn, Academia, etc.), and conversion platforms (Twitter, blogs, etc.). These platforms differ in terms of functions and purpose (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Therefore, if an organisation uses different sets of platforms to achieve different purposes, it could reflect the level of use of social media marketing. The qualitative data indicated that companies could establish different accounts on certain social media platforms to target different consumer segments and to accomplish specific marketing objectives.

Since the marketing capabilities improve as a result of the strategic actions taken by an organization and the day-to-day activities used to apply the organization's strategies (Grant, 1996), the following hypothesis can be put forth:

**H6: Tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.**

### **5.3.3. Aggregate Assimilation and Marketing Capabilities**

According to Weerawardena (2003), marketing capabilities can be defined as 'integrative processes designed to apply the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of the firm to the market-related needs of the business, enabling the business to add value to its goods and services and meet competitive demands'.

It can be argued that technology is a resource for marketing capability once it is leveraged and integrated with the organisation's existing resources and skills (Chatterjee et al., 2002). This is relevant to dynamic technologies, such as social media marketing. Social media marketing does not necessarily improve marketing performance unless it is integrated with other marketing communication resources, such as customer relationship management (CRM) (Trainor et al., 2013), advertising, and public relations (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012) to generate distinctive capabilities

(Trainor, 2012). However, there is a lack of studies that link the level of assimilation of social media marketing with improving marketing capability. Some researchers have indicated that the integration of social media marketing within marketing efforts enhances marketing capabilities and improves firms' performance in general. For example, Assaad and Gómez (2011) pointed out that social media marketing could become the core of online marketing activities by creating communities for the products and services of firms by building brands and maintaining consumer loyalty. The combination of social media marketing resources and customer-centric management systems leads to a better understanding of consumer needs and improved customer relationship management (Trainor et al., 2013). Moreover, Schniederjans et al. (2012) argued that the integration of social media marketing with impressive management strategies could enhance the financial performance of an organization.

Moreover, the qualitative interviews revealed that using social media as a marketing tool for organisations can lead to many benefits and consequences, which can improve and contribute to their marketing capabilities. Participants indicated towards several outcomes of assimilation of social media marketing, such as reduced costs and increased profits, increased marketing communication capabilities, changed organisational behaviour, improved services or products, increased prestige and credibility of organisations, and gaining competitive advantages.

Based on this line of reasoning, previous studies and qualitative study in chapter four have established a relationship between aggregate assimilation of social media marketing and marketing capabilities. In this regard, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H7: Aggregate assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.**

#### **5.3.4. Control Variables**

According to Ravichandran (2005), 'Control variables are used to account for factors other than the theoretical constructs of interest that could explain variance in the dependent variable'. This study includes five control variables: industrial sector, experience, social media's management, employees' numbers, and guidance availability.

Industrial sector can be an important variable that affects aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Companies from different business types may vary in application of social media marketing strategies and then in realising advantages from leveraging social media marketing. For example, previous study in e-commerce assimilation found that service companies can extensively use the internet more than manufacturing companies (Chatterjee et al., 2002). Therefore, the potential influence of industry is required to be controlled.

The extant experience in using social media marketing is another important control variable that affects the level of assimilation of social media marketing. Technology assimilation can be influenced by organization's cumulative experience and learning (Purvis et al., 2001). Organisations that have maintained social media marketing presence for a longer period of time are more likely to increase their experience and insight about how to effectively use social media platforms for marketing. Therefore, the extent of social media marketing experience is likely to be positively associated with assimilation of social media marketing.

Social media marketing's management is one variable that was mentioned by the participants in qualitative interview in chapter four. It can be referred someone to who is reasonable enough to manage the social media marketing activities for an organisation (i.e. in-house or outsourcing). In early stage of adoption of social media marketing, organisations can consider outsourcing their social media efforts to an agency that can better plan initiative strategies, organise presences, and train marketing teams, as their employees can lack the relevant social media knowledge

(Hays et al., 2013). However, in post-adaption stage, the large companies should have financial and human resources to successfully assimilate social media marketing in-house. At a higher level of assimilation, organisations encourage confidence in the benefits of social media marketing, accelerate the social media assimilation agenda, which is required in in-house infrastructure to support social media marketing activities. On other hand, to increase creativity of social media marketing usage and create engagement, some sort of content can be outsourced, for example, a video that needs more advanced technology and skills but cannot be available for the organisation all the time. Furthermore, organisations use outsourcing to measure and analyse data gathered from social media platforms.

Employee numbers or social media manpower may also influence social media marketing assimilation. It refers to the number of employees who plan and manage social media marketing activities within organisations. Publishing and feeding information in social media platforms can require a single technical person (Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012). However, organisations can require many full-time social media employees in order to increase their use of social media marketing and preform different sets of social media marketing functions, such as 24-hour engagement with consumers, responding to their messages, and being interactive with the organisation's environment (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

The final control variable is guidance availability, which refers to the structural guidance to use social media marketing in daily business in order to provide support to employees and professionalise social media marketing management (Lehmkuhl et al., 2013). Guidance can be a vital element to implement a social media marketing strategy, which reflects an organisation's values and contributes to its overall goals. The guidelines for internal and external communication can help marketing teams to act and react on social media platforms in a manner consistent with an organisation's environment (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Lehmkuhl et al., 2013). In addition, the availability of guidance can help employees learn how to

utilise social media marketing to benefit from it, which can lead to higher level of assimilation of social media marketing.

#### **5.4. Summary**

This chapter presents an integrated research framework that addresses both antecedents and consequences of assimilation of social media marketing. Two dimensions of assimilation of social media marketing are identified as strategic level and tactic level of social media marketing, reflecting the variety and intensity with which an organisation is engaged in social media marketing. The conceptual framework of this study employs a framework with multidimensional constructs that enables capturing of complex concepts related to assimilation of social media marketing. Thus, in this study, a conceptual research framework is divided into a direct framework and a combined framework.

The direct framework (Figure 8) is proposed to directly link between relative advantage, top management support, organizational readiness, and competition intensity, which are proposed as antecedents of strategic and tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing. This framework also proposes that strategic and tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capability (Table 8).

Figure 8: The direct framework

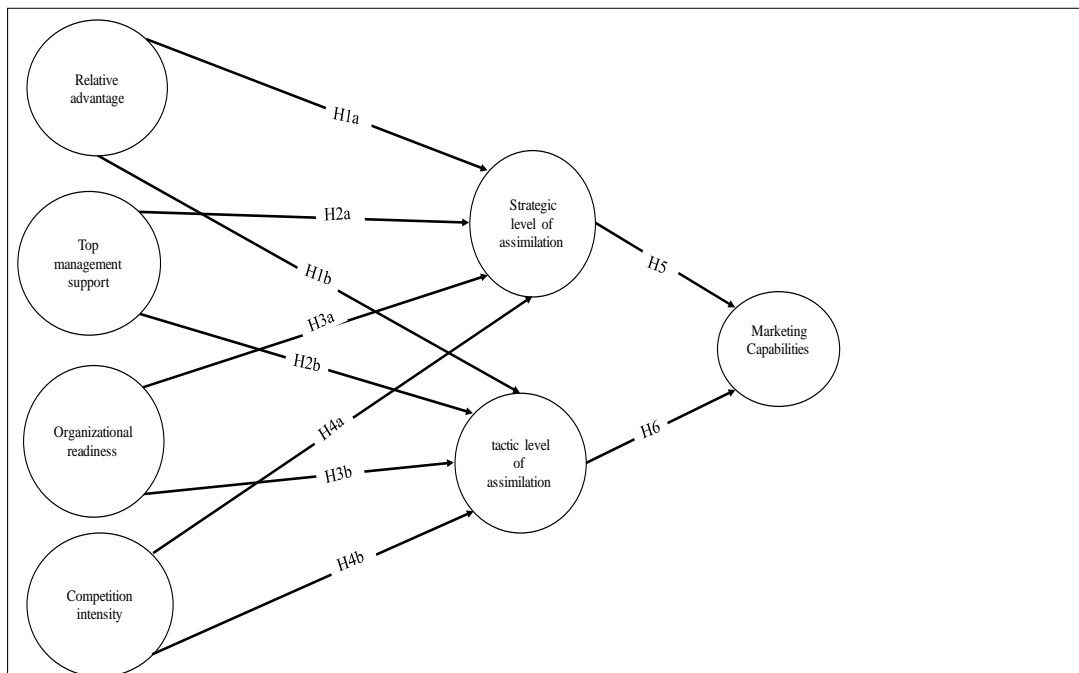


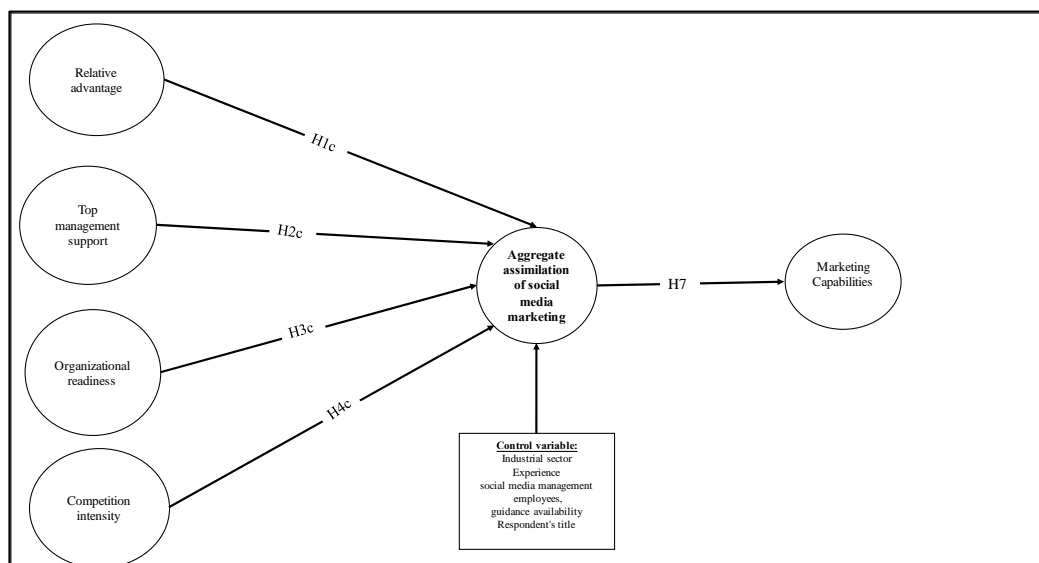
Table 8: Summary of hypotheses of direct framework

Hypotheses	
H1a	Relative advantage has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H1b	Relative advantage has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H2a	Top management support has a positive impact on strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H2b	Top management support has a positive impact on tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H3a	Organisational readiness has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H3b	Organisational readiness has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H4a	Competition intensity has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.

H4b	Competition intensity has a positive impact on the tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H5	Strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.
H6	Tactic level of assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.

In Combined framework both strategic and tactic levels with their items and measurements were combined to create aggregate assimilation of social media marketing (Figure 9). this Combined framework was established to test the impact of study constructs on one another, firstly, to test the impact of independent constructs (antecedents) on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing, and secondly, to test aggregate assimilation of social media marketing impact on marketing capabilities (consequences). Direct links from control constructs (industrial sector, experience, social media resources, employees, and guidance availability) to aggregate assimilation of social media marketing were also added. Table (9) presents combined framework's hypotheses.

Figure 9: Combined framework





*Table 9: Combined framework's hypotheses*

Hypotheses	
H1c	Relative advantage has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H2c	Top management support has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H3c	Organisational readiness has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H4c	Competition intensity has a positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.
H7	Aggregate assimilation of social media marketing has a positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies.

## **Chapter Six: Empirical Setting for Quantitative Study**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents a cross-sectional survey design for the quantitative phase of this study to test the research model and its hypotheses. The data is collected via online questionnaire from large Saudi companies. The chapter starts with scale development and measures. Then, the following section presents operationalization of constructs. Finally, a detailed description of the pilot study, applied sampling methods is given.

### **6.2. Research Constructs: Scale Development and Measures**

As mentioned earlier, no comprehensive quantitative measures were found for any of the constructs investigated in this study, with the exception of antecedents (e.g., relative advantages, top management support, etc.) and consequences (marketing capabilities). New scales were developed for constructs that have not been measured previously. Previously developed quantitative instruments for antecedents and consequences were not effective measures of these constructs concerning social media marketing in the Saudi market. The antecedents of assimilation have been largely investigated in many study contexts (e.g., Wongpinunwatana and Lertwongsatien, 2003; Gibbs and Kraemer, 2004; Zhu et al., 2006; Oliveira and Martins, 2008; Li et al., 2010), and consequences of assimilation, which focus on marketing capabilities in this research, have been investigated as a key construct in organisational performance studies (e.g., Vorhies, 1998; Weerawardena, 2003; Day, 2011; Mariadoss et al., 2011; Potočan, 2013). Thus, the study's instruments were not completely suitable to examine the hypotheses of the research's frameworks, and required new scales to be developed for assimilation of social media marketing. Amendments for these constructs related to antecedents and consequences, specifically considering social media marketing in Saudi market settings, were also

required. This process was informed by the qualitative data supplemented by the review of literature presented in previous chapters.

Deductive scale development was exploited to develop the theoretical definition of the constructs relating to the assimilation of social media marketing. The most popular guidance to develop measurements for marketing constructs was suggested by Churchill (1979) (Table 10). Although these guidelines came from marketing disciplines that were dominated by positivism (Hunt, 1994), they also aim to make generalised results from the objectivist framework (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). This would not conflict with mixed methods because it encourages different methods to be generated, as well as validity constructs. Churchill’s (1979) guidance has eight steps to develop scales and ensure their validation and reliability. A further update by Gerbing and Anderson (1988) augmented this guidance by incorporating more efficient assessments for uni-dimensionality, which refer to the “existence of one latent trait underlying the data” (Hattie, 1985). The rationale of this update was to incorporate a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate uni-dimensionality which offers more strength of interpretation than other statistical tests, such as item-total correlation, coefficient alpha, and exploratory factor analysis.

*Table 10: Churchill’s guidance for the Scale Development process*

Steps	Description	Sub-steps
Step 1	Specify domain of construct	Search literature to conceptualise and justify new measures
Step 2	Generate sample of items	Literature review Expert item – evaluation Focus groups, interview Coefficient alpha exploratory Factor analysis
Step 3	Collect Data	
Step 4	Purify the measures	
Step 5	Collect new data	
Step 6	Assess reliability with new data	Coefficient alpha
Step 7	Assess construct validity	Confirmatory Factor Analysis Correlation Coefficient Structural equation modelling
Step 8	Develop norms	Other statistical tests such as destructive and regression tests

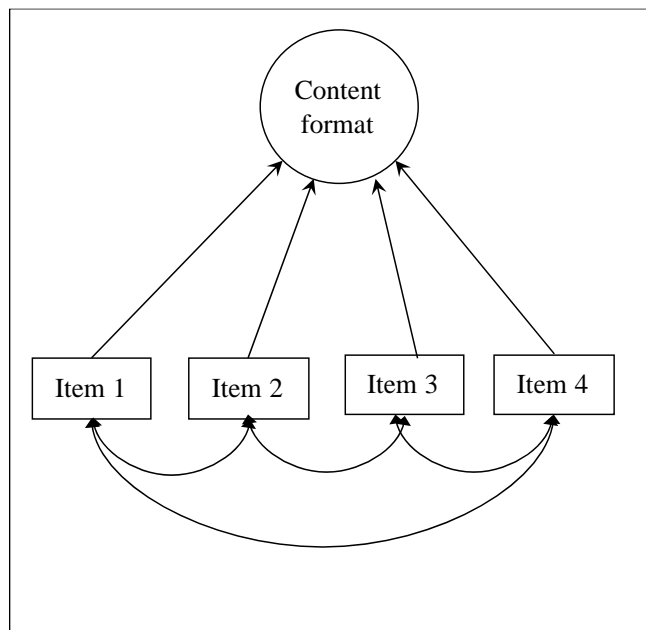
In the first stage, the process of identifying the relative research domains of the constructs was informed primarily by theories and frameworks articulated in the literature and the qualitative data as discussed in the previous chapters. Below, the following stage of construct types, operational definitions, and identified domains of constructs are articulated.

### **6.2.1. Construct Types**

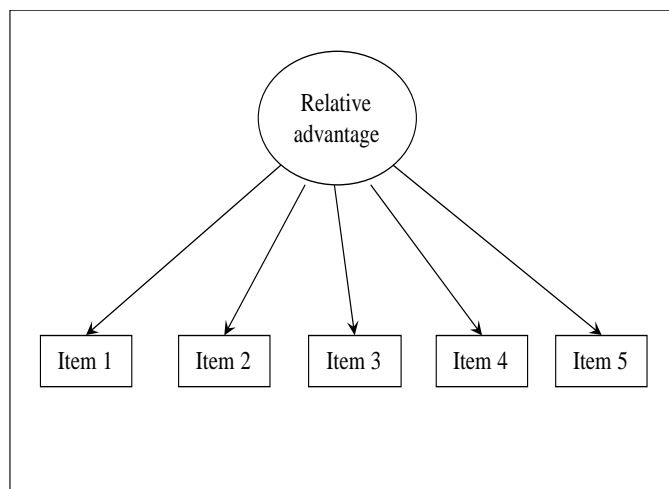
The constructs in the proposed research's framework were operationalized as reflective and formative constructs. The choice to use formative and reflective measurements should be established primarily on theoretical considerations related to the priority of causal relationship between the indicators and latent construct (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001) and the objectives of study (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). However, the analysis of qualitative data suggested a formative indicator approach based on three theoretical considerations from rules that Coltman et al. (2008) developed for deciding whether the measurement model is formative or reflective. The first consideration is the nature of the construct: the qualitative data indicated that the nature of tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing and its dimensions were formative. For example, contact formats dimension, which, as a tactical level of assimilation, does not exist as an independent entity. Rather, it is a composite measure of formats of messages published through social media platforms. Any change in one or more of these indicators is likely to cause a change in the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing. On the other hand, the antecedent of assimilation social media marketing (e.g., relative advantage, top management, organisational readiness, etc.) were formulated within previous empirical studies as reflective constructs (e.g., Chwelos et al., 2001; Yoon, 2009) which exist independent of their measures. Dropping or changing the measures of construct can lead to the second consideration, which is the direction of causality between constructs and indicators (Jarvis et al., 2003; Coltman et al., 2008). In this study, the direction of

causality in formative constructs, such as content format, flows from the indicators to the construct; thus, the indicators as a group define the conceptual meaning of the constructs (Figure 10). In contrast, relative advantage as reflective construct is the direction causality flows from construct to the indicators (Figure 11).

*Figure 10: Content formats as formative construct.*



*Figure 11: Relative advantage as reflective construct.*



The final consideration is characteristic of indicators: higher-order reflective constructs are assumed to cause their indicators rather than be caused by them (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Therefore, the reflective indicators are considered highly correlated and substitutable facets of the focal construct (Bollen and Lennox, 1991). Thus, change in the latent variable must precede variation in all its measures (Simonetto, 2011). Moreover, all indicators within one construct share a common theme and are interchangeable. Adding or eliminating one or more indicators from the construct may not cause any change in the nature of the construct (Petter et al., 2007) and does not significantly affect content validity of the construct. In contrast, formative indicators “form” the latent construct as a composite (Edwards, 2010). From this perspective; the formative indicators define the construct. According to MacKenzie et al. (2005), formative indicators are described as “defining characteristics that collectively explain the meaning of the construct”. Consequently, indicators of formative construct are not correlated with one another and characterise distinctive contents of the latent construct, which means the reliability evaluation is not applicable to formative constructs (Cyr et al., 2009).

As mentioned in Chapter Five, this study employs a framework with multidimensional constructs, which enhances complex concepts related to the assimilation of social media marketing in comparatively simple abstractions (Polites et al., 2012). It also allows associating broad predictors with comprehensive outcomes and increasing explained variance (Edwards, 2001). According to Polites et al. (2012), multidimensional constructs can consist of several orders. The first-order construct is unidimensional and can contain one or more indicators. The second-order construct is multidimensional, which can have more than one dimension. Both constructs’ orders can be either formatively or reflectively measured (Polites et al., 2012). The framework of this study consists of eight first-order constructs and one second-order construct (Table 11).

*Table 11: Construct types and orders in this study*

Construct	Type and order	Sub-constructs	Type and order
Relative advantage	Reflective first-order		
Top management	Reflective first-order		
Organisational readiness	Reflective first-order		
Competition intensity	Reflective first-order		
Aggregate assimilation	Formative second-order	Strategic level	Reflective first-order
		Tactic level	Formative first-order
Marketing capabilities	Reflective first-order		

### 6.3. Operationalisation of Constructs

Measurement items for constructs were revised in terms of wordings and length to ensure relevance to this specific research context, and they were measured at the organisational level. All items were modified in terms of language and wordings to make sure they are easily understood by the targeted respondents.

#### 6.3.1. Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing

Antecedents are independent variables that divide social media marketing into three contexts: technological (Relative advantage), organizational (Top management support, Organisational readiness) and environmental (Competition intensity). These variables are operationalized in the following sections.

##### 6.3.1.1. *Technological Context*

**Relative advantage** was operationalized as a reflective first-order construct, and was operationalized as *perceived technological benefits of assimilation of social media marketing*. Scales for this construct have been used frequently to perceive assimilation of various types of technology with acceptable measures of validity (Moore and Benbasat, 1991; Truman et al., 2003; Tanakinjal et al., 2010; Motohashi et al., 2012; Panopoulos and Sarri, 2013). Seven reflective items were modified based on Papastathopoulou et al.'s (2007) study, equivalent to the context of this study (Table 12). These scales were adopted because they were used to measure information and communication technologies (ICTs) in organizations.

##### 6.3.1.2. *Organizational Context*

**Top management support** was operationalized as a first-order construct. It *measures the impact of participation of top management on the assimilation of social media marketing*. Three reflective items were modified based on Chatterjee et al.'s study (2002) to investigate Top Management Support in the context of social media. These three items measure the level of top management's participation in terms of establishing a vision and goals for using social media marketing (Table 12).



**Organisational readiness** deals with the compatibility and consistency of social media marketing with the organization's culture, values, and favoured work practices. It was operationalised with a 5-item scale informed by previous studies (Iacovou et al., 1995; Grandon and Pearson, 2004; Molla and Licker, 2005). It measures the level of organizational preparation and suitability to assimilating social media marketing. The resources are committed by the organization to assimilation of social media marketing, express formalization of employees' roles and responsibilities, and orientation of employees towards using social media marketing (Table 12).

#### **6.3.1.3. *Environmental Context***

**Competition intensity** was measured using a 3-item reflective scale adopted from Thong's (1999) study. These items were developed based on Porter and Millar's (1985) three competitive forces concept: ease for a customer to switch to a competitor, level of rivalry among companies in the same industrial sector, and the influence of substitutable products and services (Table 12).

*Table 12: Measurement scales for antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing.*

Construct	Label	Items
Relative advantage	RV1	Social media platforms are easy to use by us and our consumers
	RV2	We can access social media platforms any time.
	RV3	We can interact with consumers instantly.
	RV4	Social media marketing enables us to reach our exact target market.
	RV5	Social media marketing activities are easy to monitor.
Top management support	TM1	Top management articulated a vision for the organizational use of social media marketing.
	TM2	Top management formulated a strategy for the organizational use of social media marketing.
	TM3	Top management establish goals and monitor the use of social media marketing.
Organizational readiness	OR1	Social media marketing is staffed with proper resources to achieve its goals.
	OR2	Roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined with each social media implementation.
	OR3	We have social media mindset throughout all levels of management.
	OR4	Our employees at all levels support social media marketing use.
	OR5	Our social media managers are granted the authority to make decisions and take actions as opportunities arise.
	OR6	We have clearly-defined metrics for assessing the impact of our social media marketing implementations.
	OR7	We have an effective governance model in our social media marketing implementations.
Competition intensity	CI1	Our customers can switch to another company for similar services/products without much difficulty.
	CI2	The rivalry among companies in our industry is intense.
	CI3	The substitutable products and services affect our company in this industry.

### **6.3.2. Assimilation Of Social Media Marketing**

Previous studies have identified some measurements for assimilation technology in general, but none of them are well-defined and validated across social

media studies. Through extensive literature review and information gathered from qualitative interviews, the assimilation level of social media marketing was divided into two levels: strategic level and tactical level.

**6.3.2.1. Strategic Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Strategic level operationalizes as reflective first-order construct, and is one of the two key constructs in the assimilation of social media marketing. The operational definition of strategic level in this research is *to what extent large companies is using social media marketing strategically to achieve many marketing communications objectives*. In this research, strategic level is measured through its dimensions of presence strategy and monitored approach. Presence strategy has a total of 8 items developed based on qualitative interviews and studies conducted by Kietzmann et al. (2011) and Štajner and Novalija (2012) (Table 13) . These items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, from (1) strongly disagree, to (5) strongly agree.

Monitoring approach measures the level of monitoring of social media marketing to ensure the achievement of social media marketing strategies. Five items were operationalized in this dimension. These items measure the degree of monitoring of social media marketing activities in terms of monitoring techniques, type of monitoring, and information usability. These items were adopted from different studies, including: the soft return of investment (ROI) of social media marketing (e.g., number of followers/fans, timing, engagement rate, page views, likes, shares) (Fisher, 2009; Larson and Watson, 2011; Schweidel and Moe, 2014), the hard return of investment (ROI) social media marketing (e.g., sales, revenue and market share) (Enders et al., 2008), and key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that align with objectives (Murdough, 2009; Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012; Neiger et al., 2012). These items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (Table 13).

*Table 13: Measurement scales for strategic level*

Dimensions	Labels	Items
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Presence strategy	PS1	To publish information and news about our brand and products.
	PS2	To engage with and generate dialogue with our consumers.
	PS3	To collect data and monitor our competitors' activities.
	PS4	To create company/brand communities and fans.
	PS5	To answer our consumers' questions and solve their problems.
	PS6	To collect feedback from consumers about our service and products.
	PS7	To educate society and share knowledge with our consumers.
	PS8	To share our consumers' experiences, pleasures and successes.
Monitoring approach	MA1	We use different tools to analyse our performance on social media.
	MA2	Our company measures soft return of investment (ROI) of social media marketing (e.g., number of followers/fans, timing, engagement rate , page views , likes, shares).
	MA3	Our company measures hard return of investment (ROI) social media marketing (e.g., sales, revenue and market share)
	MA4	Our company has key performance indicators (KPI) for each platform we use.
	MA5	Our company uses analytic information to understand target audience and decision about content.

### **6.3.2.2. Tactical Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Tactical level is another key construct to measure the assimilation of social media marketing. It is operationalized as a formative first-order construct. The operational definition of tactical level for this research is *to what extent of social media marketing activities are conducted by companies to fulfil their marketing communications objectives*. Tactical level is measured through its dimensions of content formats, content types and interactivity (the frequency of use and response rate).

Content formats refer to the form of text, image audio and video originally produced by companies to publishing information on social media platforms. Content types measure the diversity of social media messages used by companies to serve different marketing purpose. Both items for these dimensions were operationalized based on the qualitative interviews and form studies such as Yang and Kankanhalli (2012) and Bucher et al. (2013). These items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, from (1) Never to (5) Always (Table 14).

*Table 14: Measurement scales for tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing*

Dimensions	Labels	Items
Content formats	TL1	Original writing content(e.g., tweet, article, presentation , ebook)
	TL2	Original visual content (e.g., photographs, Infographics, charts and diagram)
	TL3	Original Video content
	TL4	Link to Your company Website
Content types	TL5	Brand message (e.g., brand news, review, facts, brand commercial, team, CSR programs)
	TL6	Products message (e.g., products information, products advertising, launch new products, feedback..)
	TL7	Promotion message (e.g., Promotions, special offers, discounts, sales, packages...)
	TL8	Reward message (e.g., competition, games, prize...)
	TL9	Engagements message (e.g., replies to questions, experience sharing, comments, picture captions, humour...)
	TL10	Information message (e.g., general information, community education.)

### **6.3.3. Consequence of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

**Marketing capabilities** scale captures the level of distinctive capabilities that organizations possess by using social media marketing. 9-item scale was adopted and modified based on previous studies, including Atuahene-Gima (1993), Weerawardena (2003), and Zou et al. (2003). This construct has two dimensions: low-cost advantage and marketing communication capabilities. Low-cost advantage has three items to measure the extent to which organizations benefit lower cost of using social media marketing and gain a higher return on investments (ROI). Marketing communication capabilities measured the level of effect of using social media marketing positively on marketing communication capabilities (Table 15).

*Table 15: Measurement scales for consequence of assimilation of social media marketing*

Dimension	Label	Items
Low-cost advantage	MC1	Reducing the cost of marketing communications.
	MC2	Reducing the cost of research and development.
	MC3	Gaining a higher return on investments (ROI).
Marketing communication capabilities	MC4	Enhancing visibility of the business website.
	MC5	Increasing trust and customer satisfaction.
	MC6	Entering new markets.
	MC7	Enhancing brand image.
	MC8	Enhancing the credibility and prestige of the organization.
	MC9	Changing the way that organization conducts business.
Scale administration: 5-point Likert-type scale from (1) Not at all to (5) A great deal.		

#### **6.3.4. Control Variables:**

There are six factors used as control variables including: industrial sectors, the experience of company in using social media marketing, Responsible for managing social media marketing activities, the number of social media marketing employees and social media marketing guidance availability.

**Industrial sectors** are measured by asking respondents to specify the primary industrial sector to which their organizations belong. Primary industrial sector refers to the sector that most of the organisation sale comes from (e.g., Banks' Financial Services, Retail, Energy Utilities, Food Industries, Telecommunication, IT, etc.). According to Corstjens and Umblijs (2012), the level of social media marketing impact on brand or organisation can depend on the industrial sector or product

category. Moreover, qualitative data indicates that the purpose and activities of social media marketing can differ from sector to sector.

**The experience of company in using social media marketing:** This variable measures the time since the organisation adopted and used social media marketing. It reflects a company's cumulative experience with social media marketing (Cronin et al., 2000). Companies that have adopted social media marketing relatively early are likely to be further alongside in their mutual assimilation and learning processes than companies that adopted social media marketing later.

**Responsible for managing social media marketing activities:** This variable is measured by asking respondents to specify where the social media marketing efforts are conducted – in-house or outsourcing. Ordinary tasks of social media marketing can be executed in-house by organisation's employees. The organisation can use outsourcing advanced tasks such as design and development social media presence, content creation and analyse the organisation usage (Stelzner, 2012).

**The number of social media marketing employees** is measured by asking respondents how many employees work on social media marketing within their organisation. The tangible assets such as the number of employees may have a significant impact on the level of assimilation of social media marketing (Lee, 2011).

**Social media marketing guidance availability:** This is a variable that measures if companies have structural guidance to use social media marketing on a daily basis, which provides employees with guidelines to use social media marketing (Lehmkuhl et al., 2013). This guidance can establish the rules and guidelines for how social media marketing responsibilities are organised in an organisation, who responsible to interact with the company on a social media platform, and the regulations for a situation during instructive social media marketing. The availability of such guidance can indicate to a higher level of assimilation of social media marketing, since this guidance can be established based on internal organisational influencers such as corporate vision, mission, goals, organisational culture and

available resources, as well as external influencers such as communities, government and competition level (Felix et al., 2016).

#### **6.4. Translation Research Instrument**

The lack of validity and cultural bias can be an issue to any cross-national study that involves an instrument translation process (Malhotra et al., 1996; Kreiser et al., 2002). To avoid such issues, backward translation method suggested by Brislin (1976) was used to translate the current study instrument to minimize any problems related to lack of equivalence and consistency between English and Arabic instrument version as well as to check the validity of the translation process (Appendix C).

The translation process started with sending the instrument to the translator in Saudi Arabia in order to translate it to Arabic. At same time, another copy was translated by an Arab PhD student in the UK. After the translation, both copies were reviewed and checked for any differences between the translations in terms of wording and meaning of items. The differences were minor. Then, the Arabic version was sent to another translator to translate it back to English. Finally, both English copies were checked and reviewed for equivalence and consistency. Both contained no significant differences, which indicated that the translation process was acceptable.

#### **6.5. Pilot Study**

The second stage of scale development process according to Churchill (1979) was to conduct a pilot study in order to assess content adequacy for new scales for assimilation of social media marketing and detecting any problems that affect the administration of the questionnaire. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that the questionnaire is consistent in terms of content, structure, and design, and also to identify any words, phrases, sentences or other elements of research instruments that seem confusing, lack clarity or contain other problems. Moreover, the analysis of data



by pilot study can help explore a number of latent variables employing reliability tests.

Prior to conducting the pilot study, pre-test content validity was performed to confirm that the instrument is reflective of the concepts of research. According to Casaló et al. (2008), content validity refers to “the degree to which items correctly represent the theoretical content of the construct”. To accomplish content validity, according to Rubio et al. (2003) “A content validity study can provide information on the representativeness and clarity of each item and a preliminary analysis of the factorial validity. In addition, the expert panel offers concrete suggestions for improving the measure”.

The research instrument was sent to a panel of judges to: 1) determine whether it would yield data to inform this study, 2) to check the intelligibility of the questions, and 3) suitability of scale descriptors. An email was sent to the panel that consisted of two academics with specialists in marketing communication, two PhD students with major in social media, and two experts in marketing and social media. They were sent a request via email, which contained the research purposes, model and questionnaire.

After the completion of the pre-test, the questionnaire were finalised for pilot study after some modifications were made according to the panel’s comments and suggestions, including:

- Adding two items to strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing.
- Adding one item to constructs: relative advantage and competition intensity and marketing capabilities.
- Deleting one measurement of organizational readiness because it was ambiguous.
- Changing some language issues in terms of wording expressing and sentence phrase.

### **6.5.1. Sampling Technique for Pilot Study**

The pilot test used twenty participants from Saudi companies. A convenience sample was used. The convenience sampling is non-probability sampling method, which selected a sample based on convenient elements (Malhotra et al., 2004). According to Malhotra et al. (2004), this sampling method is suitable for pre-testing questionnaire and pilot studies. The participants were strictly from Saudi companies that used social media marketing.

The participants' content was collected during the interview phase. The questionnaire was delivered to participants via email and their social media accounts. The sampling frame for the pilot study has the following requirements:

- The participants' job must be related to social media marketing within the company.
- Companies must be within business to consumer (B2C) category.
- Companies' marketing effort through social media must target only the Saudi market.

### **6.5.2. Data Collection and Analysis for Pilot Study**

The research instrument for the pilot study was a self-administered online questionnaire (Appendix D). There are many benefits of using online-based questionnaire compared to paper-based questionnaire. It is more convenient and likely to reach a larger number of participants within a wider geographic area. Moreover, online questionnaire saves time because it enables the researcher to work parallelly on other research tasks during data collection (Ilieva et al., 2002). Also, online survey websites are compatible with analysis software such SPSS, therefore, the coding and sorting data process can be easy, fast and error-free. In addition, the cost of distribution and collection of online survey is much less than paper-based survey because there are no printing and delivery costs (Dillman, 2011).

The online survey questionnaire was the final Arabic version after pre-test for content validity with a total of 69 items. The questionnaire was divided into four sections.

The first section focused on measuring the level of assimilation of social media marketing. It started with general questions about social media platforms that are used by a company, presence strategy, interactivity, maintenance tactics and monitoring activities. In this study, the most important objective is to theorise the assimilation of social media marketing. Thus, it was beneficial to start with addressing such objectives since the questionnaire length can affect the concentration of the respondents (Dillman et al., 1993).

The second section addressed the antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing with measurement of items related to constructs: Relative advantage, Top management support, Organizational readiness and Competition intensity.

The third section assessed the consequences of assimilation social media marketing, measuring the extent of marketing capabilities. The final section assessed the series of control variables with questions that were mostly close-ended, which can be easier to be answered by respondents. These variables included Industrial sector, Policy and guidance for using social media, Employees' number, Organization Experience of using social media, and Respondent's title.

The online survey questionnaire was distributed via email and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) to target respondents. The invitation message communicates the significance of this research and the importance of participation. The message also includes a link to the online questionnaire. Of the total 35 questionnaires distributed, 23 were collected and valid for data analysis.

Since participation in this pilot study is very low, it can be difficult to run any multivariate analysis such as factor analysis, which requires at least 100 cases to be performing (Zhao, 2009). Therefore, SPSS Statistics 21.0 program was used to perform only Cronbach's alpha test for each reflective scale.

The result of the pilot test showed that the value of Cronbach's alpha value exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 recommended for exploratory studies (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) for all the reflective constructs (Table 16). Although the sample sizes are too small to draw a robust conclusion, the estimation of Cronbach's alpha value of pilot study data showed that the scales developed are reliable.

*Table 16: Reliability assessment for reflective constructs.*

Construct Name	Cronbach's alpha
Relative advantage	.970
Top Management support	.948
Organizational readiness	.938
Competition intensity	.883
Strategic level (Presence strategy)	.971
Strategic level (Monitoring approach)	.935
Marketing capabilities	.957

### **6.5.3. Survey Sampling approach**

The target population for this study is large Saudi companies which are active social media marketing users for last 12 months, besides the criteria of the sampling frame (as described in chapter three). The random sampling method was employed to select the target companies. The simple random sampling technique was used since quantitative part of this study targets to make generalizations (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). This sampling technique gives the opportunity for each case in the sampling frame to be chosen equally for this study. The procedure of sampling began with using Microsoft Excel to generate a random sample from the population list of 4545 large Saudi companies, which were obtained from the Saudi Chamber of Commerce & Industry according to its database in 2014. Then, each company's profile in social media was manually examined to assure that randomly selected companies fit the criteria from the sampling frame; any company that not meet the

requirements was eliminated. The next step was to employ social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to send messages that included the survey link to contender companies. The researcher used his personal social media accounts to send messages to companies. The reason for using these accounts was to ensure that the questionnaire is delivered to target population, and to confirm that the message was sent from a real person's accounts, and that was not spam, as the targeted companies could see the researcher's identity. However, for companies that suspend their messages service through social media platforms, email was used. The message consisted of a cover message accompanying the survey link, which stated the study objectives, confidentiality statement and the researcher's details.

The link to the online questionnaire was sent to 314 out of 4545 companies, who were found to use social media marketing. However, the initial response from large companies was not as high as expected, and follow-up with the organisations brought the requisite number of responses. After two reminders, a total of 82 responses were collected. The survey response rate was 26%, which can be considered quite satisfactory regarding the lack of research culture in Saudi Arabia (Sadi and Iftikhar, 2011).

## **6.6. Summary**

In this study, a mixed approach to sequential qualitative and quantitative was adopted to study the assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies, with the quantitative method being the primary approach. The use of these two approaches permits a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. This chapter provided empirical sitting for the second quantitative phase of this research, which includes the development of the survey instrument, pilot study process, and sampling approach.

Chapter seven will present the study results of the mass data collection and analysis in order to test the research model and its hypotheses.

## Chapter Seven: Quantitative Study Results

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from the analysis of the survey, guided by the aim of this research that is to investigate the assimilation of social media marketing in developing countries at an organisational level, taking large Saudi companies as a case study. Based on literature review and a set of interviews in the first stage of the study, an appropriate conceptual model was developed and described in chapter 5. In chapter 6 a questionnaire was designed and distributed among large Saudi companies. The data gathered from the survey was analysed with various statistical procedures.

This chapter begins by presenting demographic characteristics and Descriptive Statistics for study constructs. However, this study relies on nonparametric partial least squares (PLS) analysis, which not requires normality tests and assessing underlying assumptions (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Then, two steps of PLS analysis are detailed, the first step is to assess the measurement model to determine the validity and reliability of the theoretical constructs, which include four analytic procedures: construct reliability, construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2011). Furthermore, the validity of formative constructs was determined. The second step was to evaluate the structural model and test hypotheses, which includes standardised path coefficients, their significance, and the amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ ).

## **7.2. Data Screening**

In early 2015, the survey was sent and distributed by email and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to 314 organisations, selected at random from a database obtained from the Council of Saudi Chambers. After two reminders, there were 82 returns in mid-2015. The response rate was 26%. There are no missing data, and all questions were answered since the online questionnaire had not allowed for participants to skip questions without answering. After the questionnaire data were coded and organised to facilitate analysis, the data were examined to control response bias. Responses from the same organisation and extreme answers were eliminated. After removing seven invalid responses, 75 cases were retained for further analysis.

## **7.3. The Characteristics of The Organizations**

Participants have answered seven questions regarding their organisations' profile. Table (17) summarizes the demographic characteristics of large Saudi companies that include: the companies' industrial sectors, used social media platforms, experience of using social media marketing, responsibility for managing social media marketing activities, the number of social media marketing employees, social media marketing guidance availability, and respondents' job title.

As the Table (17) shows, about a quarter of the responses came from retail sectors (25.3 %), followed by automotive and other sectors with 10% each, this result indicated that these two sectors have more consumers orientation than other sectors. Large Saudi companies use more social networking platforms (Twitter, Facebook) than social media sharing (YouTube, Instagram), which is consistent with the results from a study conducted by the Saudi Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC), which indicated that most Saudi companies mainly used social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (CITC, 2014). The bulk of the experience of using social media marketing falls into two categories, one year and more than three years, with approximately 30.7% of each category. Nearly 72% of the

sample conducts social media marketing activities based on in-house resources, which may indicate that marketers within large Saudi companies are likely to be involved more in development and implementation of social media marketing and be more aware of it for in-house resources rather than outsourcing. Furthermore, approximately half of the responses indicated that the number of people responsible for social media marketing is between 1-2 employees. The availability of the guidance for social media marketing usage was almost equal in percentage, at approximately 50%. Finally, the majority of participants were marketing managers at approximately 37%, followed by Social media managers that accounted for nearly one-third of the sample.

*Table 17: Demographic characteristics*

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
<i>Industry sector</i>	Banks/Financial Services	4	5.3
	Retail	19	25.3
	Energy Utilities	1	1.3
	Agriculture and Food Industries	4	5.3
	Telecommunication and IT	7	9.3
	Automotive	10	13.3
	Real Estate Development	5	6.7
	Transport	2	2.7
	Media Publishing	6	8.0
	Health sector	7	9.3
	Other	10	13.3



Continued Table (17): Demographic characteristics.

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Social media platform</i>	Twitter	62	82.7
	Facebook	55	73.3
	Google+	28	37.3
	YouTube	44	58.7
	Instagram	44	58.7
	Others	9	12.0
<i>Social media marketing experience</i>	Less than 6 months	12	16.0
	One year	23	30.7
	Two years	10	13.3
	Two years and half	7	9.3
	Three years and more	23	30.7
<i>Responsibility to manage social media marketing activities</i>	In-house	54	72.0
	Outsourced	21	28.0
<i>Social media' guidance</i>	No	38	50.7
	Yes	37	49.3
<i>Social media marketing employee numbers</i>	1-2	36	48.0
	3-5	25	33.3
	More than 5	14	18.7
<i>Respondents' Job Title</i>	Marketing Manager	28	37.3
	Social Media Manager	22	29.3
	Public Relations Officer	13	17.3
	Corporate Communications Manager	3	4.0
	Webmaster	2	2.7
	Other	7	9.3

## **7.4. Descriptive Statistics**

This section presents the descriptive statistics of study constructs, including empirical items, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum for each measurement item. It focuses on the first order constructs as follows. Firstly, the antecedents of assimilation of social media marketing that include four constructs: relative advantage, top management support, organisational readiness, and competition intensity. Secondly, the assimilation of social media marketing for both levels: the strategic level with two dimensions: presence strategy and monitoring, the tactical level that has two dimensions: content format and content type. Finally, the consequence of assimilation of social media marketing that has only one construct, that is marketing capabilities.

### **7.4.1. Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

#### **7.4.1.1. *Relative Advantages***

The relative advantage scale consisted of 6 statements that related to how large Saudi companies perceive the benefits of using social media marketing as a motivation to use it. Each scale was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale having the elements 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neither, 4) Agree, and 5) Strongly agree.

Average scale rating ranged from 3.73 to 4.33 for each of the six items in the relative advantage scale. The highest average rating of 4.33 was given to the statement “We can access social media platforms any time.”

The second highest rating on the five-point Likert-type scale was 4.19, and it was given to the statement “Social media platforms are easy to use by us.” The next two statements, still having an average of above 4 (4.11 and 4.05 respectively), on the five-point Likert-type scale: “Social media platforms are easy to use for our consumers”, and “We can interact with consumers instantly.”

The two statements with the lowest average ratings on the five-point Likert-type scale included the following: “Social media marketing enables us to reach our target market exactly”, and “Social media marketing activities are easy to monitor.” Therefore, these findings indicate that participants believed that the relative advantage of social media marketing could lead to using it. Relative advantage scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (18).

*Table 18: Relative Advantage scale descriptive statistics.*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Social media platforms are easy to use for us	1	5	4.19	1.111
2) Social media platforms are easy to use for our consumers	1	5	4.11	1.073
3) We can access social media platforms anytime.	1	5	4.33	1.057
4) We can interact with consumers instantly.	1	5	4.05	1.138
5) Social media marketing enables us to reach our target market exactly.	1	5	3.97	1.139
6) Social media marketing activities are easy to monitor.	1	5	3.73	1.143

#### 7.4.1.2. Top Management Support

Top management support consisted of three statements that described how organisations perceive the significance of top management support to determine the assimilation of social media marketing. Each statement was measured on a five-point Likert scale having the elements 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neither, 4) Agree, and 5) Strongly agree. The results of the analysis of the mean for each indicator in top management support ranged from 3.45 to 3.51, and standard deviations ranged from 1.177 to 1.189. The item with the highest rating is “Top management formulated a strategy for the use of social media marketing.” The other two statements which got the same average of 3.45 are: “Top management articulated a vision for the organisational use of social media marketing” and “Top management established goals and monitors use of social media marketing” (Table 19). These results show that participants slightly agree with the statement that the top management support could motivate their organisation toward assimilation of social media marketing.

Table 19: Top Management Support scale descriptive statistics.

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Top management articulated a vision for the organisational use of social media marketing	1	5	3.45	1.177
2) Top management formulated a strategy for the organisational use of social media marketing	1	5	3.51	1.178
3) Top management established goals and monitored use of social media marketing	1	5	3.45	1.189

#### **7.4.1.3. Organisational Readiness**

Organisational readiness consisted of six scaled statements that focused on how the level of organisational readiness impacted the assimilation of social media marketing. Each statement was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 5) strongly agree. The average scale of the statements ranged from 3.21 to 3.45. The standard deviations ranged from 1.142 to 1.234. The highest ranked items were “Our employees at all levels support social media marketing use” (Mean = 3.45), and “Social media marketing is staffed with proper resources to achieve its goals” (Mean = 3.39). These items were closely followed in ranking by the statements “Our social media managers are granted the authority to make decisions and take actions as opportunities arise” (Mean= 3.35), and “We have social media mindset throughout all levels of management” (Mean = 3.33). There was a considerable amount of agreement with regard to the remaining statements: “Roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined with each social media implementation” (Mean = 3.21), and “We have clearly defined metrics for assessing the impact of our social media marketing implementations” (Mean = 3.21).

Overall, this result suggests that the participants tend to be neutral to slightly in agreement with the statement that their organisations could be ready for assimilation of social media marketing. Organisational readiness scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (20).

*Table 20: Organisational readiness scale descriptive statistics*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Social media marketing is staffed with proper resources to achieve its goals	1	5	3.39	1.218
2) Roles, responsibilities, and accountability are clearly defined with each social media implementation	1	5	3.21	1.189
3) We have social media mindset throughout all levels of management	1	5	3.33	1.234
4) Our employees at all levels support social media marketing use.	1	5	3.45	1.142
5) Our social media managers are granted the authority to make decisions and take actions as opportunities arise.	1	5	3.35	1.191
6) We have clearly defined metrics for assessing the impact of our social media marketing implementations	1	5	3.21	1.142

#### **7.4.1.4. Competition Intensity**

The competition intensity sub-scale consisted of four statements. Each statement was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 5) Strongly agree. The averages of statements were rated from 3.13 to 3.51, and the standard deviations ranged from 1.082 to 1.329. The statement with the highest rating was, “Our customers can switch to another company for similar services/products without much difficulty” (Mean = 3.51). The next strongest rating was for “Our priority is to reduce competitors’ impact on our market share” (Mean = 3.33). The next two statements had averages of 3.25 and 3.13 respectively on the five-point Likert-type scale: “The substitutable products and services affect our company in this industry”, and “The rivalry among companies in our industry is intense.”

These results indicate that organisations tend to be neutral to slightly in agreement regarding the degree of competition intensity in the Saudi market

environment, which could lead to more assimilation of social media marketing. The competition intensity scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (21).

*Table 21: Competition Intensity scale descriptive statistics*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Our customers can switch to another company for similar services/products without much difficulty.	1	5	3.51	1.329
2) The rivalry among companies in our industry is intense.	1	5	3.13	1.082
3) The substitutable products and services affect our company in this industry.	1	5	3.25	1.274
4) Our priority is to reduce competitors' impact on our market share.	1	5	3.33	1.256

#### **7.4.2. Strategic Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

##### **7.4.2.1. Presence Strategy**

The presence strategy consisted of nine items that described the purpose of using social media marketing within the organisational marketing strategy. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 5) Strongly agree. The average scale ratings ranged from 3.37 to 4.17, and the standard deviations ranged from 1.210 to 1.397 for each of the nine items in the presence strategy scale. The highest rated statement was “To answer our consumer’s questions and solve their problems” (Mean = 4.17). The statement that had the second highest average of 4.12 was “To collect feedback from consumers about our service and products.” This statement was followed closely by: “To engage with our consumers and generate dialogue with them” (Mean = 4.11), “To educate society and share knowledge with our consumers” (Mean = 4.09), and “To publish information

and news about our brand and products (Mean = 4.05). Most of the remaining scale items were in the mid-range of the five-point Likert scale, clustered between ratings of 3 and 4. These statements pointed towards the value of presence strategy through the following statements: “To create company/brand communities and fans” (Mean = 3.89); “To share our consumers’ experiences, pleasures, and successes” (Mean = 3.79); “To support sales people and make their job easier” (Mean=3.44). The lowest rated statement was “To collect data and monitor our competitors’ activities” (Mean = 3.37)

To summarise, these findings show that the presence strategy of large Saudi companies mainly focuses on consumers’ service and engagement with them, collecting feedback, and publishing information and news about their brand and products. On the other hand, they perceived the use of social media marketing as a sales tool and in monitoring competitors’ social media activities as less important strategies, which may indicate that the large Saudi companies are aware of the potential of social media marketing as an engagement tool rather than a sales tool. With regarding to the statement that got the lowest rank, “To collect data and monitor our competitors’ activities”, it can be indicated that large Saudi companies do not yet fully utilise social media marketing as a strategic tool that can be used to gain competitive advantage. The presence strategy scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (22).



Table 22: Presence strategy scale descriptive statistics

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1)To publish information and news about our brand and products.	1	5	4.05	1.272
2)To engage with our consumers and generate dialogue with them	1	5	4.11	1.247
3)To collect data and monitor our competitors' activities	1	5	3.37	1.343
4)To create company/brand communities and fans	1	5	3.89	1.237
5)To answer our consumers' questions and solve their problems.	1	5	4.17	1.288
6)To collect feedback from consumers about our service and products.	1	5	4.12	1.273
7)To educate society and share knowledge with our consumers	1	5	4.09	1.210
8)To share our consumers' experiences, pleasures, and successes.	1	5	3.79	1.369
9)To support sales people and make their job easier	1	5	3.44	1.397

#### 7.4.2.2. Monitoring Approach

The monitoring construct consists of six statements that focused on the degree of measuring social media marketing activities. Each statement was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 5) strongly agree. The average of statements was rated from 3.12 to 3.77, and the standard deviations ranged from 1.146 to 1.335. The statement with the highest rating was “Our company measures the soft return of investment (ROI) of social media marketing” (Mean = 3.77). The next strongest rating was for “We use different tools to analyse our performance on social media” (Mean = 3.52). An average of 3.45 on the five-point Likert-type scale was achieved by the statement “Our company uses an analytic information to understand the target audience and decision about content.” The three statements with the lowest average ratings on the five-point Likert-type scale included

the following: “Our company measures hard return on investment (ROI) social media marketing” (Mean = 3.28), “Monitoring of marketing performance is part of our organisational culture” (Mean = 3.17), and “Our company has key performance indicators (KPI) for each platform we use” (Mean = 3.12).

These results indicate that the large Saudi companies tend to apply many techniques to monitor and measure their usage of social media marketing. However, the soft return on investment (SROI) is the most popular method to measure social media marketing strategies, while fewer companies agree that they have key performance indicators (KPIs) for each platform they use. Monitoring approach scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (23).

*Table 23: monitoring approach construct scale descriptive statistics*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) We use different tools to analyses our performance on social media.	1	5	3.52	1.267
2) Our company measures soft return on investment (SROI) of social media marketing. (e.g. number of followers/fans, timing, engagement rate, page views, likes, shares).	1	5	3.77	1.146
3) Our company measures hard return on investment (HROI) of social media marketing. (e.g. sales, revenue, and market share)	1	5	3.28	1.214
4) Our company has key performance indicators (KPIs) for each platform we use.	1	5	3.12	1.335
5) Our company uses an analytic information to understand the target audience and the decision about content.	1	5	3.45	1.255
6) Monitoring of marketing performance is part of our organisational culture	1	5	3.17	1.178

### 7.4.3. Tactical Level of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing

#### 7.4.3.1. Content Formats

The four items described the content format which can be used to convey social media message. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale having the elements (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, to (5) Always. Average scale ratings ranged from 3.29 to 3.65, while the standard deviations ranged from 1.074 to 1.303 for each of these four items. The highest rated item was “Original visual content” (Mean = 3.65) which means that large Saudi companies tend to use more effective format to communicate with their consumers, followed closely by the item “Original writing content” (Mean = 3.64). The third item was “Link to your company website” (Mean = 3.51). The lowest rated item was “Original video content” (Mean = 3.29).

These findings indicate that large Saudi companies tend to use visual content, which means that these organisations could have a perception that visual content is more effective than other content formats. Content format scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (24).

*Table 24: content format scale descriptive statistics*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Original writing content (e.g. Tweet, article, presentation, eBook)	1	5	3.64	1.074
2) Original visual content (e.g. Photographs, Infographics, charts, and diagram)	1	5	3.65	1.300
3) Original Video content	1	5	3.29	1.303
4) Link to Your company Website	1	5	3.51	1.256

### 7.4.3.2. Content Types

The content type describes the purpose of social media marketing messages. Each of the six items was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale having the elements (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, to (5) Always. The average scale ratings ranged from 2.81 to 3.68, and the standard deviations ranged from 1.226 to 1.420. The highest ranked item was “Products message” (Mean = 3.68). The second highest rating was given to “Brand message” (Mean = 3.64,). The average rating for “Engagements message” was 3.41. Two items were given very close average of 3.28 and 3.27 respectively, “Promotion message” (SD = 1.420, n = 75), and “Information message”. The lowest rated item was “Reward message” (Mean = 2.81).

The high standard deviation among these results indicated different views among participants about the types of social media marketing messages used by their organisations. The results show that large Saudi companies are likely to use more content related to their products and brands. Content type scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (25).

*Table 25: Content type scale descriptive statistics.*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Brand message (e.g. brand news, review, facts, brand commercial, team, CSR programs...)	1	5	3.64	1.226
2) Products message (e.g. products information, products advertising, launch new products, feedback...)	1	5	3.68	1.397
3) Promotion message (e.g. Promotions, special offers, discounts, sales, packages...)	1	5	3.28	1.420
4) Reward message (e.g. competition, games, prize...)	1	5	2.81	1.392
5) Engagements message (e.g. replies to questions, experience sharing, comments, picture captions, humour...)	1	5	3.41	1.337
6) Information message (e.g. general information, community education...)	1	5	3.27	1.388

#### **7.4.4. The Consequences of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

##### **7.4.4.1. Marketing Capabilities**

Marketing capabilities consisted of 10 statements with the subscale attempting to capture the level of distinctive capabilities that organisations possess, by using social media marketing. Average scale ratings ranged from 3.07 to 4.04 for each statement that was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from (1) Not at all to (5) A great deal. The standard deviations for marketing capabilities ranged from 1.168 to 1.306.

Statements having the highest ratings were “Enhancing brand image” (Mean = 4.04), and “Enhancing the credibility and prestige of the organisation” (Mean = 4.04). Two statements were tied for the second highest rating: “Enhancing visibility of the business website” (Mean = 3.89), and “Increase the ability to identify the reactions of consumers and hear their voices” (Mean = 3.88). These statements were closely followed by the statement “Increasing trust and customer satisfaction” (Mean = 3.76).

The next statement had averages of 3.57, “Reducing the cost of marketing communications” The statement, “Gaining a higher return on investments (ROI)”, was given 3.31. The three items with the lowest average ratings on the five-point Likert-type scale included the following: “Entering new markets” (Mean = 3.25), “Changing the way the organisation conducts business” (Mean = 3.19), and “Reducing the cost of research and development” (Mean = 3.07). This shows that respondents perceived that the assimilation of social media marketing could positively impact the marketing capabilities of their organisations. The highest impact of social media marketing is on enhancing brand image, credibility, and prestige of large Saudi companies. Marketing capabilities scale descriptive statistics are shown in Table (26).

*Table 26: Marketing capabilities scale descriptive statistics.*

Scale statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) Reducing the cost of marketing communications.	1	5	3.57	1.275
2) Reducing the cost of research and development.	1	5	3.07	1.266
3) Gaining a higher return on investment (ROI)	1	5	3.31	1.197
4) Enhancing visibility of the business website	1	5	3.89	1.258
5) Increasing trust and customer satisfaction	1	5	3.76	1.261
6) Entering new markets	1	5	3.25	1.306
7) Enhancing brand image	1	5	4.04	1.168
8) Enhancing the credibility and prestige of the organization	1	5	4.04	1.120
9) Changing the way the organization conducts business	1	5	3.19	1.193
10) Increasing the ability to identify the reactions of consumers and hear their voices	1	5	3.88	1.252

## **7.5. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) Analysis**

The partial least squares (PLS) for structural equation modelling (SEM) were used to evaluate the measurement models and test the hypotheses for several considerations. Firstly, PLS-SEM is a causal modelling method that seeks to maximize the variance among the latent dependent variables (Hair, et al., 2011). Latent variables (also known as latent constructs) are unobservable hypothesised concepts that can be characterised by measurable and observable variables. These variables are measured indirectly by analysing and examining the consistency of multiple measured variables or indicators (Hair, 2010). Moreover, The PLS was developed by Gerlach, Kowalski and Wold (1979) as an alternative to covariance based structural equation modelling to offer more flexibility to deal with modelling challenges (Vinzi, et al., 2010), since covariance based structural equation modelling requires hard assumptions to be met, such as multivariate normality, residual distribution, and large sample size (Vinzi, et al., 2010). However, PLS does not require multivariate normality, and it can cope with smaller sample size, and there are no limitations in terms of independent variables' multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2011; Marcoulides, Chin and Saunders, 2009; Sosik, Kahai and Piovoso, 2009). Furthermore, PLS can generate productive models out of theories that have not been rigorously examined (Pirouz, 2006). Finally, compared to other SEM techniques, PLS is more appropriate for this study regarding its flexibility in examining a research model that comprises second-order constructs and formative constructs besides reflective constructs (Vinzi, et al., 2010). Sánchez-Franco et al. (2011) stated that the framework with formative constructs cannot be easily modelled using other covariance-based approaches. Moreover, Several social media's studies have used the PLS for many reasons such as model with formative indicators (Sánchez-Franco et al., 2011; Lu and Yang, 2014), to develop theories and prediction of data (Ayeh et al., 2013; Bharati et al., 2013) and to assess psychometric properties (Cheung et al., 2011).

PLS also supports a hierarchical component model with the second-order construct by linking all indicators of first-order factors to second-order constructs (Polites, Roberts and Thatcher, 2012). The PLS analysis was used in assimilation literature (e.g. Li, Lai and Wang, 2011; Liang, et al., 2007; Ravichandran, 2005), with their research models containing reflective and formative constructs.

The PLS analysis involved a two-step procedure (Hair et al., 2011). The first step was to assess the measurement model in order to determine the validity and reliability of the theoretical constructs. Four measures were conducted to ensure the model was fit for PLS analysis: construct reliability, reflective construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The second step was to evaluate the structural model, which is including standardised path coefficients, their significance, and the amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ ). Path coefficients indicate the strength of the associations between independent and dependent variables, and the  $R^2$  estimates the amount of variance explained by the independent variables. Table (27) summaries all tests and measurements use within PLS analysis for this study.



Table 27: PLS analysis's tests and measurements.

Steps	Tests	Measurements and significance	Objectives	Recommended by
Step one: to assess the measurement model	construct reliability	-Item-to-total correlations exceeded 0.50 - inter-item correlations exceeded 0.30	To measure the Internal consistency reliability and deleted low correction items.	Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman, (2013)
		-Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.70 - Composite reliability exceeded 0.70	To assess the internal consistency of the constructs.	Nunnally(1978) Segars (1997)
	reflective construct validity by using (confirmatory factor analysis)	-Convergent validity (the loading of indicators for each underlying construct should be higher than 0.7)	To test if constructs are expected to be related or not.	Nunnally(1978)
		-Discriminant validity (the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) should be higher than the correlations between the construct and the other constructs in the model).	To test if constructs are not related to each other.	Fornell and Larcker (1981)

Continued table 27: PLS analysis's tests and measurements

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Tests</b>	<b>Measurements and significance</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Recommended by</b>
	Formative constructs validity	-Indicator weights at the 0.05 level. -The Variance inflation factors (VIF) below 10. - The Inter-Construct correlations , correlations should be less than 0.7	to assess formative construct validity.	Chin (1998), Gujarati and Porter (2009), Henseler, et al., (2009)
	common method bias	Harman's one-factor	to check whether common method bias is a serious threat to an interpretation of results.	Podsakoff et al. (2003)
Step two: to evaluate the structural model	Standardised path coefficients	-Bootstrapping path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), Standard Deviation, and t-values	to test the significance of the relationship between the study constructs	Son and Benbasat, (2007).
	the regression	The amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ )	To estimate the relationship between a dependent variables and independent variables.	Downing and Clark (2003)

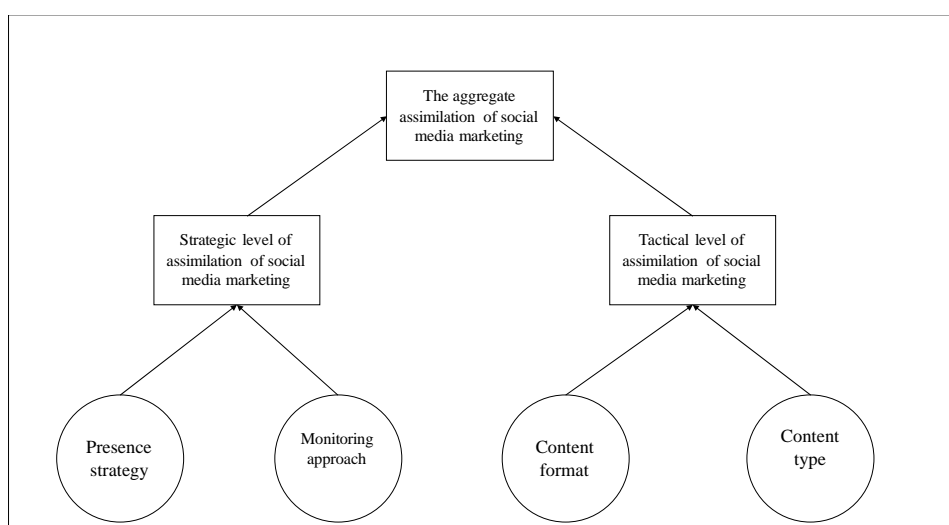
### 7.5.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

The purpose of assessing the measurement model is to establish that the measures used in the analysis are valid and adequately reflect the underlying constructs. Based on analysis results of PLS analysis, the measurement model was assessed in terms of the reliability of measurements , internal consistency , convergent validity and discriminant validity.

#### 7.5.1.1. Constructs Type

All multi-item constructs related to Antecedents and consequence of assimilation of social media marketing in this study are conceptualised as reflective. The aggregate assimilation of social media marketing, which was hypothesised as a second-order formative construct, consisted of two first-order constructs; strategic level and tactical level. The strategic level was conceptualised as a first-order reflective construct, which consists of two dimensions; presence strategy and monitoring. The tactical level was conceptualised as a first-order formative, which consists of two dimensions; content format and content type. (Figure 12)

Figure 12: Hierarchy of assimilation of social media marketing



For multi-item constructs, it is important to categorise them as formative or reflective prior to evaluating measurement properties. Misspecification of the

measurement model can be lead to measurement error that can affect the validity of the structural model (Jarvis, MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2003; Petter, Straub and Rai, 2007). The type of constructs in the model are summarised in Table (28).

*Table 28: construct type.*

Construct	Type	Sub-constructs	Type
Relative advantage	Reflective		
Top management	Reflective		
Organisational readiness	Reflective		
Competition intensity	Reflective		
Aggregate assimilation	Formative	Strategic level (Presence strategy, monitoring approach)	Reflective
		Tactical level (content formats, content types)	Formative
Marketing capabilities	Reflective		

The main difference between reflective and formative constructs is that the reflective constructs are assumed to cause their indicators rather than be caused by them, which means their indicators should be highly correlated (Chin, 1998; Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). Therefore, all reflective constructs are entitled to be assessed for reliability and validity. In contrast, formative constructs are assumed to be caused by their indicators, which means the indicators do not need to be highly correlated with each other (Chin, 1998). Consequently, the reliability test is irrelevant for formative constructs (Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009; Petter, et al., 2007). In terms of validity, formative constructs are assessed differently from reflective constructs, which is described below.

### **7.5.1.2. Reliability**

Reliability is described as “the degree to which it measures are free from error and yield consistent results” (Peter, 1979). Reliability is to ensure that specific measures would achieve the same outcome when they are applied repetitively to the same object (Sekaran,2003). Item-to-total correlations and inter-item correlations exceeded 0.50 and 0.30, respectively (Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman, 2013) and were used to assess the reliability of measurements. Based on the results of the analysis that is shown in Table (29), most of the items exceed 0.50 inter item-to-total correlations and exceed 0.30 in inter-item correlations. While Items CI2 and CI4 assessing competition intensity are deleted because their item-to-total correlations are below 0.5. The item OR6 assessing organisational readiness is also deleted because its inter-item correlation is below 0.3.

Table 29: Inter-item and item-to-total correlations

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix								Item-Total Correlation
		RV1	RV2	RV3	RV4	RV5	RV6	
Relative Advantage	RV1	1						0.765
	RV2	0.81	1					0.704
	RV3	0.85	0.779	1				0.699
	RV4	0.80	0.759	0.794	1			0.758
	RV5	0.74	0.755	0.659	0.773	1		0.793
	RV6	0.78	0.685	0.656	0.707	0.773	1	0.75
Top management	TM1	1						0.719
	TM2	0.83	1					0.729
	TM3	0.59	0.663	1				0.751
Organisational readiness	OR1	1						0.668
	OR2	0.53	1					0.632
	OR3	0.60	0.697	1				0.676
	OR4	0.58	0.624	0.591	1			0.661
	OR5	0.66	0.663	0.61	0.638	1		0.762
	OR6	0.25	0.294	0.275	0.111	0.342	1	0.441
Competition intensity	CI1	1						0.677
	CI2	0.64	1					0.426
	CI3	0.76	0.543	1				0.543
	CI4	0.30	0.056	0.318	1			0.193

Continued Table (29) Inter-item and item-to-total correlations

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix											Item-Total Correlation
		PS1	PS2	PS3	PS4	PS5	PS6	PS7	PS8	PS9	
Presence strategy	PS1	1									0.741
	PS2	0.873	1								0.768
	PS3	0.557	0.54	1							0.595
	PS4	0.76	0.761	0.545	1						0.77
	PS5	0.745	0.821	0.524	0.784	1					0.843
	PS6	0.663	0.749	0.369	0.729	0.844	1				0.701
	PS7	0.708	0.781	0.569	0.756	0.865	0.791	1			0.772
	PS8	0.674	0.766	0.529	0.785	0.865	0.744	0.82	1		0.771
	PS9	0.618	0.624	0.494	0.692	0.618	0.631	0.559	0.742	1	0.628
Monitoring approach		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6				
	MA1	1									0.653
	MA2	0.632	1								0.76
	MA3	0.501	0.619	1							0.55
	MA4	0.65	0.645	0.646	1						0.594
	MA5	0.53	0.599	0.518	0.636	1					0.656
MA6	0.428	0.53	0.4	0.536	0.567	1				0.543	
Marketing capability		MC1	MC2	MC3	MC4	MC5	MC6	MC7	MC8	MC9	MC10
	MC1	1									0.665
	MC2	0.562	1								0.644
	MC3	0.733	0.655	1							0.676
	MC4	0.611	0.556	0.659	1						0.758
	MC5	0.633	0.594	0.712	0.776	1					0.836
	MC6	0.561	0.513	0.546	0.51	0.554	1				0.55
	MC7	0.583	0.547	0.62	0.693	0.814	0.481	1			0.863
	MC8	0.646	0.465	0.596	0.693	0.763	0.538	0.805	1		0.773
	MC9	0.746	0.537	0.716	0.589	0.641	0.654	0.499	0.581	1	0.554
MC10	0.518	0.593	0.593	0.721	0.881	0.474	0.771	0.678	0.522	1	0.814

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were performed by using SmartPLS 3.0 software , To assess the internal consistency of the constructs. The Internal consistency is the degree of intercorrelations among indicators of each scale. The Cronbach's alpha value at 0.70 is considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978), as is the threshold of composite reliability for each construct, which is above 0.7 (Segars, 1997). However, in PLS analysis, composite reliability is the more appropriate way to estimate reliability than Cronbach's alpha, since composite reliability assumes that not all latent variables (indicators) are equal in terms of reliability (Hair, et al., 2011).

All constructs show greater than 0.7 in Cronbach's alpha, which indicates the satisfactory internal consistency. Constructs ranged from 0.864 for Competition Intensity to 0.953 for Presence Strategy. Likewise, the composite reliability of each investigated construct exceeds 0.7, a common threshold in social science studies for demonstrating satisfactory construct reliability (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The range of composite reliability values was from 0.920 for Organisational Readiness to 0.961 for Presence Strategy. The overall results indicate satisfactory construct reliability (Table 30).

*Table 30: Reliability of constructs*

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Relative Advantage	0.949	0.959
Top Management Support	0.874	0.923
Organisational Readiness	0.891	0.920
Competition Intensity	0.864	0.935
Presence strategy	0.953	0.961
Monitoring approach	0.885	0.913
Marketing capability	0.943	0.951



### **7.5.1.3. Reflective Constructs Validity**

To assess the reflective constructs validity, the convergent and discriminant validity was estimated by conducted Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Convergent validity is defined as "the degree to which two or more attempts to measure the same concept through maximally" (Bagozzi and Phillips, 1982). Convergent validity reflects that items measure their assumed constructs.

Convergent validity can be assessed by testing if the loading of indicators for each underlying construct is significant and higher than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) . moreover, according to Gefen and Straub (2005) convergent validity is determined when each item loads with a significant t-value on its assumed construct. Usually, the p-value for t-value should be significant at least at the 0.05.

By using SmartPLS 3.0, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, which showed (Table 31) that all items' loading was significantly high in their constructs and above 0.7 and they were significant at the 0.01 significance level. This indicates adequate convergent validity. Moreover, Average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct were examined to to assess convergent validity. The acceptable level of AVE values should be at least 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.637 for Monitoring approach to 0.878 for Competition Intensity (Table 31), which represents adequate convergent validity, since latent constructs can account for at least 50 percent of the variance in measurement scale (Hair, 2010).

Table 31: Item loadings and T-Statistics for constructs

Items	Item loadings	T-value	AVE
Relative Advantage			0.797
RV1	0.933**	40.456	
RV2	0.891**	20.167	
RV3	0.883**	19.518	
RV4	0.904**	26.479	
RV5	0.882**	23.32	
RV6	0.863**	26.976	
Top Management Support			0.8
TM1	0.905**	33.567	
TM2	0.934**	43.421	
TM3	0.842**	19.811	
Organisational Readiness			0.696
OR1	0.817**	18.874	
OR2	0.835**	21.368	
OR3	0.834**	16.005	
OR4	0.814**	13.026	
OR5	0.87**	26.329	
Competition Intensity			0.878
CI1	0.957**	105.307	
CI3	0.917**	20.565	
Presence strategy			0.732
PS1	0.863**	18.93	
PS2	0.907**	29.515	
PS3	0.656**	9.214	
PS4	0.888**	24.893	
PS5	0.929**	41.694	
PS6	0.855**	16.55	
PS7	0.899**	24.212	
PS8	0.903**	39.551	
PS9	0.765**	12.765	
Monitoring approach			0.637
MA1	0.787**	11.167	
MA2	0.857**	19.55	
MA3	0.767**	12.216	
MA4	0.854**	25.909	
MA5	0.808**	11.496	
MA6	0.706**	8.47	
Marketing capability			0.663
MC1	0.789**	14.062	
MC2	0.723**	12.539	
MC3	0.822**	18.597	
MC4	0.849**	25.117	
MC5	0.922**	57.501	
MC6	0.683**	7.724	
MC7	0.866**	33.301	
MC8	0.847**	18.685	
MC9	0.762**	13.372	
MC10	0.854**	27.445	

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct with its assigned indicators shares more variance than any other constructs (Ayeh, Au and Law, 2013). The discriminant validity of reflective constructs in this research was tested by using the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE), as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The AVE of each construct should be higher than the correlation of the construct with any other constructs, to ensure sufficient discriminant validity (Chin, 1998). Table (32) shows the correlation matrix of the constructs with the square root of the AVEs, which is larger than the correlation of the constructs with any of the other constructs. Therefore, this is an indication of sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 32: Correlation matrix with Square Roots of AVE

	Relative Advantage	Competition Intensity	Presence strategy	Marketing capability	Monitor	Top Management Support	Organisational Readiness
Relative Advantage	<b>0.893</b>						
Competition Intensity	0.643	<b>0.937</b>					
Presence strategy	0.716	0.547	<b>0.856</b>				
Marketing capability	0.776	0.558	0.742	<b>0.814</b>			
Monitoring approach	0.59	0.422	0.679	0.656	<b>0.798</b>		
Top Management Support	0.623	0.496	0.626	0.719	0.791	<b>0.894</b>	
Organisational Readiness	0.643	0.497	0.628	0.738	0.702	0.86	<b>0.834</b>

Notes: Shaded diagonal elements are the square root of AVE for each construct.

#### 7.5.1.4. *The Validity of Formative Constructs*

As mentioned, the validity of formative constructs is assessed differently from reflective ones in terms of measurements. Initially, the assessment has two levels: the indicator level and the constructs level. The indicator validity is evaluated by examining indicator weights that should be significant at the 0.05 level (Chin, 1998) and the variance inflation factors (VIF), which should be below 10 (Gujarati and Porter, 2009). As shown in Table (33), all the items met the required value of indicator significance and VIF. However, according to Henseler, et al. (2009), it is strongly recommended not to delete any item in formative constructs as long as these are theoretically justified.

*Table 33: The indicator validity of formative constructs*

Items	Item loadings	VIF
Content format		
CF1	0.819***	1.839
CF2	0.742***	1.562
CF3	0.832***	1.897
CF4	0.778***	1.628
Content type		
CT1	0.812***	2.224
CT2	0.86***	3.083
CT3	0.627***	1.495
CT4	0.734***	1.854
CT5	0.823***	2.575
CT6	0.838***	2.65

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

In terms of construct level validity, the inter-construct correlations were conducted to assess the correlation between formative and reflective constructs. The correlations should be less than 0.7 (Henseler, et al., 2009). Table (34) shows that most of the correlation between constructs is within the recommended value. Moreover, the nomological validity is another method to assess the validity of formative constructs. According to Peter (1981), nomological validity is "based on

the explicit investigation of constructs and measures in terms of formal hypotheses derived from theory”. Therefore, the nomological validity and the relationship of formative constructs with other constructs were determined through literature review and prior qualitative research.

Table 34: inter-construct correlations

	Relative advantage	Top management	Organisational readiness	Competition intensity	Presence strategy	Monitoring approach	Content format	Content type	Marketing Capabilities
Relative advantage	1								
Top management support	0.622	1							
Organisational readiness	0.644	0.859	1						
Competition intensity	0.633	0.537	0.491	1					
Presence strategy	0.714	0.626	0.627	0.586	1				
Monitoring approach	0.59	0.792	0.698	0.44	0.679	1			
Content format	0.55	0.554	0.567	0.426	0.66	0.692	1		
Content type	0.536	0.595	0.595	0.37	0.584	0.705	0.799	1	
Marketing Capabilities	0.775	0.72	0.739	0.578	0.741	0.657	0.642	0.641	1

#### **7.5.1.5. Common Method Bias**

Common Method Bias is a critical problem for self-report research, particularly in the case of single informant survey when conducting data collection through the same questionnaire during the same period of time (Verkasalo, et al., 2010), because method bias is one of the sources of measurement error, in which method variance is a result of data collection method rather than what the measurement is proposed to assess. Moreover, it can be a threat to the validity of the conclusions about the relationships between constructs (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), there are many available statistical remedies to control common method biases such as Harman's one-factor, Partial correlation procedures and Multiple method factors. This research uses Harman's one-factor to check whether common method bias is a serious threat to an interpretation of results.

Harman's one-factor one of the most common methods has been used to address common method bias in marketing and business literature (e.g. Zhu and Kraemer, 2005; Rapp et al., 2010; Murray et al., 2011; Theodosiou et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2013). Usually, in this test, all constructs are loaded into an unrotated principal component factor analysis, and the threat of common method bias is high if a single factor accounts for more than 50 % of the variance. The rationale for this test is to determine that there is no one general factor that will explain the majority of the covariance of variables (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). With regards to this research, the result shows that the total variance of the first factor was 37%, which indicates that no general factor was apparent (Appendix F).



### 7.5.2. Hypotheses Testing

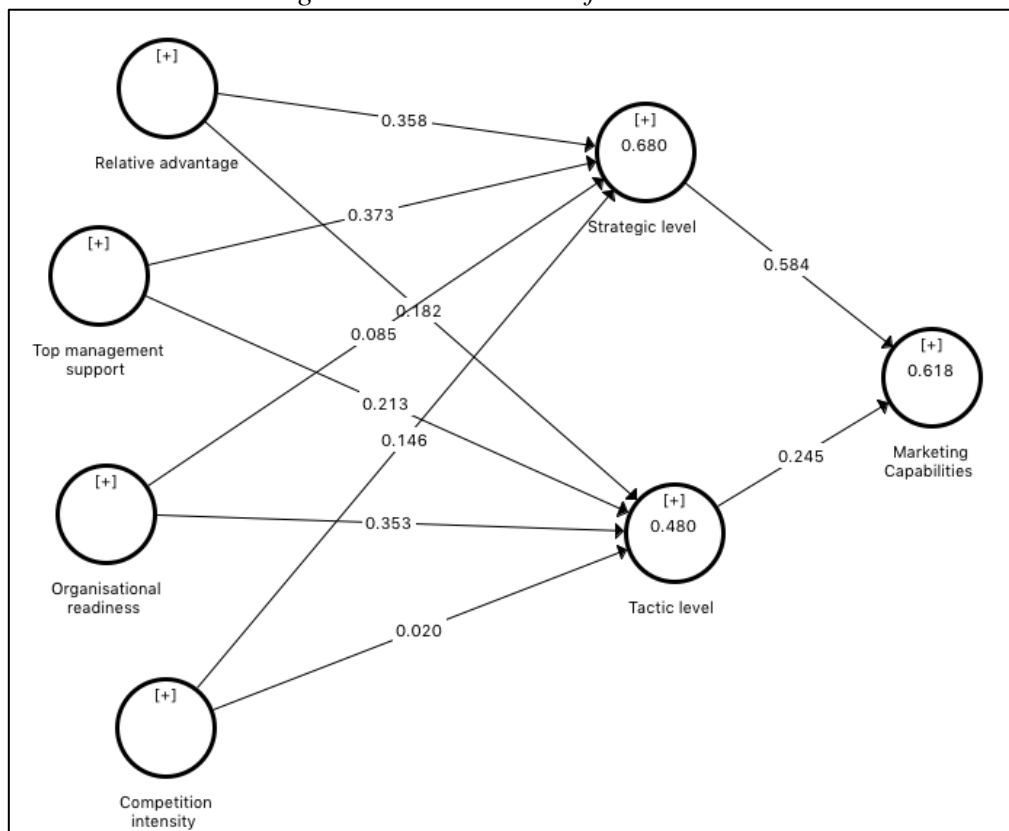
In this section, the conceptual model and its hypotheses were tested using a partial least square (PLS) approach to SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis process starts with testing the direct model, which tests the relationship between independent constructs, two levels of assimilation (strategic and tactical level) and marketing capabilities. Then, the combined model was tested to determine the impact of independent constructs on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing.

PLS analysis used the bootstrapping method to estimate the significance of the path coefficients. This method involves non-parametric inference and is appropriated when the sample size is small (Gibbons and Chakraborti, 2003; Mooney, Duval and Duval, 1993). Bootstrapping path coefficient ( $\beta$ ), Standard Deviation, and t-values to test the significance of the relationship between the study constructs. Since all hypotheses in this study are one-directional, all hypotheses were tested using one-tailed t-tests (Son and Benbasat, 2007). Moreover, the PLS analysis was given the  $R^2$  value for the regression. According to Downing and Clark (2003), “ $R^2$  measures the percent of the variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by regression. The value of  $R^2$  will always be between 0 and 1”. If the  $R^2$  value is greater than 0.75, the relationship is substantial; if the  $R^2$  value is 0.50, the relationship is moderate; if the  $R^2$  value is 0.25, the relationship is weak (Wong, 2013).

### 7.5.2.1. Direct Model

The Direct model is proposed to directly link the antecedents of assimilation and strategic and tactical level of assimilation to marketing capability. The results in Figure (13) show that the  $R^2$  value for assimilation in strategy level, tactical level and marketing capabilities are 0.680, 0.480 and 0.618 respectively, which is a reasonable and moderate proportion of variance explained in the assimilation of social media marketing and marketing capabilities. Bootstrapping produced the estimation of structural equation model including standardised path coefficients and t-value. The bootstrap with 100 resampling methods was run to determine the significance of relationships between constructs. Table (35) presents the direct model's hypotheses and their test results. Most hypotheses are showed significantly.

Figure 13: The Results of Direct Model



*Table 35: Results of direct model hypotheses testing*

Hypotheses		Result
H1a	Relative advantage has positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H1b	Relative advantage has positive impact on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H2a	Top management support has positive impact on strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H2b	Top management support has positive impact on tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Not supported
H3a	Organisational readiness has positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Not supported
H3b	Organisational readiness has positive impact on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H4a	Competition intensity has positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H4b	Competition intensity has positive impact on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Not supported
H5	Strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing has positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies	Supported
H6	Tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing has positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies	Supported

### *Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing*

Relative advantage has a positive impact on both the strategic level and tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing. The influence of Relative advantage on the strategic level is significant, which is supporting the Hypothesis 1a ( $\beta = 0.358, p < 0.001$ ). It indicates that relative advantage is a significant factor leading large Saudi companies to use social media marketing for various purposes. Moreover, it is supported that relative advantage significantly impacts the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing, offering evidence for the Hypothesis 1b ( $\beta = 0.182, p < 0.05$ ).

Top management support was found to have a highly significant impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing, which supports the Hypothesis 2a ( $\beta = 0.373, p < 0.001$ ). However, it has no impact on tactical levels, so that the Hypothesis 2b ( $\beta = 0.213, ns$ ) is not supported.

Contrary to Top management support, Organisational readiness does not have enough influence on large Saudi companies in the assimilation of social media marketing at the strategic level, which means the Hypothesis 3a ( $\beta = 0.085, ns$ ) is not supported. In contrast, Organisational readiness has a significant impact on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.353, p < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that the top management is more concerned toward the strategic level of assimilation of social media rather than tactical level, which is more dependent on the level of organisational readiness.

Competition intensity has a positive impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing. Then Hypothesis 4a ( $\beta = 0.146, p < 0.05$ ) is significantly supported, while the impact of Competition intensity on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing is not significant. Thus, hypothesis 4b ( $\beta = 0.02, ns$ ) is not supported. The path coefficients results are shown in Table (36).

***The Level of Assimilation –Marketing Capabilities Link***

In this research, the level of assimilation of social media marketing is assessed by two distinct constructs, strategic level and tactical level. The result of analysis shows (Table 36) that both constructs have a positive impact on marketing capabilities offering evidence for Hypotheses 5 ( $\beta = 0.584, p < 0.001$ ) and 6 ( $\beta = 0.245, p < 0.01$ ).

*Table 36: Results of direct model*

Path	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Deviation	T-value
Relative advantage -> Strategic level	0.358***	0.102	3.517
Relative advantage -> Tactical level	0.182*	0.126	1.445
Top management support -> Strategic level	0.373***	0.12	3.116
Top management support -> Tactical level	0.213ns	0.22	0.967
Organisational readiness -> Strategic level	0.085ns	0.129	0.658
Organisational readiness -> Tactical level	0.353*	0.225	1.573
Competition intensity -> Strategic level	0.146*	0.102	1.432
Competition intensity -> Tactical level	0.02ns	0.107	0.188
Strategic level -> Marketing Capabilities	0.584***	0.141	4.144
Tactical level -> Marketing Capabilities	0.245**	0.143	1.707

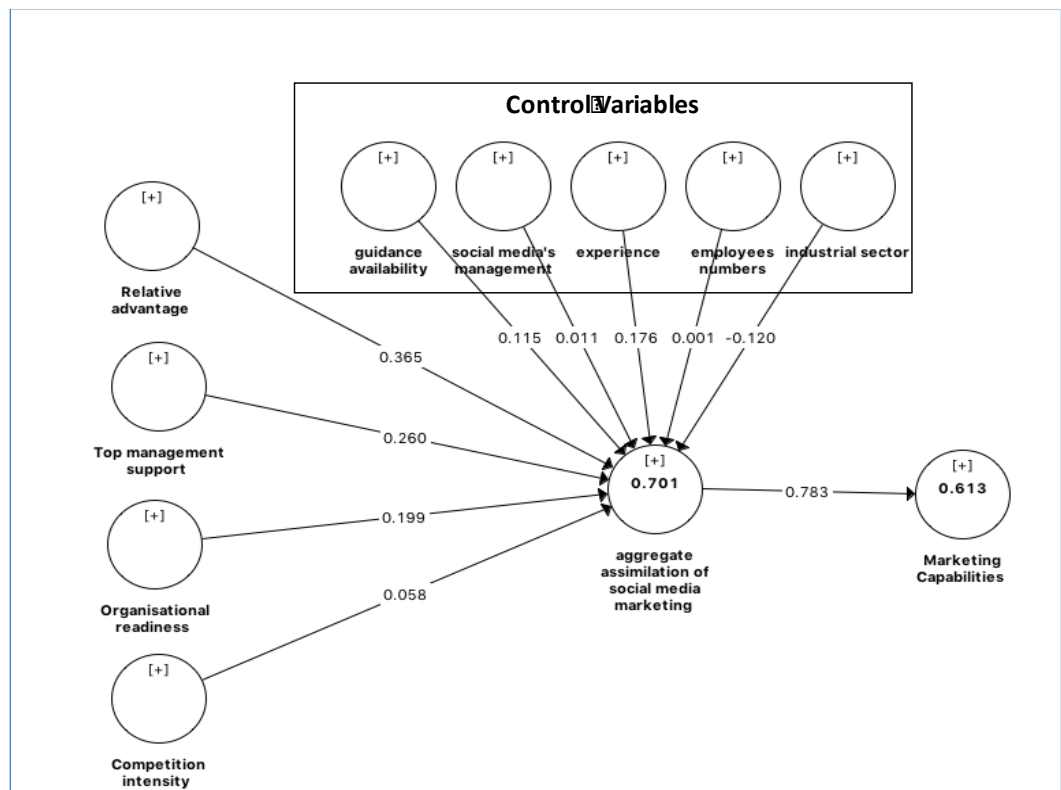
\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; ns= not significant.

### 7.5.2.2. Combined Model

Combined model was established to test several impacts between study constructs. Firstly, it tests the impact of independent constructs (Antecedents) on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Secondly, it tests the impact of control variables on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Finally, it tests the impact of aggregate assimilation of social media marketing on marketing capabilities (consequences).

Computing both strategic and tactical levels with their items and measurements to create aggregate assimilation of social media marketing, direct links from control constructs (industrial sector, experience, social media resources, employees, guidance availability) to the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing were also added (Figure14). Table (37) presents the combined model's hypotheses and their test results. Most hypotheses are showed significantly.

Figure 14: The Result of Combined Model



*Table 37: Results of combined model hypotheses testing*

Hypotheses		Result
H1c	Relative advantage has positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H2c	Top management support has positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H3c	Organisational readiness has positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Supported
H4c	Competition intensity has positive impact on aggregate assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies	Not supported
H7	Aggregate assimilation of social media marketing has positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies	Supported

***Antecedents of Aggregate Assimilation of Social Media Marketing***

Within combined model, the relationship between independent variables and aggregate assimilation has been tested. As the results shown in Table (38), the Relative advantage has a strong positive impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing, which supports the Hypothesis 1c ( $\beta = 0.365, p < 0.001$ ). Top management support and organisational readiness also have significant positive impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Thus, the hypothesis 2c ( $\beta = 0.260, p < 0.05$ ) and the hypothesis 3c ( $\beta = 0.199, p < 0.05$ ) are supported. In contrast, competition intensity has no significant impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing, so that the Hypothesis 4c ( $\beta = -0.058, ns$ ) is not supported.

### ***Aggregate Assimilation- Marketing Capabilities Link***

As Table (38) shows, the results support the Hypothesis 6 that aggregate assimilation has a significant positive impact on marketing capabilities of large Saudi companies ( $\beta = 0.783, p < 0.001$ ). The  $R^2$  value for aggregate assimilation explains 61% of the variation in marketing capabilities. This indicates that as the assimilation of social media marketing increases, large Saudi companies are more likely to leverage their marketing capabilities.

*Table 38: the result of combined Model (independent constructs)*

Path	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Deviation	T Statistics
Relative advantage -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.365***	0.135	2.708
Top management support -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.260*	0.17	1.529
Organisational readiness -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.199*	0.137	1.457
Competition intensity -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.058ns	0.107	0.542
Aggregate assimilation of social media marketing -> Marketing Capabilities	0.783***	0.04	19.552

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; ns not significant.

### ***Control Variables***

As control variables were included in the combined model, five variables were tested: industrial sector, experience, social media's management, employee numbers, and guidance availability. As the results in Table (39) show, only the experience of using social media marketing has a significant positive impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.176, p < 0.01$ ). Industrial sector ( $\beta = -0.120, ns$ ) does not affect aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. The social media management ( $\beta = 0.011, ns$ ) and employee numbers ( $\beta = 0.001, ns$ ) also do not affect aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Finally, social media guidance availability ( $\beta = 0.115, ns$ ) is also not found to have any effect on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. The  $R^2$  value was 0.701, which meant that 70% of the variance in the extent of aggregate assimilation of social media marketing was explained by this model.



Table 39: the result of combined Model (control variables)

Path	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Deviation	T Statistics
Employee numbers -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.001ns	0.094	0.015
Experience -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.176**	0.098	1.806
Guidance availability -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.115ns	0.107	1.076
Industrial sector -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	-0.120ns	0.089	1.345
Social media's management -> aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	0.011ns	0.079	0.136

\*\*\* p<0.001; \*\* p<0.01; \* p<0.05; ns not significant.

## 7.6. Summary

This chapter starts by presenting demographic characteristics of sampling and descriptive statistics, followed by details of data analysis to assess measurement model and structural model by using PLS analysis. The assessment of measurement model includes four tests: construct reliability, construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, to evaluate all the reflective constructs in the research. One item from organisational readiness was deleted, besides two items from competition intensity. Moreover, the validity of formative constructs was described.

The next stage of PLS analysis was to test hypotheses. PLS-SME is an appropriate technique to estimate proposed hypotheses and structural model, because of its flexibility in modelling formative constructs within the same model. Two models were tested. Firstly, the direct model to measure the direct relationship between independent variables, and two second-order constructs of assimilation of social media marketing, which consists of strategic level and tactical level. Also, the relationship between these two constructs and marketing capabilities was evaluated. Most of the direct model's hypotheses were found significant, except for the impact of top management support and competition intensity on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies. Moreover, Organisational readiness was found to not impact the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing.

The second stage was to test the combined model and its hypotheses, where strategic level and tactical level were combined to create aggregate assimilation of

social media marketing. The relationship between independent variables and aggregate assimilation of social media marketing was tested, which was found significant expect for competition intensity. The control variables' impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing was also examined, where only the experience in using social media marketing was found to impact the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing significantly. Finally, The  $R^2$  value for aggregate assimilation of social media marketing explains 61% of the variation in marketing capabilities.

## **Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **8.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide interpretations and inferences of analysis results and a detailed discussion on these research findings. In particular, the researcher intends to link the findings of the survey with previous studies conducted on the assimilation of social media marketing and IT innovation, as well as the results of the exploratory study presented in Chapter 4. First, the summary of the study will be detailed. Then, the findings are presented with four influential factors that lead to the assimilation of social media marketing, which is discussed with respect to their effects and significance. Second, the conceptualisation, role, and measurement of the assimilation of social media marketing in building organisational marketing capabilities are discussed. Finally, theoretical contributions and practical implications, as well as limitations are discussed. Suggestions for future research and development are also considered. The following section presents summary of the study.

### **8.2. Summary of the Study**

This study aimed to examine social media marketing through the lens of organisational innovation; so, this research adopted an innovation assimilation perspective to investigate social media marketing in large Saudi companies. It aimed to study the post-adoption stage of social media marketing, which is rarely examined in IT and marketing literature, with overall aim of this study is to investigate the assimilation of social media marketing in developing countries at an organisational level, taking Saudi large companies as a case study. Taking into account different perspectives, the objectives of this study were:

- 1) To review and develop a coherent framework that use to examine the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi large companies.

2) Create a research instrument that target specifically post adoption stage (assimilation) of social media marketing in large Saudi companies.

3) Critically examine the factors that affect the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi large companies.

4) Empirically test the impact of social media marketing on marketing capabilities.

5) Provide managerial implications that will help Saudi companies to improve of their assimilation of social media marketing

6) Finally, to understand the assimilation of social media marketing within the context of progression in high-income developing country such as Saudi Arabia.

To gain the best view of this phenomenon, mixed methods with both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to study the assimilation of social media marketing in the Saudi context. The first phase of the study was to conduct qualitative interviews with social media marketing experts in the Saudi market. A preliminary framework was developed based on the literature review, the technology–organisation–environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky et al., 1990) and the theory of diffusion of innovations (DOI) (Rogers, 1983). This preliminary framework includes the groups of variables that are proposed to impact assimilation in social media marketing and marketing capabilities. This general framework was outlined as a guidance of the procedure of semi-structured interviews and analysis of the qualitative data.

The interviews were conducted with the necessary amount of participants to accomplish saturation and key phrase identification, which were concluded on themes that addressed the phenomena. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. Nine participants provided efficient data that satisfied the purpose of this study. Six individuals were employees of large Saudi companies. The analysis of these sets of

interviews identified some factors that had an effect on the levels of assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies and confirmed the impact of social media marketing on marketing capabilities.

Based on the literature review and the analysis of qualitative data, a conceptual framework of the research was established. This framework addressed both the antecedents and the consequences of the assimilation of social media marketing. Two dimensions of the assimilation of social media marketing were identified as strategic and tactical levels, thus reflecting the variety and the intensity with which an organisation is engaged in social media marketing. The conceptual framework of this study employed a model with multidimensional constructs that was able to capture complex concepts related to the assimilation of social media marketing. Thus, this study divided a conceptual research model into direct and combined models. The direct model is proposed to directly provide a link between relative advantage, top management support, organisational readiness, and competition intensity, which are proposed as antecedents of strategic and tactical levels of the assimilation of social media marketing. This model also proposed that strategic and tactical levels of assimilation of social media marketing have a positive impact on marketing capability.

The combined model was established to test several impacts between study constructs. First, it aimed to test the impact of independent constructs (antecedents) on how they aggregated the assimilation of social media marketing. Second, it tested the aggregate assimilation of the impact of social media marketing on marketing capabilities (consequences). This combined both strategic and tactical levels with their items and measurements to create an aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. Direct links from control constructs (the industrial sector, experience, social media resources, employees, guidance availability) were also added to the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing.

Then, a cross-sectional survey design was presented for the quantitative phase of this study to test the research framework and its hypotheses. A scale and measure development process was described, and a questionnaire was tested in a pilot study to check its reliability. Then, the data was collected via an online questionnaire given to large Saudi companies. The online questionnaire was distributed to 315 large Saudi companies by using social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and email, while 82 responses were returned.

In chapter seven, after the data was screened, 75 responses were prepared for analysis. This chapter starts by presenting the demographic characteristics of sampling and descriptive statistics, followed by details of data analysis to assess measurement and structural models using PLS analysis. The assessment of the measurement model includes four tests: construct reliability; construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. These evaluate all the reflective constructs in the research. Finally, the PLS analysis aimed to test the hypotheses, as PLS-SME is an appropriate technique to estimate proposed hypotheses and structural models because of its flexibility in modelling formative constructs within the same model. The main results of the PLS analysis are summarised in the following table (40).

Table 40: Main results of the PLS analysis

Supported Relationship	Not Supported Relationship
Relative advantage → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	Top management support → tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing
Relative advantage → strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing	Organisational readiness → strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing
Relative advantage → tactical level assimilation of social media marketing	Competition intensity → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing
Top management support → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	Competition intensity → strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing
Top management support → strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing	Employee numbers → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing
Organisational readiness → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	Guidance availability → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing
Organisational readiness → tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing	Industrial sector → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing
Competition intensity → tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing	Social media's management → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing
Aggregate assimilation of social media marketing – > marketing capabilities	
Strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing → marketing capabilities	
Tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing → marketing capabilities	
Experience → aggregate assimilation of social media marketing	

### **8.3. Discussion and Summary of Main Findings**

This section discusses and analyses the main findings from the quantitative study in previous chapter. These findings will be linking with the prior studies and qualitative findings from chapter four.

#### **8.3.1. Antecedents of Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Regarding the third research objective about the antecedents and factors of assimilation of social media marketing, we relied upon the literature on innovation assimilation and social media. Given that the literature has examined numerous variables predicting IT adoption and assimilation, this study identified the most critical and relevant ones based on the literature review and the first qualitative phase of this study: relative advantage, top management support, organisational readiness, and competition intensity. Results provided strong evidence that relative advantage, top management support, and organisational readiness have positive effects on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. However, the proposed impact of competition intensity on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing is not supported by the results.

##### **8.3.1.1. Technological context**

###### ***Relative advantage***

The survey analysis revealed that the relative advantage is a significant factor that positively impacts the assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies. This result supports the conventional wisdom that perceived relative advantage is a key determinant of innovation adoption and assimilation (Rogers, 1995). According to Malekpour and Norouzi (2013), the relative advantage is the most frequently significant factor that lead to adopt and use technology. Moreover, this result is supported by the exploratory findings as relative advantage has been seen as the main reason for using social media marketing in Saudi business environment as participant 8



confirmed that '*Most Saudi companies from various sectors are using social media in marketing because of its benefits*'.

The survey analysis also confirmed many relative advantages of using social media marketing, which were suggested by participants in chapter four, such as ease of use, accessibility to social media platforms any time, instant interactions with consumers and the ability to reach target market exactly. This consists of studies conducted by Oliveira and Martins (2010b) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who found that organisations use social media because of non-transactional nature, which is suitable for making two-way conversations, developing relationships and trust with consumers, and collecting feedback from them.

In the research framework, the relative advantage was hypothesised as a direct motivator towards the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing and to both strategic and tactical levels. The quantitative analysis confirmed the positive direct impact of the relative advantage factor on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing as ( $\beta = 0.365, p < 0.001$ ). Also, it had a positive impact on the strategic, ( $\beta = 0.358, p < 0.001$ ) and tactical levels of assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.182, p < 0.05$ ). These findings agree with the conclusions in the existing literature, In the TOE framework and the DOI theory, relative advantage is considered as one of the key antecedents of organisational innovativeness (Oliveira and Martins, 2010a). The outcomes in this research of large Saudi companies complement many other empirical studies that have studied technology usage at the organisational level and shown the importance of relative advantage as a driver in technology assimilation (Cragg and King, 1993; Agarwal et al., 1997; Yoon, 2009; Li et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2010; Al-Ariefy, 2011; Ramdani et al., 2013). Moreover, the relative advantage in this research context is also similar to the concept of perceived benefits, since both concepts refer to the extent to which an organisation can execute a better performance by using

social media marketing that gives it an advantage over exacting marketing tools. Therefore, many empirical studies in the field of organisational adoption and assimilation of various technologies have used this concept (Flanagin, 2000; Mehrtens et al., 2001; Hsu et al., 2006; Chan and Ngai, 2007; Shah Alam, 2009; Baabdullah and Williams, 2013). The results from both sets of data analysis in this study show that the relative advantage as an essential contributor can promote the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies. However, the assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies was not as significantly driven by the purely technological characteristics of social media marketing as it was by other organisational and environmental factors. Alternatively, companies are rational in their decision-making when they integrate social media marketing into their marketing efforts. When social media marketing is tied to the company's strategy and marketing activities to a much higher degree, the effect of technological characteristics may decrease.

### ***8.3.1.2. Organisational context***

#### ***Top Management Support***

the top management support was hypothesised as a direct promoter of the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing and both of its levels. The quantitative analysis confirmed that the top management support had a positive impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.260, p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the top management support significantly impacts the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.373, p < 0.001$ ). However, it does not have an impact on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.213, ns$ ). The overall positive impact on aggregate assimilation and the strategic level of social media marketing is consistent with prior empirical studies that employ the TOE framework, which confirmed that the top management plays a significant role in enhancing various types of technology assimilation (Premkumar and Ramamurthy, 1995; Lertwongsatien

and Wongpinunwatana, 2003; Nelson and Shaw, 2003). Moreover, this agrees with a study conducted by Liang et al. (2007), which indicated that active top management support might play a significant role in the assimilation stage.

However, the inconsistent results show that top management support does not impact the tactical level of social media marketing. A possible explanation is that top management support focuses on the strategic level of social media marketing by planning and integrating social media marketing into the strategic plan of the company, while executive managers and social media teams are responsible for planning social media marketing activities. This explanation is supported by the exploratory findings as participant 9 state that: *‘Top management who draw strategy for the company can include the presence in social media and decide how the company will enter social media, in-house, outsourcing or both’*.

Moreover, this finding is consistent with findings from qualitative data, which indicated that top management figures who interfere in the daily work of social media could weaken it and reduce its impact as participant 3 suggested:

*“This is a very important issue that I have faced during my work as the digital marketing manager. The top management believe in the importance of social media as a marketing tool, but they have some concerns, so they try to intervene in social media marketing work or its content, which results in many problems for the marketing team”*.

To sum up, according to qualitative and quantitative analyses, the impacts of top management support on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing are significant, as participant 7 confirm:

*“At the end of the day, based on the belief of top management on social media, you will get either support or not. If they believe you will find all*

*horizons open, they will give you all the powers you need for the strong and organised use of social media marketing”.*

This demonstrates that top management support can significantly influence both strategic and tactical levels of the assimilation of social media marketing. In this research, the top management support construct refers to the extent to which senior managers in large Saudi companies are committed to accommodating social media marketing in their overall organisational plans. to implement professionally social media marketing requires that top managers continuously provide commitments and support to facilitate social media marketing.

### ***Organisational Readiness***

Organisational readiness is the second construct within the organisational context, which aims to measure the overall readiness of organisations to assimilate to social media marketing. It is defined in this research with respect to the number of organisations that are ready to integrate and use social media marketing within their organisation’s culture, values, and favoured work practices. As mentioned previously in chapter five, organisational readiness has different levels, so this study context focuses on organisational awareness and commitment to using social media marketing. The research framework tested these concepts as indicators of the major factors of organisational readiness.

This construct was hypothesised as a direct driver towards the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing and its dual levels. In contrast to top management support, organisational readiness has no influence on large Saudi companies regarding the assimilation of social media marketing at the strategic level ( $\beta = 0.085, ns$ ). On the other hand, organisational readiness has a direct positive impact on the tactical level of social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.353, p < 0.05$ ). These findings imply that the role of organisational readiness is relatively more important at

the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing. It might be explained that the extent to which a company engages in social media marketing activities still substantively relied on the level of organisational awareness and commitment of resources.

This result is consistent with qualitative data which indicated that organisations should prepare their employees by increasing their awareness of social media marketing and attain adequate commitment of resources for assimilating social media marketing before they start to use social media marketing as participant 6 suggest that : ***“When the organisation is interested in using social media marketing, they facilitate the marketing team with all the requirements to start their work with social media marketing in a professional way”***. Prior studies have also indicated that the lack of awareness of technology and an enabling environment leads to insignificant organisational readiness (Molla and Licker, 2005; Kurnia et al., 2009; Ogunyemi and Johnston, 2012).

Overall, the survey analysis revealed that organisational readiness has a direct positive impact on aggregate assimilation ( $\beta = 0.199, p < 0.05$ ), which is consistent with previous studies that found the organisational readiness and its forms have been found significantly impact the adoption and assimilation various technology in some notable studies, such as internet e-commerce (Law et al., 1998; Alam, 2009; Grandon and Pearson, 2004; Murdough, 2009) e-business (Zhu et al., 2006; Yi, 2009; Li et al., 2010b).

#### **8.3.1.3. Environmental Context:**

##### ***Competition intensity***

Competition intensity is the only environmental context that is conceptualised in the research framework, according to participant 6. ***“In the case of many of my competitors using social media, I think the first and the most important factor that***

*leads me to use social media marketing will be competition insanity*". This construct aims to measure the impact of competitive intensity on the assimilation of social media marketing.

In the research framework, the hypothesised impact of competitive intensity on aggregate assimilation ( $\beta = -0.058, ns$ ) and tactical level ( $(\beta = 0.02, ns)$ ) of social media marketing were not supported, which is not consistent with many prior studies that found competitive intensity positively related to the assimilation of various technologies, such as e-commerce (Wongpinunwatana and Lertwongsatien, 2003; Grandon and Pearson, 2004), website (Oliveira and Martins, 2008) and e-business (Oliveira and Martins, 2010b). Moreover, this result supports the exploratory findings, which indicated that companies from sector to sector can differ in terms of response to competitive intensity; it does not lead to using social media marketing all the time. Participant 2 indicated this problem in following statement:

*"Some sectors of the Saudi market, such as the food and telecommunications industry lead companies to use social media, while in other sectors, there may be intensity of competition, but we could not find a significant role for social media marketing in these sectors. For example, there is a huge competition in the fashion market, but there is no impact on social media marketing in this sector. Another example is the automotive sector in Saudi Arabia, where there is no momentum or interactivity for social media marketing"*.

It can demonstrate that competition intensity may be less likely to impact organisational behaviour at the assimilation or post-adoption stage of social media marketing. Compared to those organisations considering an early adoption stage, the organisation at the post-adoption stage of social media marketing has a better awareness of the application of social media marketing. Organisations also have better knowledge

of the potential of social media marketing practices. Therefore, they may not need to imitate their competitors' social media marketing practices.

On the other hand, organisations may focus on competitive intensity from a strategic aspect, as they can analyse the external competition environment and understand their competitors, which can help them to create more effective strategies for using social media marketing and differentiate their social media presence. Thus, the result of the statistical analysis in chapter seven indicated that competition intensity has a significant impact on social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.146, p < 0.05$ ). also, participant (3) confirmed that *“Social media marketing enables an organisation to know what your competitors are doing, so that you can distinguish your communication strategy via social media marketing from their strategies”*.

In conclusion, these results provide support for fully or partially positive associations of relative advantage, top management support, organisational readiness, and competition intensity with the assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies. These findings are critical and relevant for organisations and researchers who are interested in the implementation of social media marketing. The relationship between relative advantage, top management support, competitive intensity and the assimilation of social media marketing suggests that these factors are significant when large Saudi companies plan a core strategy and draw up policies in the assimilation of social media marketing. On the other hand, organisational readiness and relative advantage are important factors when large Saudi companies facilitate social media marketing activities.

### **8.3.2. Assimilation of Social Media Marketing**

Although large Saudi companies strive to capture the potential of social media marketing, there is still a cognitive uncertainty among these companies in regard to the nature and the impacts of social media marketing initiatives. This research concentrates

on the post-adoption of social media marketing, which can be called assimilation, rather than the early adoption stage. Moreover, the variance in the assimilation of social media marketing is particularly examined in terms of the scope and the extent of social media marketing engagement. Through a detailed review of innovation adoption, assimilation literature, social media marketing research and support from the first qualitative phase, the construct of social media marketing assimilation is introduced and conceptualised as the extent to which social media marketing implementations are leveraged by an organisation to support various marketing activities alongside the value chain.

The assimilation of social media marketing is conceptualised as two distinct dimensions: strategic level and tactical level. These two dimensions respectively reflect the variety and the intensity of social media marketing implementations that are applied to support organisational marketing activities. Such a measurement strategy of assimilation of social media marketing is consistent with the multidimensional framework of IT usage and web and e-business assimilation in prior empirical studies (Chatterjee et al., 2002; Hallahan et al., 2007; Li et al., 2010; Michaelidou et al., 2011) and is improved by the utilised qualitative method. The multidimensional operationalisation is characterised by two distinct facets of assimilation, which explain the versatile nature of the assimilation of social media marketing and present a comprehensive schema for guiding an organisation's social media marketing initiatives. An analysis of the findings shows that responding Saudi companies differentiate the strategic level from the tactical level of the assimilation of social media marketing.

The strategic level has two sub-dimensions: presence strategy and monitoring approach. The descriptive statistics show that the presence strategy of large Saudi companies mainly focus on consumers' service and engagement with them, collect feedback and publish information and news about their brand and products. On the other hand, they perceived that using social media marketing as a sales tool and



monitoring competitors' social media activities are less important strategies, which may indicate that the large Saudi companies are aware of potential social media marketing as an engagement tool rather than a sales tool. This explanation supports by participant 7 statement: ***“Social media is one of the great communicative arms for companies; through social media, a marketing company can publish information and news, and engage with consumers. Also, it is a useful tool to attract customers to the official website”.***

In terms of collecting data and monitoring competitors' activities that had the lowest rank, it can indicate that large Saudi companies do not yet fully utilise social media marketing as a strategic tool that can be used to gain competitive advantage. The findings of the exploratory study revealed that the lack of understanding of social media marketing and how it works can be a barrier to successful implementation of social media marketing as participant (8) suggested

***“Many companies treat social media as a communication tool, but it is not a tool. It is something more than a tool; it is a strategic choice that must be inputted in your marketing and sales strategy. If you use it as a publishing tool, please do not use it”.***

With respect to the monitoring approach, the descriptive statistics indicated that the large Saudi companies attempt to apply many techniques to monitor and measure their usage of social media marketing. However, the soft return on investment (SROI) is the most popular method to measure social media marketing strategies, while fewer companies agree that they have key performance indicators (KPIs) for each platform they use. According to Malthouse et al. (2013), companies need to develop KPIs to measure the performance of each component of the social media marketing framework in order to evaluate whether its social media marketing is successful or not.

This result consists of findings from the exploratory qualitative study presented in chapter 4. Several participants indicated that the awareness of the potential of social media as a strategic marketing tool is still low among many Saudi companies as a result of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. Therefore, many of the Saudi companies use social media marketing that are devoid of a clear strategy and objectives, as participant (2) indicated that: *“The strategy for using social media marketing is still a shallow culture in the Saudi market”*

The tactical level of the assimilation of social media marketing is conceptualised into two sub-dimensions: content formats and content types. In terms of content formats, the findings indicate that large Saudi companies attempt to using more visual content (e.g. photographs, infographics, charts, and diagram) in their social media interaction, which means that these organisations can perceive that the visual content is more effective than other content formats. This was the result of the previous studies that found that photos or visual content receives more attention from social media users (Curtis et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2010; Kwok and Yu, 2013). This finding is supported by the findings of the exploratory study: *“A tweet with a picture is more attractive to followers, and they focus on pictures more than text” (P6)*. *“If you add to your messages photo or videos, it is more likely to attract more attention and interaction” (P4)*.

The second dimension is content type. The result showed that large Saudi companies use social media marketing to publish information about their products and brand, following that the content is relative to engagement with consumers. However, the main objective of social media marketing is engaging and building relationships with consumers (Waters et al., 2009; Hvass and Munar, 2012; Mohammadian and Mohammadreza, 2012). Many literatures on marketing emphasises that the economic value of this objective and its direct link to companies profit by enhancing the selling of

products or improving the brand loyalty (Li, 2010; Castronovo and Huang, 2012; Papasolomou and Melanthiou, 2012). Therefore, this indicates that large Saudi companies are more professional at the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing than the strategic level.

With regard to the impact of control variables, the PLS analysis indicated that only the organisation's experience has a significant impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. This result indicated that large Saudi companies that have maintained a social media marketing presence for a longer period of time are more likely to increase their experience and insight about how to effectively use social media platform for marketing. According to Purvis et al. (2001) technology assimilation can be influenced by an organisation's cumulative experience and learning.

Overall, according to the results of this research, influential factors have different impacts both on the levels of assimilation as well as aggregate assimilation. The finding that the assimilation of social media marketing is dependent on marketing capabilities further demonstrates that strategic and tactical levels of assimilation are distinct in terms of their impacts on organisations. Compared to the operationalisation of the adoption of social media marketing by asking respondents whether social media marketing is adopted or not, the sophisticated multidimensional conceptualisation of the assimilation of social media marketing in this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of social media marketing engagement in Saudi companies. The distinction between two dimensions of the assimilation of social media marketing also helps us to enable a deep investigation of their different relationships with antecedent factors. Further, and more importantly, the identification of two different dimensions of assimilation of social media marketing allows researchers to examine their different impacts on organisational marketing capabilities.

### 8.3.3. The Impacts of Social Media Marketing On Marketing Capabilities

Marketing capabilities are conceptualised as a first-order reflective construct to capture the level of distinctive capabilities that organisations possess by using social media marketing. The data and analysis findings support that both strategic and tactical levels of assimilation of social media marketing significantly affect marketing capabilities. Large Saudi companies that engage in greater levels of social media marketing applications will build stronger marketing capabilities by addressing market and environment changes. However, the survey results show that the largest Saudi companies perceived that the assimilation of social media marketing could positively enhance the brand image, the credibility and the prestige of the organisation. This indicated that large Saudi companies strive to enhance their prestige and credibility, in order to improve their image and increase their corporate reputation in the eyes of stakeholders. Such a finding is in line with the finding of the qualitative investigation, as many Saudi companies use social media marketing for prestige:

*“In bagging social media revolution, companies use social media as a prestige, and the leaders attempt to publish their news and pictures. However, now we have a state of maturity in the use of social media”. (P7)*

*“Some companies use social media for prestige and tell people that our business has a presence in social media”. (P6).*

Results show that the strategic level influences marketing capabilities ( $\beta = 0.584, p < 0.001$ ) more strongly than the tactical level ( $\beta = 0.245, p < 0.01$ ). One possible explanation for this finding is that the more intense planning and mentoring is when conducted to support social media marketing activities, the more engagement and interactivity with consumers occurs, and that in turn allows a company to maximise the benefits from the specific use of social media marketing. Therefore, the results show

that aggregate assimilation is very significantly related to marketing capabilities ( $\beta = 0.783, p < 0.001$ ).

The positive relationship between the assimilation of social media marketing and organisational marketing capabilities are the major findings in this study. Previously, no empirical researches were conducted to examine the impacts of the assimilation of social media marketing on organisational marketing capabilities. By validating this impact, this study provides a theoretical underpinning of the mechanism underlying how companies leverage the social media marketing potential to enhance marketing capabilities. More interestingly, the strategic and tactical levels of the assimilation of social media marketing were found to have different impacts on marketing capabilities in terms of magnitude.

## **8.4. Research Conclusion**

This section draws conclusions for the current research. It starts by identifying the key contributions to the body of knowledge and managerial implications for business managers. It concludes by discussing the research limitations and addressing avenues for future research.

### **8.4.1. Contributions to the Body of Knowledge**

By empirically testing an integrated research framework, this research offers to make a significant contribution to the literature on social media marketing and innovation assimilation. First, it has been suggested that the assimilation of innovation is a multi-stage process, which starts from the initial awareness of the innovation to sustained implementation (Fichman, 2000) or the evidence of its impacts on business performance (Chatterjee et al., 2002). Although some enquiries have been carried out to address these assimilation stages, most have focused on the intention or the initial decision to adopt social media marketing (Curtis et al., 2010; Kim, 2011; Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Kelleher and Sweetser, 2012; Mandal and McQueen, 2012). The implementation of social media marketing and realising its importance should be perceived far beyond a simple technology adoption (Richter et al., 2013), arguing that social media marketing may have a different impact across the various assimilation stages. Therefore, this study contributed to the existing literature by conducting an in-depth inquiry and highlight the post-adoption stage of social media marketing.

Second, to bridge the assimilation of social media marketing and marketing capabilities, it is essential to investigate antecedents and core assimilation constructs and consequences in an integrated model, which was absent in prior social media marketing research. By examining both the antecedents and the consequences of the assimilation of social media marketing in an integrated research framework, insights are synthesised from literature streams that separately explore social media marketing.

Prior social media marketing studies generally focus on factors to adopt and use in social media marketing or the impact of using it. However, this study adopts a general perspective on social media marketing, which argues that it should be understood in its entirety. Such a general perspective on social media marketing research is more significant in capturing its impacts on marketing capabilities. Social media marketing applications supporting various marketing activities could create a synergy to improve organisational performance and competitiveness. Therefore, this research developed a multi-perspective framework to incorporate elements from different theories and models to provide a broader understanding of assimilation of social media marketing as organisational innovation. Such a trend is consistent with previous studies in assimilation innovation, such as e-business (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005) and e-commerce (Awa et al., 2015).

Third, the majority of current theories and models were devised in the developed world. However, Zhu and Kraemer (2005) pointed out that theories and frameworks that have been developed in the context of western countries should be re-examined for use in developing countries. This has been suggested because some issues that might appear insignificant for developed countries may play an essential role for social media marketing adoption in developing countries. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by applying these theories and models to explore the assimilation of social media marketing and its antecedents and consequences, in a little-explored region, such as the Saudi market.

Fourth, this research also enriches the social media marketing literature by providing a comprehensive picture of the extent to which social media marketing is diffused and routinised in organisations. Providing an insight by viewing social media marketing through the lens of organisational innovation, this research applied an innovation assimilation perspective on social media marketing to capture its many

aspects as part of organisational innovation. Two different dimensions of the assimilation of social media marketing were identified in this study, which offered an insightful effort into further exploring the density of social media marketing in an organisation. The distinction between strategic and tactical levels of the assimilation of social media marketing indicates that there are different aspects of how organisations assimilate and use social media marketing. This suggests that studies investigating the social media marketing phenomenon should consider the potential outcomes of such a density. As such, a deeper investigation can be conducted in the future to develop a classification of the diverse patterns of assimilation of social media marketing based on different dimensions, such as strategic and tactical levels of assimilation used in this study. Furthermore, the results of this study offer evidence that antecedents may have different impacts across the different stages of the innovation process. Nevertheless, the influences of antecedents on different dimensions of assimilation have not been investigated extensively. This research investigated the impact of relative advantage, top management support, organisational readiness, and competition intensity on distinct dimensions of the assimilation of social media marketing. The investigation of the relative strengths of predicting the influence of antecedents on strategic and tactical levels of assimilation of social media marketing establish an insightful effort into a deeper examination of the density of this assimilation.

Finally, companies use social media marketing to support a variety of marketing activities (e.g., public relations and the promotion and sales process), which aim to connect the internal capabilities of companies to their external environment (Vrontis and Pavlou, 2008). Social media marketing is a new technology that brings a new managerial style to the marketing systems by using social media, the Internet-based platforms. More specifically, there are two types of organisational innovation: technical and administrative; and both types can significantly affect the firms' performance (Han



et al., 1998). Most of the existing literature examined each type of organisational innovation separately (Battisti and Stoneman, 2010). Social media marketing has significant implications in various aspects of an organisation, such as organisational communication marketing innovation and consumer relationship (Langer, 2014). Although social media marketing has a potential as an organisational innovation, there is a limited and a fragmented understanding of the impacts of social media marketing on organisations. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by examining the impact of social media marketing on the marketing capability of an organisation.

## **8.5. Research Implications**

This study has contributed to both a practitioner and the research perspective. In addition to theoretical contributions, several implications inferred from the results for business managers are discussed in the following sections.

### **8.5.1. Managerial Implications**

Because of the exponential growth in the number of users of popular social media platforms, it is not surprising that businesses have a high level of interest in social media marketing and use it as a part of their communication strategy. Managers have started to pay close attention to issues, such as value creation, increasing profits and gaining competitive advantages through social media marketing. Social media marketing can help organisations to be more active and dynamic with their consumers and in their market environment. The most important aspect for managers is to understand what social media marketing means and how they can consider it when making decisions regarding marketing strategies and activities. The results from this research can offer valuable insights into these issues.

#### ***8.5.1.1. Understanding social media marketing***

The innovation assimilation perspective on social media marketing has significant suggestions for how managers should consider the application and evaluation of social media marketing. First, managers in companies should shift from viewing social media marketing as an alternative for traditional media, which focuses on publishing news and information, in order to use it to create interactions with their consumers and add value. With such a view, managers have to understand that it is essential to establish long-term strategies and supporting mechanisms to facilitate the assimilation of social media marketing. Second, after an organisation has already used social media marketing, it should disaggregate its different aspects of assimilation. The multidimensional concept of the assimilation of social media marketing represented by two distinct dimensions provided comprehensive guidelines for managers to understand the nature and impacts of social media marketing initiatives. Considering the strategic level of the assimilation of social media marketing offers managers a broader view of the purposes and goals that it can be used for; also, this level of assimilation of the monitoring approach can help managers to measure social media marketing performance. On the other hand, the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing provides ideal techniques for daily activities by focusing on the content formats and types, which is the lifeline of social media marketing. Executives should make a decision about how many of the various social media marketing applications should be implemented or how intensively initiatives are used to support marketing efforts. To sum up, managers should be able to identify and plan the extent of assimilation of social media marketing in their organisation and ensure its consistency with the organisational strategic plans.

**8.5.1.2. *The importance of top management support, organisational readiness, and competition.***

Results in this study argue that managerial and organisational factors impact the assimilation of social media marketing. Top management support is important to enhance the extent of assimilation of social media marketing. Top leaders should make constant efforts to apply social media marketing by providing both intangible and tangible support. First, senior managers should exert their significant impact on an organisation's employees in terms of the promise and importance of using social media marketing. Senior managers can convey their beliefs on social media marketing through many types of support mechanisms, such as training programs, setting objectives and task forces.

Second, senior managers should acknowledge that utilising the full potential of social media marketing will require more than an initial financial investment. They must offer more financial and organisational support to develop a favourable atmosphere to infuse social media marketing implementations into marketing strategies and activities. Third, the top management should be aware of the profound influences of social media marketing. A comprehensive perspective on social media marketing in entirety can allow senior managers to appropriately evaluate the impact of initiatives and develop effective strategies.

Furthermore, this study found that organisational readiness is an influential factor in the assimilation of social media marketing, especially on a tactical level. This indicates that organisations with high levels of organisational preparation, including tangible and intangible ones, are more likely to increase the scope and the magnitude of social media marketing implementations. Managers involved in social media marketing must understand the significance of well-trained staff, clear usage policy, and financial resources in facilitating and supporting the assimilation of social media marketing.

Moreover, the results of this research suggested that competition might be increasing the assimilation of social media marketing at the strategic level. In sectors with intensive competition where many organisations use social media marketing, managers should benefit from this situation by analysing their competitors' presence on social media platforms to understand factors of their success or failure to create the correct strategy for using social media marketing. In sectors where few organisations use social media marketing, managers should take the initiative and create strategies that help their organisation to gain a competitive advantage.

#### ***8.5.1.3. Leveraging marketing capabilities by using social media marketing***

Results in this study indicated that the benefits accruing from social media marketing in terms of enhancing marketing capabilities cannot be underemphasised. Managers should look beyond conventional insights of social media marketing value in reducing marketing costs and enhancing organisational credibility and prestige. Rather, the roles of social media marketing in enhancing companies, services and products, adding value for consumers, and helping to adopt market change are more important for companies to foster survival and success in a changing environment. Social media marketing offers substantial opportunities for organisations to enhance their flexibility adaptability by providing interacting communication tools, which can be used to get instant feedback from consumers, which helps companies to respond to market changes. Moreover, managers should be able to understand the relationships between the use of social media marketing and marketing capabilities, as this can help organisations to plan their marketing strategies more effectively. A systematic analysis of an existing marketing capabilities portfolio and a plan for how to leverage social media marketing to improve these capabilities are also required.

## **8.6. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study makes a significant contribution to developing a comprehensive framework that measures the assimilation of social media marketing in a little-explored region. The findings are relevant to large companies across various B2C industries in Saudi Arabia. However, it was exploratory in nature and definitely came with several limitations. First, it was limited to study social media marketing in Saudi Arabia, and thus its generalisation can be influenced by this geographical limitation; however, this can be overcome by conducting further studies in the assimilation of social media marketing in other regions and business environments. As this study has focused on large B2C companies from various industries, the findings might have been impacted by the variance in control variables. Sampling from a specific industry sector or B2B companies or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could be considered as a subject for further research.

Moreover, although a survey is justified to be an appropriate method for testing the theoretical framework of this research, it can be difficult to counteract all the limitations imposed. For example, participants in a survey can provide a positive assessment of their organisational usage of social media marketing, which can lead to bias. The quantitative data of this research is based on the perceptions of social media marketing practitioners evaluating at an organisational level. Although all efforts were made to ensure that the participants in this research have enough knowledge and experience to answer the questionnaire at this level, the findings are still based on perceptions rather than on measurable outputs. Another limitation of the survey is that the data was collected using a cross-sectional online questionnaire to understand the directions of the hypotheses in the research framework. However, the statistical analyses presented in the previous chapter absolutely cannot confirm the causality of the relationship between the constructs proposed in the framework.

Finally, the interactivity was mentioned in qualitative interviews as one of the potential constructs that contributes to measuring the assimilation and use of social media marketing. However, both interviews and the survey research used cannot capture accurately and adequately the level of social media marketing interactivity, particularly in an exploratory study that focuses on various types of business and social media marketing strategies. Therefore, future studies could focus on investigating the interactivity's link to the assimilation of social media marketing by using a content analysis approach.

### **8.7. Conclusion**

The primary drive of conducting the research was to explore the assimilation or post-adoption of social media marketing and mechanisms, thus underlying how social media marketing impacts the marketing capabilities among large Saudi companies.

To address these issues, a framework was generated based on a literature review and refined through an exploratory study to explore the assimilation of social media marketing in a Saudi business environment. The research framework extends beyond technological boundaries and explores the organisational and environmental factors of assimilation of social media marketing. It introduced two levels – strategic and tactical – to measure the assimilation. More broadly, this research has provided a comprehensive view of the assimilation of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia by considering different elements from various perspectives. Unlike the majority of social media marketing adoption studies, this research focused on exploring the antecedents and the scope of use in addition to its impact on marketing capabilities among large companies in a little-explored region, such as Saudi Arabia.

The refined research framework was empirically examined using data collected by online questionnaires from large Saudi companies. The empirical findings revealed several major results that have different impacts on the assimilation of social media

marketing. In summary, two models were tested by PLS. First, the direct model aimed to measure the direct relationship between independent variables and two second-order constructs of the assimilation of social media marketing, which consist of the strategic and tactical level. Also, the relationship between these two constructs and marketing capabilities was evaluated. Most direct model hypotheses are found to be significant except on the impact of top management support and competition intensity on the tactical level of assimilation of social media marketing in large Saudi companies. Moreover, organisational readiness was found to have no impact on the strategic level of assimilation of social media marketing.

The second stage was to test the combined model and its hypotheses, whereby strategic and tactical levels were combined to create an aggregate assimilation of social media marketing. The relationship between independent variables and the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing was tested and was found to be significant except for competition intensity. The control variables' impact on the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing was also examined; only the experience of using social media marketing was found to significantly impact the aggregate assimilation of social media marketing.

By applying an innovation assimilation perspective to social media marketing, this research contributed to the social media marketing literature by concentrating on the assimilation phenomenon, which has been neglected by prior studies. The conceptualisation of the assimilation of social media marketing, consisting of two distinctive dimensions, provided a useful outline for further research on the assimilation of social media marketing. This research also contributed to the literature of marketing capabilities by focusing on the impacts of social media marketing on the capabilities of the companies. This study enriches an understanding of how large Saudi companies leverage and enhance their marketing to compete in a changing environment. With respect to the research aim and objectives, this empirical inquiry not only introduced

contributions to the relevant literature, but also offered substantial implications for practitioners who have considerations about the utilisation and the evaluation of social media marketing. In general, this empirical study offered a solid foundation for future researchers on the assimilation of social media marketing.



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## Appendix (A) the guidance question for interview

<p><b>1- Information about participant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name:</li> <li>Age grope:</li> <li>Education:</li> <li>Company:</li> <li>Occupation :</li> </ul>	<p>-[معلومات عن المشارك:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>الاسم:</li> <li>العمر:</li> <li>التعليم:</li> <li>شركة:</li> <li>الوظيفة:</li> </ul>
<p><b>2- Motivations to use social media marketing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do you think your company use and assimilate social media marketing?</li> <li>Are there any technical reasons that are leading your company to use social media?</li> <li>Are there any organisational reasons that are leading your company to use social media?</li> <li>Are there any environmental reasons that are leading your company to use social media?</li> </ul>	<p>٢-دوافع استخدام التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>لماذا تعتقد أن شركتك تستخدم واستيعاب التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>هل هناك أي أسباب تقنية تقود شركتك إلى استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>هل هناك أي أسباب تنظيمية تقود شركتك إلى استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>هل هناك أي أسباب بيئية تقود شركتك إلى استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> </ul>
<p><b>3- Assimilation of social media marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which social media platforms do you use in your companies (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs)?</li> <li>What are the company strategies of using social media marketing?</li> <li>What are the current company practices related to implementation of social media marketing?</li> <li>How is your company maintaining their presences in social media marketing?</li> <li>How is your company measure its activities in social media platforms?</li> </ul>	<p>٣- استيعاب التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ما هي منصات الوسائط الاجتماعية التي تستخدمها في شركتك (مثل فيسبوك و تويتر و لينكدان و يوتيوب والمدونات)؟</li> <li>ما هي استراتيجيات الشركة في استخدام التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>ما هي ممارسات الشركة الحالية المتعلقة بتنفيذ التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>كيف تحافظ شركتك على وجودها في التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>كيف تقيس شركتك أنشطتها في منصات التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> </ul>
<p><b>4- Consequences of using social media marketing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your company benefits from using social media marketing?</li> <li>What is the impact of using of social media marketing on marketing capabilities of your company?</li> </ul>	<p>٤- عواقب استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ما هي فوائد شركتك من استخدام التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟</li> <li>ما هو تأثير استخدام التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على القدرات التسويقية لشركتك؟</li> </ul>

## **Appendix (B) Consent form**

I voluntarily and without any pressure and any force agree to be interviewed on the topic of "assimilation of social media marketing among large Saudi companies".

This study is conducted by Hassan Somili, a PhD student at Sheffield-Hallam University to obtain his doctoral degree. I understand that the aim of this study is to investigate the assimilation of social media marketing in developing countries at an organisational level.

I understand that the amount of time needed will not exceed 90 (ninety) minutes. I understand that my participation is fully voluntary and I am fully free to stop at any time. I understand that the interview will be recorded and the audio record will be transcribed. The information from me will only be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study. It will not be distributed or shared with anyone else as long as it is still complying with the law. If the information will be used for any interest other than this study, I will be informed first and my consent will be sought first. I understand that my answer can be quoted, but my name will be written as pseudonym in the final report. I understand that my consent can be terminated at any time without any prejudice or any sanction. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions pertinent to this study. I have read and I have consented to participate in this study.

Name:

Company:

Signature:

## Appendix (C) questionnaire (English)

### Section 1: general information about your company:

- 1- Please, select your firm's industrial sector
- Banks & Financial Services  
 Retail  
 Energy & Utilities  
 Agriculture & Food Industries  
 Telecommunication & IT  
 Insurance  
 Automotive  
 Real Estate Development  
 Transport  
 Media and Publishing  
 Hotel & Tourism  
 Other: .....
- 2- How would you describe the length of your social media marketing experience?
- Less than 3 months  
 Less than 6 months  
 Less than 12 months  
 1 to 3 years  
 More than 3 years
- 3- Presently, the most of our social media marketing activities conduct
- In-house  
 Outsource (*move to question 6, please*)
- 4- How many employees work on social media marketing?
- 1-2  
 3-5  
 More than 5
- 5- Does the firm have a guidebook for use of social media marketing?
- Yes  
 No
- 6 What is your job title?
- Marketing Manager  
 Social Media Manager  
 Public Relations Officer  
 Corporate Communications Manager  
 Internet Manager  
 Webmaster  
 Other: .....

<b>Section2: Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements</b>						
		<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
RV1	Social media platforms are easy to use by us and our consumers	1	2	3	4	5
RV2	We can access social media platforms any time.	1	2	3	4	5
RV3	We can interact with consumers instantly.	1	2	3	4	5
RV4	Social media marketing enables us to reach our exact target market.	1	2	3	4	5
RV5	Social media marketing activities are easy to monitor.	1	2	3	4	5
TM1	Top management articulated a vision for the organizational use of social media marketing	1	2	3	4	5
TM2	Top management formulated a strategy for the organizational use of social media marketing	1	2	3	4	5
TM3	Top management established goals and monitor use of social media marketing	1	2	3	4	5
OR1	Social media marketing is staffed with proper resources to achieve its goals	1	2	3	4	5
OR2	Roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined with each social media implementation	1	2	3	4	5
OR3	We have social media mindset throughout all levels of management	1	2	3	4	5
OR4	Our employees at all levels support social media marketing use.	1	2	3	4	5
OR5	Our social media managers are granted the authority to make decisions and take actions as opportunities arise.	1	2	3	4	5
OR6	We have clearly defined	1	2	3	4	5

	metrics for assessing the impact of our social media marketing implementations					
OR7	we have an effective governance model in our social media marketing implementations	1	2	3	4	5
CI1	Our customers can switch to another company for similar services/products without much difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5
CI2	The rivalry among companies in our industry is intense.	1	2	3	4	5
CI3	The substitutable products and services affect our company in this industry.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Section3:</b>						
<b>Q1: Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements</b>						
<b>We set up accounts on social media platforms</b>		<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
PS 1	To publish information and news about our brand and products.	1	2	3	4	5
PS 2	To engage with our consumers and generate dialogue with them	1	2	3	4	5
PS 3	To collect data and monitor our competitor activities	1	2	3	4	5
PS 4	To create company / brand communities and fans	1	2	3	4	5
PS 5	To answer our consumers questions and solve their problems.	1	2	3	4	5
PS 6	To collect feedback form consumers about our service and products.	1	2	3	4	5
PS 7	To educate society and share knowledge with our consumers	1	2	3	4	5
PS 8	To share our consumers' experiences, pleasures and successes.	1	2	3	4	5

Q2: Please, select the social media platform/platforms that usually your company uses:

1.  Twitter
2.  Facebook
3.  Google+
4.  YouTube
5.  Instagram
6.  other, please specific.....

**Q3: Please, indicate what is format do you use for original content in your social media marketing practices?**

(Original mean that the content is created by your employees, agency or freelancers to target for your audience)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	often	Always
Original writing content (e.g. Tweet, article, presentation , ebook)	1	2	3	4	5
Original visual content (e.g. Photographs, Infographics, charts and diagram.	1	2	3	4	5
Original Video content	1	2	3	4	5
Link to Your company Website	1	2	3	4	5

**Q4: Please, indicate what type of contents do you use in your social media marketing practices**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	always
Brand message (e.g. brand news, review, facts, brand commercial, team , CSR programs ...)	1	2	3	4	5
Products message (e.g. products information, products advertising launch new products, feedback..)	1	2	3	4	5
Promotion message (e.g. Promotions, special offers, discounts, sales, packages ...)	1	2	3	4	5
Reward message (e.g. competition, games, prize ...)	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Section 4:</b>								
<b>To what extent has your firm use of social media in marketing had the following effects</b>								
MC1	Reducing the cost of marketing communications.	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC2	Entering new markets	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC3	Enhancing visibility of the business website.	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC4	Reducing the cost of research and development.	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC5	Increasing trust and customer satisfaction	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC6	Gaining a higher return on investments (ROI)	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC7	Enhancing brand image	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC8	Enhancing the credibility and prestige of the organization	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal
MC9	Changing the way the organization conducts business	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A great deal



Engagements message (e.g. replies to questions, experience sharing, comments, picture captions, humour...)	1	2	3	4	5
Information message (e.g. general information, community education..)	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Q5: Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:</b>					
Monitoring	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
We use different tools to analyses our performance on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
Our company measures soft return of investment (ROI) of social media marketing. (e.g. number of followers/fans, timing, engagement rate , page views , like,shares ).	1	2	3	4	5
Our company measures hard return of investment (ROI) social media marketing. (e.g. sales, revenue and market share)	1	2	3	4	5
Our company has key performance indicators (KPI) for each platform we use.	1	2	3	4	5
Our company uses analytic information to understand target audience and decision about content.	1	2	3	4	5



لي أي مدى توافيق أو لا توافيق مع الجمل التالية: ٢-					
موافيق جدا	موافيق	محايد	غير موافيق	غير موافيق جدا	
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	RV1 نا لنا وللعلائق بالنسبة مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي سهلة الاستخدام
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	RV2 لي مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في أي وقت يمكن الدخول
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	RV3 على الفورنا يمكن التفاعل مع عملائق
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	RV4 نا المستهلكين إلى عملائق اجتماعي نتيج لنا الوصول شبكات التواصل ال مباشرة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	RV5 نشطة التواصل الاجتماعي التسويقية سهل قياسها
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	TM1 التواصل الاجتماعي وسائل استخدم لتنظيم دارة العليا رؤية لإ وضعت في التسويق
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	TM2 الإدارة العليا استراتيجية المنظمة لاستخدام شبكات التواصل صاغت الاجتماعي في التسويق
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	TM3 س لاستخدام الاتصال ايهدف والعق لإدارة العليا ال لإ حددت الاجتماعي التسويق
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR1 بالوارد المناسبة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تم تزويد لتحقيق اهدافه
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR2 من تطبيقات الاتصال تحديد الادوار والمسؤوليات لكل تطبيق تم الاجتماعي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR3 لدينا عقلية الإعلام الاجتماعي في جميع مستويات الإدارة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR4 موظفينا في كافة المستويات يدعهمون استخدم الاتصال الاجتماعي التسويقي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR5 اتخاذ القرارات واتخاذصلاحيه تم منح مدير الإعلام الاجتماعي لدينا الإجراءات كلها سحت الفرص
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	OR6 تعاملي التسويقي تطبيقنا للاتصال الاج لتقييم تأثير واضحة مقياس لدينا
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	CI1 خري بدون شركة امشابهه من اختيار منتجات وخدمات للعلائقنا يمكن صعوبه
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	CI2 التنافس بين الشركات في مجال نشاط الشركة قوي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	CI3 له يؤثر أعمال الذي نتمجي جات والخدمات البديله في قطاع لا الممت على شركتنا

الجزء الثالث :

ولا توافقي مع الجمل التالية: أي مدى توافقي إلى أول: السؤال ال					
موافق جدا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق جدا	شركتنا قامت بافتتاح حساباتها في منصات التواصل الاجتماعي
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS1   التجارية ومنتجاتنا تنشر حول علاء نشر المعلومات والال
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS2   حوار معهم خلقنا وتمام مع عملائنا تواصل ل
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS3   نشطة الشركات المنافسة الجمع البيانات ومراقبة
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS4   لخلق مجتمع افتراضي ومعجبين للشركة والعلامة التجارية
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS5   العملاء وحل مشاكلهم نسألنا جابة على إلى
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS6   حول منتجاتنا وخدماتنا عملائنا التعرف على ردود ل
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS7   نأى المعرفة مع عملاء وتبادل المجتمع لتتقيد
٥	٤	٣	٢	١	PS8   ونجاحاتهمنا مناسباتهم لمشاركة عملا

أقع الاجتماعية التي عادة شركتكم تستخدمها في التسويق: حدد ، من فضلك لسؤال الثاني :

- تويتر
- بوك فيس
- قوقل بلس
- يوتيوب
- ستقرام ان
- اخرى ، حدد.....مواقع

من فضلك ، حدد مدى استخدامك شكل المحتوى الاصلي الذي تستخدمه في الممارسة التسويقية الثالث السؤال  
 لشركتكم من خلال الاتصال الاجتماعي؟  
 المحتوى الاصلي يعني المحتوى الذي تم إنشائه بواسطة موظفي الشركة أو الوكالة الاعلانية أو أي طرف ثالث  
 (لا تستهدف جمهورك بشكل خاص)

محتوى مكتوب	أبداً	نادراً	أحياناً	غالباً	دائماً
(مقالات ، عروض تقديمية، كتب الكترونية، تغريدات ، منشورات فيسبوك الخ).....	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
محتوى مرئي (الصور، انفوجرافيك ، رسومات بيانية)	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
محتوى فيديو اصلي	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
روابط الموقع الشركة	١	٣	٣	٤	٥

من فضلك ، حدد مدى استخدامك نوع المحتوى الذي تستخدمه في الممارسة التسويقية الرابع السؤال ا  
 لشركتكم من خلال الاتصال الاجتماعي؟

سائل متعلقة بالعلامة التجارية ، اعلانات عن العلامة التجارية ، برامج المسؤولية الاجتماعية مثل الاخبار ، معلومات وحقائق	أبداً	نادراً	أحياناً	غالباً	دائماً
سائل متعلقة بالمنتجات والخدمات معلومات عن المنتج أو الخدمة، اعلانات، اطلاق منتج او خدمة جديدة ، اراء حول المنتج او لخدمة	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
سائل ترويجية ثلا عروض ، تخفيضات، مبيعات )	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
سائل تحفيزية ثلا مسابقات، العاب، جوائز )	١	٣	٣	٤	٥
سائل تفاعلية الاجابة على تساؤلات العملاء، مشاركة التجارب، التعليق ، رسائل طريفة)					
سائل تعليمية ثلا معلومات عامة، تعليم المجتمع )					



## Appendix (E) Research Ethics Checklist



### RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST (SHUREC1)

This form is designed to help staff and students to complete an ethical scrutiny of proposed research. The SHU [Research Ethics Policy](#) should be consulted before completing the form.

Answering the questions below will help you decide whether your research proposal requires ethical review by a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). In cases of uncertainty, members of the FREC can be approached for advice.

**Please note:** staff based in University central departments should submit to the University Ethics Committee (SHUREC) for review and advice.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research and with the principal investigator for staff research projects.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements for keeping data secure and, if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption.

The form also enables the University and Faculty to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

- For student projects, the form may be completed by the student and the supervisor and/or module leader (as applicable). In all cases, it should be counter-signed by the supervisor and/or module leader, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in their research projects, and staff should keep a copy in the student file.
- For staff research, the form should be completed and kept by the principal investigator.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Faculty Safety Co-ordinator.

#### General Details

*(Table cells will expand as you type)*

Name of principal investigator or student	Hassan Somili
email address	b1047714@my.shu.ac.uk
Course or qualification (student)	PhD
Name of supervisor (if applicable)	Prof Noel Williams
email address	n.r.williams@shu.ac.uk
Title of research proposal	Assimilation of social media marketing (SMM) in Saudi large companies: antecedents and consequences
Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (50 words). In addition for research with human participants, include recruitment method,	this project adopts an innovation assimilation perspective regarding SMM in Saudi large companies. It aims to study the post-adoption stage of social media marketing, with the goal of achieving the following objectives:

<p>participant details &amp; proposed methodology (250 words).</p>	<p>-To conceptualise the assimilation of SMM within Saudi large companies.</p> <p>-To evaluate, analyse and synthesize existing theories and literature on technology adoption and innovation diffusion to understand SMM assimilation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To empirically justify the impacts of SMM on marketing capability.</li> <li>- To provide managerial insights into SMM implementation for practitioners.</li> </ul> <p>methodology :</p> <p>The positivism philosophy will be the fundamental basis used to address the research problem. Quantitative methods and an online survey will be used to collect data. The population of this study will be large Saudi companies that are using social media marketing, scales will be developed to measure the assimilation of social media marketing by following the guidance from earlier research.</p> <p>This process will be guided by Churchill (1979) to ensure the measurement items reflect the domain of the constructs. Firstly, the generated items will be created using a combination of extensive literature review and exploratory qualitative focus group discussions, which will be conducted with social media marketing experts in Saudi companies. The snowball sampling techniques will be employed to select the participants for the focus group. The main purpose for the focus group discussion is to identify characteristics of assimilation of social media marketing. The items for the other constructs, which will be drawn from the literature review, will be combined with the items generated from the focus group discussion to create the questionnaire layout using 5-point Likert scales.</p> <p>The next step will be to conduct a pilot study on convenience sampling in order to identify the underlying variables that present in set of items to measure study constructs. It will also help to spot any errors or difficult to understand or confusing items. The data from the pilot study will be used to assess and purify the measurements by employing a confirmatory factor analysis. Moreover, the reliability of the constructs will be tested with new data using Cronbach's alpha. The final step will be to assess construct validity by determining the correlation between the measures in order to ensure that these measures perform as expected</p>
<p>Will the research be conducted with partners &amp; subcontractors?</p>	<p><b>Yes/No NO</b></p> <p>(If <b>YES</b>, outline how you will ensure that their ethical policies are consistent with university policy.)</p>



## 1. Research Involving the NHS or Social Care / Community Care

Question	Yes/No
<p>1. Does the research involve the NHS or Social Care/Community Care (SC) as defined below?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or SC</li> <li>• Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or SC</li> <li>• Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients</li> <li>• Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients</li> <li>• The recently dead in NHS premises</li> <li>• Prisoners recruited for health-related research</li> <li>• Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their incapacity</li> </ul>	no
<p>2. Is this a research project as opposed to service evaluation or audit? For NHS definitions please see the following website <a href="http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/">http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/</a></p>	no

If you have answered **YES** to questions **1 & 2** then you **must** seek approval from the NHS or Social Care under their Research Governance schemes.

NHS <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx>

If you are undertaking Social Care research in Sheffield you will require a favourable ethical review from a Faculty Committee but must use the Sheffield Council form for this. Full details from <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/us/research>. For other areas contact the relevant social services department directly for advice on procedures.

**NB** FRECs provide Independent Scientific Review for NHS or SC research and initial scrutiny for ethics applications as required for university sponsorship of the research. Applicants can use the NHS or SC proforma and submit this initially to the FREC.

## 2. Research with Human Participants

Question	Yes/No
<p>1. Does the research involve human participants? This includes surveys, questionnaires, observing behaviour etc.</p> <p><i>Note</i> If YES, then please answer questions 2 to 10 If NO, please go to Section 3</p>	yes
<p>2. Will any of the participants be vulnerable?</p> <p><i>Note</i> 'Vulnerable' people include young people under 18, people with learning disabilities, people who may be limited by age or sickness or disability from understanding the research, etc.</p>	no
<p>3. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?</p>	no
<p>4. Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?</p>	no

Question	Yes/No
5 Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	no
6 Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	no
7 Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants? <i>Note Harm may be caused by distressing or intrusive interview questions, uncomfortable procedures involving the participant, invasion of privacy, topics relating to highly personal information, topics relating to illegal activity, etc.</i>	no
8 Will anyone be taking part without giving their informed consent?	no
9 Is it covert research? <i>Note 'Covert research' refers to research that is conducted without the knowledge of participants.</i>	no
10 Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?	no

If you answered **YES only** to question 1, you **must** submit the signed form to the FREC for registration and scrutiny by the Chair. If you have answered **YES** to any of the other questions you are **required** to submit a SHUREC2A (or 2B) to the FREC.

### 3. Research in Organisations

Question	Yes/No
1 Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc)?	yes
2 If you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? <i>If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.</i>	no
3 If you answered NO to question 2, is it because: A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access. <i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.</i>	A

### 4. Research with Products and Artefacts

Question	Yes/No
1. Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes or secure data?	no
2. If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain? <i>Note 'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.</i>	

Question	Yes/No
<p>– Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.</p> <p>– Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.</p> <p><i>If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.</i></p>	
<p>3. If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data? <i>If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain permission.</i></p>	
<p>4. If you answered NO to question 3, is it because: A. you have not yet asked permission B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access.</p> <p><i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.</i></p>	<b>A/B/C</b>

**Adherence to SHU policy and procedures**

<b>Personal statement</b>	
I can confirm that: – I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures – I agree to abide by its principles.	
<b>Student / Researcher/ Principal Investigator (as applicable)</b>	
Name: Hassan Somili	Date: 18/06/2014
Signature:	
<b>Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off</b>	
I can confirm that completion of this form has not identified the need for ethical approval by the FREC or an NHS, Social Care or other external REC. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received.	
Name: Noel Williams	Date: 18/6/14
Signature:	

## Appendix (F) exploratory factor analysis

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		Cumulative %	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	27.259	37.86	37.86	27.259	37.86	37.86
2	5.807	8.066	45.926			
3	4.322	6.003	51.929			
4	2.996	4.161	56.09			
5	2.675	3.715	59.805			
6	2.26	3.139	62.944			
7	2.008	2.789	65.733			
8	1.843	2.56	68.292			
9	1.727	2.398	70.69			
10	1.563	2.171	72.862			
11	1.436	1.994	74.856			
12	1.285	1.785	76.641			
13	1.211	1.681	78.323			
14	1.14	1.584	79.907			
15	1.015	1.41	81.316			
16	0.914	1.27	82.586			
17	0.862	1.197	83.783			
18	0.777	1.079	84.862			

19	0.745	1.035	85.896			
20	0.721	1.002	86.898			
21	0.705	0.979	87.877			
22	0.676	0.939	88.816			
23	0.586	0.815	89.63			
24	0.554	0.769	90.399			
25	0.526	0.731	91.13			
26	0.523	0.727	91.857			
27	0.455	0.631	92.488			
28	0.446	0.619	93.107			
29	0.381	0.529	93.637			
30	0.353	0.491	94.128			
31	0.334	0.463	94.591			
32	0.324	0.45	95.041			
33	0.309	0.429	95.47			
34	0.29	0.403	95.873			
35	0.283	0.393	96.266			
36	0.255	0.354	96.62			
37	0.235	0.326	96.946			
38	0.227	0.315	97.261			
39	0.198	0.274	97.536			
40	0.178	0.247	97.782			
41	0.167	0.233	98.015			

42	0.157	0.218	98.233			
43	0.149	0.207	98.439			
44	0.114	0.158	98.598			
45	0.11	0.152	98.75			
46	0.102	0.142	98.892			
47	0.097	0.135	99.027			
48	0.086	0.12	99.147			
49	0.072	0.101	99.248			
50	0.069	0.096	99.344			
51	0.058	0.08	99.424			
52	0.055	0.076	99.501			
53	0.053	0.073	99.574			
54	0.048	0.066	99.64			
55	0.045	0.062	99.702			
56	0.037	0.051	99.753			
57	0.033	0.045	99.799			
58	0.03	0.041	99.84			
59	0.025	0.035	99.875			
60	0.021	0.028	99.903			
61	0.018	0.025	99.928			
62	0.014	0.02	99.948			
63	0.011	0.016	99.963			
64	0.008	0.011	99.974			

65	0.007	0.009	99.983			
66	0.004	0.006	99.989			
67	0.003	0.005	99.994			
68	0.003	0.003	99.997			
69	0.001	0.001	99.999			
70	0	0.001	99.999			
71	0	0.001	100			
72	0	0	100			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						