

**A ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN B2B MARKETING AND
BRANDING: A CASE OF UK FASHION INDUSTRY WITH
REFERENCE TO ZARA, UK**

ABSTRACT

Current research is focused on the topic namely, **A ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN B2B MARKETING AND BRANDING: A CASE OF UK FASHION INDUSTRY WITH REFERENCE TO ZARA, UK.** This study aims to analyse the role of social media as capitalised by small and mid-sized British fashion houses for their B2B marketing and branding activities. The researcher has employed secondary research methodology in this study, where all relevant information has been obtained from secondary, that is, published sources. In order to gain valuable insight on the research topic, the researcher has entirely relied on statistical data published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Along with that, newspaper publications and other reports published by market research firms. For analysing the role played by Zara in B2B marketing and social media activities, latest published annual report has been put into use in to this study. The research has revealed that contrary to conventional mode of marketing and promotion, branding activities, when performed through social media channels, yields greater benefits both in terms of business growth and sales volume.

UK being a popular fashion destination across the world, fashion enthusiasts from all over the world congregate in this nation to weather themselves with latest trends. As a result, fashion retailers capitalise this opportunity to boost their business. In this context, B2B marketing through popular social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube proves to be extremely beneficial for such purpose. these platforms not only helps companies such as Zara to stay connected with their trading partners but also to engage in active collaboration with customers and partners alike. However, web-based advertising also has several darker niches and Zara has to be aware of those issues. The company could employ 27*7 Chabot for better connectivity that could be utilised both by clients and customers for providing feedback. In this way, current study has presented a holistic account on the issue of

B2B marketing and branding as practiced by fashion brads in UK through social media channels.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It provides me immense pleasure to present my dissertation entitled as “A ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN B2B MARKETING AND BRANDING: A CASE OF UK FASHION INDUSTRY WITH REFERENCE TO ZARA, UK”. This topic of research has helped me to gather immense knowledge about B2B marketing as well as the role of social media in the same.

I wish to extend most sincere gratitude for those who have helped me to lead this research work towards a reality. Firstly, I thank those who have helped me to gather data throughout the research. I would like to like to present heartiest thanks towards my professors who have helped me to understand this topic and have also helped me to land into a conclusion in this study. I would also like to thank my fellow mates as well as friends who provided me with enough assistance to reach a definite goal. I acknowledge support of batch mates, supervisors as well as professors for this study and I declare to be solely responsible for shortcomings of this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Ever since the invention of social media platforms, companies and their brands are trying to raise their standards by means of increased brand awareness among people. In today's digitalized era, marketing through social media campaigns are a mandate and gone are those days when marketing involved hands on experience as well as thorough labour. Moreover, with the integration of big data techniques in the field of marketing have made it easier to mark out their customers and create marketing strategies as per market demands. The popularity of social media gained momentum since the creation of Facebook back in 2004. Since then growth of social media marketing (SMM) for B2B sales have increased at a considerably high rate and have been found to have marked a growth of around 42% in the year 2016 (Businessinsider.com, 2017).

B2B or Business to Business process involves marketing process by means of sales agents with the help of another business process. Since the introduction of massive usage of social media websites and digital marketing strategies, companies are trying to make people aware of brands through web based communities and in recent studies it has been found from user reviews that most of their purchase decisions are influenced by the contents on social communities. Among several social media sites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have revolutionized the way of marketing. Signature features like "Like and share" option of Facebook, Hash-tag option of Twitter and subscribe option of YouTube have made B2B marketing as well as brand awareness process much easier (Hootsuite.com, 2017). As stated by the reports of Forbes, 38% people prefer to read user comments on social media before buying any goods as people state about their practical experiences in web platforms and that is what makes people aware and attracted towards a brand (Forbes.com, 2017). The study is focused on marketing strategies of Zara, a clothing brand from UK and emphasis has been laid on marketing theories as well as procedures.

1.1 Research background

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has just not been the platform for marketing a brand name but also a medium used for expanding customer base with the help of competitive and attention grabbing ad campaigns (Hsu and Lawrence, 2016, p.70). From \$6.1 billion in 2013, revenue from social media advertising increased to \$11 billion in 2017 and have been in the

primary list of marketers for brand marketing (*refer to appendix 1*). Moreover, with the launch of Big Data, social media platforms have been bull's eye for company owners as social media websites helps big data analysts to gather market data even from small terabytes of data. Fashion brands have been active in social media since the launch of digital technologies, however marketing processes has evolved over time. Social media is the witness of war of shoppable contents which decide sustainability of companies (Laroche *et al.* 2013, p.80). As described by Hollebeek *et al.* (2014, p.160), “shoppable content” is nothing but the process of enabling customers to shop by just a click. While in apparent vision this is just a process of engaging customers by means of attractive contents, in practical scenario, this is also a process of revenue generation with the help of paid advertisements.

From 2015 to 2016, annual revenue of Zara has increased by 24.2% and the brand has managed to collect revenue of \$220 billion by the end of financial year 2016. Zara, Inditex owned brand has been successful regarding its social marketing and the brand surely knows the way of retaining in customers. The brand typically believes in fast fashion and its eye catchy marketing strategies have played a supporting role in its success. With 6.2 million followers on Instagram, Zara has created a niche for itself and have surpassed its arch competitors Adidas as well as H&M way behind in the race of superiority (Zara.com, 2017). However, risks are inevitable whenever communities are involved and thus companies needs to deal with innovative trends as well as strategies so as to gather positive feedback from people. Marketing failures can be a potential risk for companies and thus even in the struggle for existence companies need to head the right track for maintaining its customers. As mentioned by Today.com (2017), social media can be profitable and risky at the same time as a minor mistake can turn customer attraction to repulsion and thus can also rupture brand names. Ad renaissance have taken a toll on many companies as creative ad campaigns may be easy to sound but hard to implement. For an instance “Love your Curves” campaign by Zara was meant for a creative ad campaign but failed to create positive impact on people and made its way in the list of annoying companies for sometime in 2016 (Today.com, 2017).

1.2 Research rationale

As mentioned earlier in this study, social media can equally appear as a boon as well as curse for B2B practices of a company. In order to get adjusted in the competitive marketing environment, companies always need to stay with updated techniques. In the desperation of

getting a top place in the minds of followers, companies create huge blind spot for themselves. In 2016, Zara was slammed in social networking sites by fashion geeks for stealing design of others. The sales rate from 2016 to 2017 increased only to about 5% via B2B marketing techniques, which may be a profit practically but a loss when compared to other companies.

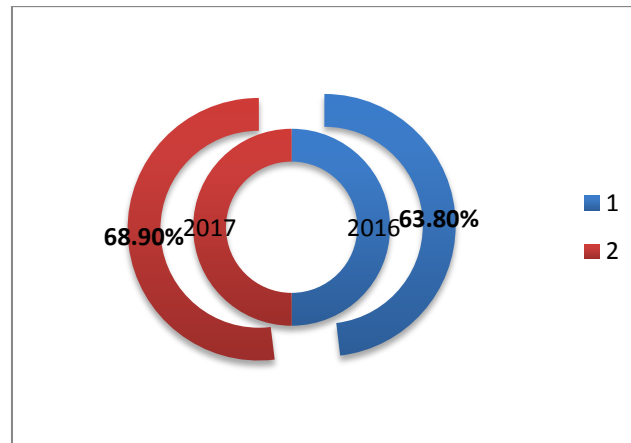


Figure 1: Zara sales rate from 2016 to 2017

(Source: Today.com, 2017)

In 2016, the sales rate has been 63.8% and in 2017 the rate has been roughly around 68.9%. As stated by Dessart *et al.* (2015, p.40), the root of B2B marketing problems lies in the desperate measures taken by companies to sustain in the marketing struggle.

Customers these days act as real influencers and their reviews matter the most for company reputation. News about piracy of designs has not affected the sales rate but has molded the views of people regarding their product which is a severe crisis for B2B process as it is entirely dependent on clients (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014, p.340).

Currently people are encouraging new brands which offer products at competitive prices; even rich fashionistas are experimenting with new lower recognized brands and seems to be happy. This is where the current risk lies in B2B marketing practice via social media (Labrecque, 2014, p.140). Moreover, with the rupture of brand name of Zara, rival companies like H&M as well as Topshop are making their ways to the top of fashion lists. In 2017 March, H&M sold women's wear up to 57% and Menswear up to 28%, whereas, Zara sold menswear as well as women's wear up to 30% and 42% respectively (Businessinsider.com, 2017).

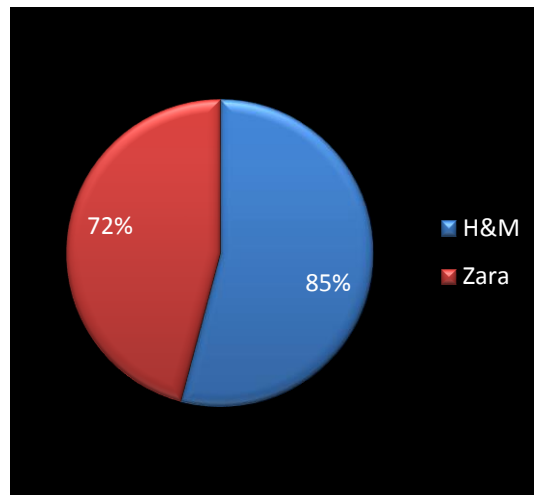


Figure 2: Sale of garments by Zara and H&M

(Source: Businessinsider.com, 2017)

1.3 Research aim

This research conducts a study investigating the role of Social Media in B2B Marketing and Branding. The study is conducted with reference to UK Fashion Industry, and a Case of Zara, UK. Purpose of this study is find loopholes in the practices of Zara and to provide recommendations for those.

1.4 Research objectives:

- To investigate the effectiveness and performance of Social Media in B2B Marketing and Branding
- To identify and assess the various social media tools effectiveness and performance in B2B Marketing and Branding
- To evaluate Zara's effectiveness and performance using social media tools for B2B Marketing and Branding
- To find out suitable social media models for B2B Marketing and Branding

1.5 Research questions

- What are the effective Social Media practices in B2B Marketing and Branding?
- What are the various social media tools for effective B2B Marketing and Branding practices?
- Has Zara been able to carry out effective practices regarding B2B marketing?

- What are the suitable social media models for B2B Marketing and Branding?

1.6 Significance of the research

Any research can be judged to be practically significant on successful application of multiple grounds. As this research is based on theoretical models on social media, it would be helpful for fashion brands like Zara to implement sustainable marketing practices. Moreover, this research would also find out potential flaws in the techniques used by Zara for social media marketing which would appear as lessons for other companies to rectify their flaws. Researcher in this study has delved deep into the process of data collection of the chosen company which would not only help to diagnose thought process of customers but would also provide valuable insights of the company. These aspects would enable people to understand the effects of proper as well as improper social media marketing practices on brand image and would thus be able to bridge the gap of past researches which has not been properly focused in these areas. Different social media marketing theories helps to derive generalized recommendations which would be helpful for digital marketers to formulate their strategies (influenced by the view of Dessart *et al.* 2015, p.40).

1.7 Structure for the dissertation

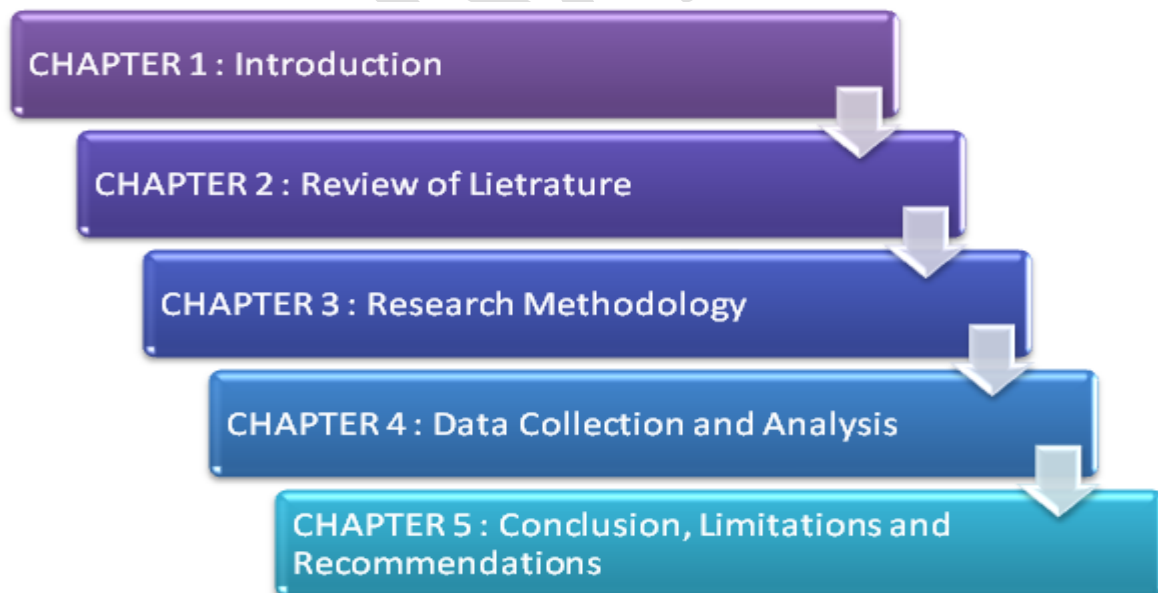


Figure 3: Structure of dissertation

(Source: Self-developed)

1.8 Summary

Chapter 1 in this research work has been intended to provide brief overview of company named Zara and the context of social media marketing in B2B practices. A brief background of this research as well as company has been provided in this chapter so as to provide clear understanding of this research to the reader.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to critically reviewing and analysing the relevant literature sources available both in online as well as offline medium. As this paper is aimed at investigating the role of social media in B2B market, with respect to British fashion industry, hence this chapter will delve deep into the published newspapers, journal articles, books as well as web-publications for understanding the internal mechanisms of this industry. In the recent decades, both the fashion industry as well as information and communication technology (ICT) have undergone revolutionary changes. As a result of such phenomena, role of social media has gained notable momentum in terms of business expansion, while the conventional media channels have experienced decreased both in business and market reputation. Therefore, it is imperative to ascertain whether such developments of social media is actually beneficial for B2B marketing and branding in British fashion industry.

2.2 Current state of British fashion industry

Fashion industry, similar to several other mainstream industries such as ICT, remains in a constant state of flux. Naturally, crisis situation are quite common in this industry as the same is also applicable for its British segment. As per UK Govt. statistics, British fashion industry occupies 6% of entire national market, yielding a total domestic valuation worth £66 billion (Fashionunited.uk, 2017). A total number of 555,000 people engaged in this industry are employed in diverse sectors such as clothing, footwear and leather goods production. Major players in this industry includes name such as Next Plc (valuing worth £8015 billion), Marks & Spencer (annual sale of £10.3 billion), Arcadia Group (annual sale of £2.1 billion). Apart from these three major companies, other famous names include Zara, Kurt Geiger, Sports Direct, New Look and Burberry (Fashionunited.uk, 2017).

Despite such attractive figures and promising position in market, British fashion industry is currently battling with a crisis situation. The event of Brexit can be blamed for such situation. Although it is responsible for plummeting value of British Pound, as a result of which expensive fashion materials such as Louis Vuitton Speedy bag is available in \$200 cheaper price; however, the same Brexit has also engineered the prevention of foreign (especially

European) students and skilled fashion designers (Ft.com, 2017). As a result, UK fashion industry is facing severe issues in terms hiring skilled individuals due to complex visa policies. As a result, British fashion industry is facing turbulence both from outside, and within (Theguardian.com, 2016).

2.3 Defining B2B marketing

B2B marketing, an acronym for Business-to-Business marketing, refers to the act of marketing products or services to other businesses. Contrary to conventional norms, where business usually involves transaction between a seller and a customer (B2C or Business-to-Customer model), B2B business is extremely beneficial for establishing trade relationship between two or more organisations and thus cement business operations. Brennan (2014, p.129) has commented that in fashion industry, where business landscape is in a state of constant flux, B2B marketing can gain notable momentum to business through social media collaboration. Fuelled by credit crunch in recent past, major players of British fashion industry shifted their focus on social media marketing and web-advertising in order to address the rising demand of young generation.

2.4 Theories and models of B2B marketing

B2B marketing being special type of social marketing, involves active participation in different social media platforms as well as web-based advertising mediums. From this perspective, following theories could be applied here-

2.4.1 Agency theory

As a useful empirical as well as theoretical lens for understanding a wide range of concept in B2B marketplace, this theoretical supposition is beneficial in understanding the relationship existing between the principals and agents in a business. As commented by Gummeson (2014, p.620), agency theory is interest in resolving issues emerged between shareholders (also known as principals) and organisational executives (considered as agents). For example, executives of a major fashion apparel maker may decide to expand their business into rural

market and thus mould their production accordingly. Now, this decision may affect the company to sacrifice short-term profit-making activities in exchange of estimated growth and better revenue in future. As such situation sparks a conflict between the principals and agents, agency theory can be applied here to resolve the conflict and benefit both parties by providing an inclusive solution.

2.4.2 Theory of reasoned action

Similarly, theory of reasoned action can also be applied to enhance B2B marketing in business, for example, fashion industry in this case. Möller and Parvinen (2015, p.5) has mentioned that social attitudes play a vital role in decision-making process and such case is equally applicable in modern business sector. The theory of reasoned action dictates the impact of social attitudes in decision-making activity and contrasts the outcomes of uninformed decisions against informed ones. This theory also proposes that social as well as personal attitude influences people to make decisions in different scenarios. As opined by Woodside (2015, p.97), it is theoretically possible to yield better outcome from business by triggering those two attitude factors.

Apart from there, following models are also equally applicable in discussing the role of B2B marketing in business expansion-

2.4.3 Direct connection model

In this model, a business organization directly interacts with trading partners for the purpose of exchanging goods and services. In the opinion of Govindarajan (2016, p.108), direct connection model involves active participation in social platforms, thus increasing the importance of IT department in an organisation. Through execution of a series of activities such as mapping, technical support, translation and tracking - this model helps an organisation to reach to their trading partners more effectively and create a solid branding image. However, as criticised by Wirtzet *al.* (2016, p.37), this model renders ineffective with the growth of target community as it becomes virtually impossible to keep direct contact with every single trader in such scenarios.

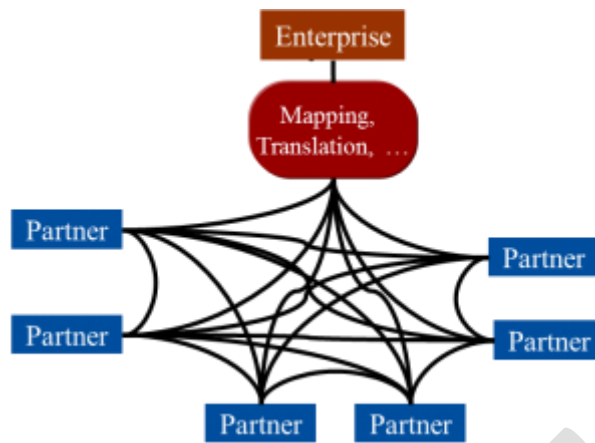


Figure 4: Direct Connection Model for B2B marketing

(Source: Wirtz *et al.* 2016, p.38)

2.4.4 Network model

In order to avoid the burgeoning complexities of previous model, many organisations sought to make an exclusive collaboration with a singular B2B service provider, which forms the basis of network model. As mentioned by Achrol and Gundlach (2014, p.745), under this model, a business organization aiming to set foot in B2B marketplace make a pact with service provider and trading partners of that business organisation also have to follow suit, where each of those partners are required to select a district connectivity protocol. In this way, each individual trading partner enjoys the liberty of independent decision-making while the service providers acts as a mediator between two trading parties. Ping and Shunbin (2014, p.96) has favoured this model especially in fashion industry as it allows business partners with different requirements and preferences to state their own views without being influenced by others.



Figure 5: Network model for B2B marketing

(Source: Ping and Shunbin, 2014, p.97)

2.4.5 Hybrid model

As the name suggests, this model is a combination of direct and network model. As explained by Chiu *et al.* (2014, p.232), this model allows business entities to engage in business via internet with preferred trading partners with whom they perform majority of business transactions, through a handful of dedicated protocols. In this way, the business partners not only saves a notable amount of financial resources in terms of service provider fees, but are also able to leverage the service provider for allowing multiple business channels and thus enhance business. As per Huang *et al.* (2016, p.175), hybrid model is extremely useful where large communities are involved in a business. As fashion industry requires a wider range of stakeholders, such as major British fashion brands.

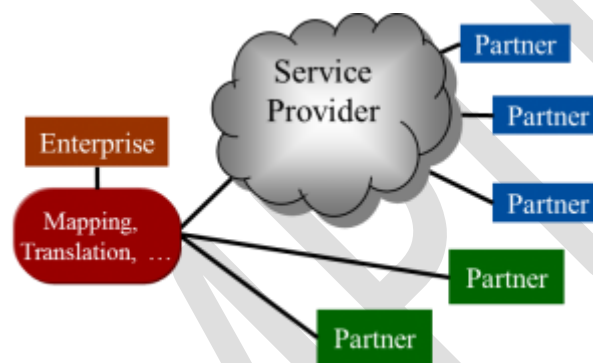


Figure 6: Hybrid model for B2B marketing

(Source: Huang *et al.* 2016, p.176)

2.4.6 Managed model

In this model, entire business process is outsourced to an external service provider, service of who are being bought in exchange of financial resources, for a limited period of time. Meyer *et al.* (2017, p.193) has stated that as managed model transfers entire responsibility of resource management to an external business entity, it greatly decreases the burden requirements of various resources -timely allocation and utilization of which can be a toiling task. For the same purpose, expenses in terms of financial as well as human resources also falls drastically under this models - thus reducing complexity of entire operation.

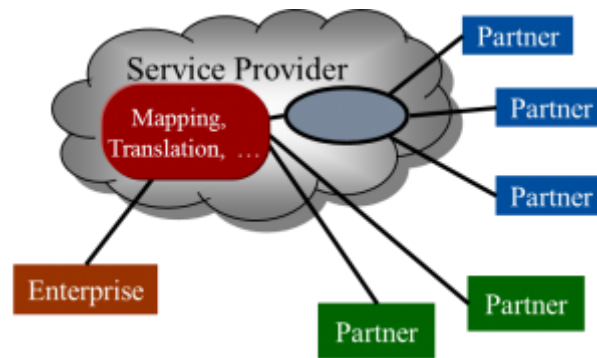


Figure 7: Managed model for B2B marketing

(Source: Meyer *et al.* 2017, p.194)

2.5 Defining branding

As an immensely crucial aspect of marketing, branding refers to act of endowing certain products as well as services with the power of an already established brand (Strandviket *al.* 2014, p.242). In other words, branding adds meaning to a specific product or service by incorporating it into an established brand image and thus channels consumers towards that product or service. From standpoint, branding can be considered as a strategic move, derives by business organisation for assisting their respective target customers to promptly identify their products as well as producers. Okonkwo (2016, p.122) has rightfully quipped that primary objective of branding lies in attracting and retaining loyal customers by providing a product or service that can easily be aligned with brand promises. As players of British fashion industry

2.6 Theories and models of Branding

2.6.1 Keller's brand building model

Devised by K.L. Keller, this model is also known as customer-based brand equity (CBSE) or simply brand equity model. As per Keller (2016, p.3), customer's perception towards a specific product or service should be shaped in order to build a robust brand image in market. For this purpose, a business organisation must create suitable experience for their customers, which would radiate positive feelings and opinions towards offered product. As illustrated in

Figure 5, four steps are required for building a strong brand equity in market and the same are also applicable for British fashion industry also.



Figure 8: Keller's Brand Equity Model

(Source: Keller 2016, p.4)

The major four steps illustrated in Figure 5 illustrate four fundamental aspects typically asked by customers about a brand, even subconsciously. As creation and retention of image is extremely crucial element of branding, social media could be utilised as a highly rewarding platform for this purpose. As pointed out by Heckler *et al.* (2014, p.178), major fashion brands, through their dedicated social media platforms, could identify different target market segments and reshape their trading policies accordingly. In this way, trading partners not only become aware of the brand image, but the image is also considered synonymous of that company.

2.6.2 Ad Exposure Model

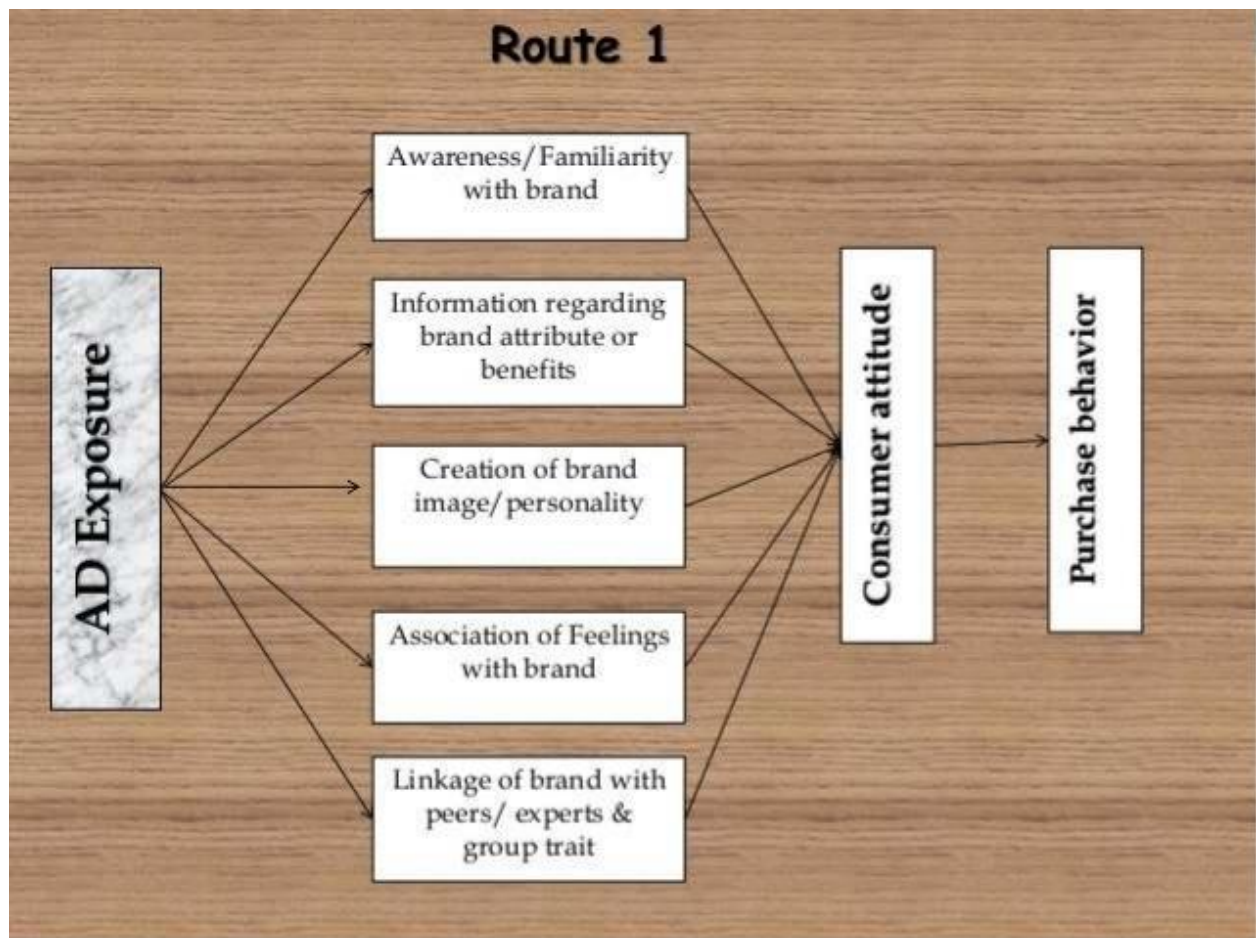


Figure 9: Keller's Brand Equity Model Route 1

(Source: Hollebeek *et al.* 2014, p.151)

Developed by D. Aaker, this model discusses the interrelationship between advertising and brand development. In the opinion of Hollebeek *et al.* (2014, p.150), through effectively controlling the exposure of advertisement in different medium, an organisation can shape customer's attitude as well as purchase behaviour and thus cement their brand image in public psyche. This model primarily talks about two routes through which a business organization can influence purchase behaviour. As illustrated by Xu *et al.* (2014, p.1395), the first route details how exposure of advertisement, through an array of different factors, shape attitude of buyers and thus influence purchase behaviour. On the other hand, the second route details the way through which an organisation can directly influence purchase behaviour of buyers or trading partners by triggering buyers' attitude. It is worthwhile to mention here that the last

activity in second route also involves several factors such as brand awareness, brand creation, brand linkage and so on.

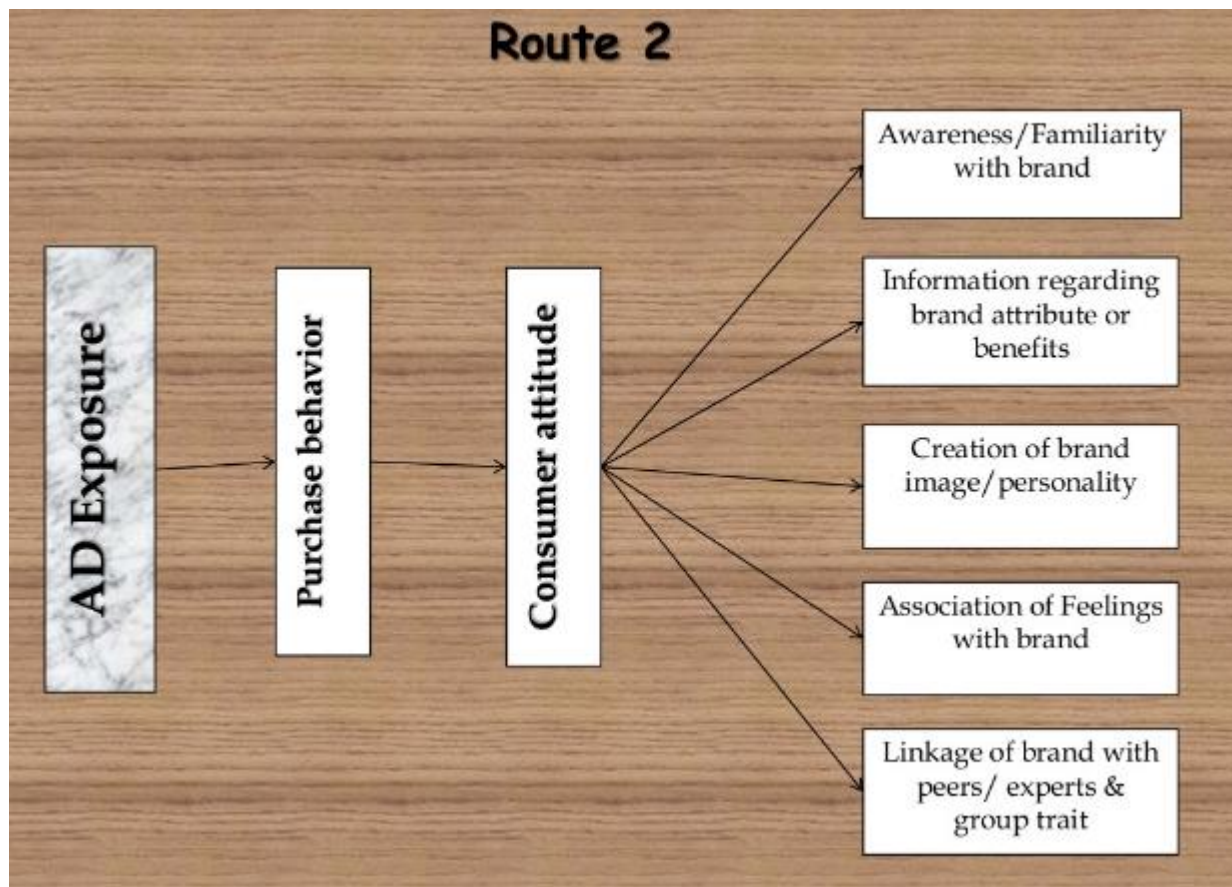


Figure 10: Keller's Brand Equity Model Route 2

(Source: Xu *et al.* 2014, p.1396)

2.7 Popular social media platforms and their implications in B2B marketing and branding

Now that key aspects of B2B marketing and branding has been epitomised in the previous section, it is imperative to discuss in detail the role of social media platforms in this context. In the opinion of Agnihotri *et al.* (2016, p. 175), past decade have experienced a boom in information and communication technology, connection people irrespective of geographical boundaries and time. Likewise, different social media platforms are also being used by business organisation reaching out to their trading partners and solidify the communication channels. As pointed out by Siamagka *et al.* (2015, p.90), one notable feature of these web-

based platforms is they allow semi-formal and informal interactions and thus create a personal bond between connecting parties, contrary to the formal and corporate environment of workplace. Most popular platforms in this context include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and Flickr. Despite the wide range of options for customer engagement, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter three primary weapons for business organisation to perform internet marketing activities bolster their brand image. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, the role of these the social media platforms in B2B marketing and branding have been discussed in detail, along with other minor social networks used for same purpose.

2.7.1 Facebook

Since its inception in February 4, 2004, Facebook has emerged as an unprecedented and formidable social network platform, connection people in a virtual world. As per Ashley and Tuten (2015, p. 17), availability of Facebook in different platforms such as both mobile, PC and tablet has enabled individuals to take account of events occurring at far end of world in real-time and thus empowering both business enterprises as well as commoners. For this same purpose, fashion industry has found it immensely beneficial to use this social network for connecting to different trading partners and place suitable advertisement campaigns through this social media platform. Furthermore, as commented by Chaffey and Smith (2017, p. 129), facilities such as 'Facebook for Business' is also rewarding for B2B marketers to avail features such as paid advertising, through which they can maintain a dedicated advertisement campaign to target audience.

2.7.2 Twitter

Although started as a micro-blogging website for sharing ideas and views on different matters, Twitter is also considered as a potent weapon for creation and retention of brand image, in other words, business opportunities. In the opinion of Choi (2014, p. 8), the most unique feature of Twitter lies in its ability of keeping users up-to-date with latest developments regarding their preferences. In addition, the concept of hash-tag marketing, that is, uploading social media content using hash-tags is also useful for B2B marketing as it displays a value proposition to target audience (Dinner *et al.* 2014, p. 529).

2.7.4 YouTube

Rolled out in February 2005 as a video streaming and sharing website, YouTube, a product of Google lets its users to upload and share video contents and thus maintain a communication channel. According to Emanuel *et al.* (2014, p. 147), YouTube provides a stage for sharing opinions and ideas through video format and thus appeal directly to customers' psyche. Furthermore, option such as subscription lets users to stay round-the-clock informed about their preferred channels. In case of fashion industry, traders can connect to their clients via YouTube by subscribing their channels and thus stay up-to-date about new products or services.

2.7.5 Instagram

Initially released in October 6, 2010 as an internet-based photo-sharing platform, Instagram soon gained immense popularity due to its unique approach. As opined by Gloor *et al.* (2013, p. 89), this photo and video sharing social network can also be utilised for B2B marketing maintaining an official account and uploading creative contents into that account. Major brands of fashion industry can upload their business content into their respective official accounts and thus disperse them across the web. In this way, business organisations can stay connected to their trading partners and the partners could also provide constructive feedback back to the uploader - and thus the business relation is solidified. As per Goh *et al.* (2013, p. 90), features such as liking, commenting, mentioning, tagging and direct messaging are useful for business entities to stay connected to business partners and retain branding image.

2.7.6 Pinterest

Launched in March 2010, Pinterest allows users to share as well as save digital content (photos and videos) to their personal virtual collection known as pin-boards. As stated by Gummesson and Gummesson (2017, p. 17), Pinterest is especially helpful or B2B marketers to pursue their branding activities as its database contains information on a wide array of areas such as technology, fashion, literature, sports etc. As a result, it is comparatively easy for business organisations to select their trading partners and maintain a dedicated communication channel by sharing contents of common interest.

2.7.7 LinkedIn

Founded in December 28, 2002, LinkedIn is a dedicated social networking platform for corporate world and professionals. Naturally, this web-based platform is extremely beneficial for marketing professionals as they can not only gain valuable insights from veterans but also can establish new business connection. Gyrð-Jones and Kornum (2013, p. 1485) has mentioned that LinkedIn approximately has 65 million business professionals as user, nearly 50% of whom hold a decision-making authority in their respective companies. As result, this platform is able to provide significant boost for business growth as well as brand image creation and retention. Furthermore, features such as passive and proactive LinkedIn marketing also allow users to promote their business and perform marketing activities.

2.8 Advertising through social media

The aforementioned social media platforms are most popular channels for web-based advertising and business organization such as major British fashion brands perform e-marketing activities here. As defined by Hajli (2014, p. 388), e-marketing spans a wider spectrum just than internet marketing as it also incorporates utilisation of other digital media such e-mail and wireless media for marketing and branding purpose. However, contrary to offline marketing, social media marketing mainly requires content marketing, that is, circulating of creative and appealing content through social media. Therefore, it is vital for fashion brands to constantly remould their advertisement content and share them through social networks so that brand promises are aligned with those contents. Költringer and Dickinger (2015, p. 1837) has pointed out that social media advertising does not undergo a linear path, rather it contain several interconnected loops - connecting the marketers and audience in their own distinct ways.

According to Lanzolla and Frankort (2016, p. 208), B2B marketing trends in recent years has shifted from broadcast media towards social engagement, thus calling for intense social media engagement. Currently 79% of 115 premier B2B marketers' favours social media as their primary channel for marketing activities, as the later platform helps marketers to establish leadership position by strengthening customer relationships (Ons.gov.uk, 2016).

2.9 Factors affecting marketing through social networks

Major factors that affect social media marketing includes-

2.9.1 Time and date

Despite social media platform being operation 24*7, it does not imply that audience will immediately respond to an advertisement. Therefore, time and date are two most crucial factor social media advertising as these two can act both as a boon or curse to an advertiser (Laudon and Laudon, 2016, p. 124). For example, it is recommended that advertisement of winter-wear is to be displayed before winter season, not during scorching summer. Apart from that, traffic patterns in different social media platforms are also distinct and an advertiser has to take account of this pattern. For example, traffic in Facebook and Instagram rises after evening while at that time traffic in LinkedIn starts to fade away.

2.9.2 Personality

As suggested by Ngai *et al.* (2015, p. 35), connect of social e media advertisements should incorporate a consistent tone for establishing and creating a robust relationship with trading partners. Furthermore, the tone and personality embedded in adverts should also reflect promises made by brand image, so that audience can relate and interact with the advertiser.

2.9.3 Call to action

One or more form of engagement (feedback form, suggestions sharing and so on) are vital elements in social media advertising, as they help viewers to directly interact with advertisers via social media. According to Okazaki and Taylor (2013, p. 57), such options are beneficial in B2B marketing as trading partners can easily share their views and constructive ideas through those channels, which can again be moderated as per market scenario.

2.9.4 Financial factors

Last but not the least; financial factors are also a crucial determinant for social media advertising success. As mentioned above, major social media platforms now allow users to use paid advertising mode for better branding and promotion. Naturally, almost all major fashion brands now use such features to penetrate deeper into market through options such as

organic search as soon (Okonkwo, 2016, p. 135). Moreover, as paid advertisements amplify the exposure of adverts and incorporate remarketing and repetition features, they are extremely beneficial for B2B marketing activities. Naturally, financial resources play vital role here as without paying the required ad fees, organisations could not avail paid advertisement features.

2.10 Contrasting the offline and online advertising network

Traditional or offline marketing mediums include print media (newspapers, newsletters, pamphlets and brochures), broadcast media (TV and Radio), mail (postcard and catalogues) and telemarketing. On the other hand, online marketing is anchored in digital media such as websites, social networks, Google ads, content marketing and video marketing (through YouTube). Naturally, these two modes exhibit contrasting features both in terms of pros and cons. According to Pauwels *et al.* (2016, p. 640), offline advertising network have high success rate and have established metrics for measuring success of advertising campaign. On the other hand, online advertising is more cost-efficient in nature and have a wider audience reach. As B2B marketing is primarily involved with creation and retention of trade relationship with other business entities, therefore online advertising can be considered more beneficial in this context as they allow direct response from target audience (Saxton and Wang, p. 852).

2.11 Issues in web-based branding

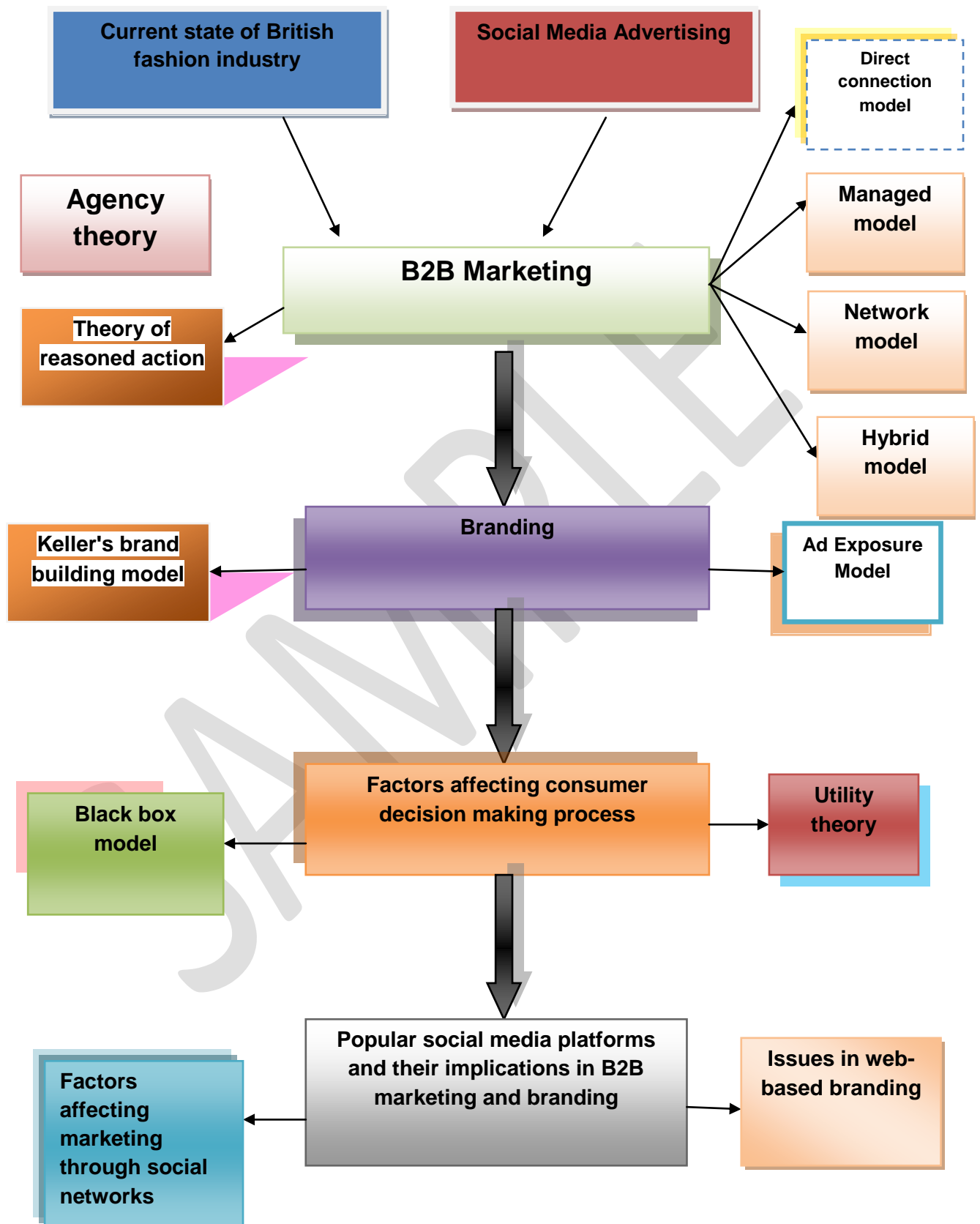
Despite the tempting success experienced through online marketing and web-based advertising activities, it is not a smooth voyage for B2B marketers to establish their brand image in the web. As pointed out by Vernuccio (2014, p. 212), the biggest problem lies in creating an appealing brand image that will not only directly align itself with designated pride but also exhibit its own purpose in market. From this standpoint, web-based branding activity could be referred as ‘double edged sword’, capable of both constructing and wrecking the brand reputation.

Apart from the risk of a misleading content in advertisement, fraudulent adverts are all major concern for B2B marketers (Mansfield-Devine, 2014, p. 6). Misleading ads can not only navigate a user to a potentially harmful website but also could question the credibility of the organisation which image it is using as a camouflage. Thirdly, scarcity of a valid and reliable customer database also affects B2B market, which is essentially a data-driven marketing

sector. As per Ng *et al.* (2016, p. 36), lack of internal experience in data collection and implementation are creating obstacle to marketers in terms of gaining valuable insights from harvested data.

SAMPLE

2.12 Conceptual framework



2.13 Gap analysis

Now that various niches of B2B marketing with respect to social media advertising has been discussed and analysed in detail, it is imperative to identify and analyse the gaps inherent in previous research. An ideal research gap should reveal lack of interesting component and lack of exploration of previous studies, and those two have been pointed out below-

Firstly, previous research, in order to perceive the role of social media in branding and B2B marketing activities, overlooked the information available in secondary data. In this way, those research failed to grasp the insights available in secondary data sources, published in different books, journals and websites. From this standpoint, unintentional overlooking of this valuable information source and failure to interpret the research issue through this information could be termed as a serious fallacy of previous studies.

Secondly, earlier research conducted in this field of study has limited their focus on a specific fashion brand and their target customers, or only have emphasised on purchase behaviour of affluent customers. However, none of them made an attempt to pen down the implications in B2B marketing - which is also a major segment of British fashion industry. Thus, too much specialisation and absence of a holistic attitude is also another major gap evident in previous studies.

This paper has ventured to bridge those gaps and presented a holistic account by incorporating all the relevant aspects that are significant to this project.

2.14 Summary

This chapter has discussed in detail different theoretical concepts and models associated with B2B marketing and branding, along with their connection to social media advertising and British fashion industry. Apart from defining key terms such as B2B marketing branding, this chapter has also presented a detailed account regarding how popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are utilised by marketers to stay connected with their trading partners. These discussion and analysis, made in a critical tone, revealed that British fashion industry is also engaging itself with social media advertising and brand promotion activities for creating new business relationships. As previous research have failed to take account of secondary data and outcomes of social media advertising on B2B marketing and branding activities, this paper has identified those two as research gaps and endeavoured to address them through subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology for Study

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology can be portrayed as a set of techniques which are used by the researcher to detect results of this research and find a solution for research problem. It is associated with systemic theoretical analysis of methods as well as principles. This chapter has focused on the methods and techniques used by researcher to conduct the research work and gather reliable as well as valid results. Furthermore, justifications have been provided for considering and discarding each research method and proper links has been created with the research topic.

3.2 Research outline

Research outline	
Approach of the research	Deductive
Philosophy of the research	Positivism
Research design	Descriptive
Research methods	Quantitative and qualitative
Data collection method	Secondary

Table 1: Research outline

(Source: Self-developed)

3.3 Research philosophy

This research study has considered positivism philosophy among positivism, realism and interpretivism. As mentioned by Ponterotto (2013, p.60), positivism philosophy is helpful for a researcher to conduct a quantitative study as it enable a researcher to make use of

quantitative tools as well as techniques which in turn helps to cover all the quantitative parameters for getting an appropriate solution.

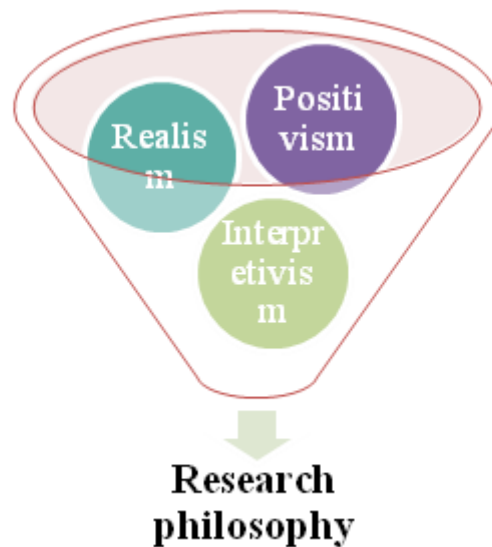


Figure 11: Types of philosophy

(Source: Ponterotto, 2013, p.62)

Additionally, positivism philosophy also helps to gather first hand data by means of survey or questionnaires and thus helps to detect numeric data easily (Cohen *et al.* 2013, p.34). On another interpretivism questions existing theories and realism is based on past as well as present perceptions of people (Ponterotto, 2013, p.64). As this study is directed to find out the effectiveness of B2B techniques used by Zara, factual quantitative data is necessary to gauge any conclusion and thus interpretivism as well as realism philosophy has been discarded for this study.

In fact positivism has been considered for this study as it has been helpful for the researcher to apply quantitative data analysis techniques for gathering data about the rise or fall of customer attraction towards Zara due to their B2B techniques. Moreover, positivist philosophy also enabled the researcher to analyse as well as interpret gathered data by means of quantitative data analysis tools with the help of charts and tables. These tools are helpful to analyse data by prompt quantification of gathered data and thus also validate them for further use. Therefore in this study, statistical data regarding successful implementation of B2B as well as SMM techniques by Zara has been measured on the basis of customer retention, sales rate and customer base of Zara.

3.4 Research approach

Among deductive and inductive research, deductive research has been considered for carrying out this research study. Principle difference between deductive and inductive approach lies in the theoretical aspects. While deductive approach helps to test existing theories by gathering factual data, inductive approach tends to create new theories.

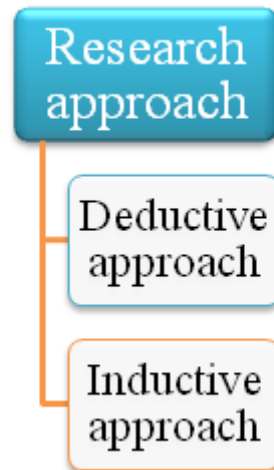


Figure 12: Types of research approach

(Source: Influenced by views of Creswell, 2013, p.56)

Creation of new theories is clearly not the intention of this topic and thus inductive approach is discarded for this study, rather deductive approach has been chosen. As mentioned by Creswell (2013, p.45), deductive approach is helpful in initiating a research by means of pre formulated questions, which helps to find answers throughout the study. Moreover, deductive approach as the name suggests deducts data in a descriptive manner by following a top-down approach which involves sequential steps. For example in a research work, this approach helps a researcher to start down from gathering theoretical data to obtaining as well as analyzing quantitative or qualitative data (Johnston, 2014, p.212).

As this study is based on the impacts or influence of social media marketing in B2B marketing techniques, deductive approach has helped the researcher to formulate research objectives primarily and gather theoretical data based on the objectives to have a clear idea about the context or basic idea of the topic. Furthermore, this top-down approach also enabled researcher to lean down the process of data collection by creating appropriate links between existing theories and B2B strategies used by Zara for social media marketing. Influenced by the views of Gray (2013, p.45), it can be said that as deductive approach is helpful to create a link between existing theories as well as practical reality while studying

B2B marketing process of Zara, it has helped to validate the findings of this study. Therefore, it can be stated that deductive approach has been appropriate for this study.

3.5 Research design

Research design can be presented as the aggregate of techniques that helps a researcher to collect data and analyse variables that are particular for a study. As mentioned by Yin (2013, p.48), there are three types of research design namely descriptive, exploratory and explanatory design. Among the three types of design, exploratory and explanatory design has been discarded as exploratory design intends to explore new ideas, whereas explanatory design focuses on providing generalised explanation which is clearly not the intentions of this study.



Figure 13: Types of research design

(Source: Yin, 2013, p.56)

In order to test the correlation of existing theories as well as strategies applied by Zara, past tried and tested theories of social media marketing process is empirical. Thus generation of new theories via exploratory design and brief explanation via explanatory design would have been inappropriate for this study, which has been the prime reason for discarding these designs.

Thus exploratory and explanatory designs have been discarded, rather descriptive design has been chosen as this design helps to describe a particular research by existing theoretical underpinnings. Being a kind of conclusive research, descriptive design helps to shed light on research problem with the help of proper data collection process. As mentioned by Creswell (2013, p.23), descriptive design not merely helps to provide descriptive idea about the

research topic, it is also a process by which a researcher can validate his or her results by creating appropriate links with the existing ideas.

As the present research is aimed towards the idea of social media marketing and B2B process regarding brand image, descriptive process has been able to provide valuable insights into existing theories about B2B marketing and its link with social media marketing theories. Additionally, descriptive design has also enabled the user to correlate existing methods of B2B marketing with processes used by Zara, which has in turn helped the researcher to validate the findings of this research. Therefore as the descriptive design has been able to find out the perceptions of people regarding Zara products and advertisement campaigns, descriptive design has been appropriate for this study.

3.6 Research method

Among the two prime types of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative research method has been chosen for this study in order to meet the demands of research work. As opined by Yin (2013, p.56), nature and purpose of the research determines methods to be used in a study, which helps to mark out further steps of a study. Quantitative method as the name suggests, helps to quantify research findings and qualitative data analysis method helps to assess as well as evaluate theoretical findings in a study as mentioned by Smith (2015, p.42).

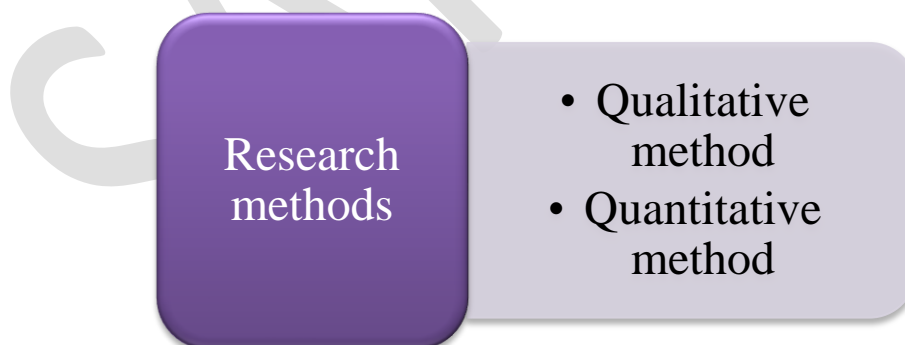


Figure 14: Research methods

(Source: Smith, 2015, p.43)

Usage of both qualitative as well as quantitative data helps in better validation of results by linking statistical data with facts from research questions. As this study is based on the role of

social media in B2B process it has been a mandate for this study to cover all factual theoretical data as well as quantifiable data. As following mixed analysis method by considering both qualitative as well as quantitative data helps in better interpretation of research findings, both these methods has been considered for this study. Furthermore, these methods has been found to be helpful for a researcher to conduct research study with positivist approach by means of wide range of tools namely survey, questionnaires, polls or opinion votes and others. In case of this study regarding social media and its role in the B2B marketing process, consideration of present as well as past theories and statistical data were necessary and thus both qualitative and quantitative methods can be considered as valid for this study. Moreover, these methods enabled researcher to find out the engagement of social media and its impact on the profit or loss incurred by Zara and thus qualitative as well as quantitative methods were also reliable for this study.

Sampling is the process of choosing subset for a study

3.7 Data collection method

In general two types of data collection methods are used namely primary and secondary data collection methods. As commented by Silverman (2016, p.48), while primary data considers collection of first hand information from direct sources like survey, interviews and online polls, secondary data is collected from literary sources like books, journals, website and news articles.

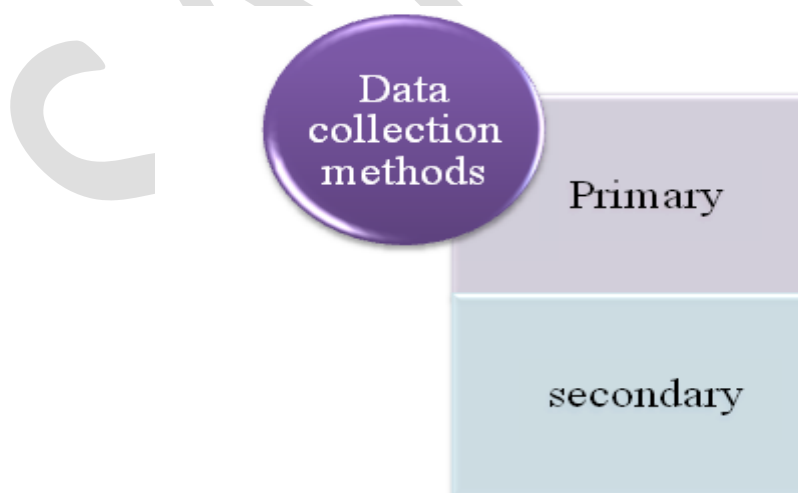


Figure 15: Data collection methods

(Source: Silverman, 2016, p.23)

In addition to these, as secondary research method gather data from existing sources, theories can be factored into future marketing design as well as plans. In this study use of primary data collection method has been discarded as it was not the intention of researcher to gather information about Zara and its products from online surveys.

Moreover, being part of World's one of the richest brands, managers were not available for direct interviews or cold calling procedures. On another hand, again being one of the most popular fashion brands in the world, there has been enough literary information about B2B marketing techniques as well as Social media techniques used by Zara to market their products. News reports about fashion advertising blunders made by Zara have also been found to be available in web based sources. Theoretical data about traditional as well as revolutionised concepts of branding via social media platforms were available in the literary sources like journals, books and website articles. Statistical data is also gathered by means of online websites.

There are several web based platforms which remains boasted with the information of company data such as annual sales rate, financial losses, risk statements, sales rate of products and customer reaction towards products of various companies. In addition to these, customer reaction towards services and ad campaigns of Zara can be easily gathered by means of social media websites, reviews on official websites and fashion blogs.

Many fashion magazines also provide critical reviews about fashion products which have helped the researcher to carry out research based on contrasting viewpoints. As this research is based on the idea of involvement of social media in B2B marketing techniques, literary sources has been enough to gather data about SMM marketing techniques, advertising trend these days, impact of massive competition in social media marketing and the role of social media in the growth of Zara. Moreover as secondary data is collected from valid as well as reliable sources; it has been able to provide the researcher with genuine data. Therefore it can be stated that the idea of considering collection of secondary data for this research study has been a reliable process for this study.

3.8 Data analysis technique

Generally, qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques are used in research study and are naturally chosen as per the requirements of a research work. Based on the comments of Venkatesh *et al.* (2013, p.32), it can be stated that data analysis is a crucial part of a research study, appropriate methods of analysis must be chosen in order to incur best possible results.

In order to analyse and evaluate statistical data, proper data analysis software applications are a mandate (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015, p.540). In this study both qualitative as well as quantitative analysis techniques has been considered as both statistical and literary data has been gathered in this study. Qualitative data analysis technique helps to conclude results from literary or theoretical data and quantitative data analysis technique helps a researcher to derive quantifiable results, both of which has been empirical for this study. Thus both qualitative as well as quantitative methods of analysis have been considered for this study so as to fulfil the needs of this study.

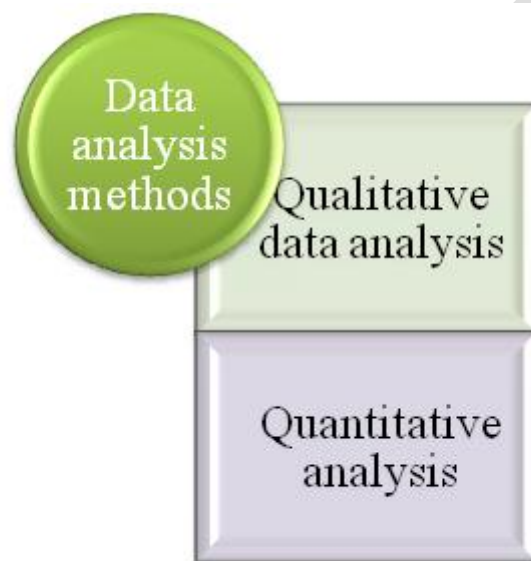


Figure 16: Types of data analysis techniques

(Source: McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015, p.540)

As in this study data has been gathered by means of secondary sources, Microsoft Excel has been enough to compare and contrast of information. Moreover, as statistical data has also been collected from secondary sources, there has not been a need of any extra data analysis software applications as already analysed data has been collected from website as well as books.

Information about the theories of social media marketing and traditional B2B process has been collected from peer reviewed journals, online articles and books. On another hand, numerical data like sales rate, rate of increase in customer base of Zara has been collected by means of reliable web portals.

In case of qualitative data, primarily data has been collected from literary sources of newspapers, magazines, books as well as journals and sorted out on the basis of recency as well as relevancy. In the next step, data collected regarding B2B process of Zara and their

engagement with social platforms has been analysed by means of compare and contrast process, on the basis of which evaluations has been made.

3.9 Validity and reliability

In a research work, both validity as well as reliability is prime area of concern. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.32), a research work thrives on its credibility as well as reliability and thus must be assessed on the basis of validity of data collected in the process. It has also been stated that, validity of a research study is judged on the basis of reliability of tools used in the research process, whereas, reliability of data or study is judged on the basis of stability as well as consistency of gathered information. As opined by Bryman and Bell (2015, p.67), reliability of a study states that if same data collection methods are implemented twice, similar results can be gathered. Validity on another hand stands on the basis or extent of reliable information provided in the study.

In case of this study, which is based on the influential as well as impactful role played by social media in B2B practices, primary emphasis has been laid on maintaining reliability as well as validity of information gathered. In order to ensure reliability of data, factual information has been collected from company reports, news reports, customer reviews on social platforms and statistical data providing websites. Theoretical concepts about Social Media Marketing (SMM) and B2B marketing has been collected from peer reviewed journals, books and other literary sources for increasing credibility of research work.

3.10 Ethical considerations

A researcher always stays in charge for maintaining some ethical considerations throughout the study, foremost of which is protection of data as mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.78).

3.10.1. Informed consent

In order to carry out the research work peacefully, the researcher has informed about the need and purpose of this study to responsible authorities. This has not only enabled researcher to maintain legal practices by maintaining transparency of work but have also eased the process of collection of data.

3.10.2. Respect regarding privacy as well as confidentiality

By following the principles and guidelines mentioned in Data Protection Act 1988, the researcher has maintained confidentiality of data and has not mentioned any personal details about any individual. Information collected with the help of user reviews on social platforms and official application of Zara has been portrayed by maintaining anonymity. Name and actual views of people has not been depicted in this study so as to respect the confidentiality of people.

3.10.3 Efforts for protection of data

In order to maintain confidentiality of data, the researcher has not disclosed any valuable information about the collected data till the end of this study, but have stated the need, purpose and type of information to be collected in this study to the responsible authorities prior to the conduction of research work so as to facilitate easy conduction of research work.

3.10.4. Efforts to maintain genuineness of data

The researcher has presented genuine information in this study and have not altered any data for own benefit. Moreover, throughout the research work, the researcher did not compel anyone for the participating in this study, nor did the researcher collect data from improper sources of data.

3.11 Limitations

The researcher has faced several constraints while conducting research, which posed as restriction in the path of maintaining steady pace of this research. One of the main constraints that the researcher has faced was collecting statistical data about company. As the study is based on secondary research, it has been problematic to present statistical data based on secondary sources. Influenced by the view of Silverman (2016, p.56), it can be said that secondary sources sometimes are based on apparent available data, which cannot be considered to be appropriate always and this is the prime limitation of this study. Moreover, short time and budget appeared as additional constraints for this study.

It is a hefty process and sort out all the relevant data within a short time frame. Additionally due to unavailability of monetary funds, it was not possible for the researcher to get in touch with costly literary sources. Quantitative analysis of data has been entirely based on secondary data, which has a high possibility to have been moulded on the basis of preference

or partial approaches and thus have been one of the major limitations of this study. Moreover, user perceptions that have been considered for assessing successful marketing practices by Zara though are valid for this study but cannot be considered as reliable as those can change with time.

3.12 Summary

This chapter has provided detailed view on the methodologies that has been considered in this study. The section has provided the concepts of tools as well as techniques that have been used in this study and justification of using these tools has been provided accordingly. Proper reasoning for discarding certain data analysis methods has also been provided. In this secondary means of research, positivism philosophy, deductive approach, descriptive design and secondary data collection methods have been adopted, which have facilitated to gather as well as analyse qualitative (literary) and quantitative (numerical) information. Primary data collection procedures have not been considered as numerical as well as theoretical data has been found to be available on secondary sources of information.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the information obtained from valid and relevant secondary data sources, such as, books, journal articles, annual reports, newsletters and web-publications. Needless to mention, all published material selected for compiling this chapter are directly associated with

4.2 Data analysis and interpretations

This chapter will present the secondary data in a different approach. In order to make the presentation of complex statistical data more legible and easily comprehensible, the entire discussion has been divided into three segments. While the first segment will solely focus on B2B marketing sector of UK, the second segment will discuss the state of British fashion industry. Discussion on the third segment will concentrate upon organisational report of Zara, the leading British clothing and accessories retailer based in Galicia, Italy

4.2.1. UK B2B market situation

As per the data revealed by Office of The National Statistics (ONS), the e-commerce market in UK accounts for 17% of entire British trade operations, out of which 9.8% is sourced from Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) while the rest, that is, 7.2% is derived from website sales (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). Here, an interesting trend is being observed in recent years. Given the social media boom all across the globe, website sales are experiencing a major growth while the share for EDI is on decline. This situation reflects changing landscape of e-commerce industry in UK. It is imperative to mention here that social media has engineered such massive transition that has entirely transformed the conventional concept of business-to-business sales. In this new scenario, British business world is experiencing a substantial potential for a holistic growth in terms of e-commerce industry as well as a massive disparity between associated industries existing hitherto. Apart from that, large organisations, irrespective of their operating industry are rapidly engaging themselves into e-commerce activities. In other words, highly contrasting features of offline versus online marketing campaigns in terms of Return-On-Investment (ROI) has propelled major companies to slowly shift their focus from conventional marketing tactics towards web-based advertising and promotional ventures.

Discussion on B2B marketing could not be wrapped without providing a detailed statistical analysis of British online fashion market. As per Mintel report, £12.4 billion worth of money was spent in online shopping activities in 2015, displaying a surge of 16% from £10.7 billion as measured in 2014 (Britishfashioncouncil.co.uk, 2016). The report also estimates that by the FY 2019, total value generated from online sales would touch the ceiling of £19 billion. As for internet usage, Mintel report illustrates that 68% of British internet users spend their internet resources for online shopping activities, mainly involved in buying clothing or footwear materials. The report also reveals that out of total time spent online, 29% time has been invested in online shopping activities, implying an increase of 13% from FY 2011 (Britishfashioncouncil.co.uk, 2016).

Surge of online shopping activities by British people is also indicates the growing business opportunities in web-based advertising and marketing activities. It implies that with the stellar rise of online shopping activities, B2B marketing also has insignificant momentum. While end-customers are swarming towards online stores, fashion brands and their trading partners are capitalising the opportunity to expand their business as well as penetrate deeper into market. Through effective execution of social media advertising strategies, different fashion brands have engaged into a fierce competition to grab hold of majority of customers via social media platforms. Moreover, most of the leading retail stores have now enabled a direct link between their online stores and their official accounts in various social media platforms. Through such features, those fashion houses can easily detect a potential customer to store and translate a mundane social networking activity into profitable business activity. In this way, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, twitter and YouTube has proven immensely beneficial to fashion industry in terms of B2B marketing.

4.2.2 UK fashion industry situation

Fashion has always been an integral part of British people, used for defining themselves in society as well as understanding others. As a powerful tool for expression and influence, studies reveal that British citizen are more likely to trust and even take orders from an individual clad in suits or uniforms (McRobbie, 2013, p.122). This statement reveals the fact that human beings have a direct and integral affinity towards aesthetics, which is best expressed through fashion. Naturally, British fashion market is considered as a nucleus for fashionistas who congregate from all parts of Europe to have a gain a taste of latest fashion and learn the mechanics of soft power- radiated through fashion and attire. This

unconquerable zeal as well as enthusiasm towards fashion has helped the British fashion industry to gain a net worth of £26 billion annually. In addition, the same reason has also engineered to create an employment umbrella for nearly 800,000 individuals in the country, which are engaged in diverse niches of this massive industry (Fabacus.com, 2016).

Similar to other major shopping destinations and fashion ghettos, British fashion industry, unofficially headquartered at London is primarily concentrated on clothing business. As per Govt, archives, the net export value for wool trade from British Isles once accounted for 80% of entire export operations (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). This statistics signify the major role played by British textile industry in the past. Continuing the trend, the British fashion industry is now considered as the largest creative industry in UK, where value generated from textile and fashion materials is worth more than £6.5 billion (Fabacus.com, 2016).

It is important to mention several key statistical figures that would help the reader to obtain a better understanding about British fashion industry. As per reports published in Oxford Economics, total sale value of womenswear on 2015 amounted to £27 billion in 2015, and this figure is estimated to grow 23% by FY 2020, approximately a net sale value of £32 billion. Naturally, this massive sale made a notable contribution to British economy, creating a direct contribution of £26 billion in 2015, which has risen from £21 billion as in 2009 (Fabacus.com, 2016). This huge figure in terms of sales has also contributed to community support, especially to designers of British Fashion Council (BFC). As per a report, nearly £1 million worth of support was supplied to designers at BFC, while mentors invested more than ten-thousand (10,000) hours of support to boost the fashion industry in 2015 (Britishfashioncouncil.co.uk, 2016). Consequently, the British fashion industry also created employment options for 797,000 individuals in 2014, as per an Oxford Economic Report (Britishfashioncouncil.co.uk, 2016).

Now considering the above mentioned figures and the discussion made above about major fashion brands investing in online sales, the following figures express how this industry has indulged in web-based activities. As per the global market research firm Mintel report, British fashion industry gained £12.4 billion in 2015, which increased by 16% from a value of £10.7 billion in 2014 (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). The report also states that 68% of British internet users prefer to buy fashion item such as clothing and footwear from online sources. This change of preference of British citizen has propelled major fashion brands to develop their own online shopping portal and adapt with changing time. A different section of this report also reveals that 29% of total time spent in the web is invested for buying clothing or

footwear materials, which has surged from a mere 13% as measured in 2011 (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). These figures exhibit that online shopping has become an obvious phenomenon across the British nation. Along with that, it is both beneficial for the marketers as well as buyers. Continuing the discussion, it is time to present a brief statistical discussion and analysis on British retail industry, of which the fashion industry is an integral part.

Store type	Weight in RSI	Year-on-Year Growth rate (per cent)		
		Volume	Value	Inflation in store price (intended price deflator)
Textile	0.2	-2.6	-3.0	-0.4
Clothing	11.05	-7.4	-6.7	-0.4
Footwear	1.23	2.3	0.1	-0.1
Total	12.5	-6.3	-6.0	-0.4

Table 2: Summary of British retail industry, as compared between April 2016 and April 2015

(Source: Ons.gov.uk, 2017)

Table 1 illustrates that clothing sector has played a predominant role in retail sales while textile and footwear segment have only minute contribution. April 2016 experienced a fall of 6.3% in both quantity and 6% in spent amount, summing up the figures of clothing, textile and footwear industry, as compared to April 2015. Feedbacks obtained from manufacturers as well as their trading partners (including retailers) reveal that early Easter and unfavourable weather conditions have engineered this poor year-on-year performance, thus ultimately affecting the sale of summer-wears. This situation has been portrayed better in the following figure-

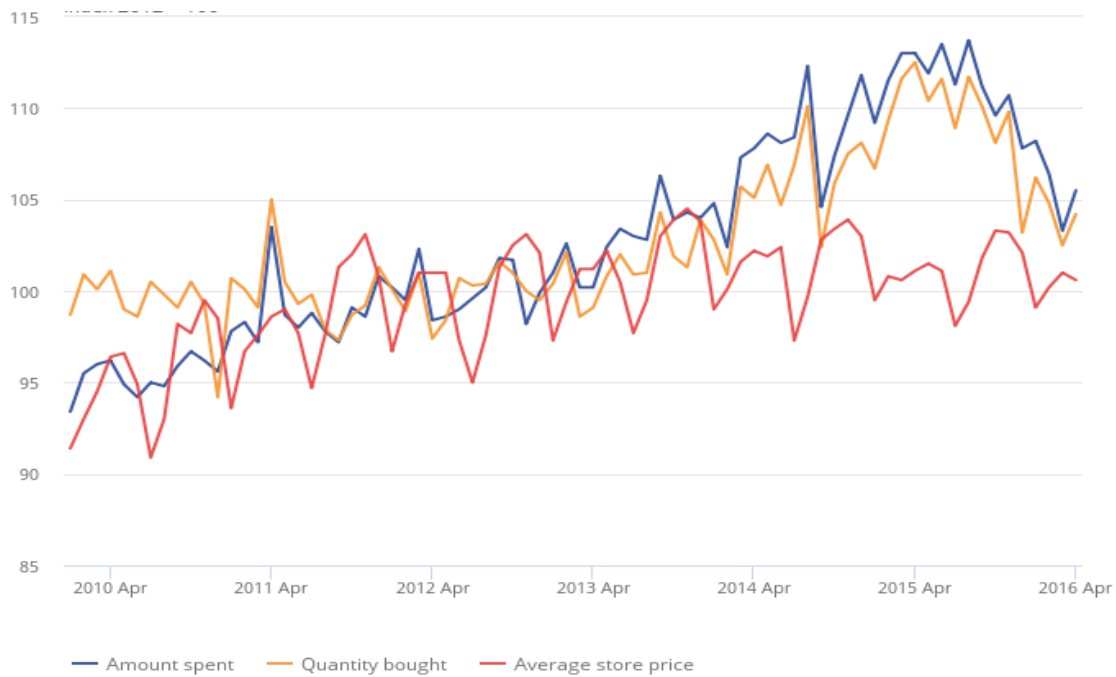


Figure 17: Clothing sales in UK from January 2010 to April 2016

(Source: Ons.gov.uk, 2017)

Looking at Figure 17 and comparing figures from April 2016 with March 2016, it is clearly visible that net bought quantity has increased by 1.7% while total spent amount has increased by 2.1%. On the other hand, the average price for store decreased by 0.4%. The last statistics is an indicator of increase in online sales compared to offline brick-and-mortar stores. This phenomenon calls for a brief discussion on retail sales.

The Retail Sales Data Index (RSI), published by Govt. of UK highlights the sales made via internet in detail. This index includes a seasonally calibrated value index as well as a year-on-year (YoY) and month-on-month (MoM) growth rates. It should be noted here that sales made via internet are estimated through measuring the total time spent in online activities associated with visiting web-stores of different fashion retailers. As per this RSI, average time spent by British internet users on a weekly basis in April 2016 created net sales of £886.6 million, which has increased by 9.3% as compared to April 2013 (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). This figure illustrates that with the increasing demand for online shopping, major fashion brands are moving towards online stores - attracting tech-savvy people to save their time and enjoy a better shopping experience. Furthermore, this increased internet sales, coupled with huge value generated has attracted small and mid-sized business entities to engage in web-based marketing and branding activities, thus ushering a revolution in B2B marketing also. Furthermore, the RSI also exhibits that out of total time spent by British internet users in

April 2016, 13.4% of time was spent online for retail activities (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). In other words, British internet users spent quite a notable time for buying clothing and footwear materials from online stores, as compared to 12.4% of total internet usage measured in April 2015.

The following table illustrates the YoY growth rates for internet sales and the ratio of sales conducted via internet from different internet sector.

Category	YoY sales growth	Sales as a ration of entire retail sale	Index categories and their respective weightage in terms of percentage
Total retail	9.3	13.4	100
Total food sector	14.3	4.5	15
Total non-food sector	10.1	10.1	36.1
Departmental stores	21.1	12.2	8.6
Clothing, textile and footwear stores	2.0	13.0	13.9
Sales from household goods	33.6	8.6	5.4
Others	-1.2	7.0	8.3
Sales from non-store retailing	7.4	76.0	49

Table 3: Summary of total sales made via internet, measured in April 2016

(Source: Ons.gov.uk, 2017)

Now, from the abovementioned tables and statistical figures, it can be easily considered that British fashion industry generates value both for society as well as market, along with helping the Royal Coffers to gain foreign currency. As per a report published by British Fashion Council, the fashion industry in this country is capable of creating value through a series of ways, apart from making an appeal to international fashion community (Britishfashioncouncil.co.uk, 2016). As per a survey conducted on behalf of BFC, 22%

British youth voted that fashion is the central theme that made UK attractive to them, while 15% cited design as the primary factor for the same purpose. This survey result highlights that UK has always been and is still considered as major fashion destination - thus signifying a looming opportunity for traders engaged in this industry.

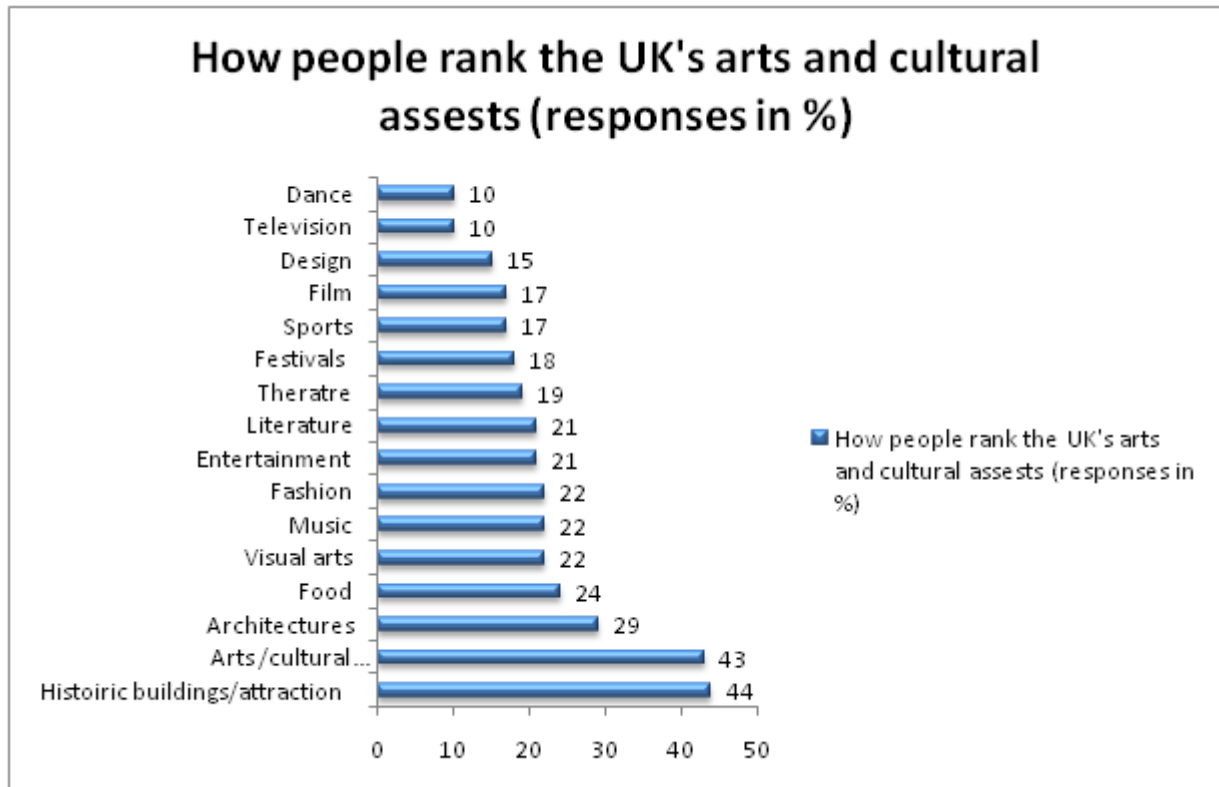


Figure 18: Perception towards British cultural and artistic assets

(Source: Ons.gov.uk, 2017)

Figure 18 highlights the amplitude of soft power exercised by British fashion industry over society as well as on market. Several examples could be cited here to illustrate the power of fashion in this context. The 'New Look' Campaign launched by fashion brand Dior instilled the concept of French chic to hundreds of thousands Britons (Ons.gov.uk, 2017). Similarly, Armani, the famous Italian fashion house reinforced elements of Italian fashion into UK. Now, it is time to move into detailed discussion on the performance of Zara in the context of online marketing and branding.

4.2.3 Data analysis and interpretation on Zara

Zara Espana S.A., popularly known as Zara, is a Spanish fashion retailer specialising in clothing and footwear. As the main brand of Inditex Group, Zara managed nearly 20 different

clothing collections in 2016. Being one of the largest fashion company with global acclaim, this fashion house considers customers at the core of their business operations, which incorporated several different activities such as designing, manufacturing and distributing clothing and footwear material across UK market (Zara.com, 2017). Following this business philosophy, Zara has also engaged themselves into intensive web-based advertising and branding activities - for the purpose of strengthening their B2B as well as B2C marketing activities.

Now, in order to understand and analyse the length and breadth of B2B marketing as practiced by Zara through social media, it is imperative to critically discuss relevant elements of Zara's business. For this purpose, majority of the discussion in this subsection has been premised on Zara annual report 2016.

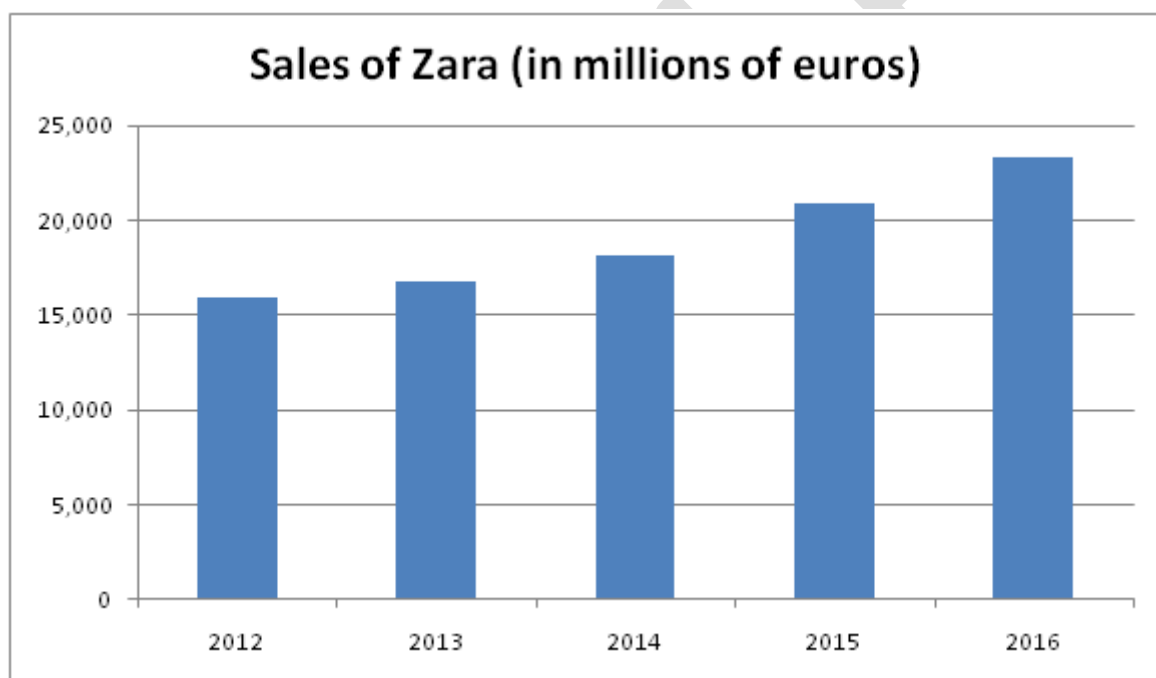


Figure 19: Chronological illustration of sales made by Zara (from 2012 to 2016)

(Source: Static.inditex.com, 2017)

Figure 19 illustrates that Zara has experienced a steady growth over years in terms of sales. While the net sale value in 2012 was worth of €15,496 million, the amount for same context touched the ceiling of a whopping €23311 million in 2016. This monumental increase in net annual sales exhibits nearly 50% surge.

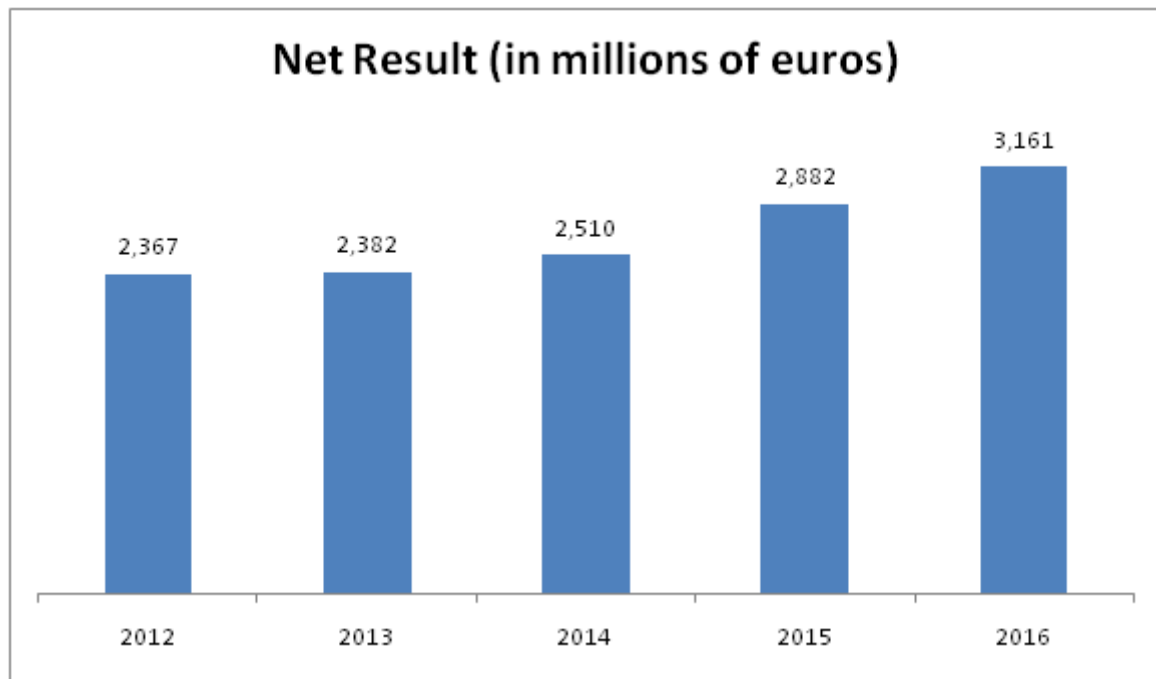


Figure 20: Chronological illustration of Net result gained by Zara (from 2012 to 2016)

(Source: Static.inditex.com, 2017)

Figure 20 displays the net results accumulated by Zara over the past five years, that is, from 2012 to 2016. This chart also illustrates business growth of Zara as the company sought to engage in web-based marketing activities by entering B2B marketplace. The Italian fashion house mattered online retail market in 2010 by opening new online store in five countries such as Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and UK (Bbc.com, 2010). This strategic business move, apart from retaining their brick-and-mortar stores, provided a significant momentum to the company result of which is clearly visible in aforementioned chart.

Now, along with stellar business growth, Zara have also engaged in active social networking activities. Apart from their online store, the company has also engraved their presence in virtual media through five major social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube (Zara.com, 2017). As of 2016, the company has 1.1 million beneficiaries. In addition, the fashion house has also engaged in several social programmes and has extended a helping hand for different charity causes organised in various social media channels. As per their annual report, Zara has provided €40 million in 2016 in these social programmes (Static.inditex.com, 2017).

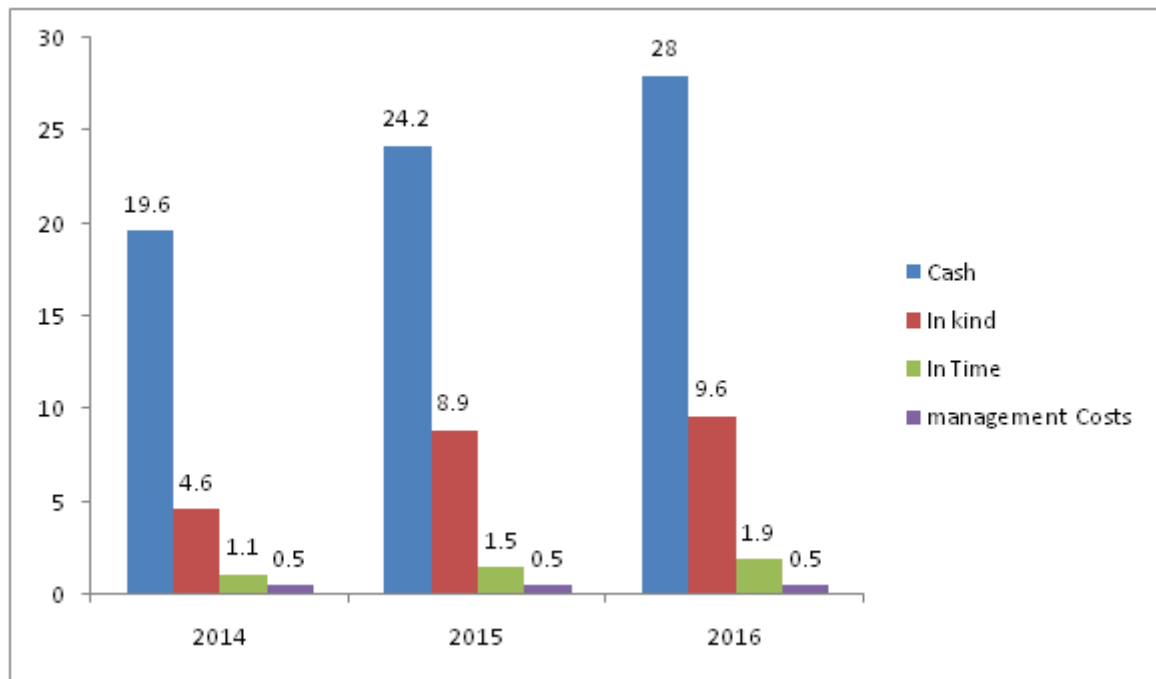


Figure 21: Chronological illustration of contribution provided by Zara (in millions of Euros) (from 2014 to 2016)

(Source : Static.inditex.com, 2017)

Figure () exhibits different types of contribution made by Zara from 2014 to 2016. It is clearly visible from this chart that their major contribution amounts in cash endowment, which has increased from €19.6 million in 2014 to €28 million in 2016. In addition, it also highlights that the company has also increased their contribution in kind over the years, as the company have experienced significant growth due to B2B marketing activities.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has interpreted the data as derived from different secondary sources such as journals, annual reports and other web-based publications. In addition, the secondary data has also been critically analysed keeping the focal of this research in mind. The entire discussion has been fragmented in three distinct yet interconnected segments for providing a logically comprehensible perspective on the gamut of secondary data. In the first segment, a brief discussion has been provided on UK's B2B market, while the following, that is, second section has analysed in detail current state of British fashion industry and the role played by social media in brand promotion and B2B marketing activities. The last and third section has entirely focussed on Zara's performance in terms of B2B marketing and social media

activities. Information in this section has been sourced from latest available company annual report.

Findings from this chapter revealed that emergence of social media channels has greatly benefitted fashion brands such as Zara to stay connected with their trading partners as well as forge new business relationships. As a result of these intensive web-based advertising activities, Zara has experienced notable growth both in terms of sales and net result acquisition. Therefore, based on the above-mentioned evidences and analysis, it can be surmised that social media indeed plays an immensely favourable role in B2B marketing and branding activities as practised by British fashion brands. However, it should be reminded here a fashion retailer such as Zara should be aware of the issues embedded in web-based advertising and formulate effective social media marketing strategies for that purpose.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The research investigating the role of social media in B2B marketing and branding exhibited the increasing importance of B2B marketing techniques in online brand promotion and marketing activities. This research emphasised on British fashion industry, with a special reference to Zara UK, the famous Italian designer clothing and footwear retailer. The researcher has performed secondary research here for understating the current state of British fashion industry and the role played social media in B2B marketing and branding activities. In due course, it has been revealed from secondary that UK, being a popular fashion destination, experiences notable fashion trends, along with possessing several world-famous fashion universities. As a result, this country has its own unique signature in fashion market, which is again reflected in the nation's fashion market.

Now, on this context, the researcher has endeavoured to understand how social media gained a predominant role in terms of promotion and branding activities. Extensive research and analysis revealed that with the stellar growth of information and communication technologies, common public displayed a trend of performing shopping activities through web-based applications. Contrary to offline brick-and-mortar stores, these online virtual stores provided them smoother shopping experience as significant amount of time was saved. Following this trend, business entities and fashion houses also moved towards establishing online stores to keep par with changing landscape. As the conventional trading relationships were no longer valid in this new scenario, small and major players of British fashion industry sought to forge business relationships in the web.

B2B marketing came as a saviour in this new scenario as business organisations were able to create and retain commercial relations with their trading partners through a series of social media channels. As social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram gained immense popularity in recent decade, corporate world took to these new platforms to expand their business operations, and British fashion industry also follows suit.

Following this trend, Zara UK, the major British fashion retailer of Italian origin also introduced themselves in virtual web. Along with launching their online wire in 2010, the company also announced their presence in social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube. Forwarding with social media strategy of increasing followers and actively engaging with them, Zara has built a strong brand

personality as well as been successful in maintaining a recognisable image on social media. In addition, the company has also successfully capitalised these social networking options for conducting promotional campaign and guerrilla marketing. In this way, Zara has not gained notable success in business but has been able to create and retain business opportunities exclusively through social media. Turning their focus towards social media promotion has also helped this British fashion retailer to experience a 50% growth in annual sales from 2012 to 2016.

However, despite these promising figures and favourable prospects, it is also important to highlight the dark side of British fashion industry here. Unfavourable weather conditions and turmoil in national as well as international economic weather has affected this industry, shadow of which has also been cast upon Zara's social media branding and B2B marketing activities. In addition, the announcement and possible implementation of Brexit has also raised concern over performance of fashion industry. The prospective imposition of visas would heavily impact trade as well as designing activities in fashion industry, and Zara would also be affected by this scenario most likely. Therefore, in the following section, recommendations have been provided for addressing such issues and maintaining smooth and unhindered business operations in British fashion market.

5.2 Linking with objectives

5.2.1 Linking with first objective

As found in the study, brand equity model and Ad exposure model depicts the influence of social media in branding as well as B2B activities. Both the theory points out that "word of mouth plays a major role in influencing people. The study discusses about the role of influencers in the decision making process of people, and as per the study, influencers like creative ad campaigns, celebrity suggestions and critical product reviews plays a key role in creating awareness of products among people. Moreover, with the rise of online shopping platforms, people have been found to prefer reviews about certain products before than official product descriptions. The study also pointed out the disrupting side of social media, which showed that with rising social followers comes massive responsibilities and small mistakes like Zara did while promoting products for curvy girls can be potentially harmful to brand values as well as B2B process.

5.2.2 Linking with second objective

Social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are mainly used as marketing tools used by business ventures. As found in the study, Facebook and Twitter are massively used for marketing activities due to wide range of users and options for business marketing. As stated in the managed model of branding theory, external service providers play supreme supporting role in B2B marketing, which involves service providers like Facebook and YouTube to promote products for a company and gather royalties. “Facebook for business” and YouTube video streaming services allow companies to promote their brand via creative ad campaigns and thus help in B2B marketing activities by gauging bulk attention of people.

5.2.3 Linking with third objective

Zara, an Inditex owned brand, is considered as one of supreme brands in terms of fashion as well as marketing activities. As found in the research work, Zara is typically a fast fashion company which create designs for short time and according to rising trend and delves into the practice of creating creative advertisements which gauges core attention of people. Moreover, the company also practices a theme based B2B marketing practices and use influencers to grab attention of people. The company made \$220 billion profit at the year end of 2016 by means of Social media, by which they left their rival companies far behind. However in the desperation of maintaining supremacy, Zara did some massive blunders like piracy of designs and misleading content in ads.

5.2.4 Linking with fourth objective

As derived from the study, social media marketing may seem like an easy concept but in reality, situations are different and need various dedicated approach for reaching out to people. Keller’s brand building model, hybrid model of marketing and direct communication model can be taken into considerations for B2B marketing process by means of Social media. On one hand hybrid model states the importance of integrated service of internet as well as engage trading partners, on another hand direct connection model states the importance of active engagement of company in the social media platforms. Keller’s brand equity theory states that in order to build a brand, identification of target markets is necessary and social media platforms can be best for marking out potential buyers. These theories and models are

based on the core context of branding, B2B marketing and social media integration and thus can serve the purpose of enhanced SMM marketing activities of Zara.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendation 1

- **24*7 chat bots**

Live and forever active chat bots have been tried by premium brands like Burberry, American eagle and have garnered better results in terms of customer retention as well as engagement. As influenced by the views of Ashley and Tuten (2015, p.22), for B2B marketing, chat bots can be beneficial as they are controlled by technical commands and have lower risk of customer service hazards. Moreover, record as well as maintenance of data appears to be easy with the help of chat bots.

Smart recommendation	
S-Specific	The process is specific as chat bots are in trend these days and can be involved for B2B purpose by technical advancement
M-Measurable	The process is highly measurable as by means of chat bots, companies can keep track of customer records
A-Attainable	Chat bots can be involved by implementing advanced technical measures.
R-Relevant	The process is relevant as it is already used by luxury brands and has been helpful to maintain customer base
T-Time	Around 6-8 months

5.3.2 Recommendation 2

- **Digital reality**

Digital reality or virtual reality is the new dream for fashion geeks and this is what common masses around the world are currently looking for as mentioned by Okazaki and Taylor (2013, p.65). Digital reality enables people to try on products virtually. An esteemed make up brand named Charlotte Tilbury enable its users to try on makeup online. The process can be typically helpful as it would not only gain appraisal for innovative methods but also open doors for customers to experience virtual trial service.

Smart recommendation	
S-Specific	The process is specific for rising customer attraction towards brand and can also provide users to choose right product.
M-Measurable	This strategy is measured on the aspects of increased customer base.
A-Attainable	The strategy can certainly be attained by technical measures
R-Relevant	This idea is relevant as it has already been tested by different brands and has helped in B2B process
T-Time	Around 8-10 months for design, formation and implementation purpose

5.3.3 Recommendation 3

- **Spending more on digital campaigns**

Zara already puts on a lot on digital marketing campaigns and have garnered positive results. However, Zara also have made marketing blunders, which led to the loss of customers to a certain extent. Influenced by the views of Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014, p.340), it can be said that Zara can delve into digital practices and communicate with users as much as

possible. Being a dominant name in fashion industry, it might not have enough scope to communicate with potential customers but, the company can install chatbots as suggested above and can also engage a separate team of digital marketers for handling responses in social media.

Smart recommendations	
S-Specific	This approach is specific for enhancing B2B process of Zara and can also enhance social media marketing process
M-Measurable	The process is measurable on the aspects of customer reaction as well raised productivity of Zara
A-Attainable	The goal can be attained by involving separate digital marketing team and enhanced customer support
R-Relevant	It is a common process used by several companies and is relevant for practical use
T-Time	3-4 months

5.3.4 Recommendation 4

- **Putting effort on organic fashion**

Zara is a well renowned brand for fast fashion and usually copy trendy products in the market in a short time frame. While this strategy has been loved and preferred by people, it is also a wearied out strategy as it is followed by several companies. Based on the viewpoints of Wolny and Mueller (2013, p.580), it can be recommended that Zara can launch and market their own fashion styles and carry out a B2B process for their organic collection beside their traditional collections. Organic fashion line enables a brand to attract extra attention and gauge additional customers towards their brand.

Smart recommendations	
S-Specific	This strategic approach is specific for gauging extra public attention, which in turn can enhance B2B marketing practice of Zara by involving potential stakeholders
M-Measurable	The approach is measurable in the aspect of increased client base as well as customer base
A-Attainable	This strategy of organic fashion is certainly attainable by involving potential designers and innovative technologies for increased production as well as enhanced digital B2B process
R-Relevant	Organic fashion is not a new concept and there are several brands which delve into this practice and thus is a relevant process for enhanced social media marketing and customer retention process.
T-Time	Around 1 year, for market analysis, drafting designs and make products

5.4 Limitations of the research

This study faced several constraints, which restricted the natural pace of the research. Unavailability of monetary fund posed as a barrier for gathering primary data by means of survey, which would have brought more clear responses for this study. On another hand, limited monetary funds also did not allow the researcher for getting access to costly literary sources of journals and books. While collecting data about Zara, the study faced a setback as very few genuine data has been found to be available, which also have delayed completion of this study. Limited availability of statistical as well as literary data has been major limitations

of this study and thus has also restricted appropriate execution of this study. Had the research work been carried out by both primary as well as secondary approach, research would have gathered more factual data.

5.5 Future scope of the research

Almost every research study is aimed at grabbing a strong foothold in future aspects and this point is applicable for this study too. For current study, it may be beneficial for future researchers to carry out detailed study on Zara and this study can also play a supporting role for creating contrasting views if research is carried out on other brands from fashion industry. Statistical data gathered in this study can be helpful to find out loopholes in marketing practices and used as a lesson for future B2B practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Increase of revenue for social media marketing

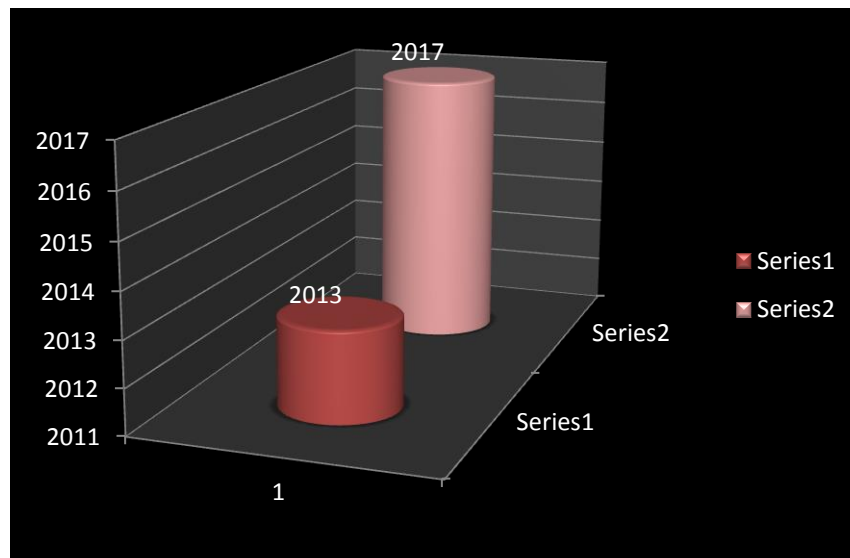


Figure 1: Increase of revenue for social media marketing