SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING EVALUATION DECISION MAKING PROCESSES AND THE AGENCY-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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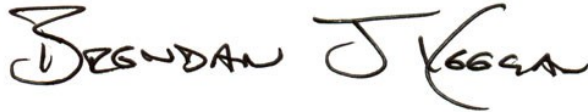
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Declaration

No portion of this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university.

Brendan James Keegan

Abstract

Evaluation of social media marketing is central to its success. This thesis seeks to contribute to our understanding of social media marketing evaluation processes and outcomes, together with an exploration of the dynamics of agency-client relationships. It contributes to knowledge across three major themes: *strategy development, evaluation,* and *agency-client relationships* and is one of the first studies to consider the role of the agency-client relationship in social media marketing. In particular, the study addresses a gap in current knowledge by revealing the significant influence of agency-client relationships on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation.

Adopting the ontological and epistemological position that reality is socially constructed, a qualitative study of twenty social media marketers provided a specialist digital agency perspective of social media campaigns. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key practitioners, supported by a cognitive-mapping elicitation technique.

The findings generate knowledge of the first two major themes: *strategy* and *evaluation* through the development of two process models: the 'Cycle of Social Media Marketing' for strategy, and the 'Cycle of Social Media Marketing Evaluation' for evaluation. Findings for the second theme reject the traditional view of agency-client relationships, and instead offers a fresh perspective on these relationships in social media marketing, identifying three sub-themes: *context, conflict* and *co-creation.* The findings reveal key techniques for enhancing client relationships, including client account management strategies; the impact of conflict on trust between both parties; the crucial role of mutual participation in strategy development of strategy and evaluation; and the importance of co-creation, largely facilitated through collaborative learning workshops.

This study has implications for scholars as it contributes to our understanding of evaluation in relation to strategy development in a rapidly developing area of modern marketing practice, affirming the importance of social media data analysis to decision-

making. This study has implications for practice as it extends knowledge through conceptualisations of processes and offering insights into the influence and dynamics of agency-client interactions in social media marketing.

Finally, a key contribution to knowledge is the development of two conceptual frameworks: *The Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation in Strategy Development*, and *The Conceptual Framework of Agency-Client Dynamics in Social Media Marketing* which encapsulate the multi-layered nature of this study and the vital importance of evaluation in social media marketing.

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To everyone who helped, directly or indirectly, you know who you are, and I thank you most humbly for not asking me what my PhD was about.

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Thanks also to the Digital Team at MMU who helped me along the way, by leaving me alone!

Dedication

To all the Keegan's, Boyle's, Quinn's, and O'Shea's, who had a part in shaping me.
To my Mother, Father and Brother, who supported me.
To my beloved Sheila, for being amazeballs.
As this project draws to a conclusion, I would like to dedicate it to my next one.
    …Órlaith Martha Keegan, born on the 1st of September, 2018.

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Publications and Conference Papers from this Research

Journal Articles (n = 2)

Keegan, B. J., Rowley, J., and Tonge, J. (2017). Marketing agency-client relationships: towards a research agenda. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(7/8). doi:10.1108/EJM-10-2015-0712

Keegan, B. J., and Rowley, J. (2017). Evaluation and decision making in social media marketing. *Management Decision*, 55(1), 15-31. doi: 10.1108/MD-10-2015-0450

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1 Introduction to the Research

"Not everything that can be counted, counts.
Not everything that counts can be counted"
Albert Einstein (attributed)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the authors motivation for the study as well as a rationale. It outlines the three major themes underpinning social media marketing: *strategy*, *evaluation*, and *agency-client relationships*. The chapter outlines the aims and objectives of the study before providing an overview of the chapters in the thesis.

1.1 Motivations for Conducting the Study

My motivations for conducting this study are a combination of industry experiences and curiosity. Having worked for a number of years in agencies, I was regularly tasked with reporting on digital marketing campaign performance for clients. Such reports would reflect the contribution to website traffic from platforms such as banner adverts on affiliate sites, paid search engine placements and targeted email marketing campaigns. In preparation of these reports, it struck me that the industry was providing their clients with sophisticated spreadsheets with sophisticated indications of performance, such as percentages of open and close rates for targeted emails. This precision was only possible when relying upon quantitative digital marketing data. Prior to beginning this PhD journey, social media was rapidly emerging as the new and exciting platform for digital marketing. However, I noticed that traditional methods of reporting campaign performance were not applicable, due to the nuances of the data involved. Social media campaign data does possess numerical information, such as number of Facebook likes, however I believed that such metrics did not tap into the qualitative aspects of social media marketing. As practitioners continued to apply the traditional reporting methods to this new approach to digital marketing, I was curious to gather their perspectives on adapting to the introduction of social media.

A pilot study was conducted to gather opinions on campaign reporting techniques in social media. Although, a consistent theme repeatedly emerged, managing the agency-client relationship. Pilot study participants were keen to point out the pivotal nature of the relationship in generating campaign strategies for social media marketing. Hence, three key themes emerged within social media marketing: *development of campaign strategies, evaluation,* and *the influence of the agency-client relationship*. At this point, I began the PhD process by gathering all available literatures on the three themes and generated a data collection regime based around gathering industry perspectives of these three themes.

1.2 Research Overview

This is a qualitative study adopting a social constructionist perspective investigating the phenomenon of social media marketing. Three major themes underpin the topic and guide this study's investigations namely: strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. Each of these themes are reported in prior studies, however this study combines all three as the core components of social media marketing. Semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted and provided insights in relation to strategy development, evaluation and the influence of agency-client relationships in social media marketing. Coupled with the previous literature in this area, thematic analysis of findings produced two conceptual frameworks. The first is a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development (Figure 5-3). This is the first model of its kind to identify the processes and outcomes of evaluation activities within the context of social media marketing strategy. In so doing, links between evaluation and strategic decision-making are identified. In exploring social media marketing evaluation, it was clear that these processes were significantly influenced by the agency-client relationship. The second conceptual framework represents the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation (Figure 6-1).

The study affirms the three major themes of the study - *strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships* – and their importance to social media marketing, as well as offering new perspectives that emerged from the analysis of participant interviews.

1.3 Rationale for Study

Social media have become increasingly popular since their inception at the turn of the 20th century (Phua and Ahn, 2016). Interest in social media usage by organisations has proliferated in the field of marketing literature for over twenty years (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). With ferocious competition between the litany of modern marketing communications channels, organisations are increasingly turning to new and emergent media to interact with their audiences (Iankova et al., 2018). Scholars also advocate the potential of social media as an innovative method of communicating with customers (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014; Jones et al., 2015; Touchette et al., 2015; Tatar and Eren-Erdoğmuş, 2016). Hoffman and Novak (2012) claim two-way communication exchange between consumers and brands outperforms traditional marketing capabilities, echoing the sentiments of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010).

Social media has created a paradigmatic shift in modern marketing practice towards consumer centric strategies (Hanna et al., 2011). Engagement with consumers in a highly visible online public forum can enhance brand awareness, improve or damage brand equity (Holtzblatt et al., 2013), and affect profitability (Rishika et al., 2013). Marketers' appreciation of social media and its benefits are well documented (e.g., Dzamic, 2012; Gretry et al., 2017) and therefore its inclusion in modern campaigns requires special attention to advance marketing knowledge and practice. Aral et al. (2013) claim social media is *"fundamentally changing the way we communicate, collaborate, consumer, and create" (p3)* underpinning the modern perspective for organisations which is not whether to engage in social media marketing, but how to perform it. The knowledge and theory relating to agency-client relationships precedes the emergence of digital and social media and it relevant for modern marketing practice, as campaigns are performed by specialist agencies (Quinn et al., 2016). Thus, there a need to understand this phenomenon to benefit both academia and practice.

Three major themes underpin social media marketing: strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. The rationale behind these three major themes will be discussed in turn.

Why Social Media Marketing Strategy?

There is a growing importance in understanding social media as a marketing channel and the strategies employed in its campaigns. The unique feature of this media is two-way communications between brands and consumers which have been shown to greatly enhance brand reputation (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016; Duffett, 2017). Furthermore, social media campaigns produce large datasets of information regarding consumer behaviours, preferences and sentiments (Fan and Gordon, 2014; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016; Moro et al., 2016). Arguably this feature is most valuable to organisations in terms of understanding their audiences, however this demands a strategic approach to formulating campaigns (Quinton, 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015).

It is estimated that in 2017, there are 2.77 billion social media users, constituting a global average of 71% of internet usage (Statista, 2017c). Facebook is the market leader amongst social media users, with 1.9 billion active users, who are increasingly accessing the service through mobile applications (Statista, 2017d). The earliest manifestations of social media sites offered platforms for communities to engage with brands (Li et al., 2007). Facebook Brand Pages are a typical example of an online community which also harbours sophisticated advertising systems within them (Kabadayi and Price, 2014; Kang et al., 2014). Recent innovations in social media marketing allow brands to target social media users through highly precise methods, such as Sponsored Stories and Promoted Tweets that appear in the users newsfeeds (eMarketer, 2017).

Digital platforms have seen significant investment by advertisers, amounting to 18% of a total of $563.4 billion in global advertising spend in 2017 (Statista, 2017d). Focussing on the UK advertising market, over 50% of the £21.19 billion annual budget in 2017 was dedicated to digital advertising platforms (WARC, 2017). The UK spend on social media equated to £1.7 billion in 2017, suggesting an important and emerging area within the advertising industry (Statista, 2017d). Social media now takes its place within marketing campaigns and consumers expectation is that brands will be found on these channels (Valos et al., 2017). Customer service is also highly effective when

provided through social media (McLean and Wilson, 2016). Marketers are also using social media to engage with consumers alongside traditional marketing channels (Floreddu and Cabiddu, 2016) and hence appropriate strategies are required to implement such campaigns. Therefore, social media marketing is important to modern marketing practice and the strategic approaches to developing campaigns is worthy of investigation.

Social media marketing strategy offers a rich area for research since there is considerable and ongoing development of new practices in this area, and whilst the body of research into social media marketing is growing rapidly, there are many areas of practice that are currently under-researched, in particular, strategies employed in industry (Ngai et al., 2015). Social media marketing strategies are complex, compared to traditional media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). A litany of social media platforms makes production of knowledge in this subject area difficult (Hajli, 2015). Felix et al. (2016) conclude that social media is highly unpredictable and erratic, meaning conceptualisation through research will continue to be difficult. As a result, scholars have drawn upon industry practitioner knowledge to investigate strategy development (e.g., Chung et al., 2017; Galati et al., 2017) and this study will extend this method of investigation of social media marketing. In doing so, the research seeks to capture the essence of social media marketing strategy, while conceptualising its processes and outcomes.

In summary, many organisations are employing social media marketing to interact with large number of online users and the benefits over other digital media channels it provides. In particular, it offers a two-way communication system to brands allowing them to engage in a manner never seen before in marketing. Secondly, it offers unique opportunities for enhancing a brands reputation, allowing for campaigns which are driven by consumers' user generated content. Lastly, the large volume of data available to organisations when implementing social media marketing campaigns allows for complex analysis of vast swathes of data, generating valuable insights. Such analysis of social media data is pivotal to developing social media marketing strategy, and hence leads to the next major theme of the research, evaluation.

Why Evaluation?

Social media maketing campaigns produce enormous volumes of user data (Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). As a result, it is difficult to manage large volumes of data which are can be comprised of semantic expressions (Moro et al., 2016). Brands are increasingly attracted to the potential of social media marketing due to social media's unique measurement capbilities (Coursaris et al., 2016; Jobs and Gilfoil, 2016). The ability to precisely predict user behaviours (Kalampokis et al., 2013), profile audiences based on psychographic sentiment allow organisations to create highly targetted and relevant marketing communications (Micu et al., 2017). However, deciphering valuable insights from social media data is not a simple task (Adedoyin-Olowe et al., 2014; Alberghini et al., 2014; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015), which has resulted in specialist social media marketers who analyse and interpret data into simplified formats such as dashboards (Akter and Wamba, 2016; Wedel and Kannan, 2016; Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018).

Digital technology and software provide a highly efficient means of measuring the outcomes of social media campaigns (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015), which indicates how metrics and key performance indicators (KPI) are useful for campaign evaluation (Peters et al., 2013; Fan and Gordon, 2014). Studies have identified that evaluation is not simply a consideration of metrics but requires investigation as to the wider possibilities of the process, such as predictive metrics, machine learning and artificial intelligence (Ruhi, 2014; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Moro et al., 2016). However, the gap in the current knowledge is how these metrics and KPIs are used in the evaluation of social media campaigns.

Whilst, social media marketing strategy development has received recent attention from scholars (e.g., McCann and Barlow, 2015; Chung et al., 2017; Felix et al., 2017), a number of studies have considered the importance of evaluation in strategy development (Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013). Therefore, this study contributes to an emergent area of practice. In doing so, this study responds to calls for a better understanding of social media marketing evaluation (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Akter and Wamba, 2016). As limited research has been conducted on social media

marketers who perform the role of analysis and therefore this research is poised to investigate social media evaluation techniques.

In summary, social media marketing evaluation is worthy of investigation due to the complex analytical procedures which are being performed in industry, however not documented by academic studies. The third major theme reflects the importance of the relationship between agency and their clients in social media marketing strategy development and evaluation.

Why Agency-Client Relationships?

The impact of agency-client relationships on marketing practice have been widely reported (Murphy and Maynard, 1997; Waller, 2002; Fam and Waller, 2008; Levin et al., 2016). The underlying premise of this area of literature is that working relationships between agencies and clients as having a significant impact on the outcomes of marketing campaigns (Halinen, 1997). Extant studies offer insights into several areas such as the types of relationships between agency and client (Fam and Waller, 2008), advice on achieving productive relationships (Kaynak et al., 1994), as well as highlighting factors which provoke dissolution (Broschak and Block, 2014).

However, only a limited number of studies concentrate specifically on the impact of the agency-client relationship on marketing strategy (Davies and Palihawadana, 2006; Beverland et al., 2007). Arguably, particularly relevant to consideration of social media marketing evaluation is the emerging stream of research that considers the involvement of clients in developing social media campaigns, and the importance of relationships to the notion of co-creation in the service industries (Nenonen and Storbacka, 2010; Izzo et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2015). Some studies provide insights into agency-client interactions (Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Bruning and Ledingham, 2002; Håkansson and Ford, 2002; Davies, 2009), however very few studies concentrate specifically on how these interactions influence decision making processes (Broschak and Block, 2014).

As a consequence of the rapid development of social media, client-side marketing managers lack of social media skills (Royle and Laing, 2014; Jobs and Gilfoil, 2016)

and outsource strategy development to specialist agencies (Olotewo, 2016). Hence, social media campaigns are developed and evaluated by these agencies (Quinn et al., 2016; Wedel and Kannan, 2016). This results in the client organisation ceding control over their social media campaigns and a collaborative relationship between agency and client is beneficial to both (Skjølsvik and Breunig, 2016). However, clients are often reluctant to share commercially sensitive information with their agencies which poses problems for the development of social media campaigns (Komulainen et al., 2016; Taylor, 2017). Therefore, this research is poised to perform an investigation amongst specialist social media marketers to provide insights on the influence of client relationships on strategy development and evalution.

It is important to note that this study interrogates the agency perspective of the client relationship. The rationale behind this decision is based on greater access to agency participants available to the researcher, at the time of the study. Specifically, participants were reluctant to allow interviews with their clients out of concern for compromising their ongoing working relationship. Notable studies in this field also adopt this perspective by examining the influence of client relationships in developing strategies (e.g., Bergen et al., 1992; Haytko, 2004; Davies and Prince, 2011). However, it should be noted that the interpretations that emerge from the analysis of this study are primarily the agency view of the client relationship and should be viewed as such.

This concludes the rationale for the three major themes which underpin this investigation into social media marketing. Next, the aims and objectives of this study are presented.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The research aims for this study are as follows:

> *Aim 1: To contribute to knowledge and theory of social media marketing evaluation and contextualise evaluation in relation to strategy development*
>
> *Aim 2: To investigate the influence of agency-client relationships on social media marketing strategy development and evaluation*

The research aims are supported by the following research objectives:

1. *To review the various literatures for knowledge, theory and practice in:*
   - *social media marketing strategy development,*
   - *social media marketing evaluation, and*
   - *agency-client relationships in marketing*
2. *To explore the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation*
3. *To develop a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development*
4. *To examine the influence of agency-client relationships on social media marketing evaluation*
5. *To develop a conceptual framework that represents the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing*

Aim 1 is supported by Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 5. Aim 2 is supported by Objectives 1, 4 and 5.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, providing a rationale for the three major themes before presenting the research aims and objectives. The structure of the thesis is also outlined.

Chapter 2 –Social Media Marketing Industrial Context

Chapter 2 offers an outline of the UK digital marketing industry. In providing this overview, social media is identified as an emergent and important aspect of modern marketing practice and hence worthy of investigation.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

Chapter 3 presents the results of the literature review in two parts. Part I reviews the knowledge and theory in the area of social media marketing strategy and evaluation. Social media strategy has received much scholarly attention to date and these are

critically reviewed. Following this, the social media marketing evaluation knowledge is examined. Part II reports the theoretical perspectives of the agency-client relationship. It highlights the pivotal role of the agency-client relationship to marketing practice, revealing three key areas of the agency-client relationship: interpersonal, alternative, and challenged. Specifically, contractual arrangements, client account management feature as interpersonal factors of agency-client relationships. The alternative view considers cultural implications and co-creation. Lastly, challenges faced within the agency-client relationship, such as trust and conflict are also discussed.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the chosen methodological approach. The chapter begins by outlining the nature of qualitative inquiry and justifies the research philosophy of this study. The thesis adopted a social constructionist philosophy which is discussed in terms of ontology and epistemology. The sample, methods and analysis are outlined before addressing reliability and validity of the data collected. Semi-structured interviews were performed with twenty key informants in possession of expertise knowledge regarding social media marketing. Cognitive mapping was used as an elicitation technique promoting richer discussion of the interview topics. Limitations and ethical considerations are considered.

Chapter 5 – Findings I - Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Chapter 5 presents the outcomes of the study in terms of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation resulting in two process models. A contextualized conceptual framework is provided bringing together the two models, highlighting the relationships between the two processes.

Chapter 6 – Findings II – Agency Client Relationships in Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Chapter 6 presents the findings relating to the agency-client relationships and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. Firstly, the wider context of agency-client relationships within social media is explored through the following categories: *contractual arrangements, cultural implications* and *client account management strategies*. Next, findings reveal how conflict is evident in relationships emerges in the following areas:

agency performance, campaign performance, decision-making, communication, personnel and policy. Lastly, analysis of findings indicate how co-creation in social media marketing is beneficial to both agencies and their clients, revealed through: *collaborative learning, co-creation in strategy development, and co-creative conflict*. These form the basis of a conceptual framework of agency-client dynamics in social media marketing.

Chapter 7 – Discussion, Debate and Reflection

Chapter 7 discusses the analysis of findings in relation to the literature. In doing so, the primary contributions to knowledge in the three major themes are provided. A summary of key contributions to knowledge in the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on social media marketing evaluation within the wider context of social media marketing strategy is provided. The two conceptual frameworks revisited in this chapter: *a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development,* and *a conceptual framework of agency-client dynamics in social media marketing*

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Future Research Agendas

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by revisiting the research objectives of the study detailing the contributions to theory and practice. Through examining social media marketing, the study produces transferrable knowledge in the areas of strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. Limitations of the study are discussed and an agenda for further research is outlined. The chapter concludes with managerial implications in light of the findings and offers a comment on the future direction of social media marketing.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the rationale for the study, aims and objectives for the research, and outlined the structure of the thesis.

2 Social Media Marketing: Industrial Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the key attributes of the social media within the context of the marketing sector. It begins by providing a review of the earliest references to social media in the marketing literature. Next, a discussion of social media audiences is offered to further establish its importance in the modern media landscape. Finally, an overview of 2017/2018 digital advertising spending figures is offered highlighting the pressing need for further academic research of these practices.

2.2 Social Media in Marketing

Social media has seen a variety of definitions since its inception, at the turn of the millennium. The earliest referral to the concept of an internet-based social network was through a discussion of 'virtual communities' by Rheingold (1986), wherein collections of internet users discussed topics such as geo-political events through website forums and chatrooms.

> *Social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace (Rheingold, 1986).*

The early days of social networking saw an increase in websites which allowed online communities to interact with each other, often referred to as the second generation of the internet, or Web 2.0 (O' Reilly, 2005). The distinguishing feature of Web 2.0 was the ability of users to interact in a two-way communication with commercial entities (Constantinides, 2014). Boyd and Ellison's (2007) early work focussed on networking behaviours exhibited within online communities and offered a three-tiered definition:

> *'Social networking is a collection of web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system' (Boyd and Ellison, 2007: pp. 211)*

Social networking was therein seen as an activity performed on online platforms, referred to a social media.

Numerous attempts have been made to classify social media in marketing. Bernoff and Li (2008) posited the notion of the collective power of communities when suitably motivated by a cause, that creates a 'groundswell' of online activity, drawing from Gladwell's 'Tipping Point'. This aspect of social media is arguably the desired outcome for social media marketing by persuading a large volume of customers to interact with a brand. Furthermore, Mangold and Faulds (2009) argued for the inclusion of social media as part of the modern integrated marketing communication mix, outlining possibilities for brands to communicate directly with customers, as well as understanding customer sentiments. From earliest studies of social networking and social media, its commercial potential for organisations is recognised by scholars.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2014) sought to understand and classify social media using theories from traditional media (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure). Their work reflects upon the activities of social media users and the challenges for businesses who engage with their consumers using this medium. They propose a considered approach to using social media by organisations, employing cautious judgements as to selection of media, content type, and tone of the campaign. Furthermore, Hanna et al. (2011) recognised brands usage of social media in larger multi-channel campaigns and theorised that the modern media environment is a connected system whilst warning of the repercussions of poorly executed campaigns.

However, in attempting to observe and interpret social media marketing in practice, scholars have struggled to keep up with the rapid rate of change in social media. Mangold and Faulds (2009) collated the platforms they observed at the time of writing many of which no longer exist, such as Piczo.com and Newsvine. Similarly, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) also classified social media applications into categories, many of which are no longer in operation (e.g., Bebo and Google Groups). Whereas, Keitzmann et al.'s (2011) study sought to overcome this rapid pace of change in platforms creating an overarching framework for understanding social media. Their

'honeycomb model' focuses exclusively on the functionality of the social media (e.g., developing relationships, establishing reputation) and the implications associated with these functions (Keitzmann et al. 2011, p.243). Therefore, this study will develop a similar overarching framework of social media marketing by focusing on strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships as the foci of this project.

Frameworks are useful in displaying contributions to knowledge in theory and practice (Bryman and Bell, 2010). Conceptual frameworks present an overview of the outcomes of studies, reducing findings to a simplified format and highlighting relationships between the research phenomena (Fisher, 2010). In generating a conceptual framework, this study brings together the theoretical constructs of strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships in social media marketing. As no previous study of social media marketing has considered these three themes, a conceptual framework will be useful tool in providing an overview. The development of a conceptual framework also provides an explicit link between the present study and the prior literature. Hence, future studies may look to examine elements of the frameworks in further detail.

The value of conceptual frameworks in this study are also relevant to practice. Industry expert participants provided examples of social media marketing practice which are valuable to future practitioners. The frameworks provided by this study offer a set of stages within each process, offering clear guidance on social media marketing strategy development, evaluation and client relationship management. It is argued that these frameworks are transferrable to practice as well as further studies of the phenomenon. Social media practitioners regularly rely on industry sources for advice, whereas the conceptual frameworks developed in this study are grounded in prior literature and empirical data. Hence, the production of conceptual frameworks is deemed to be important for industry and academic audiences.

In summary, social media marketing engages consumers in a two-way communication dynamic allowing customers the opportunity to interact and engage with brands on an open and publicly visible online platform. This interaction and engagement is the foundation of social media marketing practice and hence the reason why many

organisations are keen to engage in this new form of marketing communications. Tuning to the social media platforms themselves, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that organisations of all sizes can benefit from marketing on social media using social network site (Facebook, and LinkedIn), blogs (Wordpress, Blogger), microblogs (Twitter), review sites (Yelp, Trip Advisor) and video/photo sharing communities (YouTube, Vimeo), to name a few.

However, due to the many social media platforms, this poses a significant challenge for organisations in selecting the most appropriate one for their customers. This creates a significant demand in the marketing industry whereby organisations of all sizes are keen to engage with social media, however they lack the necessary skills and experience in creating social media marketing campaigns. Hence, social media marketing specialists have operated within digital marketing agencies by exploiting this demand for creating and performing campaigns (Quinn et al., 2016). Next, the chapter will examine this social media marketing industry in more detail.

2.3 The Social Media Marketing Industry

Social media represents a channel which is a part of the wider digital marketing spectrum, as is displayed in Figure 2-1. Many digital channels are available to the modern marketer, however the previous section has outlined an increasing tendency for brands to use social media as a marketing communications channel (Statista, 2017d). As this study is focused on social media marketing, it is important to put into context how these practices play a significant role in a digital marketing agency offering. This section will begin with a review of social media audience figures before focussing on marketing industry, therefore establishing the importance of this sector in the modern media landscape and highlighting the pressing need for further academic research in this area

Figure 2-1 The Digital Marketing Spectrum
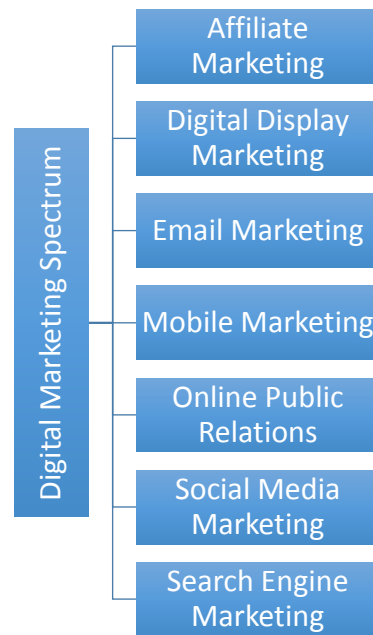
2.3.1 Social Media Audiences

Social media constitutes a significant proportion of global internet usage and, apart from search engine usage, is reported to be the most popular online activity (Statista, 2017a). It is estimated that roughly 2 billion active Facebook users access the network on a monthly basis, equating to nearly half of the worldwide internet user base (Statista, 2017b). In the UK, Facebook outstrips its rival networks achieving over 64% of the total social networking activities online in 2016-2017 (OfCom, 2017). Figure 2-2 offers an overview of UK social media usage figures in more detail. It is noteworthy that this figure underlines the significant volume of regular online activity dedicated to social media, which reflects its international counterparts. Therefore, it is argued that conducting this study in a UK context is justified as a suitable representation of a global phenomenon.

Figure 2-2 UK Social Network Usage
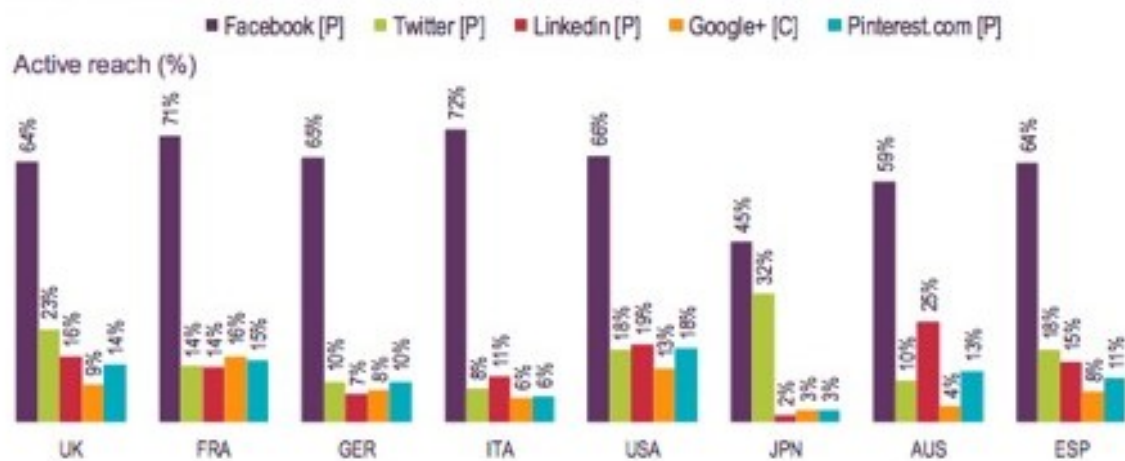
Source: (OfCom, 2017)

Turning to the breakdown of the UK social media audience, Facebook is the market leader. LinkedIn, a professional social networking site, Twitter and Instagram represent 33-44% of the UK audience figures (OfCom, 2017). Additional platforms such as Google+, Pinterest and Snapchat feature, however do not have the same volume of users as Facebook. Furthermore, user statistics for these sites also point towards the difficulty in competitive social media sites in challenging the long-established Facebook. Therefore, attempts to implement campaigns on niche social media sites should be treated with caution.

Figure 2-3 presents an excerpt from a report by OfCom (2017) also produced a demographic profile of social media users across selected sites, suggesting younger audiences favour new and emergent platforms such as Snapchat and Tumblr. Whereas, the profile of Facebook users, matches the national demographic profile of the selected country audience (United States) (OfCom, 2017). Therefore, it is important to note that while Facebook is an established and longstanding social media site, future generations are less interested in this platform. Hence, a thorough investigation of social media marketing practice across a number of platforms is appropriate at this time.

Figure 2-3 US Social Media Demographic Profile
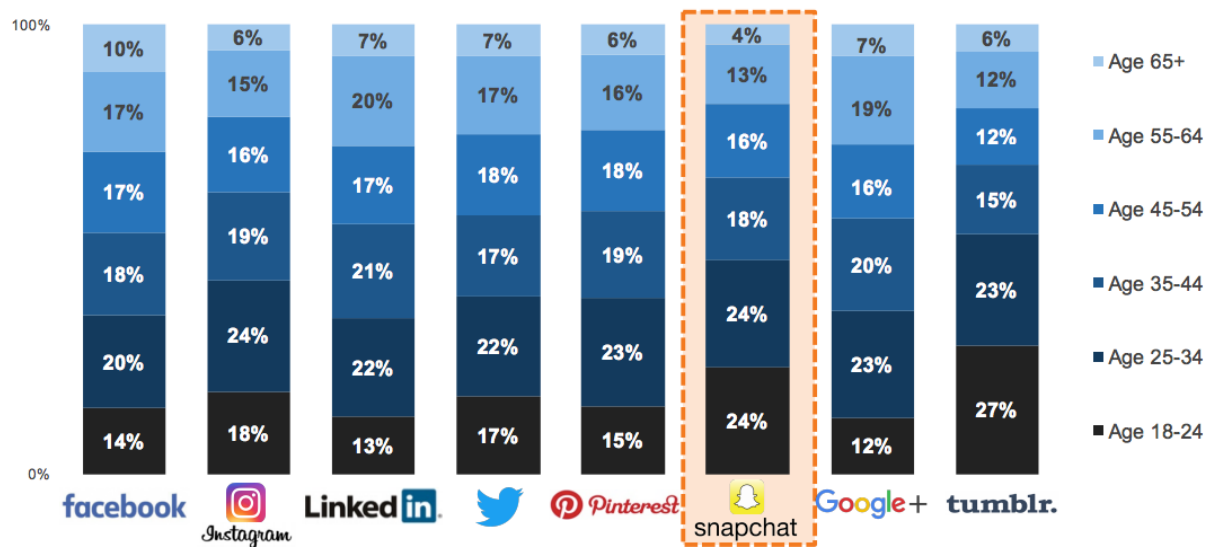
Source: (ComScore, 2017)

2.3.2 The UK Social Media Marketing Industry

The UK marketing industry is recognised as a competitive member of the global marketing landscape. The total UK Adspend in 2017 amounted to £21.4Bn, of which, £11Bn was spent on digital advertising, constituting nearly half of the total investment from advertisers and a 13.8% increase on the previous year (IAB UK, 2017a). This suggests that the digital marketing industry is no longer a niche area for marketing and has seen year on year growth since digital figures were first recorded in 1997 (IAB UK, 2017a). However, the majority of digital investment is dedicated to search engine and display advertising, whereas mobile applications and online video are also increasing investment year on year (IAB UK, 2017b). Finally, it is estimated that revenue from social media platforms has this year passed over the £1Bn threshold, suggesting the medium is an increasingly sought-after advertising platform (eMarketer, 2017).

However, marketing agencies vary greatly in terms of size, range of services offered, and category of clients they service. A recent report by WARC (2018) provides a useful snapshot of the industry which identifies how size and services offered are used to distinguish between media agencies. Three distinctions are used in terms of size, namely: *full-service, medium and small agencies*. Full-service digital agencies are large organisations who have 250+ employees, allowing them to provide a broad range of digital marketing services such as web design, search engine marketing,

email marketing and social media marketing. Medium-sized agencies have less employees than full-service, however they manage to service multiple clients, often specialising in one aspect of digital marketing such as social media marketing. Likewise, small agencies tend to have 10-50 employees and service a much smaller pool of clients. Small agencies are also highly specialised in one particular area of digital marketing, such as search engine optimisation.

WARC (2018) also indicate that the category of client is another differentiator of UK media agencies. It highlights how the largest agencies operating in the UK market are described as full-service and have numerous client accounts, many of whom are large global brands (e.g., global alcoholic drink brand, Heineken). Similarly, medium-sized and small agencies tended to have one large client (e.g., retail brand, Boohoo), or a range of smaller clients on their accounts (e.g., local 6th Form college). Also noteworthy in this report is a recognition of the importance of specialist 'boutique' digital agencies who provide social media marketing services for individual clients.

In the last five years, there has been a dramatic increase in advertising investment in social media. Figure 2-4 outlines the breakdown for the 2015-2018 figures, which indicate that Facebook advertising received over £1.6Bn worth of investment and will continue to increase according to a recent report (eMarketer, 2017). This is reflective of the global advertising figures which put social media investment at 18% worldwide advertising spend in 2017 (Statista, 2017d). Furthermore, as social media marketing spending has seen its highest figures to date in 2017 (IAB UK, 2017b), this suggests it is an important area within the marketing industry which requires further attention through academic enquiry.

Figure 2-4 UK Digital Advertising Revenue Breakdown
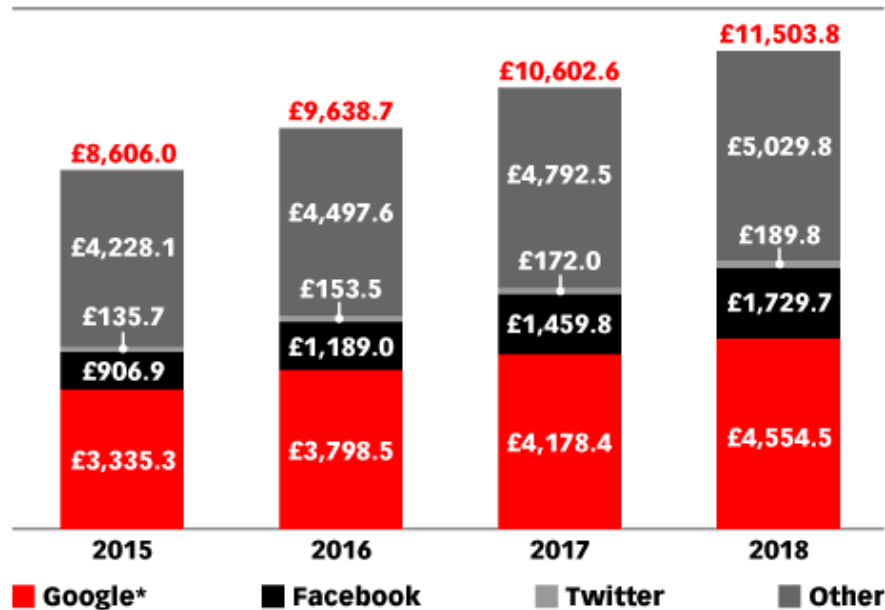
Source: (eMarketer, 2017)

A report by Statista (2015) illustrated a significant increase in digital agencies in the UK advertising industry in the previous decade. While it is difficult to obtain an exact number of digital agencies that offer social media marketing services, it is estimated that over 180,000 people are actively employed in an advertising and marketing roles in the UK, giving an indication of a thriving industry (Statista, 2017e). Arguably, the rise of social media as a marketing communications channel has driven investment and may have led to an increase in agencies offering social media marketing services. Other indications of the volume of agencies operating in the UK marketplace are the Top 100 Agency List (Econsultancy, 2017), The Prolific North Top 50 Agencies (Econsultancy, 2017) which give an indication of the number of active digital agencies offering social media marketing services in the UK. Finally, the Manchester Digital Agency Directory provides a list of 90 agencies within the region which offer social media marketing services (Manchester Digital, 2017).

2.4 Summary

This chapter outlines the industrial context for social media marketing, introducing the phenomenon, providing an overview of social media audiences before giving an outline of UK marketing industry. In doing so, this chapter makes the case for

investigation of the practices and processes of social media marketing as performed by agencies.

3 The Literature Review

3.1 Literature Review Styles

A critical review of the relevant literature is a vital step in fully understanding a topic (Saunders et al., 2015). In reviewing prior literature, the researcher is better equipped to understand the phenomenon and is able contribute to knowledge in this area (Rowley and Stack, 2004). Reviews produce two distinct outcomes, namely relevant information within the topic area, and identification of gaps in knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2010). To achieve these outcomes, this chapter will use two styles of literature review: *narrative, and systematic*. Narrative literature reviews identify themes from areas of literature that are determined by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2015). However, Tranfield et al. (2003) argue that narrative reviews are less thorough and suffer from selective bias. On the other hand, systematic literature reviews analyse large volumes of literature, identifying thematic patterns, as well as outlining details of the process (Webster and Watson, 2002). As systematic reviews require large volumes of literature, it is not always feasible to perform them in emergent areas (Denyer and Tranfield, 2008), and such is the case with social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. Therefore, a narrative review of the social media marketing strategy and evaluation literature was employed in Part I of this chapter.

Part II of this chapter uses a systematic review of the literature providing an overarching view of the agency-client relationship knowledge and theory. It is important to identify how this aspect of the study involved the systematic collection and processing of agency-client relationship research using bibliometric techniques. To begin, an initial set of search strings relating to the term agency-client relationship were used upon a series of databases. This process generated a list of approximately 7,000 results. A strict exclusion protocol was applied using guidelines from Denyer and Tranfield (2008) and a final dataset of 111 titles identified (see Appendix 3). Then the dataset was read in depth to identify significant themes: *contractual arrangements, client account management strategies, cultural implications, conflict and co-creation*. These themes are explored in Part II of this chapter providing a foundation for understanding the influence of the agency-client relationship on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation underpinning the aims and objectives

of this research. A more thorough overview of the systematic literature review procedure can be found in Section 4.5.2.

Part I: Social Media Marketing Strategy and Evaluation

3.2 Introduction to Part I

Part I reviews the knowledge and theory of social media marketing evaluation within the context of marketing strategy. The chapter begins with a discussion of the stages in traditional and digital marketing strategy models including the following stages: *situation analysis, objective setting, creative campaign decision-making, implementation,* and *evaluation*. Next, descriptions and definitions of social media marketing strategy are presented and discussed. Prior knowledge of marketing evaluation is then reviewed, outlining the following key concepts which are useful for this study: *evaluation goals, social media metrics, key performance indicators, data collection and analysis,* and *report generation*. In performing this review, this chapter outlines the current understanding of social media marketing evaluation within the wider context of marketing strategy. Further, the chapter highlights the importance of evaluation in supporting strategic decision-making. By reviewing this stream of literature, gaps in knowledge are also highlighted, offering a platform for the present study. The next section will begin by exploring marketing strategy.

3.3 Marketing Strategy

Social media is now an essential part of modern marketing campaigns (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). However, scholars state that an overarching model of social media marketing strategy is absent in the current literature (Felix et al., 2017). Therefore, to understand social media marketing strategies, this section will critically review a selection of traditional and digital marketing strategy models.

Strategies are essential to the wellbeing of an organisation, benefitting its long-term direction and wider goals (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Table 3-1 presents traditional and digital marketing strategy models showing their stages, similarities and differences.

For example, McDonald (2007) diverts more attention to the earlier stages of strategy development by comparison to the latter. Dibb et al.'s (2016) model suggests beginning the process with pre-campaign analysis and evaluation research. On the other hand, Jobber (2012) presents highly detailed consideration of the tasks performed by marketers, which is particularly useful for this study.

A Public relations (PR) campaign strategy model by Gregory (2000) has comprehensive stages of activity which include identification of publics and budgetary considerations. From the traditional and PR models, a series of interconnected stages appears to be the standard approach to conceptualising marketing strategies, which this study will adopt. Interestingly, within the digital marketing models (Gay et al., 2007; Chaffey and Smith, 2012), there are fewer stages. (Gay et al., 2007) present three distinct stages for digital marketing strategy; *planning, implementation and control*. Chaffey and Smith (2012) present a five-stage model which pays special attention to the implementation stage. Finally, it is noteworthy that the stages in both models show similarities, suggesting some correlation between digital marketing strategy models, and their respective stages of marketing activity. This will be explored in the next section.

3.3.1 Reflections on the Traditional and Digital Marketing Strategy Models

Whilst, it is acknowledged that many strategy models are in circulation, the common stages in all models below are as follows: *situation analysis, objective setting, creative campaign decision making, campaign implementation, and evaluation* (Table 3-1). These stages will now be discussed further in terms of their applicability to social media marketing strategy and relevance to this study.

3.3.1.1 Situation Analysis

Situation analysis is a process that assesses an organisation's internal capabilities and external environment that contributes significantly to strategy development (Kotler and Keller, 2009). The PESTEL model is an example of how an organisation can perform this analysis of the macro-environment by considering political, environmental, social, technological, economic and legal factors (Kotler, 2000). As consumer trends are dynamic and unpredictable, situation analysis can identify

customer sentiment and external requirements which are useful to the marketing process (McDonald, 2007; Pettit, 2013). Models used to perform these analyses are varied and some well-known at our disposal e.g. SWOT, PESTEL (Kotler, 2000). Recently, business intelligence is being utilised at this stage using historical, current or predictive datasets, and organisations are turning to online data, such as social media, for consumer preferences (Chau and Xu, 2012; Dobele et al., 2015). Through this activity, data is processed and converted to provide an overview of potential marketing campaign performance as well as attempting to predict consumer behaviours (Rapp et al., 2013). In social media marketing terms, utilisation of data such as consumer sentiment can greatly assist decision-making in strategy development (Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015). Therefore, an investigation into social media strategy could uncover insights into the analysis of social media data for strategic decision making. Pivotally, this stage informs the next, which is the development of campaign objectives (Patti et al., 2015).

3.3.1.2 Setting Objectives

Objectives are short statements that govern campaigns (Na et al., 2009). Such objectives will typically include measurable goals that a campaign will work towards, either by way of sales, or increased brand awareness (Barreda et al., 2015). However, from Table 3-1, it is striking how authors chose to omit an objective setting stage, although in some cases it is subsumed into other stages (e.g., Gay, Charlesworth and Essen, 2007; Dibb et al., 2016). Interestingly, there is limited reference to campaign objectives within the digital marketing literature, nor has this process been investigated greatly through empirical studies of traditional marketing. This is in contrast to the coverage of social media metrics (Peters et al., 2013; Moro et al., 2016) suggesting that more work is required in this area to investigate how social media marketers set campaign objectives and related targets (Ruhi, 2014; Pauwels and Joshi, 2016). When objectives have been created, the next stage is to decide on the most appropriate course of action in terms of channel, audience and message.

Table 3-1 Marketing Management Strategy Models and Activities

Traditional Marketing Strategy Models				Public Relations Strategy Model	Digital Marketing Models	
McDonald (2007)	Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2012)	Dibb et al. (2016)	Kotler and Keller (2009)	Gregory (2000)	Gay et al. (2007)	Chaffey and Smith (2012)
Situation Review	*Identify* ***Analyse***	***Analyse*** *Evaluate*	***Marketing Analysis***	*Briefing* *Research* ***Situation Analysis***	*Planning*	***Situation Analysis***
Marketing Objectives Strategy Formulation	***Define Objectives*** Determine Budget			*Identifying Publics* *Timescale* *Budget*		***Objectives***
Resource Requirements	***Create Platform*** ***Develop Media Plan*** Create Measures	*Plan*	Marketing Planning	***Key Messages*** ***Creative Idea*** *Tools*		*Strategy* *Tactics*
	Execute Campaign	***Implement***	***Marketing Implementation***		***Implementation***	*Actions*
Measurement *Review*	***Evaluate Effectiveness***	*Control* *Review*	*Marketing Control*	***Evaluate***	*Control*	*Control*

- *Common stages adopted by this study are highlighted in bold by the author*

3.3.1.3 Creative Campaign Decision Making

Creative campaign decision-making in various forms appear in the strategy models considered above. Decisions such as these will dictate the type of channel selected for a campaign (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012), the essence and tone of the marketing message (Chaffey and Smith, 2012), and in some cases the target audience and media budget (Gregory, 2000). Agencies are often tasked with these strategic decisions when planning social media marketing campaigns (Na et al., 2009). Some client organisations have marketing teams that prescribe targets and goals for the campaigns (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) and in this situation, clients and agencies must agree on the best way forward (Rust et al., 2004). However, decision-making in social media marketing strategy development can cause disagreements between clients and agencies (Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Chowdhury et al., 2016). The next stage considers the tactical implementation of the campaign.

3.3.1.4 Implementation

Following on from creative campaign decision-making, the next stage is the implementation of the campaign. Implementation involves the execution of the campaign strategy (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). At this stage, the tactics which have emerged from the decision-making process are enacted and closely monitored against the campaign objectives (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Whilst the strategy literature pays particular attention to campaign planning, relatively little is offered in terms of details relating to implementation (e.g., Gregory, 2000; McDonald, 2007). This is also the case in social media research apart from a limited stream details regarding campaign implementation (e.g., Nakara et al., 2012; Minazzi, 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2016). Recently, a strong case has been made for more research to in the area of social media communication techniques (Choi and Thoeni, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2016; Floreddu and Cabiddu, 2016). Herein, a gap in the literature is identified which this study will investigate. In doing so, this study will respond to the increasing trend for brands' use of social media marketing and in particular, campaign evaluation processes, which will be explored in the next section.

3.3.1.5 Evaluation

Whilst there is slight variation between the descriptions of this stage in Table 3-1, evaluation features in all of the traditional, PR and digital marketing strategy models, suggesting its importance for strategy development. Evaluation in marketing measures performance by drawing upon the various sources of campaign data, analysing it and establishing the return on investment and efficiency (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013; Ruhi, 2014; Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). Holsapple et al. (2014) views evaluation as the application of analytics to social media content to achieve a specific goal, such as calculation of ROI. On the other hand, Moro et al. (2016) demonstrated how evaluation knowledge enables informed decisions as to the ongoing impact of a campaign implementation. The connection between evaluation and marketing strategy is discussed extensively in the next section (Section 3.4).

It should be noted that only two models in Table 3-1 establish a connection between the evaluation stages of the strategic models and the initial situation analysis stage, informing subsequent campaigns (Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Gregory, 2000). Considering Chaffey and Smith's (2012) is a digital marketing strategy model which makes this connection, it suggests more research is required to further understand evaluation in the digital environment. Finally, none of these models have been empirically tested. Nor have they been investigated within a general marketing, or social media marketing setting. Considering the facilitation of two-way communications between consumers and brands on social media (Jiao et al., 2015), a strategy model would further knowledge in this emergent area of practice. Therefore, Table 3-2 revisits the stages of marketing strategy development that are adopted by this research and comments upon their relevance to social media marketing strategy, and to this study. As the literature review has considered the traditional, PR and digital marketing strategy models, strategy development in social media will be discussed in the next section.

Table 3-2 Thematic Analysis of Marketing Strategy Models

Strategy Stages	Descriptors from Findings	Relevance to SMM	Relevance to the Current Study
Situation Analysis	Situation analysis refers to a collection of methods that managers use to analyse an organization's internal and external environment to understand the organization's capabilities, customers, and business environment (Kotler and Keller, 2009).	Pre-campaign analysis is relevant to social media marketing. Analysis of social media data is a complex yet can reveal insights into consumer sentiment, as well as monitoring trends as they emerge.	An investigation into how brands assess and decide upon their campaign intentions is merited.
Objective Setting	Objective setting involves the development of a desired or required result to be achieved by a campaign within a specific timeframe.	Campaign objectives and their development have seen little attention in the social media marketing studies to date.	As these are pivotal to the marketing process, the development of objectives should be investigated further.
Creative Campaign Decisions	Creative Campaign Decision-Making consists of the construction of an integrated marketing programme that delivers value to the customer by selecting appropriate and effective marketing channels through analysis of customer needs as well as identifying major channel alternatives and evaluating those alternatives (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012).	Strategic decisions relating to social media marketing, in terms of channels, marketing message are more complex due to the two-way methods of engagement with social media users.	Key informant decisions at this stage will reveal how practitioners respond to a challenging media environment.
Implementation	Campaign Implementation incorporates the tactical decisions which utilise the selected channels, delivering the campaign message to the target audience. Implementation decisions typically take the form of a strategic communications delivery plan,	Typically, campaigns using social media marketing aim to further online conversations with customers, which will lead to an increased brand awareness and in some instances, direct sales.	Investigating the implementation of social media marketing campaigns will be of great value to a comprehensive understanding of social media marketing strategy.

	utilising customer insights from the Situation Analysis stage.		
Evaluation	Evaluation is the process of measuring the performance of a marketing campaign, use of marketing resources to achieve measurable gain in return on investment and efficiency (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013)	Social media marketing evaluation is recognised as a beneficial tool however, only a limited stream of research has examined this topic.	As marketing teams are required to justify budgets relying upon social media marketing evaluation, this is an important concept for investigation.

Source: Keegan (2018)

3.4 Social Media Marketing Strategy

Whilst a social media marketing is a new field, a breadth of definitions and descriptions of its strategies are available, which are provided in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3 Social Media Marketing Strategy Definitions/Descriptions

Literature	Definition/Description of Social Media Marketing Strategy
Mangold and Faulds (2009)	*Social media encompasses a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, blogs and social networking websites (pp. 358)*
Trusov et al., (2009)	*Typical social networking sites allow a user to build and maintain a network of friends for social or professional interaction (pp. 92)*
Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)	*Group of Internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow creation and exchange of User Generated Content (pp. 61)*
Hanna et al. (2011)	*In the new social media-driven business model defined by customer connectivity and interactivity, content goes hand in hand with technology, producing far-reaching effects for the way marketers influence current and potential customers (pp. 266)*
Hoffman and Novak (2012)	*Global usage of the main social networking sites, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, has grown to a scale that can only be described as ubiquitous (pp. 69)*
Aral et al. (2013)	*Social media is fundamentally changing the way we communicate, collaborate, consume, and create (p. 3)*
Constantinides (2014)	*The Social Media domain presents businesses with new opportunities of improving their competitive position and creating new forms of customer value that will attract new customers and help building strong relationships with them (pp. 41)*
Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014)	*Attracted by the rapid penetration of social media into society, firms are increasingly using them as a part of their marketing and brand building activities, although only a small number of firms feel comfortable in the new environment (pp. 328)*
Ngai et al. (2015)	*Social media have revolutionized the life of many people and thus attracted much attention, not only from industry, but also academia.*
Felix et al. (2017)	*Social media marketing is an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (often in combination with other communications channels) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders. On a strategic level, social media marketing covers an organization's decisions about social media marketing scope (ranging from defenders to explorers), culture (ranging from conservatism to modernism), structure (ranging from hierarchies to networks), and governance (ranging from autocracy to anarchy) (pp. 123)*

An analysis of Table 3-3 demonstrates how social media strategies have developed over time. The earliest social media strategy research was concerned with electronic word of mouth, facilitated by social media platforms, and offer little more than a mention of strategy (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Trusov et al., 2009). Hoffman and Novak (2012) reviewed the developing trends in social media with e-commerce, whereas Constantinides (2014) proposes two strategic approaches to customer engagement on social media: *passively listening to conversations, and actively engaging social media users*. Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) categorisation of social media considers opportunities and challenges with a strong focus on a carefully considered strategic approach to using social media which is a consistent theme in the definitions provided (e.g., Hanna et al., 2011).

This theme is continued by Aral et al. (2013) who outline strategic approaches to branding, whereas Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) assert the relationship between social media activity and overall business performance. For the purposes of the current study, the author adopts Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) and Felix et al.'s (2017) definitions to represent the importance of social media in cultural and social terms which is pertinent to brands who are seeking to gain entry to this digital space. In adopting these two definitions, this study is therefore equipped to investigate the processes and outcomes of social media marketing, while also considering the impact of client relationships.

Therefore, upon consideration of the prior strategy models and the definitions provided in Table 3-3, this study proposes the following definition.

> *Social media marketing strategy is a systematic procedure consisting of: pre-campaign analyses of an organisations suitability for social media marketing; identification of campaign objectives, creative campaign-decision making in relation to message, media and audience; formulating an implementation plan; evaluating campaign performance;* and *management decision-making based on an evaluation report.*

3.4.1 Social Media Marketing Strategy Models and Frameworks

There are three notable models and frameworks for social media marketing strategy development - McCann and Barlow (2015), Felix et al. (2016), Chung et al. (2017). These will now be discussed providing valuable foundation for interpreting the data collected in this study. However, it is important to note that these works were published during and after the data collection of this study. Therefore, whilst these models and frameworks did not inform the interview protocols *per se*, they added were particularly valuable to the analysis of the data collected and the generation of the contextualised conceptual framework in the findings.

3.4.1.1 McCann and Barlow's (2015) Measurement of Social Media Framework

The first model to consider is McCann and Barlow's (2015) study of social media marketing strategies among small to medium sized enterprises. A framework for the strategic planning, implementation and evaluation of social media is presented in Figure 3-1.

This model is important as it pays attention to the specifics of planning and implementation that are conspicuously absent in the traditional strategy models explored in Table 3-1. Furthermore, the stages of this model concur with Gay et al.'s (2007) initial stages but offer much more in terms of specific detailed sub-stages. As such, this study considers the nuances of social media marketing, in particular in its consideration for the pivotal relationship between evaluation and strategy development. Specifically, the framework suggests that overall campaign goals lead to objectives, which in turn point to specific evaluation metrics which affirms the importance of social media metrics in guiding strategy development (Peters et al., 2013).

Figure 3-1 McCann and Barlow's Framework
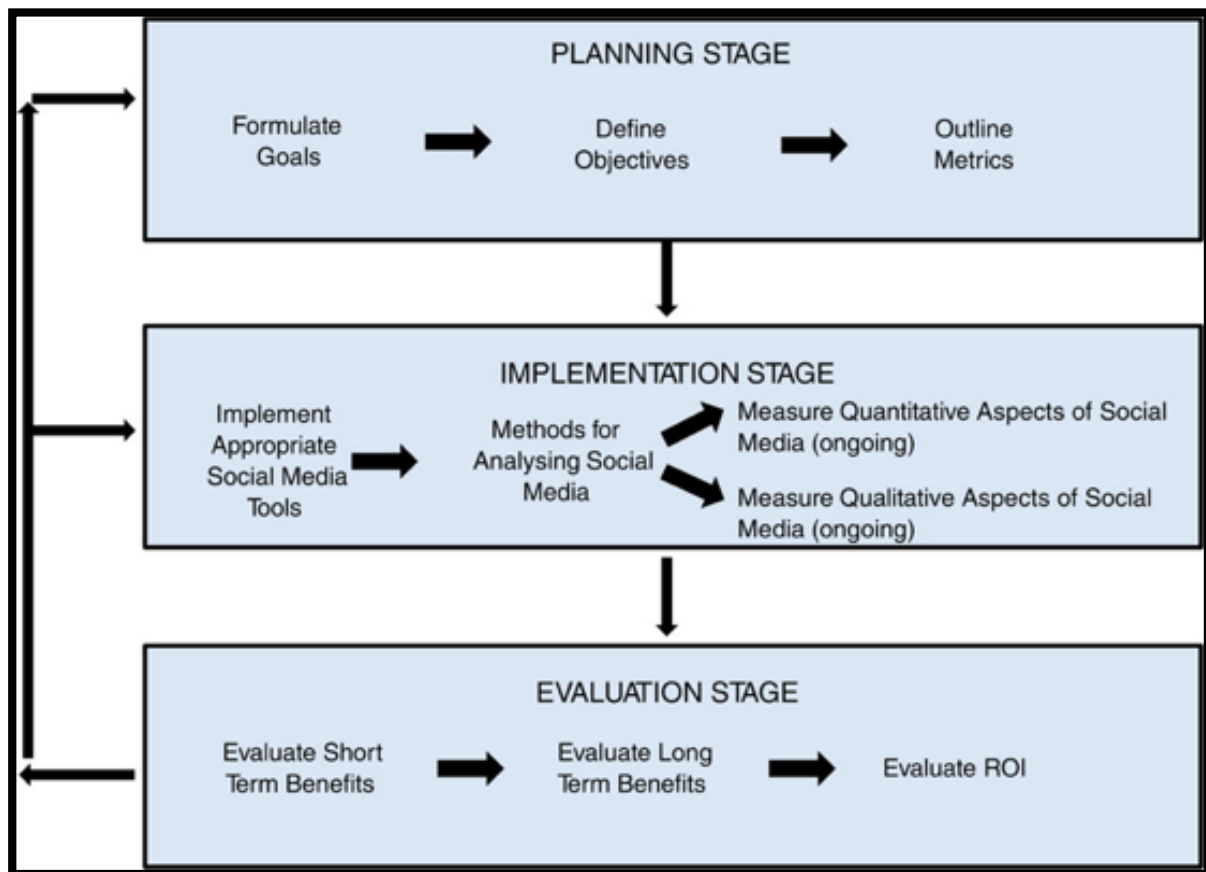
Source: McCann and Barlow (2015). Figure 2: Measurement of ROI of social media, pp 284

Next, tools and methods for the analysis of the selected metrics are identified, which underpins the significance of software for the implementation of the social media strategies (Brennan and Croft, 2012; Töllinen et al., 2012). Finally, the model proposes the generation of short and long-term evaluation goals that contribute to an overall return on investment (ROI) calculation. Arguably, McCann and Barlow's (2015) model constitutes a significant advancement of the prior knowledge in strategic approaches to social media marketing as it the first model of its kind that relies upon data collected amongst practice. Other studies have outlined practical suggestions for small components of social media campaign implementation (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014; Killian and McManus, 2015) however these have not provided an overarching framework such as this. Specifically, McCann and Barlow's (2015) proposed stages at the planning and implementation stage are original compared to prior social media marketing strategy studies.

However, issues are apparent among the sample of participants in the study who indicated significant difficulty in performing social media marketing, due to lack of experience. The authors noted how smaller firms avoided any form of social media marketing evaluation, nor were they aware of any software that could perform this task. The study finds that measurement models in industrial publications were perceived as overly complex and were not used (McCann and Barlow, 2015). Lastly, whilst there is certainly merit in the suggested approaches to planning, implementation and evaluation of social media, this model has not been validated in practice and hence is not clear to what extent it reflects how practitioners perform these tasks.

McCann and Barlow's (2015) model is the first of its kind which considers the issues relating to social media marketing strategy development and evaluation from an organisational perspective. Prior studies outline the many challenges as a result of social media marketing campaigns (Schultz and Peltier, 2013; Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016), however these do not consider the perspective of the marketing practitioner in developing strategies. McCann and Barlow (2015) conclude that evaluation of social media marketing is beyond the capabilities of the small to medium sized enterprise, due to excessive costs, skills and technological capabilities. As such, these findings offer a new perspective to the previous social media research which is generally optimistic about such techniques. Therefore, it is argued that by investigating strategy development amongst specialist social media practitioners - with greater experience than the participants surveyed by McCann and Barlow (2015) - this study will help to develop further insights into social media practice knowledge.

3.4.1.2 Felix et al.'s (2017) Strategic Social Media Marketing Model

The second model, by Felix et al. (2017), advances the work of McCann and Barlow (2015) and can be seen in Figure 3-2. This study recognises the importance of social media within a marketing function while also recognising its value can extend to other departments in an organisation. As a result, this study provides a holistic perspective of the usefulness of social media to organisations, subjugated between the generic departments within large firms. This perspective has been provided through a series

of interviews within large organisations and their analysis culminates in an overarching schematic of the participant organisations adoption of social media. In providing this holistic framework, Felix et al. (2017) also offer general advice for both managerial and scholarly audiences. Figure 3-2 presents the framework which outlines consideration for the wider stakeholders to an organisation beyond the marketing department, and indicates the key aspects of social media strategy, such as: *culture, scope, structure, and governance*. A typology of how firms abide by these factors is also provided in the model.

Of particular value to this study, they propose three arguments for successful social media adoption: *(i) measurement of non-financial metrics are pivotal to successful social media adoption, (ii) organisational culture determines the social media marketing strategy, (iii) stakeholders outside of the marketing team should be consulted as to social media strategies.* Hence, Felix et al.'s (2017) study offers a useful perspective on current and future approaches to social media marketing. Specifically, Felix et al. (2017) outlines the connection between senior management decision-making and social media marketing strategy. Whilst prior works have alluded to the relationship between decision-making and social media (Bashar et al., 2012; Valos et al., 2016), none have sought to conceptualise this relationship. However, this model is limited in terms of providing insights for planning, implementing and evaluating social media marketing, in comparison to McCann and Barlow's (2015).

Figure 3-2 Felix's Strategic Social Media Marketing Model
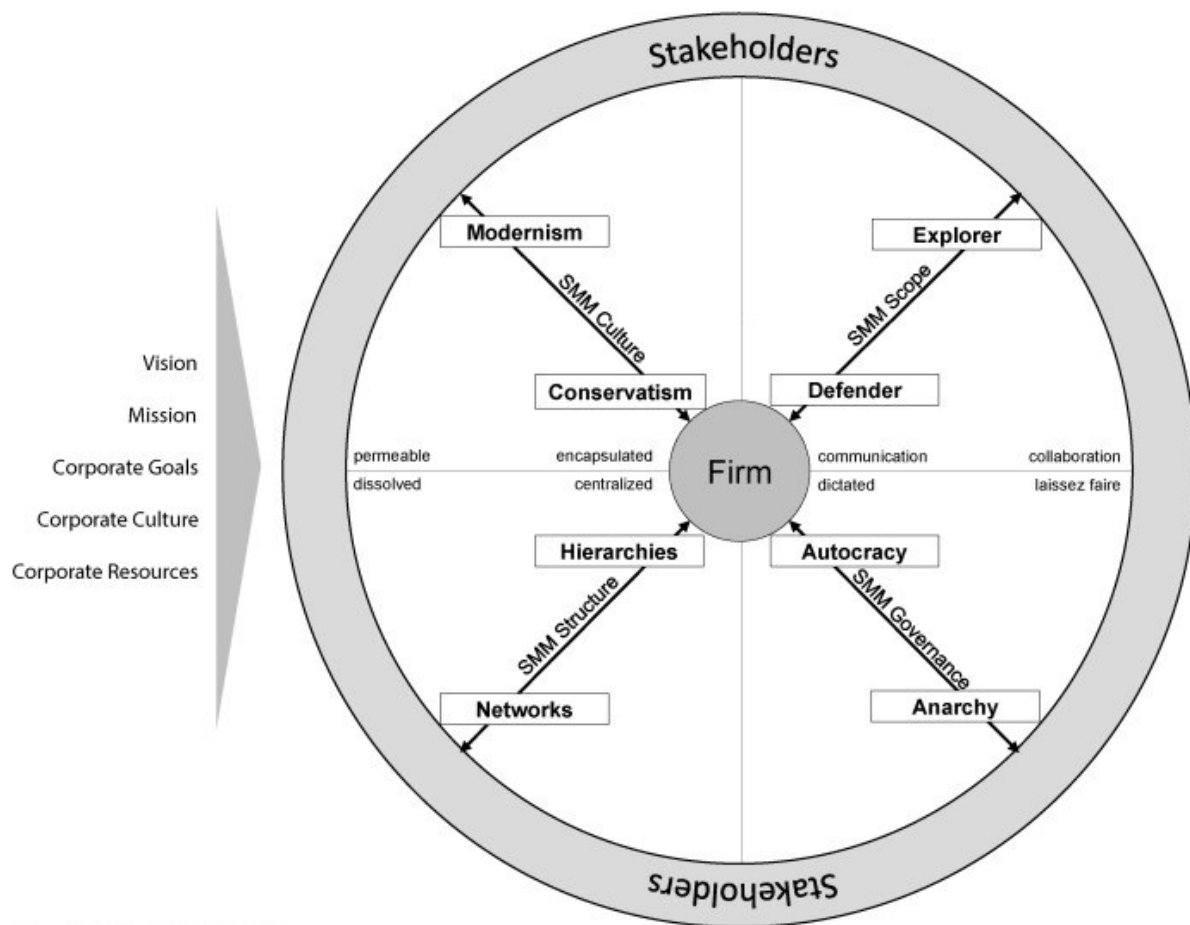
Source: Felix et al. (2017) Fig. 1. Strategic Social Media Marketing Framework., p. 121

3.4.1.3 Chung et al.'s (2017) Benchmark Variables

The third model from Chung et al. (2017) emerged from a study of small to medium sized enterprises adoption and utilisation of social media (Figure 3-3). This study conducted a survey on the influence of social media on an organisation's business processes. A series of questions within the survey interrogated the value and usefulness of social media in a variety of areas, such as: *strategy, business process, structure, management style, technologies adopted, application of technologies, impact on skills, impact on internal stakeholders, impact on external stakeholders, and return on investment*. These variables are cross tabulated with a profile of the stages of an organisations social media adoption which are as follows: *experimentation and learning, rapid growth, formalisation, consolidation and integration, institutional absorption.* In doing so, Figure 3-3 provides a matrix model which indicates a spectrum

of social media adoption and proficiency, thus illustrating the benefits of social media to an organisation.

This study is useful in advancing upon Felix et al.'s (2017) study by presenting empirical data on the strategic deployment of social media across a range of industries and commenting on the varying degrees of proficiency amongst them. Of particular relevance is the consideration of the benefits of evaluation to organisations. Chung et al. (2017) note how a firm that has fully embraced the potential for social media marketing can add value to "*selling products and/or providing services; and customer service and satisfaction*" (p. 1411). However, as this study examined strategy across a disparate range of organisations, a number of whom have limited experience in this field, it raises questions about the validity of the study's findings.

These three studies - McCann and Barlow (2015), Felix et al. (2016), Chung et al. (2017) – suggest a growing interest in social media marketing strategy. Since publication, studies have drawn upon these frameworks in their investigations of social media marketing. Felix et al.'s (2016) work is the highest cited (n = 107), with a range of textbooks and empirical papers using their findings to underpin their investigations. Notable empirical studies cite this framework. Rauschnabe, Kammerlander and Ivens (2016) study of antecedents of brand crises on social media, using their framework to suggest how an integrated strategy for social media is required across all areas of an organisation. Whereas, Brech et al. (2017) adopted the same framework for their study of social media engagement between higher education institutions and their students. Other citations of Felix et al.'s (2016) work utilising their framework as a platform for understanding strategic used of social media in a variety of industries.

McCann and Barlow's (2015) work is the second highest cited (n=65). Relatively few empirical studies cite their work, with the majority comprising of conference papers and non-peer reviewed sources. However, notable works which use their framework include Keegan and Rowley's (2016) study of decision making in social media marketing evaluation and Dutot and Bergenon's (2016) examination of small to medium sized enterprises and their adoption of social media marketing. This theme continues amongst other works, specifically how small to medium sized businesses are adapting to the increased use of social media for a variety of organisational

functions, in particular in the African and Middle Eastern regions (e.g., Fatoki, 2016; Odoom, Anning-Dorson and Acheampong, 2017; Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2018)

Chung et al (2017) is a recent publication which has not been cited as extensively (n=12). However, two works stand out in terms of quality namely, Tafesse and Wien's (2018) investigation into strategic implementation of social media marketing, and Högberg's (2017) case study of social media adoption by the hotel industry. Both of these studies utilise elements of Chung et al.'s (2017) framework into their respective contexts, suggesting credibility in terms of its interpretation of organisational use of social media for marketing purposes.

Whilst these three frameworks are useful for this study, questions remain regarding the specific practices in relation to campaign implementation and particularly the evaluation of social media campaigns, which is discussed in the next section. It is also important to note that while many social media studies examine components of the strategy models listed above (e.g., Ang, 2011; Hanna et al., 2011; Nair, 2011; Rawat and Divekar, 2014; Ballings et al., 2015; Benthaus et al., 2016; Busalim et al., 2016; Effing and Spil, 2016), the three discussed in this section are the most comprehensive. Therefore, in considering the components of the Chung et al. (2017), Felix et al. (2017) and McCann and Barlow (2015) strategy models, this research will interpret how strategic decision making plays a role in the processes and outcomes of social media marketing.

Figure 3-3 Chung's Social Media Adoption Benchmark Variables

	1: Experimentation and Learning	2: Rapid Growth	3: Formalisation	4: Consolidation and Integration	5: Institutional Absorption
7. Impact on Skills	• Pilot SMBP used to test capabilities and understand the skills required • Basic skills are acquired through practice with the application • No formal training	• Basic skills are acquired through practice with the application with knowledge and support from management • No formal training	• Begin to implement social media training for employees • Organisations should document and share learning across the organisation	• Organisations use social media to work with suppliers and locate expertise within organisation • Social media training for employees	• Training programmes and guidelines are present • Recruitment of personnel skilled in managing SMBP • Empower employees to use social media
8. Impact on Internal Stakeholders	• Minimal impact on internal stakeholders	• Minimal impact on internal stakeholders	• Impact on internal stakeholders through knowledge acquisition (i.e., SMBP training) • Limited in other aspects	• Internal use, i.e., advertising vacancies, special interest groups	• Internal use, i.e., advertising vacancies, special interest groups
9. Impact on External Stakeholders	• Minimal impact on external stakeholders • Basic information provided to external stakeholders through SMBP	• External stakeholders become more engaged and are encouraged to follow, like, and comment on SMBP • Information dissemination to external stakeholders facilitated by SMBP	• External stakeholders become more engaged and are encouraged to follow, like, and comment on SMBP • Information dissemination to external stakeholders facilitated by SMBP	• Customers provided with more integrative social media experience • Involving stakeholder in product and service development	• Customers provided with more integrative social media experience • Involving stakeholder in product and service development
10. Return on Investment	• Minimal return on investment	• Minimal return on investment	• Increase in customer service satisfaction	• More successful products and services • Increase in customer service satisfaction • Customers provided with a means to dialogue and therefore reduce customer turnover	• More successful products and services • Increase in customer service satisfaction • Customers provided with a means to dialogue and therefore reduce customer turnover

Source: Chung et al., (2017) Table 6 Benchmark variables values. P. 1412

3.4.2 Summary

The knowledge examined in this section provides a foundation for understanding social media marketing strategy development. The many social media marketing strategy studies provide useful descriptions and conceptualisations. After reviewing descriptions of the process in Table 3-3, a working definition is provided based on the component stages of activity from Section 3.3 adapting these specifically for social media marketing. Three studies in particular have adopted an overarching view of this type of strategy outlining the benefits to organisations engaged in such practices - McCann and Barlow (2015), Felix et al. (2016), Chung et al. (2017). Insights from these studies are critically discussed and reiterate the need for an empirical study of social media marketing strategy which matches the pace of industry practice. Furthermore, these three studies were conducted with a broad range of firms with little or no experience in social media marketing. As a result, there is a requirement for investigation of social media marketing strategy amongst a sample of experienced practitioners. This study seeks to perform an investigation of strategy development by social media marketing expert practitioners.

3.5 Social Media Marketing Evaluation

This section will review the knowledge related to marketing and PR evaluation, before turning its attention to social media marketing evaluation. In doing so, the key concepts for measuring campaign performance are discussed. The chapter then explores evaluation of social media, considering the following themes: *evaluation goals, metrics and key performance indicators, tools and software, data collection and analysis, and reporting*.

3.5.1 Definitions and Descriptions of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

In terms of social media marketing evaluation, there are very few definitions or descriptions available. To date, only three have been identified in the literature (Table 3-4). Hoffman and Fodor's (2010) description suggest that financial measurement is not appropriate for evaluating the effect of social media engagement. Whereas, Murdough's (2010) study provides an outline of social media measurement but does now offer a definition. Lastly, Kumar and Mirchandani (2013) offer a description that

introduces the use of metrics to assess the impact of social media within a marketing context.

Table 3-4 Social Media Marketing Evaluation Descriptions

Literature	Definition/Description of Social Media Marketing Evaluation
Hoffman and Fodor (2010)	*Social media investments will not always be measured in dollars, but also in customer behaviours (consumer investments) tied to particular social media applications.*
Murdough (2010)	*The social media measurement process is: decide on how a brand might want to change their relationship with customers, put a thoughtful plan together, accept the tracking imprecision of consumer control and calibrate expectations, and then get out there and see what happens.*
Kumar and Mirchandani (2013)	*Using metrics to calculate the value of an individual influence in the social media arena*

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that commentators advise against defining aspects of social media, due to its rapidly changing nature (Leonardi et al., 2013; Williams, 2014). Furthermore, the lack of a universally agreed definition suggests a conceptualisation of the process in practice is warranted, which this research will provide. As prior studies tend to focus their attention upon individual elements of the evaluation process instead of an overarching view of the process. Accordingly, this research will seek to outline the process and generate a working definition of social media marketing evaluation. This definition is provided later in the Chapter 5 as a result of the analysis of findings (Section 5.3.7).

3.5.2 The Context of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

The previous section has established that campaign evaluation is pivotal to marketing strategy (McDonald, 2007; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Further, it demonstrates the accountability of campaigns as well as offering insights necessary for developing future strategies (Malthouse et al., 2013). Traditionally, marketing evaluation approaches rely upon two sets of data: *profits from sales, and advertising spend* (Pergelova et al., 2010). Advertising spend in a traditional media such as television is a well-regarded metric for campaign success and has been used in evaluation,

however the digital marketing industry has significantly changed this model of media spend (Jobs and Gilfoil, 2014). Advertisers are no longer investing in traditional advertising placements (e.g. banner advertisements) on social media, but actively engaging with consumers in a two-way marketing communications dynamic (Shen et al., 2016). As a result, the traditional model of media spending using traditional display placements needs to be adapted and changed with the advent of social media marketing (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014).

Broom et al.'s (2011) systematic literature review establishes how Murdough (2010) produced the first article which considers social media marketing evaluation. Other studies since 2010 have made additional contributions but tend to focus on specific aspects of the process, such as social media metrics in industrial contexts (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013). Some scholars adopt a broader view of the process, arguing that evaluation provides a means for dialogue with customers, thus reducing turnover and improving future marketing efforts (Chung et al., 2017). However, studies that consider strategic decision-making and marketing evaluation are limited. One such study by Valos et al. (2016) examined marketers use of social media within integrated digital communications systems and proposed a decision-making framework for overcoming uncertainty. This study demonstrates how evaluation of social media data can inform and assist strategic decision-making.

3.5.2.1 Traditional Marketing Evaluation Literature

As a basis for understanding evaluation in social media marketing, it is prudent to consider pertinent knowledge from the pre-internet literature (Kaplan and Norton, 1993; Phippen et al., 2004; McDonald, 2007; Watson and Noble, 2007). Two specific areas of traditional campaign evaluation knowledge have been identified in this review: *the balanced scorecard, and marketing dashboards*. The marketing strategy texts explored in the previous section also proposed a variety of measurement systems (e.g., McDonald, 2007). Such performance measurement systems considered simple economic variables, such as sales data, or market share. A more focussed approach was the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) which identifies four categories of metrics to measure performance (Kaplan and Norton, 1996).

In proposing the BSC, the authors sought to overcome the challenge made by large volumes of data by categorising organisational metrics into the following categories: *financial, customer, innovation and learning, internal business processes*. Furthermore, the BSC establishes a link between short-term actions and long-term strategy, translating a company's strategy and mission statements into specific goals, which is a useful consideration for this study. More recently, the BSC has been used to measure digital marketing activities (Kim et al., 2003; Grembergen, 2004) with Kim and Kim (2010) hailing the BSC as one of the most effective methods of marketing evaluation.

Continuing the principles of the BSC, the marketing dashboard has emerged as an important concept for evaluation (O'Sullivan et al., 2009). Marketing dashboards suggest that selected metrics are an efficient way to focus the evaluation process (Pickton and Broderick, 2005; Fill, 2006). Marketing dashboards specifically consider digital marketing activities by aligning marketing campaign metrics from multiple channels to provide an overarching view of performance (Dierdorp, 2013). Furthermore, the importance of objectives and metrics and their relationship to strategic decision-making in strategy development is also made clear within the dashboard format (Pauwels et al., 2009). Recently, Pauwels and Joshi (2016) demonstrated how predictive metrics in dashboards can assist contribute to increases in sales.

A pivotal study in this area is Peters et al. (2013) investigation the process of metric selection in generating marketing dashboards, culminating in a framework for social media metrics. In proposing this framework, the authors adopt a theoretical view of metrics in the absence of empirical data. This work represents a useful foundation for understanding the importance of dashboards and their role in determining performance across a variety of digital and social media.

3.5.2.2 *Public Relations Evaluation Literature*
Studies considering approaches for measuring the impact of influencing public opinion and promoting conversation are found in the public relations literature (Watson, 1997;

Gregory, 2000; 2001). The PR industry has grappled with campaign evaluation for many years as evidenced by considerable coverage of the topic (e.g., Broom and Dozier, 1990; Dozier and Repper, 1992; Cutlip et al., 1994). Research in this area is useful for this study as PR campaign metrics are similar to those used for social media marketing, for example measuring the tone of conversations and consumer opinions. Conversations are at the centre of social media marketing, suggesting a strong association between the PR literature and this study.

PR scholars such as Watson (2007) and Noble (1999) also propose that evaluation is an integrated circular process continually providing insights for the evolving and ongoing campaign. It is also suggested that traditional PR measurement methods can be applied to digital campaigns (White and Raman, 2000; Pinkleton et al., 2001)). For example, Jiang et al. (2016) provides an outline of metrics from their investigations into social media communications strategies by PR practitioners (See Table 3-5). Notably, this study provides categories of metrics: *sentiment, affinity, and tonality of conversations*. As PR campaign evaluation is similar to social media marketers, the research around this area may be useful to this study.

Table 3-5 Measurement Model of Social Media

Involvement	Interaction	Intimacy	Influence
Awareness and Presence: 1. Site traffic; 2. # Page clicks; 3. Time spent; 4. # Link clicks; 5. # Track backs, etc.	**More robust behaviors than analytics:** 1. Purchasing behaviors; 2. Requesting catalogs; 3. Signing up for emails; 4. Posting comments; 5.Uploading audios/videos/ images/photos etc.	**Sentiment, Affinity, and Tonality:** The emotional component that members of a public exhibit in conversations and actions, for instance, the meanings behind posts, comments, reviews, forum threads, etc.	**Impact and Community Building):** The likelihood that members of a public will exhibit outreach-expanding actions, such as passing a corporate blog or a You Tube video on to their social networks.

Source: Jiang et al. (2016) Fig. 1. A tentative measurement model of social media engagement for future development (adapted based on previous literature). P. 680

At this point, it is important to note that the term engagement refers to consumer interaction with a brand. From a marketing perspective, the term has roots in Brodie et al. (2011) definition of the "psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/ object (e.g. a brand)." Later, Hollebeek et al. (2014) explored the term in a social media context demonstrating how social media engagement can enhance a consumer's perception of the brand. Furthermore, Jaing et al.'s (2016) model, the term focuses on categories of social media engagements, offering an alternative view of the term.

3.5.3 Social Media Marketing Evaluation Components

The chapter will now explore research knowledge of social media marketing evaluation. The key components of digital and social media marketing evaluation identified by the literature review are as follows: *evaluation goals, metrics, key performance indicators, data collection, analysis,* and *reporting*. Lastly, an overview of the social media measurement tools and software is also provided, establishing a foundation for which to perform an investigation of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation.

3.5.3.1 Social Media Marketing Evaluation Goals

Marketing campaigns are guided by strategic goals that determine the desired outcomes. Such goals should translate directly to the processes and outcomes of evaluation. Social media research asserts the importance of goals when performing campaign evaluation (Karjaluoto et al., 2015; Patti et al., 2015). It is also suggested that marketers should be proficient in generating robust campaign objectives that match such goals (Ruhi, 2014; Praude and Skulme, 2015). For example, Patti et al. (2015) encourages managers to develop marketing strategy using a three-step process for objective setting. They suggest that campaign objectives should be: *(i) communication-oriented, (ii) quantifiable in terms of the desired outcome, (iii) specific in terms of the target audience and the time period in which the objectives are to be accomplished*.' (pp. 16). Therefore, goals and objectives are pivotal aspects of marketing practice and the process of evaluation should also be guided by these principles. However, formulation of goals is far from straightforward when dealing with emergent channels such as social media. Quinn et al. (2016) highlight the difficulties

marketing managers face when setting goals for social media campaign, hence the need for contracting specialist digital agencies for social media marketing services.

Interestingly, aside from Patti et al.'s (2015) work, little more is reported regarding the nature of objectives used in social media. Cvijikj et al. (2012) establish pre-determined guidelines for evaluation establishes the benefit of the process to the organisation. McCann and Barlow's (2016) findings devise a system for guiding the measurement process for campaigns, notably dividing ROI calculation into short and longer-term goals. For example, referral traffic to a website may be a short-term goal, however in the longer term, this may lead to sales, hence the campaign evaluation process needs to recognise the distinctiveness between the two sets of data. Furthermore, since it is agreed that social media marketing strategy should be informed by objectives (Chung et al., 2017; Felix et al., 2016), evaluation should be governed by the same principle.

3.5.3.2 Social Media Metrics

Marketing metrics are defined by Farris et al. (2010) as '*a measuring system used by marketers that quantifies a trend, dynamic or characteristic*' (p 1). These measurement units are vital to the process of evaluation and support the accountability of marketing strategy (Sterne, 2010). Social media metrics are discussed extensively, often in appreciation of developing customer insights, monitoring trends and assessing sentiment (Jeffrey, 2013; Buhalis and Mamalakis, 2015; Moro et al., 2016). In particular, it is argued that harnessing social media metrics can significantly improve their marketing efforts, including calculation of ROI (Buhalis and Mamalakis, 2015; Praude and Skulme, 2015).

However, digital and social media metrics are difficult to use in conjunction with each other in a campaign evaluation setting (Ángeles Oviedo-García et al., 2014; Pan and You, 2017). Social media metrics media such as likes, followers, and views may appear to be comparable to traditional media however independently, they do not reflect the key aspects of social media. Peters et al. (2013) warns how using such simple metrics in dashboards can harm a firms' prospects by ignoring the semantic nature of social media arguing for a more systematic approach to utilising media metrics. Furthermore, studies that do adopt a systematic approach by clustering social

media metrics intro groups according to KPIs are useful (Figure 3-4). Here, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) plotted social media metrics against the desired marketing outcomes: *brand awareness, advocacy,* and *word of mouth*. Furthermore, the authors establish a link between social media metrics and objectives and therefore marketing strategy goals. Hence, a schematic such as this is beneficial for scholars and marketers alike, in understanding the relationship between social media marketing evaluation within the context of marketing strategy.

Figure 3-4 Metrics for Social Media Applications Organized by Key Social Media Objectives

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION	BRAND AWARENESS	BRAND ENGAGEMENT	WORD OF MOUTH
Blogs	•number of unique visits •number of return visits •number of times bookmarked •search ranking	•number of members •number of RSS feed subscribers •number of comments •amount of user-generated content •average length of time on site •number of responses to polls, contests, surveys	•number of references to blog in other media (online/offline) •number of reblogs •number of times badge displayed on other sites •number of "likes"
Microblogging (e.g., Twitter)	•number of tweets about the brand •valence of tweets +/– •number of followers	•number of followers •number of @replies	•number of retweets
Cocreation (e.g., NIKEiD)	•number of visits	•number of creation attempts	•number of references to project in other media (online/offline)
Social Bookmarking (e.g., StumbleUpon)	•number of tags	•number of followers	•number of additional taggers
Forums and Discussion Boards (e.g., Google Groups)	•number of page views •number of visits •valence of posted content +/-	•number of relevant topics/threads •number of individual replies •number of sign-ups	•incoming links •citations in other sites •tagging in social bookmarking •offline references to the forum or its members •in private communities: number of pieces of content (photos, discussions, videos); chatter pointing to the community outside of its gates •number of "likes"
Product Reviews (e.g., Amazon)	•number of reviews posted •valence of reviews •number and valence of other users' responses to reviews (+/–) •number of wish list adds •number of times product included in users' lists (i.e., Listmania! on Amazon.com)	•length of reviews •relevance of reviews •valence of other users' ratings of reviews (i.e., how many found particular review helpful) •number of wish list adds •overall number of reviewer rating scores entered •average reviewer rating score	•number of reviews posted •valence of reviews •number and valence of other users' responses to reviews (+/–) •number of references to reviews in other sites •number of visits to review site page •number of times product included in users' lists (i.e., Listmania! on Amazon.com)
Social Networks (e.g., Bebo, Facebook, LinkedIn)	•number of members/fans •number of installs of applications •number of impressions •number of bookmarks •number of reviews/ratings and valence +/–	•number of comments •number of active users •number of "likes" on friends' feeds •number of user-generated items (photos, threads, replies) •usage metrics of applications/ widgets •impressions-to-interactions ratio •rate of activity (how often members personalize profiles, bios, links, etc.)	•frequency of appearances in timeline of friends •number of posts on wall •number of reposts/shares •number of responses to friend referral invites
Video and Photosharing (e.g., Flickr, YouTube)	•number of views of video/photo •valence of video/photo ratings +/–	•number of replies •number of page views •number of comments •number of subscribers	•number of embeddings •number of incoming links •number of references in mock-ups or derived work •number of times republished in other social media and offline •number of "likes"

Source: Hoffman and Fodor (2010) Metrics for Social Media Applications Organized by Key Social Media Objectives, p. 44

Similarly, Etlinger's (2012) framework displays social media metrics, aligned with strategic marketing goals (Figure 3-5). By assigning categories of metrics, this approach provides an alternative perspective of Hoffman and Fodor's (2010) contribution and continues to assert the importance of metrics in the evaluation process. Arguably, both of these frameworks use clusters of relevant metrics as key performance indicators, which will be discussed in the next section. Furthermore, the second column of Etlinger's (2011) schematic points towards evaluation goals, as discussed in Section 3.5.2.1.

Figure 3-5 Sample Social Media Measurement Formulae

Use Case	Example	Sample Formula
Brand Health	Social Share of Voice	Brand Mentions --- Total Competitive Mentions on Social Channels [Brand + Competitor A + Competitor B + Competitor C ...]
Marketing Optimization	Relative Campaign Engagement	Retweets + likes + fans per dollar spent of Campaign A --- Retweets + likes + fans per dollar spent of Campaign B
Revenue Generation	Visit Loyalty by Social Channel	Total Website Visitors from [Social Network] Who Have Returned Within Past 30 Days --- Total Website Visitors from [Social Network]
Operational Efficiency	Community Impact	Average purchase value on [Social Network or community] --- Average Purchase Value [all channels]
Customer Experience	Social Service Level	Number of Service Issues on [Social Network] Acknowledged within 4 Hours --- Total Number of Service Issues Noted on [Social Network]
Innovation	Idea Acceleration	Number of [IDEA] Topic Mentions in [END DATE] --- Number of [IDEA] Topic Mentions in [START DATE]

Source: Etlinger (2011) Sample Social Media Measurement Formulae

Throughout the literature that has explored social media metrics, their value to an organisation engaged in social media marketing is a recurring theme (Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). For example, Paine (2011) categorised social media metrics in the following areas: *content sourcing and transparency; reach and impressions; engagement and conversation; opinion and advocacy; influence; and, impact and value*. Hence, by categorising metrics, it is intended to enhance the social media

campaign evaluation process. Whereas, other studies have attempted to attribute sales figures to social media (Brettel et al., 2015) and decision making in strategy development (Paek et al., 2013).

Not all commentary on social media metrics is positive. Critics highlight the issues when linking social media metrics and wider business performance (Ramanathan and Dreiling, 2013). Notably, Praude and Skulme (2015) argue that metrics are pivotal to developing marketing strategy, outlining how smaller firms benefit from using social media metrics in informing strategic decisions. Some studies suggest marketers' awareness of social media metrics is limited, resulting in missed opportunities (e.g., Järvinen and Taiminen, 2016). For example, Michaelidou et al. (2011) identified that B2B organisations do not utilise any metrics to assess effectiveness of social media activity, whereas McCann and Barlow (2016) discovered that smaller organisations had the least awareness of the potential of social media metrics or the notion of evaluation.

There is also an on-going debate around whether social media metrics and traditional marketing metrics can be aligned (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014; Oh et al., 2017). By the very nature of social media processes and their metrics, authors argue that it is difficult to link social media marketing activity with sales figures (e.g., Tajvidi and Karami, 2017). The efficacy of social media metrics such as 'the number of Facebook likes' and how they contribute to sales is a recurring theme in the literature (e.g., Guesalaga, 2016; Lee et al., 2016).

3.5.3.3 *Tools and Software for Social Media Marketing Evaluation*
Analytical tools and software appear in various social media marketing studies (e.g., Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012; Veeck and Hoger, 2014). In some cases, these are cited as pivotal to the construction of social media marketing dashboards (Cvijikj et al., 2012). The majority of tools are commercially produced software which seeks to perform the analysis of social media data (Wamba and Carter, 2014). Overall, Google Analytics emerges as the most frequently cited tool for capturing and processing social media data (Nakatani and Chuang, 2011). However, other tools and software that perform social media marketing evaluation appear in a variety of works: *Web Scrapers*

(Das and Chen, 2007), *Crowdpulse* (Musto et al., 2015), *Social Bakers* (Habernal et al., 2013), *Radian 6* (Conejero et al., 2012), *Argyle Social, HootSuite, MediaFunnel, Sprout Social, TweetDeck* (Dierdorp, 2013), *and Hadoop* (Zhang et al., 2014).

There are some criticisms with the tools available, in particular, the inability to combine social media data with other marketing data, such as website traffic figures. Also, commercial tools such as these withhold access to their methodology for measurement, making it difficult for users to get a complete perspective of the exact meaning of the outcomes (Borra and Rieder, 2014). Therefore, despite an array of commercially produced social media measurement tools and softwares, their use in practice is far from straightforward. Discrepancies between abilities of tools highlights the requirement for human intervention to perform evaluation, however little more is reported in this area. Therefore, it is important to understand the tools required to identify and collect social media metrics.

3.5.3.4 Social Media Key Performance Indicators

KPIs are specifically selected metrics, or groupings of metrics which dictate the evaluation process (Gunawan et al., 2008). Compared to the studies of social media metrics, KPI research have received less attention. Chaffey and Patron (2012) proposed that evaluation benefits from prioritising selected metrics above others. Alberghini et al.'s (2014) definition suggests KPIs are dynamic and changeable concept reliant on specific metrics that help organisations to monitor their overall business performance:

> *"KPIs are commonly used by an organization in order to analyse the critical success factors of a particular activity in which it is engaged. In a personalized and simple way, they help understand the trend of the business performance. Moreover, KPIs are able to highlight sudden changes that need immediate intervention." (p. 260)*

Whilst this definition offers a comprehensive overview, it is limited because it does not consider the relationship between KPIs and marketing objectives. However, Cvijik et al. (2012) and Jeffrey (2013) offer measurement frameworks that pay particular attention to the importance of the connection between KPIs and objectives. Both of these are explored further in the next section. Recent social media research suggests

the use of key performance indicators for effective practice as they are reported to be misunderstood both in academia and practice (Töllinen et al., 2010; Alberghini et al., 2014; Moro et al., 2016). Furthermore, considering the complexities associated with social media marketing evaluation, an investigation into practitioner use of KPIs in the evaluation process is required.

Another key debate in the social media literature is return on investment (ROI) calculation as a KPI. Broom et al. (2011) assert the importance of calculating ROI in justifying social media marketing activity, whereas critics argue this calculation is not feasible for social media (Fisher, 2009). Likewise, Peters et al. (2013) question the value of social media metrics in these calculations, whereas Dzamic (2012) is sceptical of ROI frameworks and proposes that marketers develop their own evaluation abilities. Kaske et al. (Kaske et al., 2012) examine the difficulties in ROI calculation proposing a formula: *higher customer retention, better customer communication, potential outrage avoided, higher sales, and higher reach*.

Numerous challenges associated with ROI calculation feature in social media research (e.g., Ferguson, 2008; Duboff and Wilkerson, 2010; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011) . Hoffman and Fodor (2010) argue traditional advertising ROI calculation models are not applicable to social media and a focus on customer relationship management is advisable. Buhalis and Mamalakis's (2015) case study confirms the traditional approach is difficult as the metrics involved are non-financial and loosely defined (e.g., consumer sentiment in social media comments). Indeed, the predominance of the challenges for ROI calculation seem to point towards more effective use of social media metrics (Peters et al., 2013; Moro et al., 2016; Pauwels and Joshi, 2016). Finally, Romero (2011) proposes a useful series of non-financial KPIs for ROI calculation: *new versus returning followers, periodic behavioural comparison, reaction to marketing messages, changes in brand perception*. This debate is relevant to a range of businesses, but particularly for a specialist agency contracted by a client in justifying their social media marketing campaigns. This study will closely examine the analysis of social media data and any attempts at ROI calculation in the processes and outcomes of evaluation.

3.5.3.5 Data Collection

In the process of evaluation, the collection of campaign data is core component. This activity involves the gathering of the selected metrics and KPIs which underpin the objectives of the campaign (Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012). However, instead of offering insights into this process, the studies concerned with this aspect of evaluation divert their attention to the attributes of social media metrics and KPIs (e.g., Gunawan et al., 2008; Töllinen et al., 2010). Numerous studies confirm that Google Analytics is the most commonly adopted software for collection of digital metrics (e.g., Nakatani and Chuang, 2011). But, there is also little discussion beyond the suggestion that the tools and software perform this task (Chaffey and Patron, 2012). To illustrate, Jeffrey (2013) ascribes data collection as a vital stage to her framework and then provides a list of softwares available, yet this discussion offers no guidance or critical reflection regarding the use of these tools. Hence, while data collection may be pivotal to the process of social media marketing evaluation, limited insights exist with respect to how this task is performed in industry.

3.5.3.6 Social Media Analysis

The next theme in the evaluation literature is the process of analysing social media data. Understanding of social media analysis within the context of marketing strategy is scant in the literature, suggesting a gap in current knowledge. However, a small stream of research establishes the link between social media analysis and business intelligence (Chau and Xu, 2012; Ruhi, 2014). For example, Holsapple et al.'s (2004) study lists the benefits of social media analysis to business intelligence: *improving marketing strategy, increasing customer engagement, improving customer service, reputation management and identifying new business opportunities.* Furthermore, Holsapple et al (2004) underline a relationship between social media and decision-making in their definition which is useful for this study:

> *"All activities related to gathering relevant social media data, analysing the gathered data, and disseminating findings as appropriate to support business activities such as intelligence gathering, insight generation, sense making, problem recognition/opportunity detection, problem solution/opportunity exploitation, and/or decision making undertaken in response to sensed business needs." (p. 4)*

Similarly, Zeng et al. (2010) propose two functions of the process: *facilitate conversations and interaction between online communities* and *extract useful patterns*

with a view to generating intelligence. From a marketing perspective, using social media for facilitation of conversation is useful and most brands engage in this practice proficiently (e.g., Fan and Gordon, 2014). However, using Zeng et al.'s (2010) second proposal is under-represented in the literature and hence this study seeks to exploit this gap.

A review of the literature also reveals the most commonly reported social media analysis techniques (See Table 3-6). Two analysis techniques emerge from the literature which are particularly relevant to the process of social media marketing evaluation: *sentiment analyses* and *social media monitoring*. Sentiment analysis has early roots in market trend analysis (Adedoyin-Olowe et al., 2014) and is also referred to as *sentiment mining* (Atzmueller, 2012). It uses social media analysis to discover and interpret opinions and attitudes expressed by people upon a variety of subjects. Pang and Lee (2008) were early adopters of the technique and used it as an '*opinion-oriented information seeking system'*. This study assessed public sentiment of a variety of products and services from internet-based services, although they did not consider social media. Secondly, social media monitoring is described as the process of observing and extracting insights relating to products and services prior to a marketing campaign (Zhang and Vos, 2014). Töllinen et al. (2010) suggests that this technique consists of the following activities: *listening and interacting, brand protection, scholarly aims and evaluating online interactions*.

Table 3-6 Social Media Analytics Techniques

Social Media Analysis Techniques	Core Construct/Concepts
Event Trend Analysis	Event trend analysis involves the collection of social media data in relation to ongoing events such as natural disasters, health epidemics and protests
Sentiment Analysis	Sentiment analysis identifies emotions, attitudes and opinions towards a specified topic within social media content, usually performed in line with a social media marketing campaign
Social Media Monitoring	Social media monitoring is the ongoing monitoring of social media channels to deduce insights into consumer attitudes and awareness in relation to products and services

Text Analysis	Text Analysis seeks to assess text algorithmically, extracting and weighting significant phrases resulting in an overview of the predominant trends within the data.
Text Cluster Analysis	Text Clustering Analysis seeks to gather and organise social media data to create hierarchies, density assessments and to partition trends within the data .
Twitter Analytics	To analyse identify constructs by collecting Twitter data around a certain topic and performing analyses of associated phrases used.

3.5.3.7 Reporting

In examining the literature around social media marketing evaluation, few works have considered the process of campaign report generation. Recently, it has been argued that campaign reporting in social media campaigns may have an influence upon future strategic decision-making (Pauwels and Joshi, 2016) and it is therefore worthy of investigation. However, few studies offer insights of social media marketing reporting techniques (Töllinen et al., 2012; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015). Generating a concise social media marketing evaluation report is not a simple process, as the analysis techniques are highly technical activities (Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012). Furthermore, frustration with the software has been reported (Töllinen et al., 2012), suggesting a significant barrier to generating useful insights. To illustrate, Canhoto and Padmanabhan's (2015) analysis of social media conversations revealed significant disparity between commercial sentiment analysis software and the researcher's interpretation of the data. Some studies propose the use of analytical dashboards to automate campaign reporting (Peters et al., 2013), whereas other studies consider frequency of reporting as important, i.e., weekly versus monthly reports (e.g., Phippen et al., 2004).

3.5.4 Social Media Marketing Evaluation Models

This section will critically analyse the three studies that focus on social media marketing evaluation: Murdough (2010); Jeffrey (2013); and Felix et al. (2017). These models are of particular value to this study as they outline the current knowledge of social media evaluation processes and will be discussed providing a valuable grounding for this study.

3.5.4.1 Murdough's Social Media Measurement Model

The first model is from Murdough (2010) who proposed a conceptual schematic for the collection and processing of social media metrics, which can be seen in Figure 3-6. Whilst Murdough (2010) discusses social media metrics, these are not linked in any form to campaign objectives. Furthermore, a subjugation of categories of social media data is also provided such as sentiment and purchase intention. While these categories are useful for guiding evaluation of social media, the primary criticism of Murdough's (2010) work is the lack empirical evidence or critical reflection of the model proposed. Furthermore, this article lacks objectivity by the absence of limitations to the model provided. However, this is the first academic publication which considers the social media marketing evaluation phenomenon and is worthy of recognition in this respect. Finally, these criticisms highlight the need for an empirically-tested model that is grounded in both theory and practice.

Figure 3-6 Murdough's Social Media Measurement Model
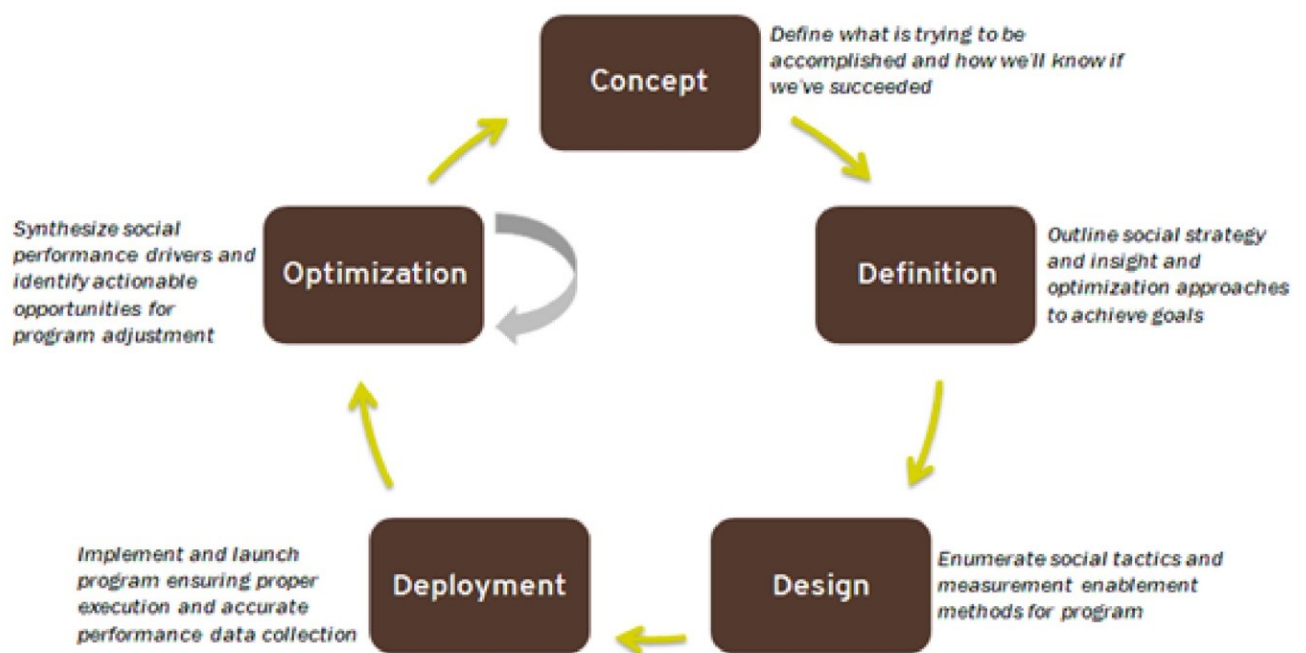
Source: Murdough (2010) Social Media Measurement Process, p. 94

3.5.4.2 Jeffrey's Social Media Measurement Process

The next model of importance is from Jeffrey's (2013) eight step social media measurement process (Figure 3-7). This model emerged from a PR publication and details a series of stages for a strategic approach to measuring social media campaign

activity. It is noteworthy that the first stage begins with an identification of goals, leading to objectives which underpins the social media literature (Karjaluoto et al., 2015; Patti et al., 2015) and the recommendations in Section 3.5.3.1. KPIs also feature in Jeffrey's (2013) model although linked to the stakeholders identified in the previous stage, which features in most PR campaign strategies (Gregory, 2000)

Next, Jeffrey (2013) suggests that PR industry benchmarks are applied as part of the process and that campaign reports are provided for the attention of management in support of continuous improvement.

Although grounded in earlier work by Murdough (2010), this model also lacks theoretical and empirical underpinning. However, of particular note is the link between KPIs and campaign objectives, advancing Murdough (2010) and contributing to Peters et al.'s (2013) study. Additionally, Jeffrey's (2013) model also lacks critical reflection and does not offer any consideration of the challenges associated with each of its stages. However, the latter stages do offer a fresh perspective on the outcome of evaluation, which is to present to a managerial team for continuous improvement, a notion which does not feature in the marketing literature.

Figure 3-7 Jeffrey's Social Media Measurement Process

The Eight-Step Social Media Measurement Process

1. Identify organizational and departmental goals.
2. Research stakeholders for each and prioritize.
3. Set specific objectives for each prioritized stakeholder group.
4. Set social media Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against each stakeholder objective.
5. Choose tools and benchmark (using the AMEC Matrix).
   - Public Relations Activity
   - Intermediary Effects
   - Target Audience Effects
6. Analyze the results and compare to costs.
7. Present to management.
8. Measure continuously and improve performance.

Source: Jeffrey (2013) The Eight-Step Social Media Measurement Process, p4.

3.5.4.3 Cvijikj's Evaluation Framework for Social Media Brand Presence

Cvijikj et al.'s (2013) comprehensive social media marketing evaluation framework is presented in Figure 3-7. It presents an overarching view of evaluation with consideration for social media data, as well as its collection and analysis. Notably, the styles of analysis are assigned categories, indicating the different functions of social media evaluation. Furthermore, it has four sub-categories of social media marketing evaluation, namely: *user analysis, user generated content analysis, engagement analysis and benchmarking*. However, as it is primarily focussed on evaluating a brand awareness campaign and as such the connection with direct sales or ROI is not considered. Furthermore, the framework is also conceptual in nature and lacks empirical underpinning.

Table 3-7 Evaluation Framework for Social Media Brand Presence

Analysis	Method	Data Source	SMM Relevance
User Analysis			
•Demographics •Categorization •Interactions	•Descriptive Statistics •Theory Extension •Social Network Analysis	•Facebook Insights •Facebook Graph API	•Conversation tone •Reactive moderation
User-Generated Content Analysis			

•Topics
•Intentions
•Sentiment
•Trends
	•Text mining
	  •Topic extraction
	  •Sentiment analysis
	  •Trend detection
		•Facebook Graph API	•Support board
			•Proactive moderation
			•Negative publicity
			•Related pages monitoring

Engagement Analysis			

•Likes
•Comments
•Shares
•Interaction duration
	•Statistical analysis:
	  •Variance analysis
		•Facebook Graph API	•Proactive moderation:
			  •Media type
			  •Content
			  •Weekday / Time
			  •Frequency

Benchmarking			

•Competitors monitoring
•Prediction
	•Statistical analysis
	  •Variance analysis
	  •Regression
		•Facebook Graph API	•KPI measures and values
			•Measuring ROI

Social Media Marketing Strategy			

Source: Cvijikj et al. (2013) Evaluation framework for social media brand presence, p. 1332

A critical review of the social media marketing evaluation models has identified a range of known components in this process. However, a number of key weaknesses are apparent, namely: *the lack of empirical testing of such models, links between components (such as KPIs and objectives) are absent, absence of specifics relating to the collection and analysis of data,* and *critical reflection on the proposed models.* Therefore, this study is poised to investigate this processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation, as enacted by key industry informants. In doing so, this study will address these weaknesses and gaps in the current knowledge of this

important aspect of social media marketing. Furthermore, this study aims to generate and test a conceptual framework which is grounded in the knowledge examined so far in this chapter.

3.6 Review of Recent Digital and Social Media Marketing Research

Whilst the studies reviewed within Part I of this chapter are pertinent to the respective themes of this study, it is important to acknowledge the most recent research in the digital and social media marketing landscape. Aside from many researches that examine online consumer behaviour resulting from digital and social media marketing activity, a growing body of recent studies provide useful insights that are continuing to shape conversations around modern approaches to marketing. Lamberton and Stephen (2016) performed a comprehensive systematic literature review of digital, social media and mobile marketing research spanning a twenty-year period. Their findings detail a significant trend in academic enquiry of digital and social media through three distinct phases in research over the given time period. The first phase (2000-2004) outlines how digital media have elevated the importance of individual expression amongst consumers shaping buyer behaviours. However, there is a clear knowledge gap in relation to the strategies developed by marketer's adaptation to this shift.

The second and third phase (2005-2010; 2011-2014) identified by Lamberton and Stephen (2016) underlines how social media shaped modern approaches to marketing, resulting in a highly prized marketing tool. Notably, the authors assert the importance of using social media data generated by users to inform strategy development. In this respect, the importance of social media analytics to deciphering such consumer information is identified, however no studies are identified which explore this concept further. Furthermore, Lamberton and Stephen (2016) suggest a future research agenda which is an apt departure for the present study. Specifically, they call for a more in-depth investigation into the adaptation of business practices and their use of digital and social media for marketing. As a result, further knowledge gaps are identified which are pertinent to this study. Specifically, the lack of insights

which explore the relationship between social media evaluation processes and strategic decision-making.

Other knowledge gaps in regard to digital and social media in marketing are as follows: digital disruption to business models in B2B and industrial marketing, use of analytics in developing business intelligence, value co-creation between B2C and B2B networks, and a call for more qualitative research. Iankova et al.'s (2018) examination digital disruption in B2B, B2C and mixed business models revealed the extent to which organisations have adapted to the proliferation of social media. The authors argue that whilst widespread acceptance of digital transformation of B2C business models, increasingly B2B marketing is adopting social media. Empirical findings also underline the need for more research in digital transformation to mixed B2B2C business models which has implications for the present study. Similarly, another key knowledge gap is the use of social media in industrial marketing and a number of authors have begun to probe this topic (Salo, 2017; Iankova et al., 2018). Interestingly, the authors in this space concur that despite widespread use of social media in a B2B domain, it is not perceived as effective by the results of their analyses (e.g., Rathore et al. 2017). Recent studies also identified the contribution of analytics in supporting business intelligence in industrial marketing, while asserting this lack of knowledge in this key area of practice. In his systematic review, Misirlis (2018) studied the use of metrics a wide range of sectors, outlining the extent of current knowledge in this area. Similarly, Rathore et al (2017) investigated the use of analytics across a range of industries revealing that industrial marketers area using social media insights to support decision making. Therefore, more scrutiny of this topic of social media data in supporting decisions making in industrial marketing is warranted and one this study will explore.

An important theme that is seeing increased attention is value co-creation within B2C and B2B networks. Arrigo's (2018) study of luxury brands use of social media provides an extensive overview of the potential for customer engagement and impact on brand equity. However, they argue that across the B2C and B2B networks, there are more opportunities for value to be co-created as a result of using this medium. Whilst co-creation studies are not new, the focus on B2B co-creation is a novel and interesting concept which is useful for this study. Finally, Adhmed et al (2018) examined how social media as a vehicle for knowledge sharing across a range of industries, however

their analysis indicates a significant call for more qualitative research to be performed. This is echoed by many scholars working in this field, suggesting that a shift towards empirical qualitative work is required to advance knowledge of social media marketing. Misirlis (2018) also estimates that the majority of academic work performed in their dataset is quantitative survey-based, which echoes Salo's (2017) work.

Upon review of the recent research in the field of digital and social media marketing, it is clear that an investigation into the influence of evaluation on strategy development is warranted and will offer a suitable contribution to the ongoing conversations around modern approaches to marketing.

3.7 Part I Summary

This chapter has reviewed the knowledge and theory of social media marketing strategy and evaluation. The review first identified the extent to which traditional, digital marketing and PR strategy models are relevant for understanding the social media marketing. Further analysis of these models revealed the following activities in strategy development: *situation analysis, objective setting, creative campaign decision-making, implementation,* and *evaluation*. Each of these were shown to have importance in social media marketing are have relevance for the present study. Three strategy models are then critically discussed assessing their usefulness for this study.

Evaluation knowledge and theory was presented and discussed identifying the following activities relevant to this study. Public relations campaign measurement metrics was shown to be similar to those used in social media. The BSC is also seen to be a useful concept for measurement of performance across multiple channels. Exploration of the evaluation literature revealed the following activities: *evaluation goals, metrics, key performance indicators, data collection, data analysis,* and *report generation*. The associations between these activities and social media marketing are made. Finally, the three models that tackle evaluation in social media are scrutinised, highlighting their merits and oversights.

A number of gaps in the current knowledge of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation have been identified in the course of this review. These

gaps have been compiled into a table which will be revisited in the findings and discussion chapters (See Table 3-8). This critical discussion of the knowledge underpinning strategy and evaluation offers the research project valuable information for investigating the topic further. In doing so, Part 1 of this chapter has contributed to Research Objective 1, which is as follows: *to review the various literatures for knowledge, theory and practice in social media marketing strategy development, and evaluation.* Having explored the first two themes in Research Objective 1, the Part II will now explore the agency-client relationship and how this may influence the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development.

Table 3-8 Knowledge Gaps in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development and Evaluation

Theme	Knowledge Gap Identified
Major Theme 1: Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	The processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice
	Limited details are available on social media campaign objective setting and implementation are available
	A gap exists in how the knowledge gained from social media evaluation supports strategic decision-making
	Strategic decisions made by specialist agencies in their social media marketing endeavours is under-researched
Major Theme 2: Social Media Marketing Evaluation	The processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice
	The lack of academic work in the area of setting goals for the process of evaluation
	Few works examine the connection between social media metrics and strategic decision-making
	Little is known as to how marketers address the challenge of evaluating complex metrics
	A limited stream of research has examined how social media campaign data is collected
	There are limited insights into the specifics of assembly and presentation of the results of the data collection and analysis
	A distinct lack of insights on the usability, function of social media measurement softwares used by social media marketers

Part II: Agency-Client Relationships

3.8 Introduction to Part II

Part II of Chapter 3 considers the relationship between marketing agencies and their clients. The review begins by examining previous descriptions and definitions of the agency-client relationship. Next, the chapter presents the key theoretical perspectives in two categories: *the interpersonal, and the alternative*. In reviewing the literature within the interpersonal view, contractually determined relationships are explored as well as client account management strategies employed by agencies. Next, the alternative view considers the agency and client cultural implications, before considering the notion of co-creation in the relationship. Further to this, challenges associated with the agency-client relationship are discussed such as trust and conflict which emerge within the relationship. In doing so, the chapter provides a reflection upon the influence of relationships on strategic decision-making in marketing. By scrutinising prior knowledge of marketing agency-client relationships, a foundation for investigating their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing is developed.

3.9 The Agency Client Relationship

This section begins the discussion of agency-client relationships by examining the various attempts to conceptualise the phenomenon. Various approaches to capture the essence of the relationship are evident, including: *life-cycles, classifications, behavioural,* and *advisory*. The chapter will review the definitions, descriptions and various conceptualisations within the agency-client relationship literature.

3.9.1 Conceptualising the Agency Client Relationship

The agency-client relationship refers to the relationship between marketing agencies and their clients. It has been shown to have a significant impact on the outcomes of marketing campaigns (Beard, 2010; Gould et al., 1999; Yuksel, 2011). Despite long-standing recognition of the importance of this relationship (Halinen, 1997; Pollay and Swinth, 1969), a mutually agreed definition is absent. Durkin and Lawlor (2001)

identified this lack of a formally recognised definition, stating that a trustful and committed agency-client relationship is '*aspirational or Utopian in nature*' *(p. 184).*

However, the earliest attempts to conceptualise the relationship adopted a life-cycle format with stages of interaction between the two parties. The earliest proposed life-cycle consisted of the following stages: *pre-relationship, development, maintenance, and termination* (Doyle et al., 1980). Similarly, Waller (2004) presents a three-stage lifecycle: *agency selection, development/maintenance, and review/termination*. Continuing this format, Fam and Waller (2008) advanced on the prior studies to create a four-stage lifecycle: *inception, development, maintenance, and dissolution*. These early studies offer insights into the activities in each of the stages culminating in advice regarding relationship management, a consistent theme throughout this chapter. Furthermore, as the lifecycle stages suggest, client relationships are a complex phenomenon.

Another conceptualisation of the agency-client relationship proposes a tiered classification of relationships between organisations and their advertising agencies (e.g., Skjølsvik and Breunig, 2016). Haytko's (2004) classification delineates two types of relationships: *(i) the 'firm-to-firm' whereby a group of agency staff upheld a working relationship with client representatives; and (ii) a more intimate 'interpersonal relationship'*. Firm-to-firm relationships were described further and categorised as follows: *vendor, partner, and surrogate*. A *vendor* style relationship was seen as dictatorial and project-focussed, whereas a *partner* relationship encourages inclusion of the client within all elements of the business. Finally, the *surrogate* manager controls the advertising facility on both agency and client side. Hathko (2004) also defines three interpersonal relationships between individual client managers and advertising executives: *strictly business, business friends, and personal.* The description of 's*trictly business'* is one that is purely focussed on the project at hand and will tend to avoid excessive interaction or disclosing personal information. '*business friends*' will disclose personal information in exchanges with each other, albeit restricting their discussions to project-based themes. Finally, a '*personal*' relationship is a more intimate one which affords significant interaction between both sides beyond scheduled work appointments.

Continuing the theme of conceptualisation of client relationships, scholars also placed emphasis on interpersonal factors. Trust emerges as a key interpersonal factor that determines a relationship, arguing the link between trustworthiness and the success of an agency-client relationship (Cardoso, 2007). Whereas, the much cited Wackman et al. (1986) adopted Doyle et al.'s (1980) lifecycle and identified the following interpersonal factors to be of importance: *personnel, mutual agreement, reputation, integrity and interpersonal compatibility*. Notably, Wackman et al.'s (1986) study is influential, as evidenced by the volume of subsequent works that cite it in their investigations. Importantly, this research stands out as it outlines these interpersonal components to predict client satisfaction, as well as dissatisfaction. The authors argue that *agency leadership, relationships with creative teams, efficient meetings, responsibility assignment, and approval mechanisms* are the most important agency functions which can detrimentally affect the health of the relationship. This suggests that client relationships are not only complex but are positively and negatively influenced by both of the parties involved.

In contrast, LaBahn and Kohli (1997) looked at the relationship from a different perspective and focussed on the professional interactions between the two parties. They proposed three key behavioural components: *agency and client behaviours, agency performance, and client disposition*. Specifically, they provide further insights into these categories, firstly, *agency and client behaviours* are pivotal to the relationship between them, namely: *accessibility, assertiveness, and decisiveness*. Secondly, the *agency performance* is proposed as a key factor through: *productive campaign planning interactions, and creative implementation*. Thirdly, *client disposition* is the last factor which underpins the agency-client relationship, specifically: *trust, and commitment*. Furthering the theme of professional interaction, Lichtenthal and Shani (2000) used organisational buying behaviour theory to interrogate the agency-client relationship. They suggest four groups of factors affect the relationship: *psychological, organisational goals, personnel, and environmental.* These works highlight the professional perspective which can be considered in attempting to conceptualise the agency-client relationship.

Another theme in the conceptualisation of agency-client relationships focusses on the provision of guidance on how to: *develop* (Knowles, 1981; Michell, 1986; Verbeke,

1989); *prolong* (Bergen et al., 1992; Henke, 1995; Armstrong, 1996); *ensure satisfaction* (Beard, 1997; Hill, 2006); *and identify causes for dissolution of the agency-client relationship* (Murphy and Maynard, 1996; Tahtinen and Halinen, 2002; Beverland et al., 2007). Furthermore, in a limited number of studies, advice on client relationships in B2B is offered (e.g., Aarikka-Stenroos et al., 2017), and recently that has specifically included digital marketing (Novani, 2012; Piller et al., 2012). Whilst, a long-standing stream of research offers advice, it also identifies challenges for scholars and practitioners. However, only a limited number of recent works examines the role of the agency-client relationship in the context of social media marketing (Novani, 2012; Piller et al., 2012; Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Keegan, Rowley and Tonge, 2017). This is an apparent gap in which this study will seek to exploit.

The following sections present the results of the systematic review of the literature, identifying the primary themes as well as outlining the important areas underpinning this study. The chapter provides two perspectives of the agency-client relationship, highlighting the key themes identified by the systematic literature review. Specifically, the categories of agency-client relationship literature are as follows: *the interpersonal view* (contractual arrangements, client account management), *the alternative view* (cultural implications, co-creation). Furthermore, numerous challenges are also reported which emerge from the relationship, such as trust and conflict and these are discussed as the final section of the chapter.

3.10 Interpersonal Views of the Agency Client Relationship

As Haytko (2004) argued, the interpersonal perspective of the agency-client relationship is a useful and instructive method for considering the relationship, which is echoed by many authors (e.g., Michell, 1986; Lichtenthal and Shani, 2000; Price and Arnould, 2013). The systematic review has identified the key themes from agency-client relationship into categories. The first of these categories examines those works which adopt an interpersonal view of agency-client relationships. In the following section, two sub-themes are presented and discussed: *contractually determined relationships, and client account management*.

3.10.1 Contractually Determined Relationships

Marketing agencies have contractual arrangements which aim to achieve a successful creative campaign (Zhao, 2005). The predominant theoretical standpoint for works in these categories is the use of Agency Theory, often used as a lens for examining a range of facets in contractually determined relationships (Bergen et al., 1992; Gould et al., 1999; Spake et al., 1999). Originally, grounded in economic theory (Wilson, 1968), Agency theory has proliferated across many disciplines, in particular, through the advertising industry (Waller, 2004). Moreover, it has been applied within a business context in understanding the relationship between an agency and their employer agree mutual responsibilities through a contract (Eisenhardt and Eisenhardt, 1989).

It is argued, that through the perspective of Agency Theory, a fruitful working relationship is the intended goal by recognising potential risks (Kesner et al., 2013). Ellis and Johnson (1993) used the theory as a lens for empirical investigation of advertising decision-making processes, as well as the associated risks to the agency-client relationship. Whereas, Gould et al. (1999) examined the level of integration between agency and client decisions through Agency Theory. The notion of risk between the two parties, which is pivotal to the theory, has also been used to investigate: *compensation for poor campaign performance* (Spake, D'Souza, Crutchfield and Morgan, 1999), *the contractual dynamics of agency compensation* (Davies and Prince, 2005; Zhao, 2005), *agency switching costs* (Davies and Prince, 2011).

The systematic literature review also identified important aspects in contract development: *agency selection* (Waller 2001; Yuksel and Sutton-Brady, 2011), *and contract dissolution* (Arul, 2010). Agency selection has been the focus of much research and attention. An early example of agency selection work is by Harvey and Rupert (1988), who developed The Agency Selection Process Model that incorporates the following five stages: *pre-planning, agency visitation, corporate visitation, agency project presentation, selection decision and control process*. Whilst, this model is primarily concerned with the client perspective of agency selection, it is also useful in underlining expected work-based, organisational and relationship factors which can affect the relationship. Wackman et al. (1986) continue this theme in their set of

interpersonal factors which point towards agency selection. Faisal and Khan (2008) states the key components in convincing clients in their decision making around agency selection are the agency's planning, strategy and planning processes. Agency selection studies suggest that there are many factors which need to be considered by an agency in attempting to recruit clients, and these may ultimately affect their ongoing relationship (Palihawadana and Barnes, 2005).

Pivotally, the research which examines agency selection and contract dissolution represents the beginning and end of the agencies opportunity to manage their client relationships. Contract dissolution emerges frequently in the agency-client relationship literature. For example, Farrelly and Quester (2003) focus their study on the damage caused by the dissolution of a client contract. Bennett (1996) and Arul (2010) discovered a variety of relationships dissolution factors: *performance, confidence,* and *creativity*. Katarantinou and Hogg (2009) investigated contractual relationships and suggest two categories of clients, relationship seekers, and relationship switchers and therefore different styles of client managed are required for each of these categories. Finally, the review has revealed how contracts are important for establishing responsibilities of marketing agencies.

3.10.2 Client Account Management

The review has revealed a significant theme in the literature regarding agency management of clients. Furthermore, a number of relationship-specific subthemes were identified underpinning the client-account management function of agencies: *conceptualisation of client account management strategies, communication strategies for relationship management*, and *balance of power between both parties*.

3.10.2.1   Conceptualisation of the Agency-Client Relationship

Much of the literature relating to agency-client relationships attempts to conceptualise the approaches to client management. Many scholars offer advice on how to manage this relationship for the benefit of agencies (Beltramini and Pitta 1991; Halinen, 1997; Harvey and Rupert, 1988; LaBahn and Kohli 1997; Michell, 1986). Furthermore, this theme is extended in latter agency-client relationships literature, outlining the benefits of a mutually beneficial relationship achieved through client account management

strategies (Beverland, Farrelly and Woodhatch, 2007; Waller, 2004). Client account management strategies are reported in the literature in a variety of formats, such as client management and interaction frameworks.

A useful example of a client management framework is the Key Account Management Model from Ojasalo (2001), who attempts to conceptualise the client account management strategies into the following stages: *identifying key accounts; analysing key accounts; selecting suitable account-specific relationship strategies; and continuous development of operational-level capabilities to improve the relationship.* Other studies have discussed the types of agency-client relationship such as Haytko's (2004) categorisation of key relationships as *firm-to-firm* and *interpersonal.* Whilst Lian and Laing (2007) focus on agency selection and the subsequent development and maintenance of personal relationships. Relationship maintenance in particular poses a range of interesting research questions in terms of the activities required to foster longer term relationships, such as corporate policies that require client firms to routinely switch agencies (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Vafeas, 2015).

Another perspective of client account management involves the degree of interaction between the two parties. However, agency-client interaction becomes complex when campaigns are delivered across multiple channels (Kitchen, Spickett and Grimes, 2007). This is especially the case in the digital sector where client input is required for marketing strategy development, leading to a high level of agency-client interaction (Marasco, 2013). Recently, Komulainen et al. (2013) discussed intermediary roles of advertising agencies in the Finnish mobile advertising industry. Their study revealed a complex network of relationships between small local companies and digital advertising providers.

3.10.2.2 *Communication Strategies for Relationship Management*
The role of communications in client account management is pivotal to enhancing the agency-client relationship and is suitably represented in the body of literature. Beltramini and Pitta (1991) examine communication strategies between agencies and their clients, finding the importance of initial definition and recognition of clear agency and client roles is essential for avoiding agency-client relationship issues. Na, Marshall

and Woodside (2009) extend this theme by concentrating on agency-client communications within the context of the strategic decision-making processes. However, there is also a recurring theme which exposes the detrimental effects of poor, or lack of communication between both parties. Johnson and Laczniak (1991) examined communication patterns related to decision-making and found it to be an antecedent of dissatisfaction. Indeed, the authors show how communication between agencies and their clients can expose weak areas of agency and potentially lead to conflict within the agency-client relationship. This study should be mindful of this concept moving forward in its investigation.

3.10.2.3   Balance of Power

Lastly, the review uncovered the importance of the power balances and their effect on the agency-client relationship. Although under-researched in the wider agency-client relationship literature, Zolkiewski et al.'s (2008) study is at the centre of this debate. This study identified how balance of power between clients and their agencies was generally seen to be a detrimental concept, interfering with planning and implementation of campaigns. Further studies also assert how the balance of power in terms of campaign planning decisions is an area fraught with potential for conflict (West and Paliwoda, 1996; Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Morais, 2007). However, within these works, co-operation between both parties in decision making is proposed as the ideal working scenario, suggesting an even balance of power is preferable (Davies and Prince, 2005).

3.10.3 Summary of the Interpersonal View of Agency-Client Relationships

Despite the sizeable body of advisory literature on client account management, a number of issues persist. Through a range of strategies available, the primary goal is to alleviate conflict and drive the agency-client relationship towards a mutually beneficial one (Pincus et al., 1991). Also, it appears that through differing contractual interventions this is becoming more commonplace (Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Tate et al., 2010). Research in this area tends to focus on large client account management strategies for large clients (Fam and Waller, 2004; Katarantinou and Hogg, 2009) thus there is a need for investigation into agency-client relationships between different sizes of organisations. Specialist digital agencies tend to have small numbers in terms

of employees (Quinn et al., 2016) but they also provide social media marketing services for both small local business and global brands.

Lastly, a key critique of the client account management literature, in that it does not consider the modern digital and social media environment (Komulainen et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2016). This is a considerable knowledge gap considering the increased number of specialist digital marketing agencies that currently operate in the marketing industry and how they establish and manage client relationships. Therefore, this research aims to investigate these practices further, by examining the influence of agency-client relationships upon social media marketing evaluation in strategy development.

3.11 The Alternative View of Agency Client Relationships

The section of the review will consider the alternative views of the agency-client relationship: *culture, and co-creation*. Two sub-themes within the notion of co-creation are presented: *social media co-creation, and co-destruction*. By critically reviewing these perspectives, this section informs this study's investigation of the influence of agency-client relationships on decision-making in social media marketing evaluation.

3.11.1 Agency and Client Cultural Implications

The systematic literature review has revealed how cultural aspects affect the agency-client relationship significantly. Specifically, cultural practices greatly impact relationships where agencies are contracted by client from different countries. An emergent stream of research considers this situation, and differences between operating policies across continents has been reported (e.g., Ng, 2013). Hence, adapting to different cultural norms is now an important aspect of managing the client relationship (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Moon and Franke, 2000; Prendergast and Shi, 2001). Similarly, studies also point to the importance of organisational culture (Wetsch, 2005; Hill, 2006; Vafeas, 2015). As such, recognition of cultural implications in client relationships highlights a further challenge for agencies in enhancing the agency-client relationship.

Given the cultural dimensions of business relationships, the nature and management of the agency-client relationship varies between countries (Fam and Waller, 2008). The literature review identified that the studies in this area suggest that agencies must adapt to the culture of their clients (Delener, 2008; Janita and Miranda, 2013; Quinton and Wilson, 2016). In this area, the majority of agency-client cultural studies were conducted in Europe, Asia and the USA (e.g., Fam and Waller, 2008; Moon and Franke, 2000; Verbeke, 1989). In particular, these studies demonstrate how the agency-client relationship with clients from different countries influences strategy development (Moon and Franke, 2000). Furthermore, cultural studies also offer insights into the tensions experienced by agencies with international clients (Zolkiewski et al., 2008).

In terms European cultural studies, Verbeke (1989) applied Wackman et al.'s (1986) methodology on advertisers in The Netherlands in comparison with the USA. This study identified how American agencies appointed a higher significance to personal relationships than agencies form the Netherlands. Similarly, Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Odabasi (1994) prioritised personal relationships above all other factors in their study of the Turkish advertising industry. Zolkiewski et al. (2008) studied the Greek advertising industry and found personal relationships to be pivotal and often produced conflict between the two parties. Confirmatory findings suggest interpersonal attributes of the European advertising industry is a significant factor understanding the agency-client relationship in a UK setting.

There is also a significant body of studies in Asia. Prendergast and Shi (1999) surveyed 200 Chinese advertising agencies and found clients were heavily involved in the decision-making process. However, their later studies also found how clients believed that creative campaign decisions were the responsibility of the marketing experts (Prendergast and Shi, 2001; Prendergast, Shi and West, 2001). Oh and Kim (2002) found a relationship between agency size (large versus small) and the level of commitment between agencies and their clients in the South Korean advertising industry. Moreover, they also interrogated the balance of power between clients and agencies, which Zolkiewski et al. (2008) discuss in their European study. Continuing the Asian agency-client relationship work, Moon and Franke (2000) examined ethical decision making in Korean agencies, such as accepting gifts to gain favour from

clients. They found that cultural influence was a significant factor that affected the agencies operating policies.

Fam and Waller (1999) have performed a number of studies on selection policies of advertising agencies in New Zealand by global brands. They revealed that trust, honesty and commitment were the key factors that determined the success of the agency-client relationship. Furthermore, the authors propose the utilisation of these factors in the promotion of the agency and recruitment of new clients. In a later work, Fam and Waller (2008) argue for agencies to proactively attempt to identify which of these factors are most important to their clients to ensure a longer partnership. Similarities between the Australasian and US studies were also revealed by the systematic review (O'Connor et al., 2016).

Some comparative agency-client relationship studies use the US as a benchmark. For example, Davies and Prince (1999) considered longevity of agency accounts between the US and UK. In this work, it is suggested that agency size and age have an effect on the agency-client relationship. In both countries, newer agencies were discovered to have less experience and lower budgets and therefore struggled to attract new clients, whereas older agencies used their reputation to dominate the marketplace, although at times lacked the same creativity as newer agencies. Likewise, Waller, Shao and Bao's (2010) comparison of the Australian and US advertising industries identified how client input was used in copyrighting, creativity and design services, but who did not engage in the analysis of target markets.

Finally, the review revealed how organisational culture of a client organisation can affect relationships. Often, agency and client standards of practice can differ and consequently either party will either adhere or alter their operating procedures to avoid potential misadventures (Brownlie et al., 2007; Hill et al., 2007). For example, communication strategies are key to managing the relationship, however the procedural nature of these strategies need to be agreed in adherence to the organisational culture e.g., frequency of agency updates per week (Fincham, 2003; Homburg et al., 2012). Furthermore, many studies reveal how corporate culture can significantly impact the ongoing client relationship, posing a significant challenge for agencies (Ritter and Gemünden, 2003; Wetsch, 2006). It is suggested by many

authors that identifying and agreeing upon operational details can enhance the ongoing relationship (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000).

Across a global marketplace, it can be argued that these cultural studies assert how interpersonal factors can lead to the enhancement or breakdown of the agency-client relationship. Also, through globalisation of the advertising industry, large international agencies have the potential to negate cultural differences through client account management strategies.

3.11.2 The Co-Creation View of Agency Client Relationships

The review also revealed how a number of studies argue the case for co-creation between marketing agencies and their clients (Lambert and Enz, 2012; Hughes et al., 2018). This argument is also supported by studies that uncover insights as to the complexity of relationships when using digital and social media in marketing (e.g, Skjølsvik and Breunig, 2016; Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016; Felix et al., 2017). The systematic review identified prior works on co-operation (Michell, 1988) and co-production in advertising campaign planning (Bacile et al., 2014). These studies represent a precursor to the more recent discussions of co-creation in modern marketing practice.

A key agency-client relationship commentator, Halinen (1997) discusses the '*co-production*' of creative ideas, whereas Brennan (2001) states that an '*interactive*' relationship is essential for knowledge transfer between both parties. There is a longstanding acknowledgement that clients are closely involved in marketing campaigns (Bennett 1999), such as mutually agreeing campaign objectives (Fam and Waller, 2008). However, Beard (1996a) posits how proliferation of digital advertising channels intensifies the demands on the agency-client relationship meaning that it is imperative for clients to engage with agencies for successful campaigns.

As mentioned previously, early agency-client relationship contributions highlight the importance of co-operation and collaboration in marketing (Beard, 1996a; Brennan, 2001; Halinen, 1997; Michell, 1988). Such contributions acknowledge the benefits of co-operation between agencies and their clients to deliver successful campaigns and

enhance their ongoing relationship (Durkin and Lawlor, 2001). This sentiment matches the co-creation dynamic in a B2B scenario (Lambert and Enz, 2012). Based upon service dominant logic theory (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), co-creation in terms of value is defined as the *'joint creation of value by the company and the customer; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context'* (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004 p. 8). In terms of marketing, this involves mutual participation in strategy development in campaigns (Barrutia et al., 2016). However, although co-creation studies refer directly to a strategic approach of utilising the joint nature of value creation between the organisation and consumer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000), this study focuses its attentions on the B2B relationship in social media marketing. Recently, Hughes et al (2018) work examined how resources influence co-creation between marketing agencies and their clients, finding this dynamic to be optimal.

Prior to the inception of co-creation, the agency-client relationship literature was heavily influenced by the notion of relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994). From the 1980s the agency-client relationship literature shifted its focus from client account management to relationship building (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). For example, Bennett (1999) use a relationship marketing perspective and suggest that account management should ensure that the needs of the client are met in campaign planning and implementation. Hotz, Ryans, and Shanklin (1982) collected perceptions of agency relationship marketing efforts. Thus, a healthy relationship with a client emerged as the key to propagating future business and enhancing the reputation of both parties in the 1990s (e.g. Henke, 1995). Gould et al.'s (1999) inter-organisational analyses produced a systematic study of the difference between agency and client culture and how relationship marketing played a key role in mediating between these two cultures. Several authors argue that successful agencies are those that use relationship management to retain clients (e.g., Durden, Orsman, and Michell, 1997; Baskin and Pickton, 2003). Furthermore, a proactive approach to relationship management such as anticipating client demands is proposed by Beverland, Farrelly and Woodhatch (2007).

Co-creation of creative ideas for marketing campaigns has been asserted as best practice in the planning stages of digital marketing (Stephen, 2016), with client's

contributions to decision making being key to successful campaigns (Na et al., 2008). Further, inclusion of clients in creative planning decisions is proposed by a number of authors (Kelly, Lawlor and O'Donohoe, 2005; Sasser and Koslow, 2008). In their examination of conflict resolution, de Waal, Malefyt and Morais's (2010) advocates co-creation in supporting creativity, innovation, and advancement of the brands advertising message. A recent stream of research now considers the importance of the agency-client relationship as a contributory factor for co-creation (Masiello et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2016). Finally, one study suggests that social media as a communications channel between agencies and their clients is a contributing factor in maintaining collaborative relationships, as well as co-creation (Bhagat, Dutta and Dutta, 2012).

Grant, Gilmore and Crosier (2003) propose clients and agencies' involvement in advertising planning is necessary through a system of creative input, regular updates and copy and imagery review. Sutherland, Duke and Abernethy (2004) suggest client account managers should act as 'gatekeepers' in transferring key information to creative teams in support of the development of creative advertising campaigns. Continuing this theme, Sasser and Koslow (2008) propose a model to support co-creation in marketing planning and acknowledge how both negative and positive impacts on advertising creativity can occur as a result. Conflict between creatives and clients, particularly in an online marketing context has been reported as actively compromising co-creation (Kelly, Lawlor and O'Donohoe, 2005). Sasser, Koslow and Kilgour (2011; 2012) have written extensively on this topic and concluded that the impact of clients' innovativeness and willingness to explore risky concepts is pivotal to a co-creative agency-client relationship. Therein, the benefits of a co-creation dynamic in marketing planning is obvious, however only recent works identify the obstacles which it may pose (which is discussed in Section 3.11). Finally, many authors have explored co-creation within a B2B setting, providing a theoretical foundation for this study (e.g., Komulainen, 2014; Nenonen and Storbacka, 2010; Novani, 2012; Piller, Vossen and Ihl, 2012; Vargo and Lusch, 2011, Hughes et al., 2018).

3.11.2.1   Social Media Marketing and Co- Creation

Whilst commonplace in the business to consumer arena, very few works have explored co-creation through social media from a practitioner perspective. The review has outlined a small body of work exploring the impact of Internet on advertising in modern agencies (Drossos et al., 2011; Behboudi et al., 2012), yet a gap remains with regard to investigations on the impact of the social media platforms and co-creation. Lace's (2004) is a useful example of the impact of the internet on the agency-client relationship, wherein he discovered how clients expected their contracted agencies be knowledgeable with regard to Internet advertising, while at the same time being reluctant to engage with the planning or implementation processes of these activities. However, a few studies have considered how the agency-client relationship may play a role in the development of digital campaigns (Durkin and Lawlor, 2001; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). Koch and Liechty (2005) also comment on the post-millennium agency-client relationship espousing the benefit of digital campaign measurement in ensuring client satisfaction and therefore a healthy agency-client relationship.

Within the digital sector, creative production of marketing campaigns is complex due to the number of teams working on various aspects of modern multi-channel campaigns (e.g., Search Engine Marketing, social media marketing, Digital Display Advertising, Email Marketing), this provides a challenge to an efficient working relationship with clients (Sasser and Koslow, 2008; de Waal Malefyt and Morais, 2010). This is consistent with the suggestion from Zolkiewski, Burton and Stratoudaki (2008) that failing to adapt to modern trends in marketing, such as social media, may create conflict between the two parties. Often, multiple specialist agencies are contracted to work alongside each other on larger campaigns, putting pressure on agencies to perform efficiently and coordinate multiple relationships (Rogan, 2014).

3.11.2.2   Co-Destruction of Value

Echeverri and Skalen (2011) suggest that both co-creation and co-destruction can occur. Indeed, it is argued that co-creation scholars tend to avoid the negative aspects of the concept, (Mitręga and Zolkiewski, 2012), although other studies have examined detrimental elements of B2B relationships (Jain et al., 2014; Olsen et al., 2014). Recent research has begun to uncover the detrimental aspects of co-creation (Plé and

Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Furthermore, Chowdhury et al. (2016) argue that poor relationships can impact the reputation of agency and client. Additionally, they determine the following conflictual issues that contribute to co-destruction: *role conflict, role ambiguity, weak optimism, and power plays*.

Therefore, considering the notion of value co-destruction, it is suggested that agencies encourage healthy relationships with their clients (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Likewise, it is imperative that agencies retain clients over long periods of time, as client retention is perceived in industrial terms as a sign of success (Rogan, 2014).

3.11.3 Summary of The Alternative View of Agency Client Relationships

The alternative view of the agency-client relationship is represented through consideration of cultural implications and co-creation. The research in this area identifies international interpersonal factors that affect agency-client relationships. Therefore, a study of agency-client relationships within the context of social media marketing will investigate the impact of cultural attributes of global clients and their influence on UK digital marketing agencies.

While the specifics of international cultures have seen much attention in the agency-client literature, recent works espouse the notion of co-creation in the marketing industry (Paredes et al., 2014; Barrutia et al., 2016). In this instance, co-creation is underpinned by collaboration in strategic decision making when developing campaigns (Butler and Batt, 2014). While co-creation is predominantly reported in between organisations and consumers, this study will examine the concept in a B2B setting, through the lens of social media marketing.

On the other hand, caution is required when encouraging such a collaborative partnership. Co-destruction of value results in agencies and their clients inhibiting their corporate reputation (Barrutia et al., 2016; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). The gap in the current knowledge which this study will exploit is the various ways in which the agency-client relationship impacts social media marketing practice. Finally, the

alternative view extends beyond the interpersonal and provides additional considerations for how an agency manages their clients.

3.12 Challenges associated with Agency Client Relationships

Agency-client relationships are problematic, and conflict can arise as a result of a variety of factors, leading to dramatic consequences. The earliest empirical research on the agency-client relationship displays conflict as a significant theme in their investigations (Murray, 1971; Pollay and Swinth, 1969).

Six key areas emerge in the research which considers conflict between agencies and clients that will be explored in this section: *trust, agency performance, campaign performance, personnel change, conflict outcomes, and strategies for managing conflict*. Trust lies at the core of inter-agency conflict and the majority of research examines the impact of trust on the agency-client relationship (e.g., West and Paliwoda, 1996; Fam and Waller, 2008; Vafeas, 2015). Research conflict was found to arise from provocation factors, or the strategies for managing conflict (Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Grant et al., 2012). The systematic literature review categorises three predominantly reported areas where conflict emerges: *agency performance, campaign performance and personnel*. Agency and campaign performance emerge as a significant source of conflict, whereas other works report on the outcomes of conflict such as dissatisfaction, which leads to switching agencies (Davies and Prince, 2011). Conflict outcomes are a key area explored by the literature, and point towards two outcomes: *client switching to a competitor agency, client firing the agency* (e.g., Kulkarni et al., 2003). These outcomes will be discussion before the section considers the literature which offers insights on how to manage this conflict and avoid these outcomes (e.g., Pincus et al., 1991).

3.12.1 Trust

Trust is a pivotal construct when considering how agency-client relationships are created, managed and dissolved. The review revealed that perceptions of trust varies, however a useful description is that positive trust is an assurance between what an agency claims to be able to perform versus the outcomes of their assertions (Ngai and

Wat, 2002). Furthermore, there is a belief that when an agency states obligations - typically in the form of campaign objectives - trust will be determined in the achievement of these objectives (Boughton et al., 1996). Trust is also viewed as an interpersonal construct that relies upon interactions of staff, such as Gounaris and Venetis, (2002) view that trustworthiness in service industries relies upon social bonding. Whereas, Grönroos (1994) described trust in relationship marketing as having a *trustee* and a *trustor*. Moreover, some agency-client relationship studies adopt a relationship marketing perspective paying particular attention to trust development as a core construct of good relationships (Davies and Prince, 2005; Fam and Waller, 2008; Wackman et al., 1986).

The systematic review revealed that trust studies focuses on the following key aspects: *earning or gaining trust* (Sekeley and Blakney, 1996)*, lack of trust* (Michell and Sanders, 1995)*, trustworthiness* (Haytko, 2004)*, outcomes of untrustworthiness* (Davies and Prince, 2011). Although, it is noteworthy that distrust receives equal if not more much attention. Pollay and Swinth's (1969) findings intimated that agency dishonesty would result in a loss of trust with their clients, in some cases leading to a boycott by prospective clients. However, the overall outcome of their research is the deduction that trust is inextricably linked to agency-client relationship conflict. Therefore, an investigation of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing should also consider the impact of trust in the agency-client relationship.

3.12.2 Agency Performance Conflict

The review shows that client perception of agency performance is perhaps the foremost reason for the emergence of conflict (Hozier and Schatzberg, 2000). In Murray's (1971) examination of satisfaction with advertising agencies in the Republic of Ireland, it was found that client interpretations of creative decisions resulted in conflict. The study also showed clients who perceived their agencies as lacking creativity were also dissatisfied with the level of professionalism displayed in their interactions. The current study seeks to examine agency-client interactions further and Murray's (1971) assertion that professionalism may create conflict is noteworthy. Hotz, Ryan and Shanklin's (1982) list of agency-client perspectives suggested that agency performance leads to tension between the two parties.

Early conflict studies underline a significant trend, namely the identification of relationship factors to advise practitioners on conflict avoidance (e.g., Pincus et al., 1991; Bourland, 1993). However, latter conflict studies seek to scrutinise the dimensions of conflict, with little practical advice offered (Morais, 2007; Prince et al., 2016). For example, Zolkiewski et al.'s (2008) argue that trust is pivotal factor in determining whether the client relationship will be a *'partnership or battleground'*. Interestingly most studies within this category of conflict research, the focus is on the bi-lateral relationship between the agency and their clients. However, Grant, McLeod and Shaw (2012) explored inter-agency conflict and its effects in the context of large firms employing multiple advertising agencies. They argue that with the expansion of the advertising industry and specialist agencies creates complex networks of relationships. This poses a unique scenario whereby the agency-client relationship becomes a composite of multiple relationships, which increases the potential for conflict to arise. Specialist digital agencies tend to operate in conjunction with many other digital and traditional marketing agencies and therefore the potential for conflict is heightened. Hence, this study will consider the influence of client appetite and scrutiny of agency performance in its investigation.

3.12.3 Campaign Performance Conflict

Throughout the agency-client relationship literature, obstacles to developing effective campaigns are evident. Concerns regarding campaign performance typically centred on the professionalism or creativity exhibited by the agency (Bourland, 1994; Murray, 1971; West and Paliwoda, 1996). Michell (1998) suggested that client relationships with small firms can be problematic due to a lack familiarity with the client. Sekeley and Blakney (1996) also provide evidence which support this assertion regarding SME organisations.

A significant theme in the agency-client relationship studies reveal the propensity of scholars to identify conflict factors, which related to campaign performance. Devinney and Dowling (1999) categories campaign related conflict as follows: *style of the advertising campaign (a creativity issue), effectiveness of the campaign (a success or failure issue), the cost of the campaign, and client service (an interpersonal issue)*.

Beard (2010) argued that the use of an Integrated Marketing Communications methodology can result in client satisfaction through monitoring these key factors: *satisfaction with performance, satisfaction with relationship, conflict, and stress*. Zolkiewski et al. (2008) the theme of conflict factor identification producing the following issues between Greek advertising agencies and their client: *lack of daring, lack of knowledge, and status*. Conflict factors identified throughout these studies suggest that campaign performance is a significant area for clients where conflict may arise. Furthermore, in examining agency-client conflict there is much more to consider besides campaign under-performance that this study will endeavour to investigate.

Creative decisions are also identified as a source of conflict within campaign planning (Murphy and Maynard, 1997). Pollay and Swinth's (1969) study examined rational decision making to find that clients opted to boycott agencies who lack creativity in their campaign planning. Morais (2007) examination of interactions in creative meetings revealed how the agency's ability to impress through creativity is key to ensuring agreement, avoiding agency-client conflict (Morais, 2007).

Communication of campaign performance was also revealed to lead to conflict, as Johnson and Laczniak (1991) examination of decision-making using an inter-organisational view of relationships asserted. So (2005) also found communication was a key conflict factor for clients in China and Hong Kong. He explored communication systems between the two parties and identified how Chinese culture may have an impact in these instances, such as *guanxi*. Furthermore, development of personal connections is important for the Chinese market, and in particular how improved communication will assist the longevity of the agency-client relationship. Interestingly, some conflict studies also revealed variation in different industries. Murphy and Maynard (1997) found financial industries had many disagreements, whereas FMCG clients tended to have more amenable relationship with less conflict. It is clear from the studies above that pressures on agencies to perform can create conflict between the two parties and thus pose a strain on their relationship.

3.12.4 Personnel Change Conflict

Agency personnel have been identified as a conflict factor in a number of works. While this category is used as an umbrella term, it entails agency, as well as client executives impacting the agency-client relationship resulting in conflict. Role ambiguity and satisfaction in agency-client relationship also play a part in leading to conflict (Beard, 1996b; 1999). Additionally, size of the client account has significance in terms of the level interaction with their agency and this can lead to agency-client relationship conflict (Beard, 1999). Furthermore, another study found that technical incompetence and deviation from professional norms by agency personnel led to conflict (Pincus, Acharya & Trotter, 1991).

Agency personnel dynamics also emerge in the conflict research. For example, West and Paliwoda, (1996) examined advertising client-agency roles in campaign planning and how clients form judgements of their agencies. Four factors specifically related to agency personnel were shown to create conflict in the agency-client relationship: *(i) changes to agency personnel, (ii) assistance provided by agency, (iii) effectiveness of the client organizations in dealing with advertising, and (iv) agreement between both parties over the agency's role.* This study differs from many others in that it examines personnel changes, whereas other research is often restricted to outcomes of conflict.

Whereas, personnel also emerged as a factor in agency switching, it emerged that large clients stay with their agencies for longer. Importantly, the importance of agency personnel to the ongoing relationship is recognised under the following factors: *agency performance, creative product, account servicing, value for money, personal relations, personnel turnover, agency and client roles, and organizational structure* (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999). Finally, continuing the theme of personnel turnover as a conflict factor, it also emerged that managerial and executive exits in agencies contribute to the dissolution agency-client relationships. Broschak and Block's (2013) findings revealed that managerial exits significantly affected the agency-client relationship

3.12.5 Conflict Outcomes

Two primary outcomes of conflict are reported in the literature. The client firm either ceases their contract with the agency and terminates the relationship, or they transfer

their business to another agency, referred to as switching. In either instance, there are distinct implications on the agency-client relationship which will now be explored.

While much has been written on the challenges in maintaining the agency-client relationship, few studies have explored its dissolution and termination. In one such study, factors for firing or switching agencies was identified: *dissatisfaction with agency performance, disagreement over campaign objective, senior staff no longer giving sufficient attention* (Yuksel, 2011). Whereas, Bruning and Ledingham's (2002) study of relationship decline formulated four phases: *contrasting phase, idling phase, and discontinuance phase*. Notably, their phases recognise how client firms apply scrutiny to the creativity of their current agency through comparison to prior agencies, suggesting another layer of complexity to the relationship. In managing the current client needs, client expectation may be determined by a competitor.

The systematic review also revealed a stream of literature that examined the outcomes of firing an agency. One study confirmed a dip in stock marketing performance after agency termination and recommended an integrated approach to dealing with clients between fiscal teams as well as marketing teams who hire agencies (Hozier and Schatzberg, 2000). Furthering this theme, termination of an advertising agency was discovered to have an impact on the stock market share price by Kulkarni, Vora and Brown (2003). Bruning and Ledingham (2002) also examined the decline of agency-client relationships and found a decrease in share price before they fired their ad agencies. Arguably, this suggests wider business implications for conflict within the agency-client relationship.

The second outcome of agency-client conflict is switching, whereby the client will cease their contractual agreement and will move their account directly to another agency (Tahtinen and Halinen, 2002). Whilst this scenario results in a similar outcome for the agency, i.e., cessation of the relationship, it is reported that switching has a significant impact upon the agencies reputation and future client recruitment (Davies and Prince, 2011). Many reasons for switching are reported in the literature, however they do appear to lead back to Doyle, Jens and Michell's (1980) study, which unveiled a multitude of switching precursors, referred to as vulnerabilities, as well as offering advice for agencies who have lost client accounts. The authors propose the following

six strategies for protection of agency-client relationships: *(i) vigilance to signals of vulnerability, (ii) regular review sessions, (iii) tactical adaptation to client organisational change, (iv) commitment to new strategies, (v) account audits, (vi) post-mortems.*

Notably, a proactive approach is a common theme in many studies (Durden et al., 1997; Vafeas and Hilton, 2002; Davies and Prince, 2011), suggesting that it is the responsibility of the agency to detect early signs of client disenchantment, in the interest of avoiding switching. Henke's (1995) longitudinal study identified six switching predictors: *(i) satisfaction with current agency, (ii) importance of agency performance dimensions, (iii) importance of creative skills, (iv) satisfaction with media skills, (v) satisfaction with creative skills, (vi) importance of winning industry awards.* Similarly, dissolution of relationships is explored by Tathinen and Halinen (2002) and reasons for agency switching, consistent with previous authors (Doyle et al., 1980; Henke, 1995) are provided: *client dissatisfaction with agency performance, changes in client policy, changes in client management, changes in agency management and changes in agency policy.* Therefore, an investigation into the influence of the agency-client relationship should consider account management strategies for current clients, but also clients that have left, or switched agency.

Davies and Prince (2011) used Agency Theory to underpin their model of switching costs. This study identified the following factors for agencies to consider as a result of client departure: *time, effort, money, and psychological burden.* Furthermore, it is argued by Davies and Prince (2011) that the higher the switching costs, the less likely clients are to exert efforts to remain with the agency. This study also produces a number of factors which relate to agency-client relationship conflict: *work not on strategy [sic], lack of sales results, work not integrated, and creative arrogance.* In contrast, Prince and Everett (2012) state that the benefits of replacing one relationship with another are mitigated by switching costs, the costs associated with the act of changing the relationship itself.

Switching agencies appears to be a significant theme within the agency-client relationship literature and one that agencies should take note of in an increasingly crowded digital environment. However, there are limited studies in this area, and it would be advantageous to examine this in a digital marketing context. Therefore, this

study will seek to identify not only conflictual factors, but also enquire as to previous clients where the relationship has broken down, to further understand the influence of agency-client interaction on social media marketing.

3.12.1 Managing Conflict

The review revealed many constructive approaches for managing conflict. The aim of such strategies is maintaining a harmonious and productive agency-client relationship. The earliest work in the agency-client relationship literature portrayed useful steps for the enhancement of the relationship, suggesting trust and honesty as key factors (Pollay and Swinth, 1969). Hotz, Ryan and Shanklin (1982) provided a list of variables leading to agency-client relationship breakdown as well as an informative set of suggestions for relationship curation. It is evident that in managing conflict in the agency-client relationship, special attention should be paid to earning trust and displaying honesty even when reporting poor campaign performance.

A useful source for conflict management emerges from the studies of agency switching, as they also recommend pre-emptive, or proactive strategies to avoid agency-client relationship breakdowns (e.g., Doyle, Jens and Michell, 1980). Another perspective for managing conflict is through the identification the respective responsibilities in the agency-client relationship. One study proposes that for agencies to avoid client turnover, they should regularly evaluate their own performance, whereas client firms should review their decision-making processes (Hotz, Ryans and Shanklin, 1982). Furthermore, the authors argue that by both parties understanding their respective roles in the agency-client relationship '*conflict can then be greatly reduced since both sides tailor their procedures to meet a clearly defined set of expectations'* (p. 44) Also, the systematic review identified how communication is also identified as an important conflict management tool (e.g., Murphy and Maynard, 1997; Morais, 2007).

Frameworks for conflict management were identified by the systematic literature review. Devinney and Downling (1999) 'Rules for Engagement' provide advice for managing conflict between both parties. Whereas the 'Expectation Model' by Hill (2006) positing that conflict can emerge from client responses to creative work. This

study also suggests two strategies for avoiding conflict in these scenarios: *avoid over-promises, ensure performance is perceived to be exceeding expectations*. Similarly, Arul (2010) identified a set of conflict management steps taken by the agencies to retain their clients: *understanding the client needs, performance, confidence and creativity*. In proposing these frameworks, these studies highlight the ongoing trend in the agency-client relationship literature to identify conflict factors leading to strategic advice for conflict alleviation for practitioners. This study will consider the multitude of conflict factors and advice in its investigation of client relationships in social media marketing.

Whereas, Zolkiewski, Burton and Stratoudaki (2008) also provide three recommendations are made on how to handle disagreements: *(i) comply with client demands (even if you do not agree with them), (ii) do not comply with client demands, but try and persuade them towards their own point of view, (larger agencies were better at doing this due to their reputation), and (iii) try to change client behaviour.* These tactics are particularly relevant to this study by offering insight into agency conflict management with difficult clients. This study will seek to investigate the management of client relationships and seek to uncover if social media marketers employ any of the aforementioned tactics.

Finally, this study also argues for closer involvement of the client in decision-making process as the ideal working scenario. Decision-making also emerges as a key consideration for mitigating conflict in many studies (West and Paliwoda, 1996; Na et al., 2009). For example, Johnson and Laczniak (1991) argue that collaborative decision-making structures can allay conflict and enhance the agency-client relationship, in some ways supporting the theme of co-creation in strategy development. In an increasingly fragmented digital media landscape, conflict between clients and multiple agencies may be more relevant now that ever. Hence, this research will examine conflict in its investigation of social media marketing practice.

3.12.2 Summary of Challenges Associated with Agency-Client Relationships

The review of the literature has revealed how conflict is rife within agency-client relationships and has a significant impact upon marketing strategy development and

practice. Research in this area in consistent in its investigations into factors, or reasons for conflict after it has emerged. Another strand to this area of literature is the advice provided for practitioners on pre-emptively addressing client unhappiness with their relationship. In understanding the agency-client relationship, it appears that equal attention is required for the negative outcomes, as well as the positive.

Trust and the perception of trustworthiness between the two parties emerges as a pivotal aspect of the relationship. Whereas, conflict can also emerge from client interpretation of agency performance as well as campaign performance with dramatic consequences. As the agency-client relationship concept draws upon interpersonal factors, changes to personnel can also produce conflict. However, it has also been reported that agencies are adept at managing conflict through strategic approaches to avoid outcomes such as contract cessation and clients switching agencies. Collaborative decision making and enhanced communication are proposed as good practice for overcoming the many challenges associated with the agency-client relationship.

In reviewing the conflict literature, a considerable gap in the knowledge is consistently identified in that the conflict which may arise from the impact of the digital and social media is absent. Considering the proliferation of digital and social media in the modern marketing industry, the nature of conflict today is under-reported in the literature. Hence, this study will examine agency-client relationships within a modern context, while also considering the manifestation of conflict in the processes and outcomes of social media marketing. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the strategies employed by agencies to allay modern variations of conflict.

3.13 Part II Summary

In this chapter, the results of a systematic review of the agency-client relationship are reported. The review provided a profile of how the relationship has been studied in the absence of a formal definition. Then, the chapter examined three distinct perspectives of this relationship, namely; the interpersonal view (comprising of contractually determined relationships, and the client account management view) and the alternative view (agency and client cultural perspective and the co-creation view).

Next, the challenges associated the relationship, specifically, trust and conflict. Throughout the review, it highlighted the lack of insights relating to the agency-client relationship in a social media marketing setting, which this study will explore. A number of gaps in the current knowledge of agency-client relationships in social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. These gaps are collated into a table, along which will be revisited in both the findings and discussion chapters (See Table 3-10). Furthermore, Figure 3-9 presents a summary of the major themes and sub-themes explored in Parts I and II of the literature review.

Table 3-9 Knowledge Gaps Identified from the Social Media Marketing Strategy, Evaluation, and Agency-Client Relationship Literatures

Theme	Knowledge Gap Identified
Major Theme 1: **Social Media Marketing Strategy Development**	The processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice
	Limited details are available on social media campaign objective setting and implementation are available
	A gap exists in how the knowledge gained from social media evaluation supports strategic decision-making
	Strategic decisions made by specialist agencies in their social media marketing endeavours is under-researched
Major Theme 2: **Social Media Marketing Evaluation**	The processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice
	The lack of academic work in the area of setting goals for the process of evaluation
	Few works exists which examine the connection between social media metrics and strategic decision-making
	Little is known as to how marketers address the challenge of evaluating complex metrics
	A limited stream of research has examined how social media campaign data is collected
	There are limited insights into the specifics of assembly and presentation of the results of the data collection and analysis
	A distinct lack of insight on the usability, function of social media measurement softwares used by social media marketers
Major Theme 3:	Conceptualisations of the agency-client relationship reflect the complexities of the relationship. Within a social media marketing context, the agency-client relationship is significantly under-researched

Agency Client Relationships	The changing nature of how agencies manage the relationship with their clients is intriguing, particularly with the advent of social media services offered by digital marketing agencies
	Limited knowledge is available on contractual arrangements between specialist agencies and their clients and the impact these have on the agency-client relationship
	There is a lack of academic work on the link between contractual agreements as part of the client account management function
	As agencies tend to operate in a services marketing dynamic, the balance of power between the expert social media marketer and their client will be an interesting avenue for investigation in this study.
	Little is known regarding the impact of cultural demands of international clients on a digital marketing agency and how it affects the agency-client relationship
	There is a lack of studies performed on the UK digital marketing industry who service international clients
	Only a limited number of studies investigate co-creation in B2B agency-client relationships, through the lens of social media marketing
	Longstanding knowledge in agencies client co-creation in strategy development exists, however no recent studies consider the impact of digital and social media in a modern context
	Little is known regarding the notion of co-creation and co-destruction in social media marketing
	No prior studies have focussed on agencies and client interactions in developing social media marketing campaigns
	Conflict in social media marketing practice is under-researched topic despite prevalence in modern practice

Figure 3-8 Overview of Major Themes and Sub-Themes in Strategy, Evalaution and Agency-Client Relationships

Major Themes	Sub-Themes					
Strategy	Approaches to Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	Pre-Campaign Research	Campaign Objective Setting	Creative Campaign Decision-Making	Campaign Implementation	**Campaign Evaluation***
***Evaluation**	Approaches to Social Media Marketing Evaluation	Evaluation Targets	KPIs	Metrics	Data Collection and Analysis	Report Generation
Agency-Client Relationships	Conceptualisations of the Agency-Client Relationship	Contractual Implications	Client Account Management	Cultural Implications	Co-Creation in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	Conflict

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach to performing the present study. It begins by outlining the research paradigm that is most appropriate for this study. It then discusses the data necessary to address the research aims and objectives. The chapter continues by defining the overall research strategy. The techniques for collection of data are then provided, including the sampling strategy and data analysis procedures that were employed. The chapter then discusses the validity and reliability of the data. The chapter concludes with an overview of the limitations and ethical implications of the study.

4.2 Research Philosophy – Justification of the Appropriate Paradigm

Research is defined by Saunders et al. (2015: 5) as the:

> *"A systematic collection of data to discover and interpret information to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing knowledge"*

To perform research, a methodology is necessary. A methodology outlines the techniques for collection and analysis of data as well as the evidence which is used to satisfy the research question (Saunders et al., 2015).

Research philosophy is concerned with the various ways in which knowledge is developed and the nature of that knowledge (Crotty, 1998). It is imperative that researchers identify their philosophical view of the world around them (Bryman and Bell, 2010). In doing so, the researcher must be aware of their own subjectivity in attempting to answer a research question (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). To address the issue of subjectivity, it is first necessary to establish the beliefs that underpin the researchers' worldview. This set of beliefs is referred to as a research paradigm. Table 4-1 presents four research paradigms. To discuss the respective paradigms and their influence on research, it is necessary to demonstrate an understanding of the

foundations of philosophy: ontology, epistemology, axiology. Ontology and epistemology are usually debated in tandem to comprise of a researchers 'construction of meaning' (Crotty, 1998).

4.2.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with authors understanding of reality (Bryman and Bell 2010). Kuhn (1962) underlined the need for researchers to identify their perception of reality to be able to interpret information and generate knowledge. Within business research, Bryman and Bell (2010) indicate that social ontology is concerned with the manner in which actors within organisations offer evidence of phenomenon as they occur in organisations. Social ontologies are divided further into *objectivism* and *constructionism*. Objectivism suggests that the social phenomena should observed independently of the actors involved, whereas Constructionism seeks to make sense of phenomena through iterative observation and revision (Creswell, 2013b). Therefore, the subjectivity of Constructionism rejects the notion that social actors in organisations are external to reality and have no place in the phenomenon being explored by a researcher (Bryman and Bell, 2010). The present study adopts the ontological perspective of Constructionism in that the reality of the phenomena being explored is constructed through the interactions of social actors, in this case, social media marketing practitioners and their clients.

4.2.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the researchers understanding of what is acceptable as knowledge and the manner in which it can be created (Bryman and Bell, 2010). A researcher's epistemology is concerned with their interpretation of knowledge, effectively, a way of understanding and explaining what Crotty (1998) calls, '*how we know what we know*'. Central to epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and the phenomena being researched, and two broad views are apparent in this respect: *positivism, and phenomenological* (Saunders et al., 2015). These two views of knowledge are often considered opposite ends of a spectrum of views relating to order within reality. Positivists view reality as external, ordered and consists of observable facts. Phenomenology holds the perception that reality is socially constructed, and its focus is on establishing meaning by interpreting the phenomenon

(Bryman and Bell, 2010). In some instances, interpretivism is used interchangeably with phenomenology, however, many variations in research paradigms are evident and these are presented in Table 4-1 and will be discussed in the next section. Hence, in understanding these dimensions of epistemology, the researcher can critically interpret the validity and scope of knowledge generated from their research, as well as identify appropriate research methodologies (Saunders et al., 2015).

4.2.1.1 Axiology

Axiology considers the notion of value within a study (Saunders et al., 2015). Business and management research is not value free and personal values tend to be biased or prejudiced. Therefore, an axiological assumption will reflect upon whether the research being conducted is value-laden, or value free (Saunders et al., 2015). In doing so, the researcher uses this opportunity to reflect upon their own position as an objective or subjective researcher and how this will influence their interpretation of the knowledge being created.

4.2.1.1 Methodological Associations

In attempting to address a research question, the researcher should be guided by their own ontology, epistemology, axiology (Bryman and Bell, 2010). A research methodology reflects the approaches to investigating a research question and is dictated by the researcher's philosophical perspetive (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers who pertain to a particular paradigm, must also be aware of associated methodological approaches which are more appropriate than others (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In some instances, research philosophy dictates the nature of the evidence which will support the research question. For example, Saunders et al. (2015) suggest a close affiliation between quantitative methods and positivism, whereas interpretivism tends to rely upon qualitative methods. However, in some cases, research doesn't follow linear patterns and exceptions to the rules are evident, such as the realist and pragmatist philosophies. Table 4-1 indicates the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodologies which apply to the four paradigms which will now be discussed in more detail in the next section.

4.2.1 Research Paradigms

Four research paradigms have been considered by Saunders in Table 4-1 and are as follows: *positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism*. It is important to understand the various paradigms, as they are a governing factor for the research project as a whole (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A fuller understanding of research philosophy assists the researcher in producing the most appropriate research design.

4.2.1.1 Positivism

Positivism is mostly used within the natural sciences (e.g., chemistry, biology). It embraces the following three principles: *the world is can be viewed as external; research is free of value; and the researcher remains independent – adopting the role of the objective analyst* (Saunders et al., 2015). Positivistic research often utilises hypotheses with a view to testing them within a sample that represents the total population in order to examine causality, performance and patterns (Bryman and Bell, 2010). Accordingly, positivism makes the assumption that the world comprises of observable facts, seen as reductions of overarching constructs of reality. Saunders et al. (2015) argue that one of the benefits of this perspective is that it provides '*value free*' interpretations of phenomena. From a methodological point of view, positivism tends to employ large scale quantitative surveys that are deductive in nature, examining cause and effect relationships within datasets.

Table 4-1 The Four Research Paradigms

Source: Saunders et al. (2015)

	Positivism	**Realism**	**Interpretivism**	**Pragmatism**
Ontology: the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, objective and independent of social actors	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple	External, multiple, view chosen to best enable answering of research question
Epistemology: the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data
Axiology: the researcher's view of the roles of values of research	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Research is value laden; researcher is biased, by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing. These will impact on the research	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view
Methodologies Employed	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative but can use qualitative	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative

4.2.1.2 Realism

Realism, adopts a scientific perspective similar to the positivistic stance and believes reality exists beyond the realm of human interpretation but what we experience are sensations that are representations of the world around us (Saunders et al., 2015). A realist view of business and management research therefore seeks to make sense and order out of observable phenomena in a positivistic manner. Realism is divided further into direct (what you see is what you get) and critical realism, whereby social conditioning plays a role in determining the knowledge being created. The epistemological position of this paradigm is that knowledge is created in adherence to the facts being observed, but also within a given context (Bryman and Bell, 2010). Critical realist researchers value systems tend to be influenced by their cultural experiences, world views and upbringing and hence will impact on their interpretation of findings. As such, this type of research philosophy is objective, but recognises the influence of social conditioning (Creswell, 2013b). Methodologically, realist studies employ a blend of methods, quantitative and qualitative to address the 'how' and 'why' questions (Saunders et al., 2015). It is argued by the realist perspective that a researcher can operate outside of the traditional epistemology and ontological restrictions that have been debated for decades (Bryman and Bell, 2010).

4.2.1.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism views the world as highly complex such that the rules and rigour of natural science are not applicable (Fisher, 2007). Human behaviour does not follow universal rules and often, unexpected phenomena are revealed through social science investigations. Bryman and Bell (2010) state three principles of interpretivism: *the world is socially constructed, this world is given meaning through people, and research is driven by interests of society*. Interpretivist research seeks to understand subjective realities and to create meaningful insights for the readers of that research. From this perspective, fundamental '*laws*' and '*facts*' are not feasible when attempting to observe and interpret socially constructed phenomena. Hence this philosophy makes two assumptions. Firstly, the social world is observed by interpretations and meanings people ascribe towards it. Secondly, social phenomena can only be understood by looking at the wider context in which they exist (Saunders et al., 2015).

Interpretivists also have a high degree of involvement with the subject matter they are examining, which is a significant departure from the objective positivistic ontology. Positivists seeks to explain behaviours while interpretivists attempt to understand human behaviours within the context under which those behaviours are enacted. From an axiological perspective, the interpretivist researcher is inextricably linked to the subject matter, meaning their value system is integral to the processes of understanding and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2015). Therefore, this philosophy affords the reader the opportunity to provide contextual understandings and interpretations of the data that is collected.

From a methodological point of view, this type of research tends towards inductive qualitative methods that can respond to the dynamic nature of social behaviours (Creswell, 2013a). Lastly, interpretivist research often uses a combination of tools to gather data to understand the wider context of the phenomena being investigated (Saunders et al., 2015).

4.2.1.4 Pragmatism

The pragmatist paradigm spans the positivism-interpretivism divide. At its core, this philosophy upholds the research question as being the central construct for a study. By focusing on the research questions, this philosophy overlooks the view that epistemology and ontology are the foundations of the research. It proposes a philosophical perspective which is free from restrictions, and utilises a wide range of research methodologies, irrespective of advice from the research methods textbooks (e.g., Saunders et al. 2015). Advocates argue that the dogma of pragmatism is to simply use the most valuable approaches to inquiry and avoiding the debate around the nuances of the established paradigms (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). In some cases that may require employing a combination of research methods and gathering both qualitative and quantitative data.

4.2.2 Chosen Research Philosophy

The researcher believes the interpretivist paradigm is the most fitting for the present study for the following reasons. Within the interpretivist school of philosophy, the goal is to explore and understand social phenomena. This view relies upon the subjective

human experience, whereas the present study is concerned with a specific set of behaviours and interactions within a business setting. A philosophical perspective has emerged from the interpretivist school that specifically considers human interaction through nuances of societal interaction, namely social constructivism (Bryman and Bell, 2010). This philosophical perspective shares many of the core concepts of interpretivism, but it differentiated by its approach to understanding social actors' interaction in given context. In the case of this research, the context is the interactions between social media marketing practitioners and their clients. In other words, social constructionism seeks to create meaning from human behaviour to build knowledge and therefore is most fitting for this study (Saunders et al., 2015).

Social constructionist research focuses on societal meanings within data thus requiring rich data to support this understanding (Easterby-Smith et al. 2002). Therefore, the evidence necessary to address the aims and objectives of this study are the interactions between marketing agencies and their clients. It is also the intention of this study to produce conceptual frameworks which attempt to make sense and establish order to the respective processes of strategy development and evaluation. In other words, the study is required to balance the desire to make sense of the context of social media marketing processes and outcomes while also recognising the implications of social interactions to the phenomena.

Social constructivism considers societal and historical contexts whereby people give meaning to the world through cultural interaction (Watson 2008). Therefore, the researcher's ontology is that the world is socially constructed and as opposed to objectively determined. The researcher recognises the phenomena being explored does not match a positivistic perspective and hence interpretivism is the most appropriate paradigm. The focus of the present study is on understanding a phenomenon which occurs through people's experiences rather searching for underpinning facts. Hence, the researcher believes that by understanding the interactions of human actors - in this case social media marketers and their clients – the study will make sense of the context of social media marketing.

In summary, this study adopts the position of the interpretivist viewpoint, assuming the social constructivism perspective by generating insights through analysis of the

opinions and interpretations of expert social media marketing participants. By drawing upon their interpretations as they understand them, the study can explore the realities of the individuals involved. Next, the chapter will examine further the research methodologies that are most appropriate for this study.

4.3 Research Methods – Justification for a Qualitative Research Methodology

After a philosophy has been decided upon, the researcher must consider the range of research approaches and determine the most fitting for the aims and objectives of the study (Saunders et al., 2015). Previously, the chapter has outlined a range of research paradigms and indicated the preference for an interpretivist approach to investigating the phenomenon. As interpretivists focus on meanings within the research process, they seek to understand through participants experiences. Interpretivists often collect data from small samples through qualitative means, such as interviews, or participant observation, producing rich data that allows the researcher to understand people's motives, beliefs and opinions on specific topics. In doing so, qualitative research aims to interpret phenomena and subsequently build theory from the understandings of phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Qualitative research is common within the social sciences, although, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used in some cases (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). However, qualitative research is criticised its subjectivity and a number of issues relating to qualitative research have been reported, such as: *distortion of the data by the researcher, participants difficulty in verbalising concepts, undue pressure from an interview setting, and fabricated responses from interviewees* (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Such issues can produce misguided interpretations of data and can affect the generation of knowledge. However, through the axiological assumption of an interpretivist philosophy embraces researcher's subjectivity and recognises how the value-system is a central aspect for interpreting the results of the study (Saunders et al., 2015). Accordingly, this research adopts an interpretivist perspective of a socially constructed phenomenon and by incorporating the cultural and experiential worldview of the researcher will assist in the decipherment of the data collected.

In its investigation of social media marketing practice, this research cannot rely upon physical objects which the natural sciences benefit. Instead, this study will rely upon the opinions and interpretations of key informants, who possess and in-depth knowledge of agency-client relationships in social media marketing. Hence, these opinions and interpretations constitute the qualitative data that will underpin this study. Specifically, the present study will attempt to investigate how the agency-client relationship influences the processes and outcomes of social media marketing. Furthermore, the study also seeks to address the reasons for why this relationship has an impact on this modern style of marketing.

4.3.1 Researching Social Media in Practice

To date, social media research is varied and scattered across a variety of disciplines. Within business management studies, many studies have examined social media with respect to: *consumer behaviour* (Diffley et al., 2011; Goh et al., 2013); *cultural attributes* (Zaglia, 2013; Gabrielli and Baghi, 2016), *and motivations* (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). However, very few studies consider the practical application of social media marketing by practitioners and relatively little is known regarding the complexities of strategy development and evaluation (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). From a methodological perspective, the majority of social media studies adopt the positivistic large-scale survey approach investigating the impact of social media marketing campaigns (e.g., Boerman et al., 2017; Hillman and Neustaedter, 2017; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). On the other hand, there is a distinct lack of qualitative research performed using social media marketing informants (e.g. Komulainen et al., 2016; Mariani et al., 2016). The present study is therefore poised to examine social media marketing in practice through qualitative study which collects and analyses insights from practitioner informants.

4.4 Research Strategies

A qualitative research is the chosen approach for this study due to its alignment with opinions, feelings and perceptions of business practice (Bryman and Bell 2010). Many authors have championed the validity of the qualitative approach to inquiry, especially within the social sciences (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2010;

Saunders et al., 2015). Typically, a qualitative approach is employed to build theory and develop an understanding of phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). When a study begins with a clear theoretical position it is referred to as a deductive approach (Bryman and Bell 2010). However, there is no established theoretical foundation for an area such as social media marketing and hence this study will adopt an inductive approach - building theoretical contributions after the data has been collected and analysed (Saunders et al., 2015).

In the pursuit of addressing the aims and objectives of this study, a range of strategies were considered. Saunders et al. (2015) states the following qualitative methodological strategies are suited to interpretivist, realist and pragmatist studies:

- Case Study

- Grounded Theory

- Ethnography

- Action Research

- Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory studies.

Creswell (1994) defines a case study as an exploration of a phenomenon within a bounded system over time through in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information. describes that case study research can occur whereby either one or multiple cases are identified and scrutinised through a variety of data collection methods that are triangulated. Holistic or embedded case studies can also be performed, referring to the researcher's association with the phenomenon being examined, such as an independent investigator versus an employee reflecting upon their own practice (Yin, 2003). Considering these two dimensions of case study research, this approach was not feasible for the aims and objectives of this study. When data collection first began in 2010, it was quite difficult to obtain access to social media marketing industry experts working in digital agencies and therefore an embedded, or holistic case study approach was not possible. The notion of the multiple case study approach was considered although access to multiple forms of data from each agency was the obstacle preventing this research strategy.

Grounded Theory is a method whereby theory can be built through coding and categorisation of data (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Grounded Theory seeks to develop theory through interpreting behaviours iteratively under a theoretical framework. However, this strategy was disregarded due to the distinct lack of theoretical works in the area of social media marketing and that constructing such a framework would be impossible with the literature available.

Ethnography is an inductive study of the social world the researcher inhabits (Saunders et al., 2015). Ethnographic investigations focus on human behaviours and interaction from a cultural perspective. An ethnographic study of social media marketing practitioners *in situ* to generate rich and insightful data was considered but disregarded for practical reasons. Specifically, pilot study participants indicated they were not comfortable with an independent researcher presence in strategy meetings due to the sensitive nature of the information being conveyed.

Action research involves periodic cycles of intervention and observation within an organisation (Saunders et al., 2015). For action research to be effective, the researcher is required to be embedded in the organisation under scrutiny, and for this reason, this strategy was deemed unfeasible. Also, decision-making in social media marketing occurs sporadically and can be dependent on client demands requiring the researcher to be present at all times constituting an extensive data collection period, which was unrealistic given the timeframe for this study.

Exploratory studies seek to uncover knowledge when not much is known about a particular phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). Similarly, descriptive studies opt to paint a vivid picture of the research phenomenon. Explanatory studies seek to establish causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2015). In performing this type of study, the researcher attempts to understand the variables in order to explain the relationships between them, resulting in a thorough understanding of the research phenomenon.

The present study is concerned with understanding the influence of the agency-client relationship on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. Therefore, the purpose of this research is explanatory,

as it attempts to understand the aforementioned processes and outcomes, but also the relationships between them and the influence of client relationships. Saunders et al. (2015) claims that explanatory studies allow for investigation of new and emergent topics, with a view to building theory where limited previous knowledge exists.

4.5 Research Procedures

A research methodology states the approach adopted by the researcher in attempting to satisfy a study's aims and objectives. While many research methods are available, it is necessary to consider their merits and to select the most fitting for a research projects aims and objectives. Hence, while there are no 'false' methodologies (Silverman, 2010), some can be more appropriate than others, and this section will present the selected methods of data collection and analysis.

While prior qualitative research has been conducted on social media in marketing, the majority of studies rely upon large scale surveys examining social media impact upon consumer behaviour (e.g., Schivinski et al., 2016). A number of studies explore strategy development in social media (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Broom et al., 2011; Peters et al., 2013; Williams, 2013), with some opting to examine social media strategies through practitioner insight (Chaffey and Patron, 2012; Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012; Töllinen et al., 2012; Alberghini et al., 2014). Similarly, social media marketing evaluation studies offer a useful foundation for this study (Murdough, 2010; Jeffrey, 2013; Marklein and Paine, 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015). Chapter 3 has identified the pivotal works in the area of social media strategy and evaluation revealing how qualitative empirically-based studies among industry experts are noticeably absent. In this absence, this study aims to contribute to the current body of knowledge in this area. The literature review also reveals how the profile of agency-client relationship studies are predominantly quantitative with a few notable qualitative studies (e.g., Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Hollmann et al., 2014; Vafeas, 2015; Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Furthermore, recent studies that investigate the agency-client relationship in the digital marketing environment have employed qualitative case studies with agencies generating rich insights (Sasser et al., 2011; Valos et al., 2015). This study aims to unveil findings in this area through a qualitative, inductive approach with key informants.

4.5.1 Pre-Campaign Pilot Study

Prior to conducting this study, a pilot study was carried out as a scoping exercise to gain insight into social media marketing practices from the perspective of digital marketing practitioners. Informal interviews were conducted with four social media marketing specialist practitioners. The pilot study revealed how the evaluation of social media campaign activity is a primary concern for practitioner's due to the level of skill required to ensure meaningful reporting. Participants also described the development of social media campaigns as challenging due to the rapidly-changing nature of the industry. Interestingly, the importance of agency-client interactions was identified as key to the overall success of social media marketing campaigns.

The findings of the pilot study highlighted a knowledge gap for investigation based on the important and influential role of agency-client relationships, which were considered central to the evaluation of social media marketing campaigns. Three areas emerged as particularly relevant to the study of social media marketing from the pilot study interviews: *strategy, evaluation, and agency-client relationships.* Following this, the next phase of the research involved investigating these topics further by way of examining practice knowledge and theory in the literature by way of a systematic literature review. Synthesis and analysis of this knowledge provided a framework for the next phase which involved the collection of primary data amongst key informants.

There were additional benefits of the pilot study beyond the three themes indicated above. The researcher established a series of contacts in the social media marketing industry, which assisted with the sampling strategy and recruitment of participants. Discussions also set the context under which the study would be performed, namely, semi-structured interviews were the most fitting method for discussing social media marketing strategy development and evaluation, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.5.2 Systematic Literature Review Procedure

As the agency-client relationship emerged as a significant theme within the pilot study, a systematic review of the literature surrounding this topic was conducted to explore

the extent of previous theory, research and commentary on the topic. The systematic literature review was performed in three stages in accordance with recommendations from Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003). A variety of databases were used encompassing business and management, advertising, marketing and public relations publications.

The first stage of the review began by developing a set of keywords collated as search strings relating to the term 'agency-client relationship' with associated variants (e.g. plurals, hyphenation, cultural variants) as well as searches using Boolean operators, for example: [agency-client relationship OR client-agency relationship] AND [marketing] OR [advertising] OR [public relations]. Additional strings were included comprising of agency-client relationship with more specific aspects of marketing to broaden the search (e.g. agency-client relationship AND account management; agency-client relationship AND relationship marketing). Importantly, 'Allintitle:' and 'Allinabstract:' operators were employed to scan mentions of agency-client relationship not in the title of publications, thus further broadening the dataset. No date limits were specified to provide a full historical picture.

Using this initial list of search strings, searches were performed using Google Scholar, via the use of Harzing's Publish or Perish (HPOP). HPOP is a system that indexes results through repeated requests to Google Scholar (Harzing, 2010), thus allowing easier creation of an integrated dataset, than is possible with Google Scholar page segmented outputs. Although Google Scholar was used as the primary search engine, searches were also conducted in the following databases to ensure the completeness of the retrieved article set: Emerald, IEEE Xplore, EBSCO Business Source Premier and ACM Digital Library. Additional items identified in these databases were added to the dataset in HPOP.

The search procedure generated over 7000 references from HPOP that were exported to an Excel spreadsheet to permit manipulation of the items in the dataset using pivot table operations. These operations facilitated the cleaning of the dataset (e.g. the elimination of duplicates), and re-ordering of the dataset in line with the bibliometric analyses from the second stage of the review.

The second stage employed an exclusion process was used to refine and focus the dataset. Step one of this process was to eliminate all references to items in the following list, in order to create a dataset that was robust and focussed on refereed journal articles, published in English (Tranfield et al., 2003):

(i)   non-peer reviewed publications (e.g. professional magazines, books)

(ii)   non-cognate publications (e.g. publications on topics such as medicine, psychology and sociology)

(iii)   papers in conference proceedings

(iv)   articles in a language other than English

(v)   untraceable articles, as a result of incomplete or incorrect citations

(vi)   pre-publication and duplicate versions of articles

Exceptionally, although Halinen (1997) and Buttle and Michell (1996) are books, they were retained in the final dataset since they were heavily cited and focussed on the agency-client relationship. Also eliminated were articles that discussed both agencies and clients but did not address the relationship between these two entities. The final dataset comprised 111 documents, which together constitute the extant literature on the agency-client relationship.

The third stage involved a thorough review and categorisation of the 111 publications. Each publication was read, reviewed and analysed for recurrent themes were identified within the agency-client relationship literature. The analysis produced the following themes: contractual arrangements, cultural implications, client account management, conflict, and co-creation. The articles were coded in line with the themes as shown in Appendix 3, identifying the article type (conceptual, empirical, case study), search strategy and sample of participants.

In performing the systematic literature review, a useful overview of the theory, research and commentary relating to the agency-client relationship was provided, supporting the aims and objectives of the study. Thematic codes within the review assisted with the formulation of the questions in the interview protocol (See Section 4.5.3.1). Finally, it is also important to highlight that a narrative style review was adopted to identify themes in the social media marketing literatures. This approach utilised critical discussion of the available literatures to identify relevant information

within the topic area, and knowledge gaps (Bryman and Bell, 2010; Saunders et al., 2015). This style of uncovered themes and knowledge gaps which led to the generation of thematic codes that underpinned the collection and analysis of data.

4.5.3 Data Collection

It is important that a data collection method is appropriate for the aim of the study. This study used two methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews, supported by a cognitive mapping elicitation technique. In utilising two sources, this will lead to triangulation, adding validity to the research findings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

4.5.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Gummesson (1999) argues that interviews are one of the most widely employed methods of carrying out social science research and they draw upon familiar skills of ascertaining information through questioning. Qualitative interviews can be structured, un-structured or semi-structured, allowing for exploration of themes which are not immediately apparent in the literature (Bryman and Bell, 2010). Semi-structured interviews have predetermined questions but also allow interviewees to follow their own thoughts and expand where necessary. Unstructured interviews usually commence with a respondent's narrative and may not have any particular set questions or themes (Bryman and Bell, 2010). If exploring an area, semi-structured or unstructured interviews are most appropriate as they can, *"yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings"* (May, 2001: 120). This conversational style is argued to build a rapport with the interviewer and interviewee, assisting the researcher to further understand the subject's opinions, rather than generalisation (Saunders et al, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews with marketing experts have been shown to be effective in probing perception of industry practices, and the effectiveness of their attempts to plan campaigns (Davies and Palihawadana, 2006; Grant et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). One of the benefits of semi-structured interviews is obtaining participants views on sensitive topics. The discussion of the agency-client relationship is considered highly sensitive and may not be easily conveyed through quantitative data collection methods. In these cases, the researcher is given the opportunity to explore sensitive themes in an interview setting. In conducting semi-structured interviews with social

media marketing practitioners, the researcher is allowed the opportunity to guide the conversation towards the three areas of investigation that have emerged from the literature: *strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships*.

Whilst the pilot study indicated the importance of these themes, the review of the various literatures in Chapter 3 also reveal how these areas have some underpinning in social media marketing practice. It was decided that a semi-structured interview will provide a fitting avenue for key informants to discuss their experiences and opinions of these three topics. Hence, a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate for satisfying the aims objectives of this study.

Rich data can be obtained from interviews, and with a high degree of validity, as participants are given free rein to describe and discuss the topic at hand (Saunders et al., 2015). From an operational perspective, audio recording of interviews allows for the ability to retain a large quantity of data. However, interviews have limitations and demand a skilled interviewee to elicit information from participants. Probing of participants is an important skill for interviews and which can be challenging for inexperienced researchers (Saunders et al, 2015). Further, interviewer bias is a significant challenge, whereby the interview consists of leading questions, or unconscious signals resulting in misrepresentations of participant opinions (Saunders et al, 2015). Interviews are also time-consuming, and transcriptions can be costly for the researcher. In terms of reliability of the data, issues are reported in the literature and should be heeded in a study of this kind.

Cresswell (2009) reports that due to the conversational nature of this type of interview, questions can be asked differently, and hence may produce differing responses. This is particularly important for studies which have small sample sizes and thus restricted opportunities to obtain information. Moreover, validity of interview data can be called into question, as it can be difficult to ascertain if the participant is telling the interviewer what they want them to hear, of providing false information (Cresswell, 2009). Accordingly, an interview protocol was developed to investigate the planning and measurement processes for creating social media marketing campaigns. An interview protocol was developed (Table 4-2)

4.5.3.1 Cognitive Mapping

As this research is specifically concerned with the processes and outcomes of social media marketing, it was deemed appropriate to utilise an elicitation technique to support semi-structured interviews. The chosen elicitation technique was cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping originated from Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory whereby participants describe their circumstances in order to make sense of the wider world. This technique has become popular in qualitative studies and is certainly appropriate for interviewing participants who operate in a creative industry. For example, Pinch et al. (2010) ultilised cognitive mapping in three creative design agencies, generating process maps for client projects. The results of this study identified numerous client-based challenges to progress which echoed the issues identified in the literature review (Pinch et al., 2010).

In the present study, participants were urged to describe their thinking while strategising and evaluating social media campaigns and the influence of the client relationship upon the aforementioned processes. The process of using cognitive mapping within the interviews involved a preliminary discussion, which outlined the goal of the exercise. Specifically, the participants were asked to sketch their approaches to campaign strategy development, and campaign evaluation. In doing so, colour coded annotations were encouraged to identify the key aspects of their approaches. Participants were provided with flipcharts - in some cases whiteboards where available. Black marker pens were used to describe the stages involved, blue markers indicated any elements of best practice and green was used to indicate areas where client relationships were important. Finally, challenges or issues associated with the processes were indicated using a red marker. Through this technique participants portrayed activities, offering examples of best practice as well as identifying any issues. Relationships and links between stages were also identified diagrammatically. As participants sketched, the interviewer used probing questions e.g., that's interesting, can you tell me why you put that there? In using cognitive mapping, Furthermore, participants had a visual record of the process they are describing in front of them. The maps were also used as a point of reflection at the end of the interview. At the end of the interview, maps were photographed and stored for analysis. Analysis of the cognitive maps adopted the same thematic categories generated through the coding process as described below in Section 4.5.5.

Table 4-2 Interview Protocol

Area of Inquiry	Interview Questions	Expected Outcome	Associated Studies
Strategy	*Can you describe your approach to developing campaign strategies?*	Identification of activities and specific tasks when developing campaign strategies.	(Gregory, 2000; McDonald, 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Dibb et al., 2016)
	What are the most important activies in developing campaign strategies?	Indicative stages are identified and scrutinised.	
	Can you illustrate your approach to strategy development?	Confirmation of components of prior strategy models constructs in social media marketing	
Evaluation	*Can you describe your approach to measuring the success of social media marketing campaigns?*	Conceptualise the evaluation process, as envisaged by the practitioners.	(Kaplan and Norton, 1993; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Murdough, 2010; Hanna et al., 2011; Töllinen et al., 2012; Ruhi, 2014; McCann and Barlow, 2015)
	Can you give some best practice examples?	Overall depiction of the process is identified and discussed.	
	Can you illustrate your approach to social media marketing evaluation?	Identification of activities and specific tasks when evaluating campaigns. Identify order of activity in evaluation. Stages are discussed and external and internal pressures are elaborated upon.	
	Are there any obvious links between the strategy and evaluation in your illustration?	Identification of connections between strategy and evaluation	
	What challenges to social media marketing evalution do you face?	Identify primary challenges, or issues faced by the practitioner in evaluating campaigns.	
Agency-Client Relationships	*Can you tell me about your client relationships?*	Identification of the various influences from agency-client relationships upon the processes of strategy development and evalaution.	(Murphy and Maynard, 1997; Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Waller, 2002; Grant et al., 2003; Lace, 2004; Davies and Palihawadana, 2006; Morais, 2007; Davies and Prince, 2011; Broschak and Block, 2014; Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Komulainen et al., 2016)
	What impact does the client relationship have on campaign planning and evaluation?	Gather insights into the influence of the agency-client relationship upon social media marketing strategy development and evaluation.	

4.5.4 Participants

Sampling in qualitative research aims to consider a representative group of participants which reflect the overall population (Fisher, 2007). A variety of sampling styles exist in business and management research, which are divided in to probability and non-probability strategies. The important aspect of the approach to sampling is that it matches the aims and objectives of the study at hand. The sampling method adopted by this research was purposive sampling. This type of sampling selects participants who are most appropriate for producing informed opinions on the research topic (Patton, 1990). This approach is also typically used where small samples are necessary (Saunders et al., 2015). As social media marketing strategy and evaluation are relatively under-researched areas, the study aims to gather data from a small sample of expert informants set producing richest descriptions of the processes and outcomes they experience. The participants selected under the purposive strategy were industry practitioners who performed social media marketing work in digital agencies.

Under this sampling strategy, participants must have prior experience in developing social media marketing campaigns for clients. It is important to point out that at the outset of this study, specialist social media experts were not common within the advertising and marketing sector, and participants tended to be marketing practitioners who also managed wider digital campaigns. The UK digital sector has seen a significant rise of social media in the marketing industry since 2010 (Statista, 2017e). Manchester and the surrounding region were selected as the destination where the sample would be targeted. The region has seen extensive growth since 2010 in terms of the digital marketing sector and numerous agencies were available to the researcher offering a central destination for travelling to and from interviews.

Therefore, to employ a purposive sampling strategy, searches were conducted through Google for local digital agencies offering specialisms in social media marketing. It became evident when approaching participant firms that a comparatively small number of digital agencies in the Manchester region that offered a significant social media marketing service for clients. More often, digital agencies would focus on search engine, email and mobile marketing, meaning social media would be

considered an add-on to existing services. Great care was taken to select participants who had direct responsibility for social media marketing campaigns.

A local digital and creative industry directory (Manchester Digital) was used a useful asset in performing further searches. A sample of twenty participants was identified (Table 4-3). This number of participants is consistent with previous qualitative studies that interview marketing practitioners (Lace, 2004; Killian and McManus, 2015; Felix et al., 2017). This sample is consistent with Cresswell's (2009) recommended number of participants for a qualitative study of this kind. It was noted that the interviews were generally confirmatory of the previous insights suggesting a saturation point had been reached from the sample of twenty participants (Bryman and Bell, 2010).

Potential interviewees were contacted through email, or in some cases by phone and were made aware of the nature of the research project. A consent form was also used (See Appendix 1) to outline the focus of the project, as well as the manner in which the interview data would be treated anonymously and safely stored. Furthermore, it was made clear on the consent form that the participant was under no pressure to divulge information that may endanger their current employment, or risk contravening the confidentiality of their clients.

The limitation of this sample is certainly the extent to which it represents the national, and global population of social media marketing experts. However, the region where the sample was drawn from (Manchester) possesses a thriving digital workforce with a large range of specialist agencies who have been operating successfully for a number of years. Table 4-3 identifies the profile of participants. The table also provides key information about the participants which was relevant to the context of their interview. Their title was deemed to be of important as there were differences in the respective role descriptions of participants who were in charge of social media campaigns. In some instances, a Head of Digital role in a small agency would be responsible for developing campaigns, whereas larger agencies had dedicated social media executives. Names of all participants were anonymised, as well as any clients mentioned.

As discussed in Chapter 2, agency-size, services offered and categories of clients are used to differentiate marketing agencies (Statista, 2017; WARC, 2018). Full-service agencies have significant resources available to provide a broad range of services. Medium-sized agencies would offer less services than their full-service counterparts. Small agencies tended to focus on their unique offering, often described as specialist agencies, which this study refers to as micro-agencies. Within the sample of interviewees below (Table 4-3), the type of agency is indicated as follows: micro-agencies (-10 employees), small to medium (SME) (10-250 employees), and full-service (250+ employees). The number of clients discussed in interviews was also useful in developing an understanding of agency-client relationships in strategy development and evaluation. Smaller agencies tended to have numerous small clients, whereas larger agencies worked with a smaller number of clients. Finally, the size of clients was also deemed to be important in terms of their influence on social media marketing practice. The categorisation of these adopts a similar framework as above: Micro (-10 employees), SME (10-250 employees), and Large (250+ employees). Client details and sectors were not provided in interviews in to ensure anonymity.

Table 4-3 Sample of Interviewees

Participant	Title	Size of Agency	Clients Discussed	Client Size
Renata	Head of Social Media	SME	4	SME
Celeste	Head of Social &SEO	Micro	4	Micro & SME
Andrea	Head of Social Media	Full-Service	5	Large
Julia	Digital Strategy Director	Full-Service	4	Large
Isabel	Head, Digital Marketing	Micro	4	Micro
Igor	Head of Social Media	Full-Service	3	Large
Lawrence	Head of Social Media	Full-Service	5	Large
Peggy	Head of Social Media	SME	3	Large
Isaac	Head of Social Media	Micro	6	Micro & SME
Alana	Head of Social Media	Micro	4	SME
Michael	Head of Digital Marketing	SME	4	Large & SME
Chris	Head of Digital Strategy	SME	6	Large
Diana	Director	Micro	3	Large
David	Social Media Manager	SME	4	SME
Lilly	Head of Digital Marketing	SME	6	SME & Micro
Paula	Digital Marketing Executive	Micro	3	SME
Cheryl	Social Media Consultant	Micro	2	Micro
Conor	Social Media Consultant	Micro	3	SME
Claude	Head of Digital Strategy	SME	4	SME & Micro
Roseanne	Head of Social Media	SME	3	Large & SME

4.5.5 Data Analysis

According to Huberman and Miles (1994), there is no perfect approach to analysing qualitative data. The aim of qualitative data analysis is to reflect upon the meanings within the results and generate insights from the collective perceptions of the participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). Three analytic procedures exist in qualitative research namely: *content analysis, grounded analysis, and thematic analysis* (Saunders et al., 2015). Content analysis focuses on the frequency of words and concepts within qualitative data. Next, grounded analysis involves the researcher intuitively developing themes from the data, which was also disregarded. Finally, thematic analysis involves the researcher coding interview transcripts to identify themes and patterns within the data. The latter was deemed to be the most appropriate form of data analysis for this study.

Thematic analysis uses a coding system which aligns themes identified in the literature and the data collected within the study. To facilitate qualitative thematic analysis, interview recordings were transcribed close to the time they were carried out to allow the researcher to reflect upon the interview recently conducted (Kvale, 1996; Bazeley and Richards, 2007; Saunders *et al*., 2015). Bazeley and Richards (2007) suggest qualitative data analysis should balance coding with reading, reflecting, linking and noting to facilitate more than one type of analysis. Lastly, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a framework that takes a pragmatic approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Table 4-4).

Table 4-4 Framework for Thematic Analysis

Early steps in analysis	Classifying and organising. Exploring each interview Searching for emergent themes
Exploring/describing	Exploring interviews Searching for themes Coding
Ordering/exploring	Coding Thematic analysis Mapping data
Drawing/explaining	Drawing a framework Explaining the findings

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994)

In analysing semi-structured interviews, themes and sub-themes were generated through a coding system (Catterall and Maclaren, 1996). At each stage of the analysis, themes and sub-themes were assessed and reassessed to identify relationships through a continual assessment of similarities and differences (Shaw, 1992). This iterative process produces themes that aid the foundation of theory building (Goulding, 1998; Shaw, 1992; Saunders et al., 2015). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that there are three main sources to derive themes: *utilise terms that emerge from your data; based on actual terms used by your participants, and terms used in existing theory and within the literature*. In the present study, the researcher applied open codes by combining all three sources. The themes and sub-themes derived in this research are listed in Table 4-5 with a brief description and illustrates how the codes

emerged from literature explored in Chapter 3 published prior to and during the data collection period.

To support a logical chain of steps from data collection to the development of a conceptual framework, the analysis began by organising and classifying the encoded portions of qualitative data. These portions of data were then examined for any relationships (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2010). Throughout the analysis, data is continually being considered for further patterns, or phenomena which may not have been considered by previous works in these areas. This iterative process of revising and adapting codes using the knowledge from published literature, was conducted until the key themes were identified (Saunders et al., 2015). When the data analysis offers no additional or new themes, a saturation point has been achieved and therein the reporting process can begin. Finally, the data was condensed, clustered, sorted and linked. This was vital in the analysis process as it guided the development of a conceptual framework, in which the aforementioned logical chain of evidence was presented (Miles and Huberman, 1994). After the interviews were conducted, respondents were asked to approve transcripts, initial coding and key themes identified, enabling clarity of the meanings in the data (Charmaz, 2010). This procedure affirms the validity and reliability of the data by isolating experiential knowledge from opinion (Stake, 2008). The logical progression of the findings culminated in the two conceptual frameworks presented and evidenced in the next two chapters.

Table 4-5 Codebook

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	Description of Code	Related Sources
Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	Situation Analysis	(S-PCR-SA)	Pre-campaign research or situation analysis performed	(Kotler and Keller, 2009; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015
	Campaign Objectives	(S-CO)	Devising campaign objectives for campaign strategy	McDonald, 2007; Peters et al., 2013;
Social Media Marketing Evaluation	Creative Campaign Decision	(S-CCD)	Decisions pertaining to media, message and channels for the campaign strategy	(Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012;
	Implementation	(S-IMP)	Strategic deployment of campaign strategy	(Nakara et al., 2012;
	Evaluation	(S-EV)	General discussion of campaign evaluation	(Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013; Ruhi, 2014; Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015)
	KPIs	(S-EV-KPI)	Discussion of KPIs in supporting evaluation	(Hoffman and Fodor 2010; Töllinen et al., 2010; Chaffey and Patron, 2012; Peters et al. 2013
	Metrics	(S-EV-MET)	Identification of metrics which underpin the evaluation process	(Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Paine, 2011
	Data Collection and Analyses	(S-EV-DCA)	Discussion of collection and analysis of campaign data	Emerged inductively from the data, but attributed to: Sterne (2010); Stavrakantonakis et al. (2012)
	Report Formulation	(S-EV-REP)	Generation of a campaign evaluation report	(Gunawan et al., 2008; Töllinen et al., 2010; Nakatani and Chuang, 2011)
	Management Decision-Making	(S-EV-MDM)	Subsequent decisions made based upon the outcome of the evaluation report	Emerged inductively from the data, but attributed to: Murdough (2010); Jeffrey (2013); Cvijikj et al. (2013)
	Challenges	(S-EV-CHL)	Challenges that arose in the strategy development and evaluation processes	(Ferguson, 2008; Duboff and Wilkerson, 2010; Murdough, 2010; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011; McCann and Barlow, 2015)

Agency-Client Relationship	Contractual	(ACR-CON)	Contractual agreements for ensuring a prosperous agency-client relationship	(Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Tate et al., 2010)
	Client Account Management	(ACR-CAM)	Strategies for ensuring a working relationship	(Michell, 1986; LaBahn and Kohli 1997; Halinen, 1997; Fam and Waller, 2004; Katarantinou and Hogg, 2009)
	Cultural Implications	(ACR-CUL)	Aspects of international and organisational culture which impact the agency-client relationship	(Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Moon and Franke, 2000; Prendergast and Shi, 2001; Wetsch, 2005; Hill, 2006)
	Co-Creation	(ACR-CC)	Co-creation of value between agencies and clients through collaborative decision-making in strategy development and evaluation	(Henke, 1995; Gould et al., 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000; Sasser and Koslow, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2008)
	Conflict	(ACR-CON)	Conflict that may arise within the agency-client relationship	(Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Kulkarni et al., 2003; Beard, 2010; Davies and Prince, 2011; Grant et al., 2012)

4.6 Writing and Presenting the Data

The final task of the research project was to report the findings of the project. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend adopting the role of the 'story-teller' when presenting the culmination of findings from qualitative data collection. Accordingly, the story being told highlights the most important aspects of the results of the analyses in line with the research aims and objectives. To ensure a coherent account of the analyses of findings, these are grouped into thematic sub-sections which paints a picture of the most pertinent concepts in social media marketing strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. The findings and discussion chapters present a rich description of the influence of agency-client relationships on the development of strategy and evaluation of social media marketing. Additional findings which do not come satisfy this overarching theme are detailed in the further research agenda in Chapter 8.

Chapter 5 will present the findings in relation to social media marketing strategy and evaluation. Findings relating to the processes and outcomes of strategy development and evaluation is social media are presented through two process models which are then combined into a conceptual framework at the end of the chapter. Chapter 6 will report on the findings in relation to agency-client relationships, before establishing the relationship between the three thematic areas of this study. Both of these chapters will present findings supported by selected quotations from participants to underpin the significance of the construct being presented. These models will conceptualise the overarching results of this study, identifying the significant factors that are relevant to strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships in social media marketing. Hence, these sections guide the reader through the chapter with ease in a logical fashion. Chapter 7 will reflect and discuss the findings in line with the knowledge and theory presented in the literature review. Chapter 7 will present the study's contributions to knowledge and theory in the area of strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. Lastly, Chapter 8 will reflect upon the entire study and will outline the outcomes of the study.

4.7 Ethics & Limitations

As this research is concerned with the opinions and impressions of marketers and their clients, ethical considerations which must be in place in a study of this kind. The nature of inquiry should be of an honest and open nature which respects the integrity of the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Confidentiality of data is paramount, owing to the commercially sensitive nature of the interview content. Anonymity of data was made clear to the participant at the beginning of the interview. Opportunities for the interviewee to should prefer to speak off the record were also facilitated when required. The identity of the interviewees as well as any reference to specific clients were anonymised as advised by Bryman and Bell (2010). An interview consent form contained full details of the ethical considerations of the researcher which was explained prior to the interview and was signed by all participants (Appendix 1).

4.7.1 Limitations

A number of limitations are evident with this study. This study considers the practices associated with social media marketing which is a rapidly-moving industry that displays considerable change over short periods of time. Hence, the processes associated with social media marketing have changed significantly since the beginning of this study. The author is also partially restricted to a specific sector and region of the UK and may not reflect the national, or global industry as a whole. Critics of qualitative research claim that it produces generalised findings which are not representative of the entire population. For instance, with the sample interviewed in this research, it is difficult to see the connection with the outcomes of this project and the wider population of social media marketers around the globe. However, it is noted that qualitative research does reporting on findings for entire populations of participants, but to undertake theory development.

This thesis argues that theoretical contributions from the sample interviewed are transferrable to the wider population of marketing practitioners who develop campaign strategies. Furthermore, the insights from this study are transferrable to the wider area of marketing agency-client relationships. Hence this study has adopted a logical, systematic investigation into the impact of the agency-client relationship upon social media marketing and makes valuable commentary for both theory and practice.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the ontological, epistemological viewpoint of the researcher within this study. The methodology utilised within this study has been provided in the attempt to address the research aims and objectives. The case has been presented for a qualitative, inductive study, positioned under the remit of social constructivism as argued by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as being the social construction of reality by actors, in this case the interactions with social media marketing practitioners and their clients in the generation of campaigns. Then, a discussion of data collection techniques, data analysis, validity and reliability of data, ethical considerations and limitations have been provided. In the following chapter, the results of the study are presented, having been thematically analysed.

5 Findings I: Social Media Marketing Evaluation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings that examine the processes and outcomes of strategy social media strategy and evaluation, as well as identifying the challenges embedded in those processes. The findings are presented in sections which support the development a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between strategy and evaluation.

5.2 Social Media Marketing Strategy

Findings revealed the extent to which social media features in most modern multi-channel marketing campaigns. Isabel who is the Head of Digital Marketing at a large agency indicates that social media marketing is usually part of a wider campaign, including offline and traditional media.

> *'You would never do a social [media marketing] campaign alone, it wouldn't make any sense, unless if you are a massive brand with huge brand recognition.' (Isabel)*

Thematic analysis of findings revealed the following stages of strategy development:

    i.   Pre-Campaign Campaign Research

    ii. Objective Setting

    iii. Creative Decision-Making

    iv. Implementation

    v.   Evaluation

    vi. Management Decision-Making

Several participant's approaches to strategy development differed slightly, however analysis of the data confirmed the six stages. Next, this section will explore activities at each stage, disseminating insights and presenting a holistic view of the social media planning process.

5.2.1 Pre-Campaign Research

Descriptor: Pre-campaign research refers to the analysis of an organisation's suitability for social media marketing.

Whilst the literature reviews point towards situation analysis as the initial step for organisations developing their marketing strategies, agencies begin strategy development with what the analysis revealed to be 'pre-campaign research'. This stage has a strong association with from situation analysis. This stage of the process was pivotal to the development of the campaign. All participants confirmed the use of a client brief in advance of a 'pitching' event. This process is typically in response to a written or verbal outline of intentions of the client firm, and the agency is expected to respond with a proposal of activities, which would lead to being employed to take on board a more rigorous planning activity. Diana, a director of a micro-level agency, stresses the importance of getting the brief mutually agreed at the outset of the planning process.

> *'It is important that all the way through you sense check what you think they mean so, "We have read your brief, and this is how we interpret it, so if this is wrong could you tell me now." (Diana)*

The goal of this stage is that the client would agree and sign a contract to pursue further social media marketing activity with the agency. Larger agencies, such as Ally's offered this campaign idea proposal as a paid-for service, encouraging clients to engage with the agency before commencing further in-depth planning.

> *'The first proposal is to get them to pay to go through the planning process. We do sometimes give the planning process away for free, but it depends on the client.' (Ally)*

Analysis of findings revealed a pre-campaign research stage generated insights in relation to the prospective audience and relevant media. Practitioners described their individual approaches to the first stage of strategy development and a variety of styles were evident. Paula, a Digital Marketing Executive in a small agency, explains how with her clients, she would begin by composing an outline of proposed social media marketing activity to the client before embarking upon the finer details of the campaign.

> *'When I formulate a new social campaign, I will give them very top-level ideas on a two-page document, listing all the ideas and the timings. Then once they have signed all that off it is then in-depth planning.' (Paula)*

Other participants described more sophisticated pre-campaign research using social media insights related to the target audience. Ally and Andrea, (Head of Social Media at a large agency) continue this theme, both espousing their unique approaches to pre-campaign research.

> *'We have a Content Flower, and we have a look at what people are searching for in search engines and what people are talking about in social media and we put those figures together.' (Ally)*

> *'We take quite a bit of time and make up a channel strategy, content strategy and an engagement strategy' (Andrea)*

Commercial or practitioner-based sources informed participants research at this stage; 'eConsultancy', 'SocialBakers' and the 'Social Media Examiner' were identified as the most popular amongst participants. Next, Paula describes how the latter resource is her most valuable resource in terms of informing her as to new developments in social media.

> *'There is a website called Social Media Examiner which is fantastic. It's like my bible. They will talk a lot about new updates to Facebook or whatever and then there's stuff like eConsultancy where they will give you a roundup of campaigns that are happening.' (Paula)*

Additionally, this stage would include a review of current and previous social media campaigns which achieved success.

> *'If I am suggesting a student campaign that's going to utilise Snapchat then I will go and research what other big brands are doing on Snapchat and then we can emulate that this way for our audience' (Paula)*

The importance of this stage has been lauded by several participants in deciphering the direction of the campaign, as well as supporting the finer details of the campaign decisions made at a later stage. This is asserted by Diana, who positions pre-campaign research activities as a core activity within her agency.

> *'Gathering requirements, consumer and brand insight, strategic recommendation, measurable creativity and that is the thing that is the core of our business. it's the thing that cuts through everything' (Diana)*

Further, the pre-campaign research stage was not restricted to providing a simple report for clients. Diana next explains how she conducted specific meetings with her clients to present the results of the research from this stage and how it impacts the direction of the campaign.

'There is no written brief for this particular project because what I have got is a situation where there are four stakeholders whose opinions need to be counselled. What I am recommending in this situation is that I host 30 min interviews with each of the stakeholders' (Diana)

Interestingly, a Head of Social Media in a small agency, Isaac, divulged how this stage would extend beyond simply investigating target audiences, but to explore dissatisfaction with a competitor agency.

'We will seek to find out their competitors, their USP's, what they expect from their marketing campaign, what they were unhappy with from their previous agency.' (Isaac)

In terms of operational details, the format of this stage varied between participants. For instance, Claude - Head of Digital Strategy in a medium-sized agency - used a questionnaire to uncover insights into the client's intentions.

'What we do is we kind of create a questionnaire for the client, so we will speak to the client and aim to get as much of it done as possible, so it is in their own words, this is what they expect.' (Claude)

Conversely, a subset of participants insisted on a face to face consultation to ascertain the clients desired intent from the social media activity. Alana – Head of Social Media in a small agency - explains her rationale for this preferred format.

'I would want to have a conversation to understand what was going on and not just necessarily with the marketing team, but ideally with a couple of people within the business. Go in and understand what the business is because the marketing is under its own pressures which are fed from the business, so if you can understand what the business problems are, you can understand what issues the marketing team are having to deal with and you get the truth behind it. So, your campaign has more meaning for them.' (Alana)

5.2.2 Objective Setting

Descriptor: Objective Setting involves the development of a desired or needed result to be achieved by a specific time within a social media marketing campaign.

Campaign objective setting was revealed to be a fundamental step in the planning process. All participants agreed interviewed who asserted the value of objectives and their relationship with the clients business objectives. Igor, who is the Head of Social Media at a large digital agency with a range of international clients, illustrates this as he argues the case for a clear link between the two.

'You need to have business objectives and marketing objectives in order to work out the rest' (Igor)

Marketing objectives were also reported as not straightforward to develop. Client firms were described as having unrealistic interpretations of objectives. Isaac elaborates this notion by stressing the need for decisive interaction with the client to discuss the agreed objectives.

'If we think their objectives are unrealistic, we will try and manage that, but it is really all about trying to get the results that they want so long as they are realistic. We have to still go and speak to them. You want to hear it from the horse's mouth' (Isaac)

Several participants mentioned clients difficulty in constructing social media marketing objectives. This was described as due to their lack of understanding of social media as a marketing channel. On the other hand, Alana who is the Head of Digital Marketing in a small agency describes how the use of benchmarks helped to support the development of highly-specific objectives.

'Yes, having a benchmark is important but instead of "grow awareness" you would say grow awareness by 5% so you have got something specific. Not just to show them that they are getting value for money but to cover your own back as well. (Alana)

Lastly, Alana suggests that one overarching objective for the proposed campaign should be agreed at the outset, based upon the initial research from the previous stage.

'What do you want to achieve? Who with? By when? Through what? You know all that stuff and if you can put it in one concise statement that is your holy grail ... That is the number 1 facilitator of success I think. (Alana)

5.2.3 Creative Campaign Decision-Making

Descriptor: Creative Campaign Decision-Making consists of the construction of an integrated marketing programme that delivers value to the customer by selecting appropriate and effective marketing channels through analysis of customer needs as well as identifying major channel alternatives and evaluating those alternatives.

Next, creative decisions were considered relating to the campaign audience, marketing messages, and the type of media selected. Analysis of findings established that the next stage in strategy development was to decipher the target audience, often

emerging from the pre-campaign research. Alana provides her preference to for the next stage in strategy development is to identify the target audience.

> *'The natural thing would be you might define here what success looks like and what the proof points are but what I would probably do is go into audiences, know who you are talking to.' (Alana)*

The pre-campaign research also generated insights into the most appropriate marketing communications messages for the target audience. Igor's preference is to identify the audience and then decide upon the type of marketing message which will be conveyed in the campaign. Considering the nuances of social media channels, this type of research was revealed to be useful in deciding the tone of voice the campaign should adopt.

> *'Understanding the audience we are trying to reach and what we are trying to say to them, when and where to reach them.' (Igor)*

As with the development of campaign objectives in the previous stage, industry and market reports were often cited as a useful source of information for the planning process. For example, an online consumer demographic database was used by Igor to inform decisions regarding demographic profiling of the target audience.

> *'we have this massive database for international consumer attitudes and it helps you work out demographic types with the statements. Using [Industry Report X] you can work out the size of the audience and also where they are in the purchase process. So, there are many different ways of doing the audience analysis.' (Igor)*

The development of audience personae was also prevalent in the planning process. Participants identify groups of consumers in a traditional segmentation exercise, culminating in a detailed profile of the social media user. Development of personae by Isaac proved useful for informing clients as to the proposed target audiences. This was a commonly cited technique used to convince a potential client as to the merits of social media marketing.

> *'From there we will go on and do competitive research, industry research, type of audience research and take that away and develop personas' (Isaac)*

In addition to the decisions made by agency practitioners regarding the target audience, an appropriate marketing communications message supporting the campaign is an essential aspect of the social media marketing planning process. With respect to the creative message of the campaign, a strong link between the objectives,

media and message utilised was also evident. Michael's synopsis of how he deciphers the suitability of media channels to specific marketing messages was also consistent with the accounts offered by other participants.

> *'We work out things like which media channel is most effective or which media channels together are the most effective. So, it might be like TV and digital is the best.' (Michael)*

Often, the research performed by practitioners would directly inform the media channel decisions via customer personae.

> *'We do competitive research, industry research, type of audience research and take that away and develop personas if the budget allows for that kind of thing and only then will we start to sit down and come up with some ideas, based on what they have told us, what their objectives are, what their audience wants.'(Claude)*

Social media allows brands to communicate with consumers using highly effective targeting methods. Head of Digital Marketing in a medium sized agency, Michael, suggests precision is a key factor used in convincing clients to invest in a social media.

> *'Your media plan should work out exactly how many people you will be able to reach' (Michael)*

As social media platforms offer their own sophisticated measurement software, it relies upon expert practitioner knowledge for the curation of large datasets. Hence, the use of social media data and the insights it provides is vital for Alana in developing strategy.

> *'You will have all your channels and all the insight that comes out of them' (Alana)*

Lastly, decisions surrounding media channels also impact the marketing message being conveyed. Planning is concerned with matching the right channel with the right message to the right audience. Similarly, the selection of media channels was a factor in determining in the type of marketing message communicated. Engagement with the target audience on Facebook, for example, would differ immensely to the style of interaction on Instagram.

5.2.4 Implementation

Descriptor: Implementation incorporates the tactical decisions which utilise the selected channels, delivering the campaign message to the target audience. In particular, with social media marketing campaigns this will involve promoting further online conversations with customers and brands. Implementation decisions typically take the form of a strategic communications delivery plan, utilising customer insights from the pre-campaign research stage.

Social media insights were found to directly influence the decision making in defining the operationalisation of social media activity. At this stage, participants were concerned with the tactical level of campaign activity. Implementation planning varied across participants' responses, such as the content plans referred to by Isaac which acted as an overarching guideline for campaign activity.

> *'We formulate typically a 3-month plan of action. Basically, setting out for the client exactly what activities we are going to do each month for that campaign.' (Isaac)*

Furthermore, Isaac continues to explain how this content plan also factors in responses on social media activity to specific seasonal events, such as Valentine's Day.

> *'For social media we will do trigger calendars for the upcoming 3 months, saying this is what's happening or what's topical, this is what we might talk about.' (Isaac)*

Furthermore, as two-way communication is a pivotal aspect of social media campaigns, the planning process must anticipate and respond to customers. Paula outlined her approach to engaging with customers on an *ad hoc* basis on social media, describing the challenges this poses to the practitioner to react to unforeseen circumstances.

> *'Most stuff is scheduled anyway whereas some stuff is reactionary. [Client X] prefer rather it than it just being off the cuff, they like the overarching' (Paula)*

5.2.5 Evaluation and Management Decision-Making

Section 5.3 will explore social media marketing evaluation processes in detail incorporating Evaluation and Management Decision Making stages. This section will reiterate the descriptors of each stage and then continue to present the additional

findings relating to the social media marketing planning process itself. The next section will explore the relationships between the planning and evaluation.

Descriptor: Evaluation is the process of measuring the performance of a marketing campaign, use of marketing resources to achieve measurable gain in return on investment and efficiency.

Descriptor: Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports. Often these reports are presented to the client with a view to informing future iterations of the same campaign, or alternative approaches to improve weaker elements identified within the reports.

Decisions relating to the proposed evaluation of the campaign are made in line with the outcomes of the previous stages. Furthermore, metrics and KPIs are identified as well as the tools for measurement are agreed upon. Reporting exchanges were described by participants either as part of a weekly, monthly, quarterly and in some instances, yearly event. Often, the reporting event would take place at a board meeting, held periodically with the agency team and their client's senior management team. A common theme within having this meeting was the requirement to meet with the client face to face, as Paula explained her schedule of presentation of campaign results at board meetings.

'There is normally a board meeting every month, so I will put my report together and then our Comms Director will go and present my findings and if there is anything specific they want to know about then she will drag me into it. So, they will get to see it face to face.' (Paula)

In summary, the constituent stages of the social media planning processes have been identified. Next, the chapter will examine the relationship between the stages.

5.2.6 Relationships and Ambiguities in Social Media Strategy Development

Evaluation and planning stages explored in the previous sections had relationships of varying degrees of intensity. Association between pre-campaign research and the setting of objectives is clear from the previous section, however the link between campaign objectives and the evaluation targets was also evident. Similarly, effective pre-campaign research was seen to guide measurement decisions and participants

alluded to the link between the pre-campaign research and the decisions in the selection of KPIs and metrics and to a lesser degree, in the formation of the evaluation report. It also became clear that the objective setting stage of the strategy development process was integral to the proceeding steps. All participants agreed the importance of the clear and established campaign objectives in guiding the evaluation procedures. Furthermore, wider business and marketing objectives should be aligned with the proposed social media activity.

The dedication to research on the target audience in social media marketing is an important finding. Participants indicated this was a pivotal part of strategy development and informs subsequent stages of activity. Insights from this stage assist in defining the campaign objectives and thus crystallising targets for measurement. Furthermore, participants intimated that decisions made around segmenting the target audience preceded all other activities in strategy development. Audience behaviours dictated KPIs and metric identification through specific aspects of the target audiences' online behaviour. Engagement factors such as sharing, commenting and other social media activities clarify the KPI. Finally, report generation and management decision making stages were influenced by the target audience. The report itself should aim to address the question of whether the campaign has reached or influenced the appropriate target audience. Whereas, the last stage will endeavour to reflect upon whether the campaign performed well enough, reached the right audience, and delivered the appropriate marketing communications message.

Turning to creative decision making in relation to marketing communications messages, strong influences existed within the evaluation stages and the ability to plan campaigns. More specifically, the message of the campaign offers an opportunity to define manifestations of user engagement. Hence, the identification of metrics and KPIs are defined in part by the marketing communications message. Analysis of findings showed that target audience responses to the marketing message can be measured at this stage. Further, evaluation will not only explain campaign performance of but also validate the outcomes of the campaign, suggesting a strong link between the marketing message and campaign report generation. Finally, evaluation offers the opportunity to reflect upon the effectiveness of the approach to

social media and practitioners are afforded the opportunity to review their campaign decisions.

An exceptionally strong link exists between the selection of media platforms and evaluation. Expressly, social media platforms influence strategy and hence determine metrics, KPIs and data collection and evaluation processes. As previously seen, participants use the platform-specific statistical information to inform their reports however, there is a tendency to create bespoke systems of measurement for analysis. Typically, reports took the form of Excel spreadsheets presenting data from multiple social media channels. Furthermore, the reports themselves would be responding to the campaign objectives which contained metrics, ultimately determined by the media selection.

Finally, evaluation would assess the viability of each channel selected, and considered in future campaign initiatives. A high degree of association between KPIs and the implementation stage of the campaign. As social media campaigns involve multiple channels working in unison, this creates a highly complex set of data to manage. Accordingly, implementation decisions will define in tandem with objectives, the most appropriate KPIs and metrics from the evaluation cycle. In reporting upon social campaigns, the process will query tactics of the campaign. Finally, the ultimate stage of evaluation will reflect upon whether the actions of the strategy was successful or not. Ideally, decisions at this stage will undertake a wider reflection bearing in mind the learning from the report to decide how to improve future iterations of future campaigns.

5.2.7 Proposing the Cycle of Social Media Marketing Strategy

Through the findings presented in this section, the insights into social media marketing strategy is provided. Figure 5-1 offers the cycle of social media marketing strategy. The stages have emerged from analysis of findings, as well as elicitation techniques employed in the interviews. Specifically, the stages involved are as follows: *pre-campaign research, setting campaign objectives, creative campaign decision-making (in relation to audience, media and message), implementation, evaluation,* and *management decision-making.* The cycle encapsulates the findings within the first

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major theme of the study (*strategy*) and offers a contribution to knowledge in the area of marketing strategy within a social media marketing context.

Firstly, the pre-campaign research stage highlights the importance of using social media data to inform strategic decision-making. Whilst this is akin to a situation analysis, the difference with this cycle is that subsequent stages of the cycle are informed by this stage, further cementing the pivotal nature of evaluation to social media strategy development. Secondly, the management decision-making stage is a notable contribution to knowledge. Findings indicate the importance of a reflective stage where results of evaluation reports were utilised to inform future campaigns. The marketing strategy models explored in the literature review appear to suggest that the strategy development ends when the campaign is over. However, evidence from this study suggests that social media marketing involves reflection using evaluation reports. Finally, the cycle established a set of stages grounded in empirical data that are useful to academics and practitioners. In suggesting the importance of pre-campaign research to social media marketing, it highlights the usefulness of social media data analysis which is a new perspective on marketing practice. It is also anticipated that this model is also transferrable to marketing practice beyond social media.

Figure 5-1 The Cycle of Social Media Marketing Strategy
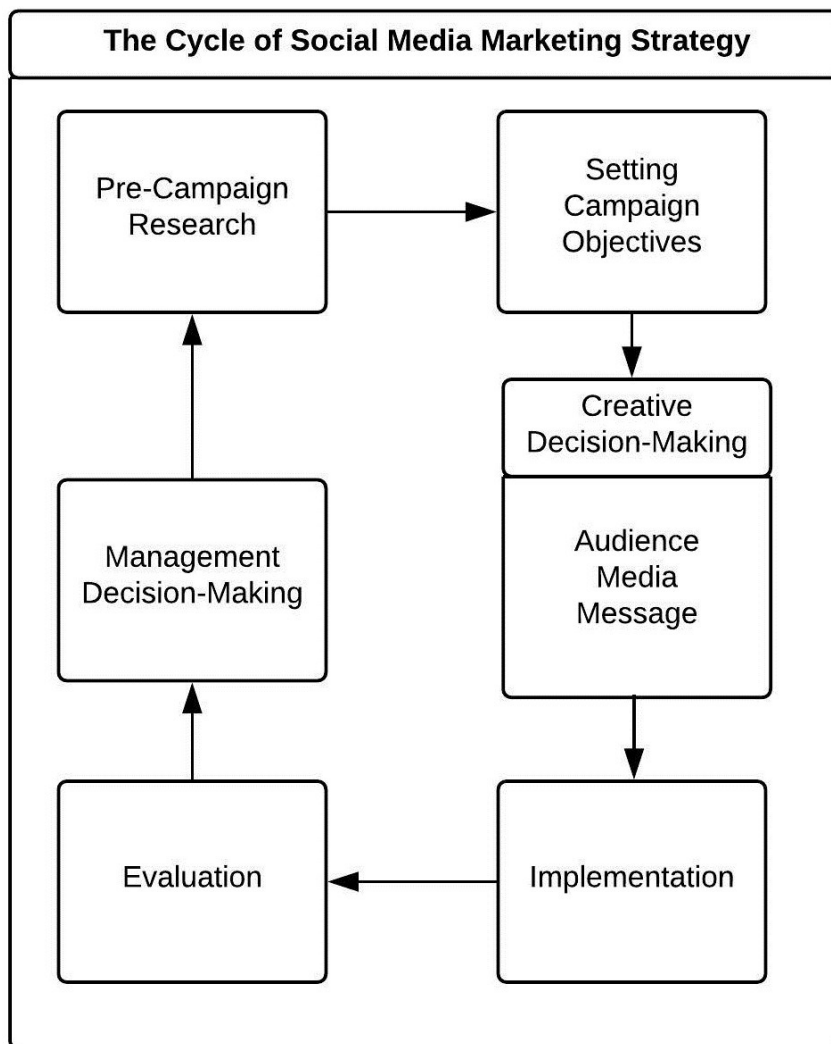
5.2.8 Challenges in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development

While participants were at ease in their descriptions of the planning process, many obstacles also emerged from the data. Consultant Cheryl indicated that they enjoyed speaking in a confidential setting in the interview which facilitated their ability to discuss challenges and issues and reflect on matters which were not appropriate to share with clients.

'This is great, this is like therapy!' (Cheryl)

One of the many obstacles to the ability to plan social media was client firm's not adhering to the implementation plan which had been agreed with the practitioner. This lack of compliance would detract from other aspects of the campaign and may risk compromising further social media interaction with customers. Paula explains in the

following extract, the challenges with planning and running competitions across multiple Facebook pages for her client.

> *'I manage the central [Facebook] page nobody, else touches that apart from us. Whereas, the [Client] pages themselves that are run by [Client] and they put out their own daily content, whereas I put out campaign content because if I was to manage all 50 Facebook pages, it would be a nightmare! So, if [Client] responds with the wrong answers to Facebook competition entries, that equals pissed off customers'* (Paula)

Similarly, Celeste (Head of Social and SEO in a small agency) expressed frustration with her clients who would ignore the agreed objectives of the strategy in place. She suggested that in some cases, employees of client firms can affect social media campaigns and thus compromise time and budget.

> *'The important thing here is understanding and tying it back to your objective and why you are doing it. That's where loads of people spend and waste money. Literally, they would be better burning it.'* (Celeste)

Widespread lack of understanding of social media posed a significant challenge to the ability to strategise campaigns. As social media marketing is still relatively new in comparison to its offline counterparts, it is a misunderstood marketing channel, as Alana highlights in this except.

> *'There are people in senior positions who just see success as the front page of the Sunday Times and as much as you can argue against it, that is the thing that will make them famous internally. Whilst you can get great results in social media, that doesn't matter because his boss is not seeing his brand in the paper on a Sunday morning when he's having a coffee.'* (Alana)

Participants expressed frustration with time-limited campaigns, because they felt that once a conversation and a relationship has commenced in social media it is 'impolite' and counter-productive not to continue the interaction. Michael sees these campaigns as less likely to achieve the desired objectives.

> *'For example, if you had a 2-week turnaround on a press release, then you would have the alarm bells ringing. So that's a very important thing.'*(Michael)

It is suggested by the findings that client representatives are overwhelmed by complexities of social media data. Lilly – Head of Social Media in a small agency - points out how this can deter the client from continuing with social media marketing activity.

> *'Clients just get bamboozled with data and there is so much and they just go a bit crazy with it. Whereas if you have your clear objective at the beginning it's finding the relevant data that reports back on that. But also, honest data because you can skew it and if you do that they will lose trust in you.' (Lilly)*

Descriptions of strategy development varied between the participants. Hence, this section will distil some of these variations in experiences and perspectives. Typically, larger agencies, with larger clients were afforded the ability to have sophisticated planning and evaluation processes. Conversely, smaller agencies would have a piecemeal approach to planning, due to financial and time pressures, as Lilly explains in her description of two client firms.

> *Smaller clients aren't really bothered, and then the client like [Client} they want all the stages in all of things and it is just absolutely crazy the level of stuff they need*

Another interesting concept which emerged was how 'Content Marketing' was also mentioned frequently between participants. This technique refers to the distribution of online content in supporting digital marketing campaigns and seems to indicate a shift in practitioner approaches to traditional planning methods. Conor, a social media marketing consultant who services three clients for social media marketing activities, provides an example of this technique in the following description of his social media marketing activities for a one client.

> *'I have built a website for them and I am now just embarking on a content marketing strategy.' (Conor)*

Lawrence – Head of Social Media in a large agency - continues to explain how the type of client would determine the extent of social media strategy development. Small clients would rely upon the marketers experience in determining the type of campaign which is most appropriate for them.

> *'Whereas for the smaller clients it's kind of up to us what we tell them. They just want to know what the end stats are.' (Lawrence)*

While the strategy development stages indicated are cyclical in nature, participants generally saw it as linear or circular format. Alana suggested that a spiral version of the social media marketing planning model was more appropriate. When asked to

graphically represent the stages, she produced a spiral diagram, with connections between evaluation process and the next round of planning.

> *'I would say if you are doing it properly 95% of the time you would have a full cycle and what we often do is to have a 3 year strategy or like a 5 year one so you get an objective that starts off from a problem but you almost predict how that problem is going to change each year so you can almost put like a 2D model it's more like a 3D spiral.' (Alana)*

Indeed, agency practitioners would often refer to their unique approach to planning and evaluation. In some cases, the agency in question would use their differing approach to strategy development as a factor in attracting potential clients at the initial pitching stages. For an overarching view of the variation in individual terminologies, the Table 5-1 presents descriptions of planning stages, with the participant identifier. Furthermore, Appendix 2 shows a cognitive map of social media strategy development, which indicates the descriptors used by a participant. Finally, a notable theme throughout the interviews was the impact of the agency-client relationship upon the decision-making processes in marketing planning. This will be explored in the next chapter and will offer further scrutiny of the impact of this relationship upon the planning and evaluation processes presented in this chapter.

Table 5-1 Variant Descriptions of Social Media Strategy Development

Social Media Planning Stage	Participant Variant	Participant
1. Pre-Campaign Research	Research Insights Brand Insights Desk research Benchmarking	Lilly Paula Diana Alana Paul
2. Objective Setting	Strategic Recommendations Facilitators of Success	Diana Alana
3. Audience Research	Consumer Insight Segmentation Profiling Personae Development	Paula Paul Diana Isaac
4. Message Selection	Creative Platform Hook	Alana Isabel
5. Media Selection	Creative Platform Measurable Creativity Channel Selection	Alana Diana Lilly
6. Implementation	Tactics Activation Just Do It!	Michael Alana Rachael
7. Evaluation	Reporting Observation	Ally Alana

5.3 Social Media Marketing Evaluation

The importance of social media marketing to modern marketing campaigns has been established. Campaign evaluation is fundamental to marketing practice. As reported in section 5.2, the ability to precisely measure campaign activity was cited by participants as the most valuable attribute of social media marketing for those using it. Analysis of findings revealed numerous insights into the processes associated with social media marketing evaluation.

Thematic analysis of findings revealed the following six stages in social media marketing evaluation:

    i.   Identifying Evaluation Objectives

    ii.   Identifying KPI

    iii.   Identifying Metrics

    iv.   Data Collection and Analysis

    v.   Report Generation

It was also discovered that despite the competitive advantages offered by social media, unique challenges in terms of measuring the performance of campaign activity. Whilst social media campaigns generate very large datasets, interpreting these datasets and linking that interpretation to marketing decision-making presents many challenges. Accordingly, the following sections will discuss each stage before presenting a holistic view of the process as well as presenting associated challenges at each stage. As the challenges discussed were more frequent than in the discussion of strategy development (Section 5.2), these have been incorporated as such.

5.3.1 Identifying Evaluation Objectives

> *Descriptor: Identifying Evaluation Objectives is the first stage of social media marketing evaluation in which there is a categorisation of specific desired outcomes of the campaign evaluation procedure which support wider marketing and overall business goals*

There was evidence that agencies were engaged in the identification of evaluation objectives, often with their clients. Social media evaluation objectives are typically developed in line with wider campaign objectives. Evaluation objectives reflect the desired outcome of the evaluation process. Igor illustrates, social media marketing campaign objectives have a strong connection with the strategic direction of their client firms.

> *'The strategy would link the business objectives through their communication and marketing objectives to create social media objectives and from there, we can see what the most important measures of success will be.'(Igor)*

More specifically, evaluation objectives attempt to clearly identify targets for what the process of social media marketing evaluation is hoping to achieve. Participants universally agreed with this stance, that the intention at this stage was to collect data on social media platforms which determined the success of the activity.

> *"We will count a fan as this, or a like as this, or a comment as this. And we had different categories, one was a soft engagement, one was a hard engagement, so the more you that you get to take part the more points it gets. You get almost a point scoring system…' (Ally)*

Varying degrees of complexity were presented in the participants' evaluation strategies, however the decision-making processes involved were highly influenced

by the client. For example, larger firms would engage in a thorough pre-campaign research phase, with collaborative development of evaluation objectives using customer insights and social media industry reports. Andrea highlights in the following extract how social media marketing campaign development involves a range of strategic considerations.

> *'We take quite a bit of time and make up a channel strategy, content and an engagement strategy' (Andrea)*

Furthermore, participants offered another perspective in terms of decisions relating to evaluation targets whereby clients and social media marketing practitioners would collaboratively develop targets for social media marketing evaluation, utilising social media data available. This differs from the expert advisor-client dynamic and offers a different perspective to this important process. This collaborative goal development is epitomised by Conor in the following excerpt.

> *'I have a very collaborative relationship with my client, so we are just endlessly talking about it, rather than discussing a formal report at the end of the month. So, it's a very kind of organic evaluation, in a sense of, "What do you want to do?", "Okay great let's do this."' (Conor)*

On the other hand, smaller agencies lacked the time or resources to perform elaborate evaluation activities. Renata, Head of Social Media in a small to medium sized agency, explained how with their four clients, there is little scope for strategic approaches to evaluation. In this case, and in many of the cases with the smaller agency participants interviewed, it would often be required to define the benchmarks for success in basic terms, such as the monthly increase in social media followers.

> *'Our clients expect a fairly basic report. Measurement isn't something they often want' (Renata)*

However, overall, participant's reflections upon evaluation objective setting displayed a high degree of precision, with clear goals and quantifiable targets. In the following extract, Alana explains how her agency attempts to incorporate as much precision in their objective setting to ensure clarity of performance for both the client and agency.

> *'Your objective is one thing and it might be to get awareness and understanding and to grow it by 5% amongst this audience over this time period, so you know what success looks like. But what you need to know is what are the proof points.' (Alana)*

5.3.2 Identifying Key Performance Indicators

Descriptor: The Identifying KPIs stage involves the selection of the most appropriate performance indicators which support the evaluation objectives and subsequently, the campaign objectives

Participants commented upon the use of KPIs as the preferred method for assessment of campaign performance. Moreover, participants outlined the use of KPIs in regular discussions with clients, supporting the ongoing performance of the campaign, and particularly, with longer term campaigns. Both Lilly and Ally are in similar positions (Head of Social Media) in a small agency and detail how they use KPIs for regular updates with their clients.

> *'We have a six-month project plan set up, so they know what is going to happen month on month…they know how well they are performing against the KPI.' (Lilly).*

> *'Usually we will say to a client that they are performing well against their KPI' (Ally)*

Relatively few participants could be prompted to further elaborate on specific KPIs and referred to generic interpretations of key performance indicators. However, participants who provided robust KPIs included details relating to engagement, reach, and conversions of social media users to direct sales. Lilly, for instance, spoke fluently about sales conversions through social media referral traffic as a KPI. Whereas Isabel explained how brand mentions on social media are a typical target they would use.

> *'So, for KPIs we would set for conversions, say month 1 in October, 50 social conversions…' (Lilly)*

> *'How many people are mentioning the brand. Social mentions are great because it shows it is getting the name out there…' (Isabel)*

Further, it emerged that the process of identifying KPIs is challenging for the practitioner, demonstrating it as an iterative process. Lawrence' agency is a small to medium sized enterprise which has three clients. As a result, the reporting function differed slightly due to having a larger marketing budget. Lawrence found that the targets being set were not as useful and he began to question the value of these campaign goals.

> *'…how we set those [KPI]was quite interesting. At the end of the year a lot of the targets were over reached, as we started doing advertising and*

competitions and more engaging stuff, so it became apparent that the targets didn't actually mean anything.' (Lawrence)

Interpretation of ROI was referred to by several participants, who highlighted the value of this concept in discussions regarding KPIs with their clients. Very few participants linked specific social media metrics to sales statistics. For example, Paula, who manages four small to medium sized clients, explained how ROI was prevalent in conversations with one client, who provided a calculation method for social media campaign activities.

> *They [Client] love ROI! People go into their website, making a booking which goes to sales team…the average booking will normally generate £30, so that is the figure what I have been told to work to' (Paula)*

However, sophisticated calculation of ROI proved to be elusive to the majority practitioners interviewed. The following extract from Renata offers an example of a social media marketing campaign that was specifically designed to support the calculation of ROI. She outlines how sales data was aligned with social media activity through use of an online coupon, which would therein be redeemed in store:

> *'We ran a Facebook offer, which we measured separately. That's in-store redemption only, run at one store in (Client Store). We know how much we spent and how much was redeemed so it was easy to run stats. There was a 14% redemption rate and it cost £2.50 per person that bought something.' (Renata)*

ROI also constituted a significant challenge to the practitioners interviewed. For Claude, he explains how he tries to explain the direct and in-direct results of social media marketing campaigns. However, clients were sceptical of these indirect benefits.

> *'So, one of the biggest challenges we have is demonstrating ROI. We can obviously tell them what we expect to happen in terms of KPIs and we can say we want to increase brand awareness and we want to improve people's image of you and demonstrate expertise and things like that, but when it comes to them paying for it as a service, it's difficult.' (Claude)*

It appeared that this was not only a common challenge for effective social media marketing evaluation, but also the most frequently asked question by their clients. Often, these measurement systems were intended to be used as time-saving devices aimed at streamlining the data collection procedure, however they also informed the

strategy development in highlighting KPIs for future campaigns. As Paula explains, Google Analytics allows for isolation of bespoke KPIs achievement which is defined as a 'goal'. These goals will undoubtedly inform the reporting function, but also offer a benchmark for future campaigns with her clients.

> *'Another thing is setting up sub tracking so that will be Google Analytics Goals'* *(Paula)*

5.3.3 Identifying Metrics

> *Descriptor: The Identifying Metrics stage will isolate the specific metrics underpinning the KPIs and which will need to be collected and enumerated in the evaluation process to achieve the specific evaluation objectives*

It was noted that the terminology for KPIs and metrics were referred to interchangeably by participants. However, many were clear on the value of identifying KPIs using composites of metrics, and to plan campaigns around these measures. However, observations such as this one from Michael, a Digital Strategist in a small to medium sized agency, identifies the delineation between the two.

> *'Metrics are just notches that you measure on paper. KPIs are really what you want to happen. I have found KPIs are a bit more like targets.'* *(Michael)*

Participants indicated that their selection of metrics was largely determined by the analytical tools available to them. Participant interviews were rife with mentions of metrics such as social media followers. Often, social media metrics were identified in conjunction with metrics from other digital channels, such as sales data from the client's e-commerce platform and website traffic through search engines. Michael exemplifies an array of digital metrics which are used in campaigns he manages where his role requires a more overarching view of all digital channels his agency utilises. In this excerpt, a weekly reviews of the metrics which are relevant for their clients are required.

> *'We will create a weekly set of metrics which includes followers, social growth, web site traffic referred to and from our social media activity and last click revenue.'(Michael)*

However, this was not always the case. Analysis of the data revealed how metrics used in other digital channels were difficult to use in conjunction to social media metrics. Roseanne - Head of Social Media in a medium-sized agency - highlights this

issue by outlining her approach was to collate a range of digital and offline metrics to support the overall campaign, however this was providing difficult to connect sales data to social media data.

> *'We are looking to see if we can attribute sales or emails or phone calls back directly to people coming from Twitter or from FB, or LinkedIn.' (Roseanne)*

Frustration with the efficacy of social metrics were revealed to be a significant challenge for participants. Participants were sceptical when discussing the value of such metrics. Ally typifies this sentiment in the following extract where she expresses dissatisfaction with speculative approaches to measurement in social media marketing.

> *'We make too many assumptions and there is too much guess work in social media marketing. I like to know exactly the effects of my marketing.'(Ally)*

Further, there was also concern in relation to the reliance upon statistics generated by social media platforms. Next, Lilly outlines how there is a misconception amongst the marketing industry whereby the ownership of the social media channels is misconstrued.

> *'You talk about social media as your owned channels, but they're not. They are owned by Facebook or owned by Twitter, you are just being permitted to use the technology.' (Lilly)*

Furthermore, many challenges to evaluation were suggested in the findings, highlighting the need for practitioners to improve their skills and knowledge in terms of evaluation. It was found that this was a common theme amongst participants as Paula highlights how online advisory sources are often informing decisions regarding metrics and KPI.

> *'I have a load of social media books and blogs. I sometimes get information from clients about what they specifically want reporting.' (Paula)*

Moreover, Paula also explained how advice from other social media marketing practitioners was indicated as useful in terms developing knowledge and awareness of best practice.

> *'I learn from practice, research and talking to people like other practitioners.' (Paula)*

5.3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Descriptor: Data Collection and Analysis entails obtaining metrics and KPIs from relevant channels for analysis, interpreting campaign performance

Most data collection makes use of standard industry tools in the collection and analysis of social media data. Despite their immediate benefits, the tools available to the participants came under intense criticism from most participants. Alana explained how she is sceptical of the evaluation software which are used in her agency.

'We use loads of different tools. Every man and his dog is trying to sell some form of evaluation tool but they are worth naff all because they don't talk to each other' (Alana)

The majority of participants referred to the use of Google Analytics as a standard industry tool for campaign reporting. For instance, Ally highlights the value of Google Analytics for her agency, in producing evaluation reports on social media marketing campaigns, but also provides insights beyond its basic reporting function. Hence, her referral to the additional value of the tool comes across in the following extract.

'We'll use Google Analytics a great deal and all the lovely stuff that comes with that.' (Ally)

Michael offers a similar view in recognising of the value of widespread use of Google Analytics, in particular how it allows collection and analysis of social media data in line with other digital teams within his agency. Notably, his agency, which has a number of global clients with large budgets, has a dedicated team for validation of media activity from an econometrics perspective. Thus, the value of transferrable data from Google Analytics is demonstrated in the following statement.

'Everything we do is linked up with the SEO guys, the Google Analytics guys and the econometrics team' (Michael).

After Google Analytics, Facebook Insights was the second most commonly mentioned social media marketing evaluation tool. Other tools mentioned were *Sprout Social, Hootsuite, Brandwatch, Radian 6, Sysomos, Buzz Metrics, Altimeter, Alterian, Meltwater* and *Coremetrics*. Paula and Andrea offer an example of the tools they used in the following excerpts.

'I dabble, so I use Sprout Social, TweetDeck, Hootsuite and Facebook itself' (Paula)

'After Google Analytics, we use Brandwatch mainly' (Andrea)

Despite the dependence on such tools, participants expressed dissatisfaction with their functionality and the statistical information that they provide. In particular, a well-known tool (Radian6) was criticised by others, such as Ally.

'It's [Radian6] just really clunky and hard to use' (Ally)

Whereas, the most popular social media platforms also came under criticism because of its limited ability as a reporting tool. Indeed, participants frequently provided opinions on the limitations of platforms to provide valuable campaign data.

'Twitter will literally give you nothing.' (Lilly)

'We use HootSuite for our day to day activity, it doesn't provide all the data you need.' (Renata)

The following extract shows how Igor focuses his critique of social media software is their lack of integration.

'No tool does everything you want in social media. If it doesn't measure real world business outcomes as well as correlate with other sets of information, it's not going to be very useful.' (Igor)

Furthermore, the type of data produced by these tools came into question, and critical reflections on the value of this data was evident. Alana offers a perspective on the value of campaign data in the following extract.

'Data on its own is naff all, so it's how you interpret it and that is a really tough, time consuming job, especially if you are working with offline media, you have got to manually search for all those key messages, or if you are working with online you have got to go through on a post by post basis and get all the individual impressions. (Alana)

As a result, it was agreed by participants that there was a requirement to continually search for new tools which collate data from several sources. Ally explains how a newly adopted measurement tool has enabled a change in campaign strategy.

'We've just found a new tool that helps us to look at it [data collection and analysis] a bit and we are going to change the strategy.' (Ally)

Consistent with this, a few participants detailed how they used bespoke campaign dashboards. In Lawrence' agency, a bespoke dashboard was collaboratively developed for one of their large clients which incorporated pre-agreed KPIs and metrics for the campaign.

> *'We've also built them an online dashboard account with a login and the API app pulls stats every forty-eight hours from Facebook and from Twitter. They come on and report every week' (Lawrence)*

However, despite this highly proficient dashboard system, Lawrence stresses how metrics and tools are in a continuous state of flux, which is impacting upon social media marketing evaluation processes.

> *'Metrics change on such a regular basis and the Industry standards fluctuate so that much, that it is so difficult to keep up.' (Lawrence)*

5.3.5 Report Generation

> *Descriptor: Report Generation is performed by compiling KPIs and metrics into a presentable format, highlighting the overall campaign performance with other notable insights from the campaign*

As ongoing campaign data collection is completed, reports are generated for clients. All agencies engaged with this process as part of their contractual responsibilities. Participants all described campaign reporting as a procedure where initial campaign objectives were presented against the actual performance of the campaign in a formal report. Further, reports focussed upon specific KPI, as agreed with the client, offering an opportunity for the practitioner to explain the performance against the agreed targets. Written reports, often showing quantitative measures were at the centre of most reporting. However, the size of these reports varied significantly.

> *'Every Monday morning the report will be literally straight off Facebook…which will be just to show new likes, unlikes (sic), comments; it will have pretty much everything in about twelve columns and the percentage increase/decrease from previous weeks.'(Andrea)*

However, it was also evident that few client firms saw value in reporting. For one of her clients, Celeste adopts an *ad hoc* approach to evaluation, often due to extraneous pressures exhibited by the client.

> *'I think that completely depends on the clients. I will prepare a little mini report, but I maybe simplify a little bit and say Facebook fans went from this to this.' (Celeste)*

There was some disparity as to the optimum frequency of reporting with daily, weekly and monthly reports being provided for clients. Frequency of reporting differed with

the type and size of the client. Larger clients for example, would demanding more frequent reporting, whereas Alana's small clients would receive a monthly report.

> *'We would probably give it to them every month so that they can see it. We just do it in a really easy way, say 1 sheet with a couple of graphs on it and a couple of lines of text, they don't want more than that.' (Alana)*

Reporting events often culminated in a face-to-face meeting, supported by documents, spreadsheets, or PowerPoint slides which present the campaign performance data.

> *'I would say weekly we send either a small PowerPoint or e-mail report, occasionally Excel; then monthly always PowerPoint and usually face-to-face.' (Ally)*

Interestingly, a minority of participants preferred to structure data for the client themselves. In these cases, practitioners use Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, to combine and distil information from the various social media performance datasets. Accordingly, this approach allowed them to identify key trends and outcomes linked to the KPIs and metrics.

> *'We don't use anything that just pulls the data for us because we have got an amazing tech guy who built a report that pulls metrics plus KPIs so that everything updates automatically.' (Lilly)*

Furthering this, participants created specific dashboards for campaign performance figures with large clients, such as Lawrence' example. Through these dashboards, clients could interrogate the datasets themselves, offering a window into the campaign performance in real-time, based upon a design template which was mutually agreed.

> *'They do that by using the dashboards to pull the figures themselves. Every month there is a report which they [Account Manager] go in and type some information into and then the report generates itself ready on A3 format for them to save off as a .pdf and then they email that to the client to talk about at their monthly meetings' (Lawrence)*

Lastly, as reporting processes were normally part of a contractual arrangement with individual clients, there was considerable variation in reporting practices with clients. However, it was noted by Isabel and Andrea, a client's reporting requirements were heavily dependent on their budget.

> *'it really depends on the client and how much they will pay for the evaluation'(Isabel)*

> *'… we have to be realistic, it is going to be down to what the client can afford' (Andrea)*

5.3.6 Management Decision Making

Descriptor: Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports. Often these reports are presented to the client with a view to informing future iterations of the same campaign, or alternative approaches to improve weaker elements identified within the reports.

Decisions based upon campaign performance data are the culmination of most evaluation procedures. This final stage of the social media marketing evaluation process typically involved a discussion around the contents of the report between the agency and their clients. This stage acts as the basis for decision making regarding the next iteration, or future social media campaigns. Agency and clients would work together on this, a key part of the process is typically a collaborative event during which the performance of the recent social media activity is discussed.

> *'So, it is sort of working out what clients' actually need to see and what shows that we are actually doing our jobs properly' (Lilly)*

It was suggested that a frank and open discussions about all aspects of the campaign was pivotal in improving future campaigns.

> *So, we will have regular discussions where they say we want to do this, or make an app for this, or run with these figures in the next campaign (Lawrence)*

Alana provides an example of how negative performance is equally as important to discuss, alongside positive campaign results.

> *'So, we take the data, interpret it and put what it means next to it and also it's not a bad thing to say, "Oh this didn't work that well, it's not a bad thing to change it to this going forward." There's no reason that people should hide away from saying that because that's digital, its constantly changing. (Alana)*

The reflective nature of the reporting process was also evident with management teams on both agency and client sides taking on board knowledge produced from the information presented. Paula explains in the last large report she made, she altered the metrics towards engagement, as opposed to reach.

> *'The last kind of report I did, I did look at of engagement and unique clicks that we were getting, rather than just being like, oh so that process has reached 30,000 people because you have spent £100. But who cares if you have reached 30,000 people, when you actually want to know how many people liked, comment, shared or clicked on the link' (Paula)*

Finally, the link between decisions made at this stage and the initial campaign objectives was evident, suggesting a cyclical, or iterative nature of social media marketing evaluation. Alana provides an insightful perspective of how insights derived from the measurement process feeds into future campaign objectives.

> *'The insight that you pull out of measurement impacts on your future objectives.'*
> *(Alana)*

However, some participants expressed concern over evaluation reports were not being read or used in subsequent decision-making. This posed a significant challenge to the practitioner who would have compiled a significant report, with suggestions for improvement, or enhancement of the future direction of the campaign. Ideally, this activity should assist both the client, and the agency in their campaign decision making, however, often this knowledge is ignored, as Lilly explains.

> *'Some of them [Client Executive] won't even look at it, they will circulate it in their office and no one will read it. Sometimes, we just send it over and we get nothing back' (Lilly)*

5.3.7 *Conceptualising and Defining Social Media Marketing Evaluation*

Informed by findings presented in the previous section and considering the previous marketing evaluation constructs examined in the literature review, Figure 5-2 presents the cycle of social media marketing evaluation. Participants commented on the shape, structure and flow of the processes, reflecting its cyclical form. In the following sections, the chapter will present a definition of social media marketing evaluation, before presenting challenges associated with the cycle.

A number of contributions to knowledge emerge from this model which address the second theme of the study (evaluation). Firstly, it adds to the body of knowledge relating to marketing campaign evaluation highlighting the level of effort participants would apply to campaigns. Of particular relevance is the notion of an objective that provides a goal for the process of campaign evaluation. This is an original finding which adds to the understanding of modern approaches to evaluation. Not surprisingly, a number of factors dictated the sophistication of evaluation procedures, such as tools and softwares, budget and client awareness of social media. The collection and analysis of data is an important aspect of this process of which little is

understood in the previous literature. However, dashboards were observed to be common in the generation of campaign reports. Lastly, the management decision stage is also a significant feature of the evaluation cycle. This stage was observed to be pivotal to understanding the performance of the campaign, including areas of underperformance, to better inform future campaign strategy development.

Secondly, the influence of the client relationship in the process was an original finding and adds to our knowledge in the field of marketing. Client awareness of social media was a distinctive factor in determining the level detail within campaign reports. However, it was also significant that the size of client firms as well as their marketing budget would also play a role in the campaign evaluation that was performed. In some instances, workshops were held with clients to introduce the requirements of social media marketing evaluation leading to collaborative decisions. Whilst participants suggest the importance of a co-creative relationship in strategic decision-making, it appears that campaign evaluation is particularly agency-led task.

Figure 5-2 The Cycle of Social Media Marketing Evaluation
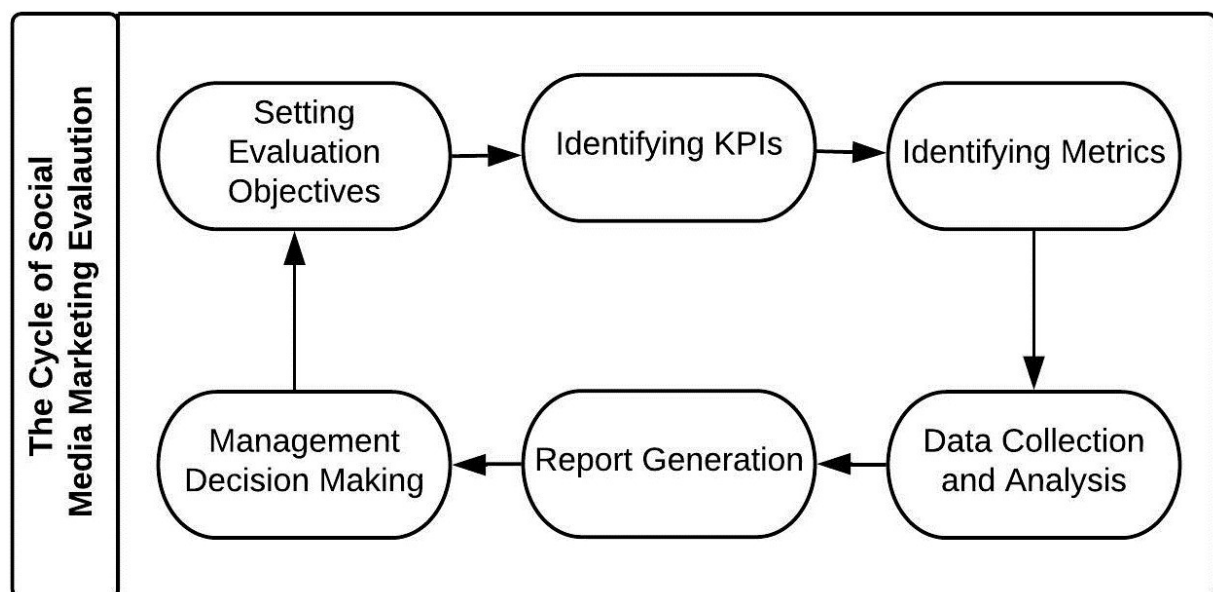
The chapter has explored component parts of the social media marketing evaluation and provided a model of process in Figure 5-2. The process emerged inductively from the empirical research conducted. On the basis of this and considering the various descriptors adopted in the previous section, the following definition is offered:

Social media marketing evaluation is a strategic management process that commences with the setting of evaluation objectives, proceeds to the selection of appropriate KPIs and metrics, involves the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, to populate metrics and generate insights, which are distilled into report format and concludes with management decision making that influences future social media marketing objectives and strategies.

This definition considers the process of evaluation from a social media marketing perspective and consideration for the initial goals of the campaign. In considering these factors, it is envisaged that this definition will inform social media campaign strategy and the intricacies it possesses.

5.3.7.1 Further Challenges in Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Turning to the challenges described which were not strictly tied to specific stages of the previous section, the following overarching challenges were provided by the analysis of participant data. The most commonly cited challenge was available budget. Allocation of budget in discussions with clients posed a significant challenge to the ability of the practitioner to plan and evaluate social media campaigns.

> *'it really depends on the client and how much they will pay for the evaluation'(Isabel)*
>
> *'and again, we have to be realistic, it is going to be down to what the client can afford' (Andrea)*

In addition, there was evidence that on occasions, agencies were faced with unreasonable client expectations in terms of what they would pay for. They reported that the agency would regularly perform tasks that were beyond the billable hours agreed with the client firm.

> *'[Colleague] spends about 2/3 hours a day talking to them and creating stuff, and then if [Colleague] writes a blog page, that's additional time as well, and then we do reports on top of it. That's not really been paid for, that's really in our retainer.' (Celeste)*

The dynamic nature of social media was also presented as a challenge to both planning and evaluation of campaigns.

'Social media changes all the time. It is like a full-time job just trying to keep up with what Facebook is doing, LinkedIn, Snapchat or whatever so it is good when clients actually understand the actual nature of social media. It's really dynamic; it's really diverse so it's changing style all the time. There's new updates, you can't do this, you can do that, so it's frustrating' (Paula)

Notwithstanding the above comments, virtually all of the conversations relating to challenges, included the relationship with their clients, which will be explored in more detail in the next section of the findings.

5.3.8   A Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Considering the validation of the components of strategy development and evaluation by participants, this section presents a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing. Elements from evaluation, and planning cycles are aligned as had been described by participants. Thematic analysis confirmed the position, order and links between the respective cycles.

Furthermore, interviews employed a cognitive mapping elicitation technique whereby practitioners drew the two processes using flipchart and markers as part of the interview. Thematic analysis was also used to identify the key elements of the cognitive maps developed by the participants. The same coding rationale (See Table 4-5., Section 4.5.5) was applied to the maps to identify patterns within the various stages of strategy development, evaluation and the influence of the agency-client relationship. In doing so, the analysis of the cognitive maps were pivotal in deciphering the stages of the cycle of social media marketing (Figure 5.1), the cycle of social media marketing evaluation (Figure 5.2) and the Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation in Strategy Development (Figure 5.3). The analysis also highlighted the various descriptions of activities at each stage, which are detailed in Table 5-1. Examples of cognitive maps are provided in Appendix 2.

Figure 5-3 draws together the first two themes of this study in a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development. In combining the respective cycles of strategy and evaluation, an overarching representation of social media marketing is provided. Activities from the two cycles are

aligned into groupings that indicate phases of the social media marketing campaign, namely: *pre/post campaign decision-making, strategy development, ongoing campaign activity,* and *evaluation.* These elements of campaign activity have been aligned as a result of analysis of the findings. Relationships between the stages were also a key feature in the findings and are identified in the framework using a colour coding system. Strong links between strategy development and evaluation processes emerged from the findings and these are highlighted using coloured arrows in the framework. The green arrows indicate how strategic decision made at pre-campaign research stage influence the stages of activity during evaluation, such as identification of metrics. Blue arrows indicate how the strategic objectives inform the creative decision-making, as well as elements of the evaluation processes. In particular, campaign objectives influence the format of the campaign report, suggesting a strong relationship between analysis of the campaign and the strategic objectives created during the strategy development.

In combining the two cycles into the framework overleaf, it also reflects the previously mentioned new contributions to knowledge in strategy development (Section 5.3.6) and evaluation (Section 5.3.7) in social media marketing. However, this framework also provides a number of new contributions to knowledge. Firstly, the present study contributes to knowledge and practice by offering new insights into campaign evaluation and strategy development, as well as the interfaces between the processes. The framework offers additional stages to strategy models and evaluation knowledge explored in the literature review, specifically: *management decision-making, data collection and analysis,* and *report generation.* Whilst the other stages of activity are grounded in previous knowledge, this study of social media marketing offers the opportunity to understand how practitioners undergo a strategic decision-making in campaign development.

Secondly, the framework highlights the pivotal importance of the outcomes of complex data analysis to the social media marketer. By establishing the relationships between evaluation and strategy development, the study suggests that the role of the practitioner in a social media marketing context is one of analyst and strategist. Previous knowledge relating to campaign decision-making indicates that marketers

experience is a key factor in making creative decisions, whereas this study suggests that modern marketing decisions are made on the basis of data analysis.

Thirdly, the utilisation of campaign evaluation is a key contribution from this study. The outcome of the evaluation processes is a review of the social media marketing performance. It is clear from the framework that these insights are used to inform future campaign activities and strategy development. This continuous cycle represents a novel finding from the study, whereas the previously held models suggests that performance evaluation ends with the campaign. However, due to the fast pace of change in social media, there is a need for practitioners to react quickly to changes in the marketplace. In doing so, social media marketers appear to develop strategy in a continuous loop that is highly reliant upon evaluation.

Figure 5-3 Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation in Strategy Development
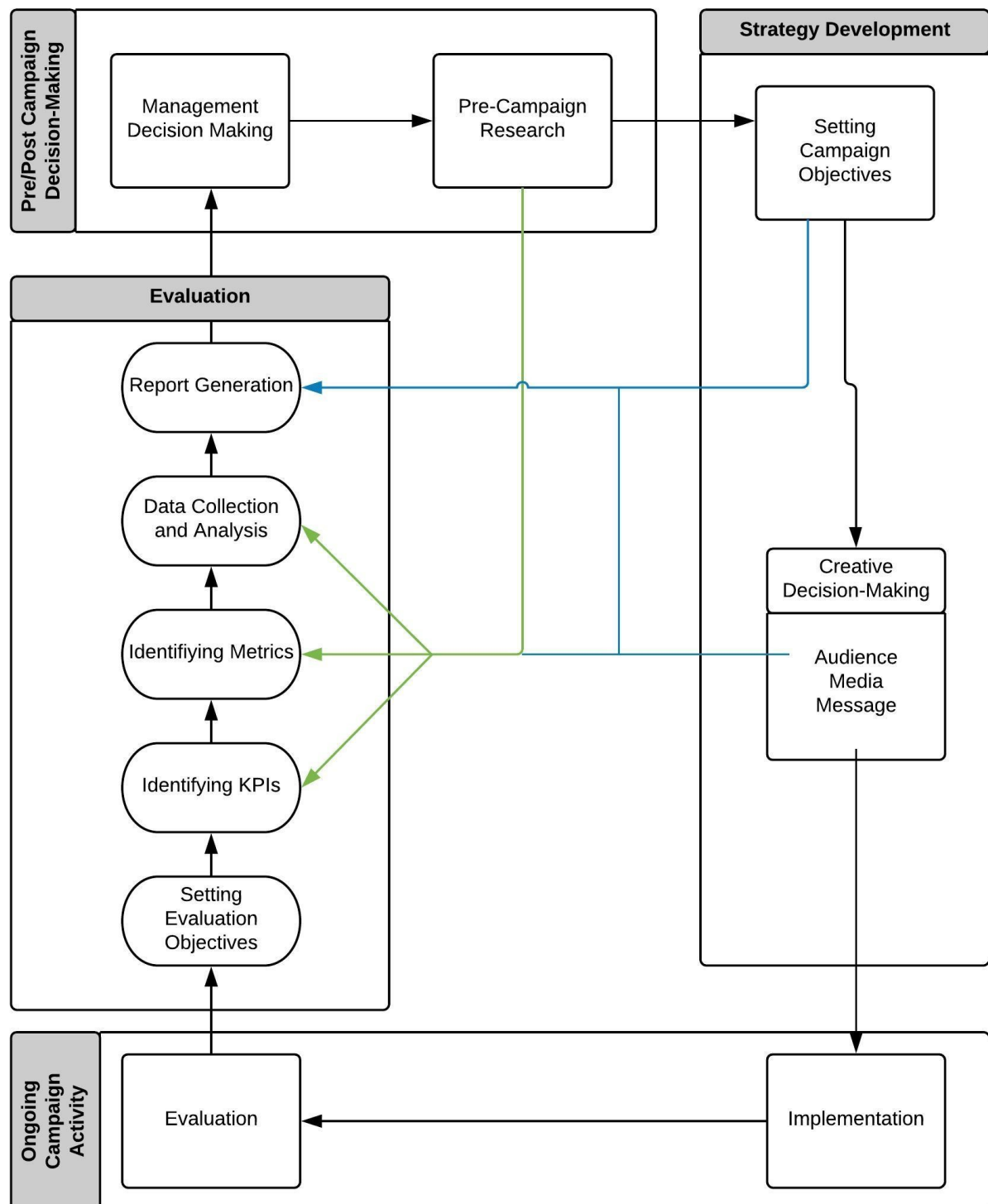
5.4 Summary of Chapter

The processes of social media marketing strategy development emerged from the findings. Several findings revealed how in the main, participants followed a linear process in terms of social media campaign development. These stages of the planning process would ultimately build upon the prior campaign information, or other available social media data available. Typically, industry reports or social media insight sources would inform decision making at this stage. Hence the importance of social media marketing datasets is again asserted in the planning process. This chapter also reported findings on the ability to evaluate, a pivotal aspect of social media marketing. Specifically, the chapter has categorised and conceptualised social media marketing evaluation.

This chapter concluded with the presentation of the conceptual framework and links between the two processes are explored. Varying types of social media activity was also reported upon by participants and were rounded up in this chapter, as well as associated challenges to planning and performing campaigns. Adopting the prior knowledge from the previous two models, influences, commonalities and conflicts between two processes were evident from the data and hence, the proposed framework is a key contribution from this research.

Finally, this chapter has presented the empirical findings of this research relating to social media marketing evaluation. In doing so, an exploration of strategy development and evaluation processes has been provided. Key themes were identified at this stage and have furthered our knowledge of social media evaluation, and practitioners provided accounts of their individual approaches to evaluation practice. These findings are important because they reveal that marketing practitioners have developed bespoke procedures to plan campaigns. Moreover, these findings assist in addressing the research aims and objectives.

6 Findings II: Conflict and Co-creation in Social Media Marketing

6.1 Introduction

The findings relating to the agency-client relationship are presented in this chapter. It begins by providing an overview of the participant descriptions of client relationships in social media marketing. Next, the context of agency-client relationships is explored by presenting the findings in relation to contractual arrangements, cultural implications and client account strategies. Then, conflict factors in the agency-client relationship are reported, before exploring the findings relating to co-creation in campaign strategy development and evaluation. The findings are presented in sections which support the development a conceptual framework that illustrates how agency-client relationships influence strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing.

The agency-client relationship is an important area in both academic and industry circles. Both sides of the agency-client dyad are developing their competences in this area and feel vulnerable with regards to their relationships with each other and the potential performance of campaigns, as well as the level of their investment. They are seeking to manage the relationship using traditional approaches which are based upon contracts, responsibilities and clearly defined roles. These are difficult to specify in complex and rapidly changing digital environments, particularly with the advent of social media. Social media marketing agencies believe that the ideal agency-client relationship is a collaborative one, i.e. working together on planning and managing campaigns. However, they are frustrated by clients' expectations, which are too frequently based upon limited knowledge, expertise and familiarity with social media. Consequently, agency-client relationships experience tensions, leading to situations in which both parties need to manage conflict within the relationship. In this process, communication is also pivotal as are a variety of contextual factors. This chapter reports on findings that examine the influence of the agency-client relationship upon social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. In doing so, it offers valuable insights from an agency perspective into B2B relationships in rapidly evolving industries, sectors and areas of practice.

6.2 Client Profiles

All participants indicated that the agency-client relationship was vital to the success of their business. Participants also acknowledged how no client relationship was the same and both organisational and personal factors play a role in defining it. This is highlighted from the findings by Andrea who reveals how important the agency-client relationship is to heir agencies in the following extracts,

> *'Some brand managers are really hands on and some are not. It's really down to the person, as well as the company' (Andrea)*

It was also revealed how clients were attempting to enhance exchanges with their agencies during regular campaign updates and quarterly/annual meetings. Thematic analysis of transcripts uncovered how descriptions of the relationship could be categorised as follows: media awareness, campaign involvement, analytical nature, length of relationship, age profile, and client size.

Awareness of media, specifically digital and social media was the most common category within agency-client relationship descriptions. A spectrum of media awareness was found in the analysis of findings namely: *'Unaware', 'Purporting', 'Fully Aware'*, and *'Savvy'*. The first clusters of client relationship descriptions were categorised as *'Unaware'* in terms of media, with such clients lacking any knowledge of the capabilities of social media. Ally elaborates how this type of client relationship tends be commonplace with small to medium sized firms and hence why they will be approaching the specialist social media marketing practitioner.

> *'Yes, smaller clients that come to you definitely don't know anything about social media' (Ally)*

Participants also commented upon these client's reluctance to pursue social media marketing. To illustrate, Isabel explains in the following excerpt, how a client was interested in undertaking it but decided against it after a consultation meeting. She revealed how after receiving a briefing, the client declined to pursue any further discussion, for fear of damage to the reputation of the brand. In essence, the client firm was unwilling to put themselves in a position of scrutiny by social media on such a public platform.

It's a bit of both, we do have a lot more people asking should we be doing this social media. But a lot of them tend to be terrified of all the things that could go wrong. So, it's a case of doing some training to show them how a business can actually use it without embarrassing themselves or making a mistake which can cause some real problems. (Isabel)

The next description of clients is '*Purporting*' to know about social media marketing. This type of relationship was noted for unfamiliarity of social media, despite assertions to the contrary. This agency-client relationship poses a significant challenge to practitioner's ability to strategise campaigns. Numerous accounts were recorded whereby the client decision making process in strategising campaigns was grounded upon questionable motivations. For example, Lawrence explains how one of his clients is paying for social media marketing services whilst not really knowing why.

'The majority of the time, the old traditional companies only do it because they think they should really do it' (Lawrence)

However, agency-client relationships were also described whereby there was a thorough awareness of the capabilities of social media as a marketing channel. Isabel and Isaac provide descriptions of their clients were described as '*Fully Aware*', or even '*Savvy*' indicating.

'[The Client] are actually pretty switched on. You would be surprised they are really take to blogging and Twitter across the board' (Isabel)

'It depends some of them are smart and they know what it's going to take and know it's different from how it used to be' (Isaac)

These two descriptors of agency-client relationship are of great value to the agencies; however these were described in as much detail as the more challenging relationships above. Therefore, social media awareness is a key component within the agency-client relationship.

Next, the level of campaign involvement by the client firm was used as a category for describing the agency-client relationship. Three levels were produced from analysis of the findings: '*Hands Off*', '*Demanding*' and '*Collaborative*'. Lawrence describes how one of their contracted client firms were '*Hands Off*' acknowledging the agency as the expert in terms of media and social media marketing decisions. This position of consultant expert-client relationship emerged in several interviews, especially for smaller client firms.

> *'Whereas for the smaller clients it's kind of up to us what we tell them, I suppose'* *(Lawrence)*

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Lawrence as describes the agency-client relationship with his other client as '*Demanding*'. Interestingly, despite the negative connotations in this description, this type of agency-client relationship was seen to be very helpful to the strategy development processes.

> *'They [Client] are quite demanding and their requirements are very specific, so that's very helpful'* *(Lawrence)*

Finally, we have the '*Collaborative*' agency-client relationship reported as the ideal scenario by Andrea and echoed throughout the other participants views of the agency-client relationship. Collaboration in strategic decision-making is a theme which emerges much later in this chapter and supports the establishment of context of the agency-client relationship within this section.

> *'Clients like [Client Name] are very much collaborative and they will say, "Do you think we should be giving this social media thing a go?" and we will be like, "Yes, yes, absolutely," and we go that way'* *(Andrea)*

In another descriptor of the agency-client relationship, client appetite for analysis and dissemination of campaign data was used to describe the relationship, specifically: '*Analyst*'. For example, clients were defined based upon their analytical skills, often expecting insights into media usage of the client's target audience. Julia (Digital Strategy Director) and Peggy (Head of Social Media) provided useful examples of these in the following excerpts.

> *'One is really analytical, one isn't that analytical'* *(Julia)*

> *'Some clients just want millions of graphs. All you can do as an analyst is explain your findings'* *(Peggy)*

Finally, the '*Boffin*' agency-client relationship was observed, whereby with both parties are heavily reliant on data supporting all decisions. Familiarity with data, analytics and insight is seen to be a core construct in the agency-client relationship, according to Ally.

> *'I'm like a boffin basically. I like sitting there with my spread sheets and saying, I think we should do this'* *(Ally)*

Participants also used years of association as a descriptor of the agency-client relationship with *'Old'* and *'New'* clients appearing frequently in interviews. *'New'* clients required more attention to foster and encourage a relationship, whereas *'Old'* clients would have a firmer base of mutual understanding and awareness of each other's strengths, weaknesses and operating procedures. Chris, for instances, described his clients while interviewed in terms of the number of years they have worked together.

> *'We have got 5 or 6 clients that have been with us over 10 years' (Chris)*

It also emerged that the age of the client was also used to describe the type of agency-client relationship. Due to lack of familiarity, or fear of reputation management, older client executives were perceived to less likely to involve their brand with social media marketing. This poses a significant challenge, as the aim of agency is to enlighten the client in terms of this new form of advertising hence, length of working history with clients is a significant factor in the ongoing relationship. Alana highlights the struggle that she faces with clients who she describes in terms of age.

> *'The older people are the more they struggle to embrace new technology because they don't understand it and they don't identify with it' (Alana)*

Finally, the size of the client firm has been used to describe the agency-client relationship, with both '*Large'* and '*Small'* clients who demanded different amounts of attention respectively. Generally, the larger the client firm, the more intense the level of planning and management is required, whereas the opposite applies to smaller clients. This was observed by several participants, in particular Lilly and Julia, who describe both sides of the spectrum.

> *The smaller SME's that we work with, some of them anyway and they aren't really bothered, just say thanks and keep on tweeting! (Lilly)*

> *The client like [Large Client Firm], wants monthly content planners with every piece of content and what the objective is… it is just absolutely crazy the level of stuff they need. (Julia)*

Overall, it is useful to observe the varying descriptions of the agency-client relationship to further understand participant perception of the client relationship, and how they will approach strategy development and evaluation for clients with different types of

relationships. Also noteworthy is how the descriptors here have emerged inductively from the interview data, and as such are representative of the agency-client relationships within social media marketing in general. Further into this chapter it will be evident how the agency-client relationship plays a significant role in the decision-making processes in strategy development and social media marketing evaluation.

Next, the chapter will explore the thematic areas identified in the literature review, under three primary categories of agency-client relationship findings: context, conflict and co-creation. Thus, within these categories, the chapter will go on to explore how within the context of the agency-client relationship, contractual arrangements, cultural implications and consultation techniques are prevalent. Furthermore, the chapter will then hone in on how conflict emerges between agencies and their clients, and how co-creation is lauded as the ideal working scenario.

6.3 The Context of Agency-Client Relationships

This section of the chapter begins by examining the wider context of the agency-client relationship in social media marketing. The chapter begins with an exploration of the types of contractual agreements in place in day to day social media marketing practice. Then, the cultural implications which have to be considered between the agency and their clients is explored. Finally, the communication strategies between both parties is unravelled further. By doing so, this section of the chapter outlines how the contextual aspects of the agency-client relationship affect strategy development before offering a wider examination of conflict and co-creation in the agency-client relationship.

6.3.1 Contractual Arrangements in Social Media Marketing

> *Descriptor: Contractual arrangements are binding agreements between the marketing, advertising, public relations agencies with their customers which identify and confirm the agreed series of tasks which will be performed, as well as the intended outcomes of the campaign. Client Account Management teams will play a significant role in this process, together with the specialist social media teams within the agency.*

Contractual arrangements and obligations between the agency and the client firm were often referred to in defining the shape and nature of the agency-client

relationship. Seven contractual arrangements were provided by participants, which will be explored in this section. These complex arrangements dictated the expected outcomes and level of involvement in the development of social media marketing campaigns. B2B contractual agreements play a role in determining mutual responsibilities. This section will describe and discuss the contractual arrangements recounted by participants.

Analysis of findings showed the most commonly described as a '*Full Service*' contractual arrangement. Such clients enlist the agency for a full suite of marketing activity extending beyond social media services. This agency-client relationship is one which requires careful nurturing and regular communication to ensure that the client is pleased with the marketing work being performed and will consequently enlist the agency's services in the future. Hence, under this arrangement, the agency will exert significant time and effort to ensure this client is satisfied with every aspect of the work being provided. This agency-client relationship was revealed to exert significant pressure on the agency to display a high degree of efficiency. The impact of the *'Full Service'* contractual agreement was reported as most challenging in terms of planning and management of social media marketing campaigns. More specifically, the predominant challenge reported by participants was in managing the expectations of the *'Full Service'* clients. Social media manager David divides his descriptions of his clients on the basis of this type of contractual arrangement.

> *'So pretty much it's full service or more tactical stuff' (David)*

Next, another commonly described contractual agreement was the '*Retainer*', whereby the client firm sub-contract specialist agencies solely for their social media marketing expertise. Retainer contractual arrangements are made with a fixed fee for the social media marketing services being offered. In some instances, these are seen to be more lucrative to participants than a '*Full-service'* scenario, as less client account management is required on the part of the agency.

> *'Whereas someone like [Client Firm] who are a retainer client, who are retained just for social media marketing' (Andrea)*

Consequently, this relationship will have a much higher degree of time and energy dedicated to maintaining it on behalf of the agency. Contractual agreements such as these were portrayed as putting increasing demands on the client relationship as well as the agency performance. However, agencies were often required to perform tasks beyond what was contractually agreed.

> '[Executive] probably spends about 2/3 hours a day creating stuff, that's additional. Any time that we go in for strategy or planning meetings, that's not really been paid for, that's not even in our retainer.' (Julia)

Commonly cited was the role of the social media specialist as 'Consultant'. Participants confirmed this contractual arrangement, whereby they were required to assist and advise upon strategy, however not implementing the marketing activity themselves. Client firms would often hire consultants purely to advise upon strategy and identify overlooked areas of their marketing communications output. Many participants confirmed that they had this arrangement with some of their clients.

> 'I think [Client] looks at me as being more of a digital strategist' (Celeste)

Another contractual arrangement reported in the findings is 'Supportive'. Here, a client may already be contracting the agency for other digital marketing services (e.g., Search Engine Optimisation) but does not immediately require social media marketing service. However, through an additional offering to their current contract, the agency will offer support by way of free social media consultancy.

> 'One of which is a tactical support kind of client, so they might have a particular promotion or a particular objective' (Igor)

This type of arrangement is often a fruitful one and relies on a good pre-existing relationship. Assuming the relationship is in a good health, the likelihood of the client requesting additional work was perceived to be greater. This informal contractual relationship would often involve a consultation/workshop as to the merits of social media, with a view to escalating the client towards a 'Retainer' style arrangement.

Clients with less interaction than under the previous arrangements are described as 'Ad hoc'. Herein, the practitioner is requested to provide notional social media advice to a client who had enlisted a separate service within the same agency.

> *'if a client books one day of photography they often request ½ day asset creation for social so we advise on how that might work' (Peggy)*

This type of relationship was predominantly reported as being informal and different to the consultant role, which involved simply advising the client as to the capabilities of social media. Like the '*Supportive*' agency-client relationship, the purpose of this type of client engagement is to move the client towards a *'Consultant'* or *'Retainer'* type of agreement, in addition to the current marketing services provided. Similarly, the relationship with a client who has minimal demands in terms of social media marketing, was described as a '*Basic*'. This descriptor refers to clients who would have simple needs in terms of social media support, by comparison to other advertising platforms. This contractual arrangement is demands a high degree of involvement by the agency, however more recognition for the work performed is acknowledged. As Isabel describes, the client is comfortable to allow the agency to proceed and the agency is not actively seeking to enhance this relationship as such.

> *'For a client like [Client Firm], there isn't much channel strategy, they do what they feel like doing' (Isabel)*

Lastly, Ally described how their agency adopted social media work for several charities, without a formal fee agreement.

> *'We are only just starting to be the social media agency for 3 charities that have come on board that are really just social media with us and that's it' (Ally)*

This '*Charitable/Philanthropic*' arrangement was a unique client relationship, whereby the imposition of budgetary considerations, and pressures associated with fees were absent. A relationship like this based upon philanthropy, implies that this relationship is built upon a different dynamic to its predecessors above. The relationship with this client will ideally enhance the reputation of the agency.

In summary, contractual arrangements, despite being intended to define and delimit the work involved in social media, exert positive and negative effects upon the agency-client relationship. Contractual arrangements also generate tensions when the boundaries of agreed work are exceeded, posing challenges to any potentially co-productive B2B relationships. Further, arrangements relating to contracts are also pose a strain upon the client account management function of the agency, as the client

account management teams are constantly striving to ensure their clients are satisfied, irrespective of how unrealistic their demands are. Finally, analysis revealed that the intention of contractual agreements is to drive clients towards a co-productive relationship, which is discusses later in the chapter.

6.3.2 Cultural Implications in Agency-Client Relationships

Descriptor: Marketing, advertising, public relations agencies and their customers poses internal and international organisational cultures, which dictate how they conduct themselves in business. Organisational and societal cultures play a significant role in agency-client relationship and needs to be adhered to by both sides of the dyad.

Organisational and international culture is an important construct in B2B practice and is an area worthy of exploration. Particularly within marketing strategy development, cultural differences can place significant challenges on the agency-client relationship. Culture in this section of the findings entail both organisational culture (approaches to marketing practice) as well as international cultural implications (language, or other cultural norms). Interestingly, it is noteworthy that findings did not elicit a rich vein of insights in this area, however a small proportion of interviews suggested the importance of this theme.

6.3.2.1 Agency Cultural Implications in Social Media Marketing

Each participant provided insight into their inherent culture relating to practice to some degree. In most cases, the specialist agency had an 'in-house' approach to planning social media, and broader digital marketing activity. Larger agencies have some well-defined processes of developing strategies. Smaller agencies tended to have an ad hoc approach, when dealing with small client firms.

> *'So, gathering requirements, consumer and brand insight, strategic recommendation, measurable creativity and that is the thing that is the core of our business on our Brand Wheel out there, so it's the thing that cuts through everything, then implementation.' (Diana)*

Smaller agencies would advise clients as to the capacity of social media marketing and make the case for investment in this type of marketing. Often, the specific approach to strategy development was itself used to encourage clients to avail of their

services. In each interview participants were encouraged to clarify the terms they would use within their agencies for planning and managing social media campaigns. As Andrea describes, complex marketing planning procedures can convince clients that the agency possesses an intelligent and robust approach to planning. Therefore, the organisational culture in terms of marketing practice can set the tone in terms of how they will move forward in the agency-client relationship.

> *'Our triage process is kind of like a big flow-chart for our clients; is this a positive or negative comment, you will know if it is genuinely a negative comment. Then the engagement strategy has two sides; there is the proactive and the reactive.'* (Andrea)

6.3.2.2 Client Cultural Implications in Social Media Marketing

Conversely, client firms were described as having cultural differences which imposed upon the agency's ability to perform tasks. Numerous accounts were provided whereby clients would dictate specific actions to be completed in line with their internal organisational culture were provided. Indeed, it was observed that participants employed a malleable approach to client demands, despite disagreeing with them. Analysis of findings uncovered the respect that agencies had for their clients' organisational culture. Client influence upon strategic decision-making processes showed how an internal cultural motivation would dictate these decisions. Often, the client representative would be pivotal to decisions relating to marketing messages being portrayed. However, deference for other cultural approaches may ideally lead to a co-creative partnership, or to a situation of conflict between both parties.

> *'We will say, "Let's do a male focus," and she will be like, "[Client X] want us to push these and we have that new video that we want to be talking about as well," so we just have to be really dynamic. (Celeste)*

Hence, cultural deference can encourage a collaborative working environment and thus ensure a longstanding agency-client relationship. Similarly, agency account management teams ensure differences in respective organisational cultures are managed effectively. Indeed, adaptation to the different cultural demands is seen to be of importance to maintaining a working relationship. Adaptive cultural strategies were often the case in the smaller agencies, who faced intense pressure to perform given their dependency on short term contracts. To illustrate further, the following

excerpt explains a discord which exists between participant and a public relations agency. The disharmony stems from a significant difference in cultural approach to marketing, more specifically, between a marketing agency approach and public relations approach to promotion of the clients' brand.

> *'Because they are a PR company and they always think of PR it's not always the way that I would think of things in a marketing way, so we will have discussions where they say we want to do this, or make an app of this or run these figures and I will say, "Well what we have seen from other clients doing this, the best thing to do would be this".' (Claude)*

6.3.2.3 Global Cultural Implications in Social Media Marketing

International cultural attributes were described by participants as affecting the agency-client relationship. Within the sample of participants, (agencies with national and regional clients) a small set of participants were contracted by large international clients. Conversely, few participants were employed to tackle one aspect of the client firm's demands, but were not involved at regional, or international management level.

> *'I am sure our [Client] brand managers do their reports to the kind of heads of the countries, or you know whatever that is, but we don't get to go near those, definitely not' (Ally)*

However, larger agencies were seen to deal with international client firms on a regular basis. In this extract, Andrea describes how a large client firm from Far East Asia dictated, to a high degree of specificity, the way the agency would approach and communicate with the client firm, suggesting cultural deference is required on the part of the agency.

> *'For example, with [Client] everything has to go on an A3 piece of paper. They specify that with all of your [PowerPoint] slides you have to say what you have to say within 20 seconds, there is no point in you saying it ... you should see how tiny the font is but all your data has to go on this A3 piece of paper ... it's very much a very strict, straight to the point approach' (Andrea)*

Finally, the following excerpt describes how a large international pharmaceutical firm, based in the US, intervened upon the social media work of one participant due to legal requirements. The level of scrutiny applied to the existing social media content was significant and posed a significant challenge to the ability of the practitioner to perform.

'The lawyers said, "You have got un-moderated patient comments on your [Social Media] presence." This is a company asset and if you rightly or wrongly go on a forum and say, "Yes I took this and my leg dropped off etcetera." then that is a notifiable incident. We had to pull Twitter feed and similarly on Facebook, we just had to put it on ice whilst the lawyers in the US debated amongst themselves, the marketing team in the UK, and you know we just had to stop.' (Conor)

This situation was further exacerbated by the international client firms legal team making unrealistic social media suggestions, irrespective of the 140-character limit on Twitter:

'There was actually one occasion when they said, "Well you will have to put all T&C's into every tweet.'(Conor)

Cultural attributes of both agency and client organisations, and international cultural norms, exert pressures upon the development of social media strategy. Indeed, in some cases cultural considerations create unhelpful situations between agencies and their clients. Furthermore, the ability to adhere and adapt to each other's cultural position, goes some way to enable the co-creative agency-client relationship. Finally, it should be noted that despite the importance of organisational culture, limited responses within this area were provided in interviews.

6.3.3 Client Account Management

Descriptor: Client Account Management is a function within marketing, advertising and public relations agencies whereby employees are responsible for the management of the relationship with specific customers. While the client account management team typically does not engage in marketing work on the account itself, they are expected to manage the relationship with the client of the account(s) they are assigned to, and to address any concerns on behalf of the customer.

After providing participant descriptions of agency-client relationships, the chapter will now explore the client account management initiatives. Management of client accounts seeks to avoid and alleviate conflict as well as guiding relationships towards collaboration. It is widely recognised that achieving a longstanding B2B relationship was not achieved without careful nurturing. Specialist client management personnel are employed to facilitate harmony between agencies and their clients, leading to a collaborative dynamic between the parties. However, a mutually beneficial relationship

depends upon the nature of the client and their propensity to work with the agency. This section now presents the analysis of findings in relation to the management and nurturing of the relationship.

6.3.3.1 Relationship Building Techniques

Client account management was predominantly reported as a task employed by the agency to ensure collaborative decision making in terms of campaign ideas, selection of media channels and engagement with social media audiences. Details of these account management actions varied across participant views, however the most common approaches included regular planning and review consultations where client sentiments were identified in relation to satisfaction with the work being performed. Often, workshops were used to elicit a system of clients' impressions of the campaigns which were being developed as well as addressing any issues that may have arisen. These workshops were key to developing the direction of campaigns, as well as cementing the relationship with the client.

> *'We have a kind of consultation, so we get our team and their team around a table and we start asking the right questions, understanding their aims and objectives.' (Alana)*

Furthermore, participants saw their role as not simply informing, but also educating their clients in terms of media as well as technological capabilities. Therefore, workshops are key in developing the relationship with clients through an open exchange of information relating to social media.

> *'If we are not entirely sure that they are ready yet, we would give them some training, what we think they should do, and they make a decision off the back of that for whether they should commit to it' (Isabel)*

However, as one participant reflected, the danger of clients who were not so willing to take this consultation on board also posed problems.

> *'Sometimes you risk compromising a campaign to give them the figures that they want, rather than the figures that the business needs.' (Ally)*

A client such as this adds further strain on the agency-client relationship and may require the attention of the client account management team within the agency. There was also a perception that asking too many questions of the client, especially in the earlier stages of a relationship, may be detrimental to the agency-client relationship.

> *Quite often we will have a list of questions that we will seek to get answers for when we come from that meeting. We don't want to keep bothering them. (Isaac)*

6.3.3.2 Communication Strategies

Communication between both parties is a vital element of the agency-client relationship. In most cases, open exchanges of views were encouraged by agencies from their clients, however at times, communication of complex concepts was difficult, partly due to a lack of social media awareness. Therefore, participants reported how they adapted their style of communication, omitting complex data and relying upon rudimentary statistics in terms of campaign performance.

> *So yes, we kind of keep it simple for them … just the basic stats of what they need because you can go so deep with social media analysis because you do get a lot of information, but it should be kept to the top level. (Lawrence)*

On the other hand, larger client firms adopted a position of scrutiny. In stark contrast to smaller clients, they would typically adopt a more rigorous approach to enquiry in campaign discussions with the agency practitioner.

> *'With [Client Firm] they like the detail … they are constantly asking questions and you know if you are unprepared for it you can get blindsided'. (Celeste)*

It was revealed that the size of client a determining factor in the communications strategy, which was a consistent theme in this study. Celeste's description of this engagement is noteworthy, whereby a careful approach to communication was required for fear of offending the client representative.

> *'I think with [Client Representative] it can do because she needs explaining and you don't want to patronise her'. (Celeste)*

A significant aspect of communication is the transfer of knowledge between the two parties and this also emerged as a significant theme in client account management practices. Conveyance of data, and insights was given significant attention by participants. For example, the need for visual representation of data was required for presentations for the client, a practice commonplace with modern marketing industry professionals.

> *Yes, I think part of the challenge we have as an agency, you are trying with all that huge data at the bottom, you can chuck as many excel files over to your client but a lot of people working in marketing just need visuals. (Chris)*

However, information transfer was not necessarily limited to strategy development and reporting. Social media marketing techniques were imparted to the clients by specialist experts. Training was often provided by the consultant for client firms on how to manage elements of their social media marketing offerings.

> *'I've had one client who had built a successful business, but they never really had to find the brand before so they got a bit of a freebie of how to work the brand, which I had to do to show them, this is how you do social media.' (Lilly)*

Regular communication with clients was identified as further strengthening the relationship.

> *It's quite important to us that clients like speaking to a human each time because some agencies will send an automated email with this is your performance etcetera, we are very much about the return on the people's investment that we are making because we treat their budgets as our own and we want them to feel like we are part of their team and that means having that sort of contact. (Lilly)*

Lastly, communication can move clients towards a co-creative dynamic, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. In summation, communication between both sides of the agency-client relationship emerged from the findings as a significant construct which would both create tensions and alleviate conflict.

6.3.3.3 Multi-Agency-Client-Relationships

Frequently, multiple marketing, advertising and public relations agencies would be employed by larger firms to integrate a broad range of channels within one campaign. Common amongst the participants' descriptions, multi-agency-client relationships would pose challenges to ability to plan and perform social media marketing. Furthermore, complex multi-agency relationships pose a significant strain in terms of operationalising the campaign.

> *'[Client 1] doesn't actually have a marketing department in the UK. They have buyers and product managers, but their marketing department is [Agency 2], which does all their marketing. [Agency 3] does all of their PR for the UK so really [Agency 3] is our client and [Client 1] is their client. [Agency 3] are the ones I suppose that challenge us to say, we want to know this, we want to know how to get this information, this is what we want' (Lawrence)*

Multiple digital agencies actively working on larger campaigns with one client presents a difficult relationship for the agencies to perform, putting pressure on the agencies to perform effectively, while also vying for the attention of the client. Often the multi-

agency dynamic creates tension between the agencies, where a competitor agency may seek to undermine them in discussions with their client.

> *'What else is interesting, when one of the other agencies like [Agency X] for example, they want to do the social media, so they will do a little bit of nit-picking to kind of go: "You know if we were doing social media we would have reported on this, this and this." So, we are quite often being prodded [by the Client] to do things that the other agencies think we should be doing.' (Ally)*

6.4 Conflict in the Agency-Client Relationship

Descriptor: Conflict within the agency-client relationship comprises of a state of disagreement and disharmony between agencies and their clients. Tensions between both parties can be overt, or covert which can manifest in agency meetings and client communications, both online and offline. Several factors can lead to conflict across the dyad, leading to a partial, or complete breakdown of the, or a reparation of the relationship.

Analysis of findings revealed how conflict regularly occurs between agencies and their clients. Conflict in the relationship can significantly affect the ability to plan and manage campaigns. Thus, an unhelpful working scenario can result in the dissolution of the relationship. Accounts of conflict were provided by all participants who described the debilitating effect of poor working relationships upon social media marketing. Further, six sub-thematic areas of conflict emerged from the analyses. Out of these, four sub-themes were identified as having the greatest impact: *agency performance, campaign performance, campaign decision-making, and communication*. Factors exerting lesser significance were *personnel policy changes*.

6.4.1 Agency Performance

The analysed findings discovered agency performance was one the strongest cause of conflict. More specifically, lack of media awareness, was cited as the primary deterrent to progress, hence the requirement for agencies to convince their clients of the value of social media. Over half of the respondents described the difficulty with client expectations in terms of social media capabilities. Accordingly, agencies were frequently required to *'manage the expectations'* of the client in terms of their marketing requirements, even if in addressing over-zealous expectations. Claude

explained how one of his clients regularly conveyed expectations exceeded the capabilities of what the agency, and social media, can realistically achieve.

> *'One of the problems we have sometimes is that our idea of success might still be different to theirs' (Claude)*

Likewise, further challenges included handling client's expectations of using the social networking sites, for example with Lilly explained for us how with Facebook, the perception existed that it did not require a strategic approach.

> *'That is the biggest challenge we have to face because clients think that because Facebook is free and that means that anyone that does stuff on your Facebook should be free as well' (Lilly)*

This position adopted by the client is a common one and poses a significant challenge as clients may have unrealistic views of social media. Thus, to avoid conflict, client account management strategies are employed to maintain the relationship while not offending the client. Thus, the onus is on the agency to inform and educate the client with a view to ushering them towards a co-creative dynamic, whereby both sides of the dyad are making campaign decisions harmoniously.

Trust, and lack thereof, was commonly cited protagonist for conflict in several accounts of agency-client relationship. Often a disparity in the levels of trust existed between multiple clients. Julia highlights the challenges of servicing multiple clients with varying expectations in the following excerpt.

> *'With [Client 1] we would say, "Wow, look this video got 100,000 views." and I think [Client 1] appreciates that because when [Client 1] gets something good [Client 1] sends it out to the regional business managers and says, "Look this good thing has happened." I think that is kind of what [Client 1] wants. They trust us to be doing a good job and to be doing it right. With [Client 2], they want to see every single stat because they don't trust us and aren't sure or not if we are cheating them out of 1p!' (Julia)*

Above, Julia describes how they perceived their client as being sceptical in their dealings with the agency, adopting an overly analytical view of many campaign decisions. The language used within this passage evokes a sense of frustration with the client, suggesting that a relationship which is not trustworthy is a significant barrier to progress on both parties. Also noteworthy is the attention to the marketing activity from Client 2, who possesses an appreciation for the social media marketing evaluation process.

Participants used the pitching process to present their social media marketing expertise thereby garnering the trust of their client, enabling a collaborative planning relationship. However, when trust was broken, or not strong enough, conflict would most certainly arise. Lilly echoes this sentiment in this reflection on a situation where a client had terminated their contract with her agency.

> *'We can probably make good assumptions on where we went wrong with that client. It would be easier to say they weren't the right client in the first place because they didn't trust us, there was never any trust there.' (Lilly)*

As with the previous excerpts, emotive language is being used to describe the scenario, reaffirming the notion that the role of the expert goes beyond simply advising their clients, but to enhancing the agency-client relationship. The description of the second client in this case, offers a stark contrast to its predecessor. The term '*cheating*' suggests that trust between both sides of the agency-client relationship may have been be affected. Resultantly, evidence shows how this type of conflict is a significant barrier to effective strategy development and management. On the other hand, Alana provides a different view to this, asserting the positive benefits of a trustworthy relationship. In the following excerpt, she makes clear that nothing should be hidden from the client who has procured the services of the agency for social media marketing campaigns. This involves campaign performance data which does not reflect positively upon the campaign.

> *'So, we take the data, interpret it and put what it means next to it and also, it's not a bad thing to say, "Oh this didn't work that well, it's not a bad thing to change it to this going forward." There's no reason that people should hide away from saying that, because that's digital, its constantly changing. You should always report against the proof points and interpret the data so people, especially clients who don't have a lot of time, they get a graph and how are they going to give it the right meaning when they take it into a meeting.' (Alana)*

Also, the balance of power between the two parties in decision-making was a pivotal concept in terms of conflict in the agency-client relationship. Typically, the expert social media consultant would present their proposed campaign strategy ideas and the client would assist in deciding if this strategy was appropriate for their brand. However, clients would sometimes prefer to adopt a position of the overarching decision maker in certain instances. This would ideally be recognised in the client account management function of the agency, however the balance of power between these

two parties was a popular theme amongst participants. Lawrence refers to this balance of power with one of his clients who is becoming increasingly proficient in social media marketing techniques.

> *'Yes, there is a power balance there because the more they are learning now it starts to push us, so we are going into areas where we wouldn't have gone before.' (Lawrence)*

However, on the contrary, Lilly explains how one of her clients demands a more of a say in all the strategic decision-making. This seems to irk Lilly, who believes that the practitioner should be the primary decision maker in terms of social media marketing and the client should approve or deny their suggestions.

> *'With one of our clients, it isn't a power struggle but I know she just wants control over the account.'(Lilly)*

Client *'switching'* is whereby the client firms would cease their contractual agreements with an agency, which is often the net result of conflict within the agency-client relationship. In the following excerpt, Andrea describes how her agency acquired a client account from a competing agency through comparison of the services being provided by another agency.

> *'Sometimes clients have come to us and say this is a report from our last agency and this is how they did it. But we feel that you have missed out on key areas and this is how we would do it. Sometimes the client would come back and say, we realise we have missed out on a lot of things that your report covers, you are right. Good idea.' (Andrea)*

In this instance, this situation offered an opportunity to reinforce the capabilities of their agency by pointing out the deficiencies in the previous agency's quality of social media marketing work. Whereas Lilly described how a client had left their agency. The emotive language in this account supports the notion of conflict between an agency and their client, leading to a cessation of the business relationship, described in this case much like a personal relationship.

> *'It was a really, really difficult relationship and to be honest we are all glad it's over. The leaving process was like breaking up with someone but not ever getting closure. But these things happen.' (Lilly)*

6.4.2 Campaign Performance

Satisfaction with campaign performance is also a common area where conflict emerges. Within this expectation, three subsets of expectation were identified in the findings: budgetary, creative and campaign effectiveness. Each of these were observed to have an equal level of importance.

Budget invested in a campaign was identified as being a vital factor for clients. Hence, the cost of strategy development was seen to produce arguments between both parties. Funds required for a campaign was also referred to extensively as a driver for conflict in the relationship. Diana explains how the topic is brought up very early in the pitching process.

> *'The question you want to hit them in the face with from really early on is budget. It's nice not to be constrained by a budget but the reality is that everything is constrained by a budget' (Diana)*

Budget will typically be required for media spend, content development, which are billable hours of activity by the agency, as described in the previous section about types of work associated with developing and implementing a campaign. Clients were found to be unaware of the extent of activity by practitioners in terms of creating and implementing a social media campaign. Indeed, a common theme which emerged was the value of social media and the creative work associated with it, was identified as a source of contention between the two parties. Client firms would have a different opinion as to the perceived, versus actual value of creative planning and management of campaigns of this type. Moreover, participants such as Renata were often obliged to justify their position, and their creative output in terms of budget.

> *'I always think that clients think I have some unicorn magic but it costs money – it is a cheaper alternative to other forms of advertising but it isn't free.' (Renata)*

Creative decisions caused conflict between both parties. Often, creative aspects of the campaign were aided, as well as impeded by opinions of the client firm. Claude provides an overview of this clash.

> *'The only time the client gets involved is to say: "Can you make sure you do this?" Some of the negative bits might be, "That's not quite on brand".' (Claude)*

As client firms often sent their own brand management experts to strategy meetings, branding considerations would have to be adhered to in the planning of campaigns. Contravening these on a publicly visible platform would be detrimental to the brand in their eyes and hence, creative decisions could result in conflict. Further, conflicting views of client firms' existing social media activity caused conflict.

Clients would often approach agencies expecting suggestions from an agency to improve their current social media activity. In some instances, clients may have an overinflated view of their existing social media activities, meaning its becomes difficult for the agency to critique without offending their clients. Lilly expresses this frustration with one of her clients in the following excerpt.

> *'Some clients who read blog posts and think they know exactly what they are talking about, that is a massive challenge for us.'(Lilly)*

Practitioners were expected to make creative decisions for campaigns based upon their expertise. However, findings also revealed clients intruded upon this decision-making process leading to conflict, as well as testing the relationship between the two parties.

Perception of the success of the campaign caused conflict between the agencies and their clients. In many cases, the perception of the success differed between clients differed, and participants explained that this was partly due to the approach to measurement of the clients themselves. As discussed in Section 6.2, the *Boffin* client description was based on in terms of how analytical they were. Thus, the type of agency-client relationship would create a difficult situation for the practitioner. In this manner, the practitioner would have to be flexible and adapt to the variety of methods of working with their range of clients, and in some cases, conflict would arise. This conflict is exemplified strongly in how Julia would communicate the perceived effectiveness of the campaign to her two main clients.

> *'Working with [Client 1] and [Client 2], they are completely different, one is really analytical, one isn't that analytical. [Client 1] would look more for guidance and understanding.' (Julia)*

Whereas other clients were described as having much less involvement with the ongoing management of campaigns, producing an abundance of conflictual situations

and barriers to effective collaborative working methods. Andrea expresses frustration as well as a desire to help the client cut costs in their spending.

> *'I find a lot from my clients, they don't read the reports that go over to them [laughs], when you speak to them, they end up asking, 'so what's happening with that?' and you want to say 'didn't you read the report? I know you are not reading them; do you want me to send you an email with a top-line thing and save you like 600 quid?' (Andrea)*

6.4.3 Campaign Decision Making

Strategic decision-making is commonly referred to as a source of conflict when planning social media campaigns. Decisions made surrounding the initial planning discussions of campaigns are an important part of strategy development however if the client was not satisfied with the decisions being suggested, this would ultimately lead to disagreement between the two parties. As campaign decision making is an ongoing process throughout the planning procedure, it is rife with conflictual occurrences. Several sub-themes arose in this area namely; use of marketing research/insights, planning decisions, indecisiveness, lack of daring, lack of knowledge and finally budget.

Strategic decisions in social media campaign development requires a collaborative approach with the client, using all available data and insights. Analysis of findings ascertained that clients sometimes ignore research and insights and was a significant cause of conflict. In some cases, client's customer insights were at odds with practitioners, and posed a conflictual situation. Andrea provides an outline of this juxtaposition in terms of awareness of customer buying behaviour.

> *'We have this problem with [Client X], they think their audience is just Mums, 30-40's. And they have all of their data says its mums buying the [product], but they are not necessarily the ones eating [the product]. The people who eat [the product] are the kids, the teenagers or the dads or the husbands or the boyfriends who want something to eat.' (Andrea)*

Participant frustration in these instances was common, however the ability to balance advising their clients without over stepping the mark was also clear from participants. Alana is quite severe in her frustration with clients who make ill-fitting decisions in terms of targeting.

> *'This is kind of being too broad and not putting the value in the research, so almost like that stubborn approach which is like, "Right I think we need to work with darts fans because I like darts and I can't separate that from that!" So, it's almost like and I don't know if I would call it stubbornness or close mindedness. (Alana)*

Finally, participants reflected upon how the use of social media data and insights could often negate the conflict in these instances. Furthermore, mutual interpretation of this type of insight was shown to develop a collaborative relationship, especially when planning campaigns. Despite Alana's frustration in the previous excerpt, she is pragmatic about how an agency can use conflictual situations to guide the client.

> *'It is part of the agency's job to help them understand. It is a kind of working together thing but they need to be specific basically and allow you to be specific in who you are targeting.' (Alana)*

During planning meetings, the agency-client relationship would play a significant role in determining the decision-making processes. Isaac presents a view of the expert who is leading the client in an informed advisory role, in which the agency-client relationship is clearly defined:

> *'We are the experts here so they don't have much of an impact on it apart from how we explain it really.' (Isaac)*

Ongoing regular planning review meetings were recommended by most participants, outlining developments in the campaign and necessary adjustments. Often, when making these decisions, conflict would arise for a variety of reasons, such as Diana conveys in the following.

> *'It would entirely be dependent upon the client, but as we understand it, he is a little bit of a crotchety old man, whose resisted any kind of talk to PR agencies.' (Diana)*

A lack of involvement from the client at this early stage poses a challenge to collaboration, and often lack of media awareness is a factor at this juncture in the decision-making process. Further, frustration from the perspective of the practitioner as expert, client actions pose a significant challenge to their ability to plan a new campaign, as well as advise upon best practice. As Diana explains in the following, poor decision making on behalf of the client was described leading to conflict in the agency-client relationship. To negate these issues, the importance of the regular consultations as well as a pre-agreed campaign plan is essential.

> *'Clients come to you at different stages of their thought process and it is important that all the way through you sense check what you think they mean so, "We have read your brief and this is how we interpret it, so if this is wrong could you tell me now." (Diana)*

Indecisiveness of clients was discovered as a source of conflict for the agencies and thus exerting pressure on the agency-client relationship. To illustrate, Paula revealed how indecisiveness directly affected her planning regime.

> *'Throughout my time working in social media, clients that I work with are always indecisive. They will be like "Right this is what we want to do." Then I will plan everything, and then a week later, "Oh sorry we have changed our minds, we want to do this, we want to do that." So, they change their mind all the time.' (Paula)*

Similarly, lack of guidelines by the client were also identified as presenting issues to effective planning. In the following instance, Roseanne explains how the client firm did not have a clear idea in mind as to the possibilities in terms of creative ideas.

> *'Because they don't have a Brand Manager our agency has created their brand, created brand guidelines and effectively manage that brand because they aren't. So, if they request ideas that don't necessarily fit the brand, we have to question it.' (Roseanne)*

This reflective account suggests that while there may be conflictual issues when planning campaigns, practitioners are advising on the specifics of social media, as well as wider branding perspectives.

Clients' inability to agree decisions specifically around use of social media was also identified as an area of conflict between the two parties. Analysis revealed that practitioners would often suggest risky campaign themes, which were rejected by clients as being at odds with previous advertising messages the brand has issued. Lawrence highlights how one of his clients was concerned about communications on social media having a negative effect upon the perception of the brand.

> *'The first few months they were on Facebook they were very worried they didn't want to get involved with any conversations or spark off anything that would get out of hand.' (Lawrence)*

Indeed, this lack of daring, in terms of campaign ideas emerged, and at times clients were reluctant to engage in social media as a communications channel due to a fear of damage to the reputation of their organisation.

Conflict was regularly reported at the strategy development stages due to clients' lack of familiarity with social media. Specifically, participants referred to clients who had unrealistic goals for the social media marketing campaign. Findings showed specific examples of how client firms would deviate from the agency advice and focus on irrelevant metrics for success of the campaign, such as this one by Isaac.

> *'We might list out a lot of KPIs and metrics that we think are important. They might think it is just number of Facebook likes and they might say, "We want to set a goal to reach like 4000 likes by the end of the 3-month period." That is when we have to say, well we can do that but that doesn't mean it has met the objectives at all and there are all these other metrics we can use to show other stuff is working.' (Isaac)*

Despite the above consultation with their client, insistence upon focussing on Facebook likes, was unwavering. Furthermore, Isaac also advised this client about a social media marketing tactic to obtain these, while pointing out this would offer limited value to the campaign.

> *'We can buy them the likes but it doesn't mean more people are going on their site and more people are aware of their brand through potential prospects.' (Isaac)*

It was also observed that Practitioners believed that their clients possessed a rudimentary awareness of social media. This assumption was commonly cited as a source of ongoing conflict in the client relationship.

Finally, decisions relating to budget caused conflict between the two parties, as Celeste highlights in the following excerpt.

> *'The [Client] wanted everything quantified they want us to give them a list of how much traffic it [Social Media Campaign] will produce so that when it doesn't, they can beat us with it and not pay us' (Celeste)*

Similarly, the propensity to shift and reallocate agreed budgets was also identified in the findings, causing obstacles for the participants involved in this study, such as Paula.

> *'Another thing that I have to think about is budget. They change their budget all the time!' (Paula)*

Participants confirmed that clients operating on restricted budgets were reluctant to pay for additional services, such as pre-campaign research, which led to conflict between both parties.

'Some clients just don't have the budget for certain things or they think that they have done that research already. We might get a copy of that research and it's not quite right, which is always a bit annoying' (Andrea)

Furthermore, despite being predominantly perceived as being overtly negative, the case can also be made for the positive effects of conflict in the creative process. It was also observed in the findings that positive outcomes emerge because of conflict. Thus, creative conflict was observed in several instances.

6.4.4 Communication

Communication between agencies and their clients was also a significant factor contributing to conflict. Analysis of the findings revealed numerous instances of communication causing conflict, and more specifically, poor communication between the two parties. It emerged from the findings that communication between the two parties was essential to avoid poor use of time on either side of the agency-client dyad. Further, clarity in the messages being portrayed, particularly in relation to the decisions relating to social media, is of great importance to avoid conflictual situations. Sub-themes in this category identified are as follows: *agency-client communication, client-agency communication* and *mutual miscommunication.*

Previously, this chapter asserted the importance of communication between an agency. However, through a variety of communication strategies, agencies were able to mitigate against conflict. Diana provides an overview of her approach to communicating with her clients, which underlines the difficulty with certain clients.

'Ideally for me, meetings would be face-to-face, month to month because it helps to have that face-to-face meeting. For the clients, it helps cement the relationship and it helps them to feel that activity is progressing and if you have got a difficult client, someone who you struggle to get hold of, because their resources are low.' (Diana)

Similarly, communication on behalf of the client to the agency was identified as a strain upon the agency-client relationship, often leading to conflict. For example, communication of last minute changes were common, most of which required immediate responses. Roseanne elaborates upon how her agency reacts to these late changes to the strategy development process.

> *The staple one [challenge] is moving the goal post at the last minute, as they do and so you have to adapt things.' (Roseanne)*

Further, client representatives contributed to conflictual situations in their interpretation of performance success. Indeed, it was commonly reported that the agency-client relationship had an impact upon the processes of evaluation. Celeste explains in the following, how one of her clients had a pre-determined set of metrics in mind, however was not willing to reveal them to the social media marketing practitioner.

> *'For example, we went in and we showed the client Facebook driving loads of traffic, Twitter driving the right amount of traffic but it's got literally got about 10% of the followers and then the blog. I think, he/her will have that stuff in their head and then will not be open to hearing why it is. They just decided that. (Celeste)*

Additionally, client firms would perform specific tasks outside and beyond the agreed brief, thus altering the course of the campaign significantly. Paula now explains how a client employee acted independently providing poor advice to their customers on a publicly visible social media platform. Hence, this situation caused a significant conflictual situation between both parties.

> *'Some clients, will edit my own [Social Media] content without telling me. They will be advising stuff about the campaign, directing them to the wrong page and then you get a pissed off audience!' (Paula)*

It was also revealed how both parties were affected because of mutual miscommunication. These instances result in a breakdown in communication. To illustrate, Lilly highlights how through mutual miscommunication, the agency-client relationship with one of her clients was terminated.

> *'We had a client who were an ecommerce client with a couple of shops. They were a tricky client from day one, didn't want to give us access to their social stuff, but they wanted to pay us to do their social media. Then one day I looked at their Facebook page and tried to sign in but it wasn't happening, I signed into Twitter, nothing, signed into Tumblr, gone. We didn't hear anything, there was no communication until our CEO got a letter saying they were serving their 28-day notice, they didn't want us to do anymore work for us.' (Lilly)*

Several accounts of miscommunication of technologically complex information affected the agency-client relationship. These were predominantly through campaign updates and detailed reports focussing on specifics relating to social media data. Andrea explains in the following excerpt, her client ended up in a situation whereby

they were ignoring the campaign evaluation reports as the data within them was too complex.

> *'I find a lot from my clients, I know they don't read the reports that go over to them. You can tell because when you speak to them they end up asking, 'what's happening with that?' and you want to say: 'didn't you read the report'? (Andrea)*

Conflict also emerged in this area due to technological misunderstanding within the agency, whereby an agency employee had promised to deliver a specific target, which was unattainable. Lilly recalled an example within her agency how this had a significant impact on the agency-client relationship through miscommunication of social media capabilities.

> *'The sales guy, had promised certain things that we don't do, that we could never have delivered, just to try and get the contract through.' (Lilly)*

This breakdown of communication, particularly in relation to technological performance and ability, does not look favourably upon the agency, who adopt and maintain the position of the knowledgeable expert. Hence, this scenario can cause conflict between the two parties and disrupt the working agency-client relationship.

Interestingly, participants who had international clients reported cultural miscommunications in their exchanges. This was not immediately clear in conversations with participants, however aside from the obvious language barriers with international firms, cultural variations of expressions led to misunderstanding. Furthermore, the culture of the organisation dictated the way agencies could communicate information relating to the product. Conor explains here how a global healthcare client had a significant impact upon the development of the campaign the agency was proposing, because of adherence to international regulation:

> *'the problem we found was that working with a big [Global Healthcare] organisation, [they were] very risk adverse, that they are extraordinarily highly regulated and rightly so.' (Conor)*

While previously this chapter has discussed agency, and client cultural impacts upon the agency-client relationship, this is an example of how conflict can emerge from many other areas of exchange between the two parties.

6.4.5 Personnel and Policy Change

Change in personnel was a key factor of frustration with agencies and their clients. Managerial exit from marketing agencies would indicate a loss of expertise within that agency, whereas the same exit in the client firm equate to the loss of an established significant agency-client relationship. Hence, changes in personnel presented a situation which would lead to conflict in the relationship. Findings uncovered the impact of client employees' exit from the organisation had upon the agency-client relationship. Many years of operating in a collaborative fashion would harness a co-creative relationship, and thus, a new client representative may hold differing views, and thus create a significant obstacle for the practitioner to overcome. As marketing managers change jobs with regularity, a consistent cycle of new representatives puts the agency executive into a position whereby they are constantly building and rebuilding relationships. Lilly provides a useful example of the potential outcomes of client representatives switching firms.

> *'The best thing you want is if a client leaves a business, this has happened to one of my clients last week, who has left to go and work for another company. They said, I will be in touch in a couple of weeks anyway because their social is awful. So, it means if you build those relationships, even if they move on to another business, that is just a new lead for you.' (Lilly)*

Furthermore, a new client executive appointment exerts further pressure on the agency to fall into line with the clients demands. Ally now provides an example of how a new client executive can pose challenges to the previous method of operations, which will require adaptation on the part of the agency.

> *'It depends on what brand manager you get, and I think a brand like [Client X] you may get a different brand manager every 6 months, and it can be a pain in the ass! You get your reporting structure absolutely bob on so they are really happy with it; new brand manager, why are you doing it like this, I want to change it completely.' (Ally)*

The findings in this area signify a distinct impact changes in personnel have upon the agency-client relationship.

Regarding changes in digital marketing agency executives, this also poses a significant challenge to the practitioner. Specialist marketers carry experience and their exit bring with it a stopgap in the collective knowledge of the agency. Thus, this creates a strain on the agency-client relationship, on both sides of the dyad. Lilly

explains how the structure of teams in her agency can lead to issues in the quality of service they provide for their clients.

> *'When another team here messes up, which does happen, because we are in a transitional period as a company, the way the team structures are moving and changing is quite interesting. There are obviously teething issues there when you start to move people around the business and the clients don't necessarily like what they are doing from what they were doing.' (Lilly)*

From this excerpt, a strong focus on retention of the client despite the conflictual situation is of importance to the practitioner, despite obstacles from inside the agency itself.

Changes to client operating policy would often create conflictual situations. In some instances, this was due to technological innovation of social media platforms and software. New tools provided new approaches and these were often used to improve or enhance the approach to planning and managing campaigns. However, in the following instance, Ally explains how changes to policy in by her client led to a conflictual situation and thus posed a strain on the agency-client relationship.

> *'A typical request will be, "We've got 5,000 fans already and we want to get to 50,000, how do we do that?" That's a typical request and we would always go back and ask them how they have arrived at this 50,000-fan number. "Oh, the Chairman said that's what he wanted, cause that's what his wife said the Brand should have." (Ally)*

Also, changes to operating policy within the agencies themselves was shown to affect the agency-client relationship. As client representatives would operate in a separate environment to the marketing agency, widespread changes to their operating procedures may not be conveyed to their contracted agencies and therefore conflict may arise. Lilly provides and account of this type of how this issue features in her agency.

> *'If another team in the agency isn't doing as well as they should be doing, we have to cover up for other people, so that's quite a difficult thing. Picking up other peoples' mistakes is a really, really difficult thing' (Lilly)*

The previous sections have outlined the analysis of the findings regarding conflict in the agency-client relationship. Illustrative examples from the analysis of the interviews were used from analysis of the data. This study identified six categories of conflict -

satisfaction with agency performance, satisfaction with campaign performance, campaign decision-making, communication, changes in personnel and changes to policy.

6.5 Co-Creation in Social Media Marketing

Descriptor: Co-creation comprises of the two sides of the agency/client dyad working together in developing campaign ideas for their mutual benefit. In no particular order, both parties will; utilise insights and research, develop objectives, make creative campaign decisions, agree implantation tactics, identify campaign measurement regimen, make post-campaign decisions relating to future iterations, or necessary modifications.

Following on from the themes identified in the analysis of findings, it was revealed that practitioners suggested that there was a strong desire for collaborative decision-making between social media marketing practitioners and their client. Accordingly, this section of the chapter will explore the concept of co-creation of value between agencies and their clients and the various ways in which the relationship between them plays a key role. Several strategies are in place to foster a co-creative decision-making agency-client relationship. Notably, education of clients through social media marketing workshops plays a key role in producing and ensuring a co-creative working scenario. However, from the tensions which were also explored in the previous section, co-creation often emerged from conflictual situations.

6.5.1 Depictions of Co-Creation in Social Media Marketing

Analysis of the data discovered that participants placed a high value on a co-creative relationship. Diana exemplifies this in the following excerpt when asked about planning campaigns.

> *'Social media always works better then you have a client fully on board, in all aspects of the campaign.' (Diana)*

Furthermore, the longer-term benefits of a co-creative relationship were also asserted by Chris, who extends this notion by suggesting that through collaboration, it is possible to meet client expectations.

> *'I think when you do get to that level in the relationship you set things together. If you sit down and work on those together you are far more able to earn client expectations. (Chris)*

Moreover, all practitioners agreed that a collaborative agency-client relationship was the most efficient method to plan and implement social media marketing campaigns and was worthy of nurturing.

6.5.2 Collaborative Learning: Consulting and Educating the Client

At the outset of the planning process, agencies advise clients regarding the attributes of social media marketing. Consequently, this process affords the practitioner the opportunity to understand the decision-making culture within the client firm. Thus, the development of social media marketing campaigns offers a unique opportunity to examine the ability of both sides of the agency-client dyad. Participants claimed that they saw their role as not simply informing, but also educating their clients in terms of media as well as technological capabilities of social media marketing. Furthermore, this process highlights the ability to collaboratively learn.

Furthering this theme, collaborative decision making between the two parties, which linked with wider business functions, was also referred to extensively. Igor provides an overview of how the collaborative planning process is tied together with a system of goals and objectives.

> *'It is a case of working with the business to look at their business objectives and overlaying that to social media channels and tactics, working with the company to generate a social media strategy that overlays their business objectives and their activity for the year.' (Igor)*

These consultation events were typically in a workshop scenario whereby the agency would convene with the client to identify the potential of social media marketing. Furthermore, efforts were made at the earliest stages of the working relationship to consult and educate agencies clients as to the specific nature of social media marketing and the type of activity they should be focussing upon as part of the campaign. Consultations were held in a workshop-style event where a thorough outline and discussion of the strategic direction of the business were examined. This style of workshop was key to developing the direction of the subsequent campaigns, but also cementing the relationship between the agency and client.

"We start with that kind of consultation and its having that workshop and it's something that we actually charge for. So, we get our team and their team around a table and we start asking the right questions understanding their aims and objectives." (Andrea)

Some participants adopted a questionnaire approach to identify motivations for engaging with social media as an alternative to a standard presentation style meeting. David asserts the value of the workshop as not only educating but also engaging the client.

'A workshop is more of a collaborative thing rather than a standing up and pointing at lots of PowerPoint slides.' (David)

This consultation stage was a pre-cursor to nurturing the relationship with clients who may not necessarily require social media, but training as to manage their existing social media. Isabel explains how in her agency, basic training in social media marketing was also offered to further inform their clients.

"We would give them some training. A kind of layout of what we think that they should do to make it effective and they make a decision off the back of that for whether they should commit to it. "(Isabel)

There was a distinct impression from the participants that in some cases, client knowledge was lacking when it came to the appreciation of specific data regarding the social media campaign reporting. To assist the client in appreciating the information being provided, Lawrence would spend time explaining the minute details of the first social media marketing evaluation report.

'Basically, we give them the first [evaluation] report and then we have to go through each of the stats with them over the phone because they really wouldn't understand what any of them means' (Lawrence)

Again, the reciprocity of the pre-campaign consultation is highlighted above, which establishes a good working relationship based upon trust of the agency, as well as education of the client as to how social media performs best for their brand. Overall, the value of these consultations was shown to be supportive of the agency-client relationship as well as addressing the lack of media awareness on the client's behalf.

'You have got to speak in lots of different languages and part of the game is kind of basically translating this success so we can say, "Yes we can get you in The Times, we will do that, we will do some activity for that, but how about we look at this on a broader level?" And over time you educate them. You have to adapt yourself. About 5 or 6 years ago the penny just suddenly dropped that you can't go in and expect that people are going to come around to this way of

thinking and they are not going to adopt best practise straight away, so what you have to do is compromise and be flexible by saying, "We will work with you! (Roseanne)'

Roseanne's reference to the languages used with clients is also noteworthy, highlighting the practitioner response to different clients. In this instance, the client was convinced through consultation to the benefits of social media and the practitioner adopts the role of the informed advisor. Further, a peer review of another agencies work, such as the following from Lilly, was utilised to highlight improvements as a method of educating their client as to the specifics of social media:

'When we get new clients, they'll often send us a copy of their social media report that their agency is doing for them. A lot of what I see is really, really bad, but educating the client to what's actually relevant to their campaign.' (Lilly)

This honest reflection highlights the complex dynamic involved with clients in terms of media capabilities, and that it is not always as straightforward to inform and educate. Andrea explains how a careful approach to consultation is required with clients.

'But a large part of it is convincing the client because the clients think they know right but [laughs] sometimes they aren't fully aware.' (Andrea)

Agencies are required to learn about the organisational and decision-making culture which exists within the client firm. In this manner, a two-way collaborative learning process emerged from the findings. At times, this was not as straightforward as expected and clients would make this difficult for practitioners. Lilly provides a frank account of when the education process is compromised and poses a problem for the ongoing relationship.

'Occasionally you get clients who don't want to be educated and sometimes you risk compromising a campaign to give them the figures that they want, rather than the figures that the business needs.' (Lilly)

Therefore, collaborative understanding of both agency and client firms' perspectives enables a co-creative dynamic, which is of ultimately for mutual benefit.

6.5.3 Co-Creation in Strategy Development

The initial stages of the social media strategy development involved a briefing and pitching process. As such, there is a distinct requirement for clarity in terms of the desired outcomes of the campaign. Therefore, this quest for clarity in terms of a tangible goal supports the notion of collaboration in terms of decision-making. As

David explains, prior input from the client is as a key factor in assisting the planning process and as such, collaboration is evident at this stage.

> *'What we are presenting to the stakeholders should be accountable to the original strategy discussions. The client should not feel surprised, as they have been so close to the process that what we are presenting is an inevitable conclusion, as opposed to a big reveal.' (David)*

A careful description of this initial planning phase also suggests that there is equal room for expert advice, as well as assurance from the client at this early juncture.

Client briefs are the vehicle through which they communicate with the agencies initially and thus a co-creative relationship is essential to this integral phase of strategy development. Client briefs are required to be clear in their communication of expected outcomes for the campaign. Even though this is a standard procedure in marketing practice, social media complicates the process, and often this can lead to confusion across both parties, if not clear in conveying its message. Diana makes the case for collaborative planning as it provides a rationale for every element of the process.

> *'It's better if you can do it collaboratively because quite often what will happen is people will perhaps form an unhelpful decision chain. Because they may look at something and think I don't really like that but they don't understand how that component can be tweaked, but the general idea meets the objectives.' (Diana)*

Additionally, the pitching process is essential to the planning of social media campaigns as practitioners and clients are designing the initial framework of activities, while laying the foundation for the agency-client relationship in the process. Diana explains here how a feedback system is utilised to ensure that the social media marketing planning suits the expectations of the client, thus involving the client throughout the process.

> *'It's always unfortunate when someone gets hung up on one small aspect of the campaign and that can switch them off everything. In a pitch situation, it can put them off choosing that agency. So, what we would always do in every situation is, whether pitching to a new client or going through things with an existing client is to encourage feedback throughout the session and sense check all the way through.' (Diana)*

During the planning stages of social media campaigns, re-campaign research and findings from online market research were shown to be of great value to both parties. Agencies are often contracted to perform initial research to target audiences and are adept at answering these types of queries. They interpret this new information

regarding their existing customer base's social media characteristics which informs the campaign decision making process. Hence, by using prior research as Chris describes, this assists strategy development.

> *'When we chuck over a whole load of research to a client. Then it will be directed to that person who goes through it and actually pulls together why it is important, what it means to them. We have kind of realised that once you have pulled that data together and everyone has gone through it, it's far easier to sit down and brainstorm intelligent workable ideas because you are not just doing it off the top of your head.' (Chris)*

Similarly, the setting of campaign objectives is a vital area for a co-creative relationship. Setting the goals and targets together, allows for a mutual understanding of what the campaign is intending to achieve. Further, it is important to ensure wider objectives relating to the client firm are adhered to in the development of social media strategy. In this excerpt, Igor explains how in developing campaign objectives, he involves the sales teams' activities, among others.

> *'We start with listening and auditing and then move on to working with the business to look at their business objectives and overlaying that to social media channels and tactics. Whilst you are doing that as well, you look at the client's team and their make-up because social media goes across marketing, PR, customer service and sales.' (Igor)*

At the implementation stage, evidence of co-creation emerged from the findings. The study revealed how mutual responsibilities with their client are discussed and agreed upon at the planning stage of the campaign. In Isabel's case, there is a prior discussion to state the agreed activities early on in the planning process.

> *'It's usually worked out with the client, what we are going to do and what they are going to do. It may be a case that they are blogging, and we are managing their Twitter and Facebook, or they are tweeting some and we are tweeting some but that needs co-ordination.' (Isabel)*

Furthermore, this collaborative dynamic assists in the agency-client relationship by identifying pre-determined elements the campaign will achieve in the process. Diana highlights this succinctly by outlining how through a collaborative approach, the client is left clear in subsequent stages of their engagement with her agency.

> *'We want to take clients with us on the journey but putting a practice in place is important because it means we can signpost them through that journey. They know where we are up to and what's coming next.' (Diana)*

Finally, supporting the co-creative dynamic, the importance of open and honest communication of campaign developments as they are implemented. While trust has been explored in Section §.4.3 we revisit the concept of trust within the agency-client relationship here in Lilly's except. She places a significant value on trust and honest exchanges of information within the agency-client relationship. Hence, trust is a common theme between conflict and an enabling force for co-creation.

> *'I think trust is the most important thing, I don't think you can ever hide anything from your client as far as I am concerned. I know a lot of people would disagree with that. They think there are certain things that clients don't need to know and I get that but if it affects their business or affects their bottom line, they have got to know about it.' (Lilly)*

In summation, findings show that collaboration between clients and their specialist agencies is a preferred and mutually beneficial method of operationalising social media campaigns.

Finally, the study revealed how social media marketing measurement and evaluation also demanded input from the clients. A co-creative approach to evaluation was required in terms of deciphering appropriate metrics, and KPIs which are linked back to the campaign objectives. Explicit knowledge of social media metrics by the client are not a requirement, however practitioners would outline and explain these to the client firm, to ensure metrics collected matched the client firms view of success. Lawrence provides an informative example of collaborative decision-making in terms of developing a social media marketing evaluation dashboard for one of his larger clients. In this excerpt, it is clear how metrics and KPIs are developed in partnership with the client firm, with positive effects.

> *'In terms of the bigger clients we manage, we built digital dashboards which pull in through the Twitter and the Facebook KPIs based on what the client requirements are.'(Lawrence)*

In the following excerpt, Lilly explained how their agency created bespoke campaign reporting dashboard by a web development and design team. This dashboard been developed with the involvement of the client to replace monthly reporting meetings.

> *'We have built a completely bespoke system which they paid us for. Because we are a development agency so we are quite flexible in what we can do. We can build quite a few different range of apps; we can build these dashboards.'(Lilly)*

The reflexive nature of the client firm, in suggesting and dictating the style of measurement for the ongoing campaign is a good example of co-creation of social media strategy. As such, utilising media awareness (because of education by the agency) and a collaborative dynamic enabling this dialog between client and expert. To further illustrate, Ally explains how client decision making was influenced in a by a campaign report.

> *'The client will get quite excited if we spot something new or a new insight about their audience. It just shows we are on top of it I think and the clients will give that back in feedback of kind of saying, look you don't just keep static and just do the job we have told you to do, you are always looking to push it and kind of go, "Actually we've found a new tool that helps us to look at it a bit deeper and that show's this so we are going to change the strategy like that." (Ally)*

Alternatively, clients may appear to be quite demanding in their requests for campaign reporting. In such instances, it was described as useful for the practitioner as clear guidance is being administered. Lilly describes how the demanding nature of one of her clients is useful in informing their approach to evaluation.

> *'[Client] are quite demanding and their requirements are very specific, so that's very helpful because it does structure how we have to approach their reporting.' (Lilly)*

In summary, respondents confirmed the importance of a co-creative relationship in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating social media campaigns. Further, various factors were seen to positively affect the ability of the agencies and their clients, to enter a collaborative relationship such as this. Consequently, other factors deterred the ability of both parties to co-create, as reported in the next section.

6.5.4 Co-Creation Relationships and Conflict

Contractual, cultural and account management attributes generated their own challenges to a co-creative agency-client relationship. Conflict also regularly emerged from the findings within decision-making processes and campaign performance. Conflict between the two parties involved can significantly affect progress in terms of strategising campaigns. Findings showed that that the most significant challenge practitioners faced was the process of convincing the client to invest in social media, as Lawrence explains in the following excerpt.

> *'Well it's difficult, for example with some B2B businesses they don't also see the benefit of social, and kind of see it as a waste of time.' (Lawrence)*

Often, this difficulty was attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding the capabilities of social media. Often, clients held a predetermined view of media success, which differs from the practitioners view i.e., coverage within the broadsheet press versus exposure through social media. Additionally, the age of their client plays a significant factor. For example, Roseanne suggests that older generations may be less likely to perceive value in social media marketing.

> *'There is a generational divide in the industry and then there are people in senior positions who just see success as the front page of the Sunday Times. They will explain; "success to my boss is front page of the Times no matter what happens." So, whilst you can do all the stuff to get great results that doesn't matter to him because he's not seeing his brand in the paper on a Sunday morning when he's having a coffee.' (Roseanne)*

Thus, the two parties are at odds with each other in opposing views on the value of social media, and hence leads to conflictual situations between them. However, there the challenge is to try and convince the client of the benefits of social media and to enhance the relationship in doing so. Further, all interviewees recognised the potential for conflict, and the need to use conflict or potential conflict creatively. Disagreement across the agency-client dyad has a powerful relationship with co-creation. Indeed, conflict, and its mitigation, was reported to strengthen the co-creative dimensions of the relationship.

> *'The client wanted to run illegal Facebook competitions which we have to remind them isn't allowed. That's up to them. We warn clients of the risks and repercussions. They think doing it the wrong way will generate more 'likes', but as an agency we don't want to be associated with bad social practices. So, we advised against it and advised something else, which actually performed better in the long run.' (Cheryl)*

After Cheryl had informed their client of the implications of their actions, which they thereby relinquished, which in turn enhanced reputation as an ethical and respectable agency. Thus, the client was brought back towards a more collaborative planning scenario from an area of conflict. What is also noteworthy here is that the discussion of this incident relates to the identity of the agency, and how they would wish to disassociate themselves from 'bad social practices'. An advisory role is adopted by the practitioner and while there is a danger in this situation of losing the client, the

corporate socially responsible view prevails and thus enhances the agency-client relationship in the process.

6.5.5 Developing a Framework of Agency-Client Co-Creation

The framework encapsulates the findings within the third theme of the present study (agency-client relationships) and offers a number of new contributions to knowledge to this field. Whilst many previous works provide knowledge in the realm of the agency-client relationships in marketing, this framework offers an alternative perspective that focuses its attention on the dynamics of agency-client interactions. With an increasingly fragmented digital and social media marketing landscape, it has become clear that relationships are short-lived and hence this framework offers a valuable contribution to knowledge regarding the influence of client relationships modern client relationships to marketing practice.

Findings indicate how social media strategy development is best performed collaboratively with clients. Relationships between the thematic areas explored in the framework illustrate their ability to enable or detract from the co-creative dynamic in strategy development. The notion of co-creation in social media strategy development offers new insights into the importance of relationships to the marketing industry. This framework asserts how successful campaigns are developed by agencies using significant client input and involvement to the strategy and evaluation decision-making processes. On the other hand, it underlines how poor client relationships can lead to conflict between the two parties and hence the dissolution of the working relationship. Such findings complement the previous agency-client relationship knowledge, while also offering a modern perspective of the influence of client interaction in strategic decision-making.

While it has been suggested in the previous chapters, participants agree co-creation is essential to successful strategy creation, it is important to note the other actors involved with the development of this strategy. Contractual arrangements can indirectly enable a co-creative relationship in identifying respective responsibilities for agencies and clients, however they can also promote conflict in the agency-client relationship. Furthermore, contractual arrangements assist the client account

management function by determining the role of each party in the processes of strategy development and evaluation. A new finding was the positive impact of conflict on co-creative relationship. In some cases, resolution of conflict would enhance the agency-client relationship further. This was seen to be achieved through client account management and collaborative learning, which appeared to be positive drivers for the co-creative relationship. Lastly, cultural implications were also seen to influence the co-creative relationship in a positive and negative manner. Figure 6-1 presents a conceptual framework of agency-client dynamics in social media marketing. In summary, this chapter presents a framework of the thematic areas of agency-client relationships in social media marketing as contributors, influencers and detractors for a co-creative agency-client relationship.

6.1 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented the findings relating to the agency-client relationship and asserted its importance in the rapidly developing area of social media marketing. Descriptions of agency-client relationships were provided by participants. These descriptions were categorised as follows: media awareness, length of relationship, analytical nature, trust ant etc. Both sides of the agency-client dyad are developing their approaches to managing their respective relationships and justifying the level of investment in their campaigns. It was found that traditional marketing management approaches were employed to manage the agency-client relationship, such as contracts, with clear responsibilities and roles, which are vital in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing digital environments. Next, client account management is a vital role on the part of the agency to help to alleviate conflict which may emerge from a variety of areas of agency-client interactions. Cultural implications also emerged from the findings as a source of conflict. However, agencies believe that the ideal working relationship is a collaborative one, when planning campaigns. Significant efforts on both sides were presented with a view to moving the agency-client relationship from one of conflict to a co-creative one. Finally, in presenting findings that examine the influence of the agency-client relationship in social media marketing, it offers valuable insights into B2B relationships in a rapidly evolving area of practice. Next chapter will go on to discuss the significance of these findings considering the prior literature which has been reviewed in Chapter 3.

Figure 6-1 Conceptual Framework of Agency-Client Dynamics in Social Media Marketing
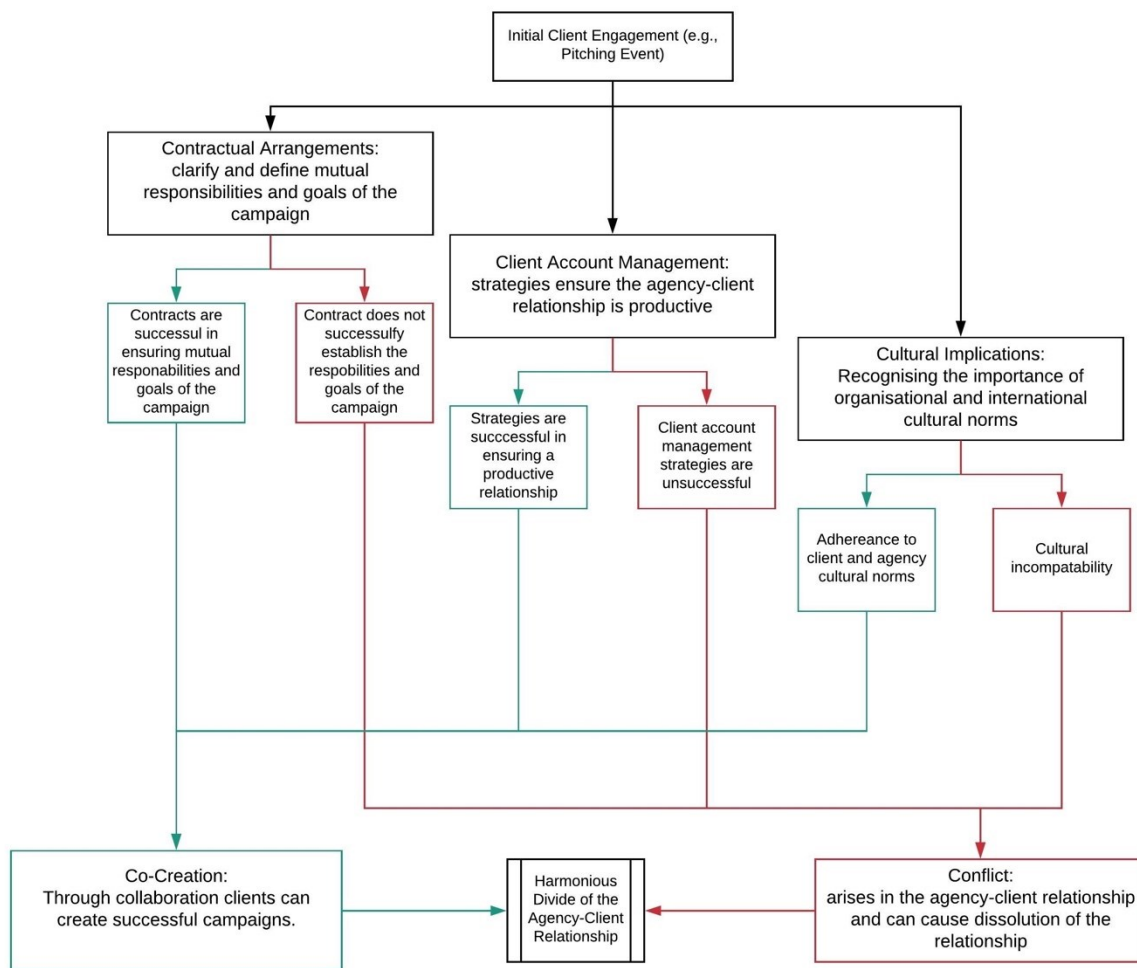
7 Discussion of Contributions to Knowledge

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study and outline the contributions to knowledge in the respective areas of social media marketing strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. The chapter begins by providing an overview of themes and sub-themes of the study. Major contributions to knowledge are then discussed in relation to theory. Sub-thematic contributions to knowledge are then discussed identifying how the study has advanced previous studies. In this discussion, the importance of findings to future research is also established. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter demonstrating how this study has achieved its aims and objectives, highlighting how the insights generated are beneficial for theory and practice.

7.2 Overview of Three Major Themes and Sub-Themes

This aim of this part of the chapter is to present an overview of the present study outlining how the findings have achieved the aims and objectives of the study. In doing so, it will place the findings of this study into context through the three major themes and sub-themes. Table 7-1 provides an overview of findings arranged by major themes and sub-themes. Most sub-themes are explored in the literature reviews and advance knowledge in these respective areas, whereas new and original findings are indicated in bold.

The first row details the contributions to knowledge in terms of social media strategy development, including the importance of the second major theme, evaluation (indicated with an asterisk). Hence, evaluation is considered a key area of strategy development and is investigated further by this study revealing the six stages of the social media marketing evaluation process. The final row of the table above presents the thematic contributions with respect to the final thematic area of this study, agency-client relationships in social media marketing. Finally, Table 7-1 outlines how the present study has produced insights that have implications for theory and practice which will be discussed in the rest of this chapter.

Table 7-1 Overview of Findings within the Major Themes and Sub-Themes in Strategy, Evalaution and Agency-Client Relationships

Major Themes	Sub-Themes						
Strategy	Approaches to Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	**Pre-Campaign Research**	Campaign Objective Setting	Creative Campaign Decision-Making	Campaign Implementation	***Campaign Evaluation**	**Management Decision-Making**
***Evaluation**	Approaches to Social Media Marketing Evaluation	**Setting Evaluation Objectives**	Identifying KPIs	Identifying Metrics	Data Collection and Analysis	Report Generation	**Management Decision-Making**
Agency-Client Relationships	Conceptualisations of the Agency-Client Relationship	Contractual Implications	Client Account Management	Cultural Implications	Co-Creation in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	Conflict **Co-Destruction**	**Dynamics of Agency-Client Interactions and Strategy Development**

7.3 Major Contributions to Knowledge

This part of the chapter presents an discusses the major contributions to knowledge within the present study. Three major contributions are outcomes of the study. Lesser contributions to theory and practice are also made at the sub-thematic level and are discussed in the next section.

7.3.1 1st Major Contribution to Knowledge

The first major contribution of the study is:

> *the production of an empirically-grounded conceptual framework of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing*

This contribution advances knowledge of modern approaches to marketing offering new insights that have implications for theory and practice. A clear gap in the literature is identified in Chapter 3, whereby social media marketing has been researched by a significant stream of literature (e.g., Hoffman and Fodor, 2010) yet little is known regarding the procedural approaches to campaign strategy development. In developing an understanding of social media marketing campaign strategy development, the literature review explored a range of well-recognised marketing strategy models (Gregory, 2000; Kotler, 2000; McDonald, 2007; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Dibb et al., 2016) identifying the most commonly reported stages of activities such as: *situation analysis, implementation* and *evaluation* (Section 3.3.1). Whilst the findings of the study confirmed a number of stages which appeared in previous models (e.g., *setting campaign objectives, creative campaign decision-making, implementation, evaluation*), two new stages of activity were evident in the context of social media marketing (*pre-campaign research,* and *management decision-making*). These two stages represent the differentiation of social media marketing strategy development from the traditional models as they utilise complex analytical techniques and reflective decision-making which is an extension of the prior literatures (e.g. Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013).

Findings also confirm prior knowledge required relating to strategy development, in particular the importance of campaign objectives (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Busalim

et al., 2016). However, interviews revealed that strategising campaigns for social media is particularly challenging which concurs with Felix et al.'s (2017) analysis of social media marketing. Quinn et al. (2016) suggest that brands relinquish control of strategy development to specialist agencies due to their own lack of skills and knowledge in this area. Therefore, campaign strategy development using complex analysis of social media data is mostly performed by specialist agencies as many recent studies have shown (Floreddu and Cabiddu, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2016; Richardson et al., 2017). The conceptual framework of this study advances knowledge by providing an overview of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation through a series of interconnected stages of activities. This framework is therefore useful for marketers who wish to develop their own social media marketing campaigns. Furthermore, through examining the process of strategy development, the importance of evaluation is established for further studies.

7.3.2   2nd Major Contribution to Knowledge

The second major contribution to knowledge is:

> *establishing the importance of analytics for decision-making in strategy development.*

The second major contribution to knowledge from this study follows on from the discussion of the contexualised conceptual framework. In particular, the *pre-campaign research* and *management decision-making* stages of the framework are highly reliant upon analysis of social media data. Thus, the findings of the study assert the pivotal nature of analytics to strategic decision-making in social media marketing which complement and advance the findings of numerous studies (e.g., Micu et al., 2017; Rathore et al., 2017; Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). Specifically, the contextualised conceptual framework has advanced the key studies of social media marketing campaign evaluation (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015) by elaborating upon the outcomes of analytics and placing them in the wider context of marketing strategy development.

Many previous studies have examined the concept of analytics in an online marketing environment (e.g., Bughin et al., 2010; Nakatani and Chuang, 2011) and specifically within a social media setting (Broom et al., 2011; Töllinen et al., 2012; Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013). However, findings from this study illustrate how social media analytics are used in a sophisticated process using metrics and KPIs (Fan and Gordon, 2014; Ruhi, 2014; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015), allowing the practitioner to make decisions relating to strategy development. Such findings indicate advance previous works which provide insights into the practices of social media analytics (e.g., Holsapple et al., 2014; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Fan and Yan, 2015; Akter and Wamba, 2016; Moro et al., 2016; Pauwels and Joshi, 2016) by suggesting that it plays a wider role in informing strategic decision-making.

This study also recognises that social media marketing is different to digital and traditional media, in particular through its reliance upon data-driven decisions (Chau and Xu, 2012; Ruhi, 2014). In particular, the study reveals a distinctive trend whereby social media analytics is used to inform decisions at each stage of strategy development (Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). Through elaborate analytical procedures, the social media marketers interviewed sought to create customer-centric campaigns (Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Trainor et al., 2014; Ho and Wang, 2015) from their analyses. Some studies have examined the possibilities of harnessing social media data but very few have investigated the procedural approaches of this process (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013). In this respect, the present study expands upon this gap in current knowledge regarding the relationship between strategy development and evaluation in a modern context and the role analytics plays between these two processes.

In examining the social media marketing evaluation process within the wider perspective of social media marketing strategy, a contextualised conceptual framework is produced. Here, the study extends three prior works that represent the extant academic knowledge of the social media marketing evaluation process and outcomes (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013). Specifically, Cvijikj et al. (2013) developed the stages from Murdough (2010) for a social media measurement system, whereas, Jeffrey's (2013) work provided vital information on the important contribution of KPIs to the social media marketing evaluation process.

The contextualised conceptual framework which emerged from this study has identified additional stages to Cvijikj et al.'s (2013) system, while also offering further insights on the importance of Jeffrey's (2013) KPIs to the social media marketing evaluation processes and outcomes. Furthermore, the contextualised conceptual framework suggests stages of the process of social media marketing evaluation, and links social media KPIs and metrics to the wider context of social media marketing strategy. These are original contributions to current knowledge and theory in the area of marketing evaluation.

Notably, none of these three social media marketing evaluation works (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013) are empirical, hence the current study presents the first conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation as defined by key informant practitioners, again making it an original contribution. While McCann and Barlow (2015) offered insights into social media marketing adoption and measurement, however their study is conducted within organisations who were not necessarily familiar with digital marketing practices. The findings presented here respond to calls for a better understanding of social media marketing evaluation (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Akter and Wamba, 2016), by establishing a contextualised conceptual framework that is empirically-grounded and is valuable for both academic inquiry and practical application. As such, this study has provided a valuable original contribution into an under-researched area and extends the understanding of social media marketing.

7.3.1   3rd Major Contribution to Knowledge

The third major contribution to knowledge of this study is:

> *establishing the importance of agency-client interactions in the co-creation of social media marketing*

The third major contribution to knowledge from this study represents an additional layer to the social media marketing story which has seen little attention to date, that of client relationships and their influence on strategy development and evaluation. Longstanding knowledge asserts the importance of this agency-client relationships to successful marketing practice (Keegan, Rowley and Tonge, 2017), but with an

increasingly fragmented digital and social media landscape, this perspective is challenged by the results of this study. The systematic review establishes how agency-client relationships are important for planning and implementing campaigns (Pollay and Swinth, 1969; Halinen, 1997; Gould et al., 1999; Beard, 1999) and the findings concur with many of the thematic constructs from the literature. However, this study also recognises that agency-client relationships in social media marketing are different from those in digital and traditional media environments, which has been explored in recent studies (Quinn et al., 2016; Quinton and Wilson, 2016, Hughes et al., 2018).

The findings of this study offer an alternative perspective to the prior knowledge and theory of agency-client relationships and focuses its attention on the dynamics of agency-client interactions. Specifically, the findings in this study appear to reject the notion that social media marketing planning is solely influenced by the relationship and instead suggests that agency-client interactions impose a significant influence. In doing so, this study highlights the influence of client interaction in strategy development and evaluation, discovering how both parties appear to be complicit in helping and deterring successful marketing practices. Furthermore, the present study argues that the traditional notion of an overarching agency-client relationship is redundant in the modern digitised environment. This argument is supported by evidence which illustrates how difficult relationship establishment and management is in a highly fragmented digitised media landscape (Komulainen et al., 2016; Aarikka-Stenroos et al., 2018). Participants illustrated retainer style arrangements, often working with competitor agencies. Hence, a multi-agency-client dynamic indicates long-term agency-client relationships are difficult to establish and maintain which offers a useful addition to similar studies by Levin et al., (2016) and Verčič et al. (2018). Also, considering the high turnover rate of clients hiring of specialised digital agencies, relationships are typically short-lived and highly dependent on campaign performance expectations (Arul, 2011; Vafeas, 2015).

This study asserts how the most successful campaigns are developed by agencies using client involvement in the strategy and evaluation decision-making processes. Co-creation in strategy development and evaluation was identified as overcoming the issues that emerge from short-term relationships. Through elaborate techniques and initiatives to enhance the clients' understanding of social media marketing practice,

this study outlines how modern marketing agencies seem to attempt to develop longer term relationships. Furthermore, through mitigation of conflict between the two parties, it appears that relationships are also improved and enhanced which represents an original contribution. These findings complement the previous agency-client relationship knowledge (e.g., Davies and Palihawadana, 2006; Beverland et al., 2007; Fam and Waller, 2008), offering a modern perspective of the influence of client interaction in decision-making. Thus, the notion of co-creation in social media strategy development offers new insights into relationships in service industries which is an avenue which has only recently been explored (Hughes et al., 2018; Vercic, Tench and Tkalac, 2018). Therefore, the influence of the agency-client interactions and their contribution to agency-client relationships constitutes the third area of the current study.

This study advances the significant body of theoretical knowledge of agency-client relationships, providing a view of modern client relationships in the digital era which has seen little attention to date (e.g., Komulainen et al., 2016). As much of the prior literature views the agency-client relationship as a dyadic phenomenon (Prince et al., 2016), this study proposes a new and alternative way of understanding the influence of relationships through the lens of social media marketing practice. Specifically, the study discovers how the nature of client interaction influences agency performance. Accordingly, this study responds to calls for more research on the impact of digitisation on marketing practice (Habibi et al., 2015; Bernard, 2016; Quinton and Wilson, 2016), as well as offering insights into the construction of modern business relationships (Heo and Sutherland, 2015; Prince et al., 2016).

This study represents the first qualitative study undertaken to understand the influence of the agency-client relationships on social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. Further, this is the first study of its kind to examine social media marketing strategy development and evaluation amongst industry experts. Thus, the study enhances our understanding of the phenomenon of social media marketing, further contributing to the research that considers the influence of agency-client relationships and their respective interactions. In doing so, this study contributes to knowledge and

theory in the area of agency-client relationships, offering a new perspective of their influence on modern business practice in a social media setting.

7.4 Sub Thematic Contributions: Strategy

The section of the chapter discusses the contributions to knowledge of the findings in relation to the first major theme - strategy development in social media marketing. This major theme addresses the first and second research objectives. It is important at this point to highlight how these sub-themes emerged from the literature. Chapter 3 details the key activities in marketing strategy development models (Gregory, 2000; Kotler, 2000; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). These stages were confirmed by participants in their approaches to strategy development in social media marketing and new insights were produced in an area which is under-researched. However, thematic analysis of findings highlighted two stages not reported in the prior literature: *pre-campaign research,* and *management decision-making*. In identifying these additional stages, the research suggests a reflective stage in strategy development in social media marketing is pivotal for informing future campaigns. Furthermore, social media campaigns tend to operate in short cycles, whereby the end of one campaign leads onto the strategy development of the next. Finally, it is also worth noting that the evaluation stage feeds directly into the decisions made during this new sixth stage, asserting further the importance of campaign evaluation to strategic decision-making.

The findings in this theme advance previous works who have considered strategy development from the perspective of inexperienced small to medium sized enterprises (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Felix et al., 2017), or firms with little experience of social media marketing (Chung et al., 2017). Therefore, a contribution is made by providing a specialist digital agency perspective in terms of techniques, implementation and evaluation processes. Lastly, the findings also contribute to the understanding of strategic decision-making processes in digital marketing. The following sections discuss the respective contributions to knowledge in each sub-theme.

7.4.1 Approaches to Social Media Marketing Strategy Development

The first sub-theme reflects an overarching view of participant's approaches to developing strategies for social media marketing. The twenty agencies interviewed suggested that strategic approaches to social media marketing were essential. None of the participants in this study are aware of, nor did they refer to, any strategy models explored in the literature review. Therefore, an important aspect of the findings is that the specific stages of the published strategy models are relevant for social media marketing, however practitioners are not utilising these sources of knowledge. This indicates a requirement to conceptualise the commonly adopted approaches to strategy development by social media marketers. This contrasts McCann and Barlow's (2015) assertions that firms with little knowledge of the formally recognised processes of strategy development are inhibited as a result. It is argued that the rapidly changing nature of social media requires an adaptive approach to strategy development and therefore established strategy models are useful, although they do not fully suit social media practice.

Findings indicate how the proficiency of social media marketing strategy development varied. For instance, larger agencies were found to be prolific in their approaches to strategy development, utilizing vast significant pre-campaign research stages, harnessing social media data to generate insights, informing decision-making (such as Andrea's Agency). The intensity at this stage advances strategy models preference for lengthy pre-campaign research stages (Gregory, 2000; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) suggesting the reliance on analytical processes differentiates modern marketing practices previous knowledge.

The study also identified social media marketing activities which were not reported in the literature which examines campaign development (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Felix et al., 2017). Social media marketers are occasionally tasked with ad hoc projects that may not come under the banner of strategy development, such as: *measuring and monitoring sentiment, social media training, consultancy, reputation management, content generation.* Thus, findings further advance knowledge of strategy development in social media marketing. Prior works have examined these topics independently, such as Töllinen et al.'s (2010) examination of the merits of social

media monitoring techniques, however no works have reviewed the various activities performed by social media marketing practitioners. McCann and Barlow's (2015) work In particular, the findings offer an insight into multi-faceted role of the social media marketer: *analyst* and *strategist*.

7.4.2 Pre-Campaign Research

The first stage in the strategy development process is the pre-campaign research stage. Chapter 5 explains how participants all took part in using data from social media to develop insights regarding customer personae, identifying appropriate channels and in some cases, highlighting weaknesses in the current campaign. While Pre-Campaign Research is firmly rooted in the prior traditional, PR and digital marketing advice (Gregory, 2000; Kotler, 2000; McDonald, 2007; Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Dibb et al., 2016), the findings indicate a strong reliance on social media data to inform these decisions. Insights from social media appeared to be most prevalent, whereas the much-cited constructs of the traditional methods of situation analysis (e.g., PEST, SWOT etc.) are notably absent in the findings. This study offers a unique contribution to knowledge by suggesting a disjoin between the traditional marketing literature and the new and rapidly developing field of social media marketing. However, commercially published industry reports were often cited as informing decisions at this stage.

The participants also indicated that the inclusion of a campaign brief is a useful method for performing an analysis at this stage. This is alluded to in one of the stages in Gregory's (2000) PR campaign planning model. On the other hand, the traditional and digital marketing strategy models do not feature a briefing stage. Perhaps the previous knowledge in this area tends to focus on agencies who have already secured accounts and overlooks the transient nature of the digital industry and the importance pitching plays in modern practice. Furthermore, participants maintained that face-to-face strategy development meetings were most useful. This sentiment offers a contribution to the prior literature that asserts the importance of pitching (Davies and Prince, 2005; Palihawadana and Barnes, 2005), suggesting face-to-face communication is vital for the practitioner to explain complex information to their clients.

Conducting research prior to the implementation of the campaign also highlights participants' reliance on knowledge of consumer trends and behaviours. Therefore, the role of the practitioner in the specialist digital agency is no longer simply to understand the medium *per se*, but to use social media data to predict consumer behaviour. The prior literature highlights the value of a marketers' knowledge of media capabilities which is recognised by previous studies (e.g., Triki et al., 2007; Waller et al., 2010), however this study suggests social media marketers are also required to conduct complex consumer research projects. This offers a contrasting perspective to McDonald's (2007) view which delineates the roles of marketing researchers and marketing managers within an organisation. Therefore the findings of the study continue to offer a unique contribution to our understanding of social media marketing.

However, all participants asserted the importance of client involvement in pre-campaign research to determine the desired outcome of the social media campaign. In one such instance, a participant (Isaac) explains that client dissatisfaction with a prior agency was shown to inform the research at this stage. Budget was specifically mentioned by practitioners as a primary factor in determining the extent of the research which will be performed. The financial constraints of the client also dictated the level of sophistication in terms of the planning process and the complexity of the campaign. While budgetary considerations feature in much of the social media literature (e.g., Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011; Valos et al., 2016), knowledge relating to pre-campaign research is elusive, further highlighting a unique feature of social media marketing campaigns.

The study also revealed how agencies appear to rely upon clients for product information that informs into the social media campaign. However, it was discovered that client firms were not forthcoming with information, posing a significant challenge to strategy development. This progresses the work of Quinn et al. (2016) who reported the many issues faced by digital agencies when strategising campaigns. As a result, lack of client involvement appears to be detrimental to social media campaign planning, highlighting the need for a collaborative working relationship, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Finally, the study revealed that pre-campaign research stage has two goals. Firstly, it establishes the projected audience and their typical behavioural responses to the marketing campaign which confirms the accepted view of *Pre-Campaign Research* which echoes suggestions of Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2012). However, in a social media setting, this stage emerged as pivotal to strategy development, as it informs every subsequent stage of the process. Therefore, these findings add new insights to the traditionally held view of situation analysis (Kotler, 2000; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) and so extends prior literature within a social media marketing context.

7.4.3 *Marketing Campaign Objective Setting*

The next stage of the strategy development is the development of campaign objectives. This confirms the prior strategy literature which suggests this stage as essential to guiding campaigns and establishing the desired outcomes of the strategy (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Patti et al., 2015). However, participants described objectives as difficult to develop due to the nature of social media. In attempting to predict and decipher the outcome of campaigns, practitioners also described social media as unpredictable, meaning targets may inadvertently highlight campaign failure. Participants described the optimal objective as a single, simple statement of intent. This statement would represent the overarching objective for the campaign and smaller tactical sub-objectives will guide the following stages. As the literature in the area of campaign objective setting in social media is limited (e.g. Kilgour et al., 2015), these findings present a contribution to this area of marketing knowledge. Finally, a strong connection between objective setting and the Pre-Campaign Research performed in the previous stage was reported.

Another intriguing finding was the view that clients - typically marketing managers - had a vague understanding of specific marketing objectives. Moreover, it was also reported that clients held little appreciation for the benefits of specific objectives. These findings offer new insights to Quinn et al.'s (2016) suggestions that digital technologies are creating a divide amongst marketing managers and specialist practitioners. In the process of taking control of the social media marketing strategy development, the specialist practitioners in this study appear to be alienating their clients under a mask

of complex media terminology. This also highlights the importance of awareness of media performance to the specialist marketer.

To overcome this lack of awareness of marketing objectives, participants reported a range of initiatives to overcome this gap in the client knowledge. Interviews and workshops were held with clients to ascertain clearly defined marketing objectives, furthering the earlier notion of the multi-faceted role of the social media expert. In these instances, the practitioner becomes educator and leads the client to a better understanding of the potential performance of the proposed strategy. Educating clients in terms of media awareness is a longstanding concept (West, 1993; Michell et al., 1996), however these findings extend the prior literature by revealing a potential co-creation dynamic. In performing these initiatives, the agency uses the opportunity to collaboratively develop campaign objectives, whereas the prior literature suggests educating clients is simply about informing the client on media performance (Michaelidou and Hassan, 2014).

7.4.4 Creative Campaign Decision-Making

Creative campaign decisions were described by participants in relation to the target audience, marketing message and selection of appropriate media. Pivotally, the majority of the sample indicated how these decisions were informed by the outcomes of situation analyses/pre-campaign research stage. While the literature to date on social media marketing strategy development adopts an overarching view of the process (Bekoglu and Onaylı, 2016; Benthaus et al., 2016; Kisato, 2016; Quinn et al., 2016; Felix et al., 2017), no research to date has examined the decision-making processes in campaign strategy development that is informed by situation analysis, or pre-campaign research. Hence, this study presents new findings in relation to the processes of strategy development in social media, highlighting the reliance on the use of insights.

The use of insights also informed decisions relating to the target audience behaviour, leading to participants creation of customer personae. These conceptualisations of the target audience, based on their behaviour, advances the literature on segmentation profiling (Prayag and Jankee, 2013; Venter et al., 2015) as no research exists on

segmentation approaches in social media marketing. Therefore, this study provides a valuable contribution to the practicalities of audience segmentation in social media strategy development.

Lastly, the process of collaborative creative campaign decision-making was commented upon frequently by participants. The ideal decision-making scenario emerged as one of collaboration between clients and practitioners, building upon the initial findings from the research at the beginning of the strategy development process. The co-creation dynamic in campaign planning is argued as successful method of strategy development (Na et al., 2009; Nätti et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2018) and this study offers insight which advance literature in this area.

7.4.5 Campaign Implementation

In implementing social media campaigns, it was revealed that tactics at this stage were also informed by the *Pre-Campaign Research* stage. Insights from this stage dictated the strategic approach to communication with the social media users and was informed by the creative campaign decisions made in the previous stage. Thus, the decision-making at this stage in line with the prior strategy models (McDonald, 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012), with particular relevance to the digital marketing literature (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Participants indicated that implementation plans for deployment of social media content were used at this stage. Similarly, a protocol for engagement with the target audience also came under the banner for a campaign. This again highlights the gap in terms of innovation in practice and scholarly research, as limited studies have been performed in this area (Erdemir, 2011; Sabate and Berbegal-Mirabent, 2014; Ahmad et al., 2016).

Another theme to emerge within this stage was the importance of social media data to the implementation of campaigns. The nature of the metrics being collected appeared to dictate the style of campaign implementation. One participant explained how a Facebook competition may include a component which requires customers to engage with the brand by way of a 'like', or 'comment'. Hence, the evaluation of that campaign would be focussed on measuring additional consumer information (i.e. customer traits that match the personae developed during the creative decision-making stage) as

metrics for the success of the campaign. This finding provides a significant contribution to knowledge, as prior social media literatures seem to discuss the impact of such metrics however fail to establish a clear link between evaluation and strategy (e.g. Lipsman et al., 2012).

7.4.6 Evaluation

While evaluation of marketing campaigns is the second theme within this research, it will be explored in depth in the next section. However, an overarching finding in this study suggests that evaluation informs management decision making in terms of future campaigns. Participants recalled how campaign performance updates allowed for continual reflection on the marketing activities of the agency. This differs in the view of the prior literatures that consider evaluation of social media activity (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013) and suggest that evaluation is a process which is performed when a campaign has finished. Interestingly, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) do establish the link between campaign objective setting and evaluation, although only provide a commentary on this link. This thesis argues that the importance of this activity constitutes a separate stage in strategy development, where the intended outcome is a set of decisions on improving, optimising, or altering ongoing and future social media campaigns. Therefore, campaign evaluation is revealed to be strongly linked to what this study refers to as a *management decision-making* stage which will be discussed in the next section. In asserting the importance of evaluation to strategy development, this study concurs with the prior strategy models (Gregory, 2000; Kotler, 2000; McDonald, 2007; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012), and social media strategy studies (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Felix et al., 2017) however it provides further contributions to knowledge which are discussed in the next section of the chapter.

7.4.7 Management Decision-Making

The analysis of findings also revealed the great importance of the process of decision-making between agencies and their clients upon the completion of an evaluation report. While evaluation was reported to be an ongoing process, not restricted to the end of a campaign, the findings suggested that there was a continual process of reflection on performance of campaigns. This created a new stage in the strategy, and

evaluation process whereby strategic decisions are made by management (typically involving a client marketing manager) and the social media marketer, based on the outcomes of ongoing campaign evaluation reports. This decision-making stage in some cases would take the form of a face-to-face meeting, or campaign update reporting event, which would review campaign performance insights with a view to making a set of decisions relating to improving the current campaign or revoking current campaign strategies. Alternatively, other decisions reported during this stage suggest outlining improvements for future iterations of social media campaigns.

It is noteworthy that client involvement at this point appeared to be significant compared to previous stages in the process. As clients are perhaps not familiar with the nuances of social media, they refrain from or are prevented from collaborating with the agency in the process up until this point. However, this stage brings both agency and client together in a pivotal situation where important strategic decision are made in some cases collaboratively, which contributes to the agency-client relationship literatures (West and Paliwoda, 1996; Grant et al., 2003).

It is important to point out how this stage is significant as it is not prevalent within the literature, however this stage is pivotal to social media marketing. Arguably, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick's (2012) link between evaluation and objective setting provides a foundation for this stage, however it is not elaborated upon in any great detail in their work, nor others. Therefore, through the lens of social media marketing strategy development, the importance of this stage has been highlighted and opens a further agenda for research in campaign decision-making.

Furthermore, such meetings are honest appraisals of success and failure of social media campaigns. It is possible that this honest approach enhances the agency-client relationship and offers additional value to the client, which requires further research. However, the findings of this study suggest that a collaborative approach would be more beneficial in educating the client in terms of social media campaign performance, as well as enhancing the ongoing relationship.

7.4.8 Summary of Sub-Themes in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development

In summary, this section has presented the key findings in relation to strategy development in social media marketing. Table 7-2 provides a comparison of the sub-themes emerging within this study. A *Pre-Campaign Research* phase was observed as a significant stage, which was followed by the identification of *campaign objectives* underpinned and informed through the evaluation of social media data. *Creative Campaign Decisions* and *Implementation* tactics were highlighted by participants, with a strong focus on the influence of clients in decision-making at this stage. Finally, the *evaluation* of the campaign was seen as a continual process which informed strategic decision-making for the rest of the process, culminating in a final stage which this study calls *Management Decision-Making*. In this last stage of strategy development, the agency and client convene to review the campaign activity and decisions to alter aspects of the campaign are made, in some cases leading to the next cycle of the ongoing campaign.

Table 7-2 Comparison of Sub-Themes Emerging in Social Media Marketing Strategy Development Findings

Literature	Sub-Theme	Description	Current Study Findings	New Contributions
Gregory, 2000; McDonald, 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Chaffey et al., 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Dibb et al., 2016	Approaches to Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	Elements of Traditional Marketing, PR and Digital Models apply to social media marketing.	Traditional Marketing Models do not appear to apply in social media marketing strategy development. Approaches to planning social media marketing are more akin to Public Relations models/frameworks due to the importance of sentiment and engagement with social media users.	A range of social media marketing strategy development activities were discovered which extended previous literature, such as: Measuring and Monitoring, Retainer, Training, Consultancy, Strategy Development, Reputation Management, Content Generation.
McDonald, 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Pettit, 2014; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Dobele et al., 2015; Patti et al., 2015	Pre-Campaign Research	Analysis of an organization's internal and external environment to understand the organization's capabilities.	Use of data and customer insight is key to planning effective campaigns. Social Media insights are vital to understanding how best to plan campaigns. Awareness of social media user behaviour may decide the direction of the campaign, including appropriate channels, engagement strategies and informs measurement processes.	Decisions relating to strategy development were often led by the expertise and knowledge of the practitioner.
Peters et al., 2013; Patti et al., 2015; Moro et al., 2016	Marketing Campaign Objective Setting	Development of a desired or required result to be achieved by a campaign within a specific timeframe.	Objectives appeared to be difficult to develop, and often clients struggle to recognise the value and importance of clearly defined objectives	Interviews/Workshops with clients were regularly held to ascertain clearly defined social media marketing campaign objectives
Gregory, 2000; Rust et al., 2004; Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Na et al., 2009; Chaffey et al., 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012;	Creative Campaign Decision-Making	The construction of an integrated marketing programme that delivers value to the customer by selecting appropriate and effective marketing channels through analysis of customer needs as well as identifying	Creative decisions for campaigns seem to be informed by pre-campaign research.	Client input was seen as valuable and often sought after by participants, but at times challenging to the planning process.

		major channel alternatives and evaluating those alternatives.		Budget dictated the level of sophistication in terms of the planning process and the complexity of the campaign
Chowdhury et al., 2016; Komulainen et al., 2016				
Nakara et al., 2012; Minazzi, 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2016; Choi and Thoeni, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2016; Floreddu and Cabiddu, 2016	Campaign Implementation	Campaign Implementation incorporates the tactical decisions which utilise the selected channels, delivering the campaign message to the target audience. Implementation decisions typically take the form of a strategic communications delivery plan, utilising customer insights from the Pre-Campaign Research stage.	Approaches to implementation of campaigns were seen to be informed by social media data.	Implementation tactics were also informed by the pre-campaign research and dictated the strategic approach to communication with the social media users. Decisions in terms of implementation were also linked the measurement strategy.
Kumar and Mirchandani, 2013; Holsapple et al., 2014; Ruhi, 2014; Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Moro et al., 2016.	Evaluation	Evaluation is the process of measuring the performance of a marketing campaign, use of marketing resources to achieve measurable gain in return on investment and efficiency.	Measurement is a key feature of social media marketing campaigns. Outcomes and processes of campaigns are evaluated using a system of KPIs and metrics.	There is a link between evaluation of campaigns and decision-making in terms of improving future campaigns. Evaluation informs management decision making in terms of future campaigns.
Michell, 1988; Murphy, 1994; Na et al., 2009; Murdough, 2010; Pescher et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2015; Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016	Management Decision-Making	Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports.	A management decision making stage often followed the digestion of the evaluation report	This stage reflects the requirement for informing future iterations of the same campaign, or alternative approaches to improve weaker elements identified within evaluation reports.

7.5 Sub Thematic Contributions: Evaluation

This section of the chapter discusses the social media marketing evaluation findings. Evaluation of social media data is vital to effective practice as well as being a challenging and complex process. Through investigation of the second theme, evaluation, the findings demonstrate that specialist agencies are aware of its contribution to decision-making in strategy development. However, it was reported by participants that their clients did not recognise the importance of sophisticated evaluation, and conflict between the two parties emerged. Thus, the study advances prior knowledge within agency-client conflict studies (Davies and Prince, 2010; Grant et al., 2012).

Astute approaches to measuring campaign performance were identified by the study. In particular, a complex system of measurement comprised of evaluation objectives, achieved by identification of KPIs and metrics. This system extends beyond mere measurement and offers a valuable new contribution to the prior campaign evaluation knowledge (Murdough, 2010; Jeffrey, 2013). Furthermore, the careful approach to preparing and communicating the performance of campaigns also has an impact on the overall process, especially by supporting decision-making by senior management. Participant agencies were observed creating value for their clients through evaluation of complex data in support of strategy development for campaigns. This connection between value creation and evaluation has been overlooked in many previous studies (e.g., Fan and Yan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Praude and Skulme, 2015; Jobs and Gilfoil, 2016), and is a significant contribution of this study.

Lastly, the contextualised conceptual framework highlights the level of complexity involved in evaluation of multifaceted media data. The majority of works that consider social media marketing evaluation focus on the *outcomes* of these processes, i.e., the benefits of measuring digital marketing campaigns (e.g. Lamberton and Stephen, 2016), rather than providing specific details of campaign measurement processes. The literature in this area is lacking and fails to uncover *how* marketers measure campaigns, despite calls for addressing the skills gap in this area (Royle and Laing, 2014). In contrast, an important contribution of the current study is insights into the

processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation that has implications for both scholars and practitioners.

7.5.1 Evaluation

Before this section considers the stages of campaign evaluation observed in the findings, it is pertinent to outline participants' evaluation approaches. The majority of these approaches were distinctive to practitioners' experience, client budget and access to software. However, three key similarities were observed in the specific processes of evaluation: *social media monitoring, social listening, and sentiment analysis.* Part I of Chapter 3 reviewed social media marketing evaluation frameworks from academic sources (e.g., Jeffrey, 2013), yet none of these entirely conformed to the practices described by participants. Cognitive mapping of these processes also revealed a gap between the academic knowledge in this area and the processes enacted by this study's sample. Therefore, it is argued that this study has advanced the key social media marketing evaluation works (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013) by offering a detailed framework of the process which is empirically-grounded.

The findings revealed how evaluation is an ongoing process that observed campaign behaviour on a weekly, monthly basis and regular client updates would present this information to the client. This echoes the previous literature that asserts the importance of effectively monitoring campaign performance through social media analytics (Vorvoreanu et al., 2013; Jobs and Gilfoil, 2014; Moro et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2016). Therein, this study contributes to knowledge by providing insights into the importance of marketing evaluation and comments upon the importance of the frequency of these communications (Järvinen, 2016). Finally, it was also found that training in social media was often to inform clients as to the value and benefits of evaluation. Therefore, this study also contributes to an emerging trend in the social media studies which argue that periodic evaluation is useful for monitoring performance, but also in enhancing the client relationship (Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018).

7.5.2 Setting Evaluation Objectives

The findings revealed that the first stage of the evaluation process is to create evaluation objectives. In some cases, it was reported that practitioners would adopt an *ad hoc* evaluation process that commenced with the identification of appropriate metrics, rather than objectives. These cases tended to be within the smaller agencies interviewed. However, the majority of agencies interviewed outlined the preference to establish an evaluation objective that was aligned with the strategic campaign objectives. Such targets were largely determined by the social media platforms, which define the desired KPIs and metrics. Large brands tended to have more sophisticated evaluation targets. Collaborative evaluation objective development was reported by participants as highly beneficial. However, smaller client firms did not recognise the value of such targets and tended to rely on agency expertise. As such, the agency appeared to take control of campaign evaluation. While the previous literature in this area lauds the benefits of campaign objectives (Chung et al., 2017; Felix et al., 2017), there is relatively little knowledge in the area of evaluation targets. Only one study in the literature review refers to setting targets for measurement (McCann and Barlow, 2015), suggesting this stage represents a novel finding from the study.

Even so, McCann and Barlow's (2015) work offers little more on the topic of evaluation targets aside from identification of the concept. They posit the following:

> *The process of measuring ROI should be an ongoing process that involves going back to the planning stage and revisiting the goals, objectives and metrics or the implementation stages and revising which social media tools or methods for analysing social media use are appropriate to use. (p.283)*

With the previous extract, the reference to targets for the overall campaign feed into the process of calculating ROI. Thus, the present study advances understanding of social media marketing evaluation knowledge significantly by stressing the importance of clarifying outcomes for evaluation of campaigns.

7.5.3 Identifying KPIs

The next stage of the evaluation process is the identification of KPIs. All participants underpinned the importance of using KPIs to guide the process of campaign evaluation. Findings in this area concur with the literature which propose the use of KPIs to manage social media marketing (Töllinen et al., 2010; Moro et al., 2016;

Pauwels and Joshi, 2016). Findings advance prior knowledge by providing specific examples of how KPIs are used as a vehicle to guide campaign evaluation that lead to decision-making in campaign strategy development. This was identified as a gap in the current knowledge (Section 3.6) as the previous work in this area tends to focus on the identification of social media KPIs solely within a campaign measurement capacity (Dzamic, 2012; Ferreira et al., 2012; Alberghini et al., 2014). Hence, this study makes an original contribution to knowledge through identifying the importance of KPIs to strategic decision making in strategy development.

The study also displayed an overview of participants' knowledge and skills in identifying KPI. When discussing KPIs identification, the majority of participants provided highly complex combinations of social media metrics, which were carefully selected to match the online behaviours of the target audience. Only a minority of participants relied upon rudimentary metrics (e.g., numbers of Facebook Likes) which they referred to as KPI. A common theme in this area was the extent to which tools and software greatly influence the ability to identify KPIs. Regardless of their complexity, it emerged that the process of using KPIs in a campaign evaluation procedure is effective. Hence, this study advances knowledge of marketing KPIs (Rubinson and Pfeiffer, 2005; Chaffey and Patron, 2012; Alberghini et al., 2014; Ruhi, 2014; Muñoz-Expósito et al., 2017) by offering specific examples from social media marketing.

Another unique contribution to knowledge in this field is the regularity of changing or altering KPIs within a campaign. Hence, this study finds that KPIs in social media are iterative and subject to regular revisions. This offers an alternative perspective to the prior literature which sees KPIs static concepts (Sponder, 2011; Drula, 2012; Praude and Skulme, 2015), although a recent research has considered the notion of ongoing optimising of campaign metrics (Pauwels and Joshi, 2016), although within a general digital marketing perspective. Hence, the study advances knowledge of KPIs to the evaluation process as well as highlighting the link between strategy and evaluation. These findings demonstrate the value of investigating KPIs in practice to produce theoretical contributions while also informing future practice.

7.5.4 Identifying Metrics

Following on from the identification of KPI, the next stage is to identify the associated metrics which underpin them. Two significant contributions emerged within this stub-theme. As previously mentioned, social media platforms dictate the selection process and the findings illustrate many examples of excessive reporting thus highlighting the need for a more strategic approach to evaluation. While prior literature on social media metrics is concerned with collating lists of available metrics (Drula, 2012; Peters et al., 2013), it does little to inform practitioners as to the value of metrics underpinning key performance indicators. Therefore, the findings in the current study advances previous understandings by demonstrating that practitioners are restricted in terms of their decision-making due to the software available to them rather than concentrating on utilisation of metrics in the wider context of strategy development. Hence, by identifying specific examples of campaign evaluation that lack strategic focus, this study highlights the benefits of a conceptual framework with a strong connection to strategy development as an advancement to the previous studies of social media metrics (e.g., Moro et al., 2016).

Secondly, findings provided insights into the wider difficulties in identifying social media metrics. In some cases, participants struggled to attribute social media marketing activity to traditionally recognised metrics such as direct sales. In doing so, this study also advances knowledge from previous scholars that have questioned the efficacy of social media metrics (e.g., Lee et al., 2016; Mochon et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2017), as well as highlighting the difficulties in trying to harness these when developing marketing strategies (Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Quinn et al., 2016). By concentrating on utilisation of metrics in the wider context of strategy development, this study advances previous understandings by demonstrating that practitioners are restricted in terms of their decision-making due to the nature of social media and the software available to them.

7.5.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The next stage to emerge from the findings in the evaluation process is the collection and analysis of social media campaign data. As with the previous stage, restrictions appeared to be imposed by the tools and softwares available to participants which

reflects the findings of previous studies (e.g., Töllinen, Järvinen and Karjaluoto 2012). It emerged that practitioners are in a continual process of testing new tools to assist with the process of campaign evaluation. In the case of data collection and analysis, these tools are supposed to enhance and improve the processes, however these were reported to be fraught with issues, in particular, those of with ownership and transferability of social media data. Practitioners appeared to be quite sceptical of the capabilities of social media measurement tools and software, with one participant (Isabel) described, '*no one tool does everything*'. Therefore, it emerged that social media marketers are also required to collate complex data into an understandable format for their clients and producing a campaign report that makes sense to both practitioner and client. In doing so, the outcome of this data collection and analysis should ideally support strategic decision-making.

These findings are unique in that prior literature on collection in social media data is extremely limited, due to the majority of work focussing on the metrics and KPIs and offer little more on *how* this data is collected (e.g., Micu et al., 2017; Muñoz-Expósito et al., 2017; Pan and You, 2017; Rathore et al., 2017). A small stream of recent studies describe the tools are used to collect data, however offer little in the way of guidance (Pauwels and Joshi, 2016; Mochon et al., 2017; Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). Considering the importance of social media data to strategic decision making, this represents a significant gap in the literature which these findings advance upon. Hence, this study demonstrates the importance of this stage to the overall process of evaluation, advancing the prior works which consider evaluation and analytical procedures (Micu et al., 2017; Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018).

As for social media analytics, the findings outline how practitioners use a variety of analytical procedures to measure and track the performance of social media campaigns. Analytical techniques demonstrated by the findings advance those represented in the previous literature (Jobs and Gilfoil, 2016; Pauwels and Joshi, 2016; Muñoz-Expósito et al., 2017; Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018) offering a modern perspective on social media marketing practice. In particular, dashboards were common in this stage, offering an extension of Kaplan and Norton's (1996) work as well as recent studies (e.g., Pauwels and Joshi, 2016) which propose dashboards as a tool for digital campaigns.

Interestingly, calculation of ROI featured in the data collected, suggesting clients demand of evidence of this within social media marketing. However, apart from one participant (Renata), none gave any definitive descriptions of how they approach this calculation. For example, one such extract discussed how their (Paula) client is in favour of using the concept of ROI, however they struggle to elaborate on how this calculation is achieved through the social media campaign. This supports the prior rhetoric from Broom et al. (2011) who indicates complexity in precise calculation of social media ROI. Further contributions to the literature are evident from the findings, such as asserting the value of ROI to campaign measurement (Cvijikj et al., 2013; Ruhi, 2014; Muñoz-Expósito et al., 2017), and how social media metrics are key to these calculations (Peters et al., 2013; Moro et al., 2016; Pauwels and Joshi, 2016). Critics suggest that such calculations are not appropriate for social media due to the semantic nature of the metrics involved (Fisher, 2009; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010) whereas this study provides evidence to argue against this notion.

7.5.6 Report Generation

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is little published knowledge in the area of crafting and creating campaign reports. Despite this, campaign reports were frequently mentioned in the findings although typically as part of a wider conversation of the evaluation process. In most cases, campaign reports were usually supported by a face-to-face meeting to explain the specifics of the performance metrics. This study therefore contributes to this conversation by providing insights into the process of shaping performance reports, often in the format of dashboards. These findings demonstrate an advancement of Peters et al.'s (2013) calls for dashboards to supporting marketing practice and evaluation of marketing activities.

Reporting styles observed in the findings tended to vary in terms of sophistication. Participants in larger agencies created sophisticated evaluation dashboards, although these were dependant on the client budget. However, results of this study also revealed campaign reports were being ignored by client leading to frustration on the behalf of the agency. This finding compliments the already reported issues identified by scholars relating to the efficiency of the measurement tools and software (Töllinen

et al., 2012; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015). However, the findings of the study for this stage of the evaluation process asserts the importance of the style of reporting, which offers a significant advancement of the limited previous work in this area (e.g., Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012).

7.5.7 Management Decision-Making

The final stage of the evaluation process represents the crossing point between evaluation and strategy. The findings of this study revealed how the culmination of the campaign evaluation led to strategic decision-making by clients and agencies on the basis of performance data produced. The literature review reveals how a small thread of studies discuss collaborative decision-making structures in terms of marketing (Johnson and Laczniak, 1991; Na et al., 2009; Michaelidou and Hassan, 2014). However, the majority of the marketing decision-making literature is consumer focussed (e.g., Pescher et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2015), although commentators also assert the importance of decision-making in planning and implementing campaigns (Michell, 1988; Murphy, 1994; Na et al., 2009; Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016). To this effect, this study contributes to knowledge of decision-making by marketing agencies and their clients, by demonstrating that within social media marketing, decisions are informed by the outcome of the process of evaluation. Hence, this management decision making stage also enables collaboration and co-creation in terms of strategy development which is also a recently explored topic (Hughes et al., 2018).

It is also noteworthy that both negative and positive performance of the campaign are considered. Hence, this stage supports a reflective learning process by agencies and their clients in terms of campaign performance. As this is such a new medium, reflection on performance is to be expected. However, as Quinn et al. (2016) states, the challenges of using such a new medium isolates the marketing manager, creating a difficult dynamic whereby agencies are in complete control of the process, leading to a distinct knowledge gap on the part of client-side marketing managers. This study indicates how this reflective stage of the process advances Quinn et al.'s (2016) assertions by highlighting the exchange of campaign performance between agencies and their clients.

Finally, the majority of participants espoused the value of the decisions made at this stage and established a relationship with informing the objectives of future campaigns. This represents a distinctive finding illustrating an area where the current literature is yet to catch up. The dominant authors who have published in the area of social media marketing measurement (Murdough, 2010; Chaffey and Smith, 2012; Jeffrey, 2013; Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015) refer to the previous stages in some form or other, however none of them examine the strategic decisions made as a result of the outcomes of the evaluation process. Therefore, the findings here with regards to the role and importance of the evaluation process in contributing to strategic decision-making is a key area of knowledge from this study.

7.5.8 Challenges Observed within Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Lastly, the study revealed the overarching challenges when performing social media marketing evaluation. Firstly, participants indicated that client lack of knowledge in terms of digital and social media posed a significant challenge to performing evaluation. As a result, agencies were routinely required to educate clients as to the value of campaign measurement. This reflects the findings of a small number of studies which indicate media awareness of client executives is important in terms of advertising practice (e.g., Skjølsvik et al., 2007), yet there is only a limited amount of work on client awareness of digital media channels performance (e.g., Quinn et al., 2016). Therefore, this study provides new knowledge by underlining the importance of media awareness to social media marketing practice.

Numerous technical challenges emerged from the findings which extended the limited stream of literature in this area (Töllinen et al., 2010; Schweidel and Moe, 2014). Issues related to software were reported by the participants. However, the study also revealed how social media data presents unique issues relating to sarcasm, colloquialisms and double negative expressions affect the ability to measure the performance of campaigns. These findings advance the knowledge from the small subset of recent studies which have scrutinised digital marketing evaluation software (Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015).

Finally, the impact of the client relationship emerged as the most is significant in all elements of strategy and evaluation, which will be discussed in the next section. These challenges to the practice of evaluation also represent a new contribution to knowledge in this area. Prior social media evaluation studies details challenges and issues relating to the process of evaluation such as inappropriate software (Cvijikj et al., 2012; Jeffrey, 2013), however no social media studies to date have examined the impact of the following four factors upon evaluation: *the client relationship, importance of media awareness, and the importance of educating clients.*

7.5.9 *Summary of Sub-Themes in Social Media Marketing Evaluation*

Table 7-3 outlines the stages observed in the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation which will are discussed in this section. It also outlines the relationship with the prior literature as well as commenting upon new insights which have emerged from the study.

In summary, this section has presented the key findings in relation to evaluation of social media marketing. In examining the process, the study revealed a series of stages which provided insights into the specific activities performed by practitioners. Some stages advanced current literatures such as the prior knowledge around *KPI, metrics*, and *data analysis*. However, other stages emerged as new concepts, such as *evaluation objectives* and the approaches to *report formulation*. Furthermore, the study highlights how the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation culminates with a period of *managerial decision-making* whereby agencies and their clients can use the array of campaign performance data to inform future campaigns or altering the objectives of the current activities. With this stage of the evaluation process, a clear link between evaluation and strategy is created. Thus, two key processes which underpin social media marketing are presented, discussed, and links between the two are outlined. Hence, the first aim of this study and objectives 1, 2 and 3 has been addressed.

Table 7-3 Comparison of Themes and Stages Emerging in Social Media Marketing Evaluation Findings

Studies from Literature	Theme/ Stages	Description	Current Study Findings	New Contributions
Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015	Social Media Measurement	There is no universally agreed system for measuring social media marketing. There is little agreement in terms of the best approach to measuring social media marketing, due to the vast amount of data and other complexities of this data.	Social media marketing evaluation involves the following stages of activity: *identifying evaluation objectives, identifying KPIs, identifying metrics, data collection and analysis, report generation, management decision-making.*	Specialist social media marketing executives have developed a variety of complex evaluation models. These do not conform with models in the literature.
McCann and Barlow, 2015; Chung et al., 2017; Felix et al., 2017	Setting Evaluation Objectives	Categorisation of outcomes for the evaluation process, supporting wider marketing strategy objectives	Targets were adopted by practitioners to align evaluation with strategic objectives of the campaign.	Categorisation of outcomes and targets for the evaluation process, supporting wider marketing strategy objectives. These are determined by the platforms involved with the campaign. Collaboration with clients in developing objectives is useful.
Töllinen et al., 2010; Chaffey and Patron, 2012; Ferreira et al., 2012; Alberghini et al., 2014; Moro et al., 2016	Identifying KPIs	Selection of key performance indicators which support the evaluation objectives and marketing strategy objectives	KPIs were commonly used vehicle to guide campaign evaluation.	Knowledge of KPI generation varied. Tools and software greatly influence the selection of KPIs, which are iterative and change regularly. Industry sources are influential for this stage.
Peters et al., 2013; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015; Lee et al., 2016; Moro et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2016	Identifying Metrics	Selection of metrics which underpin the KPIs identified in the previous stage	A variety of SM Metrics exist, but the most appropriate must be selected to avoid over-counting, or erroneous evaluation.	Tools and software greatly influence the selection of KPIs and metrics. Some misunderstanding of difference between the metrics and KPIs. Questions arise around the efficacy of metrics, and relationships to sales figures.

Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Zeng et al., 2010; Jeffrey, 2013; Vorvoreanu et al., 2013; Holsapple et al., 2014	Data Collection and Analysis	Obtaining and processing the previously identified KPIs and metrics from the relevant media channels. Analysis of campaign data will be enacted at this stage elucidating the campaign behaviour and performance	It was found that the role of the social media marketing specialist is also to collate this data into an understandable format for their clients (e.g., a social media marketing Evaluation dashboard)	Collecting social media marketing data is possible, but this process is fraught with issues, namely the ownership of the data and transferability across platforms.
Töllinen et al., 2010; Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2013; Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015	Report Generation	KPIs and metrics are compiled into a presentable format, highlighting the overall campaign performance with other notable insights	Reporting is a key element of the campaign management process. Results of this study showed that often this process was not appreciated and, in some cases, caused consternation and ultimately conflict.	Effective reporting is an important aspect of the agency-client relationship. Bespoke evaluation dashboards were also common, typically built in Microsoft Excel.
Murdough, 2010; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Cvijikj et al., 2013; Jeffrey, 2013; McCann and Barlow, 2015; Quinn et al., 2016	Management Decision-Making	Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports. Often these reports are presented to the client with a view to informing future iterations of the same campaign, or alternative approaches to improve weaker elements identified within the reports.	Evaluation reports were usually supported by a face-to-face meeting to explain campaign performance. A management decision making stage often followed the digestion of the evaluation report.	Often evaluation reports were under-utilised by clients and thus compromises the aim of the social media marketing evaluation process.

Source: Keegan (2018)

7.6 Sub Thematic Contributions: Agency-Client Relationships

This part of the chapter discusses the findings from examining the impact of agency-client relationships in social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The findings established the pivotal importance of client input to the development of strategy and evaluation in social media marketing. This section will begin by discussing the pivotal nature of agency-client interactions in social media marketing, before discussing the sub-thematic findings from the two perspectives identified in the literature review: *the interpersonal,* and *the alternative*. The interpersonal view observed how contractual arrangements attempt to outline the respective responsibilities of both parties when performing social media marketing (Gould, Grein, et al., 1999; Davies and Prince, 2011). Furthermore, the practice of client account management would also be employed to maintain the ongoing relationship (Ojasalo, 2001; Waller, 2004). The alternative view considers the impact of international and organisational culture upon relationships (Fam and Waller, 1999; Moon and Franke, 2000; Waller et al., 2001), as well as the recent trend of co-creation (Tanskanen and Aminoff, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Prince et al., 2016). Furthermore, conflict between the two parties involved is seen to have a significant influence on the ability to plan and implement marketing campaigns (Bourland, 1993; Grant et al., 2012).

7.6.1 Dynamics of Agency-Client Interactions and Strategy Development

Findings of this study appear to confirm that the broader agency-client relationship is important to the successful social media marketing campaigns. However, comparatively little research has examined the influence of interactions between the two parties in strategy development and evaluation. As a result, this study suggests that interactions between social media agencies and their clients are different to the traditionally held view of the agency-client relationship. Specifically, the literature views the phenomenon as an overarching and long-term concept carefully curated by client account management strategies (Bennett, 1999; Davies and Palihawadana, 2006; Beverland et al., 2007), however in social media marketing, the level and intensity of the relationship between the parties is significantly less. As such, the findings of this study point towards shorter term interactions between the two parties which contribute to the ongoing relationship.

The findings from this study appeared to reveal how agencies determined their relationship with their clients based on the following six factors: *media awareness, involvement in the campaign planning, appetite for data, size of the agency, age of the agency, and age of client*. However, the descriptions of client relationships which emerged from this study listed above advance in the seminal works that have examined agency-client relationship factors namely: *lifecycles, tiered classifications, and outlines of behavioural and interpersonal factors*. (Doyle et al., 1980; Wackman et al., 1986; Verbeke, 1989; West and Paliwoda, 1996). As these descriptions emerged from the analysis of the findings, they offer original descriptions to agency-client relationship knowledge. Therefore, this study argues that agency-client interactions in social media marketing are key contributors to strategy development and these interactions appear to differ from the traditionally held view of the agency-client relationship. The following sections will now discuss the findings from the interpersonal view, the alternative view, before discussing the challenges associated within social media marketing.

7.6.2 The Interpersonal View of Agency-Client Relationship

The interpersonal view of the agency-client relationship contains two distinct themes within the literature: *contractual implications,* and *client account management*. The first theme refers to the utilisation of a contract to determine the extent of marketing work which will be performed, as well as an outline of responsibility of the agency (Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Beverland et al., 2007). This study reveals a variety of original contractual arrangements which extend the previous literature in this area. Furthermore, the findings also illustrate how in social media marketing, agencies require significant input from clients to develop campaign strategies and contractual arrangements appear to reflect this.

The second area of findings within the interpersonal view is client account management, which refers to the sets of techniques for establishing and enhancing the client relationship. While the prior literature in this area is extensive (Doyle et al., 1980; Sanford and Maddox, 1999; Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Ojasalo, 2001; Grant et al., 2003; Waller, 2004), the findings of this study underline how account

management strategies differ in social media marketing. In particular, participants revealed how account management strategies tend to focus on communication strategies to inform clients who have limited knowledge of what to expect from social media campaigns. Therefore, the traditionally held view of client account management do not appear to be as relevant for social media marketing and the findings offer an original contribution to this area.

Hence, these two themes appear to indicate that agency-client relationship knowledge is useful for understanding social media marketing practice, however it can be argued that a more refined focus on agency-client interactions is required due to the short-term nature of the campaigns, and operating procedures.

7.6.2.1 Contractual Implications

Contractual arrangements clarify and define the responsibilities of agencies and in some cases the client. Six types of contractual agreements between social media marketing agencies and their clients emerged from the findings: *ad hoc, basic, supportive, consultant, retainer, full service.* Philanthropic agency work also emerged from the findings, whereby *pro bono* work for a local charity was described as enhancing the relationship of the agency with their other clients. The literature in this area is largely optimistic as to the benefits of a universally agreed contract (Wackman et al., 1986; Beverland et al., 2007; Tate et al., 2010; Cheong et al., 2016), with clarified roles and responsibilities (Beard, 1996a; Gould, Grein, et al., 1999; Grant et al., 2003; Veloutsou and Taylor, 2012). This study contributes to this area of knowledge by offering an insight into the modern manifestations of social media marketing contractual arrangements, which appear to reflect and support the traditional descriptions (e.g., retainer style agreement). Furthermore, Agency Theory is a significant theoretical underpinning in the literature which pertains to contractual implications (Eisenhardt and Eisenhardt, 1989; Gould, Grein, et al., 1999; Davies and Prince, 2010), outlining the importance of assessing risk between two parties in a contractual agreement. Hence, the findings of this study contribute to this theory by underlining how risk between the two parties is a key factor in modern social media marketing setting. Agency Theory is an appropriate theoretical lens for investigation of modern marketing contractual arrangements.

The findings of the study also indicated how conflict emerged when clients exceeded the tasks outlined in their contract. Participants indicated how they regularly performed work which was over and above the contractually agreed tasks for clients. One participant (Celeste) highlighted contract-related conflict by giving an account of how their client used contract targets to '*beat them over the head with*', which appears to impose a significant strain on the relationship. Findings from this sub-theme contributes to the prior literature that details issues that emerge from client expectation and agency performance (Hozier and Schatzberg, 2000; Bruning and Ledingham, 2002; Fam and Waller, 2008; Hollmann et al., 2015).

7.6.2.2 Client Account Management

The next category in the interpersonal view of the agency-client relationship are strategies for managing client accounts. This process emerged from the findings as vital for ensuring the longevity of client relationships. One of the most prevalent strategies reported by participants was communication with the client. In some cases, communication was fraught with issues, due to the complexities of social media marketing terminology. In these instances, complex data was regularly simplified through visualisations or omitted from strategy conversations. Also reported was that the size of the client organisation dictated the communication styles adopted. Smaller firms tended to require a simple monthly update, whereas larger firms required more sophisticated updates. In doing so, the study reveals the importance of this exchange of information in managing the client account in social media marketing, confirming the prior literature in this area. Irrespective of the technological advancements of digital and social media, the client account management literature offers similar strategies for managing client relationships (Halinen, 1997; Harvey and Rupert, 1988; Michell, 1986) and hence these findings offer a modern contribution to prior theoretical constructs. More recent literature also suggests client account management strategies to develop mutually benefits for agencies and their clients (Beverland, Farrelly and Woodhatch, 2007; Waller, 2004) and the findings of the present study demonstrate an addition to the collective understanding of modern client account management.

The next client account management technique that emerged from the findings comprised of regular strategy meetings to discuss the ongoing campaign. This also allowed for opportunities to enhance the relationship by asserting the positive outcomes of the campaign, as well as decision-making which could lead to conflict. In some cases, participants offered client training on the potential of social media to negate conflict between the two parties. The balance of power in decision-making is another contribution to knowledge relating to client relationships. Zolkiewski et al.'s (2008) research in this area suggests the balance of power between clients and their agencies can be detrimental and is an area with the potential for conflict. Other scholars have alluded to power balances in their studies, however as a vehicle for proposing the benefits of co-operation in campaign planning (West and Paliwoda, 1996; Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Morais, 2007), and an even balance of power (Davies and Prince, 2005).Therefore, this study has contributed to the appreciation of the notion of power between agencies and their clients as a key factor in client account management in social media marketing.

The findings of this study indicate that in the digital marketing industry, multiple agencies are contracted to large brands, creating a complex network of relationships. Client account management is important in highlighting the value provided by the agency (Vafeas, 2015) and this study supports the literature in this area. Thus, agencies tend to operate in highly competitive environments with a series of intermediary agencies working on one campaign at any given time. One such study in which considers this multi-agency dynamic reports on the tensions present between intermediaries in the digital marketing sector (Komulainen, 2014), and this study contributes to this discussion. Another unique contribution of this study is the notion of inter-agency conflict whereby participants described how their marketing activities are critiqued by competitor agencies.

Through client account management strategies and contractual arrangements, social media marketers attempt to ensure the longevity of their client accounts as well as minimise conflict. In conjunction with contractual agreements, it is envisaged that these two interpersonal techniques will establish a good relationship. Therefore, the findings of this section of the study contribute to the interpersonal view of the agency-

client relationship within social media marketing. Next, the chapter will turn to the alternative view of the relationship.

7.6.3 The Alternative View of Agency-Client Relationship

The literature also revealed an alternative view of the agency-client relationship which contains two themes: *cultural implications, and co-creation*. The first theme reflects how culture can affect the relationships. In this case, the literature and the findings refers to international cultural norms (e.g., Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Behboudi et al., 2012), as well as organisational culture (e.g., Hill, 2006; Habibi et al., 2015). The second theme refers to collaborative decision-making by clients and agencies in social media marketing strategy development (Ardley and Quinn, 2014; Bacile et al., 2014) and evaluation (Töllinen et al., 2012; Keegan and Rowley, 2017; Rathore et al., 2017). Through consideration of these two aspects of the agency-client relationship, the findings here seem to establish that social media marketing demands a flexible approach to strategic decision making. By adapting their approaches to marketing practice, it emerged that agencies are seeking to establish a long-lasting relationship with their clients. A variety of these adaptations are identified in the findings, which advance the knowledge in this area as well as confirm the prior literature. The following sections will now consider the areas of cultural implications and co-creation by discussing the findings in relation to the literature.

7.6.3.1 Cultural Implications

Cultural norms between agencies and client firms are can cause conflict between agencies and clients (Ng, 2013). Previous studies indicate international cultural behaviours can influence the agency-client relationship (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Moon and Franke, 2000; Prendergast and Shi, 2001). As a result, agencies must be dynamic in responding to these cultural norms (Prendergast and Shi, 1999a; Naudé et al., 2014). The findings advance these studies within a modern context by providing examples of how cultural behaviours exert significant pressure on relationships with international clients. Adaptation to such behaviours posed significant challenges to performing social media marketing work. It also emerged that social media marketing specialists interviewed rarely encounter international clients face to face. This interface would be the responsibility of the client account management team.

Therefore, the potential for collaborative decision-making was not possible between specialist and clients.

Some scholars suggest that agencies must adapt to country-specific cultures (Delener, 2008; Janita and Miranda, 2013; Quinton and Wilson, 2016), and the findings of this study advance this theme significantly. Specifically, findings demonstrate how international clients would insist on specific approaches to practice. One such participant (Andrea) indicated how the format of campaign reports must adhere to a Japanese style of presentation (referred to as *Pecha kucha*). It also emerged in the findings that legal demands from other countries would affect strategy development in social media marketing.

Findings of the study also offered insights into adaptation to the organisational cultures which posed a significant influence on client relationships. Participants described how clients and agencies held differing views on approaches to campaign development. In other cases, the differences between PR and digital marketing agencies approaches to practice were identified as having an impact upon strategy development for social media campaigns. While this represents a significant theme in the findings, it is notable that the literature has not explored this aspect of marketing practice in detail, suggesting this is a novel contribution of this study. Some scholars suggest the importance of organisational culture in campaign planning (Wetsch, 2005; Hill, 2006; Vafeas, 2015) yet they do expand on the impact of not adhering to these factors. Brownlie et al. (2007) comment on client expectations in standards of practice, however the agency response to such expectations is not prevalent in their findings. Arguably, contractual arrangements attempt to outline and establish operational details, such as communication between the two parties, that attempt to enhance the ongoing relationship (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000). However, most participants explained how mutual agreement on cultures was seen as the ideal scenario, producing a co-creative relationship which the next section will explore. Therefore, a new contribution to knowledge of organisational culture in social media marketing is offered by this study.

7.6.3.2 Co-Creation in social media marketing strategy development

The findings revealed that co-creation in strategy development emerged as the desired working scenario by the social media marketers interviewed. Grounded in service dominant logic theory (Vargo et al., 2008), co-creation in this instance is applied within a service industry perspective between the specialist marketing agency and their clients (Lambert and Enz, 2012). A key contribution to knowledge from the present study is the association with co-creation and productive agency-client relationships, which Hughes et al. (2018) has recently been investigated in a service ecosystem.

A number of techniques were reported for enabling co-creation between clients and their agencies. Collaborative learning regarding the appropriateness of social media for the client organisation emerged as a key factor. Through collaborative workshops, both parties would engage in the pre-campaign research process to establish objectives for the social media campaign. Participants were keen to explain how such workshops enhance the client relationship and ultimately result in the development of the campaign strategy through a process of co-creation. Another tactic for establishing the co-creation dynamic appeared to be specialised training on social media marketing practice. In doing so, the client would take part in the development of analytical dashboards, through education as to the merits of KPIs and metrics in the process of evaluation. The early agency-client literature asserts the importance of co-operation and collaboration in campaign planning (Michell, 1988; Beard, 1996a; Halinen, 1997; Brennan, 2001), however the social media marketing perspective suggests a more complex working scenario, in particular where co-creation is suggested. Hence, the present study offers a new contribution to knowledge in this field by highlighting how social media analytics can be used to drive relationships toward co-creation. The strategy development and evaluation processes described by participants seemed to demand mutual participation in strategy development in campaigns, which advances Barrutia et al.'s (2016) work.

The findings revealed how co-creation in strategy development and evaluation appeared to be the desired method of operating amongst participants. By attempting to establish a co-creation dynamic, the findings advance Grönroos' (1994) relationship marketing arguments. Another proponent of relationship marketing in the service

industry points towards adaptation to client culture plays a key role in promoting collaboration in strategy development (Gould et al., 1999), which links the notion of co-creation with the previous section.

The literature to date on the agency-client relationship has little consideration for the complexities of agency-client interactions in an environment where digital and social media specialist agencies perform the majority of the work (Tahtinen and Halinen, 2002; Komulainen et al., 2016). A recent stream of research proposes co-creation between agencies and their clients is the preferred business model in the service marketing industry (e.g., Zhang et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2018) and this study contributes significantly to this conversation from a social media marketing perspective. Furthermore, it offers an alternative perspective which extends the agency-client relationship literature by providing insights into the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence upon the processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation.

In outlining key activities in promoting co-creation, this study finds that participants are keen to seek out this dynamic, but that it is a tenuous endeavour, as it relies upon the willingness of the client to become involved in the strategy development and evaluation processes. The findings suggest that often, clients are not willing to do so. Participants outlined how trust is a key component in the ability to operate in a co-creation dynamic, which the next section will explore in more detail. Trust between both parties was essential for a co-creative relationship, without trust, conflict would occur.

7.6.4 Challenges Associated with Agency-Client Relationships

The present study found that client relationships are problematic and can lead to conflict and in some cases, dissolution which continues a longstanding thread within the earliest agency-client relationship literatures (e.g., Pollay and Swinth, 1969; Murray, 1971). The findings of this study identified a variety of challenges and conflicts which emerged with client relationships in the processes of strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. The literature identified four key areas where conflict between agencies and clients emerge: *trust, agency performance, campaign*

performance, and personnel change However, this study proposes a fifth area which is under-reported in the literature: *co-destruction*. These will now be discussed in further detail.

7.6.4.1 Trust

Trustworthiness emerged as an important factor in the agency-client relationship amongst participants, which addresses much of the previous literature in this area (e.g., West and Paliwoda, 1996; Vafeas, 2015). Findings from this study produced many participant accounts of how trust impacts social media marketing. One such account (Lilly) explains how trust is important for the ongoing relationship with their client. Whereas, equally, she admits that her agency also wishes to be honest and open, even if she has to communicate poor campaign performance. Trust emerged as an enabler of co-creation, as well as ensuring the longevity of the ongoing client relationship, which demonstrates a modern update to Fam and Waller's (2008) earlier study.

Celeste's descriptions of trust differ significantly. She describes how her client does not trust her and this has a significant negative impact upon the agency-client relationship. Participants outlined how there was difficulty in convincing clients of their trustworthiness. The findings therefore offer a contribution to Pollay and Swinth's (1969) study, by underlining how agency reputation depends upon client trust, and suggesting that future client recruitment would be affected from it. Interestingly, another participant (Roseanne) suggested how age also played a role in trustworthiness, with an older client who was less than trusting of younger social media marketers. This has not been reported in the literature to date and represents an original finding from the study.

Finally, trust appeared to be inextricably linked to agency-client conflict in this study. Therefore, this investigation of social media marketing establishes the impact of trust on short-term client relationships. Consequently, agencies in this study appeared to focus equal efforts on gaining trust as well as establishing their expertise providing an update to the knowledge provided by many agency-client relationship scholars (Michell, 1992; Sekely and Blakney, 1996; Haytko, 2004; Rogan, 2014). While authors have examined the impact of trust (e.g., Michell and Sanders, 1995), and

trustworthiness (Haytko, 2004), only a number of authors consider the outcomes of untrustworthiness (Davies and Prince, 2011), which in most cases results in a conflictual client relationship. The next section will now explore the next area of challenges.

7.6.4.2 Agency Performance Conflict

In terms of agency performance, the findings revealed many instances of how conflict emerged as a result of the client's interpretation of the of agency's operational procedures (Hozier and Schatzberg, 2000). This would include the development of strategy, campaign planning ideas, and use of technology and softwares for performing social media marketing. As discussed in the previous section, creative decisions were also shown to create conflict which supports Murray's (1971) study, therefore practitioners would seek to inform clients as to the value of social media to alleviate any disagreements which also responds to the works of Pincus et al (1991) and Bourland (1993). One participant described how their client demanded ownership of all strategic decisions, overruling the prior experience of the practitioner which created conflict and advances Devinney and Downling's (1999) claims.

Furthermore, participants posited that decisions made from pre-campaign research was recommended, yet clients did not appreciate extensive pre-campaign research and saw it as a waste of budget. Zolkiewski et al.'s (2008) work in this area suggests that this is a concurrent theme between agencies and their clients. Indeed, budget is a commonly cited cause of concern from clients which can lead to conflictual situations. Indecisiveness was also cited as a point of frustration from the agencies interviewed. Finally, communication of complex information was also used as a client account management tool for alleviating conflict between both parties. The findings of this study therefore advance the conflict studies in this area (Rhea and Massey, 1989; Bourland, 1993; West and Paliwoda, 1996; Prendergast and Shi, 2001), offering an extension of these theoretical works within a modern social media marketing setting.

Evidence of inter-agency conflict also emerged within the findings. In the social media marketing industry, it is commonplace for client firms to recruit multiple agencies and in some cases these agencies work with their direct competitors. Some studies have explored inter-agency conflict, however this is from the perspective of large firms

contracting two or more advertising agencies (e.g., Grant, McLeod and Shaw, 2012) and therefore the findings of this study offer a fresh perspective of inter-agency conflict. Studies have intimated how an increasingly fragmented digital media environment has created a complex network of working relationships with multiple agencies (Komulainen et al., 2016). The findings of this study offer a contribution to the collective understanding of this concept by demonstrating how agencies compete for the client's business by undermining competitors in strategy meetings. Hence, this represents an original finding from the study.

7.6.4.3 Campaign Performance Conflict

The second category of conflict emerged from the performance of the ongoing campaign. Practitioners described how client expectation was often exceeded by the capabilities of social media marketing campaigns. Often unrealistic expectations were addressed in consultation with the social media practitioners, yet these conversations would often produce conflictual situations. Media awareness appeared to be a significant factor in this area of conflict, and consequently agencies would use client account management strategies to manage expectations. Again, budgetary considerations emerged as a key topic of concern to clients and so agencies would assure transparency in terms of costs to avoid conflict. These conflictual factors advance the prior literature (Bourland, 1994; Murray, 1971; West and Paliwoda, 1996), by providing insights that assert how campaign performance is a key area where conflict emerges in a social media context. The findings of this study also show how campaign performance conflict appears to emerge as a result of both creativity and interpersonal issues which support Devinney and Dowling's (1999) study.

7.6.4.4 Personnel Conflict

The findings of the study revealed how changes to client executives can lead to conflict. It emerged in the findings how new client employees would insist on changes to previous practices. These scenarios were explained by participants as changes to client policy and agencies would have to adhere to these new operating guidelines and in most cases would lead to conflict. The seminal works on agency-client conflict point to changes in personnel as an area whereby conflict may arise (Doyle et al.,

1980; Wackman et al., 1986; West and Paliwoda, 1996; Beard, 1999) and these findings contribute to theory by offering a modern iteration of prior conflict constructs.

7.6.4.5 Co-Destruction

This study also revealed co-destruction as an unexpected finding. Co-destruction refers to a phenomenon between service industries that results in a decline in their mutual well-being (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). A small thread within the findings of this study seem to point towards this notion. One participant encapsulates this notion by explaining how a client left the agency, for unknown reasons, but it was later revealed that the client had received poor service from the agency. As a result of this event, the agency and clients' reputation is damaged. Co-destruction has seen some attention in the recent literature (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016) and this study contrubutes to this area.

Scholars in the B2B realm have focussed on detrimental relationships which also support this theory (Chowdhury et al., 2016). In particular, these studies underline how when relationships breakdown, a mutual negative impact for both agencies and client firms is observed (Rogan, 2014; Vafeas et al., 2016). Furthermore, Chowdhury et al. (2016) identify the following factors that underpin value co-destruction: *role conflict, role ambiguity, weak optimism, and power plays*. Findings of this study offer a novel contribution to theory by providing evidence of how co-destruction value was overcome by contractual arrangements and client account management strategies. The findings of the study seem to show that social media marketers attempt to drive client relationships towards a co-creation dynamic are the best way to overcome co-destruction though the following: *contractual arrangements, client account management, cultural deference, and conflict alleviation.*

7.6.4.6 A Conceptual Framework of Agency-Client Dynamics

This study has analysed participant views of the agency-client relationship in social media marketing. In doing so, the study reveals that relationships in this industry appear to be short-lived and can be fraught with significant challenges for long-term relationships. The fragmented digital media landscape created a scenario whereby competitor agencies work side by side for their clients. Hence, the findings of this study

challenges and rejects the notion of long-term relationships in the social media marketing industry. Furthermore, participants suggest that due to clients' lack awareness of social media, agencies are required to inform and educate clients, which can enhance the ongoing relationship. Therefore, this study suggests the view that interactions between agencies and clients in the processes of strategy development and evaluation is an appropriate lens for examining this relationship. This chapter has presented and discussed the third major theme of social media marketing practice, the agency-client relationship and through this discussion of findings proposes that the dynamics of agency-client interactions is pivotal to successful marketing practice and an indicator of the health of the relationship between the two parties.

Figure 6.1 (See overleaf) shows the proposed framework of agency-client interactions and their impact on strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. This draws together the key elements of the final theme of the study through a conceptual framework. The framework represents how the sub-themes explored in the literature review and findings can determine whether the agency-client relationship will end up in a situation of conflict (disharmony), or to a co-creation scenario (harmony). The order of elements in the conceptual framework do not follow a chronological pattern and are intended to show the direct connections between contractual arrangements, client account management strategies and cultural implications influence the agency-client relationship. They are not mutually exclusive, as for example culture may also play a role in determining contractual arrangements. However, this framework is a representation of the findings of this study. Finally, it is important to note that the concepts of Figure 6-1 emerged from the findings as well as the literature review in Chapter 3, representing the final contribution to knowledge of this study.

Figure 7-1 Conceptual Framework of Agency-Client Dynamics in Social Media Marketing
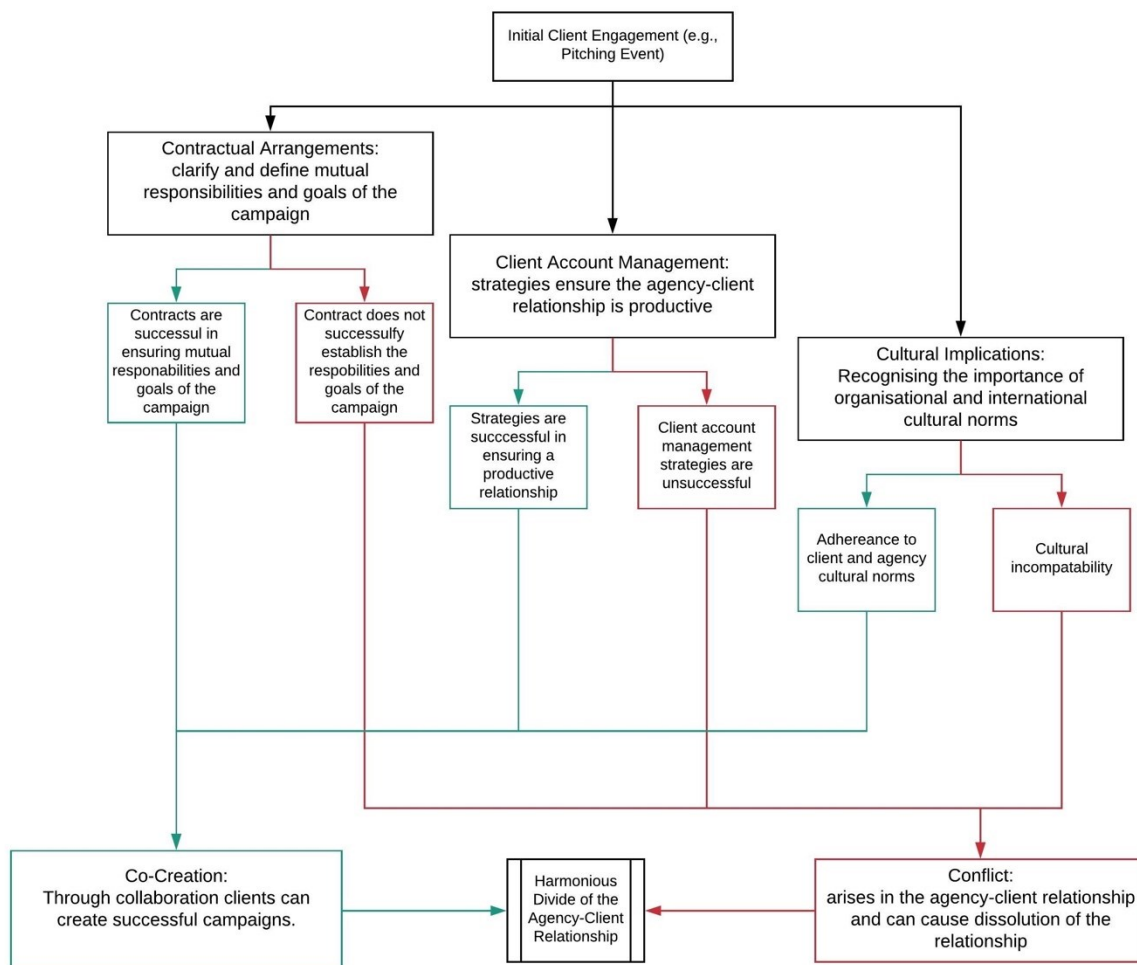
7.6.5 Summary of Sub-Themes in Agency-Client Relationships

Table 7-4 outlines the main themes emerging from the agency-client relationships findings and their contribution to the previous literature. It is important to reiterate that the themes identified in the Table overleaf are derived from the previous literature, as outlined in Part II of Chapter 3. However, the findings also provided two new perspectives: *agency-client interactions,* and *co-creation and co-destruction in social media marketing*. Finally, it is also worth noting how a small stream of research considers agency-client relationships and strategic decision-making (Bergen et al., 1992; Davies and Prince, 2010; Quinton and Wilson, 2016), to which this study contributes. Campaign evaluation is also under-represented in the agency-client literature (Beard, 1997; Devinney and Dowling, 1999; Grant et al., 2003; Kitchen et al., 2004; Ansari and Riasi, 2016), further highlighting a limitation in the current knowledge which this study aims to address.

Table 7-4 Comparison of Main Themes Emerging in Agency-Client Relationships

Literature	Theme	Description	Current Study Findings	New Contributions
Doyle et al., 1980; Wackman et al., 1986; Verbeke, 1989; West and Paliwoda, 1996.	Agency-client interactions in Social Media Marketing	Agency-client relationships are important for marketing strategy development and evaluation. A limited stream of research examines the interactions between the two parties.	The study supports the notion that the agency-client relationship is influential in strategising and evaluating social media marketing campaigns.	The study discovered how relationships in a highly fragmented media landscape appear to be short-lived and dominated by performance expectation. Interactions between agencies and their clients seem to be pivotal social media marketing.
Wackman et al., 1986; Beard, 1996b; Gould, Lerman, et al., 1999; Grant et al., 2003; Beverland et al., 2007; Davies and Prince, 2010; Tate et al., 2010; Veloutsou and Taylor, 2012; Cheong et al., 2013; Broschak and Block, 2014	Contractual Arrangements	Contractual Arrangements clarify and define the responsibilities of both sides of the agency/client dyad	Contractual arrangements appear to be important, however both agencies and clients seem to shirk their responsibilities in this study	Client firm's lack of media awareness knowledge posed a significant challenge to the ability of the practitioner to plan and manage
Michell, 1986; Halinen, 1997; Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Waller, 2004; Beverland et al., 2007; Morais, 2007	Client Account Management	Client Account Management techniques ensure the agency-client relationship is productive	Client Account Management emerges as important in developing the relationship but can lead to conflict. These techniques are vital in enhancing the agency-client relationship towards one of co-creation.	Practitioners had to inform and educate their clients as to the value of precise measurement
Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Prendergast and Shi, 1999b; Moon and Franke, 2000; Delener, 2008; Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Ng, 2013	Cultural Implications	Cultural norms vary in agency-client relationships and recognition of these different practices will ensure a healthy and productive B2B relationship	Cultural norms between agencies and client firms seem to cause conflict between both sides of the agency/client dyad. Agencies must be dynamic in responding to these cultural norms.	Organisational and international cultural attributes appear to influence the agency-client relationship greatly. Agency strategies for adapting to these are key avoiding conflict.
Grönroos, 1984; Halinen, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Gould, Lerman, et al., 1999;	Co-Creation in social media	Working closely with clients can create successful campaigns.	Co-creation appeared to be the optimal planning of social media marketing campaigns in this study.	Conflict was shown in the findings to be a precursor for co-creation in social media marketing campaign planning.

	marketing Planning			Evidence of co-destruction in the findings suggest this is a common feature in social media marketing, whereby client and agency reputation are affected by a relationship dissolution.
Pollay and Swinth, 1969; Wackman et al., 1986; Pincus et al., 1991; Bourland, 1993; Sekely and Blakney, 1996; West and Paliwoda, 1996; Beard, 1999; Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; West and Ford, 2001; Kulkarni et al., 2003; Haytko, 2004; Devinney et al., 2005; Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Echeverri and Skalen, 2011; Rogan, 2014; Vafeas and Hughes, 2014; Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Chowdhury et al., 2016	Challenges in agency-client relationships	Conflict exists in the agency-client relationship and can cause dissolution of the relationship.	A variety of conflictual situations were observed in this study and it appeared to be the most important theme in the agency-client relationship in social media marketing strategy development. Trustworthiness is key to creating and alleviating conflict.	Client firm's lack of media awareness knowledge posed a significant challenge to the ability of the practitioner to plan and manage social media campaigns. Due to the short-term nature of social media marketing campaigns, client engagements consist of brief interactions and therefore long-term relationship building is not feasible Inter-agency conflict emerges in the findings.

Source: Keegan (2018)

7.7 Summary of Knowledge Gaps and Contributions to Knowledge

Table 7-5 illustrates the three major themes and sub-themes in this study, highlighting how the three elements combine to paint a rich picture of social media marketing.

Table 7-5 Knowledge Gaps, Associated Contributions to Knowledge and Relevant Definitions, Models and Frameworks

Theme	Knowledge Gap Identified	Contributions which Address Knowledge Gap and Original/New Contributions	Relevant Definitions, Models and Frameworks
Major Theme 1: Social Media Marketing Strategy Development	• The processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice • Limited details are available on social media campaign objective setting and implementation are available • A gap exists in how the knowledge gained from social media evaluation supports strategic decision-making • Strategic decisions made by specialist agencies in their social media marketing endeavours is under-researched	• Social media marketing strategy development involves the following stages of activity: *pre-campaign research, setting campaign objectives, creative decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and management decision-making.* • Campaign Implementation incorporates the tactical decisions which utilise the selected channels, delivering the campaign message to the target audience. Implementation decisions typically take the form of a strategic communications delivery plan, utilising customer insights from the Pre-Campaign Research stage. • Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports. **Original/New Contributions** • A range of social media marketing activities were identified: Measuring and Monitoring, Retainer, Training, Consultancy, Strategy Development, Reputation Management, Content Generation • Strategic decisions relating to strategy development were often led by the expertise and knowledge of the practitioner • Client input was seen as valuable and often sought after by participants, but at times challenging to the planning process • Interviews/Workshops with clients were often held to ascertain clearly defined marketing objectives • Budget dictated the level of sophistication in terms of the planning process and the complexity of the campaign • Industry reports and social media insights informed virtually every stage of the planning process, through initial audience research • Creative decisions were best made collaboratively between clients and practitioners, building upon the initial research into the social media audience • Implementation tactics were also informed by this research and dictated the strategic approach to communication with the social media users • Campaign Evaluation is inextricably linked to Management Decision Making with the intended outcome being a set of decisions on improving, optimising, or altering future campaigns • Practitioners use a variety of phraseology for the planning stages listed above	Cycle of Social Media Marketing Strategy Development Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation in Strategy Development

| Major Theme 2: Social Media Marketing Evaluation | • The processes and outcomes of social media marketing evaluation are under-researched topics despite prevalence in modern practice

• The lack of academic work in the area of setting goals for the process of evaluation

• Limited works exists which examine the connection between social media metrics and strategic decision-making

• How do marketers address the challenge of evaluating complex metrics

• A limited stream of research has examined how social media data is collected

• There are limited insights into the specifics of assembly and presentation of campaign reports

• A distinct lack of insight on the usability, function of social media measurement software | • Social media marketing evaluation involves the following stages of activity: *identifying evaluation objectives, identifying KPIs, identifying metrics, data collection and analysis, report generation, management decision-making.*

• Categorisation of outcomes for the evaluation process, supporting wider marketing strategy objectives

• Selection of key performance indicators which support the evaluation objectives and marketing strategy objectives

• Selection of metrics which underpin the KPIs identified in the previous stage

• Campaign data is collected by obtaining and processing the previously identified KPIs and metrics from the relevant media channels. Analysis of campaign data will be enacted at this stage elucidating the campaign behaviour and performance

• KPIs and metrics are compiled into a presentable format, highlighting the overall campaign performance with other notable insights

• A variety of software is available to practitioners, yet the quality of their ability to precisely evaluate campaigns is under much scrutiny

Original/New Contributions
• The order and level of effort with each of the stages varied, and differentiation was found across campaigns

• Budget dictated the level of sophistication of the social media marketing evaluation being performed

• Training in terms of social media was required to inform client firms, who had little awareness of its merits

• Evaluation tended to be ad hoc in some cases and was found to commence with metrics, rather than objectives

• KPIs were commonly used vehicle to guide campaign evaluation

• Poor understanding of KPIs was evident

• Tools and software greatly influence the selection of metrics and KPI

• Practitioners are sceptical of social media measurement software and its capabilities

• Despite the range of tools available, participants relied upon Google analytics in the main

• Bespoke evaluation dashboards were also common, typically built in Microsoft Excel

• Evaluation reports were usually supported by a face-to-face meeting to explain campaign performance

• A management decision making stage often followed the digestion of the evaluation report

• Often evaluation reports were under-utilised by clients and thus compromises the aim of the social media marketing evaluation process. | Definition of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Cycle of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Contextualised Conceptual Framework of Social Media Marketing Evaluation in Strategy Development |

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| Major Theme 3: Agency Client Relation-ships | • Conceptualisations of the agency-client relationship reflect the complexities of the relationship. Within a social media marketing context, the agency-client relationship is significantly under-researched
• The changing nature of how agencies manage the relationship with their clients is intriguing, particularly with the advent of social media services offered by digital marketing agencies
• Limited knowledge is available on contractual arrangements between specialist agencies and their clients and the impact these have on the agency-client relationship
• As agencies tend to operate in a services marketing dynamic, the balance of power between the expert social media marketer and their client will be an interesting avenue for investigation in this study.
• Little is known regarding the impact of cultural demands of international clients on a digital marketing agency and how it affects the agency-client relationship
• There is a lack of studies performed on the UK digital marketing industry who service international clients
• Only a limited number of studies investigate co-creation in B2B agency-client relationships, through the lens of social media marketing
• Longstanding knowledge in agencies client co-creation in strategy development exists, however no recent studies consider the impact of digital and social media in a modern context
• Little is known regarding the notion of co-creation and co-destruction in social media marketing
• No prior studies have focussed on agencies and client interactions in developing social media marketing campaigns
• Conflict in social media marketing practice is under-researched topic despite prevalence in modern practice | • Agency-client relationships influence marketing practice in the following categories: *contractual implications, client account management, cultural implications, co-creation, and conflict. A conceptual framework relating these factors is provided*
• Agency-client relationships are important for the development of strategy and evaluation of marketing campaigns
• Contractual Arrangements clarify and define the responsibilities of both sides of the agency/client dyad
• Client Account Management techniques ensure the agency-client relationship is productive
• Power balances play a significant role in social media marketing, in particular regarding creative campaign decision-making
• Cultural norms vary in agency-client relationships and recognition of these different practices will ensure a healthy and productive B2B relationship
• Working closely with clients can create successful campaigns.
• Conflict exists in the agency-client relationship and can cause dissolution of the relationship.
• Co-creation is lauded as the ideal working scenario in social media marketing and significant efforts are made on the part of the agency to create it
Original/New Contributions
• Evidence of co-destruction in the findings suggest this is a common feature in social media marketing, whereby client and agency reputation are affected by a relationship dissolution
• Due to the short-term nature of social media marketing campaigns, client engagements consist of brief interactions and therefore long-term relationship building is not feasible
• Conflict is rife in social media marketing. Trustworthiness is key to creating and alleviating conflict. Inter-agency conflict emerges in the findings.
• Client firm's lack of media awareness knowledge posed a significant challenge to the ability of the practitioner to plan and manage
• Practitioners had to inform and educate their clients as to the value of precise measurement | Conceptual Framework of Agency-Client Dynamics in Social Media Marketing |

7.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter compares, contrasts and conceptualises the findings in relation to the prior literature. In doing so, it is established how the findings generate new insights, addressing gaps, and extend prior knowledge. This chapter has discussed the primary findings of the study by way of discussion in line with the corresponding literatures. Chapter 3 examined the knowledge and theory in the areas of strategy, evaluation, and agency-client relationships. The chapter has discussed findings in respect of each literature area, identified key contributions to knowledge, and in particular has offered two conceptual frameworks which address the research objectives of the study: *(i) a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation, (ii) conceptual framework of agency-client relationships in social media marketing*.

8 Conclusions and Future Research Agendas

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by reflecting upon the study as a whole. This chapter will revisit the literature reviews, methodology, findings and discussion chapters of the thesis. It will review each research objective and explore the extent to which it has been met, as well as summarise the key contributions to knowledge. The chapter then outlines the limitations of this research project, suggesting future research that responds to these limitations. Finally, implications for marketing practice and policy are identified.

Scholars have reported a significant shift in marketing practice towards the use of social media in the past twenty years (e.g., Yadav et al., 2013). Widespread adoption of social media marketing provides an opportunity to examine practitioners' approaches to developing campaigns using original marketing communications techniques. Many scholars have examined the phenomenon of social media marketing (e.g. Godey et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2016; Parveen et al., 2016; Richardson et al., 2017) however, few studies consider the practitioner perspective of strategising social media campaigns (McCann and Barlow, 2015; Chung et al., 2017; Felix et al., 2017). Moreover, Chapter 3 highlights how social media marketing practice is underpinned by complex campaign measurement techniques (Peters et al., 2013; Fan and Gordon, 2014), yet, to date, very few studies have examined these practices in any detail (Murdough, 2010; Cvijikj et al., 2012; Jeffrey, 2013). Therein, this study seeks to address a gap in current knowledge, namely to investigate the processes and outcomes of strategy and evaluation in social media marketing practice.

Quinn et al. (2016) reveals marketing managers lack digital marketing skills and therefore enlist specialist agencies to develop digital campaign strategies. As a result, the majority of large-scale UK social media marketing campaigns are performed by specialist agencies (Turnbull and Wheeler, 2017). Therefore, an empirical investigation of specialist practitioner approaches to strategising campaigns is a suitable lens for further understanding this phenomenon. A sample of twenty specialist marketing agencies within a localised area - the North-West UK - were selected for

data collection, due to their proficiency and experience in social media campaigns. In doing so, this investigation into the processes and outcomes of social media marketing generated rich insights into an emergent field of practice. The study used a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews to ascertain social media marketing practitioner interpretations of strategy, evaluation and agency-client-relationships. Results from the interviews were thematically analysed and are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, culminating into two conceptual frameworks, which are discussed in relation to the literature in Chapter 7.

The following sections will revisit each of the research objective which governed this study by surmising how these were achieved. The findings which related to each objective will be discussed in relation to the literature as well as outlining the respective contributions to knowledge.

8.2 Research Objectives Revisited

Research Objective 1: To review the various literatures for knowledge, theory and practice in: social media marketing strategy development, social media marketing evaluation, and agency-client relationships in marketing

Research Objective 1 provides the theoretical and practical foundations for this study by demanding a thorough review of the extant literatures in the fields of strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. Chapter 3 presents the outcome of the review of the literatures. The review is presented in two parts, which will now be discussed in the following sections.

8.2.1 *Part I – Social Media Marketing*

Part I of the literature review examined the knowledge and theory relating to social media marketing, by focussing on two major themes which underpin this area of marketing practice, namely strategy development and evaluation. A grounding in the previous literature provided a foundation for this study to investigate the topic in greater detail. The review found that despite a high degree of adoption by brands, knowledge of social media marketing practices are under-represented in the academic

literature. Few studies have examined the approaches to strategising campaigns (e.g., Peters et al., 2013; Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015; Rhode et al., 2015; He and Xu, 2016). Considering this paucity in knowledge, the review begins by exploring the traditional, digital marketing and PR campaign strategy frameworks. In doing so, the review identified the following activities have emerged in research of strategy development: *situation analysis, objective setting, creative campaign decision-making, implementation, and evaluation*. These stages were partially identified through three social media strategy development studies by McCann and Barlow (2015), Felix et al. (2016), and Chung et al. (2017). From this point, the review critically discusses these models producing a foundation for investigating the key elements necessary for social media strategy development.

The literature review then turned its attention to the evaluation in social media marketing. Again, prior knowledge in the traditional and public relations literature provided a grounding at the beginning of the chapter. Metrics in campaign measurement were identified as important components of process and studies of social media metrics are evident (Misirlis and Vlachopoulou, 2018). Performance measurement of multiple channels through dashboards, such as the BSC, were also identified as relevant to social media marketing practice (Pauwels and Joshi, 2016). The review of the social media marketing evaluation literature identified the following activities: *evaluation goals, metrics, key performance indicators, data collection, data analysis, and report generation*. Lastly, a critical review of the three social media marketing evaluation models - Murdough (2010); Jeffrey (2013); and Felix et al. (2017) - underlining the need for a conceptual framework grounded in empirical data. At this juncture, the review provided the knowledge and key components required to perform the study's investigations in the fields of strategy and evaluation. The constructs identified helped to frame the interview protocol for these two pivotal areas of this study. Key gaps in the literature which have been identified by the literature review are provided.

8.2.2 Part II – Agency-Client Relationships

Part II of the literature review presents the results of the systematic review of agency-client relationship literatures. It begins by profiling the depictions of this relationship in

the absence of a formal definition namely, as lifecycles or classifications of client relationships (e.g. Wackman et al., 1986; Waller, 2004), whereas other scholars focused on behavioural attributes (Pollay and Swinth, 1969). From these conceptualisations, the review also discussed how these works regularly offered client management advice to advertising and marketing practitioners (Doyle et al., 1980; Waller and Polonsky, 1996). The chapter then examines three primary themes to emerge in the literature, namely; *the interpersonal view, the alternative view and the challenges associated with the relationship*.

From the interpersonal perspective, the review revealed that agencies attempted to formalize the client relationships through contractual arrangements by setting respective goals and mutual responsibilities between the two parties. However, contracts rely upon mutual agreement that would often lead to conflict (Druker and Stanworth, 2004; Ng et al., 2010). Continuing the interpersonal perspective, the review further identified how agencies employ client account management strategies to ensure productive relationships with clients (Waller, 2004). Agencies used communication as a key component of these strategies, as well as paying attention to the balance of power in decision-making between the two parties (Zolkiewski et al., 2008; Chowdhury et al., 2016).

The review then discusses the alternative view of the agency-client relationship. It begins by considering how cultural implications play a significant role in shaping client relationships. Adherence and deference to each other's international and organizational cultures was identified as affecting relationships (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Gould, Grein, et al., 1999; Palihawadana and Barnes, 2005). In particular, the review explores the notion of co-creation between agencies and clients in campaign creation (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Huotari et al., 2015). This is identified as an emergent theme in the literature and a number of recent studies points towards its value to the digital marketing industry (Komulainen et al., 2016).

Finally, the review considers the challenges within client relationships. Trust between the agencies and their clients emerged as a key theme within conflict studies (Davies and Prince, 2005). Conflict emerges through client perception of agency performance (Grant et al., 2012), as well as campaign performance (Murphy and Maynard, 1996).

Change of personnel and personnel factors also lead to disharmony within the relationship. Outcomes of conflict were also prevalent in the studies, resulting in contract termination or clients switching agencies (Ghosh and Taylor, 1999; Davies and Prince, 2011), together with the reported strategies for managing conflict (LaBahn and Kohli, 1997; Devinney and Dowling, 1999).

Throughout the review, relationships are revealed to be pivotal to successful marketing practice. Considering social media is an emergent area of practice, it is commonplace for large firms to outsource campaign development to specialist agencies (Quinn et al., 2016). However, there is a distinct lack of studies relating to the agency-client relationships in a digital and social media marketing setting. The few studies that examine modern client relationships suggest that the traditional view of the dyadic relationship has been compromised by the digitized environment (e.g., Komulainen et al., 2016). Hence, the literature review identified a gap in knowledge, which this study aimed to explore, namely, the influence of the agency-client relationship in the modern digital environment upon strategy and evaluation in social media marketing.

In reporting the results of the systematic review, the thematic constructs of the agency-client relationship are identified for this study, namely: *contractual arrangements, client account management, cultural implications, co-creation, conflict, and challenges*. By doing so, this study was equipped with prior knowledge in this area and is able to investigate these constructs in social media marketing practice. These constructs also frame the interview protocol for the semi-structured interviews.

The findings of this study supported these thematic constructs and their relevance to social media marketing, as well as offering a new construct in the analysis of findings, namely *co-destruction*. Therefore, the first research objective has been met in so far as it critically reviewed the relevant literatures relevant to social media marketing strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships. In this critical review, key information for this study have been provided, as well as identifying gaps in current knowledge. The outcome of Research Objective 1 was fundamental in informing the next Research Objective which will be discussed next.

Research Objective 2: To explore the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation

Following on from Research Objective 1, the constructs identified framed the approach to data collection. Research Objective 2 begins the investigatory stage of the study. Chapter 4 outlines the philosophical perspective of the research before introducing the methodological strategy of this study. A pre-campaign pilot study indicated that a qualitative approach was most appropriate in investigating social media marketing. The literature review identified the key constructs in the current knowledge informing the interview protocol, as well as thematic analyses of the data. A purposive sampling approach identified twenty digital marketing agencies, with specialist social media marketing practitioners who create campaigns for their clients. Through semi-structured interviews with these key informants, supported by cognitive mapping, rich data was gathered relating to the processes and outcomes of strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. Thematic analyses were applied to the data to generate insights which are presented in the findings.

The strategy development process identified from the findings emerged with a pre-campaign research stage, which was followed by the development of campaign objectives. Next, creative campaign decisions relating to the channel, audience and campaign message were explored. This was followed by the implementation of the campaign and the tactical decisions made at this stage. At this point, the next stage of activity to emerge is the evaluation stage of the campaign which is explored in more depth as the second theme of this study. The research also proposes an additional stage which does not feature in the literature, that of management decision-making. It is argued by this thesis that with the rich data produced by digital and social media marketing campaigns, this final stage of management decision-making is a unique and original finding that is essential for successful social media marketing practice.

Turning to the process of evaluation, the first stage of activity identified is establishing evaluation objectives. This stage is followed by the identification of KPIs and relevant metrics which underpin the campaign. Data collection and analyses of campaign data constituted the next stage, followed by the generation of an evaluation report. Finally, the pivotal management decision stage emerged which allows for reflection and

decisions for future campaigns. These stages complete the process of campaign evaluation as developed inductively from the interviews conducted. A definition of social media marketing evaluation is also provided in the findings which provides a synopsis of the process (Section 5.3.2).

In identifying the constructs which make up the strategy development and evaluation processes, the interviews also revealed numerous challenges which appeared to impede practice. Through participant interviews and cognitive mapping, best practice was identified at each stage of the processes as well as the challenges participants faced at each stage of the strategy development and evaluation processes. In particular, technological challenges emerged as the significant factor in social media marketing. Poor, or sub-standard software was frequently reported, as was the inability of the existing software to effectively manage social media data. It also emerged that the complexities of social media data make evaluation difficult. Findings revealed how issues with sarcasm, colloquialisms and double negative expressions deterred practitioners from measuring the performance of campaigns.

Research Objective 1 identified the known components of these processes as reported in the literature and Research Objective 2 investigated social media marketing practice. This stage of the research addresses the 'what' question when it comes to processes and outcomes of social media marketing. The findings identified the stages of activity in the processes of campaign strategy development and its evaluation. The majority of the constructs identified in the literature review were confirmed by participants, however an additional stage – *management decision making* – was produced through analysis of findings.

Therefore, the findings of this study display the results of the investigation of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. Research Objective 2 has been achieved by performing an empirical-based study of social media marketing strategy. The processes and outcomes revealed by the findings of this study represent the extent to which this objective has been achieved. In this investigation, knowledge in relation to social media marketing has been provided, addressing the gaps in current knowledge identified by Research Objective 1. The outcome of Research Objective 2

was vital to the next Research Objective which seeks to conceptualise strategy development and evaluation, which will be discussed next.

Research Objective 3: To develop a contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development

Research Objective 3 aimed to conceptualise the outcomes of Research Objectives 1 and 2, by providing an empirically-grounded conceptual framework of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The outcome of Research Objective 3 is to gain a deeper understanding the strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. In doing so, the study confirmed constructs of strategy and evaluation identified in the literature, as well as identifying a new stage namely, *management decision-making,* which is relevant to strategy development and evaluation. The study achieved Research Objective 3 as it produced a contextualized conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development (See Figure 7-1). The stages of the framework have emerged from the prior literature which were confirmed through semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the interviews were supported by a cognitive mapping exercise whereby participants identified the order, priority and specific challenges in strategy development and evaluation. Therefore, in satisfying Research Objective 3, the study has produced a framework grounded in the constructs from the literature and confirmed by analyses of primary data, collected from expert informants.

Previous studies have asserted that measurement is vital for effective marketing practice (Kaplan and Norton, 1993; Rust et al., 2004; Pauwels et al., 2009) and the findings of this study supports this notion. However, this study also presents original empirical evidence of the significant challenges participants face when evaluating social media campaigns, suggesting the process is difficult. These challenges are presented and discussed in Section 5.2.8.

This study has advanced knowledge of marketing evaluation as well as offering insights into performance measurement beyond the realm of social media. As few studies have examined marketing evaluation in the digital marketing environment, this study has addressed this gap in the academic literature and provided an original

contribution to knowledge in this under-researched area. This study also offers a fresh perspective of social media marketing *in lieu* of a formally agreed framework for strategy and evaluation from empirically-based knowledge. It is also noteworthy that these two processes concur with elements of the prior literature, however no studies to date have produced an overarching framework.

The achievement of Research Objective 3 is therefore a significant contribution to knowledge in an area which has seen little attention in terms of research and has value for both academia and practice. Specifically, the framework offers scholars a rich understanding the nuances of social media marketing as well as series of stages of strategy and evaluation processes which marketers may adopt in practice. Therefore, Research Objective 3 has been met by this study as it has created a conceptualization of the strategy and evaluation processes in social media marketing.

Research Objective 4: To examine the influence of agency-client relationships on social media marketing strategy development and evaluation

Research Objective 4 sought to examine the third and final major theme in study, the influence of the agency-client relationship on strategy development and evaluation. This Research Objective was achieved through the data collection and analysis stages of the study building upon the thematic constructs identified in the literature review. Part II of the literature review identified the key themes in relation to agency-client relationships. The constructs identified in the literature review, namely: *contractual arrangements, client account management strategies, cultural implications, co-creation, and challenges.* Qualitative interviews were conducted with social media marketing practitioners who were asked to discuss the influence of client relationships on strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. Twenty key informant interviews were conducted, that provided rich insights of the complexities of client relationships and how they influence social media marketing.

The findings indicated that client relationships are pivotal to development of strategy and evaluation in social media marketing. The study revealed evidence of the client relationship factors the literature review identified. Notably, conflict between the two

parties was a key theme, as well as the strategies employed to prevent it. The findings of the study also revealed the preference of participants for a co-creative relationship in terms of decision making in strategy development and evaluation in social media campaigns. It also emerged that conflictual situations could lead to a co-creation, through the client management strategies employed by agencies. The study also revealed that client account management teams would employ techniques to manage the agency-client relationship using contractual agreements which would define mutual responsibilities. Adherence to organisational and international cultural practices was further identified by the findings as important in managing the client relationship.

The present study also offered new insights which further the understanding of agency-client relationships in the digital landscape. Notably, it was discovered how modern marketing managers outsource digital marketing services from numerous agencies simultaneously. As a result, this creates a complex network of relationships which were seemed to possess many challenges for the practitioners involved. Therefore, the multi-agency relationship concept offers an original contribution to the literature by offering a new perspective of the traditional agency-client relationship in marketing. Further, the study offers transferrable insights into organizational relationships of the expert consultant-client dynamic, suggesting that a co-creative approach could most effective for mutual benefit and avoidance of conflict.

The present study also offers a new perspective on the traditional view of the agency-client relationship. The prior literature presents the relationship as a dyadic concept, with the relationship between the two parties as a holistic concept. However, this study suggests that considering the fast-pace and short time frame of social media marketing campaigns, it may be no longer possible for agencies to foster substantial client relationships, as the previous literature suggests. Due to the infrequent contact between the social media marketing practitioner and their clients, the participants in this study viewed the interactions with their clients to be vital to effective practice. In other words, agency-client interactions emerged as short exchanges of information, however they do not appear to constitute the same degree of interaction that would constitute relationship development in the traditional view of agency-client relationships. Participants also describe how the majority of client interaction takes

place via a weekly, or monthly email exchange, suggesting this does not match the traditional view of long-term client relationships. Henceforth, this study proposes that agency-client interactions have a significant influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy and evaluation.

Lastly, a series of challenges were identified within the social media marketing agency-client relationships. Findings revealed that client lack of media awareness was an important aspect which posed many challenges for effective strategy development and evaluation. Also, campaign performance measurement reports were not being utilised by clients, undermining the value and potential of campaign evaluation. Lastly, conflict between client and the agency was identified as the most significant challenge to social media marketing. The findings also identified a range of challenges associated with social media marketing which can function as a guideline for future practice.

Therefore, Research Objective 4 has been met by generating knowledge and insights into influence of agency-client relationships on social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The thematic constructs within the previous literature have been used to investigate client relationships in a social media marketing. The findings revealed the importance of the client relationship in strategy development and evaluation. Specifically, the findings of the study reveal how contractual arrangements, organisational and international culture, and client account management feature in social media marketers approaches to manage clients. Also, participants also indicated a strong desire for participants to drive the relationship towards one of co-creation. Whereas, many challenges emerged within the relationships that prevent co-creation, and the study also revealed how co-destruction was observed in the findings. In achieving Research Objective 4, new and original knowledge in relation to agency-client relationships in social media marketing has been provided, addressing gaps in current knowledge identified in Research Objective 1. The outcome of Research Objective 4 is the key information which is conceptualised in the next Research Objective, which will be discussed next.

Research Objective 5: To develop a conceptual framework that represents the dynamics of agency-client interactions in social media marketing

Finally, Research Objective 5 assembles the results from the previous Research Objectives and collates them into an overarching conceptual framework (Figure 7.4). This framework represents the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The conceptual framework presents the interaction between the three major themes of this study, as well as the relationships between the three themes which underpin the aims and objectives of this research. In doing so, this framework concludes the study by presenting an overarching view of the research aims and objectives.

This study argues that to understand the process of social media marketing, one needs to also consider the relationships between the actors involved as this poses a greater impact upon practice than has been anticipated before. This study contributes to knowledge, theoretically, but also to conceptualise practice knowledge, through frameworks and models. This study has attempted to build new theory by presenting strategy development and evaluation within a contextualised conceptual framework. This clearly demonstrates the relevancy and value of marketing evaluation to the creation of campaign strategies, as well as explaining how evaluation supports decision-making. Furthermore, this study also outlines the importance of agency-client relationships and their interactions to the processes of strategy development and evaluation. This is also an original contribution to knowledge as prior studies in this area have fallen short in connecting these vital processes. Moreover, it is hoped that this theoretical extension to knowledge of social media marketing will have value to the processes of strategy development, evaluation and the influence of relationships that can be adopted in the future by marketers and scholars alike.

Therefore, Research Objective 5 has been met as the study has developed a conceptual framework that represents the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The framework has produced new and original contributions to knowledge which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

8.3 Advancements/Contributions to Knowledge

This study has advanced the collective knowledge of social media marketing practice and business to business relationships. To begin, no other study has considered social media marketing from the perspective of strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships. Previous literature details how marketing practice has been advanced in terms of elaborating upon strategic processes being performed by practitioners, but none have considered how relationships impact upon these processes. The extant knowledge surrounding this rapidly evolving area of modern practice is developing and recent studies call for the more work to be performed in this area (Quinn et al, 2016). From a marketing perspective, this study has responded to this call, clarifying the stages of activity within these processes, confirming elements of prior literatures as well as generating new insights.

Table 8-1 outlines the contributions to the three strands of the study, which have been discussed in Chapter 7. While the contributions to knowledge have been outlined previously, the following section summarises these contributions to knowledge within theoretical, practical and methodological categories.

8.3.1 Theoretical

This study is comprised of three major themes and each of these areas have their own theoretical contribution. The respective contributions will be discussed from the following three areas, strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships.

8.3.1.1 Strategy

A litany of strategy models exists within the marketing textbooks and journal articles. However, it is noteworthy how few of these are empirically tested in industry. Whilst few modern strategy models have been developed for digital and social media marketing (e.g., Chaffey et al., 2009), very little research-based empirically tested knowledge in this area is available. Through data collection with a sample of industry experts with longstanding experience in running and managing social media campaigns, this study offers a valuable insight into the endemic processes involved in campaign strategy development. Notably, the predilection for social media analytics informing decisions is a key outcome from this study.

Furthermore, the findings have shown that elements of the previously published strategy models remain relevant for social media strategy development, such as pre-campaign research and campaign objective setting. However, in examining social media campaigns, this study offers an additional stage of activity to previous strategy development knowledge, that of *management decision-making.* At this stage of the social media strategy development, it is suggested that reflection on the outcomes of the evaluation process will inform future iterations of the campaign. This stage represents a unique contribution to knowledge in terms of strategy development which highlights the relationship between evaluation and strategy development. Therefore, the theoretical contribution in this part of the study is to advance knowledge in terms of strategy development in a modern digital marketing landscape, asserting the importance of data and analytics to strategic decision-making, as well as the importance of management decision-making informed by evaluation.

Table 8-1 Table of Contributions to Knowledge by Theme and Sub-Theme

Strategy	Evaluation	Agency-Client Relationships
Social media marketing strategy development involves the following stages of activity: *situation analyses, setting campaign objectives, creative decision-making, implementation, evaluation and management decision-making*	Social media marketing evaluation involves the following stages of activity: *identifying evaluation objectives, identifying KPIs, identifying metrics, data collection and analysis, report generation, management decision-making.*	Agency-client relationships influence marketing practice in the following categories: *contractual implications, client account management, cultural implications, co-creation, and conflict*
Elements of Traditional Marketing, PR and Digital Models apply to social media marketing.	There is no universally agreed system for measuring social media marketing. There is little agreement in terms of the best approach to measuring social media marketing, due to the vast amount of data and other complexities of this data.	Agency-client relationships are important for the development of strategy and evaluation of marketing campaigns. A limited stream of research examines the interactions between the two parties.
Analysis of an organization's internal and external environment to understand the organization's capabilities.	Categorisation of outcomes for the evaluation process, supporting wider marketing strategy objectives	Contractual Arrangements clarify and define the responsibilities of both sides of the agency/client dyad
Development of a desired or required result to be achieved by a campaign within a specific timeframe.	Selection of key performance indicators which support the evaluation objectives and marketing strategy objectives	Client Account Management techniques ensure the agency-client relationship is productive
The construction of an integrated marketing programme that delivers value to the customer by selecting appropriate and effective marketing channels through analysis of customer needs as well as	Selection of metrics which underpin the KPIs identified in the previous stage	Power balances play a significant role in social media marketing, in particular regarding creative campaign decision-making

identifying major channel alternatives and evaluating those alternatives.		
Campaign Implementation incorporates the tactical decisions which utilise the selected channels, delivering the campaign message to the target audience. Implementation decisions typically take the form of a strategic communications delivery plan, utilising customer insights from the Situation Analysis/Pre-Campaign Research stage.	Campaign data is collected by obtaining and processing the previously identified KPIs and metrics from the relevant media channels. Analysis of campaign data will be enacted at this stage elucidating the campaign behaviour and performance	Cultural norms vary in agency-client relationships and recognition of these different practices will ensure a healthy and productive B2B relationship
Evaluation is the process of measuring the performance of a marketing campaign, use of marketing resources to achieve measurable gain in return on investment and efficiency.	KPIs and metrics are compiled into a presentable format, highlighting the overall campaign performance with other notable insights	Working closely with clients can create successful campaigns.
Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports.	Management Decision Making involves a reflection on the performance of the campaign utilising the insights generated from the evaluation reports. Often these reports are presented to the client with a view to informing future iterations of the same campaign, or alternative approaches to improve weaker elements identified within the reports.	Conflict exists in the agency-client relationship and can cause dissolution of the relationship.
	A variety of software is available to practitioners, yet the quality of their ability to precisely evaluate campaigns is under much scrutiny	Co-creation is lauded as the ideal working scenario in social media marketing and significant efforts are made on the part of the agency to create it

8.3.1.2 Agency-Client Relationships

The systematic literature review points towards the importance of agency-client relationships to efficient marketing practice. This study has examined the influence of this relationship further in the specific context of strategy development and evaluation. The significance of examining the influence of client relationships in social media marketing offers a unique environment whereby specialist marketers and clients are required to interact to create campaigns. Therefore, the agency-client relationship provided a juxtaposition whereby insights into marketing strategy development and evaluation are identified. The literature reviews and findings of this study established the influence of the agency-client relationship upon strategy development and evaluation processes. Therefore, this study has extended the existing agency-client relationship knowledge by offering an alternative perspective by suggesting interactions between agencies and their clients is important. Specifically, this original finding indicates that within the social media marketing sector, the influence of interactions between the two parties is more significant than studies have previously identified.

This addition to agency-client relationship theory begin with the results of the systematic literature review which outline the three perspectives of the prior literature, namely: *the interpersonal view, the alternative view and the challenges associated the relationship*. The theoretical contributions of this study to each of these perspectives is discussed and presented in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the constructs identified in the literature review and empirically investigated within a social media marketing setting, bring a theoretically mature body of knowledge into a modern context. In doing so, this study addressed a distinct gap in the current knowledge, which lacks any enquiry into the modern manifestations of agency-client relationships in the digital environment.

Furthermore, the findings of this study put forward the following theoretical contributions. Conflict was revealed to be commonplace between agencies and their clients as a result of strategic decision-making. Therefore, a co-creation dynamic in strategic decision making is emerged as the ideal scenario for addressing conflict. Agencies typically use client account management strategies to assuage conflict and to drive the relationship towards co-creation, and also use contractual obligations to

manage the client relationship. Finally, organisational and international cultural practices emerged as creating conflict between both parties. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this part of the study is to advance the perception of the client relationships in the modern digital era, identifying and promoting co-creation between the two parties as a means to overcoming conflict, and asserting the importance of agency-client interactions in strategy development and evaluation.

8.3.2 Practical

Two categories of benefits to marketing practice are evident in this study. Therefore, the provision of conceptual frameworks which provide a foundation for strategy development and evaluation and the associated challenges, as well as also advice on the influence of the agency-client relationship. These three areas will now be explored in turn.

8.3.2.1 Conceptual Frameworks

Two conceptual frameworks are produced by the study which could be of value to practitioners: *the contextualised conceptual framework of social media marketing evaluation in strategy development (Figure 5.3),* and *a conceptual framework of agency-client dynamics in social media marketing (Figure 6.1).*

Figure 5.3 is a framework which combines the two cycles of social media marketing strategy development (Figure 5.1), and social media marketing evaluation (Figure 5.2). These models provide stages of activity in strategy development and evaluation in social media marketing. While the literature offers little more knowledge in this area, it is envisaged that these models will be useful to practitioners, students and academics. Furthermore, in highlighting the importance of data to strategic decision-making, these conceptual frameworks assert the importance of analytics and evaluation to practitioners by offering a process-driven framework and guidance on the key informant samples approach to developing campaign strategies for social media.

Figure 6.1 offers a conceptual framework which outlines the influence of agency-client relationships in social media marketing. This framework underlines the importance of

establishing a good working relationship with clients, which will assist in the development of strategy and evaluation of campaigns. Practitioners may find value in these findings by offering an insight into client relationship management in the modern digital environment. Specifically, the use of contractual arrangements, cultural recognition and client account management strategies appear to be effective in developing positive working relationships. Whilst conflict is ever present in agency-client relationships, it emerged in the findings that this concept can be used to further enhance the relationship towards a more positive scenario of co-creation.

However, despite the benefits of the conceptual frameworks, this study has also identified many challenges in social media marketing. The literature pertaining to social media strategy and evaluation identifies overarching challenges to effective practice in both processes. However, this study provides specific details of practical complications which the participants face on a regular basis. In particular, this study identifies the key challenges associated with the evaluation process. Three specific challenges are identified in this study, namely: *software, lack of credible information, and agency-client relationship issues.*

Participants were keen to point out how commercially-produced automated social media measurement software deters the ability to perform evaluation. Scholars have examined the potential of social media measurement software (Töllinen et al., 2010; Stavrakantonakis et al., 2012), however this study has outlined the significant failings of such technology. In particular, participants have commented upon the lack of value in providing useful campaign performance data, which impacts client relationships. Furthermore, this study also outlines the benefit of collaboratively developing an evaluation dashboard with clients, using the softwares available to produce meaningful insights that satisfy the clients interpretation of campaign success. In doing so, the client is involved in the co-creation of the strategy and evaluation processes with mutually beneficial results. Hence, identification of the challenges faced when utilising such software will assist practice knowledge, as well as outlining the benefits of the co-creation in terms of strategy development and evaluation. Co-creation studies are generally restricted to brand-consumer co-creation and this finding offers a fresh perspective on this notion in the social media marketing sector which includes agency-client collaboration. Furthermore, practitioners may also benefit from these

insights which propose client account management towards co-creation in campaign strategy development and evaluation.

In another unanticipated finding, participants often expressed frustration with the dearth of advice in terms of social media strategy and evaluation. Considering the recent development of social media marketing, it is not surprising that limited resources on best practice are available in the practitioner and academic literature. Studies have provided advice in their investigations of aspects of evaluation such as: *social media metrics* (Batrinca and Treleaven, 2015), *KPIs* (Alberghini et al., 2014), *social media data collection* (Castelli et al., 2013)*, and analysis of social media data* (Yu et al., 2013). However, no study to date has examined evaluation and its association with strategy development campaign decision-making. This study has therefore advanced social media marketing evaluation knowledge by conceptualising the process into a framework which is beneficial for industry and academia. As well as advancing the studies in this field by offering an updated view on social media marketing evaluation, this finding offers a distinctly new contribution which establishes the relationship between strategy and evaluation. In an increasingly data-driven environment, marketers may find some value in this contribution to knowledge and can apply some of the same principles in future campaign development and evaluation. Furthermore, the logical stages of activity would be useful for practitioners by offering guidance on strategy development and evaluation which has emerged from a practice-focussed study.

The final practical application of the findings to emerge from this study come in the form of advice on managing agency client relationships within a digital marketing setting. The findings indicated that agency-client interactions have a significant influence on strategy development and evaluation.

A number of studies recognise the importance of between client relationships and strategy development in marketing (e.g., Sonnenberg, 1992; Gould, Lerman, et al., 1999; Hozier and Schatzberg, 2000; Cardoso, 2007). However, it emerged from the findings of this study that this relationship between client and strategy development is pivotal to successful campaigns in social media marketing. Therefore, this study makes a contribution to knowledge that practitioners must pay special attention to

establishing and maintaining positive working relationships to ensure successful campaigns. This finding is an original contribution to the social media marketing literature and may be valuable to future practice.

In doing so, this study has also generated insights into modern manifestations of agency-client relationships in the digital marketing industry. In this modern context, the co-creation dynamic appears to be the optimal method of strategy development and evaluation. To establish this client relationship dynamic as well as overcome conflict, client account management and contractual obligations appear to be used. Therefore, the practical relevance of these findings suggest that client management strategies have the potential to drive client relationships towards co-creation between the two parties. The co-creation dynamic, and strategies to establish it could be relevant for future practice in key areas such as account management and retention of clients.

8.3.3 Methodological

This study conducted semi-structured interviews with industry experts. Two significant aspects of the study are of relevance for further researchers. Firstly, the interviews were performed with a sample of social media marketing specialists who are industry specialists with vast experience in performing social media marketing. This type of participant is arguably most suitable for further studies of modern marketing practices. Secondly, the interviews used an elicitation technique known as cognitive mapping. This technique is particularly useful for generating rich data during interviews, particularly with creative participants. These two aspects will now be considered in turn.

8.3.3.1 Researching Social Media Marketing in Practice

Researching social media marketing in practice in this study was a useful and valuable approach to satisfying the aims and objectives. Much of the prior studies focus on the outcome and impact of social media campaigns upon customers. However, this study examined the practitioner interpretation of social media marketing, by examining the tactical details of developing and evaluating campaigns. By conducting interviews with specialist social media marketers, rich insights were collected which illustrated the

specific activities in performing social media marketing, as well as a clients' perspective of the success of campaigns. Therefore, by investigating the concept of social media marketing from the practitioner perspective, a better understanding of the machinations behind campaigns are provided. Furthermore, as marketing agencies are required to display creativity in their campaigns, new and hitherto unknown practices were identified, such as evaluation objective setting and management and the importance of management decision-making when social media campaigns have finished. Finally, as this study set out to understand a largely unknown phenomenon, key informants interviewed provided more than ample descriptions of the processes and outcomes of social media marketing which is valuable contribution to future researchers.

8.3.3.2 Cognitive Mapping

Cognitive mapping proved to be a valuable and rewarding elicitation technique. It was particularly relevant for conceptualising the processes associated with the themes of the study. By using the cognitive mapping exercises, participants were allowed to take control of the interview and provide a richer description of the topic being discussed. The technique was particularly appropriate for participants, due to their creative tendencies as social media marketers. As part of their roles as marketing executives, they are required to make creative decisions related to campaigns and using a visual mapping exercise allowed for collection of rich data during interviews. Furthermore, cognitive mapping supported discussion of concepts which participants created as part of the exercise, which is a valuable technique for encouraging richer discussion amongst participants who may struggle to verbalise complex concepts.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This research is exploratory in nature and therefore suffers from a range of limitations, namely, the sample, sector and regional focus of the study, and the methodology used. The sample from which this study is conducted is an obvious limitation of this study. This study collected the views of specialist digital agencies. In doing so, the perspective of the client, and many other stakeholders is absent within the views expressed. Furthermore, inherent biases were also observed from the agency view of agency-client interactions. The researcher was aware of such biases in participant

views of the influence of client relationships, as well as the absence of the client perspective. However, previous studies which examine digital marketing practice adopt a similar strategy of interviewing marketing agencies with promising results (e.g., Komulainen et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2016; Skjølsvik and Breunig, 2016; Wedel and Kannan, 2016; Taylor, 2017). Furthermore, interviews were confirmatory of constructs in strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships that generated definitions, models and conceptual frameworks, suggesting the sample was appropriate for the aims and objectives of this study. Further studies would benefit from a dyadic approach to data collection with both agency and client perspectives of the research phenomenon.

Despite being sector-specific, the study was also localised within the North-West UK, Greater Manchester region. This area is recognised as a significant digital and creative industry hub. Drawing from this, the study was conducted on agencies within the marketing services sector. Although an investigation of client-side social media marketing practice would also offer additional insights to the findings of this study and was also a limitation of the study. However, it was deemed most appropriate to investigate the research topic among specialist practitioners with significant experience in social media marketing to produce a richer understanding of strategy development, evaluation and agency-client relationships. The regional focus of the study is also a limitation in generating universally accepted findings. Whilst much effort has been spent on identifying a set of key informants with the relevant experience, the scope of this study is restricted to a set of specialist marketing agencies in one region. Thus, further studies across the wider breadth of the UK, Europe and beyond would offer a richer picture of social media marketing practice from a global context.

Lastly, the methods used to collect data poses limitations such as the researchers own bias in the interview process. However, the subjective nature of interpretivist research is well recognised and the interview consent form attempted to outline the project aims clearly for participants to minimise the impact of the researchers' bias. Furthermore, the interviews also allowed the opportunity for participants to offer biased statements of their agencies performance, however the aims and objectives of the study were solely concerned with strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships and overlooked any biased statements from the sample. Finally, the interviews were

conducted over a three period, during which time significant changes to social media marketing techniques and strategies occurred. A longitudinal study may have been more appropriate considering the rapidly changing nature of social media.

8.5 Areas for Further Research

This study addressed research gaps within literature related to marketing strategy, evaluation and agency-client relationships. However, despite the wide range of findings presented in the study and in-depth insights, a number of research gaps remain, most notably the client perspective of social media marketing in the service ecosystem. Three primary areas for further research were identified which extended beyond the remit of this study: *modern agency-client relationships, agency-client size variations, sector specific investigations, and inter-agency conflict*. These will now be briefly considered in turn.

8.5.1.1 Modern Agency-Client Relationships

The primary future research is to investigate the impact of digital and social media on modern agency-client relationships. The present study identifies how modern agency-client relationships have changed due to three specific influences of digital and social media marketing: *new types of agencies, different types of data, time pressures*.

The study has shown how the modern digital marketing landscape consists of a range of agencies which offer various services in marketing. A recent industry report confirms that among the top performing marketing agencies in the UK are full-service, offering clients an extensive suite of marketing services (WARC, 2018). Whilst this is not new compared to the pre-digital landscape, it is noteworthy that a significant number of smaller, specialist agencies are increasingly operating within the same marketspace. The sample of participants within this study provide a profile of the modern digital landscape with small and medium sized agencies who provide specialist social media marketing services for many clients of varying sizes. Further research might investigate how the modern agency-client relationships have changed compared to the pre-digital media landscape.

The study also supports the notion that evaluation of social media data is vital to making strategic decisions in terms of campaign development. Further, it is argued that through interpretation of social media data, better strategic decisions can be made, resulting in successful campaigns. However, the data concerned in social media is distinctly different to previously understood media. Social media data is rife with semantic nuances such as colloquialisms, irony and complex lexicographic messages such as '*emojis*'. Therefore, further studies could focus on the impact of new forms of campaign data upon the modern agency-client relationship.

Lastly, interviews indicated how the time-frames involved with social media campaigns were quite short. In one such case, a client who failed to respond to a user comment resulted in significant impact to the brand perception within a 24-hour timeframe. As only one such case was identified within this study, further research may seek to explore the impact of a time pressured environment on client relationships.

8.5.1.2 Agency-Client Size Variations

This study gathered opinions from specialist practitioners who operate in agencies that provide social media marketing services for multiple clients. The size of client and agency firms alike was found to vary significantly. Findings identified a variety of factors that impinged on the ability of practitioners to perform social media marketing, in particular client budget. However, these factors in conjunction with the size of agency and client has not been considered by this study. In other words, a smaller client may have a more restrictive budget and hence the agency is inhibited in terms of their ability to develop more effective campaigns. Smaller agencies may also be keen to seek out larger clients and enhance their reputation amongst their peers. Further studies should consider the impact of the size of agency and client organisations on social media marketing campaigns. To posit the question, does size of organisation dictate marketing approaches?

8.5.1.3 Sector Specific Investigations

This research considered how digital marketing agencies developed strategies and evaluated social media marketing campaigns for client firms. This approach was justified given the disparity of literature on social media marketing practice and the

focus upon specialists' experience in this field. However, it is also recognised that brands are increasingly managing their own social media campaigns without the assistance of social media specialists. Hence, future research could consider investigate social media marketing across a range of organisations. For example, a comparison of fast-moving consumer goods social media marketing campaigns may offer insights into how social media marketing analytics compliments segmentation and targeting of customers. Furthermore, a sector specific analysis study may allow also shed light on the appropriateness of social media to the industry, for example the legal sector.

8.5.1.4 *Inter-Agency Conflict*

A final area of further research to emerge from this study was the notion of multi-agency relationships. In these scenarios, client firms contract a number of digital agencies who simultaneously work on the same campaign, making relationship formation difficult in the modern marketing environment which leads to inter-agency conflict. Participant discussions revealed the tensions between these agencies who are contracted by a client. In one instance, a participant described the common practice of usurping rival agencies in conversation with clients, suggesting the service ecosystem is complex and deserves investigation. Further research may seek to examine inter-agency conflict and how this impacts marketing services.

8.6 Researchers' Reflection

The author has learned a great deal from the PhD process. This thesis illustrates the researchers understanding of social media marketing through the three themes of the study. In performing this study, the researcher appreciates the importance of agency-client relationships on strategic campaign decision-making. The definitions, cycles and conceptual frameworks display the researchers understanding of the three themes.

In terms of conducting this study, the researcher benefitted greatly from the experience. Firstly, the initial research aims and objectives were unfeasible and required refining. Considering the fast pace of change in social media, the researcher took steps to refocus the aims of the study to encapsulate the influence of client

relationships on strategy development and evaluation. Therefore, a key lesson learned was to remain be flexible and anticipate unforeseen obstacles, in terms of research.

The second reflection is approaches to conducting interviews. Whilst the initial interviews were valuable in obtaining information on specific topics. The use of cognitive mapping also provided a useful method to obtain insights from highly creative digital marketing specialists. It was clear in some of the interviews that participants found it difficult to describe what they meant, whereas they found it easier to sketch their ideas. Hence, another valuable lesson from this study was to remain open-minded and to evaluate the most appropriate method for the type of research being performed.

Thirdly, the author has learned a great deal from the process of publishing. Urged by my supervisory team to submit conference papers during the process of the PhD, these turned out to be highly useful exercises that helped shape the focus and direction of the study. Moreover, submitting work to a journal for peer review was distinctly different challenge. Responding to reviewers' comments at this level was incredibly helpful in sharpening the arguments made within this thesis. However, there were also a number of rejections from journals prior to the two publications from this research and these experiences were also valuable. Deciphering the reasons why an editor decided the submitted article was unsuitable, was useful. Overall, the process of peer review of short form articles from this study have been a valuable lesson in crystallising the contributions from this study.

The final reflection after completing this study is the importance of patience. Whilst this PhD was studied part-time when teaching full-time, it became overwhelming at various points. Despite the many obstacles faced and fruitless endeavours, I learned that patience is a very important part of conducting research. Moving forward, I hope to carry this through to future research projects.

8.7 Summary of Chapter

Following calls from the literature review for an in-depth empirical study of social media marketing practice, this is the first study of its kind to examine strategy, evaluation and

agency-client relationships using key industry informants. In presenting this chapter, a summary of the aims of the present study were provided. Next, the chapter outlined the extent to which the study achieved Research Objective 1 by outlining the context of the study through the review of the strategy and evaluation literatures, and systematic review of the agency-client relationship literature (Chapter 3). Following this, Research Objective 2 begins with an outline of the methodology employed to gather the necessary data required to satisfy the aims of the study (Chapter 4). Research Objective 3 was achieved though the findings in relation to social media strategy development and evaluation in a conceptual contextualised framework. Subsequent to this, the chapter identifies how Research Objective 4 was met through the findings in relation to the agency-client relationship. Research Objective 5 was also achieved through the creation of a conceptual framework of the dynamics of agency-client interactions and their influence on the processes and outcomes of social media marketing strategy development and evaluation. The chapter then revisits the contributions to knowledge in terms of theory, practice and methodology, which are clearly identified in Table 8-1 where contributions to theory practice and methodology are provided and subsequently discussed. Limitations of the study are provided before presenting a series of topics for further research. Lastly, the researcher reflects upon the study to complete the chapter.

8.8 The Future of Social Media Marketing Evaluation

Harnessing the power of consumer data is not a new concept. However, it cannot be ignored that the advances of digital and social media as widespread communication channels have changed the manner in which humans behave. Increasingly, the term Big Data is being used as a mask for converting information through analytics into knowledge. Again, this is not a new concept and has been performed for many years, through loyalty schemes, supermarket club cards and insurance claims. The difference at the point of writing this thesis is that analysis of social media data is becoming increasingly stigmatised and looked upon as a nefarious activity.

Through social media, users have been targeted with 'fake news' stories in a bid to sway their decisions in elections and referenda alike. A recent case whereby *Cambridge Analytica* used data from a Facebook survey to assist in the US election is coming under increased scrutiny for unethical use of data, which reveals a worrying trend in social media evaluation. This calls for a responsible discussion around how data should be treated, processed and interpreted to generate knowledge.

I hope that this research has offered a valuable contribution to refining our understanding of the evaluation of social media, establishing its place in connection with strategic decision-making while also recognising that at the heart of it, physical human relationships are still very relevant to complex technical processes.

I also wish to stress the importance of Russell Ackoff's interpretation of the data and how it forms part of a relationship whereby it should be complicit in the creation of information, generation of knowledge, and leading to wisdom. Coupled with Albert Einstein's earlier allegory of identifying 'things that count', I believe that precise, efficient and responsible evaluation can be performed.

It is up to us as responsible agents to ensure this is possible.

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10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 Interview Consent Form

Consent Form for Qualitative Research Interviews

Title of Project: An investigation into the impact of the agency-client relationship on the planning and measurement of social media marketing.

Brendan Keegan is undertaking research for submission as a PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University. This involves new research into how digital marketing agencies evaluate social media marketing campaigns, and the impact of the agency-client relationship.

One element of this work involves individual interviews asking practitioners to discuss their own experiences of, and opinions about social media marketing planning and evaluation.

The University understands that you are willing to be interviewed by Brendan. It is important to the University that only people who want to do so participate in this study. We make sure of this by asking you to sign this form to confirm that you have freely agreed to be interviewed. You should also have been made aware that you do not need to answer any particular question and that you may stop the interview at any time. You confirm that you gave permission for the interview to be digitally-recorded and you will be given a chance to review and amend the transcript in due course.

Any personal details will be anonymised and Brendan will not intentionally reveal your identity to anyone outside the research/supervision team. Whilst interviewees' identities will be revealed within the supervision team, the data will be anonymised before they are discussed with the team.

The contents of the interviews – including yours – will be analysed and written up during the course of the research. The findings may be included in unpublished theses

submitted for higher degrees, and later lodged in the University Library. They may also be used in published works, such as academic journal articles or

scholarly texts. This written work may include quotations from some of the interviews, including yours. Neither your own name nor any of your other personal details that would identify you will ever be associated with these quotations. We would be grateful if you could confirm, by signing this form, that you are happy for us to use the recorded interview or extracts from it in this way.

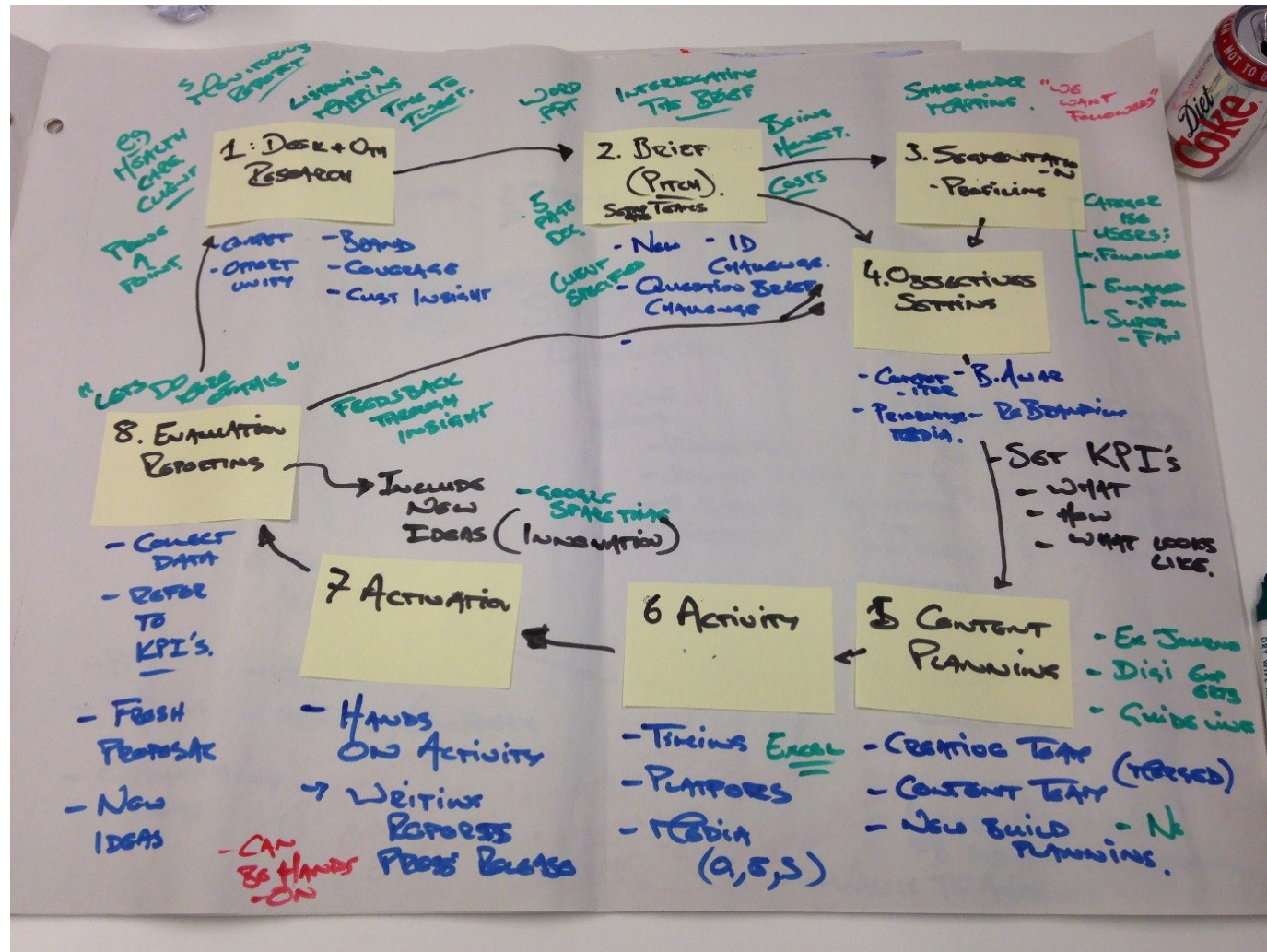I confirm I have freely agreed to be interviewed for this project and that the recorded interview or extracts from it may be used as described above.

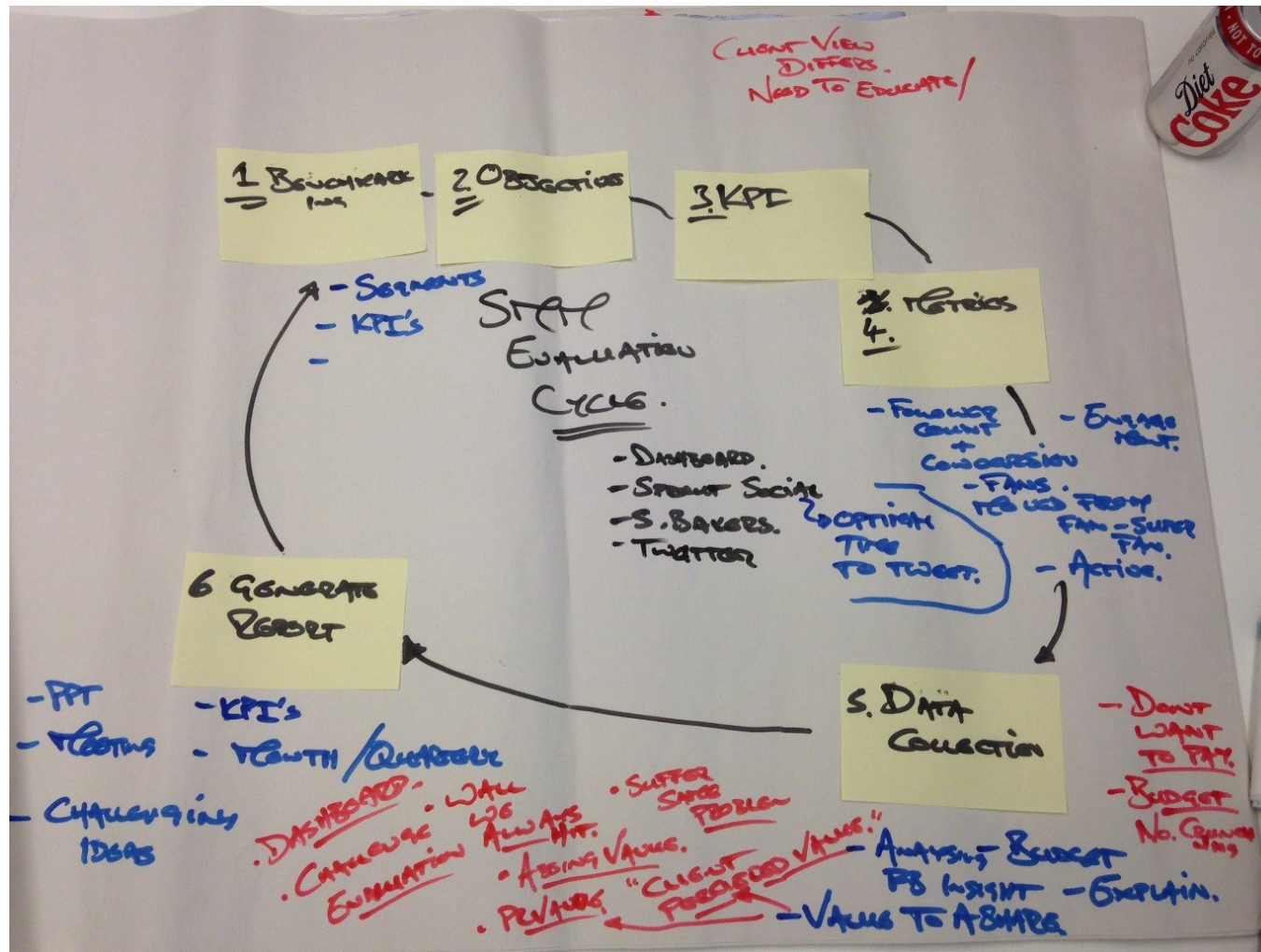Signed: ……………………………………………………

Print Name: …………………………………………………..

Date: ……………………………………………………

10.2 Appendix 2 - Cognitive Map Example (Social Media Marketing Strategy Map)

Appendix 2 - Cognitive Map Example (Social Media Marketing Evaluation Map)

10.3 Appendix 3 Agency-Client Relationship Systematic Literature Review Table

Sub- Themes	Articles	Research Strategy	Methods	Population
Client Account Management	Capon and Scammon (1979)	Case Study	Interviews	1 Advertising Agency and 1 Client
	Calantone and Drury (1979)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Wackman, Salmon and Salmon (1986)	Survey	Questionnaire	182 Client Professionals
	Michell (1988)	Mixed Methods	Questionnaire, Interviews	210 Questionnaires and 45 Agency Professionals
	Harvey and Rupert (1988)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Beltramini, DA Pitta (1991)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Morgan and Hunt (1994)	Survey	Questionnaire	204 Clients Professionals
	Armstrong (1996)	Case Study	Interviews	1 Advertising Agency and 1 Client
	Sekely and Blakney (1996)	Survey	Questionnaire	197 Advertising Agency Professionals
	Michell (1996)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Beard (1996)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	LaBahn and West (1997)	Survey	Questionnaire	194 Advertising Agency Professionals
	Halinen (1997)	Case Study	Interviews	1 Advertising Agency and 1 Client
	Lichtenthala and Shanib (2000)	Survey	Questionnaire	39 Agency Professionals
	Brennan (2001)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Ojasalo (2001)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Franke, Murphy and Nadler (2003)	Survey	Questionnaire	41 Advertising Agencies
	Morrison and Haley (2003)	Survey	Questionnaire	345 Agency Professionals
	Waller (2004)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Haytko (2004)	Case Study	Interviews	20 Agency Professionals (3 Agencies)
	Koch and Liechty (2006)	Survey	Questionnaire	77 Agency Professionals
	Beverland, Farrelly and Woodhatch (2007)	Case Study	Interviews	10 Agency and Client Professionals
	Lian and Laing (2007)	Case Study	Interviews	16 Client Professionals

	Faisal and Khan (2008)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Fam and Waller (2008)	Survey	Questionnaire	82 Agency Professionals
	Na and Marshall (2009)	Case Study	Interviews, Observation	2 Advertising Agencies
	Karantinou and Hogg (2009)	Case Study	Interviews	3 Agency and 6 Client Professionals
Conflict	Pollay and Swinth (1969)	Survey	Behavioural Simulation	9 Agency Professionals
	Murray (1971)	Survey	Questionnaire	164 Agency Professionals
	Doyle, Jens and Michell (1980)	Survey	Questionnaire	210 Agency Professionals
	Hotz, Ryans, and Shanklin (1982)	Survey	Questionnaire	68 Agency and Client Professionals
	Pincus, Acharya and Trotter (1991)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Johnson and Laczniak (1991)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Murphy (1994)	Interviews	Interviews	10 Agency Professionals
	Bourland (1994)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Henke (1995)	Interviews	Interviews	151 Agency Professionals
	Murphy and Maynard (1996)	Survey	Questionnaire	57 Agency Professionals and 63 Clients
	West and Paliwoda (1996)	Survey	Questionnaire	145 Client Professionals
	Mathur and Mathur (1996)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Murphy and Maynard (1997)	Survey	Questionnaire	57 Agency Professionals and 63 Clients
	Durden and Orsman (1997)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Bennett (1999)	Survey	Questionnaire	344 Client Professionals
	Devinney and Dowling (1999)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Ghosh and Taylor (1999)	Survey	Questionnaire	66 Agency Professionals
	Hozier and Schatzberg (2000)	Quantitative	Event Study	30 Agencies
	Waller (2002)	Survey	Questionnaire	101 Agency Professionals and 46 Clients
	Bruning and Ledingham (2002)	Case Study	Interviews	25 Agency Professionals
	Tahtinen and Halinen (2002)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Kulkarni, Vora and Brown (2003)	Conceptual	Event Studies	N/A
	So (2005)	Survey	Questionnaire	84 Agency Professionals
	Hill (2006)	Mixed Methods	Interviews, Questionnaire	18 Agency and 204 Client Professionals

	Triki, Redjeb and Kamoun (2007)	Interviews	Interviews	12 Agency and 12 Client Professionals
	Morais (2007)	Conceptual	Ethnographic	N/A
	Zolkiewski, Burton and Stratoudaki (2008)	Interviews	Interviews	18 Agency Professionals
	Murphy and Maynard (2009)	Case Study	Interviews	22 Agency and 22 Client Professionals
	Beard (2010)	Survey	Questionnaire	803 Agency and Client Professionals
	Davies and Prince (2011)	Survey	Questionnaire	108 Client Professionals
	Arul (2011)	Case Study	Interviews	25 Agency and 50 Client Professionals
	Yuksel and Sutton-Brady (2011)	Mixed Methods	Questionnaire, Interview	80 Agency and Client Professionals
	Prince and Everett (2012)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Grant, McLeod and Shaw (2012)	Interviews	Interviews	22 Agency Professionals
	Broschak and Block (2013)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
Cultural	Verbeke (1989)	Survey	Questionnaire	121 Agency Professionals
	Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Odabasi (1994)	Survey	Questionnaire	101 Client Professionals
	Delener (1996)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Prendergast and Shi (1999)	Survey	Questionnaire	200 Client Professionals
	Davies and Prince (1999)	Survey	Questionnaire	558 Client Professionals
	Fam and Waller (2000)	Survey	Questionnaire	102 Agency Professionals
	Moon and Franke (2000)	Survey	Questionnaire	214 Agency Professionals
	Prendergast and Shi (2001a)	Survey	Questionnaire	200 Agency Professionals
	Prendergast, Shi and West (2001b)	Survey	Questionnaire	200 Agency Professionals
	Gray and Fam (2002)	Survey	Questionnaire	147 Agency Professionals
	Oh and Kim (2002)	Quantitative	Factor analysis	N/A
	Beverland, Farrelly and Woodhatch (2004)	Case Study	Interviews	17 Agency Professionals
	Cardoso (2007)	Interviews	Interviews	25 Agency Professionals
	Waller, Shao and Bao (2010)	Survey	Questionnaire	147 Agency Professionals
	Gülsoy (2012)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
Contractual Arrangements	Wilson (1968)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A

	Bergen, Dutta and Waller (1992)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Armstrong (1996)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Bennett (1999)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Chakrabarty, Markham and Widing (1997)	Survey	Questionnaire	117 Agency Professionals
	Gould, Grein and Lerman (1999)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Spake, D'souza, Crutchfield and Morgan (1999)	Survey	Questionnaire	349 Client Professionals
	Farrelly and Quester (2003)	Survey	Questionnaire	96 Client Professionals
	Zhao (2005)	Quantitative	Factor analysis	N/A
	Davies and Prince (2005)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Arul (2010)	Case Study	Interviews	25 Agency and 50 Client Professionals
	Davies and Prince (2010)	Survey	Questionnaire	179 Agency and 108 Client Professionals
Co-Creation	Michell (1987)	Survey	Behavioural Testing	26 Agency Professionals
	Durkin and Lawlor (2001)	Interviews	Interviews	12 Agency Professionals
	Grant, Gilmore and Crosier (2003)	Case Study	Interviews	31 Agency and 19 Client Professionals
	Sutherland, Duke and Abernethy (2004)	Survey	Questionnaire	583 Agency Professionals
	Lace (2004)	Survey	Questionnaire	86 Agency Professionals
	Kelly, Lawlor and O'Donohoe (2005)	Interviews	Interviews	1 Agency Organisation
	Sasser and Koslow (2008)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Zolkiewski, Burton and Stratoudaki (2008)	Interviews	Interviews	18 Agency Professionals
	de Waal, Malefyt and Morais (2010)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Sasser, Koslow and Kilgour (2011)	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
	Behboudi, Hanzaee and Koshksaray (2012)	Survey	Questionnaire	193 Agency Professionals