

# **The role of Social Media in building value for the reseller in B2B marketing.**

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## Abstract

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Studies argue that the adoption of social media sites in business organisations in the Business-to-Business (B2B) environment is perceived as an irrelevant digital tool used by businesses. However, an enormous amount of literature also argues that social media is a beneficial tool that should be used by B2B businesses, as it helps businesses to create profitability for their firm by letting B2B customers to engage with them over a virtual format of social media and helps to nurture customer relationships for building brand loyalty. This gap in B2B social media is significant to B2B marketing literature today as knowing the importance of B2B businesses embedding the tool of social media into their marketing strategy and how these marketing efforts are perceived by the B2B resellers can further create profitability for the business in the near future.

Therefore, this study will explore the role social media plays in B2B organisations and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective, as previous literature fails to explore the value and role of social media from a national context of New Zealand. To do this a qualitative research approach of face-to-face semi-structured interviews is employed with sales managers and managing directors across four reseller firms who are existing customers of a B2B firm. By exploring the role that social media plays in B2B markets, this study will develop a conceptual framework to understand the usage of social media in the highly engaged B2B marketing environment.

The findings showed that the four resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages perceived the marketing efforts of Frucor beverages products in a positive manner as they were fond of the utilisation and interaction of social media efforts used by the B2B firm such as ; Facebook , Instagram and LinkedIn. This was because the resellers, found that the interaction and communication between them and the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages was easier and it created speed and efficiency in information exchange which benefitted both their

company and the B2B firm. Moreover, social media antics used by the B2B firm was perceived by the four reseller businesses in a positive era as they believed that trust and loyalty was more easily built when the B2B firm used social media and Web 2.0 to create profitability for their business through advertising on social media , promotions in store and speed and efficiency in the exchange of information.

Thus, the study is relevant to B2B marketing literature as it explains and defines the importance that is placed on B2B businesses that should embedd the digital tool of social media and Web 2.0 into their business and how the utilisation of social media sites such as, Facebook, Instagram and Web 2.0 can create a positive and healthy relationship with B2B resellers. By contributing into B2B marketing literature it is beneficial to know how utterly important the digital world of social media has become in the B2B society today as the digital world is forever growing.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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**Faaiza Munif**

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## **Ethics Approval**

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This study attained ethical approval by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017, reference number 17/306.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

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### 1.1 Background

Digital marketing is defined in the literature as a tool that links a customer to a seller, by using interactive technologies such as emails, websites, online forums, social media and news groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). In this new technological savvy environment, more B2B customers have started to spend more of their leisure time in a digital world, because of this, businesses in the B2B environment have started to cooperate and employ digital marketing to reach its customers in an easier manner. As more B2B customers in society have become fond of using the internet as a source of gaining knowledge and seeking information but also to communicate and exchange information through Web 2.0 and social media. Because of this reason B2B customers are turning instead to the Internet to gain knowledge and to communicate with other businesses in order for them to create customer engagement, nurture customer relationships and to create profitability (Ryan, 2016).

Literature today reveals that there is a paradigm shift in the role of marketing as more and more businesses are using the internet based approach of social media marketing and Web 2.0 as opposed to the traditional way of marketing of face-to-face interaction and word of mouth. This is due to the highly technological savvy environment that is present in today's society. Whether its communication or information exchange it is all done through a virtual format of social media or Web 2.0. One of the key findings literature suggest is, digital marketing isn't about understanding the underlying of technology, rather it is about understanding people, how they use technology and how marketers in businesses can use digital platforms to connect with its customers, to build strong relationships and drive sales (Ryan, 2016). Duncan and Ghashghai (2016) explain that businesses in the B2B environment understand the importance that's placed on digital marketing when a business wants to retain a

customer or build customer brand engagement. This is because, businesses in the B2B environment have finally learnt to understand that a customer's motivational factors such as advice seeking from peers, social benefits and sharing knowledge all help to motivate a customer to participate and engage in the use of digital platforms such as; social media. As a result, businesses in the B2B environment have found that it is pivotal to integrate digital marketing, as customers in today's society engage with businesses that create customers with an unforgettable experience through the interaction and engagement of social media. Strong and Bolat's (2016) research indicates the importance of having digital marketing channels present in B2B organisations, as they believe it not only contributes towards helping and nurturing a customer to engage in the business, but it also provides a benefit for the business itself by creating brand awareness through social media.

Social media is known as the way people interact with each other to create, share or exchange information and ideas through a virtual community. Katona and Sarvary (2014) claim social media is a different way of advertising that is cost effective, high in quality, fast in frequency and has a wide reach in gaining the attention of all customers throughout a virtual community. Moreover, it is increasingly important to examine social media as more and more customers in the B2B environment are using and are faced with digital platforms of social media and Web 2.0 on a daily basis. As a result, businesses in the B2B environment can use this cost-effective digital tool of social media and Web 2.0 as a way of building their brand name or product and to create customer engagement through a virtual format.

Traditionally, social media is a digital tool that is widely used by B2C organisations to create a virtual community that is formed for promotional activities of their products and services (Cova & Pace, 2006). Jussila, Karkkainen and Leinos' (2012) research indicates companies use social media sites as a two-way interaction between B2B companies as it enables marketers to deepen their relationships with other businesses. This suggests that when a two-way online interaction is present through social media, it helps a business to create the perception of the company to be closer to its target group; this, therefore, results in creating greater trust and loyalty

between the B2B business partners (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The theory of relationship marketing is best defined by Palmatier, Dant and Grewal (2006) as all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges. Research today reveals, relationship marketing tends to generate stronger customer relationship that enhances a seller to customer relationships. Social media is known as a mediator of relationship marketing as businesses use and embed social media into their marketing strategy as a source of two way communication and interaction between their customers, this enhances relationship quality, which further helps to build trust and commitment via social media. Palmatier et al., (2006) also explains when a strong relationship marketing strategy is present in businesses and social media is used as a relationship mediator it not only builds a customers trust and commitment but also creates positive word of mouth on social media about the businesses products, its brand and it further creates customer loyalty.

Kaplan (2012) and Michaelidou, Christodoulides and Siamagka (2011) suggest B2B firms tend to employ social media as a branding strategy in their B2B firm. In addition, implementing social media into a business strategy has a positive impact on the businesses innovation and product management, as it provides the business with a competitive advantage (Bughin, Chui & Miller 2009).

Businesses in today's environment embed social media marketing into their business as it helps the business to co create value to its customers in an easier way; this is through the use of social media. The theory of co creation was developed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) this process is best defined as customers working together with a company to co create value. Thus, in today's society the customer - firm interaction has become a new locus of value co creation in the social media era, as this interaction between customers to firm helps to redefine the roles that customers play in innovation and how they create value creation (Dahan & Hauser, 2002). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) reveal that the process of value co creation consists of; dialogue, access, risk management and transparency, these four steps helps to examine the value co creation process with its customers. The first building

block of dialogue refers to 'interactivity'; this helps to deepen the engagement between the customers and the firm (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The authors reveal that social media makes dialogue between the firms and customers possible. This is because, social media allows customers and firms to present themselves according to their own profession and business by creatively crafting their posts on social media such as, Facebook in a suitable way (Leonardi, 2009). Several studies also reveal that when customers engage in these online posts on social media, businesses tend to reward the customers who share the businesses posts on social media with incentives such as, discounts and free products. As a result of this, customers join in with value co creation, as they are engaging in the discussion with the business and are provided with value through the form of incentives. The second building block of accessibility is provided through social media by firms when they use social media to interact and provide the customers with information about their products in an easier manner (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). For example, accessing businesses reviews, product related information through the comfort of a customer's home. Several literatures explain that value co creation can occur when customer engage in discussions on social media regarding improvements that a business should make by commenting on the businesses social media posts. In doing this, customer involvement takes place and value co creation also occurs, as customers are involved with the business in making changes to the businesses product or service. This therefore, indicates that value co creation is present as both the business and the customer are working together to co create value that will benefit the business and the customer.

To conclude, social media enhances value co creation, because when a business engages with a customer through social media and provides a customer with an incentive such as a discount, value co creation occurs. This therefore, implies that value does not have to be added to a product for value co creation to occur, it can be assessed by a customer through the consumption and engagement process of social media in order for co-created value to occur.

Social media has harnessed in most businesses in society, as more companies are embedding this tool into their marketing, as a way of creating customer value. Katona and Sarvary (2014) claim that in recent years B2B online communities have begun to grow and B2B markets have started to use social media as a means of creating value and sharing experiences with each other. For example, a recent CMO survey showed, B2B social media spending's had increased to 9.6 % in 2012 and users of the internet spent more time on social media than any other site (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). However, Lacka and Chong (2016) argue that the adoption of social media sites in business organisations in the B2B environment is perceived as an irrelevant digital tool used by businesses. This is because; marketers in the B2B environment have a poor understanding and perception of the usability of these online sites (Lacka & Chong, 2016). For example, there are common barriers that are deterring the adoption of social media sites in B2B environment such as; having a poor understanding of using these online sites and failing to have the ability to recognise the benefits that can occur from using these online sites. However, Brennan and Croft (2012) explain that businesses in the B2B markets have grown an extensive amount of interest in the use of social media, as businesses in the B2B environment have realised that online platforms are an advantage to the company (Brennan & Croft (2012).

Literature today reveals the advantages that businesses in the B2B markets can gain from implementing and using social media is, they gain valuable feedback about the improvements that the business can make and helps their business to attract new business partners (Michaelidou et al., 2011). This therefore, enhances the buyer - seller relationship quality. Relationship Quality has been used frequently in buyer – seller literature by few practitioners and scholars who share a common definition and measure (Julie, 2006). Several literatures today define relationship quality as the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfil the needs of the customer associated with the relationship. Therefore, relationship quality is the nature of a relationship that in turn provides benefit to the customer (Julie, 2006). Hennig - Thurau (2002) explains that relationship quality theory holds three dimensions of quality that are satisfaction, trust and commitment. A positive effect on relationship quality

occurs in B2B organisations when the use and adoption of social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are being utilised in the business. Given the growing interest placed on social media in both B2B markets and B2C markets. Research suggests that adoption of social media has a significant benefit for organisations, as social media generates higher brand attitude and purchase intentions than any other source of media (Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou & Valvi, 2015). This is because; social media networking sites is also known as source of marketing and communication tool that has a high ability to spread viral messages and generate word of mouth across the Internet. Literature argues that B2B organisations use the internet to gain information and for speed and efficiency in communication exchange. From this, it is apparent that social media is valuable in B2B markets and B2C settings.

Furthermore, businesses in the B2B markets have grown to understand that employees of companies, customers, industry experts and general consumers are using social media platforms for both consumption of information, news and for interaction purposes. Due to this reason, businesses in the B2B market believe that it is necessary to embed, engage and incorporate social media into their marketing strategies as it is an easier way of interaction between businesses and all users are fond of social media as it is a fun and creative way of engaging and interacting with other businesses and customers. Thus, after understanding and developing knowledge about social media in the B2B market, a gap in literature was identified around the role that social media plays in the B2B environment and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer perspective in the B2B environment.

## 1.2 Problem Definition

The aim of this study are detailed in the sections below, with the overall research problem at hand that is presented by three key research questions.

### 1.2.1 Research Problem

A significant amount of studies argue that the adoption of social media sites in business organisations in the B2B environment is perceived as an irrelevant digital tool used by businesses. However, an enormous amount of literature also argues that social media is a beneficial tool that should be used by B2B businesses, as it helps businesses to create profitability for their firm by letting the B2B customers engage with them over a virtual format of social media. This further helps to nurture customer relationships for building brand loyalty and customer engagement.

As a result, it is important to gain knowledge into this gap in B2B social media as gaining an understanding of B2B businesses embedding the tool of social media into their marketing strategy and how these marketing efforts are perceived by the B2B resellers who are customers of the B2B firm, can further create profitability for B2B businesses and marketers in the near future.

Therefore, this research study will explore the role that social media plays in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective in the B2B marketing environment. This is because, previous literature has undergone research on the value of branding from a retailer perspective but fails to explore the value and role of social media in a national context.

The resellers chosen for this study are, sales managers and managing directors from four of the reselling small business (grocery industry) in New Zealand. The participants are customers of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages who they communicate and interact with on a weekly basis, sharing knowledge about products, brands, and pricing promotions and how to create profitability for both their business and the reseller firms' small businesses.

### 1.2.2 Research Questions

**RQ1.** What are the effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing?

**RQ2.** How do resellers of B2B firm perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology?

**RQ3.** Identify branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment?

### 1.3 Methodology

To address the research problem at hand, the researcher has adopted the constructivist framework, this paradigm is to be used to help the researcher to focus and interpret the participants meaning of their experiences and the beliefs they hold towards a particular object in a social context (Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, this study is exploratory in nature of knowledge, because the experiences, opinions and knowledge the participants have in regards to social media used by the B2B firm are very limited. As a result, the interpretivism paradigm is considered to be the best proposed paradigm that is used for this research as the focus of analysis and the meanings behind the values and experiences a participant holds is best understood through this paradigm. Also, the researcher cannot make or rely on the assumptions of the behaviour that the participants show, due to this reason the researcher has to enter the participants' frame of understanding and meaning of behaviour that they present the researcher with. This is to better understand the behaviour of the participants in a social environment. This theoretical view, helps to provide a more descriptive and meaning full research to this study, in order to better understand the role of social media in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The researcher chose to use this method to provide a rationale for method decisions as the methodology of phenomenon of qualitative research was used to undertake the research. Therefore, in regards to the research the data collection method that was used for this research study was semi structured face-to-face interviews.

There are several ways of analysing the semi structured interviews that constructs the data, such as; analytical, thematically, existentially and through a novel approach. In this research however, the method of analysis that was undertaken by the researcher is through a thematic analysis approach by using

a software called Nvivo. Thematic analysis is an analysis that is used to analyse data into themes, these themes detail a fundamental aspect and are different in nature that explains a different experience. As a result, by using this approach of thematic analysis allows the researcher to easily examine the gap by using the Nvivo thematic analysis software which helps the researcher to test theories, identify trends and helps to cross-examine information in an easier manner. Further, the NVivo requires multiple readings of a selection of the interview data to discern themes in order for the whole data set to be coded using the themes created.

## 1.4 Contribution of this Research

This study undertakes a new approach to exploring the gap in marketing literature, by seeking to understand the role of social media in B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The findings and insights that are gained from this research will increase new and exciting knowledge about social media and the effects or influences it has on a reseller of a B2B firm when social media or Web 2.0 is being employed in a B2B firm. The contributions for this research will be from a theoretical and empirical background. The study will add knowledge into theories and create new and unique insights to marketers that will help them to explore and gain knowledge of the role of social media and the effects of it in a B2B firm and how it can influence the relationship between a B2B reselling firm. The implications of the findings found from this research will create recommendations and insights for future marketers and businesses in the B2B environment. Furthermore, this study will contribute to both the research in marketing, branding, industrial marketing and practice marketing literature.

## 1.5 Thesis Overview

The thesis is in five chapters. Chapter one outlines the background the importance of the study, moving to explain the research problem and the aim of the study. Chapter two will provide a review in B2B marketing literature that will be further used to develop a conceptual framework of theories that will support the study at present. Chapter three will explain the methodological framework at

present for the study, such as the paradigm assumptions, the data collection method, data analysis procedures and the method for the study. Chapter four explains the findings from the data analysis explaining each of the seven themes in detail and making conclusions for each other themes. Chapter five discusses the findings for the study to answer the research questions at hand, explains the theoretical and empirical contributions for the study followed by the implications and future research for marketers

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## Chapter Two: Literature Review

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### 2.1 Introduction

This research aims to study and explore the gap that is found in marketing literature of social media in a B2B marketing environment. It will examine and discuss the current literatures that are present today around the conceptual framework of social media in the B2B environment. Marketing literature in the B2B environment explains that a gap still exists around the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. Following on, this section of this research provides a conceptual framework of social media in the B2B environment and also provides a comprehensive review of marketing literature that helps the researcher to create these conceptual theories and assumptions that will benefit this research. Current literatures examined will provide an overview of the role that social media plays in B2B firms and will support in answering the research question at present.

The literature will first explore digital marketing and what it is than it will explore in detail; the role of social media by defining the use of social media and how it is currently used in the B2B environment, then it will examine and highlight literature on the benefits of social media and digital marketing and how it has an effect on businesses that are currently using it and lastly it will explore how social media has an effect on an salesperson in the B2B environment. Than a gap in literature will be identified.

### 2.2 Digital Marketing

In order to explore digital marketing, it is important to first gain an in depth understanding of the concept itself and see what past literature has to say

about digital marketing. We are living in the new communication landscape whereby the role of customer interaction and user generated content are all facilitated by the digital environment and social media platforms (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). As a result, the marketing perspective has expanded the role of digital marketing and the digital environment as opportunities have arose for all kinds of companies. For example, digital marketing has affected the companies in the B2B environment in a positive manner as, firms in the environment have access to a vast number of new digital tools such as; electronic word of mouth and social media platforms which are some tools businesses can use for marketing purposes (Liu, Karahanna, & Watson, 2011). It can be argued that not only has the rise and expand in digital marketing tools in the B2B environment have benefited the firms itself but it has also made the lives of the marketers easier, as the use of digital tools has made marketing measurable as marketers are finding it more easy to collect, process and report data in regards to the marketing efforts of a firm in an easier way (Ryssel, Ritter & Gemünden, 2009).

Several studies mention face-to-face selling works better in making long lasting B2B buying whereas non-personal communication channels such as digital channels play a rather supportive role in achieving sales targets. While you could say that this statement is true, it is possible to say that only a proportion of the communication in B2B companies occur as a result of face-to-face. This is because personal selling is probably not the best tool used to deliver marketing objectives other than those marketing channel tools such as social media platforms that can help to generate, sales in terms of a firms branding strategy. So, the real question here is, is the role of digital channels helping B2B firms? Or is it a tool that is creating problems for the firm? It is possible to argue that although the role of digital channels has been used by B2B firms to help the offline marketing centres in B2B firms, it is possible to say however, that the firms are still finding it difficult to integrate and use social media platforms as a way to create profitability for their firm through the social media tools such as Facebook Groups, Snap chat advertising, Instagram pages and creating electronic word of mouth (Singha & Koshyb, 2011). Moreover, a gap still remains in literature to state whether the use of social media by B2B firms is

beneficial, the role that social media plays in B2B and the literature around social media in the B2B sector is still very limited.

Academic literature holds a view that the occurrence of social media has helped to enhance customer relationships and that social media tools should be used by B2B firms to generate viral customer evangelism and electronic word of mouth (WOM) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This view by Mangold and Faulds (2009) may be ideal for social media marketing purposes, however, this marketing effort is one that is very difficult to achieve in the B2B marketing environment. As B2B firms tend to have fewer customers and enthusiasts to share word of mouth with or to create viral customer evangelism because of this, the social media antics may be pointless.

However, several literatures portray digital marketing has several advantages, such as being easily measurable, visible, traceable and of course the ability to be viral is just another positive benefit that digital marketing has in the B2B sector. On this note, it is possible to say that although digital marketing does have several advantages, there are some barriers that are vital to understand for the causes of these digital marketing failures in B2B. For example Weber (2009) helps to gain an understanding of these barriers such as poorly defined goals, lack of expertise, resources and management to compliment the digital tools. All these aspects are key barriers that arise conflict when the implementation of digital tools in the B2B sector is in place. Because of this reason, most B2B firms find it difficult to adopt to the digital marketing tools such as; social media platforms, emails and website testing as adopting to these digital tools can arise conflict due to the key barriers identified above. B2B firms encounter these daunting barriers when trying to utilize digital marketing.

Moreover, literature up to date proposes that digital marketing is slowly being harnessed in B2B firms even when there are barriers that come in the way of utilisation of digital marketing tools that sometimes come in conflict and because of this, failures occur (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005).

## 2.2.1 Digital marketing definition

In recent years, the use of technology and the use of digitalisation has rose, as more and more firms in society have become digital friendly. Because of this, it is important to understand and explore the world of digital marketing or as known as internet or online marketing. Digital marketing is best described as the technologies that are intertwined in marketing efforts. There are several descriptions of digital marketing that authors explain in literature today, in some places the view of digital marketing is usually explained under internet marketing by Farrah (2010) or the barriers of internet usage by Melewar and Smith (2003). However, digital marketing is best described as a wide range of digital channels such as; the internet, mobile communication and also digital technology that links a seller to a customer through these interactive digital technologies such as social media (Liu, Karahanna & Watson, 2011).

Digital marketing has the digital, the internet and the online marketing side of digitalisation embedded in the concept of digital marketing. For example, the social elements that are integrated in digital media such as; discussion forums, blogs, sharing and websites. These interactive social elements are what fosters and helps the conversations on internet to grow; these social elements are now described in literature as social media (Sharma, 2002). From this, it is possible to conclude, that we should consider social media as something that represents what enhances the activities of digital technology as opposed to a replacement for digital media. Therefore, digital marketing is what facilitates the social interactions and communications amongst the customers and B2B firms and organisations in the B2B environment. Digital marketing should be known as the tool that allows companies to foster the interactions between B2C and B2B relationships through the network of digital marketing. Furthermore, this study aims towards understanding the role that social media plays in the B2B environment and the value of social media from a resellers perspective in the B2B environment.

## 2.2.2 Digital marketing in B2B marketing

Digital marketing has been given a significant amount of attention in literature today as more and more customers are embedding digital marketing into their everyday routines. Digital marketing has been defined in literature as a cost-effective marketing tool that links a customer to a seller, by using interactive technologies such as emails, websites, online forums, social media and news groups (Li et al., 2011). Along the lines of Liu et al., (2011) view a similar view was also presented by Jarivinen, Tollinen, Karjaluoto and Jayawardhena (2012) who state that the digital tools present in B2B companies in the B2B sector helps to not only create efficient communication but it also enables B2B companies to provide brand and product – related information. This therefore, helps to create brand awareness, by also improving the brand attitude current businesses in the B2B sector hold, while also creating positive purchase intentions.

Thus, it is possible to argue that digital channels have created platforms for B2B firms to interact and communicate with its customers to develop loyal relationships. Because of this reason, businesses in the B2B environment have started to use digital marketing to reach its customers in an easier way as they are aware of the benefits of digital marketing and have learnt to understand that customers are faced with these digital channels daily. The study by Jarivinen et al., (2012) contributes to the digital marketing literature by providing a comprehensive view of the usage, measurement and barriers that surround the B2B digital marketing era. The main idea that was gained from this study by Jarivinen et al. (2012) is that the importance of B2B digital marketing is to create brand awareness and enhance brand image.

Thus, to conclude firms in the B2B environment know how to make the most of the opportunities provided by the digital tools in the digital environment, this is because they tend to use the digital marketing tools of the Internet, social platforms or blogs to benefit their business in the B2B market. There are barriers present in B2B firms when firms try to comply or embed digital technology tools such as social media platforms, websites, blogs, television or the internet, companies in the B2B still try to use and embed digital tools as a

means for creating brand awareness and affecting their brand image in a positive manner. A possible implication found from the study of Jarivinen et al., (2012) is that B2B companies should update their capabilities and respect to digital marketing usage in order for them to adapt to the current practices that fit into the digital media landscape.

Academic research states that topics such as customer engagement have been highly researched in literature today (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). But there is a little amount of research that has been undergone around the usage of social media, which is very important to literature today, as the digital marketing tool of social media is one of the main influences of B2B purchase decisions (Barry & Girona, 2017). Because of the importance that should be placed on understanding the influence of the digital marketing tools of social media on B2B purchase decisions, Barry and Girona (2017) research was aimed to study and test a framework of thought leadership, that drives a marketers social capital and if the marketers adoption of digital content and social media in B2B environment has an influence on purchase decisions in the B2B environment. Following on, Barry and Girona (2017) work it is possible to argue that the findings from the study does suggest that a marketers adoption of digital content such as blogs, or the adoption of social media in a B2B setting can influence the purchase decisions of a B2B customer especially if the social capital is needed to drive the thought of leadership. Using the author's work it is possible to say that the study suggests that B2B marketers should use social media content and digital marketing in their B2B business as it does have an influence on the purchase decision when connecting with prospects for sales pitches with other B2B businesses in the market. However, it is important to note that marketers should focus on creating a trail of trustworthy content through their B2B business to other B2B businesses. This is because, by doing this the firms have the ability to earn their reputation for benevolence and problem solving.

A similar view was found to Barry and Girona (2017) work with Jarivinen et al., (2012) as the insight that was gained from the studies is that by B2B businesses continually engaging with other B2B buyers in the market they are generously sharing useful content with them and this helps the B2B business to

create a trustworthy bond with the B2B buyer or seller. For example, the trust bond that occurs can lead to a possible B2B partnership bond between the B2B business and the opposition who is the B2B buyer.

To conclude, marketers of the B2B firms would consider this as a relevant and useful content that has been put a lot of time into, to ensure their business has the ability to grow and helps to advocate their business to gain the B2B buyer or sellers attention. Moreover, further research should explore B2B products using this study. Furthermore, the insights gained in this study helps to understand the present research at hand of the role of social media in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer buyer perspective.

According to recent literature, the emergence of digital technologies has additionally created branding opportunities for B2B companies (Zahay, Schultz & Kumar, 2015). Information communicating technologies through a digital platform has helped B2B companies to enable them to create trust-based ties with its business partners through a digital platform in the B2B environment. Communication richness such as timely market information and trust-based ties are some factors that have a positive effect on building and maintaining long term business relationships (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). It is also possible to assume that increased productivity and B2B customer satisfaction is gained from using new information and communication technologies such as mobile technologies and emails as these two digital platforms, helps a business in the B2B market to create speed and efficiency in the buying process, communication and information gain process in the B2B environment (Bolat, Kooli & Wright, 2003).

In accordance to recent study by Strong and Bolat (2016) states that the importance of having digital marketing channels present in B2B organisations, as they believe it not only contributes towards helping and nurturing a customer to engage in the business, but it also provides a benefit for the business in the B2B environment itself. This is by creating brand awareness and having a positive effect on brand identity through the use of digital technologies such as emails, mobile phones and social media. Since the emergence of digital technologies such as social media, B2B businesses are facing challenges in

following trends and adopting to B2C practices such as embedding digital technologies to communicate with its customers (Strong & Bolat, 2016).

B2B businesses are finding it challenging to adopt digital marketing and follow in the B2C trends of marketing as it is all new for them as, B2B businesses have only just realised the importance that is placed on digital marketing. Strong and Bolat (2016) study aimed to explore branding in the B2B context using a case study and to further evaluate the value of B2B branding from a B2B customer perspective. Using Strong and Bolat (2016) work it is possible to say the results indicate that B2B branding is important in the B2B context in particular, when the organisation has a high reputation. For example, when an organisation has high reputation it tends to have a strong driving force of reputation that helps and enables the organisation to attract new B2B customers and helps to nurture long-term relationships with the existing B2B customers. Along the lines of Strong and Bolat (2016) it can be argued that importance of reputation in both B2B and B2C markets is highly important as customers usually tend to be attracted to businesses that have a higher reputation or is well known.

Moreover, it is possible to conclude that digital technologies in the B2B context helps to facilitate communication and helps to improve the operational process in the B2B context rather than building the B2B brand itself (Kaplan, 2012; Michaelidou et al., 2011). Furthermore, Strong and Bolat (2016) work contributes to this research as it helps to explore branding in the B2B context and helps to understand the importance placed on digital marketing in the B2B context. Future research that should be undertaken is, they should explore the use of social media by B2B organisations across several industries and to analyse the impact it has on their brand image.

### 2.3 Social media

The utilization and adoption of social media has been a popular research topic in current research study that researchers are still trying to examine. As social media has been known as a tool that opens up many new opportunities for the B2B sector, this is due to its features that have the ability to enhance

communication, interaction, learning and collaboration (Jahn & Nielsen, 2012). Social media is best defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. This allows the creation and exchange of user generated content to occur (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

However, on the other hand Web 2.0 is best defined as technologies that enable users to communicate, create content and share it with each other via communities, social networks and virtual worlds (Tredinnick, 2006).

Social media, is referred as the application that is fully based around user generated or created content that has a significant role in increasing the value of the application through a B2B service, while trying to create brand awareness for their company (Kangas, Toivonen & Back, 2007).

Recent literature, states B2B organisations use social media as a tool to help the B2B firm to enhance customer relationships, to create virtual communities through a digital platform, to enable positive brand awareness to occur in the B2B firm and to affect brand identity in a positive manner (Jussila, Kärkkäinen & Aramo-Immonen, 2014). In the B2B environment, social media has been known as a tool to drive customer engagement and to influence excellent customer service amongst B2B firms. For example, technology companies such Dell, Intel and other big B2B firms tend to use social media and Twitter for customer service purposes and to create brand awareness. They use YouTube as a platform to create and share webpage video integration and LinkedIn to connect with clients and develop professional networking ties (Lacoste, 2016).

Research suggests that B2B practitioners of these B2B firms use social media channels to target other professionals and companies in the B2B environment to engage, interact and to create positive business opportunities. B2B companies and B2C counterparts use this digital tool of social media to engage with the general public (Moore, Raymond & Hopkins, 2013). Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn provide avenues for brand insight, customer attitudes and customer satisfaction. Research advises, social media has resulted in reshaping the communication practices of how messages are

created, composed, disseminated and consumed. This is because, social media has created a more different and creative manner whereby information is created, crafted and viewed by B2B companies in a more creative and cost effective manner.

In summary, it is possible to say due to the drastic shift from face-to-face communication to a more online based communication has allowed communities to be built and created around the B2B brand in a effective manner by creating word of mouth in a more efficient manner.

### 2.3.1 Social Media definition

In marketing social media has been known as a marketing tool that B2B companies and B2C customers use to complement customer relationship management and to attract or target specific business customer segments in the B2B market (Baird & Parasnis, 2012). Social media is best defined in literature as a group of internet – based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. This allows the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media applications consist of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, blogging, Wikis and social blogs. However, from a marketing and sales perspective, social media is best described in sales research literature as the technological component of communication, transactional and relationship building functions of a business. This therefore, helps to leverage the network of customers and helps to promote value co creation. Research indicates, that with the help of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn businesses in the B2B environment find it easier to foster relationships with other businesses and business partners that they would find difficult to connect with when using the traditional way of making relationships such as, face-to-face customer relationships.

Furthermore, to conclude the utilisation of social media can help enrich buyer-seller relationships, a two way communication can be provided through the use of social media brand awareness, a two-way customer engagement and interaction with B2B partners can be created in an easier way. This is with the

help of digital tools of social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn (Quinton & Wilson, 2016).

### 2.3.2 Social media in the B2B environment

Social media is known as the way people interact with each other to create, share or exchange information and ideas through a virtual community. The tools of social media are very ubiquitous in consumer marketing, as there is very little evidence about the extent to which they have been adopted by B2B marketers. For example, several research studies argue how B2B firms should use platforms of social media such as Facebook and YouTube. This is because of the paradigm shift in marketing from the traditional way of marketing of face-to-face customer interaction to a more technological savvy way of online marketing. Brennan and Croft (2012) claim marketers of not only B2C customer goods but also B2B customer goods and services have had no option but to develop social media marketing strategies. This is because, they know that a large amount of the target audience the business sells its products to tends to spend most of their leisure time online, interacting with friends, family and businesses through social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. An example of this is, B2B companies such as Coca Cola, highlights that having the presence of the Facebook URL and is as important for their business as they have finally learnt to understand that this is the best place where their target market would get attracted to their business. The company previously highlighted the importance of corporate webpages for conventional advertising purposes. But in recent years this has changed, as more companies are finally realising the beneficial use of social media in the B2B environment and its positive effect that it has on creating customer loyalty and profitability for the company itself.

Brennan and Croft (2012) focused on understanding how B2B companies have engaged with social media. The study used exploratory research of content analysis to look at current B2B marketing practitioner literature on the subject and examined ten large companies that are extensive users of social media. Using Brennan and Croft's (2012) work it is possible to argue that the primary social media tools that are considered to be useful and are being utilised by

B2B firms in the highly engaged B2B marketing environment are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and blogging as these tools are excellent for creating content marketing, undertaking market research and for connecting with other business networks. The researcher argues using Brennan and Croft (2012) work as the authors findings suggest social media mainstreams such as Facebook and YouTube are not used by all large B2B companies, as most B2B companies have only just realised the importance of social media sites as explained in several marketing literature.

In summary, B2B social media pioneers are striving to use these tools of social media; Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube to position themselves as though they are leaders that want to build relationships with a range of stakeholders in the B2B market. This is for them to achieve business opportunities with other B2B partners with the help of the tools of social media, LinkedIn, blogging and YouTube.

Furthermore, the study used exploratory research of content analysis to look at current B2B marketing practitioner literature on the subject and examined ten large companies who are extensive users of social media. A future research that should be undertaken in relation to the study of Brennan and Croft (2012) is research should examine social media in the B2B context of the overall adoption of these channels in the different global markets. The weakness the researcher found from this study was the study was very limited as it only focused on the US market. Brennan and Croft (2012) study is relevant in contributing to the research that is present at hand as it helps to gain an understanding of the primary tools that are useful in B2B marketing in the B2B environment such as social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube , Twitter and blogging. This information is relevant to this research at hand as it helps the researcher to gain an understanding around what current literature has to say about the important tools that are currently being used by B2B companies and the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and why B2B companies use social media, LinkedIn, blogging and Twitter and how this benefits the overall B2B company.

Katona and Sarvary (2014) claim that social media is a different way of advertising that is cost effective, high in quality, fast in frequency and has a wide reach in gaining the attention of all customers throughout a virtual community (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). Using Katona and Sarvary (2014) work it is possible to assume that more B2B firms are using social media because of the ability it has to reach and gain a customer's attention. Therefore, it can be argued why it is increasingly important to examine social media in this new technological savvy environment, as businesses in the B2B environment can use this cost-effective digital tool as a way of building their brand name or product.

Piercy (2010) claim that companies' priorities of how they connect and interact with B2B customers are rapidly changing, this is due to the radical shift in the traditional role of how businesses create sales. For example, it from Piercy (2010) work it is possible to argue that because of the growing trends on outsourcing, a company's recognition is changing from a sales management strategy, to a shift in focus to a focus on a company's overall competitiveness and how they can create and manage excellent customer service with B2B customers (Piercy, 2010). Following on, due to the shift in focus from a traditional marketing perspective of face-to-face customer interaction to a more technological faced marketing perspective has challenged firms in the B2B environment, as the users in this external environment demand more technological faced advertising (Piercy, 2010). Therefore, this indicates that firms in the B2B environment are being forced and are being challenged to keep up with the competitiveness of the ever-changing marketing environment that is growing to be more technological savvy.

In contrast, Ashley and Tuten, (2015); Canhoto and Clark, (2013) claim many users who are customers of B2B firms expect the firms to participate and interact with them through digital channels of social media. These users tend to purposely pull firms into social media by mentioning the brand on social media sites or simply 'hash tagging' the firm. Moreover, the users of social media tend to pull firms in the B2B environment into social media because they want the firms to interact and engage with them as they are faced with social media in their everyday routines. Moreover, customers of B2B firms find it easier to

interact with the firms and gain knowledge about the firms promotions and discounts that present through a virtual format they use on a daily basis (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Canhoto & Clark, 2013).

The growth and shift in marketing from the traditional way of marketing of face-to-face customer interaction to a technological savvy way of online marketing has created competitive advantages for B2B firms in the B2B environment. The digital tool of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter are being widely used by B2C organisations and now B2B organisations are using this tool to create virtual communities in order for them to convey their marketing efforts such as promotional activities to their customers and to ensure engagement with B2B customers can occur about the products and services of the firm (Cova & Pace, 2006).

To conclude, social media marketing is being used by firms in the B2B market as it helps to create brand awareness, helps to monitor and analyse conversations that are made on social media, which can in turn help a B2B company to implement business opportunities and new business ideas amongst their B2B brand. B2B firms utilise these digital communities on social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to be able to monitor these sites by analysing the conversations businesses are saying or commenting about. This is important as through the analysis of these conversations and potential comments made on social media can help a B2B firm to create potential B2B partners and can help by modifying or improving their product ideas that can further benefit the B2B business in the future (Schweidel & Moe, 2014). To conclude, social communities such as Facebook communities are important for B2B feedback and for a B2B firm to achieve and to improve, that can further benefit the B2B company in the long run.

Companies use social media sites as a two-way interaction between B2B companies as it enables marketers to deepen their relationships with other businesses (Jussila, Karkkainen & Leino, 2012). This study demonstrates that when a two-way online interaction is present through social media, it enables businesses to create the perception of the company to be closer to its target group; this, therefore, results in creating greater trust and loyalty between the

B2B business partners (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Using Mangold and Faulds, (2009) work it can be argued that greater trust and loyalty occurs when a two way online interaction is present on social media. This is because companies tend to feel closer to their target group as it creates a higher amount of engagement. Moreover, when B2B firms interact and communicate with customers and other business in the B2B market through digital channels in the B2B environment businesses feel as if the B2B firm is going the long mile to fulfil and interact with them. This therefore creates a stronger bond with the B2B partners (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In contrast, a theory that best explains this relationship and bond when a two-way interaction is present on social media is through the theory of relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing is best defined by Palmatier et al., (2006) as all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges. From Palmatier et al., (2006) it can be concluded that relationship marketing has the ability to generate stronger customer relationships that can further enhance a seller to customer relationship when it is present in a B2B firm. It is possible to suggest that digital tool of social media is used in businesses in the B2B environment, as social media is a mediator of relationship marketing. Relationship marketing is important for B2B marketing, as the importance of relationship marketing is to create a positive relationship with a customer to firm to build a long-term relationship with them. The theory of relationship marketing is important to B2B as by having a long term customer relationship present with a buyer or seller, can further enhance the company's growth and loyalty when the relationship is created for long term. As a result, businesses in the B2B environment tend to use and embed this digital tool of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn into their marketing strategy as it helps the business to create a two-way interaction and communication between their B2B firms. This further helps the business to create relationship quality and builds trust, commitment between a seller to buyer relationship via a social interface of social media.

To conclude, it is valuable to have social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube in place as social media is known

as a mediator for building relationships. Therefore, relationship marketing is important to B2B environment as it helps a firm to build trust and shows commitment to the B2B firm when the needs and wants of the B2B reseller firm are fulfilled.

Also, some theorists such as Wu, Chen and Chen (2015) demonstrate that relationship marketing is known as the trust – commitment theory. This is because; in order for firms to create and maintain long-term business relationships they must possess elements of trust and commitment. Similarly, Wu et al., (2015) point is similar to Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Chiou, Sung and Wu (2009), point as all claim trust and commitment is the two important elements of relationship marketing that help a business to promote communication, share information, strengthen the quality of the relationship. Using Wu et al., point and Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Chiou et al., (2009) point it is possible to argue B2B firms should maintain excellent relationships that embed trust and commitment in the relationship they have with a buyer to seller as it can create a competitive advantage for the B2B firm. However, an important risk that the researcher believes that would be taken by B2B firms if they use relationship marketing, commitment and trust can exist between the firms but continued transactions can be ceased at any time, this is due to other competitors who are able to attract the B2B partners to engage and develop in new partnerships with them.

Social media has been placed high importance in the B2B market as it is known as a key component in developing B2B relationships and attracting new buyers. Most B2B firms present in society tend to heavily rely on the digital tool of social media as it is a tool that helps conversational communication to occur in an easier manner and it helps businesses to attract different B2B buyers, suppliers and retailers to their business. From this it is apparent that the use of social media has been utilised by businesses in the B2B context as a tool to create conversations and has been known as a tool to create a two-way bilateral engagement between businesses who have the potential to become business partners, with its buyers, suppliers and competitors in future.

According to Sood and Pattinson (2012), social media provides a range of methods for businesses to use to further deepen their business relationships; this is undergone through business interactions between a firm and its B2B customers such as the retailers. Many B2B organisations use social media as a source of managing the current B2B relationships that are present (Sood & Pattinson, 2012).

Furthermore, social media is used between firms to develop new and existing relationships and it is vital for B2B businesses to incorporate social media as a bridge into their B2B business. This is important, as this will allow other B2B firms, suppliers or buyers to interact and to communicate with them in a more efficient manner.

In relation to the argument made by Sood and Pattinson, (2012) a similar view was also found by the researcher that, social media has been seen and is now identified as a platform that allows firms to search for new business opportunities, business partners, or to establish new relationships and is also viewed as a tool for maintaining and building strong relationships through easy communication. However, social media is also known as a tool that is used to establish, maintain and create new relationships, it has an important role in the B2B customer management sector in the B2B environment as it helps to enhance communication, makes information sharing between salespeople, customers, buyers and sellers more easier.

Over the years, the process of dyadic and network actor management has been shown by B2B businesses. For example, the view that Holmen and Pederson (2003) hold towards social media is that it helps a firm to engage with new network actors that are known as new business partners for whom they can implement and manage the business relationships with. This can further benefit the company in an easier manner using social media. From this, it is possible to suggest that social media has the ability to help enable firms to connect with its customers in an easier and a creative manner through this digital tool (Holmen & Pederson, 2003).

Social media has grown significantly among consumers in recent years as explained by several literature. The growth and utilisation of social media has motivated researchers to understand the importance of social media and the influence of it on a consumers purchase decision and how it affects a consumer in spreading positive or negative word of mouth (Guesalaga, 2016).

In literature today social media refers to as platforms through which people communicate, such as discussion forums, blogs, wikis, social networks and multimedia sites such sites such as Facebook. Myspace, YouTube and Twitter. These platforms are most influential in making an individual or a consumer to show signs of commitment and high level of competence over an organisation when a consumer is involved through communication by these platforms. Guesalaga (2016) argues that social media platforms can benefit personal selling and sales management in the B2B context through an organisations competence and commitment that they show through social media. This is because these two are key determinants of social media usage in sales in gaining profitability and gaining a long-term customer Moreover, social media is transforming the way sellers and buyers interact. Salespeople are using social media more in society today to demonstrate connectivity to customers and to their organisation. Moreover , as explained social media is known to make the make the buyer-seller interactions more efficient through the use of digital platforms , although their benefits to B2B organisations using social media as a form of communication tool . This platform does have a negative impact on a company as it does reduce the quality of relationship as face-to-face interactions are not present through using the tool of social media (Guesalaga, 2016).

Research indicates marketers of B2B companies are becoming aware of the benefits of social media and how to utilise social media. Recent study explains that social media usage has a significant effect on relationships in businesses. This is because, colleagues at work tend to also support social media and the importance of social media characteristics . As a result most B2B companies have started to investigate and understand ways they can utilise social media into their marketing efforts . This is to further create stronger relationships with B2B firms but also with their own colleagues. Keinanen and Kuivalainen (2015)

understanding of social media is that the usage of social media has increased remarkably over the past years as social media services are very seldom used for business purposes among managers. Keinanen and Kuivalainen (2015) view is that social media is not utilised by most businesses as social media does not reach industrial customers and the management team of most businesses tend to interpret social media as they tend to view this tool as an irrelevant tool that does not provide benefits to their B2B firm. Furthermore from Keinanen and Kuivalainen (2015) work it is possible to suggest B2B firms should engage and use social media platforms as it can provide benefits to their business . For example , B2B firms need to give their customers a reason to engage with them through social media. This is by first being able to listen to the customers and to find out what the customers would like to hear and what they would like to talk about . By engaging and understanding the needs of their customers , B2B firms are more likely to create successful relationships with them through digital platform of social media through activities and posts on Facebook and other social media platforms (Keinanen & Kuivalainen 2015). This is because , these activities can help businesses to create long term customer relationships with the B2B firms.

B2B digital marketing is a technique that is effected through web page, social media and value-added content, which is perceived as a useful tool for achieving maintaining and sustaining brands. Holliman and Rowley (2014) explain the cycle and process of creating social media and value added content . It is possible to suggest that the first step in creating valuable content for B2B businesses requires the brand or business to take a “publishing” approach. This approach involves developing an understanding of the B2B businesses information needs, and their purchase cycle. Valuable content is described as useful, relevant and timely content. Content marketing requires a cultural change from “selling” to “helping”, which in turn requires different marketing objectives, tactics, metrics and skills to those associated with more traditional marketing approaches (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Using Holliman and Rowley (2014) work explaining the process of creating social media content , it is possible to assume that B2B firms need to embed these inbound marketing techniques such as using the web as a pull marketing strategy to help the B2B company

to pull customers to their brands websites through the search engine and social media. These digital marketing techniques is important for B2B firms as embedding these pull marketing tactics can help B2B companies to seek and capture interest of customers who are already trying to seek advice about a service or product . Moreover, valuable content, content marketing and pull marketing are all important components that B2B companies should have embedded in their marketing and sales strategies as these valuable marketing tactics of creating user generated social media content can help B2B firms to attract customers. Moreover, it is possible to argue that by using these in bound marketing tactics it helps B2B firms to actively encourage brands to take customer centric prospects that can later help brands of B2B companies to create high levels of trust with its customers in more efficient manner (Holliman & Rowley , 2014).

There is an extant amount of research in the area of industrial marketing that explains that digital channels of social media enable business relationships and partners to create and share valuable information knowledge with others through the tip of their fingers. Most B2B businesses use social media as it has been known as a facilitator for solidifying relationships and creating the basis of trust, it has been known as a tool for creating opportunities and customer value (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu & Krush 2016). Moving on, social media interaction on Facebook is utilised by businesses to gather information that can help to build and maintain the relationships for their business, which can further develop trust for the people in the network amongst their business. Ultimately however, social media can provide alternative communication channels between buyers, resellers, as it can create concise, clear and focused information through the virtual interface platform of social media.

To conclude, social media is viewed by most B2B businesses as a tool for maintaining and building strong customer relationships with its resellers, buyers and suppliers through a digital platform. It is known as a cost effective tool that creates a two-way communication through this effective digital tool.

## 2.4 Social media and service behaviour

Social media has a positive effect on the behaviour of a salesperson when creating value to a customer. For example, in recent studies it appears that a salesperson can create value using social media. This has been of high importance in the B2B environment. As literature states that a salesperson tends to play a greater role in sustaining and maintaining customer relationships as opposed to the actual firms. This means that the salesperson is the relational asset for the firm, as they help the firm to build an understanding and explain the offerings that the firm can offer to the buyer such as the resellers in the B2B firm. According to Ahearne, Jelinek, and Jones (2007) suggests that a salesperson needs to perform service behaviours such as information, communication, customer service and trust building even after they have made a sale. This is because, a salespersons service behaviour has an influence on value creation as a sales service behaviour reflects on how a firm is , what they are willing to do for the buyer and the mile they can go to create excellent customer value creation . As a result, it is possible to assume that service behaviours does have an influence on value creation that a salesperson creates for a customer.

In contrast to Ahearne, et al. (2007), Levin, Hansen and Laverie (2012) focuses on understanding a sales employee's participation in blogging, through motivation to use sales- and marketing-related technology. Levin et al., (2012) suggests that sales managers of B2B companies need to be careful when expecting employees to understand the value of using social media and need to be careful when asking employees to participate in social media .In relation to Levin et al., (2012) view it is possible to suggest that most employees of companies view the motivation and use of social media when working in a company as the companies trying to invade their personal life and their relationship they have with the company. As a result , sales managers should be careful in understanding that just because individuals see the value in using social media for their personal lives does not mean the same holds true for their professional lives (Levin et al., 2012).

Sales research explains that a salesperson can enhance the buyer to seller relationship when the seller has information in regards to the product use and is utilising social media as a source of content enabler. This therefore, can further enhance the relationship between a buyer to seller in a positive way as social media is being used as a content enabler to enhance this relationship. A social content enabler helps a salesperson to draw on the important social knowledge about product use and customers. This therefore, helps to increase and provide reliable and accurate information to its customers through a timely fashion manner. Social media platforms can help to enhance reliability through service fulfilment and personalised attention. In addition, it is possible to assume that a social network enabler can also help a salesperson to mobilize networks of suppliers and partners to provide timely customer support. An example of this is, when a salesperson uses social media tools to maintain these relationships with chat sessions on Facebook, to provide customers such as resellers with additional value through a virtual platform (Ahearne et al., 2007).

A salesperson uses social media as a network enabler whereby they are able to explore and exploit informal and direct links with customers who are outside or are within the organisation, this is to further enhance a salespersons perceived value. For example, a salesperson may use a network enabler such as social media to pursue information sharing amongst its customers. This therefore, helps to push information through network of customer connection to create perceived value for the salesperson through social media (Agnihotri et al., 2016).

The implementation of social media technology in a B2B firm's marketing strategy has been adopted in most B2B firms due to forward thinking that is present in sales forces. Social media has been known for sharing content and building a network of contacts. The findings from a study conducted by Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan (2012) explain that social media has a positive relationship with sales processes as it helps to create opportunities and helps to manage relationships. Rodriguez et al., (2012) argues that social media usage has a positive relationship with the ability that an organisation has to sell and both create opportunity and manage relationships. Research literature indicates that social media usage has a positive relationship with

relationship sales performance as results from past research study explains that in challenging business environments, organisations need to leverage their current sales technology and they should include social media in order for the organisation to gain B2B customers . This is to ensure they can build deeper relationships which can further help to strengthen their social capital. Moreover , in this technological savvy environment businesses need to think differently when wanting to communicate with its customers as suggested by Lager (2009) that creating a two way conversation can help organisation to create and coordinate webinars between firms and prospects in order to share ideas and to create a valuable conversation between the firm and its customer .

Given the importance and newness of social media, the ongoing challenges and growing importance of customer-oriented selling, research tends to demonstrate that opportunities exist for integrating multiple selling approaches, both new and old. This therefore suggests that managers need to be open to the inclusion of social media with existing strategic methods. Therefore, while some industrial professionals are only beginning to adopt social media, these new social technologies should be embraced as they are included as part of sales strategies (Schultz, Schwepker & Good, 2012). Moreover, it is possible to also mention that by including these social media technologies into sales strategies sales managers are more likely to create stronger and long term relationships with B2B firms and its customers. Schultz et al., (2012) view on social media usage and sales performance indicates that social media usage and sales performance are linked, this suggests that strategic application can evolve into strategic components for many sales organisations. As a result, it is possible to suggest that strategic plans such as recruiting, sales tactics and measurement will increase social media as a strategic component of a sales organisation.

To conclude, social media networking sites such as Facebook helps a salesperson to create excellent value creation and customer relationships as social media helps a salesperson to know the trends their customers are following, the trend that is currently in fashion in the market and helps to understand, maintain and create a bond with the customer in order to create a

personal touch to its business relationship. This can therefore create profitability for the firm.

## 2.5. Social media – Trust and Commitment

Commitment is more important than trust, when a business wants to increase the willingness of a B2B customer to ensure that they can participate in the businesses asset investments. This is because the business is likely to attain loyalty amongst the B2B customer when commitment is portrayed through the B2B customer's behaviour. This is relevant to the research at present today as most firms in society use the tools of social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and emails to communicate and interact with its B2B customers to create a committed relationship. The tools of social media and the web itself such as the use of internet browsing, interaction and monitoring of emails all helps and mediates in creating a committed relationship with a B2B firm and its B2B partner such as the resellers. A study by Wu et al., (2015) was aimed to explore the relationship between inter firm trust, commitment and loyalty. The study undertook surveys as the method of gaining data amongst the B2B firms customers. The results from the study indicated that commitment is more important than trust in a B2B relationship when a business wants a B2B partner to participate in the investment of the B2B firm. By using the analysis from Wu et al., (2015), the researcher concludes that commitment is more important than trust when wanting to gain or attain a B2B customer. An example of this is, when a B2B businesses gains loyalty or trust amongst a B2B customer this is only when they show a B2B customer such as a reseller, that they care about the needs and wants a reseller wants fulfilled. Once the needs and wants of the reseller are fulfilled they are likely to show high commitment which can than create trust.

Moreover, several literatures in marketing place high importance on the theory of trust and commitment, as those two elements are important when a business in the B2B environment wants to create profitability and a competitive advantage amongst other firms. Contrary to Wu et al., (2015) a possible limitation that was found from the study is that it only adopted to the theory of relationship marketing which limited the study. Another limitation

found is that recognition of trust and relationships will differ amongst different cultures and enterprises, therefore the generalizability of the conclusion of the study must further be explored. The research suggests that future study should be undertaken to understand what other possible factors has an influence on B2B firms in the B2B environment other than trust and commitment.

Furthermore, in using Wu et al., (2015), work it is possible to say the theorists work was beneficial as it helped to understand how B2B firms should use the theory of relationship marketing in their business to create better relationships with their business partners. Also, this contributes to the research at present as the theory of relationship marketing adds value to this research as it adds theoretical knowledge and basis to the research at present. Furthermore, this theory helps to understand how B2B firms can embed this strategy to create superior loyalty amongst their B2B firms and how it can have a positive effect on the buyer to seller relationship.

B2B firms tend to employ social media as a branding strategy as by implementing and using social media as a business strategy it has a positive impact on a business's innovation and product management, as it creates a competitive advantage for the business (Kaplan, 2012, Michaelidou et al., 2011). In relation to marketing research, it is possible to conclude B2B firms are slowly implementing social media as a branding strategy into their B2B firms as a marketing objective, as B2B firms are now familiar with the positive effect that social media tools such as Facebook has on their B2B firm in creating profitability for the B2B firm. B2B firms have started to embed the tools of social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, Instagram and YouTube into their B2B business, as they know through creative branding, advertising and monitoring system through these digital tools the business has a high advantage of creating loyal, profitable customers with the help of these valuable digital tools.

Moreover, the digital world has made it significantly easier for B2B firms to create a stronger relationship with its B2B firms such as resellers in the market as they are now finding it much easier to communicate, interact, place

orders, create product innovation, monitor for improvement through Facebook groups and learn to attract more business partners through LinkedIn (Michaelidou et al., 2011).

### 2.5.1 Social media – creating customer value

Social media has harnessed in most businesses in society, as more companies are embedding this tool into their marketing, as a way of creating customer value. Katona and Sarvary (2014) claim that in recent years B2B online communities have begun to grow and B2B markets have started to use social media as a means of creating value and sharing experiences with each other. A recent CMO survey showed, B2B social media spending had increased to 9.6 % in 2012 and users of the internet spent more time on social media than any other site (Katona & Sarvary, 2014).

However, Lacka and Chong (2016) argue that the adoption of social media sites in business organisations in the B2B environment is perceived as an irrelevant digital tool used by businesses. This is because; marketers in the B2B environment have a poor understanding and perception of the usability of these online sites (Lacka & Chong, 2016). It is possible to disagree with the point being made by Lacka and Chong (2016) as the adoption of the digital tools such as social media sites is viewed as a relevant tool in businesses in the B2B environment as several literatures previously explains that digital tools used by businesses in the B2B environment are useful as it helps B2B firms to interact, advertise, communicate, monitor and analyse the B2B partners or resellers views and perceptions they have about the businesses itself and the businesses brand or products . Therefore, it is possible to disagree with the argument made by Lacka and Chong (2016), as digital tools of social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are all beneficial tools that is used by firms in the B2B environment to help the B2B partners or B2B customers to engage and interact with the business in a more easier manner.

Moving on, Lacka and Chong (2016) views social media sites is perceived as a useless tool for B2B firms is because of the common barriers that are deterring the adoption of social media sites in B2B environments. Some

examples of these common barriers are having a poor understanding of how to use these online sites and failing to have the ability to recognise the benefits that can occur from using these online sites. Therefore, from these common barriers being present, it is possible to assume that this is the reason why theorists such as Lacka and Chong (2016) believe that social media tools is irrelevant to the B2B environment. This is due to the common barriers that are influencing the perception that the theorists currently hold towards social media.

Moving on, literature today also reveals the advantages that businesses in the B2B markets can gain from implementing and using social media. The advantages of utilising social media is businesses can gain valuable feedback about the improvements that the business can make and helps their business to attract new business partners (Michaelidou et al., 2011). This therefore, enhances the buyer - seller relationship quality. Relationship quality has been studied frequently in buyer – seller literature by few practitioners and scholars who share a common definition and measure (Hennig - Thureau, 2002).

Academic research defines relationship quality as the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfil the needs of the customer associated with the relationship. Therefore, relationship quality is the nature of a relationship that in turn provides benefit to the customer (Hennig - Thureau, 2002). This is an important theory that is relevant to the research at present as without relationship quality being present in B2B firms, it would be impossible for a B2B firm to fulfil the needs and wants of their B2B partner to create loyalty and trust.

According to Hennig - Thureau (2002) explains that relationship quality theory holds three dimensions of quality that are satisfaction, trust and commitment. The researcher has gained an insight from several literatures that a positive effect on relationship quality occurs in B2B organisations when the use and adoption of social media is in place and is embedded. This is because, by using social media tools such as Facebook for interaction, communication, advertising and B2B customer engagement purposes, a B2B firm is more likely to create satisfaction, show commitment to a reseller or a business partner of the B2B firm. Therefore, it is important to embed social media tools and the webpage of

emails to enhance and create a positive relationship through interaction and communication with its B2B customers. The digital platforms of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn all help a business to create loyalty and show a customer that B2B firm is committed to them in creating them with value through value co creation through communication and engagement through the use of social media (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

To conclude, the argument by Hennig – Thureau (2002) adds value to the research at present as it explains the growing interest that is placed on social media in both B2B markets and B2C markets. Moreover, it helps to understand how the theory of relationship quality is important for the research at present as it suggests how important it is for businesses in the B2B environment to adopt social media as it creates high brand attitude and purchase intention than any other source of media (Siamagka et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is apparent that social media is valuable in B2B markets and B2C settings.

## 2.6 Conclusion:

Moreover, this section of the research shows a comprehensive review in literature around digital marketing in the B2B environment, social media literature, and how it creates customer value. The current literature explains that the importance being placed on social media marketing being embedded in the B2B environment has become highly important as businesses in the B2B markets have grown to understand that employees of companies, customers, industry experts and general customers are using social media platforms for both consumption of information, news and for interaction purposes. Due to this reason, businesses in the B2B market believe that it is necessary to embed and incorporate social media into their marketing strategies as it is an easier way of interaction between businesses and all users are fond of social media.

Upon examining a significant amount of literature, it is important to gain knowledge into this gap in B2B social media as knowing the importance of B2B businesses embedding the tool of social media into their marketing strategy and how these marketing efforts are perceived by the B2B resellers in Auckland,

who are customers of the B2B firm can further create profitability for B2B businesses and marketers in the near future.

The proposed research question is to investigate the role that social media plays in a B2B firm in Auckland, New Zealand and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective in the B2B marketing environment. Previous literature has undergone research on the value of branding from a retailer perspective but fails to explore the value and role of social media in a national context. This research will use the theories of relationship marketing, value co creation and relationship quality to undertake the research and to better answer the research objectives for the research at present.

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## Chapter Three: Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an extensive detail view of the relevant literature that was developed to support this study at present. Past literature reveals the limitations and gaps that are still present to show that research should be in a different context. This study proposes that the role that social media plays in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective is to be explored in the context of Auckland, New Zealand.

This chapter of the research study at present will explain the research decisions and methodological frameworks that are to be used by the researcher for this study. The purpose of the study will be outlined, than the researchers paradigm that is to be used will be illustrated using methodology. Further the chapter will reveal data collection and data analysis methods and procedures that are to be used for this research at present.

### 3.2 Research Purpose

This research study aims to investigate the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The study proposes four research questions:

RQ1: What are the effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing?

RQ2: How do resellers of B2B firm perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology?

RQ3: Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment?

### 3.3 Research Approach

In order to answer the proposed research questions and the research aim, the researcher has carefully outlined four key research questions and proposed the research purpose at hand. There were five key elements that helped the researcher to undertake this research; epistemology, theoretical background, methodology, sampling and method. Theoretical background is best used in this research to clearly understand the philosophical background of the research; this is to better answer the proposed research at present.

Epistemology is used in this study to understand the philosophical grounding that will help the researcher to gain an understanding of what kind of knowledge is available. Methodology is used in this research to understand the design, the techniques and methods that will be used to shape the study at present. Purposive sampling is to be used by the researcher; this is because the researcher is deliberately selecting a group of participants based on a similar and particular characteristic among them. The researcher used this sampling method, as it was most appropriate for the phenomena interest of this research. Lastly method, the researcher chose to use method to provide a rationale for method decisions as the methodology of phenomenon of qualitative research was used to undertake the research. The data collection method that was used for this research study was semi structured face to face interviews.

#### 3.3.1 Epistemology

It is very important to know the philosophical grounding that can help the researcher to decide, what knowledge is available and how the theory of knowledge can help to divide both belief and opinion about a certain knowledge that the researcher will gain.

Epistemology provides researchers with a philosophical grounding that helps to decide what kind of knowledge are available in relation to its genuineness.

This is best defined as the theory of knowledge in regards to the methods, validity and scope in research and also to be able to distinct both belief and opinion. In this study, the researcher has decided to use the constructivism as their epistemology for this research. Constructivism is a paradigm in qualitative research whereby knowledge is not regarded as an insight into reality, but instead it is constructed on the basis of human practices. For example, constructivism is the knowledge and interactions that are created by people through the social surroundings (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism is a paradigm that suggests that the people are constructing or creating their own beliefs and experiences in regards to the influence of the objects and interactions in the social context.

Furthermore, the researcher has used constructivism as a paradigm to focus and interpret the participant's experiences and the beliefs they hold towards a particular object in a social context (Creswell, 2018). Research suggests, a participants experiences and beliefs they construct are a unique piece of lenses for interpreting towards an object, on the views, experiences and opinions a participant has viewed in a extensive manner. In addition, not only do the experiences and beliefs constructs help the participants to construct these lenses for interpretation, but it also helps the researcher, as the researchers own unique experiences and beliefs have an influence on the understandings of the constructs.

This study aims to understand and explore the role social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. Moreover, the beliefs and meanings a participant holds reflects on the participant's constructivism paradigm as the beliefs and experiences that are constructed are affected by the individual's behaviours and interactions through the social context.

### 3.3.2 Theoretical background

The theoretical background or view is an underlying philosophy behind the methodology. For example, this theoretical view explains the researchers assumptions that are embedded in the researchers decisions. The researcher is

in a relationship with the respondents or participants in this study. As based on the epistemology of the researcher, the interpretivism view is adopted. Moreover, this study is exploratory in nature of knowledge as the experiences, opinions and knowledge the participants have in regards to social media used by the B2B firm are very limited. The interpretivism paradigm is considered to be the best paradigm used for this research, as the focus of inquiry and the meanings behind the values and experiences a participant holds are best interpreted through this paradigm. The researcher cannot make or rely on the assumptions of the behaviour that the participants show as a result, the researcher has to enter the participants frame of understanding and meaning of behaviour that they present the researcher with. This is to better understand the behaviour in a social context.

The interpretivist paradigm is used in the research and is best defined as an approach to better understand human inquiry in the context of phenomenology. This paradigm of interpretivism helps to investigate this research question, as the researcher is in a relationship with the respondents by interacting with them to understand their experiences through semi structured face-to-face interviews (Grant & Giddings, 2002). This paradigm enables a researcher to gain knowledge and understanding by focusing on the individuals in this case, the participant's explanations of their experiences and views they have towards the role that social media plays in the B2B firm.

In summary, the theoretical view helps to provide a more descriptive and meaning full research to this study to better understand the role of social media in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective.

### 3.3.3 Methodology

Methodology is best defined as the study of knowledge whereby research is carried out in a systematic way through theoretical analysis of methods. The methodology of qualitative research is to be utilised for the present study at hand. Qualitative research aims to study the phenomenon in a social context by

perceiving and understanding it through the individuals who are present in that context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In qualitative research, the researcher is aware of the socially constructed nature of reality and the researcher is in the context of the study, they are involved in the research setting, the participants and the data being collected (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Whereas, the quantitative method is the method of experimental studies or designs. Quantitative method is best undertaken to examine the relationships between and among the variables, attitudes and opinions of a population (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Academic literature, explains that questions such as how and what questions can be best-responded using qualitative research. Therefore, this is why the researcher has chosen to undergo and use the method of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative method.

Quantitative research method is insufficient in collecting and offering a deep insight and perspective into the human experiences and the choices and decisions that are made by human interaction. However, when a researcher uses qualitative research, the researcher gains an advantage of being flexible, as they are able to select from various research techniques based on the research question. If a research follows quantitative research methods they are limited and are not as able to put their insight into the research as opposed to qualitative research. Because of this reason, the researcher has chosen to use qualitative research methods. This is due to the researcher being in a social context whereby the researcher will be interacting and engaging with the respondents to gain information and data. In order to accomplish this, data collection methods will allow the researcher to get close to the investigated phenomenon and to enter the social context of interest.

Following on, this study will examine the four different reseller firms that currently exist for the B2B firm through a qualitative research approach. The interpretivist paradigm will be present in this study as, the researcher is in a relationship with the respondents in this study, by interacting with them to understand and examine their relationship with the B2B organisation through semi structured face-to-face interviews (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

### 3.3.4 Methods

Methods are best defined by Crotty (1998) as the techniques and procedures for collecting and analysing data. The researcher chose to use method to provide a rationale for method decisions as the methodology of phenomenon of qualitative research was used. Therefore, the data collection method of semi structured face-to-face interviews is to be used for this research. This method is suitable as it helps the researcher to understand and explore the role of social media in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective in the B2B environment.

In depth interviews such as; semi structured interviews are known to be a far superior method that are used in research studies today as they help to narrow the focus to the meaning of the actual phenomena being found. There are several ways of analysing the semi structured interviews that constructs the data such as analytical, thematically, existentially, novel approach or even through a narrative approach. In this research, the method of analysis chosen by the researcher was through a thematic analysis approach by using the software called Nvivo.

Thematic analysis is an analysis that is used to analyse data into themes, these themes detail a fundamental aspect or are different in nature that explain a different experience. As a result, this research focuses to understand the role of social media and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. This method of thematic analysis is a suitable approach for this research, as it allows the researcher to test theories, identify trends and helps to cross-examine information. Further, the analysis process of NVivo requires multiple readings of a selection of the interview data to discern themes so the whole dataset can be coded using these themes. At this stage of the analysis, the researcher is also searching for categories and sub-categories that illustrate regularities, relationships and patterns within the data that relate to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Furthermore, the aim of answering the research question at present and the proposed research purpose, the data collection methods and analysis process are described in a much more detailed manner in the following sections below.

### 3.4 Data collection

This section of the research outlines the techniques and procedure that are to be undertaken are primary data collection of semi structured face-to-face interviews.

#### 3.4.1 Sampling method

Due to the study being qualitative in nature, the emphasis on a smaller sample size gives the researcher the benefit to gain rich information and insight into the research topic (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Purposive sampling will be conducted by the researcher to deliberately select a group of participants based on a similar and particular characteristic among them.

The researcher used this sampling method, as it was most appropriate for the phenomena interest of this research. There are several methods for sampling, but the research at present utilised sampling around purposive sampling and homogeneous sampling. Homogeneous sampling approach is focused mainly on the point that participants that share similar or specific characteristics can help to better understand and explore, the research problem at hand in a more precise manner.

#### 3.4.2 Participant Selection

Following on from the above section of sampling, the criteria the researcher followed for selecting participants for this research is using the criteria of phenomenological research. This was due to the study being phenomenological in nature, therefore the participants that were chosen for this research were, resellers who understood the phenomena being solved, Since the proposed meaning and problem of research was to understand the role that social media plays in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a

reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The participants that were selected on the basis of, businesses these are all distinct in terms of their businesses, size, age, and the number of employees. Data collection was to commence through the method of qualitative research. This is because, the questions that were asked in the interview were open-ended questions, this was to avoid the data being collected to be focused and to avoid assumptions before data collection (Yates & Leggett, 2016).

Resellers are best defined as an individual or a company that purchases goods from another business or firm with the intention of selling them rather than consuming them. In this research context, the resellers are the four-reseller businesses from the grocery industry that are resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages. Data collection was undertaken with four reseller businesses, sales managers and managing directors in Auckland, New Zealand. It was expected that two interviews were to be conducted with each of the four-reseller businesses.

A total of 8 interviews were conducted with the four-reseller firms. In addition, a further data collection of one more interview was conducted with the sales representative of the B2B firm, to examine the role that social media plays in their B2B firm. A total of nine interviews all together were undertaken for this study. The important criteria was participants were chosen for this research on the basis that they were from a retail grocery industry of same size, number, similar position and were chosen if they were a reseller firm of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages. Frucor beverages are a B2B firm, who is a drinks company who supplies drinks to the reseller firms and small businesses with their products to sell in their business. The participant's interest to participate in the study was ascertained through a telephone call and email.

### 3.4.3 Recruitment of Participants

The participants were recruited through personal networks of the researcher. The researcher, emailed the group of individuals, the reseller firms who were participants for the study at present who were; managing directors, sales managers and the sales representative of the B2B firm. The researcher gave

the participants the information sheet that outlined the purpose of the research study at hand, the data collection time frame, where it would be held and the incentive that the participant would gain from taking part in the research. The email and telephone call, also outlined the voluntary expression of interest that was undergone by the researcher to explain the purpose of the study. The researcher emailed the venue the interview was to be taken, the allocated time the interview was to be taken and when it would be taken. A copy of the participation information sheet was also emailed (Appendix 1). The participants were also given a hard copy of the information sheet at present and on arrival a Consent form was also signed prior to the interview starting (Appendix 2).

#### 3.4.4 Development of the Interview

In order to explore and understand the research problem and the research question at present an interview of open-ended and closed-ended questions were developed (Appendix 3). Open-ended questions were constructed and directed towards the participant's beliefs, values, feelings and experiences that they currently had towards social media and the B2B firm of Frucor beverages. The interview questions were aimed to answer the experiences they had with social media activities used by the B2B firm, how they perceived these social media antics, what incentives the B2B firm provided the resellers with, how they felt towards the B2B firm using these social media activities and how it affected them. The researcher made these interview questions very clear and concise so that the interview questions could be questioned to each participant in a focused clear manner, as the interview questions were questioned in a way that was suited for each of the nine individual participants.

#### 3.4.5 In depth semi structured interviews

The data collection methods of semi structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. The researcher found advantages of semi-structured interviews are the interview uses open-ended questions to create a two-way communication. Therefore, the interviewer can change the order of the questions or the way they are worded. Although, there are a number of advantages for semi-structured interviews it also has several disadvantages. Some of the

advantages of semi-structured interviews are that the interview questions are focused, conversational and it allows the researcher and the respondent to go into detail when needed to. However, the disadvantages are semi structured interviews are very time consuming, there is a relatively small number of interviews that can take place, because each interview can last for a long time and lastly it is difficult to compare the results with in depth semi-structured interviews, as all interviews are very different and unique in their own way. As a result, since all data collected from each interview is unique and different. Thus, the researcher considered that in-depth semi-structured interviews were a far superior method of data collection used for this research.

Two interviews were conducted with each of the four-reseller businesses. A total of 8 interviews were undertaken with the four-reseller businesses. The interviewee, businesses were all distinct in terms of their business profiles, such as firm size, age, and the number of employees. In addition, the researched conducted an interview with the sales representative of one B2B firm. As the researcher needed to examine the role that social media plays in their B2B firm. It can be expected that a total of nine interviews all together were undertaken for this study. The researcher asked the participants for their permission and interest to take part in the research via email and phone call. Once permission granted for participating in the interview, the data collection of face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interviews were of open-ended questions. All interviews were to be no longer than 1 hour long and participants were advised about the length of the interview. The researcher advised the participants about the recording of the interview for transcribing purposes before the researcher started the interview.

Interviews were to be conducted face-to-face, this was to ensure the researcher was in line with the assumptions and to ensure that trust could be built amongst the participants and the researcher, hence why this method was used (Crotty, 1998). Prior to the interview, the participants were informed to read and sign a consent form that helped the participants to be acquainted with the researcher at the research setting. Interviews were to be undertaken at the office of the participants to make the participants comfortable at their own setting. In order to ensure that the participants felt at ease and relaxed during the interview

because of the atmosphere they were in. Furthermore, the researcher made sure that interview questioning felt informal and that participants had time to reflect on and answer the questions to build trust. Throughout the research, the researcher tried to attempt and convey the curiosity towards the participants to encourage conversation and elaboration to get to know their experiences (McCracken, 1990). The interview was designed so that semi-structured interviews were undergone in a more comfortable nature and this would therefore allow participants to reflect on their experiences.

Moreover, data collections were conducted as a self-reflection for both the researcher and participant. The technique of memo were used in data collection this was to record, reflect and describe what research heard, saw and experienced during the interviews. The memos were used to record the interview data while the interview questions were asked by the researcher to the participants, in order for the researcher to gain the emotional, attitudinal voice experience of the participants. Overall, the interviews were undertaken in a manner by the researcher that focused solely understanding and ensuring the participants were comfortable so that they would answer the research questions at present in an ease manner.

### 3.5 Ethics for Data collection

A participation information sheet with details of the study and a consent form were read and signed by each of the participants for ethical purposes, as gaining ethical consent from each of the individuals is important for confidentiality reasons. All data that were collected by the researcher was kept confidential and anonymity of the participant's names were kept confidential.

### 3.6 Procedure for data analysis

This section outlines the procedures that are used to undergo the data analysis method of thematic analysis through Nvivo. Transcribing in literature is explained as how the interview data is transcribed or prepared by the researcher for data analysis. The interviews were transcribed using the method of thematic analysis by using the software of NVivo to assist with

developing preliminary thematic codes. NVivo is a computer software package that is produced by QSR International. At this stage of the analysis, the researcher is also searching for categories and sub-categories that illustrate regularities, relationships and patterns within the data that relate to the research question at hand (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher constructed a business profile to help the researcher write up the findings for the research at present.

### 3.6.1 Transcribing the Data

The researcher transcribed the audio files that had the recordings for the nine interviews that were taken from a mobile phone. This was because, of time constraints the researcher found it difficult to find a professional transcriber at that time. The interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word document for analysis purposes by the researcher. A total of nine interview transcripts eight to nine pages long were then examined with accuracy checking again against the audio files (Boyatzis, 1998). The researcher then re edited the transcripts for accuracy by identifying the participant to the participant's names.

### 3.6.2 Thematic analysis

The interviews were analysed through thematic analysis in Nvivo. Thematic analysis is best defined as having or relating to subjects or to a particular subject, in this case the participants' views were being uncovered through patterns of meanings that were being derived from their experiences and beliefs. Thematic analysis is whereby the researcher identifies and analyses the reports, key themes across all the data. These themes then are used to represent various aspects of the data from the transcripts. Thematic analysis is most suitable for qualitative research as it uncovers the patterns of meanings and helps to understand the experiences derived from the phenomena in an easier manner. The researcher read and re read the individuals interview transcripts three times to be familiar with the data (Boyatzis, 1998). This further helped the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of the way the participants talked about the data and the phenomena itself. Furthermore, the researcher then undertook thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis approach using NVivo software is to assist with developing preliminary thematic codes. This software has been designed for qualitative researchers who are working with very rich text-based information where the level of the data analysis is high. This software helps users to organise and analyse the non-numerical or so called unstructured data. NVivo allows the researchers to classify, sort and arrange information and to examine the relationships in the data. This software allows researchers to cross-examine information once codes are sorted out on Nvivo. The data sorts out into themes by highlighting each of the individual transcripts and categorising them with the best appropriate theme. The themes were categorised under each of the research questions to get a better and easier view of the data. The software of NVivo requires multiple readings of a selection of the interview data to discern themes so the whole dataset can be coded using these themes. At this stage of the analysis, the researcher is also searching for categories and sub-categories that illustrate regularities, relationships and patterns within the data that relate to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

By developing the themes and categorising the data under the best appropriate research question this helped the researcher to create a descriptive view of the participants' experiences of the participants. Moreover, after the approach of thematic analysis the gap was clearly revealed as the findings from the data shows that further insight into the gap of the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective is needed. Figures 1 and 2 show the data coding and categorising of themes in Nvivo.

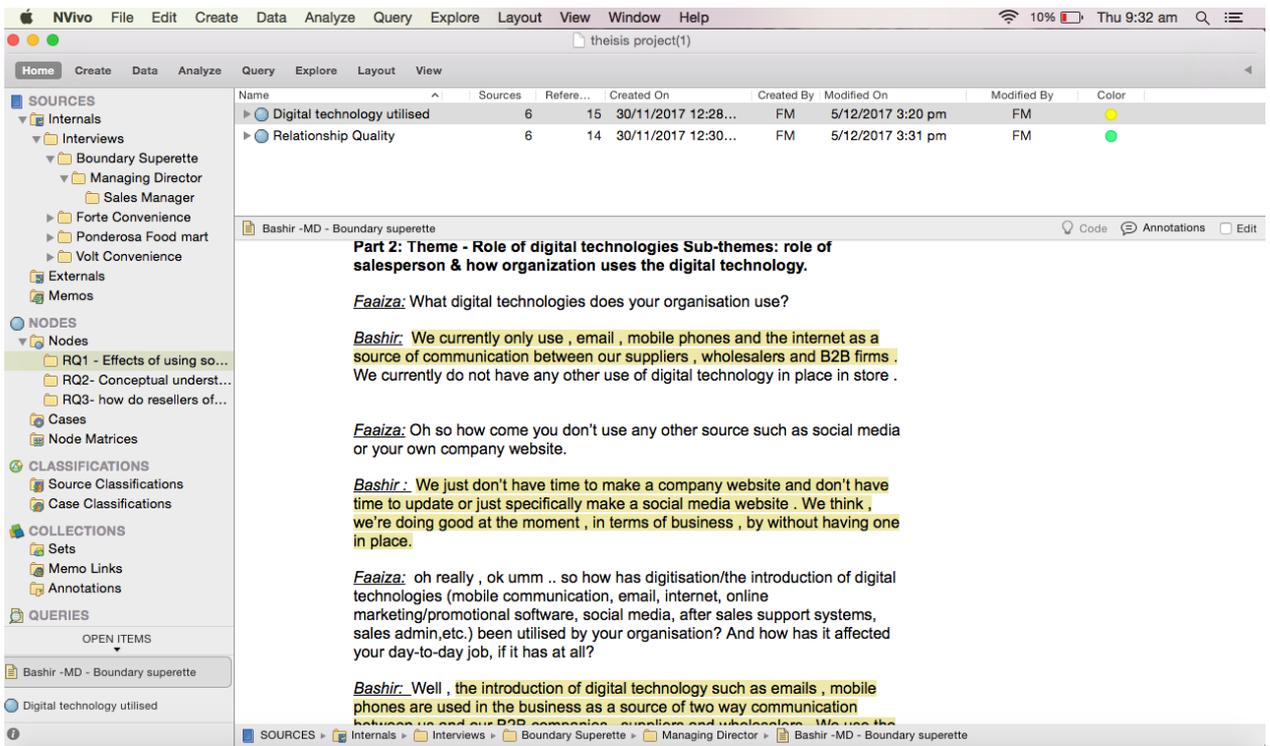


Figure 1: Showing Nvivo Data categorising into themes.

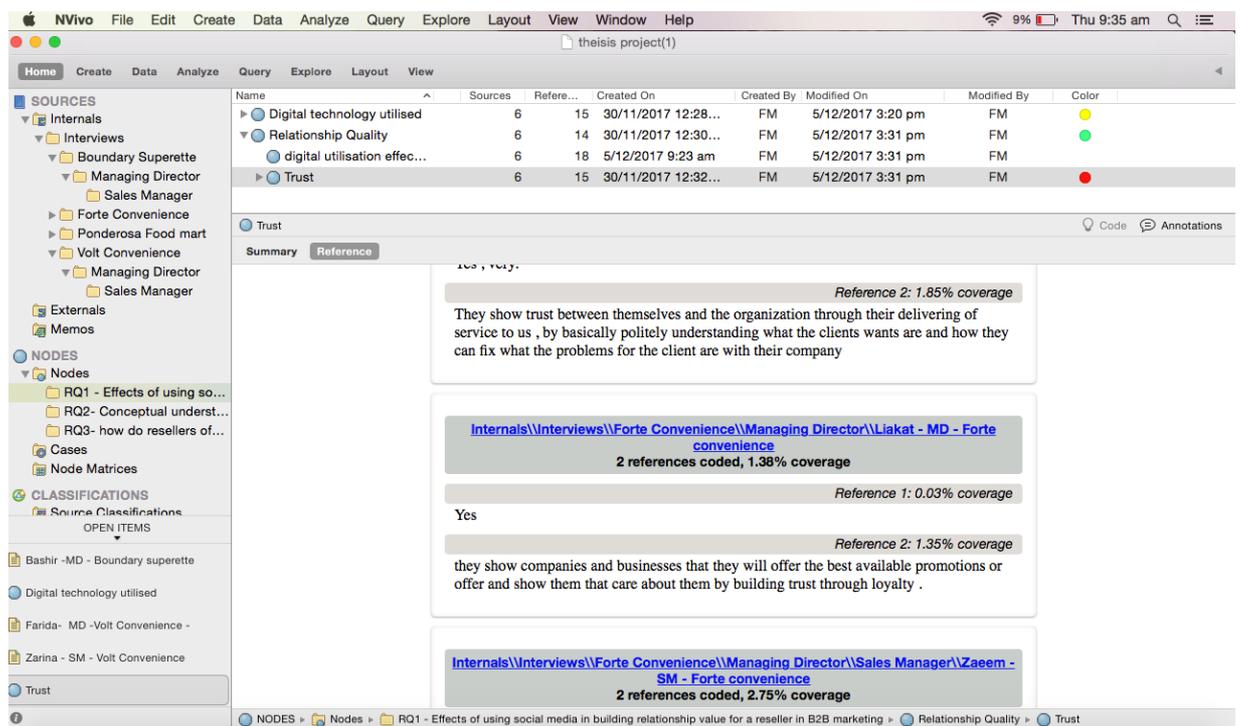


Figure 2: Showing reference of the theme of "Trust" on Nvivo Software analysis.

### 3.6.3 B2B Business participants

This business profile shown in Appendix 4 is important to this research as it clearly shows the profiles of each of the businesses and shows what each of the respondents positions in the workplace are. This use of data helps to clearly identify and explore any detailed information that the researcher has missed out during data analysis and it further helps the researcher to clearly identify any relevant data that would be key to the analysis for this research.

**Table 1: Business Profile of B2B firm resellers:**

Identification / abbreviation code of organisation and role.	Profile
MDPF	The organisation that is in the retail environment is a small business foodmart or grocery store, called Ponderosa that is owned by the Managing Director Mohammed. The managing director manages the staffs, control the payments, bills and overview everything and make the big decisions with other firms who provide food and beverage to the B2B reseller firm. The business is like a four square or some people may call it a grocery store. Located in West Auckland.
SMPF	The organisation is a small grocery store, which is called Ponderosa , it is a small food and grocery store. The participant Shameer works their as a sales manager whereby they handle all the marketing and sales duties, and gives orders to the sales representatives of firms who they buy the products off such as B2B firms; Ruka Confectionary, Coca Cola and Frucor etc. Located in West Auckland.
MDVC	The organisation is a mini convenience store called Volt. The participant Farida is the the managing director of the store. Her tasks is to manage the staff and overview everything and make the big decisions for the company, pay the bills and decide on what products to keep and what businesses or B2B firms to keep in contact with and what companies to make relationships with for their business . Located in Central Auckland.
SMVC	The company that the participant Zarina works for is called Volt it's a mini convenience store. She is the sales manager of the store. Her duties consists of, interacting with customers on a daily basis and also with a lot of different B2B firms sales reps and area mangers of the area to discuss deals , product buying , prices and promotions . Located Central Auckland.
MDBS	The organisation is a dairy shop. The participant Bashir's role in the company is that they are the owner or managing director of the shop. They handle all the staffs, purchases the groceries and beverages from other B2B companies and wholesalers. Located in Central Auckland.
SMBS	The participant Faeema is in an organisation, which is like a small mini mart of a dairy shop called Boundary store. The participant works their as a sales manager, she handles all the orders, confirms the orders , communicates with the managing director in relation to product purchasing , promotions and communicates with B2B firms sales reps in giving orders creating beneficial deals for the store . Located in Central Auckland

MDFC	The company that the participant Liakat works for is in a mini mart called Forte convenience. He is the managing director. His role is that he manages the staffs of the company or organisation, handles and confirms orders given by the sales manager, communicates with sales rep of companies to finalise deals discussed with sales manager and handles customer complaints. Located in Central Auckland
SMFC	The organisation that the participant Zaeem works as sales manager in a little mini mart in central Auckland. His duties consists of giving orders to sales rep of B2B companies in regards to the products they sell. Communicates with sales reps and wholesalers on a daily basis in regards to pricing and different promotions they can do to lift sales.

*Table 1: Business Profile of B2B firm resellers*

Table 2: Business profile of the four- reseller firms and the B2B firm.

Identification / abbreviation code of organisation and role.	Profile:
SPFB	This participant is the sales representative of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages. His role in the well – known company is to provide excellent customer service , in terms of advertising products on social media, communicating with resellers sales managers or managing directors through mobile technology and emails , or specifically doing in store promotions in reselling stores , creating excellent deals and pricing for resellers of the B2B firm and communicating with resellers on a daily weekly basis to fulfill their needs and wants to lift their sales and grow profit for their firm aswell

*Table 2: Business profile of the four-reseller firms and the B2B firm.*

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined and explained the methodological decisions for this research study. The researcher clearly detailed and examined the researchers paradigms, theoretical background of the researcher, data collection and data analysis were all examined in a detailed manner. The researcher used in depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews as the central method for this qualitative research. Interview questions used in this research were open-ended, because the researcher wanted the participants to feel relaxed and for them to be able to answer the questions in an open minded era. As a result, the nature of the venue the interviews were undertaken were at the participant’s office whereby the participants were comfortable with as the

researcher wanted to ensure the participants felt at ease when answering the interview questions. Thematic analysis was then undergone by the researcher to identify and categorise the data into the most appropriate or suitable themes that the participant's data suited.

The next section of this research examines the findings in a detailed manner and explores the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective.

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## Chapter Four: Research Findings

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will identify and explain the research data that was found from the face-to-face interviews with eight of the B2B resellers and the salesperson of the B2B company of Frucor Beverages, to find out the role that social media plays in building value for the resellers in B2B marketing. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions and these interviews were recorded for an hour for transcribing purposes.

The three research questions that were built to help gain the data was the following; RQ1: What are the effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing, RQ2: How do resellers of the B2B firm perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology and RQ3: Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment?

The participants in the interview were sales managers and managing directors from four different small businesses from the grocery industry, that were distinct in terms of their business profiles , such as the firm size , age and number of employees .

### 4.2 Development of Themes

The data gained from the interview transcripts was analysed and examined in Nvivo to code the data and create themes. The themes that were created during the analysis in Nvivo are; (1) Relationship Quality, - sub theme: Trust, (2) Role of Salesperson, (3) Incentives by B2B Company, (4) Digitalisation usage effects on B2B resellers (5) Digital Technology Utilisation, (6) Benefits in using

digital technology, (7) Brand Associations, (8) Brand Loyalty and (9) Brand Identity. All of these themes and sub themes will be discussed and analysed separately and then an overall conclusion will be made for each of the themes. Followed by a conclusion of the data found for this study.

#### 4.2.1 Overview of Themes

The data that was gained from the interview transcripts helped the researcher to categorise the data in NVivo into seven themes. Theme one explores the participants' relationship with the B2B firm of Frucor beverages in relation to Trust. Theme two explores the relationship between the role of the salesperson of Frucor beverages with the B2B resellers. Theme three presents the research by identifying the incentives that are given to the resellers by the B2B firm. Theme four suggests how the utilisation of the digital tools used by the B2B firms have an effect on the B2B resellers. Theme five explains the digital technology that is present in the B2B firm. Theme six explains the benefits of using these digital technologies that are currently present in B2B firm. Theme seven suggests the brand associations that are created for the reseller by the B2B firm using digital technology. Theme eight explains how resellers are brand loyal to the B2B firm through the influence of digital tools. Lastly theme nine presents the research with insight into how B2B firms use the branding construct of brand identity to influence the resellers of the B2B firm through the utilisation of digital technologies.

In summary, all themes were created during the analysis of NVivo , whereby the themes were categorised under each of the three research questions that they best related to. Themes 1) Relationship Quality, - sub theme: Trust, (2) Role of Salesperson, (3) Incentives by B2B Company were related to the research question one; the effect of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing. These three themes were best related to the first research question as it explores the relationship the participants have with the B2B firm. Themes (4) Digitalisation usage effects on B2B resellers (5) Digital Technology Utilisation, (6) Benefits in using digital technology are best related to the second research question of; how do resellers of the B2B firm percieve these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital

technology? These themes were best related to the second research question as it explores how the resellers of the B2B firm perceive the different kinds of digital technology that are utilised by the B2B firm and how this benefits the resellers. Lastly, the themes (7) Brand Associations, (8) Brand Loyalty and (9) Brand Identity best related to the last research question of; Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment? The themes best related to this research question as it explores how the present techniques of branding in the B2B firm have an effect on the resellers and the role of these three branding elements in the B2B marketing environment.

### 4.3 RQ1- Effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing.

#### *4.3.1 Relationship Quality sub themes 1 - Trust*

Digital channels of social media enable business relationships and partners to create and share valuable information knowledge with others through the tip of their fingers. Most B2B businesses use social media as it is known as a facilitator for solidifying relationships and creating the basis of trust and is known as a tool for creating opportunities and customer value (Agnihotri et al., 2016). By exploring the participants' relationship with the B2B firm it helps the researcher to better understand the building bridge of Trust that is important for building any kind of relationship. For example, participants in this research believe that trust is known as a building bridge for creating strong relationships between the B2B firm and its B2B resellers. Participants explain, trust is portrayed by the B2B companies' sales representatives, as they are the main point of contact that they discuss, analyse and create options and deals with on a regular basis in the reselling business.

Moreover, maintaining, building and developing a strong, stable relationship with your business partners or business associates is very important in any business growth or profitability. Therefore, trust is portrayed in this study through the salesperson of the B2B firm to the resellers of the B2B firm. It is

evident, that the role of the salesperson in the B2B firm has an effect on the participants; the resellers of the B2B firm as the salesperson of the B2B firm are the ones who they interact and communicate with to engage and create relationship value. Therefore, salespeople are very influential in building the bridge of trust between them and the B2B resellers.

*“the company’s sales representative as they are the main people who I communicate with on a weekly basis in making or placing orders so yeah the main building bridge of trust is conveyed by the sales rep of the company” (MDBS).*

From this, it is evident that the main point of interaction between a B2B firm and its resellers is through the salesperson of the B2B firm. Therefore, the salesperson is very influential and has an impact on the way the B2B firms resellers perceive the B2B firm as the salesperson are the main point of interaction, communication between a B2B firm and its resellers. This is evident from the results in this study as, most resellers explain that the salesperson has an impact on their relationship that they have with the B2B firm. This is due to the salesperson being the person who they contact in regards to any problems they have with the B2B firm and they are the ones who deal with placing orders, pricing of products and are the ones who show the resellers that the B2B firm cares about them. This is demonstrated through the salesperson going the long mile to deliver excellent service. The salesperson of the B2B firm builds a strong relationship based on trust with the B2B resellers as the below quote shows that the resellers want good deals from the B2B firm and when the sales representative is willing to provide them with it they are creating a strong bond with them as trust is being built. As a result, the B2B firm resellers feel as the B2B firm cares about the resellers’ values and needs.

*“They show me that they care about my business and they hear the offers I want from them, they show me the best possible offers that are available to me and always look after me you can say .....this builds on my values towards them and creates a strong trust relationship”(MDPF).*

*“The B2B firm is that they would go the long mile in creating customer service to me which is always something nice that is good to see. And if I’m busy and can’t give an order immediately on the sales reps visit they don’t mind calling later in the week to take the order, unlike other reps who force you to give them the order as soon as possible “(MDVC.)*

*“The current opinion I hold about the business is that they are a reliable company who are more than happy to go the long mile to provide good service to its customers such as resellers of businesses “(MDBS).*

A summary of the above shows that if a reseller has a positive relationship with the salesperson of the B2B firm they are more likely to build a trust-relationship with the B2B firm and have a positive stable relationship with them. If the salesperson of the B2B firm does not build that trust based relationship with the resellers it is possible to say that a difficult and an unstable relationship would be present. Therefore, this would create a negative perception of the B2B firm in the eyes of its resellers.

*“Yup very, like any other relationship it’s important to have trust I mean if their isn’t trust than it’s very difficult to keep a stable relationship with the brand and yourself” (SMVC).*

*“Yes it is an important aspect of a brands relationship” (MDVC).*

*“Yes, trust is really important to me in a brand relationship for sure “(MDPF).*

#### *4.3.2. Reflective comment on trust*

The findings in this section show how important ‘trust’ is to the participants, the B2B resellers in this research study. As all participants suggested that the theme of Trust places high importance in their relationship when wanting to build and maintain a strong relationship with the B2B firm. From the gathered findings, it is possible to state that the salesperson of the B2B firm is very influential in building the bridge of trust between their B2B company and the B2B reseller .This is because , the salesperson of the B2B firm are the main point of contact , interaction and communication between the B2B resellers and the company . As shown from the findings that the B2B firms resellers or participants in this research say, they create and build trust with the salesperson as they are the ones who explain and discuss the deals and promotions they have and can provide them with. They are the ones who they place the orders with and when an incentive such as the B2B firms resellers needs are fulfilled such as the deals they want from the sales rep are given to them they are more likely to create the bridge of trust between them . This is

because the resellers needs and wants are fulfilled therefore, value is created to them in a more efficient manner.

Moreover, the advertisements of deals on social media that are portrayed by the B2B firm on its Facebook Page are given to the reseller of the B2B firm, the reseller is likely to create a trust worthy relationship with the B2B firm sales rep. As an incentive is been given to them through the resellers needs and wants being fulfilled by the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages.

#### *4.3.3 Relationship Quality sub theme 2 – the Salesperson*

The salesperson or the sales representative of the B2B firms are known to be the most important means for the B2B firm of Frucor. As the salesperson is the main point of communication and interaction between the B2B firm and its resellers.

*“They are very influential as they know that they are the main face of communication of their brand so they communicate with me on a weekly basis in an effective manner, by placing my orders in a fast orderly manner and by placing courtesy calls just to see or review the orders I have placed. They also, have a very friendly down to earth attitude which always has an affect how I perceive the brand or company” (MDBS).*

It is evident from this that the salesperson of the B2B firm is the most influential person that the reseller customers of the B2B firm face with a weekly business basis , as they are ones who influence the resellers product selection choice , pricing and promotion basis . The salesperson of Frucor is known as a ‘friendly helper’ explained by one of the resellers. This is because, they are the ones who help the managing director of the reseller B2B firm to help place the orders , make courtesy calls just to see how the B2B firms reseller business is going . Due to the service that is provided to the reseller customers of the B2B firm, they are fond of the salesperson of the B2B firm. As the salesperson of the B2B firm are the important means of brand communication for the B2B firm of Frucor beverages , as their attitude and behaviour with the resellers has an effect on the overall company .

As a result, the salesperson are very important to the B2B firm as they are the face of the B2B firm when they walk into the B2B firms reseller firms business.

*“The sales rep is very influential in terms of communicating with me as their customer as they talk to you very politely and show that they basically understand the needs you have towards them and that you would like them to fulfil. The sales person doesn’t push you to buy their big deals they are doing, they are more open minded and understanding. This differentiates them in a real big way “(SMBS).*

Research data shows, B2B firms reseller customers view the salesperson of the B2B firm as the brand image of the firm. This is because, they are the ones who influence them in making and purchasing the products from the B2B firm and they are the ones who they communicate with on a daily basis with in regards to the products and pricing. They are viewed as the brand image of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages as the salesperson is the primary means of communication between the B2B firm and its resellers.

Furthermore, the salesperson of the B2B firm maximises the brand resonance as they keep in contact with their resellers and update them with offers and promotions, and most importantly because they put the brand of Frucor in the front of their reseller customers minds, to make them as influential as they can possibly be.

*“Our relationship has been affected in a positive way, due to the use in digital technologies as it has made it much easier for us to communicate with each other, with now a digital interface where we both receive information in minutes “(MDFC).*

*“Digital technologies has not really affected my relationship with Frucor beverages, maybe some aspects of digital technology such as the communication is fairly affected in a good way positive way. Or in terms of maintaining these relationships we both do a lot of communicating through email and mobile technology when we have any queries “(MDVC).*

Moreover, the support from the salesperson, helps the seven reseller customers of Frucor beverages to keep and maintain a strong relationship with them. As the salesperson knows that their personal relationships and the B2B firms’ values and beliefs are influenced by them to the reseller customers in order for success and profitability to occur for their B2B firm. The salesperson uses digital technologies of social media, email and mobile interaction to create these strong relationships with the resellers as these online digital technologies

present help them to clarify any queries and orders in minutes to the resellers. This therefore, affects the relationship between the resellers and the salesperson of the B2B firm in a positive way as speed and efficiency in information is being delivered to the reseller in minutes. In contrast, the B2B firm salesperson however, believes that maintaining a strong relationship with its resellers is very important for the company as it drives success for the firm.

*“Maintaining excellent relationship with the reseller businesses is important as we are the ones who influence their decisions on purchasing products so, maintaining that relationship with them is important for our business in order to gain success. With the help of digital technology when face-to-face interaction and communication is present the use of emails and mobile communication makes it even more handy for us to communication with our resellers in an efficient manner making our relationship to build stronger “(SPFB).*

Furthermore , it is evident that salesperson of the B2B firm also believes that having a strong relationship with the resellers is important as they influence the decisions of the resellers and they are the ones who help the resellers in making the product clarifications and choices . As a result, the help of the digitalisation world of emails and mobile communication has also affected the salesperson in a positive way as mentioned, as the interaction and communication with the resellers can be achieved in an easier and efficient manner when face-to-face interaction is unavailable .

#### *4.3.4 Reflective comment on the salesperson*

The findings from this section suggest that participants perceive the salesperson of the B2B firm as the brand image. As they are the ones they communicate and interact with on a daily basis to place orders, talk about deals, discuss ways the salesperson can help the B2B reseller to fulfil their needs and wants. Also, the findings suggest that support from the salesperson of the B2B firm, helps the seven reseller customers of Frucor beverages to keep and maintain a strong relationship with them, as the salesperson knows that their personal relationships and the B2B firms values and beliefs have an influence on the reseller customers in order for the B2B firm to gain success and profitability for the firm. In summary , the relationship between the salesperson and the B2B reseller customer is effected in a positive way through the use of

digital technology as , the speed and efficiency in communication and information exchange is portrayed by the B2B firm salesperson in minutes to resellers this is by email , social media and mobile interaction .

#### *4.3.5 Incentives by B2B Company*

Incentives are a key benefit that is given by B2B companies to its resellers and B2B customers to gain brand awareness, create customer loyalty and create brand loyalty amongst other competitors in the B2B environment. The B2B firm of Frucor beverages provides a lot of incentives to its B2B resellers in the form of discounts, promotions, giveaways and incentives such as rebates.

*“the incentives the B2B firm of Frucor gives to its reselling customers is discounts on the products , rebates on how much stock you buy and also for the customers of the reselling businesses they give out key chains , hats , sunglasses , cricket bats for promoting their brand especially the V drink which is highly promoted by the B2B firm” (SMBS).*

All seven B2B firm resellers agreed that incentives that are given by the B2B firms are in the form of rebates on how much stock the business buys, key chains that are given for the B2B firm reseller customers, in order for the resellers to gain loyal customers through their own products, hats and sunglasses are also given out in the form of promotional advertising. It is evident from the data received in research that all resellers agree that incentives that are provided by the B2B company makes the company appeal to its customers in a more pleasant manner , as the service they provide such as fulfilling the resellers needs and wants such as crediting expired goods . These little things leave a huge positive effect on the B2B firm resellers as they view the B2B firm in a positive era.

*“The company provides lots of incentives such discounts, freebies for retailers of the B2B company itself such as company rebates on how many goods you buy and freebies for your customers such as summer hats, beach bags drink holders. A positive experience I have is when one day I was talking to the sales rep of frucor beverages about the products and price deals and what kind of promotions are up for grabs for customers the rep just took out a \$100 gift card for Westfield’s to say thank you for being a customer . Little things like that make you appreciate them “(SMPF).*

This example above is a key example of the views that the B2B firm resellers have towards Frucor's promotional and incentive efforts they provide the resellers with.

*"incentives provides our company with loyal customers who wouldn't change their loyalty over another firm as they know we give them incentives so basically our incentives aim and goal is to achieve loyal customers and positive word of mouth about our B2B firm with the help of digital technology it is easier to do this through advertising of offers on social media webpage "(SPFB).*

*"an incentive given by the B2B firm is that when they advertise their products and deals on social media pages such as Facebook and Instagram or advertise their products on Youtube , it creates positive word of mouth for their brands products and this helps to create brand awareness and product awareness for their company , this inturn benefits and creates an incentive to us the resellers as well . This is because, by their advertisements we are able to create loyal customers through their advertisements and offers on the virtual format of social media webpages (SMPF).*

*"social media advertising of deals on our drinks and products all are incentives for our B2B resellers as we offer and advertise our deals so they know about the deals and so they are able to contact or to ask me when I 'am in store next so I can provide them with deals and discounts advertised on Facebook that can impact them in a positive manner "(SPFB).*

The interviews data that were conducted shows that digital world of browsing the internet, social media advertising and communication through mobile phones and emails has all benefited the B2B firm of Frucor in a positive way. This is because, the resellers of the B2B firm see their digital activities and involvement in a positive light.

Furthermore, it is possible to conclude from this data, digital technologies and social media present in the B2B environment not only has an effect on the whole B2B firm itself but the presence of social media communication, interaction and advertising has an effect on the reseller customers of the B2B firm in a positive way as it helps to create brand awareness, customer loyalty and brand loyalty. This in turn all contributes in affecting the brand identity of the B2B firm itself and has a positive effect on B2B firm reseller businesses brand image .

Social media, helps to create brand awareness, word of mouth to a wider audience in a more efficient manner and the digital technology of emails, internet and mobile communication helps a business to create speed and efficient communication and interaction amongst its reseller customers in the B2B environment. Therefore, social media has a positive effect on the businesses profitability and drives success.

In summary , the findings in this research suggest branding does still exist in the B2B environment and that building a brands identity is a process which by all the elements of branding such as brand associations , customer to brand relationships(with the salesperson ) and digital technologies contribute towards in creating a B2B firms brand identity. Moreover, the findings in this research suggest that the introduction of the digital technologies in this technology savvy B2B environment has successfully improved a business's performance through the effect of speed and efficiency that is present amongst the digitalisation world of social media, emails and mobile communication. Furthermore, digitalisation has helped to reinforce the values that the B2B firm of Frucor beverages resellers had associated with in past years.

#### *4.3.6 Reflective comments on incentives by B2B firm*

The findings from this section reveal that participants explain what kinds of incentives they gain from the B2B firm and how it benefits them in the long run. For example, advertisements on social media pages such as Facebook , Instagram and YouTube advertising the B2B companies products creates product awareness and brand awareness for the B2B firm but it also creates loyal customers for the B2B resellers . This is because, the deals and promotions or advertisements of new products has a positive impact on the reseller firm as they get more consumers because they want to buy the B2B firms products . As a result, this benefits the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages as well as the reseller firms. Also , as show above in the findings that promotions , rebates and discounts that are given to the participants the resellers of the B2B firm helps the resellers to perceive the B2B firm in a positive light , because of the benefits they gain through the incentives creates a stronger and long term relationship .

The use of digital technologies present in B2B firms has a positive impact on the resellers as well as the B2B firm itself as it reinforces the B2B firms value and it creates loyal customers for the B2B firm resellers through these incentives that are provided by Frucor Beverages.

#### 4.4 RQ2: How do resellers of B2B firm perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology

This section of the research will present this section by exploring the themes of digitalisation usage effects on B2B resellers, digital technologies used by B2B firm and the benefits in using digital technology.

##### *4.4.1 Digitalisation usage effect on reseller*

The results that are presented clearly indicate that digital technologies do play an important role in B2B branding and in the B2B environment. The results indicate that the effects of digital technologies such as the internet, email, mobile interaction and social media habits of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube portrayed by B2B firms has a positive impact on B2B resellers. This is because, digital technologies helps to create brand awareness through viral communication and advertisement of social media such as Facebook and Instagram and this therefore helps to create loyal customers for B2B resellers who sell those brands products that customers in the B2B environment are aware of.

*“by using digital technology such as the internet, email and mobile to grow awareness for their products it therefore creates customers for me as I get customers who want their products that they advertise through social media webpages on Facebook and Instagram and the promotions they do all match my values as give quality products to customers with reasonable pricing and benefits “(MDBS)*

Using the above example, it can be argued that it is beneficial to resellers when a B2B firm such as Frucor Beverages portray or use digital technology such as emails and the internet of Web 2.0 in their business, as this has an positive effect not only on the B2B firm of Frucor in creating loyal customers or creating

brand awareness for themselves. But it also has a vice versa effect on all the resellers that use the B2B firms products. This is because, it creates more customers for them and it creates profitability for the firm through the marketing and advertising efforts. When B2B firms such as Frucor beverages use digital technology of social media of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube in their firm for not only advertising their products and creating brand awareness, it also helps the firm to create a healthy relationship with their resellers through the use of digital technologies as a source of information and communication exchange.

*“Yes , I think they do utilize their digital technologies of email interaction , mobile interaction and the internet in a excellent manner in communicating with its customers such as us my business , through social media such as Facebook and Instagram and with the public through events they do and promotions. And also , in my opinion , I do think digital technologies of emails , mobile technology and social media interaction of Facebook , Instagram and YouTube being present and being utilized in firms such Frucor beverages is important in B2B environments as it creates an easier and a more effective manner of communication that helps B2B firms customers such as the resellers like my business to view their business in a more positive manner as communication is more effective and customers can gain more product information through digitalization” (MDPF).*

*“And the digital technologies utilized such as emails, internet, and mobile phones social media has influenced my perception of the brand as it basically tells me as a director of a business that this brand is willing to do anything possible to create customer loyalty and to fulfil the needs I as a reseller or a customer have with them. This therefore , influence my values in a positive way as it makes me feel as if this company cares about what I want and cares about creating profitability for not only their company but mine by using digital technology to grow awareness for their products it therefore creates customer for me “ (MDBS).*

*“Yup definitely, they do affect how I perceive frucor as a company because, the fast response in communication the effective speed and efficiency in communication which is obviously conveyed by the brand through the use of internet and emails “(SMBS).*

To conclude, the use digital technologies of emails, mobile communication, internet, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, these channels have a positive impact on the B2B resellers. This is because, the digital tools make it easier for a reseller firm to communicate with its B2B firm in an easier manner and it creates loyal customers for the resellers with the help of the B2B firms advertising of their products through the digital tools. It also creates fast and

efficient advertising in the tip of the fingers that enhances speed and efficiency in information exchange and therefore has a positive impact on the resellers as it creates more customers and helps to gain information in a fast and easier manner.

*“Digital technologies of emails and mobile technology has really affected my relationship with the firm in a positive manner. As communication is now more fast and steady and their social media has affected me in a positive way as it has created profitability for my company through their advertising efforts on Facebook . It has like umm ... created awareness of their brands and in return created more customers for me and for the customers to buy their products “(SMVC).*

#### *4.4.2 Reflective comments for digitalisation usage effect on reseller*

In summary the participants in this research suggested that the use of digital technologies being utilised by the B2B firm such as email and mobile interaction, web browsing of the internet and the use of social media habits of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all have a positive impact on the B2B firms resellers. This is because they gain customer loyalty and profitability is created for the resellers in the form of the advertising, discounts and promotions that are shown on Facebook and Instagram. Moreover, these clever marketing efforts used through the form of digital technologies all benefit the B2B firm and its resellers in a positive manner as it creates fast and efficiency in information and communication exchange as well as affects a businesses profitability in a positive way and drives success.

#### *4.4.3 Digital Technology Utilised B2B firm*

The results from the data analysis that is presented in NVivo clearly show that the use of digital technologies of email, mobile interaction, the internet and social media sites of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn is very important to resellers in the B2B environment. Because, B2B resellers and B2B firms apply and use digital technologies such as social media pages of Facebook and Instagram, mobile and email as a source of communication and interaction between each other when face-to-face interaction is not present. Also, the

importance of digital technology utilisation in B2B firms and B2B reselling firms is emphasised. As a result this shows the importance of digital technologies as it helps to improve and enhance the communication that is present between the B2B firm and B2B customers through mobile communication, social media – Facebook and Instagram interaction of advertising and email communication.

*“The introduction of digital technology such as emails, mobile phones are used in the business as a source of two way communication between us and our B2B companies, suppliers and wholesalers. We use the internet to enable our company to see other companies and wholesalers websites, for their products and basically to connect with them in an easier manner” (MDBC).*

Furthermore, as a result this shows the use of digital technologies of emails, mobile interaction, internet and Facebook that are currently present in B2B firms has made the lives of not only the B2B firm salesperson easier but also, the resellers. From this, it is also evident, that most B2B firm resellers are digital friendly and like the idea of the utilisation of digital technologies to be in place in their own reselling firms. However, there are some resellers who find the use of digital technology as a time consuming tool.

*“The business doesn’t currently have a lot of digital technology in use, as we see it as a very time consuming tool. But there is some digital technology in place which is, sending emails, using the internet and mobile phones for communication use” (SMBS).*

These resellers portray and use a lot of digital technology as a source of communication tool or a browsing tool to find out the little things that brands in the market are doing and also to communicate with B2B firms. This is because; they believe that digital technology being place in firms portrays fast and efficient communication. Fast communication that is portrayed through speed and efficiency has had an impact on the way the resellers of the B2B firms view the firm’s brand and company.

*“The development of digital technologies does influence how I perceive the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages as having control over information and communication on the tip of your fingers with the help of email communication creates speed and efficiency amongst the B2B firm and my organisation. This therefore, influences my perception of the furcor company in a positive manner” (SMPF).*

It's evident from the results that resellers of B2B firms have a positive perception of a firm when speed and efficiency in communication and information exchange is present. For example, most resellers explain that when speed and efficiency is present resellers feel that the B2B firm cares about their expectations that they want from the B2B firm. This therefore, has a positive impact on the B2B firm and the relationship they have with the resellers.

#### *4.4.4 Reflective comments for Digital Technology utilised*

In this section, the participants explained that they have a positive perception of a B2B firm such as Frucor Beverages, when the speed and efficiency in communication and information exchange is present in the form of digital technologies of emails, mobile interaction, and social media interaction on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Also, the findings suggest when B2B firms use these digital technologies than resellers perceive the B2B firm in a positive manner. Moreover, this is because, they perceive the digital technologies that are utilised in a positive manner, as they believe that it is a useful tool that all B2B firms should use as it creates profitability and loyal customers not only for them but the B2B firms as well. Further, it creates information exchange and brand awareness for the resellers business as well as the B2B firm's products in a more efficient manner.

#### *4.4.5 Benefits in using digital technology*

There are several benefits in using digital technology such as emails and mobile technology as digitalisation has been known for making communication and information exchange easier for businesses and customers to interact with each other in a simpler and easier manner.

*“Digital technology of emails, mobile interaction, the web 2.0 has affected our business day to day job basis in a very effective manner, as we are now able to connect in an easier way and keep to update with what kinds of new products are in the market and where our products we sell are on special etc“ (MDBS).*

“digital technology of social media – Facebook and Instagram communication and information exchange has affected the relationship we have in a positive manner as it has enabled us to communicate with each other in a effective manner and retaining and maintain this relationship has been affected by the use of digital technology such as mobile phones” (MDBS).

From this, it is possible to say digital interface of using webpage, browsing the internet, communicating through email and social media and lastly the interaction and communication through mobile phones has made it easier for not only customers to communicate with their friends and family, but it has also helped and made the lives of the businesses more easier and effective. For example , the use of digitalisation has helped business to now be able to connect with other customers and B2B businesses in the B2B environment in a easier manner , they can also now find out what products are being released in the market that are a competition for their B2B business. It is evident from the above quote made by the managing director of one of the seven B2B reselling businesses, who explains that they agree that digitalisation has affected their every day basis of doing their jobs as its made it much more easier and is a more effective way of communicating and interacting with its B2B businesses such as Frucor Beverages.

*“Like, I said earlier, our business does not use any form of social media such as Facebook or Instagram but we still go on the internet to search up our B2B companies such as Frucor on facebook to see what they are doing and if there are any promotions or giveaways our business can participate in without using social media“ (MDBS).*

*“The use of digital technology has made the life of all the staff here so much easier. Because of digital technology of emails and mobile phones and the use of internet has made communication so much easier between our suppliers and wholesalers and B2B companies so much easier. We basically use emails and mobile phones to communicate and stay in touch with other companies and the internet for basically everything in terms of finding new products, pricing, promotions and specials” (SMBS).*

*“Made our life so much easier” (SMBS).*

*“Yeah, defiantly as I believe including the digital world in my company is just a benefit” (MDFC).*

*“Yes, very often probably every day. As social media is the best way to communicate with friends family and businesses and also the best way to find out what kinds of things other businesses are doing in the market to create customer awareness and it’s a more clever way of advertising. So yes I do use it frequently for work purposes and for my personal life as well. As the interaction is much easier” (SMPF).*

From this data, it can be explained that one of the resellers explain even when they do not use any form of social media for their business they still use the digital interface of the internet for browsing purposes. This is to search up B2B companies such as Frucor beverages Facebook webpage on the browser to check if there are any promotions and giveaways that would benefit their B2B retail store that they can participate in. In contrast , the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages salesperson says the benefits of using social media from their perspective is they gain loyal customers through the digital interface and by using the digital interface of social media , emails or just browsing the internet creates the B2B business with effective , valuable information and in exchange . This creates other benefits for the company such as brand awareness, customer loyalty and product awareness.

*“Benefits of using the digital interface is that more and more consumers can become aware of not only our brand name but our products, the use of internet helps us to gain information about other products in the market and how our product is unique from theirs” (B2BSP).*

The B2B salesperson of Frucor beverages mentions that their business uses social media and the digital interface to gain customers in an easier manner and to create product awareness. This therefore, will create the B2B company with profitability as the more customers that become aware of their product makes loyal customers and therefore in turn will grow their business in a more positive manner. The B2B reselling businesses also know, by the B2B company of Frucor beverages using the digital interface of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter helps to gain customers from giveaways and promotions through advertising on their social media Facebook or Instagram page that helps them to become loyal customers and it also creates them with a competitive advantage for their company.

*“by Frucor using digital technology of social media of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube has not only created a competitive advantage for their business but has also increased the growth for my business and has helped to gain profitability as the more people see the products of Frucor on social media or through a digital interface the more consumers I will gain too” (MDFC).*

It is evident, social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram does not only have a one way affect when it is being used by one of the parties as mentioned by one of the seven B2B resellers. As when B2B companies such as Frucor beverages utilise digital technology it does not only create a competitive advantage for the company itself but it also creates profitability for the B2B resellers, as it increases their businesses growth. This is due to B2B companies advertisements which helps the resellers to gain loyal customers through their products. Furthermore, the benefits of digital technology and the digital interface used and enabled in companies is beneficial as it creates inevitable amounts of benefits for both parties when digitalisation tools are present in the firm.

#### *4.4.6 Reflective comment for benefits in using Digital technology*

In this section the participants explained to the researcher the importance that is placed on the benefits of using digital technology of emails, mobile interaction, internet and social media of Facebook and Instagram. Most participants mentioned, that the use and implementation of digital technologies of email interaction social media sites of Facebook and Instagram interaction has effected the lives of the resellers in a positive manner as it has made the jobs easier for them.

Moreover, it is possible to suggest from the findings that there are several benefits of using social media Facebook, Instagram, email and mobile interaction communication with B2B firm of Frucor beverages. This is because the use and implementation of these digital technologies creates a positive relationship between the B2B firm and its resellers as the communication and information exchange from the utilisation of digital technology of email, internet and Facebook interaction enables the B2B resellers to retain, maintain and gain a deeper relationship with the B2B firm and its current customers in a more effective and pleasant manner.

#### 4.5 RQ3: Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment?

In this section of the research, the themes of brand associations. Brand loyalty and brand identity will be explored to get a better understanding of the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how these three branding constructs have an effect on the resellers.

##### *4.5.1 Brand Associations*

Brand association in marketing is known as anything that is linked in memory to a brand such as; a slogan or a logo symbol. These memory or attributes of a brand are what helps a customer to remember or think of a particular product or activity because of the connection they have with it. In relation to brand associations, all seven resellers in this study explained that brand associations heavily had an impact on how they remember a brand and its products.

*“yup, their colour of their products the names and logos “(SMBS)*

*“Yes, the colour of their products their logo of the products names and also adverts”  
(MDFC).*

*“oh yeah definatly their biggest , is the colour of the products their tag lines in terms of advertising and the products logo’s that so many are familiar with that you would be able to clearly recognize the brand from far” (SMFC).*

From the above example, it is evident that the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages brand attributes such as the slogan of the product, the font, the colour of the products and the names all contribute towards effecting a reseller to remember the brand. However, the brand attributes such as slogan, logo and colour are not the only elements that help a reseller to remember the brand or the company. As, customers tend to remember a brand or a product more easily through their past experiences they have with the brand or products.

*“Yes, definitely the memorable marketing tactics used to make the brand memorable in the consumers mind such as the V advertisements and the values a customer holds towards a brand such as my own personal values” (SMPF).*

This example shows that it is evident from one of the seven resellers who suggest that marketing efforts does help them to make the brand memorable for a customer as well as the slogan, colour but also their own personal values that a customer or a reseller has towards a specific brand. These attributes and experiences all contribute towards effecting the business or customer in remembering the brand. The products a B2B firm has tend to have some positive effect on a resellers personal values that a customer tends to hold such as an energy filled individual would look towards V energy drinks, and once the customer likes the product they will never forget that brand or product. Due to their past, positive or negative experience that they have had with the brand. To conclude, this affect is of brand familiarity and also the attributes of the brand contribute towards affecting the whole process that a customer has due to past experiences they have or had with a brand or product.

#### *4.5.2 Reflective comments for brand associations*

This section of the research explains how the theme of brand association has an effect on the B2B reseller and the B2B firm itself. For example the findings from the research show that in relation to all the seven resellers suggest that brand associations heavily effect on how they remember the brand. This is because, they believe that the B2B brands products names, slogan and colour of the product all have an impact on how they recognise and remember the brand. The B2B firms resellers explain, that B2B firm of Frucor beverages brand attributes such as the colour of their products and the brand itself and the marketing efforts of the B2B firm all contribute in a positive manner to ensure that a customer is able to remember the brand.

#### *4.5.3 Brand loyalty*

Brand loyalty is one of the most important elements that has an effect on a businesses profits and growth. For example, when brand loyalty exists in a business amongst the customers over a firm, it is likely to see a growth in the

firms' profits and growth in the business. Moreover, brand loyalty amongst all seven B2B resellers were highly recognised during data analysis. This was due to the B2B firm having a strong, long term relationship with its seven reseller businesses.

*"This therefore, influence my values in a positive way as it makes me feel as if this company cares about what I want and cares about creating profitability for not only their company but mine by using digital technology to grow awareness for their products it therefore creates customer for me"(MDBS).*

In accordance, with this it is evident that a businesses service and the way they provide information and exchange information with a firm does reflect on the element of loyalty. As shown in the example above , because of the way the B2B firm of Frucor beverages looks after their customer it has a positive effect on the brand itself as it shows the B2B firms resellers that they care about the needs and wants of the B2B resellers. This in turn creates a strong relationship with the brand and it creates loyalty over the firm. Strong relationships are a key basis to building brand loyalty with a business or a customer. This was clearly shown in the research, since all reseller businesses had a strong relationship with the B2B firm of Frucor they valued their service, the way they communicated using digital technology and also the way they delivered the service and products to the customer . All of these positive experiences reflected on the overall result, making the B2B resellers loyal to the firm of Frucor beverages.

*"Yes, because of how they are with customers in terms of, fulfilling their needs and demands and always trying to meet in the middle with them. Like they don't say no to discussions. They are open to options that are or could be available to a customer" (SMFC).*

*"Yes, because they provide our business with the best service possible and tries to fulfil all our needs such as price cut downs and is always willing to give us incentives for most product promotions which is always a benefit . And unlike other companies they try to go the long mile in providing excellent service and our values and beliefs of using digital technology are similar as we both believe digitalization can benefit companies" (SMPF).*

*"Yes, I 'am because, of the service they provide me with and the way the sales rep talks in a really polite manner. And doesn't force you to buy the products if you say you don't want to*

*buy it and if it doesn't sell. They are very nice. I think I'm loyal because of the representatives who are so influential" (SMVC).*

Customer service from the sales representative of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages, and service delivery were other reasons that affected the element of brand loyalty. Brand loyalty amongst the B2B firm of Frucor and its resellers were highly effected due to the influence of digital technologies being present in the B2B firm. This had an effect on both the resellers and the B2B firms beliefs and values as both parties' views were similar in relation to utilising digitalisation in place in businesses. This therefore, had an overall positive affect on the relationship between the B2B firm and the B2B reseller. Therefore, brand loyalty occurred. From the example above it is evident that the salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages does have an effect on the way the B2B resellers perceive the company, as mentioned by one of the resellers that the salesperson of the B2B firm are influential in effecting their overall relationship . This is due to the B2B firm having an understanding of what the resellers want and the firm does not force it upon the reseller to buy their products and brand when they choose not to.

#### *4.5.4 Reflective comments for brand loyalty*

The findings from this section show, participants known as the seven resellers in this study believe that their values and beliefs are influenced due to the utilisation of digital technology such as email interaction, mobile interaction and the utilisation of social media sites of Facebook and Instagram that creates profitability for the reseller business and also for the B2B firm. The theme of brand loyalty is important in businesses and organisations as shown by the findings, that participants believe that brand loyalty is one of the most important elements that help a business to create profitability and business growth. From the above findings it is possible to argue that when the B2B firm utilises and uses digital technology to interact and communicate with resellers for promotional activities, it makes the resellers happy as it not only benefits their business but it also has a positive effect on their own business. This is because; it creates customer value for us through speed and efficiency in information exchange.

In summary, participants suggest they become loyal to the B2B firm as the firm fulfils the needs and demands not only through the virtual format of Facebook of social media interaction but also because of the customer service they provide the B2B reseller with, in terms of product rebates, discounts, deals and promotions.

#### *4.5.5 Brand Identity*

Brand identity is an important element that is portrayed by businesses in today's society; it is how a brand wants to be perceived by a customer or a business. B2B firms like; Frucor beverages use the tool of brand associations to achieve this. From the research at present, the researcher found all seven resellers of the B2B firm identified their brand very well as they felt as if their values , and beliefs were built inside the brands and it was easily relative to their brand identity .

*“The company builds their brands identity through creative marketing of their products online such as social media, television . They always try to interact and convey to customers to join in with the promotions going on , this helps to build their brand identity” (MDBS).*

From this it is evident that Frucor beverages uses digital tool of marketing such as social media, online advertising and interactive marketing tools to build their brand identity. As mentioned by one of the resellers, the B2B firm uses their creative marketing antics to help other potential B2B businesses such as resellers, to join and interact with them through a digital interface whereby they can create their brand identity. This idea is used by B2B firms as nowadays most businesses are all faced with the digital interface of emails, social media, web browsing and mobile technology. With the help of the digital technology it makes it very easy for B2B firms like Frucor beverages to build their brand identity.

In contrast, the salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages view on how their company creates brand identity for customers is through creative marketing antics, excellent customer service that is further influenced by the B2B firms salespersons and the utilisation of digital advertising.

*“How we want to be perceived by consumers, we do this in a ..... well clever manner you could say ... with the help of marketing antics such as big in store promotions on our famous well known products such as V energy drinks, we use social media and television advertising to promote our energy drinks to make consumers remember our products so they purchase it, we try to influence our resellers that are one of our biggest customers by giving them excellent service in the form of going the long mile in fulfilling their needs and wants” (SPFB).*

Similarly, the B2B firm of Frucor beverages uses digital technology for marketing purposes, this is to create a memorable picture of their products and brands in their reselling customers mind and to also create excellent brand identity, through excellent customer service, promotions and through the marketing efforts that in return benefits the resellers of the B2B firm as well as their own customers. The resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages highlights that the world of digitalisation such as emails , mobile phones , internet and social media enhances and reinforces the B2B firms values , beliefs and brand identity to the resellers in an excellent manner .

Further , it is evident from the above example that digital technology is being used by the B2B firm as it helps them to create an understanding of values and beliefs that the B2B firm have towards the resellers .

*“Because with the digital world in hand has allowed fast information seeking to suppliers and resellers vice versa. Also , I would say yeah , speed and efficiency does have an effect in how I perceive Frucor as a brand or a company as I believe it is very important for brands to show efficiency and speed in communication As it reflects on their brand image and identity”(MDFC).*

*“Important because a company or a brands work, values and attitudes reflect backs on the brand image. Because , if a customer like me , would get speed and efficiency service I’am more likely to think of the brand in a favourable manner so like , im more likely to affect their brand image in a positive way through giving the brand a good reputation by perceiving them in a positive way which I currently do” (SMFC).*

Brand identity is created by the B2B firm of Frucor beverages and it has a positive influence on their firm and the reseller as it creates word of mouth and this has influences their own B2B firms reputation in a positive way . Also, found from this research is one of the seven resellers of the B2B firms view was

that a firm's reputation of their brands, the fast communication and interaction with their business, it all helps the firm to create positive and strong brand identity in the minds of its customers and their resellers. This strong brand identity then travels through positive word of mouth through the use of social media and face-to-face interaction which further creates brand loyalty amongst the B2B firm.

#### *4.5.6 Reflective comments for Brand identity*

The findings from this section show, that brand identity has a positive influence on the resellers as it creates positive word of mouth and has a positive effect on their reputation for the firm. From the data gained from this study, it is possible to suggest that resellers perceived the B2B firm in a positive light as the resellers mentioned in the interviews that because of the speed and efficiency in information exchange they tend to perceive the B2B in a positive manner. Due to the utilisation of digital technology has allowed the reseller to communicate, interact and engage with them a more efficient manner. Therefore, the resellers believe because of how a brand interacts and communicates with them it has a positive effect on them as a brand as the resellers tend to view the firm in a positive light, therefore effecting the B2B firm's brand image and the firm's reputation in a positive manner.

In summary, it is possible to conclude that the utilisation of digital technologies present in B2B firms helps firms to be perceived by resellers in a positive light. As, resellers tend to view a firm in a positive way when a firm shows a reseller they are trying to embed the resellers needs and wants into their firm through digitalisation by creating speed and efficient ways of interaction and communication. Therefore, the reseller is likely to perceive the company's values and attitudes in a positive way, as their needs, wants and values are being cared for by the B2B firm. As a result, the resellers view the firm in a positive way by giving the B2B firm good reputation through positive word of mouth on social media.

## 4.6 Overview of the findings

This section of the research explores the findings for the research study at present in a very detailed and comprehensive manner. This was presented through creating the nine themes which are; Relationship Quality, - sub theme: Trust, (2) Role of Salesperson, (3) Incentives by B2B Company, (4) Digitalisation usage affects on B2B resellers (5) Digital Technology Utilisation, (6) Benefits in using digital technology, (7) Brand Associations, (8) Brand Loyalty and (9) Brand Identity.

The findings from the first research question of the effect of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing suggest, that resellers place high importance in their relationship with a firm when they want to build and maintain a long term relationship with them. The findings from this research suggest that the resellers create stronger trust built relationships with the B2B firm of Frucor beverages salesperson as they are the ones who the resellers interact, communicate and discuss deals and promotions with on a weekly basis. The resellers believe the salesperson of the B2B firm builds relationship value for them through interaction, communication and information exchange through Web 2.0 and the use of digital platform of social media. As they give the resellers excellent deals, promotions and advertisement on social media effects the reseller in a positive way as it creates business growth and profitability for their reselling firm, by giving them more customers through creating product and brand awareness for their products through a social media platform.

Findings from the second research question of how do resellers of B2B firms perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology suggest, resellers of the B2B firm believe that the utilisation of emails, mobile interaction, Web 2.0 and social media platforms of Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram all have a positive effect on the reseller firm. As the data shows that the reseller firms perceive the utilisation digital technology in a positive way as they believe that by firms utilising the digital technology and social media marketing into their business they are helping not just themselves in gaining customers, creating customer awareness amongst

their products and firms but also for the resellers. As a result the resellers view and perceive these social marketing strategies of utilising social media and digital technology in their business to interact and communicate with other businesses and to exchange or seek information in a more efficient manner.

Lastly, the third research question of Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment? Findings from the data show that in relation to the seven reseller businesses suggest that the branding constructs of brand loyalty, brand identity and brand associations had a positive effect on the resellers. The branding construct of brand associations effected the reseller in a positive way as the B2B firm used creative marketing strategies to make sure that the resellers remember the brands name, slogan and colour of the product in a more efficient manner, As a result, this construct of brand associations had a positive effect on the reseller as they could remember the brand in an efficient manner through the social media efforts of advertisements and promotions that were created by the firm. This helped the reseller to associate and relate to the B2B firms products and made them remember the firm through their digital marketing efforts. Also, the brand loyalty and brand identity had a positive effect on the reseller firms as they believed that by the B2B firm using digital technology to go the long mile in creating excellent customer service and ways to engage with its customers in a creative manner created value to the resellers, which helped them to create loyalty of the B2B firm and its creative marketing efforts of interacting, engaging and communicating with its resellers. Therefore, to conclude it is possible to suggest the branding constructs all helped the reseller firms to create loyalty amongst the B2B firm through the help of digitalisation efforts of social media and Web 2.0 for engagement and interaction.

In summary, to conclude, the findings from this research illustrates the reseller firms perceive these social media sites of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter marketing advertising efforts in positive manner. This is because; the resellers believe that these marketing efforts of interaction and communication through a digital interface have a benefit for their company and firm. As a result, the marketing efforts these B2B firms present themselves on social media of

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn adds value to the reseller firms as they get more customers and it creates brand awareness for their firm while creating brand awareness for the B2B firms products. Moreover, it can be concluded that the findings from the above 9 themes suggest that B2B reseller firms perceive the marketing efforts and utilisation of Facebook and Instagram advertising by the B2B firm of Frucor beverages as a creative and effective marketing tool that benefits them.

Furthermore, the utilisation of emails, internet browsing, and social media marketing creates brand loyalty amongst the B2B firm in a easier way. As resellers who see firms utilising these digital technologies tend to view the B2B firms in a positive era as they feel as if the B2B firms are trying very hard to stand out in the highly competitive marketing environment. The researcher believes that after clear analysis of data it is very important for businesses in the B2B environment to utilise digital technologies to reach its customers such as resellers in an easier way and to create business growth, profitability and successful business partners.

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## Chapter Five: Discussion & Conclusion

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the research will discuss the findings found for the study that are outlined in the previous chapter. It will then illustrate how the findings have fulfilled the purpose of the research at hand and how the research question has been answered. The discussion will also take into consideration previous research and how this research study adds value and insight to researchers who are wanting to gain knowledge in this sector of marketing. Further, conclusions will be made and drawn from findings and a discussion of the empirical and theoretical contribution of this study will be explained followed by implications and future research for marketing.

The utilization and adoption of social media has been a popular research topic (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media opens up many new opportunities for the B2B sector, this is due to its features that have the ability to enhance communication, interaction, learning and collaboration (Jahn & Nielsen, 2012). Social media is defined as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 this allows the creation and exchange of user generated content to occur (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In the B2B environment, social media is a tool to drive customer engagement and to influence excellent customer service amongst B2B firms. Research suggests that B2B practitioners of these firms use social media channels to target other professionals and companies to engage, interact and to create positive business opportunities with (Moore, Hopkins & Raymond, 2013).

With the help of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn businesses in the B2B environment find it easier to foster relationships with businesses that may be slow to connect with using the traditional way of making relationships such as face-to-face customer relationships. Furthermore, it is possible to conclude that, using social media, buyer-seller relationships can be enriched with a two-way communication that is provided (Quinton & Wilson, 2016).

Most B2B firms tend to rely on the digital tool of social media as it is a tool that helps conversational communication to occur in an easier manner, it is a tool that helps businesses to attract different B2B buyers, suppliers and retailers to their business. Social media is utilised by businesses in the B2B context as a tool to create conversations and to create a two-way bilateral engagement between businesses. Many B2B organisations use social media as a source of managing the current B2B relationships that are present (Sood & Pattinson, 2012).

Social media is used between firms to develop new and existing relationships. It is vital for B2B businesses to in cooperate within the social media environment as a bridge into their B2B business to allow resellers, suppliers or buyers to interact communicate with them in a more efficient manner, to create profitability for the firm.

The consumption of social media in the B2B firm has had a positive effect on the seven resellers. Resellers in the B2B environment suggest that social media has helped the resellers to gain incentives for the firm through social media being utilised in the firm. The next section of this research will expand and explain on this through the research findings on the effects of social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing.

## 5.2 RQ1- Effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing.

In answering the RQ1 the effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in the B2B marketing environment. The findings reveal that the participants were affected by the three themes of trust, the role of the salesperson in the B2B firm and the incentives gained from using the social media by B2B. These three themes influenced the relationship between the B2B firm and the resellers in this study when social media was implemented by the B2B firm of Frucor beverages. The resellers in this research reveal that social media marketing should be utilised and implemented by B2B firms. This is because, the findings that social media platforms and the use of Web 2.0 helps to create, exchange and gain information in an efficient manner. Also, these resellers believe that digitalisation helps reseller firms in this study to create and build the foundations of trust in an easier manner through the utilisation of social media channels and Web 2.0. In relation to the participants view, past research also argues that social media is a tool that is concerned with implementing and managing the business relationships that can benefit the company using social media (Holmen & Pederson, 2003). Social media such as Facebook and Instagram are known to be an alternative communication channel between buyers, resellers, as it can create concise, clear and focused information through the virtual interface platform of social media.

To conclude, resellers in this study view social media as a tool that helps to maintain and build strong customer relationships with its B2B firm through a digital platform. It is known as a cost-effective tool as mentioned by several articles that a two-way communication is more effectively managed and gained through this digital platform of social media. The theory that can be used to support this RQ1 is the theory of Relationship marketing, which is important for B2B marketing, as one of the main principles of relationship marketing is to create a positive strong relationship in order to build a long-term relationship. Relationship marketing can be used to support the first research question at hand as it is important to B2B for creating long-term customer relationships with a buyer or seller. As this theory can support a company to enhance the companies' growth and loyalty when the relationship

created is strong and is of high importance (Palmatier et al., 2006). As a result, businesses in this B2B environment tend to use and embed this digital tool of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn into their marketing strategy as it helps the business to create a two-way interaction and communication between their B2B firms. This further helps the business to create relationship quality and builds trust, commitment between the sellers to buyer relationship via a social interface of social media of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

### *5.2.1 Relationship Quality: sub themes 1- Trust*

The participants in this study mentioned trust influences building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing. This is because, all seven reseller firms' participants said that trust places high importance in their relationship when wanting to build and maintain a strong relationship with the B2B firm. The findings state that the salesperson of the B2B firm is very influential in building the bridge of trust between their B2B company and the B2B reseller. As shown by previous literature, B2B businesses use social media as it has been known as a facilitator for solidifying relationships and creating the basis of trust, it has been known as a tool for creating opportunities and customer value (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Social media interaction such as Facebook, is utilised by businesses to gather information that can help to build and maintain the relationships for their business that can further develop trust for the people in the network amongst their business. Trust was affected by the use of social media and is used by the B2B firm's salesperson and the B2B firm to create brand awareness, create promotions, discounts and product awareness.

As a result, the resellers in the research also believed that they could build trust with the salesperson of the B2B firm as the utilisation of technology such as emails, mobile interaction and social media interaction helped to create fast and efficient information exchange that benefited the reseller and made the reseller to perceive the B2B firm in a positive light as the communication between the B2B resellers and the company was very efficient and as a result this made the resellers to view the B2B company in a positive way as they believed the use of

digital technology made the resellers feel as if the B2B firm cared about the resellers needs and wants .

Moreover, social media and digital technology had a positive impact on trust in building relationship value for the participants. As the B2B resellers in this research say that they were able to create and build trust with the salesperson as they are the ones who explain and discuss the deals and promotions they have and they interacted with us through the digital technology of mobile and email interaction and social media Facebook interaction to fulfil the needs and wants they had.

Furthermore, the salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages helped to create relationship value for the B2B reseller through trust by using digital communication and social media efforts. The salesperson used email and technology to place orders with the resellers, this had a positive effect on the resellers as it made the resellers to build trust with the B2B salesperson. This therefore created an incentive such as the B2B firms resellers needs are fulfilled such as the deals they want from the sales rep are given to them, as a result they are more likely to create the bridge of trust between them and the B2B firm as value is created to them in a more efficient manner .

Moreover, the role of social media of the B2B firm advertising deals on social media Facebook Page and once those deals are given to the reseller of the B2B firm, the reseller is likely to create a trust worthy relationship with the B2B firm sales rep. The speed and efficiency in the communication and interaction in the relationship between the B2B reseller and the B2B firm sales person was built on trust through social media – Facebook and through email and mobile interaction. The tools of social media and the web itself such as the use of internet browsing, interaction and monitoring of emails all helps and mediates in creating a committed relationship with a B2B firm and its B2B partner (Wu et al., 2015). For example, the use of social media helps to create trust based committed relationship by B2B firm to its reseller or business partner through the tools of social media and the internet (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

### *5.2.2 Relationship Quality: sub themes 2 - Role of Salesperson*

The findings from data show that the role of the B2B salesperson had an effect on building relationship value for the reseller in B2B marketing through social media . Recent literature says that social media has a positive effect on sales persons behaviour in creating value to a customer. For example, in recent literature studies it appears that a sales-persons' ability to create value using social media has put high importance in the B2B environment (Ahearne et al., 2007). Research also explains that a sales person is expected to enhance the buyer to seller relationship when the seller has relevant information in regards to the product use and these efforts can be further enhanced to the buyer through the sales person using social media as a content enabler. This is because, a social content enabler permits a sales person to draw on the important social knowledge about product use and customers (Hannay, 2010). This therefore, helps to increase and provide reliable and accurate information to its customers through a timely fashion manner.

The participants from the research revealed that salesperson had a positive impact on building relationship value for the reseller through social media efforts on Facebook. This is due to the salesperson interacting and communicating with the resellers through Facebook encouraged to create a positive relationship for the B2B resellers with the firm and the B2B salesperson. The findings from the data gained also suggest that the participants perceive the salesperson of the B2B firm as the brand image of the B2B firm. This is because they are the ones they communicate and interact with on a daily basis to place orders , talk about deals , discuss ways the sales person can help the B2B reseller to fulfil their needs and wants . To conclude , the findings suggest that support gained from the salesperson by utilising social media in the B2B firm , helps the seven reseller customers of Frucor beverages to keep and maintain a strong relationship with them by using social media as a tool to build customer interaction and communication exchange.

In summary , the relationship between the sales person and the B2B reseller customer is affected in a positive way through the use of digital technology as , the speed and efficiency in communication and information exchange is

portrayed by the B2B firm sales person in minutes to the B2B firm reseller this is by email , social media and mobile interaction .

### 5.2.3 *Incentives by B2B Company*

The incentives by the B2B company have an effect on building relationship value for a reseller using social media in a positive way. The findings from the data suggest that incentives that were given by the B2B company to the B2B resellers all had a positive effect on creating relationship value for the reseller in using social media. The tool of social media of Facebook and Instagram was used as a creative tool that created relationship value for the reseller. The participants from the study revealed the tool of social media – Facebook communication and interaction and advertisements of the B2B companies products they were able to create a positive strong relationship with the B2B company, as the incentives that was provided by the B2B company through Facebook was that the firm was advertising their products online. This was an incentive for the reseller as they gained a significant amount of customers due to online advertising and promotion as, more customers became product and business aware. This therefore, had a positive impact on the resellers as they gained more consumers.

Also, the use of social media such as Facebook advertisements of promotions and discounts gave the resellers the ability to gain their business discounts and deals on products and asked for promotions through the B2B firm salesperson. These incentives created for the reseller had a positive impact and effect on building relationship value for the reseller in B2B environment. Furthermore, the findings above suggest that there are positive effects of using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B environment. An example of this is, the resellers perceive the marketing efforts used by B2B firms in the form of implementing these creative marketing promotions and deals for customers and resellers using digital technology such as social media or simple interaction and communication through the use of emails, mobile interaction and the internet. For example , advertisements on social media pages such as Facebook , Instagram and YouTube advertising of the B2B companies products creates product

awareness and brand awareness for the B2B firm but it also creates loyal customers for the B2B resellers. As a result, this benefits the B2B firm of Frucor beverages as well as the B2B reseller firms.

The findings also show that promotions, rebates and discounts that are given to the participants; the resellers of the B2B firm helps the resellers to perceive the B2B firm in a positive light, because of the benefits that they gain with the incentives such as customer loyalty, business and customer awareness.

Moreover, it is possible to say that the use of digital technologies present in B2B firms has a positive impact on the resellers as well as the B2B firm itself as it reinforces the B2B firms value and it creates loyal customers for the B2B firm resellers.

### 5.3 RQ2: How do resellers of B2B firm perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology?

In order to help in answering the RQ2 how do resellers of the B2B firms perceive these social marketing strategies such as social media or digital technology? The findings reveal that participants perceived these social marketing strategies such as social media of Facebook and digital technologies in a positive way. This is because as explained by past literature Piercy (2010) claims that companies' priorities of how they connect and interact with B2B customers are rapidly changing, this is due to the radical shift in the traditional role of how businesses create sales. Because of this reason, more and more B2B reseller firms perceive the social marketing strategies as a beneficial tool that is used by B2B firms as it reaches a consumer's attention in a more effective and efficient manner.

Also, according to past literature also states that social media is a different way of advertising that is cost effective, high in quality, fast in frequency and has a wide reach in gaining the attention of all customers throughout a virtual community (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). In conclusion, more and more resellers and B2B firms are realising that the tool of social media is a very beneficial tool to embed into their company.

### *5.3.1 Digitalisation usage effects on B2B resellers*

The participants in this research perceive these digital technologies of emails, mobile communication and interaction as a positive tool that is used by the B2B companies and it has a positive effect on the participants. This is because , the participants suggested in data findings that the use of digital technologies being utilised by the B2B firm such as email and mobile interaction , web browsing of the internet and the use of social media habits of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all have a positive impact on the B2B firms resellers. This is because they believe from these social media efforts that are undergone by B2B firms lets the B2B reseller to gain as loyal customers and profitability is created for both the B2B firms resellers in the form of the advertising, discounts and promotions that are shown on Facebook and Instagram.

These marketing efforts used by B2B firms through the form of digital technologies all benefit the B2B firm and the resellers tend to perceive these marketing efforts in a positive manner. In relation to this, past literature also believes that the effects of using digitalisation are beneficial and that social marketing is perceived as a beneficial tool (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Canhoto & Clark, 2013). For example past literature suggests the tools of social media and the web itself such as the use of internet browsing, interaction and monitoring of emails all helps and mediates a firm to create a committed relationship with its B2B partner the resellers (Wu et al., 2015). As social media and Web 2.0 helps B2B firm to create trust through creating a committed relationship with the B2B firm to its reseller through the tools of social media and the internet. The researcher believes that due to this reason the participants the resellers of the B2B firm view these marketing efforts as a beneficial tool that is used by the B2B firm. Moreover the participants explained that they have a positive perception of a B2B firm such as Frucor beverages, when the speed and efficiency in communication and information exchange is present in the form of digital technologies of emails, mobile interaction, and social media interaction on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The findings suggest that when the B2B firm uses these digital technologies than the resellers say that they perceive the B2B firm in a positive manner.

### 5.3.2 *Benefits in using digital technology*

The findings from the data analysis show that the participants explained to the researcher the importance that is placed on the benefits of using digital technology of emails , mobile interaction , internet and social media of Facebook and Instagram. Most participants mentioned that the use and implementation of digital technologies of email interaction social media – Facebook and Instagram interaction has affected the lives of the resellers in positive manner as it has made the jobs easier for them. Due to this reason, the researcher concludes that the participants who are the resellers of the B2B firm perceive the marketing strategies of social media and digital technologies that are portrayed by the B2B firm as a positive benefit for both themselves and the B2B Company. Literature today reveals the advantages that businesses in the B2B markets can gain from implementing and using social media is, they gain valuable feedback about the improvements that the business can make and helps their business to attract new business partners (Michaelidou et al., 2011). This therefore enhances the buyer - seller relationship quality. Relationship quality has been used frequently in buyer – seller literature by few practitioners and scholars who share a common definition and measure (Julie, 2006).

Moreover, it is possible to say from past literature and the findings there are several benefits of using social media Facebook and Instagram and email and mobile interaction communication with B2B firm of Frucor beverages. This is because the use and implementation of the digital technologies affects the relationship between the B2B firm and its resellers in a positive manner as the communication and information exchange from the utilisation of digital technology of email and internet and Facebook interaction is enabling the B2B resellers to retain and maintain their relationship with the B2B firm in a more effective manner. The B2B resellers of B2B firm of Frucor beverages perceive these marketing efforts of advertising, promoting, encouraging and interacting with their resellers and customer through a digital interface is perceived in a positive manner by the seven resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages.

#### 5.4 RQ3: Identify the role of branding in the B2B marketing environment and how does the present branding in the B2B marketing environment have an effect on the resellers in the B2B environment?

To help in answering the RQ3 branding in the B2B marketing environment. The findings reveal that participants revealed that the use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram advertising and communication encourages B2B resellers to become brand loyalty, to be able to differentiate brand identity and to be able to associate with the brand in a more efficient manner.

Past research literature suggests that social media marketing is being used by firms in the B2B and B2C context as it helps to create brand awareness, helps to monitor and analyse conversations that are made on social media that can help a B2B company to implement business opportunities and new business ideas amongst their B2B brand (Glynn, Brodie & Motion, 2007).

These marketing efforts such as creating virtual communities and groups on Facebook with other businesses in the B2B environment can help the B2B firm to create potential business opportunities. B2B firms also, use these communities on social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to further monitor these sites by analysing the conversations businesses are saying or commenting about. This is because, these conversations are important to the B2B resellers as these potential comments and conversations on social media can create potential B2B partners and can create better, improved product that can further benefit the B2B businesses in the future by gaining more B2B partners (Schweidel & Moe, 2014).

##### *5.4.2 Brand loyalty*

The findings suggest that the seven resellers believe that their values and beliefs are influenced due to the utilisation of digital technology such as email, mobile interaction and the utilisation of social media of Facebook and Instagram creates profitability for their reseller business and also for the B2B firm. It can be said that this is due to the occurrence of brand loyalty amongst the B2B firm

of Frucor and resellers are effected due to digital technologies being used in the B2B firm as the beliefs and values from both parties were similar in relation to their views on having digitalisation in place in businesses this had an overall positive affect on the relationship between the B2B firm and the B2B reseller.

Therefore, brand loyalty occurred. It is possible to say that the participants believed that the salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages does have an effect on the way the B2B resellers perceive the company as said by one of the resellers that the sales person of the B2B firm are influential in affecting their overall relationship as they understand what we want and they do not force us to buy the products that we don't want to. The theme of brand loyalty is important as shown by the findings that the participants believe that brand loyalty is one of the most important elements that helps a business to create profitability and for business growth. For example, the findings suggest that participants believe that when the B2B firm utilises and uses digital technology to interact and communicate with us or for promotional activities, it makes us happy as it not only benefits their business, but it has a positive effect on our business as it creates customer value for us. Therefore, the participants suggested that due to that reason they become loyal to the B2B firm as they are fulfilling their needs and demands not only through the virtual format of Facebook social media interaction but also because of the customer service that they provide the B2B reseller with, in terms of product rebates, discounts, deals and promotions.

Moreover, to conclude it is possible to say that branding in the B2B environment is important to B2B resellers as branding helps and contributes in creating both loyalty, customer reseller value and helps to remember a brand or product through creative branding used by B2B firms, so the findings suggested that B2B firms should use branding in B2B firms to have a positive effect on the way their business is perceived by resellers.

### *5.4.3 Brand Identity*

The participants from the research explained that it is quite evident that the B2B firm uses influential digitalisation habits of marketing to create a memorable

picture of their products and brands in the consumers mind and for their reselling customers they create excellent brand identity, through excellent customer service, promotions and of course through excellent marketing advertising that in return benefits the resellers of the B2B firm as well as their own customers. Therefore, the participants known as the resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages highlighted that the world of digitalisation such as emails, mobile phones , internet and social media enhances and reinforces the B2B firms values , beliefs and brand identity to the resellers in an excellent manner , this than therefore has a positive effect on the B2B resellers as they can recognise the B2B firms brands in a more efficient and clear manner .

Branding in the B2B marketing environment is important as it helps to analyse and outline the brand in a more clear manner and B2B resellers find it much more easier to become loyal to a brand or B2B firm such as Frucor beverages who uses branding with social media and digital technology to interact, communicate and engage with its consumers (Glynn, Motion & Brodie, 2007). Also as past literature explains that it is important to embed social media tools and the webpage of emails to enhance and create positive relationship through interaction and communication with its B2B consumers. This is because the digital platforms of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn all help a business to create loyalty and show a consumer that the B2B firm is committed to them in creating them with value through value co creation through communication and engagement through the use of social media (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

## 5.5 Contribution of this research

This study took a new approach to exploring the gap in marketing literature, by seeking to understand the role of social media in B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The findings and insights that are gained from this research has increased the researchers knowledge in regards to social media and the effects of the social media – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn in the B2B environment and how the other forms of digital technologies of emails, mobile communication and Web 2.0 has an effect on the B2B firms Frucor beverages customers who are the resellers of the B2B firms. Furthermore, this study contributes to both research

in marketing, branding in marketing literature, industrial marketing and practice marketing. Contributions of this research are from a theoretical and empirical background.

### 5.6.1 Theoretical Contribution

The B2B social media-marketing domain is currently under researched; due to this reason this research study significantly adds value to the marketing and branding literature at present. The findings from this research study reveals that B2B resellers of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages perceive the marketing efforts of social media advertising, promoting, communicating and interacting with its consumers in a positive manner and that social media is very important to B2B firms in the B2B environment when wanting to create profitability and retain a B2B reseller. Moreover, this study illustrates the meanings that are used to define and explain the effects of using social media in building relationship value for a reseller in B2B marketing and how the resellers of the B2B firm perceive these marketing efforts. Thus this study adds knowledge into current B2B marketing literature as it will help marketers to better understand and gain knowledge on the importance that is placed on B2B businesses embedding the digital tool of social media and Web 2.0 into their business and how the utilisation of social media sites such as, Facebook, Instagram and Web 2.0 can create a positive and healthy relationship with B2B resellers. By contributing into B2B marketing literature this research adds value as it is beneficial to know how important the digital world of social media has become in the B2B society today as the digital world is forever growing.

### 5.6.2. Empirical Contribution

To contribute empirically to this study, the study collected real – life data from a group of seven reseller B2B firm managing director and sales managers of four B2B reseller firms from the grocery industry and a salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages. Thus, undertaking research in a New Zealand context has provided marketers with a contextual cultural grounding as the findings provided ground a specific culture.

### 5.6.3 Practical Implication

To contribute practically to this study, the data collected in this study will help companies and businesses in the B2B environment to gain knowledge on the benefits of utilising and adopting social media channels to further benefit their business and to grow profitability. Also, this study will enhance B2B firms to clarify their understanding of the use and role of social media and how important it is for them to embed this tool into their business as it is a beneficial and relevant tool that businesses can benefit from.

## 6.0 Limitations

The limitations of this study are, this study has contributed to knowledge; attention is given to the sampling method, sample size and participant collection criteria. The study could be undergone using a different data collection method for future study as this study solely focused on qualitative research.

Further the researcher may have made some assumptions about the study's central phenomena during data collection. Coding and categorising of the themes could have been undertaken without using the software of NVivo for data collection as an analysing method, another approach could be used. The findings of the study could use a more diverse, random sample that would give a more accurate or better result as opposed to the results at hand. A more wide range of research questions could be built for a more detailed and comprehensive data collection and detailed findings. Therefore the generalizability of the findings can be further improved through future research.

## 6.1 Future Research

This study only focuses on understanding the role of social media in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The study focused on one B2B firm of Frucor beverages, future research could undergo this study with a different B2B firm altering the theories and collection of data method to gain a more detailed and comprehensive data. Also, the sample size of the research was small and was not a random sample, future

research can undergo research in context to undergoing this research with a random sample size. Different research approaches such as quantitative research approach should be employed for future data research to better gain an understanding through different research questions, this may broaden the data collection. Future research could undergo research should aim to understand how stakeholders adopt to social media tools to achieve their work goals.

### 6.1.2 Conclusion

This thesis sought to understand the role of social media in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. The research problem at hand was important as past literature studies argued that the adoption of social media sites in business organizations in the B2B environment is perceived as an irrelevant digital tool used by businesses. Social media is used in B2B organizations to nurture customer relationships for building brand loyalty and customer engagement. Therefore, a gap in literature was found which was to explore the role of social media in a B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer perspective.

Therefore, the study undertook research to explore the role social media plays in B2B organizations and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective, as previous literature fails to explore the value and role of social media from a national context of New Zealand. To do this a qualitative research approach of face-to-face semi-structured interviews is to be employed with sales managers and managing directors across four reseller firms who are existing customers of a B2B firm. By exploring the role that social media plays in B2B markets, the study developed a conceptual framework to understand the usage of social media in the highly engaged B2B marketing environment.

The study found that the role that social media plays in the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages was very important to the B2B firm and the B2B firm resellers perceived the marketing efforts of the B2B firm in a positive manner. The research study found 9 themes that were influenced by each other and they

were tied to the three research questions at present. Furthermore, findings from the data analysis showed that B2B reseller firms perceived the marketing efforts of the B2B firm of Frucor beverages in a positive manner as they thought that the utilisation and interaction of using social media efforts such as Facebook, Instagram and Web 2.0 created loyalty, customers over their small B2B reselling firm and they believed that trust was more easily built when information exchange was undergo through speed and efficiency.

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## Appendices

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### *Appendix 1: Participation Information Sheet for sales representative*



**Participant Information Sheet**

*Note: For B2B firm sales representative participation information sheet.*

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**  
30<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Project Title**  
The role of Social Media in building value for the reseller in B2B marketing

**An Invitation**  
Hey I'am Faaiza Munif. I am a Masters of business student. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. The research topic is to investigate the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. So the research interview that I would like you to participate in is around the role of social media in your B2B firm and the perspectives resellers as customers (buyers) have about the B2B firm. Furthermore, this research interview does contribute towards my qualification of my masters in business, as you can tell this is very important to me.

**What is the purpose of this research?**  
This research is part of my qualification for my Masters in Business as this research is for my thesis . The research question is based around the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of socila media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. This research is importance as , it is to be undertaken to gain an indepth understanding of the role of social media from a B2B firms reseller as a customer perspective and if the use of social media has a positive or negative effect on the resellers and how they view the role of social media.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**  
You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a sales representative of the B2B firm and the main point of my research is to understand the role that social media plays in your B2B firm and the views and perspective the resellers have about the role of social media present in your B2B firms. In relation to this, another lot of interviews will also be undertaken with four resellers who are customers of your B2B this is to understand the views and perspective the resellers have about the role of social media present in your B2B firms. As a result, I have selected one

of the four resellers B2B firm to take part in this research through a face-to-face semi structured interviews. The contact details such as names were obtained by emailing your firm to get your contacts.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

A consent form will be given to you before the research interviews progress as a record, your participation and consent being taken is really important for this research as your participation in this research is purely voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to however, withdraw from the study, than you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing me to use it. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. This is why it is important to have this information sheet read by you and a consent form signed by you to ensure that you understand the research and if you agree or not to take part.

**What will happen in this research?**

The research project involves an interview around the topic of social media. The participants in this research will be part of the data collection method, whereby data will be collected through a semi structured face-to-face interview. This is where the participants will be asked questions in the interview relating to social media. The interviews will be no longer than 1 hour. The face-to-face semi structured interviews will occur at the locations the firms offices are located or at a more convenient location such as a café. Recording of the interview will be undertaken with a digital recorder. Lastly, the questions will be about social media and B2B social media.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

These are minimal because, I promise to create a friendly conversational interview whereby you will not feel any discomfort. There are no risks involved as, your opinions are all confidential and will not be judged and information and results from this interview will be anonymous and confidential between you the interviewee and I the interviewer. The information is confidential and the individuals will not be identified in the report.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

N/A

**What are the benefits?**

This interview contributes to completion of my thesis for my qualification Masters in business. This therefore contributes in a positive way towards my Masters in business qualification. This is why, I would benefit from this interview and data collection as this contributes heavily towards my qualification. The resellers will be contributing to knowledge about business use to social media.

**What compensation is available for injury or negligence?**

N/A

**How will my privacy be protected?**

The information provided will be confidential and only I the interviewer / researcher of this research will have all information about you as the respondent of this interview data collection and all information and data will be kept confidential as the results will be confidential. Also, since I will be interviewing another group of participants the offer of confidentiality is limited. Any information that is provided will be confidential and no individuals will be identified in the report.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no cost measures apart from the cost in terms of your time. I will need approximately 1 hour of your time for this interview data collection.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have 1 week to consider this invitation. It would be muchly appreciated if this interview can be conducted on a time and date where you and I are both free. But should be undertaken and data should be collected by 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You may receive feedback on the results of this research if you want the results than I will need your email and this is where I will send you the results that I have found from this research.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Name: Mark Glynn

Email: mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz

Work phone number: 921 9999 Ext. 5813

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the

research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Name: Faaiza Munif

Email: [faaizam@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:faaizam@hotmail.co.nz)

Note that for personal safety reasons, AUTECH does not allow researchers to provide home addresses or phone numbers.

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Name: Mark Glynn

Name: Katharine Jones

Email: [mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz](mailto:mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz) Or Email: [katharine.jones@aut.ac.nz](mailto:katharine.jones@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the date that ethics approval was granted. AUTECH Reference number type the reference number.

11 May 2018

page 1 of 2

This version was edited in July 2018.

## **Participant Information Sheet**

*Note : B2B firm (retailers) resellers participation information sheet .*

### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

30<sup>th</sup> August 2017

### **Project Title**

The role of Social Media in building value for the reseller in B2B marketing

### **An Invitation**

Hey I'am Faaiza Munif. I am a Masters of business student. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. The research topic is to investigate the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. So the research interview that I would like you to participate in is around the role of social media and the perspectives you resellers have as a customer buyer of the B2B firm. Furthermore, this research interview does contribute towards my qualification of my Masters in business, as you can tell this is very important to me.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

This research is part of my qualification for my Masters in Business as this research is for my thesis . The research question is based around the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and the value of social media from a reseller as a customer (buyer) perspective. This research is importance as , it is to be undertaken to gain an indepth understanding of the role of social media from a B2B firms reseller as a customer perspective and if the use of social media has a positive or negative effect on the resellers and how they view the role of social media.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a reseller and the main point of my research is to understand the views and perspective you resellers have about the role of social media present in B2B firms. Another lot of interview will also be undertaken with the B2B firm of Frucor beverages sales representative, this is to understand the role that social media plays in the B2B firm and if it benefits the B2B firm in any way by providing value to the reseller firms. As a result, I have selected one sales manager and one managing director from each

of the four resellers B2B firm to take part in this research through a face-to-face semi structured interviews. The contact details such as names were obtained by emailing your firm to get your contacts.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

A consent form will be given to you before the research interviews progress as a record, your participation and consent being taken is really important for this research as your participation in this research is purely voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to however, withdraw from the study, than you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing me to use it. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. This is why it is important to have this information sheet read by you and a consent form signed by you to ensure that you understand the research and if you agree or not to take part.

**What will happen in this research?**

The research project involves an interview around the topic of social media. The participants in this research will be part of the data collection method, whereby data will be collected through a semi structured face-to-face interview. This is where the participants will be asked questions in the interview relating to social media. The interviews will be no longer than 1 hour. The face-to-face semi structured interviews will occur at the locations the firms offices are located or at a more convenient location such as a café. Recording of the interview will be undertaken with a digital recorder. Lastly, the questions will be about social media and B2B social media.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

These are minimal because, I promise to create a friendly conversational interview whereby you will not feel any discomfort. There are no risks involved as, your opinions are all confidential and will not be judged and information and results from this interview will be anonymous and confidential between you the interviewee and I the interviewer. The information is confidential and the individuals will not be identified in the report.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

N/A

**What are the benefits?**

This interview contributes to completion of my thesis for my qualification masters in business. This therefore contributes in a positive way towards my masters in business qualification. This is why, I would benefit from this interview and data collection as this contributes heavily towards my qualification. The sales representative will be contributing to knowledge about how the B2B firm uses social media in their B2B firm and how resellers view their social media antics.

**What compensation is available for injury or negligence?**

N/A

**How will my privacy be protected?**

The information provided will be confidential and only I the interviewer / researcher of this research will have all information about you as the respondent of this interview data collection and all information and data will be kept confidential as the results will be confidential. Also, since I will be interviewing another group of participants the offer of confidentiality is limited. Any information that is provided will be confidential and no individuals will be identified in the report.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no cost measures apart from the cost in terms of your time. I will need approximately 1 hour of your time for this interview data collection.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have 1 week to consider this invitation. It would be muchly appreciated if this interview can be conducted on a time and date where you and I are both free. But should be undertaken and data should be collected by 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You may receive feedback on the results of this research if you want the results than I will need your email and this is where I will send you the results that I have found from this research.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Name: Mark Glynn

Email: [mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz](mailto:mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz)

Work phone number: 921 9999 Extn 5813

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent

Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Name: Faaiza Munif

Email: [faaizam@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:faaizam@hotmail.co.nz)

Note that for personal safety reasons, AUTEK does not allow researchers to provide home addresses or phone numbers.

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Name : Mark Glynn

Name : Katharine

Jones

Email: [mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz](mailto:mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz)

Or

Email :

[katharine.jones@aut.ac.nz](mailto:katharine.jones@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date final ethics approval was granted, AUTEK Reference number type the reference number.



## Consent Form

### For use when interviews are involved.

*Project title:*        *The role of social media in building value for the reseller in B2B marketing*

*Project Supervisor:*    *Mark Glynn & Katharine Jones*

*Researcher:*        *Faaiza Munif*

- j    I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017.
- j    I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- j    I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- j    I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- j    I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- j    I agree to take part in this research.
- j    I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes     No

Participant's        signature: .....

Participant's        name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):  
.....  
.....  
.....

## *Appendix 3: Interview Questions for Participants*

### Interview questions for B2B firms Resellers:



#### **Part 1: Background information on interviewee and firm**

Q1) Please tell me a bit about the organisation you're in and your role within the company?

#### **Part 2: Theme - Role of digital technologies Sub-themes: role of salesperson & how organisation uses the digital technology**

Q2) What digital technologies does your organisation use?

Q3) How has digitisation/the introduction of digital technologies (mobile communication, email, internet, online marketing/promotional software, social media, after sales support systems, sales admin, etc.) been utilised by your organisation? And how has it affected your day-to-day job, if it has at all?

Q4) Do you think Frucor Beverages utilise their digital technologies effectively to communicate with customers (product info, events, social media)? In your opinion, is this important in a B2B environment?

Q5) Does speed and efficiency in communication affect how you perceive Frucor as a Brand? Speed and efficiency of communication are often linked to digitisation; can you tell me a bit about how this has affected your organisation? How important is this in relation to a brand's image and identity? (Linkage to brand identity)

Q6) How has the development/introduction of digital technologies influenced how you perceive Frucor beverages as a brand, in terms of the values and beliefs that you associate with them? (Linkage to brand identity).

Q7) How has your relationship with the sales representative of the B2B firms been affected by the use of your digital technologies?

#### **Part 3: Theme - Brand identity**

Q8) What is your current opinion of Frucor Beverages as a brand and its products?

Q9) In what ways do the B2B firm of Frucor beverages appeal to their customers?

Q10) In as much detail as possible, how do you think Frucor Beverages build their brand identity?

#### **Part 4: Theme - relationships with the brand Sub-themes: Trust and role of RESELLERS – relationship quality**

Q11) Brand relationships are often important for brands to be successful, what is your relationship with Frucor beverages like?

Q12) How has your relationship with Frucor Beverages been affected by digital technologies? How are these relationships maintained between Frucor beverages and your organisation?

Q13) Is branding in the B2B context as important to your organisation as it may be in the B2C (business to consumer) context?

Q14) Is trust important to you in a brand relationship?

Q15) How do Frucor beverages develop trust between themselves and your organisation?

Q16) With the salesperson one way for Frucor beverages to communicate with you as a customer, how influential are they in representing Frucor as a brand? Part 5:

#### **Theme - Brand associations and value co creation (RESELLERS)**

Q17) Are there specific values and brand associations that come to mind when you think of Frucor beverages?

Q18) Do Frucor beverages use brand associations (logo, name, slogan) when sending out emails and marketing/promotional material?



Q19) What effect does this have on you as a customer?

**Part 6: Theme - Brand loyalty**

Q20) Are you loyal to Frucor Beverages as a brand? If so, why?

Q21) Do you think social media is beneficial to your business?

Q22) Does the B2B firm who you are a customer employ a lot of social media in their marketing.

Q23) Do you use social media? How often?

Q24) Can you think of any incentives and any positive experiences that you have with the B2B firm / organisation of Frucor Beverages provides you with? if yes what are they?

**Interview questions for the B2B firm Frucor Beverages:**

**Part 1: Background information on interviewee and firm**

Q1) Please tell me a bit about the organisation you work for and your role within the company?

**Part 2: Theme - Role of digital technologies Sub-themes: role of salesperson & how organisation uses the digital technology**

Q2) What digital technologies does your organisation use?

Q3) How has digitisation/the introduction of digital technologies (mobile communication, email, internet, online marketing/promotional software, social media, after sales support systems, sales admin, etc.) been utilised by your organisation? And how has it affected your day-to-day job, if it has at all?

Q4) Do you think Frucor Beverages utilise their digital technologies effectively to communicate with customers (product info, events, social media)? In your opinion, is this important in a B2B environment?

Q5) How has the development/introduction of digital technologies influenced how you perceive Frucor beverages as a brand, in terms of the values and beliefs that you associate with them? (Linkage to brand identity).

Q7) How has your relationship with the salesperson in reseller firms been affected by the use of your digital technologies?

**Part 3: Theme - Brand identity**

Q8) What is your current opinion of the brand you work for Frucor Beverages and its products?

Q9) In what ways does the B2B firm of Frucor beverages appeals to their resellers known as customers of the B2B firm?

**Part 4: Theme - relationships with the brand Sub-themes: Trust and role of RESELLERS – relationship quality**

Q10) Brand relationships are often important for brands to be successful, what is your relationship with the B2B firm reseller like?

Q11) How has your relationship with the resellers of the B2B firm been affected by digital technologies? How are these relationships maintained between the resellers and your B2B organisation?

Q12) Is branding in the B2B context as important to your organisation as it may be in the B2C (business to consumer) context?

Q13) Is trust important to you in a brand relationship?

Q14) How do resellers of the B2B firm develop trust between themselves and your B2B organisation?

Q15) With the managing director of the reseller firm tell me one way how Frucor beverages communicates with your customer, how influential are they in representing Frucor as a brand?

**Part 5: Theme - Brand associations and value co creation (RESELLERS)**

Q16) Are there specific values and brand associations that come to mind when you think of your resellers that could help create value to them through your B2B firm of Frucor?

Q17) How does the B2B firm of Frucor beverages use brand associations (logo, name, slogan) when sending out emails and marketing/promotional material to its resellers?

Q18) What effect does this have on you as a salesperson of the B2B firm of Frucor?

**Part 6: Theme - Brand loyalty**

Q19) would you say your customers known as resellers of the B2B firm are loyal to Frucor Beverages as a brand? If so, why?

Q20) Can you think of any incentives that your B2B firm / organisation of Frucor Beverages provides your resellers with? if yes what are they?

Q21) Do you think your B2B firm finds it beneficial to use social media to create loyal customers? How?

Q22) How do you deal with negative comments or a brand reputation crisis?

Q23) Do you think ever since your B2B firm has started to use social media it has increased your profits for your B2B firm?

*Appendix 4: Business profile*

B2B reseller firm profiles

Identification / abbreviation code of organisation and role.	Profile
MDPF	The organisation that is in the retail environment is a small business foodmart or grocery store, called Ponderosa that is owned by the Managing Director Mohammed. The managing director manages the staffs, control the payments, bills and overview everything and make the big decisions with other firms who provide food and beverage to the B2B reseller firm. The business is like a four square or some people may call it a grocery store. Located in West Auckland.
SMPF	The organisation is a small grocery store, which is called Ponderosa , it is a small food and grocery store. The participant Shameer works their as a sales manager whereby they handle all the marketing and sales duties, and gives orders to the sales representatives of firms who they buy the products off such as B2B firms; Ruka Confectionary, Coca Cola and Frucor etc. Located in West Auckland.
MDVC	The organisation is a mini convenience store called Volt.The participant Farida is the the managing director of the store. Her tasks is to manage the staff and overview everything and make the big decisions for the company, pay the bills and decide on what products to keep and what businesses or B2B firms to keep in contact with and what companies to make relationships with for their business . Located in Central Auckland.
SMVC	The company that the participant Zarina works for is called Volt it's a mini convenience store. She is the sales manager of the store. Her duties consists of, interacting with customers on a daily basis and also with a lot of different B2B firms sales reps and area mangers of the area to discuss deals , product buying , prices and promotions . Located Central Auckland.
MDBS	The organisation is a dairy shop. The participant Bashir's role in the company is that they are the owner or managing director of the shop. They handle all the staffs, purchases the groceries and beverages from other B2B companies and wholesalers. Located in Central Auckland.

SMBS	The participant Faheema is in an organisation, which is like a small mini mart of a dairy shop called Boundary store. The participant works their as a sales manager, she handles all the orders, confirms the orders , communicates with the managing director in relation to product purchasing , promotions and communicates with B2B firms sales reps in giving orders creating beneficial deals for the store . Located in Central Auckland
MDFC	The company that the participant Liakat works for is in a mini mart called Forte convenience. He is the managing director. His role is that he manages the staffs of the company or organisation, handles and confirms orders given by the sales manager , communicates with sales rep of companies to finalise deals discussed with sales manager and handles customer complaints. Located in Central Auckland
SMFC	The organisation that the participant Zaeem works as sales manager in a little mini mart in central Auckland . His duties consists of giving orders to sales rep of B2B companies in regards to the products they sell . Communicates with sales reps and wholesalers on a daily basis in regards to pricing and different promotions they can do to lift sales.

### B2B firm profiles

Identification / abbreviation code of organisation and role.	Profile:
SPFB	This participant is the sales representative of the B2B firm of Frucor Beverages. His role in the well – known company is to provide excellent customer service , in terms of advertising products on social media, communicating with resellers sales managers or managing directors through mobile technology and emails , or specifically doing in store promotions in reselling stores , creating excellent deals and pricing for resellers of the B2B firm and communicating with resellers on a daily weekly basis to fullfill their needs and wants to lift their sales and grow profit for their firm aswell