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**Ireland's Agri-food and Drink Sector:
The Correlation Between eWOM Initiatives
and Employee Brand Advocacy**

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Monday 20th of January 2020

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Aisling Keenan Gaylard, declare the PhD thesis titled, *Ireland's Agri-Food and Drink Sector: The Correlation Between eWOM Initiatives and Employee Brand Advocacy*, is no more than 80,000 words inclusive of quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, and references.

This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. This thesis is my own work, except where otherwise indicated,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aisling Keenan Gaylard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Signature:

Date: Monday 20th January 2020

ABSTRACT

The Irish agri-food and drink sector has a rich heritage. It is Ireland's largest indigenous industry, employing 8.4% of the working population and generating an annual turnover of €27.5bn. SMEs within the sector use social media (SM) to build brand awareness, customer relations, and sales. These goals are effective when employees adopt and use electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) because they feel trusted, satisfied, and motivated by the support employers provide. The research question evaluates whether employees adoption and use of eWOM correlates to brand advocacy.

This study avails of four theories: Venkatesh et al.'s (2012) Unified Theory of Adoption and Usage Technology (UTAUT2) Model, Guesalaga's (2016) Conceptual Framework on Social Media Usage in Sales and Badrinarayanan, Sierra, (2018) Front-Line Employee Brand Advocacy Conceptual Model and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Homans, 1958). Constructs of interest include: *social influence*, *facilitating conditions*, *employee effort*, *employer motivation*, and *engaging SM community*.

This research employs a triangulation approach involving two stages. The first stage comprises of a survey to a random sample of SMEs within Ireland's agri-food and drink sector. The 150 online questionnaires have been analysed using partial least squares structural equations modelling (PLS-SEM) software Smart-PLS. The second stage involves semi-structured interviews, probing the quantitative analysis.

The findings confirm an employee's behavioural intentions, adoption and use of eWOM are the outcomes of *employee effort*, and *employer motivation*. *Social influence* and *facilitating conditions* did not influence employee adoption and use of eWOM. Business environments and colleagues do not play a major role in an employee's adoption and use of work-related SM. Employees who adopt and use eWOM initiatives are self-appointed brand

ambassadors. The rejected constructs of *social influence* and *facilitating conditions* should be omitted from future adoption and use models relating to eWOM.

The moderator, *engaging SM community*, influences *eWOM adoption and use*. However, there is no effect on *employee brand advocacy*, which indicates having an *engaged SM community* does not correlate to *employee brand advocacy*. The findings confirm the high predictive power of the constructs *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy* for the proposed conceptual model.

From an employee perspective, there is little guidance regarding the SM strategy; employers need to set SM goals for their employees to achieve. Time is the biggest detriment to employees using eWOM and employers do not acknowledge employees' SM efforts. Training in using SM to promote their brand is essential. SMEs also need support in dealing with negative eWOM and how to analyse eWOM in terms of engagement and interactions.

The findings are limited to the Irish agri-food and drink sector, their employees, and the proposed conceptual model. Beyond the variables conceptualised in this model, there are other untested variables that may improve the model's power. There may be research models, other than UTAUT2, that also explain employee behavioural intentions with regards to their use of SM.

Regarding future research, the proposed framework resulting from this study could be tested in other contexts. It may be constructive to evaluate whether the size of an employee's personal SM network influences brand advocacy and to focus on the employer perspective. Future analysis with PLS using FIMIX-PLS would test the sub population to identify whether there is a difference in the adoption and use of eWOM.

GLOSSARY

For the purpose of this study, the following terms is defined:

AVE: Average Variance Extracted is a measure of the shared or common variance in a Latent Variable (LV) which is the amount of variance that is captured by the LV in relation to the amount of variance due to its measurement error (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Behavioural Intention: Represents a person's relative strength of intention to perform behaviour.

Blindfolding: In PLS path modelling, a blindfolding re-sampling procedure omits a part of the data matrix for the construct being examined and then estimates the model parameters (Lohmoller, 1988).

CB-SEM: Covariance based Structural Equation Modelling is a quantitative technique combining factor analysis and multiple regressions to estimate path values based on covariance matrix.

CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis is a statistical technique used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables.

Composite Reliability: Composite reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of the indicators, depicting the extent to which they indicate the common latent construct (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998).

Content Validity: Content validity is a non-statistical type of validity that involves the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behaviour domain to be measured (Hair et.al, 2018).

Heterogeneity: Heterogeneity validity can be alleviated by making use of multi-group or moderator analysis.

EFA: Exploratory factor analysis is an orderly simplification of interrelated measures used to explore the possible underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables without imposing a reconceived structure on the outcome.

Endogenous Variables: Endogenous variables in causal modelling are the variables with causal links (arrows) leading to them from other variables in the model.

Exogenous Variables: Exogenous variables in causal modelling are the variables with no causal links (arrows) leading to them from other variables in the model.

External Validity: External validity involves the extent to which the results of a study can be generalised (applied) beyond the sample.

GoF: Goodness-of-fit tests determine whether the pattern of variances and covariances in the data is consistent with a structural (path) model specified by the researcher.

Internal Validity: Internal validity is an inductive estimate of the degree to which conclusions about causal relationships can be made based on the measures used, the research setting, and the whole research design.

Mediation: Examines a statistical model in which a construct intervenes between two other constructs.

Moderator: Moderator variable influences the power, or even the direction of the relationship, between constructs in the structural model

MAE: Mean absolute error.

MAPE: Mean absolute percentage error.

PLS: Partial Least Squares, sometimes called ‘component-based SEM’, is a predictive technique, which can handle many independent variables, even when predictors display multicollinearity.

PLSc: PLSc is a recent methodological advancement of PLS and is designed to produce consistent estimates of path coefficients in structural models involving common factors.

PLS Predict: PLS Predict is based on the concepts of separate training and holdout samples for estimating model parameters and assessing a model’s predictive power.

Perceptual Antecedents: A perceptual antecedent variable is a variable that occurs before the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Positivism: Positivism is a philosophy which suggests a single reality exists that is objectively measurable, inherently understandable, and outcome oriented (Buchwald and Smith, 1997).

RSME: Root Mean Square Error is the standard deviation of the residuals (prediction errors). Residuals are a measure of how far from the regression line data points are; RMSE is a measure of how spread out these residuals are (Statistics, 2019).

SEM: Structural Equation Modelling is a technique for analysing data that is confirmatory in nature and where the variables interact simultaneously with each other.

Scientific Realism: Scientific Realism contains the assumptions of positivism; however, it seeks approximate truth rather than actual truth.

SNS: Social network sites is an online platform that allows users to create a public platform.

TAM: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) predicts a person's acceptance of technology based on relationships between two main factors including 'perceived ease of use' and 'perceived usefulness'.

TRA: Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) suggests a person's behavioural intention depends on their attitude about the behaviour and subjective norms.

TPB: Theory of Planned Behaviour, is an extension of the TRA and adds the constructs perceived behaviour control. TPB predicts intention and behaviour in a wide variety of settings.

UTAUT: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology is a model by (Venkatesh et al., 2003) involving the following constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions that influence behavioural intention to use a technology.

UTAUT2: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 is an extension of UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and includes three new constructs: hedonic motivation, habit/experience and price/value.

VIF: Variance Inflation Factor diagnostic is used to assess the severity of multicollinearity problem in a regression design matrix.

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1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Evolving Social Media Technologies in Business

The evolution of technology is one of overwhelming potential and opportunity, as well as uncertainty for businesses. The future may be unknown, but digital advancement continues to reshape the world in ways that encourage people to form new habits online and find new ways to communicate and work together. In most cases, these changes translate into a range of opportunities and disruptions across every industry for businesses (Evans, 2019).

Businesses and consumers need to plan for the scale of technology changes and advancements, which include augmented/virtual reality, artificial intelligence, voice search, social media (SM) commerce, influencer marketing, data privacy, and user generated content. The increasing demands for personalised experience on SM require businesses to pivot their strategy to engage audiences (Hubspot and Talkwalker, 2019).

Some consumers are sceptical of new technologies due to privacy risks and a lack of awareness about the perceived value. From a business perspective, these technologies could generate new tasks that can be accomplished only with human effort. For example, instead of automating SM messages to the community, individual messages provide a more personal experience for community members. Adopting these new technologies requires time and effort that SMEs cannot afford (Caputo et al., 2018; Shiller, 2017; Donnelly et al., 2012).

Globally, there has been an enormous increase in the use of digital technologies. The number of internet users worldwide in 2019 is 4.4 billion, an increase of 9.1% from 2018. SM users worldwide in 2019 is 3.5 billion, also representing an increase of 9% from 2018. Mobile phone users in 2019

is 5.1 billion, representing an increase of 2% from 2018. A breakdown of these statistics is displayed in Table 1.1 (Statista, 2019).

Digital Around the World in 2019 - Globally				
Total Population	Unique Mobile Users	Internet Users	Active SM Users	Active SM Users
7.676 Billion	5.112 Billion	4.388 Billion	3.484 Billion	3.256 Billion
Ireland				
Total Population	Unique Mobile Users	Internet Users	Active SM Users	Active SM Users
4.83 million	4.74 million	4.45 million	3.20 million	2.80 million

Table 1.1: Growth in Digital Globally 2019 (Statista, 2019)

In terms of SM online platforms, Facebook has remained at a steady 62% in relation to account ownership and, in Ireland, it is still the dominant social network. Facebook is the most popular platform for accessing news in Ireland and across the EU. Interestingly, WhatsApp use is higher in Ireland than the EU average. Despite the growing popularity of closed messaging apps, few users are abandoning Facebook entirely (BAI and DCU, 2019). Instagram has continued its enormous growth with 41% of the Irish population now having accounts, representing an increase of 4% since December 2018. Of those persons with Instagram accounts, 65% use it daily, bringing it in line with Facebook in terms of daily usage (IPOS and MRBI, 2019).

One of the most cited definitions of SM is offered by Kaplan and Haenlien (2010, p. 61): *“A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”* Even with the advancements in SM, this definition is still relevant, given the importance of personal exchange and creation of user specific content (Hubspot and Talkwalker, 2019).

SM is powerful, giving voice to communities and changing the way organisations do business. Businesses have experienced numerous benefits in using SM, such as extending a global reach to users (Mackey et al., 2013), attracting new customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011), strengthening customer relationships (Yoon et al., 2013; Rapp et al., 2012; Davis, 1989; Kirtiř and Karahan, 2011; Ridings and Gefen, 2004), increasing sales (Georgios Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014), and enhancing brand awareness (Castronovo and Lei, 2012; Lee and Youn, 2009).

Adapting to the new order of SM requires more meaningful and valuable experiences. Customers want more customer service online and high engagement with their eWOM (Insights, 2019). Businesses need to change the way they communicate with customers, rather than exploit SM for its financial gain through push marketing (Arnaboldi and Coget, 2016).

However, many marketers find their organic growth from SM is stagnant. Businesses rarely see an influx of page likes from a single eWOM post, an inflow of website visitors from a Tweet or Facebook post, or significant levels of engagement from a photo posted to Instagram. Unless employees are willing to invest considerable time, effort, and money into SM, none of the above can be accomplished (Rauniar et al., 2014).

The wave of change in how consumers are interacting with brands has continued to gather momentum. The increased frequency and sophistication in consumer use of mobile devices, social networks, and other digital channels has changed the conception of how to market to customers. In today's competitive environment, brands must implement marketing activities across many platforms. In comparison to traditional media, SM serves the purpose of spreading brand messages to a wider audience more effectively (Econsultancy and Oracle, 2014; Kirtiř and Karahan, 2011).

1.1.2 Social Media and eWOM (Word-of-Mouth)

SM has produced valuable opportunities for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) conversations. eWOM messages from friends and colleagues are more significant and trustworthy than SM blasts from business SM pages (Chu and Kim, 2011). Message content shared by employees, achieves eight times more engagement than content shared by brand channels, and is re-shared twenty-five times more frequently (Holmes, 2015). When employees share messages, firms not only expand their SM reach, they also get measurably better results. Although SM usage in business continues to grow, managers still struggle with designing popular brand message posts (Swani et al., 2017).

Employers must establish an environment conducive for eWOM to propagate. Employees must also understand how eWOM works in the marketplace and learn to manage it effectively (Sundaram et al., 1998). If managers have employees who are active on SM platforms, it is an opportunity for them to facilitate conversations on a range of topics. These employees are arguably the most important stakeholders to brand equity (Pitt, et al., 2018).

Employees working with the business SM are content creators; they share business news via Twitter, publish a corporate blog, or upload corporate videos to YouTube. Critics are users who react and interact to content uploaded by employees; how audiences perceive this news is important for the business. Employers need to identify employees who have the skills to create and control company-related SM content (Ardill, 2019; Gibbs et al., 2015).

One problem with content creation is its management, because a single online contribution can have a long-term effect on a business' reputation (Cheah et al., 2018). For SMEs conducting businesses with limited resources, finding employees with the requisite SM skills can also be challenging (Andzulis et al., 2012).

1.1.3 Difference of Social Media and eWOM

Digital marketing is constantly evolving; in 2019, over half of advertising budgets are spent in digital; and the proportion of digital is projected to grow. Hence, digital should be at the heart of a firm's sales and marketing strategy. Digital marketing comprises of many activities including social media, ads, email, SEO, CRM, mobile, website (Nether, 2019).

Social media has become a popular IT application for marketing and advertising activities (Shareef et al., 2019). Social Media has permitted the simultaneity of the delivery of both business initiated MC (e.g., advertising) and customer-to-customer (C2C) interpersonal communications in social network sites (SNSs), defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as web-based services that "allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 212). From a business brand standpoint, social media is a technology used for building relationships and enabling marketplace conversations (Booth and Matic, 2011).

To differentiate from social media, eWOM is an important outcome of activity from the technology application of social media (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Together positive, neutral, and negative WOM communications can have a solid influence on consumers' behaviour and on business performance (Arndt, 1967). Indeed, eWOM has a larger influence in generating product interest among consumers than firm-initiated MC (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Further, eWOM forms a crucial component of relationship marketing and persuasion (Larson and Watson, 2011).

1.1.4 eWOM and Employee Brand Advocacy

Social media as a technology platform has provided new opportunities for business to gain consumer insight by studying online user-generated content, eWOM communications (Chang et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019a; Xu et al.,

2017), and online communities (Habibi et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2018). It is important for companies to develop social media competence (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015). When used incorrectly or by unskilled professionals, digital marketing can affect companies negatively (Aswani et al., 2018).

Litvin et al. (2008, p 461) defined eWOM as “all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers.” Companies who can sufficiently manage eWOM can have a competitive advantage, directing their actions to specific targets according to the type of the product, as well as influencing customers who could be potentially loyal to their brand, while at the same time maintaining current customers (Loureiro and Kastenholz, 2011).

SM usage by employees can be advantageous or damaging for employees and the organisation (Sakka and Ahammad, 2020). Employees could positively influence the organisation’s or brand’s reputation (Dreher, 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2014) by communicating reliable and authentic information. Therefore, the importance of empowering employees to be their organisation’s brand ambassadors, advocates and contributors, enhancing the brand’s reputation through SM is needed (Brodie et al., 2013; Pride et al., 2016; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

For this thesis, employees work as eWOM communicators by sharing their own positive perceptions of their company with their friends, family, personal network, and most importantly to stakeholders, networking to support the company’s brand and products (Pride et al., 2016). Therefore, it is seen as a significant measure of productive employee branding behavior (King et al., 2012), and a relatively new area of focus that needs further attention (Pride et al., 2016; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

1.2 Ireland's Agri-Food and Drink Sector

According to Food Drink Ireland (FDI), the agri-food and drink sector had a turnover of €27.5bn. Ireland is the largest net exporter of dairy ingredients, in Europe and supplies the majority of produce to Ireland's €15bn domestic grocery and food service sector. Over 250,000 jobs are linked to the sector, which has a high employment multiplier, meaning it supports employment in other parts of the economy in a way that other sectors do not. The sector provides the exclusive outlet for much of farmer/SME produce, providing extensive added value and is crucially important to farm incomes (FDI, 2019; Enterprise, 2019; Bord Bia, 2019)

The food and drink sector encompasses over 600 businesses throughout the country, which export 85% of their food products to more than 180 countries worldwide. Ireland's largest export markets are the UK and Europe, accounting for 37% and 34% of exports, respectively. The world's population is expected to grow by 1 billion in the next fifteen years. Food supplies are expected to increase by a remarkable 50% during that timeframe. This sector is facing a highly desirable market opportunity for Irish farm-to-fork products (FDI, 2019; Teagasc, 2017).

1.2.1 Irish Farm-to-fork Businesses

The artisan food businesses are of interest to this study because their products are hand-made and use traditional methods. They focus on providing farm-to-fork foods with locally sourced products that benefit the consumer, small scale growers and producers, as well as the local economy. The farm-to-fork sector interacts with a wide range of economic and social interests across Ireland. The sustainability credentials of the industry must be recognised, given the introduction of carbon abatement measures (FDI and IBEC, 2019).

The year of 2018 was one of extraordinary global volatility for food businesses. The reasons for this volatility include trade disputes between the

US and China, the world's two largest economies, which had significant knock-on effects for international trade. Trade disagreements also arose between the US and EU, before an agreement was reached to stave off further disruption. More significant to Ireland's agri-food and drink businesses is the ongoing negotiations between the UK and EU regarding Brexit. In combination, these elements of global volatility affect almost all aspects of the Irish agri-food and drink sector's production and export. Irish exporters are continuing to trade resiliently through these combined domestic and global challenges (Deloitte, 2018; Failte, 2018). They have had a significant impact on Irish agri-food and drink exports, resulting in a decline in beef prices and the commodity price of butter in the latter half of 2018 (Bord Bia, 2019).

Noting these challenges, market and trade insights suggest global demand for Irish agri-food and drink will remain positive for 2019 (Bord Bia, 2019). Despite the increasing quality of food and drink, as well as the new experience offerings, Ireland has a limited world reputation in this area. Perceptions globally of the quality of Irish food lag far below the reality (Failte, 2018).

Ireland's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than two hundred and fifty people and have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million (Commission, 2016; Enterprise, 2020). Food SMEs, representing most of the manufacturers in the SME sector, have an important role within the European economy. Food SMEs are conservative in allocating resources for process innovation, scarcity of financial resources prevents them from exploiting technical/technological related opportunities (Farrelly and Mitchell, 2017). These SMEs can maximise their businesses brands by using SM to tell their stories. However, most Irish food and beverage businesses spend less than 3% on research and development and many spend less than 1% (Deloitte, 2018a).

Consumer-facing technology is also central for the sector. The agri-food and drink businesses, which use mobile apps and digital media, engage with

numerous customers about aspects of their products and real-time analytics are used to offer customers personalised products (Deloitte, 2018a).

1.2.2 Irish Farm-to-Fork Businesses and SM Technology

Innovation is at the heart of agri-food and drink and it is a key driver of competitiveness and growth. Food businesses need to have the confidence and support from industry in order to invest in innovation. With Ireland's target to increase the level of exports with Food Harvest 2020, food businesses need guidance and support from industry to achieve these outcomes (FDI and IBEC, 2019; Deloitte, 2018a).

The agri-food and drink sector can use SM to build brand loyalty. By creating brand-specific online destinations, users of SM can visit the brand SM sites any time they wish. This approach is convenient because it allows businesses to impart information about their products and initiatives, as well as collect customer information. Businesses that use traditional marketing techniques should recognise the importance of eWOM communications and incorporate it into their overall marketing strategy. By understanding the effectiveness and impact of persuasive eWOM messages, marketers can create more effective marketing campaigns (Ang, 2011; Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2017).

The reasons food businesses build an online presence is to nurture a dialogue between employees and customers, as well as to build customer relationships on a deeper, emotional level (Rokka et al., 2014). However, the smallest business requires marketing to promote their products and their brand story to the consumer. They need the assistance of their employees to encourage dialogue with their customers (Bord Bia, 2014).

Regarding employees, who have work-related SM duties as part of their job role, the question is to what extent are these employees satisfied and motivated to undertake these duties. Within the literature, there is a lack of

research regarding the factors that facilitate or hinder work-related SM adoption and usage in organisational contexts (Ngai et al., 2015).

For this study, the focus is on artisan food businesses: bakeries, confectionary, dairy, beverages, prepared foods, and horticulture. The reason is because their products are hand-made, use traditional methods, and provide farm-to-fork foods with locally sourced products that benefit the consumer, small scale growers/producers, and the local economy. The nature of these businesses is where employees are expected to stand behind the products and their quality and to recommend these products to consumers, suppliers and other stakeholders. It is reasonable to inspire employees, who possess robust SM skills and expertise, to act as online brand advocates for these food businesses (Rokka et al., 2014).

1.3 Problem Statement

For this study three main themes emerge:

Firstly, Social media, and the rise in eWOM. The different types of eWOM is explained and how they are many advantages and challenges business receive from using eWOM. Noting the benefits of having an engaged SM community gaps in the literature emerge on whether having an existing social media communities makes it easier for employees to adopt and use SM. Drawing insights from Simmons et al.'s, (2010) Four Pillars of i-Branding Conceptual Framework and Guesalaga's (2016) conceptual frameworks on social media usage in sales is deliberated.

Secondly, Technology adoption and usage chapter discusses the many theories of interest to this study including, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT and UTAUT2). These technology adoption theories are core to this

study as they are central to previous studies on behaviour adoption and use of technology by both organisation and employees. Gaps within the literature emerge in three key areas *social influence, facilitating conditions* and *employee effort*. These gaps include lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM, whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment to work with SM and finally on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.

Thirdly organisation behaviour and how employer's responsibility and commitment to their employees, the different SM behaviours and motivations and employee brand advocacy. Based on the gaps within the literature arise in the area of types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business, and whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates. Drawing insights Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018) Front-line Employee Brand Advocacy conceptual model within SMEs and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Homans, 1958).

This study avails of four theoretical models: to evaluate whether employee adoption and use of eWOM culminates in brand advocacy. The focus of this research is:

“Ireland's Agri-Food and Drink Sector: The Correlation Between eWOM Initiatives and Employee Brand Advocacy.”

The main research question is:

“Does the adoption and use of eWOM by employee's within Ireland's agri-food and drink sector correlate to brand advocacy?”

This overall research question is addressed through six hypotheses presented in Table 1.2.

Research Objectives		Research Hypotheses	Research Gaps
RO1	To investigate whether social influence is a factor for employees when adopting and using SM.	H1 Social influence significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM.
RO2	To investigate the level to which an employee trusts the organisational and technical infrastructure to make the SM media task easy to accomplish.	H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment to work with SM.
RO3	To ascertain whether employees' effort with SM helps in using SM as part of their job roles.	H3 Employee efforts affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.	Lack of evidence on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.
RO4	To ascertain whether having an engaging SM community affects the adoption and use of SM by employees.	H4 Engaging SM community significantly affect employee intention to adopt and use SM.	Lack of research on whether having an existing social media community makes it easier for employees to adopt and use SM.
RO5	To evaluate the levels of motivation and encouragement employees receive from employers for adopting and using SM.	H5 Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to adopt and use SM.	Lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business.
RO6	To determine whether employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicate brand advocacy.	H6 Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicate brand advocacy.	Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.

Table 1.2: Research Objectives and Hypotheses

H1, H2 and H3 draw on the Information System (IS) literature and concentrate on *social influence* and whether it is a factor when adopting and using SM. The research hypothesis, H2 on the construct *facilitating conditions*, addresses whether the employee trusts the organisational and technical infrastructure to ensure the SM tasks are easy to accomplish.

H3 stems from IS literature and considers the level of effort employees using SM as part of their job roles. H4 reviews whether having an *engaging SM community* affects employees in adopting and using eWOM.

H5 establishes levels of motivation and encouragement employees receive when they adopt and use work-related SM for their business. Whether employees' own personal motivation, habit, and experience in using SM encourages them to adopt and use SM for their job. H6 determines whether there is a correlation between *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*.

1.4 Thesis Outline

1.4.1 Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview to the study. The research objectives and hypothesis are presented. The justification for the research and the contribution to literature is discussed. The chapter outlines the research objectives and hypotheses.

1.4.2 Chapter Two: Social Media

This chapter focuses on the SM literature and discuss the evolution of SM over time. The advancements in SM technology and the types of eWOM is outlined. This chapter highlights the many benefits and challenges employers experience in adopting and using SM for their organisation

1.4.3 Chapter Three: Technology Adoption And Use

The literature review is organised into three chapters: technology adoption and use, social media, and organisation theory. The literature review addresses the gaps in the literature before a conceptual framework and hypotheses are proposed.

Chapter Three analyses Information systems (IS) theories related to technology adoption and use is discussed, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model (UTAUT), and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model 2 (UTAUT2). This chapter provides an extensive review of the literature on technology adoption and use. It commences with a review on the different technology adoption models, including the factors for adoption from previous studies.

1.4.4 Chapter Four: Organisation Context

This chapter focuses on the organisational theory literature and discusses employer responsibility to employees, the different types of employee commitment, engagement, motivation, and brand advocacy.

1.4.5 Chapter Five: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed discussion regarding methodology, research design, and issues associated with data analysis. The overall research design selected for this study is based on a positivist paradigm by following a relatively standard survey approach. Subsequently, the research question is formed and the corresponding hypotheses resulting in a conceptual framework. The different research designs are presented: qualitative, quantitative, and a mixed method approach. A review of structural equation modelling is also given.

1.4.6 Chapter Six: Analysis

This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of the agri-food and drink sector employees' survey responses. After preliminary data examination regarding the survey, future analysis is conducted using partial least squares structural equational modelling. To clarify some survey findings, semi-

structured interviews have been conducted with a sample of employees, who completed the survey.

1.4.7 Chapter Seven: Findings

As this analysis avails of a triangulation approach, the results from the quantitative analysis using SMART PLS is presented. The outcomes from this analysis forms the basis of the questions for the qualitative research. Finally, the conceptual model and the hypotheses results are presented and discussed.

1.4.8 Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the results from the primary research and compares them with the findings from other studies in the literature review. The similarities are discussed and possible explanations for the differences from the literature are also proposed. It outlines to what extent the aims and objectives of this study are achieved. The research limitations and the author's reflection of the journey to complete this PhD thesis are summarised in this chapter. The recommendations for future research is represented in this final chapter.

1.4.7 Appendices

The three appendices consist of: employee analysis of their length of services, size of business, and the list of business who were interviewed.

1.5 Chapter Summary

The focus of this research is the agri-food and drink sector, which exports contribute €12.11bn to the Irish economy (CSO, 2017; Bord Bia, 2019). Food businesses promote their products on numerous social media platforms. The main reason is to build an online presence to nurture a dialogue between employees and customers. Of interest to this study are employees who adopt

and use SM on behalf of their firm; the question is whether these employees become brand advocates (Rokka et al., 2014).

Key insights from this chapter involve the importance of eWOM adoption and use, as well as how SM technology is evolving in today's business environment. This chapter highlights the importance of the food and drink sector to the Irish economy. Farm-to-fork businesses are discussed and their use of SM technologies.

The challenges the agri-food and drink sector are facing is highlighted, namely trade disputes between the US and China, Brexit, and the increasing cost associated to running a business in Ireland. This chapter outlines key themes for this study which are: technology adoption and use, social media, and organisation theory.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media (SM) technologies have the possibility to transform work processes because the technology is built around improving the customer relationships and brand awareness not just heightening efficiencies (Guinan et al., 2014). However, research is needed on SM use in organisational contexts to address questions regarding the factors that facilitate or hinder their adoption (Ngai et al., 2015).

2.1 SM Definitions

The definitions of SM have evolved over time as the scale of interaction of SM has adapted. Reviewing the definitions of SM in Table 2.1 by (Yadav and Rahman, 2017), three key points from these definitions have emerged, these include: businesses can use SM to communicate with customers; employees are able to create and manage content, and SM users' opinions, experience and perceptions are critical.

Author(s)	SM Definition
Chan and Guillet (2011, p. 347)	“A social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through a set of Internet-based applications that enable interaction, communication, collaboration of user-generated content and hence, sharing of information such as ideas, thoughts, content, and relationships.”
Pham and Gammoh (2015, p. 325)	“Company’s process of creating and promoting online marketing-related activities on social media platforms that offer values to its stakeholders.”
Choi et al. (2016, p. 772)	“Engaging with customers through SNSs is commonly known as social media marketing and brings several benefits to companies, such as creating word-of-mouth, positively affecting customer equity, enhancing customer loyalty to the company, and increasing purchase intention of the company’s products or services.”
Tuten and Solomon (2016, p.21)	“Is the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders.”
Felix et al. (2017, p. 123)	“Is an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (often in combination with other communications channels) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders.”

Table 2.1: Evolution of SM Definitions Adapted from Yadav and Rahman (2017)

2.2 Adoption of SM in Ireland

SM use among Irish firms is the second highest in the European Union in 2018 (CSO, 2018). For example, 68% of Irish enterprises use some type of SM compared with an average of 47% in the European Union (CSO, 2017, MRBI, 2018). Recent national and international reports indicate businesses intend to increase their digital marketing budgets for the foreseeable future:

- 45% of Irish marketers plan to increase marketing budget (The Marketing Institute et al., 2019).
- 66% of digital advertising spend is allocated to Google Search, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram (Salesforce, 2019).
- 57% of CEOs are prepared to invest more in marketing, but budgets are at risk if marketers continue to prioritise measures such as awareness over ROI (Gartner, 2018).
- 13.9% growth in digital advertising in Europe in 2018 (Econsultancy, 2019).

Ireland's digital ad spend in 2018 was €574 million and demonstrates businesses' increased commitment to online marketing (Kennedy, 2019). This increase in online marketing budgets highlights the need for researchers to understand how employees within SMEs perceive, accept, and use work-related SM. It is important for businesses to identify in which SM platform they want to promote their business. Also critical for business are the human resources to assign employees to implement and sustain SM efforts in line with their business objectives (Andzulis et al., 2012; Lanz, 2010). Some organisations avail of a bottom-up approach by encouraging younger staff members, especially recent college graduates, to engage and manage the business SM activities (Guinan et al., 2014).

SM has established a new way in which customers and businesses employees can connect socially, by incorporating information and communication technology. Considering communication technology (i.e., smart phones), a recent study notes most Irish users (72%) scroll daily through SM on mobile

based applications. This medium facilitates customers and employees with the opportunity to create, edit, access, and link to content and to other people (Cabiddu et al., 2014; CSO, 2017; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Table 2.2 outlines the SM platforms Irish consumers adopt according to use and frequency.

SM Platform	Accounts as Proportion of the Irish Population	Frequency of Use (Daily or Weekly)
Facebook	65% have a Facebook account,	69% of whom access it daily
Instagram	32% have an Instagram account,	51% of whom access it daily
Twitter	29% have a Twitter account,	37% of whom access it daily
LinkedIn	27% have a LinkedIn account,	18% of whom access it daily

Table 2.2: Irish Users' SM Statistics (O'Leary, 2017)

SM campaign messages are more likely to be effective because the users are highly engaged with the platform. Employees who are tasked with the design and management of SM need to consider the extent to which customers feel engaged by the SM platform, tool, and the message that carries their communication (FDI, 2016).

2.3 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

SM platforms have altered the role of marketers and employers in the customer marketplace. Businesses can no longer rely purely on traditional marketing media. In order to stay relevant, employers need to be aware of the factors influencing consumers' perception and the credibility of their eWOM communication. Employees tasked with work-related SM need to identify clever ways to join these conversations, so as to convey to customers the advantages of their business product selection (Shamhuyenzva et al., 2016).

The definitions of eWOM messages has evolved over time, please see Table 2.3.

Author	Key Concepts
Bussiere (2000)	Onan online forum, online chat rooms, and other online media, consumers share with other consumers positive or negative experience with a product or service in their own right.
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.
Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008)	The informal communication between consumers about a particular product or service, which requires networking technology, with the specialty of large scale, anonymity, and immediacy.

**Table 2.3. Definitions of eWOM Source Definition of eWOM
Lkhaasuren, M., & Nam, K. (2018)**

The daily eWOM conversations between customers and businesses allow opinion leaders to create and promote profiles relating to products and services of brands. Users can share their comments, messages, videos, picture, or even applications. This visually enriched content makes eWOM more entertaining and appealing. Recent SM websites help promote the dissemination of eWOM message with a vast number of people (Dessart et al., 2015; Holmes and Lett, 1977).

There are two main impacts to consider when discussing eWOM; consumer and company, please see Table 2.4 (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2010).

Main impacts of eWOM from the consumer perspective.	Main impacts of eWOM from the company perspective.
Decision Making Process	Quality Control and new procedures
Perceived Trust Worthiness/Credibility	Revenue Management
Risk Reduction	Customer Interactions Response and Recovery
Product Acceptance	Specific Marketing Strategies
Loyalty	Focus on target communication
Brand Awareness	Online Reputation
Comparison	Generate Loyalty

Table 2.4. Impacts of eWOM from the Consumer/ Company Perspective (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2010)

2.4 Types of eWOM

Even though message clarity is imperative, eWOM content is most often related with the type of the message. Positive, negative, and neutral eWOM messages are associated with high levels of either customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Anderson, 1998). The four types of eWOM are discussed in in Table 2.5.

eWOM Types	eWOM Key Concepts
Positive eWOM (PWOM)	Business controlled eWOM campaigns offer brands the chance to spread positive messages to new customers for the purposes of building awareness. eWOM consists of consumers sharing their own experiences of brand consumptions with their peers (Moran and Muzellec, 2017).
Negative eWOM (NWOM)	NWOW is likely to dissuade potential buyers from considering a product or brand, thus, damaging the company's reputation and financial position (Holmes and Lett, 1977).
Persuasive eWOM	Persuasive eWOM message refer to the type of online message, specifically recommendations that are believed to be from credible sources; these messages signify explanatory power in the acceptance of online information (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2017).
Neutral eWOM	Neutral eWOM is classified into two types. The first type is indifferent neutral eWOM (INWOM), which contains only product or service information. The second type is called mixed neutral eWOM (MNWOM), which includes pros and cons of either a product or a service (Roy, 2019; Tang, 2014).

Table 2.5: Types of eWOM Messages

PWOM is likely to increase consumers' purchase intentions for products by reducing risks. There are four categories of motivations for engaging in PWOM, which include:

- Product involvement to relieve tensions or excitement caused using product;
- Self enhancement to gain attention;
- Show connoisseurship to seek reassurance from others; and
- Message involvement to share exposure to unique or intriguing advertisements or selling appeals (Dichter, 1966).

Recent research by Wright et al. (2016) suggests consumers' negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) reviews on SM platforms are more influential than positive reviews; this finding is in the context of the hotel industry decision making. The more conflicting an online review is, the higher the chances the message receivers will trust these reviews (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2017). Indeed, "*[n]egative reviews are more influential than positive reviews in a potential guesting decision making*" (Torres and Kennedy, 2017 p. 14). Noting the extensive research on NWOM, it will be interesting to learn whether employees engage or respond to negative messages online. However, most of the research on NWOM is pertinent to the hotel industry, and not the agri-food and drink sector. There is a gap in the literature on how NWOM affects food businesses and how employees deal with these comments.

Employees are required to establish an environment that is conducive for PWOM to grow and propagate. Additionally, marketing managers and employees must understand how eWOM works in the marketplace and learn to manage it effectively (Sundaram et al., 1998).

2.4.1 eWOM Advantages for SMEs

For SMEs, SM has changed the shape and nature of their businesses. SM provides an online forum to exchange dialogue that offers the required foundations for positive relations to emerge between customers and

employees. It can also provide potential employees to form accurate thoughts and perceptions about a business and its value (Dahnil et al., 2014b; DJEI, 2014; Grant, 2016). Social networking sites (SNS) offer brands the chance to spread positive eWOM for the intention of building awareness and acquiring new customers (Moran and Muzellec, 2017).

Table 2.6 reviews the current research on advantages for businesses to adopt and use SM. The table groups the advantages according to three themes: audience, sales, and branding.

Advantages	Description	Author(s)
Audience	Global reach users	Mackey and Liang. (2013)
	Attract new customers	Michaelidou et al., (2011)
	Employee recruitment	El Quirdi et al. (2015);
	Risk communication	Henderson et al. (2017)
	Strengthen customer awareness	Yoon et al., (2013), Rapp et al., (2012), Davis (1989), Kirtiş and Karahan (2011), Ridings and Gefen (2004)
Sales	Increase sales	Georgios Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014)
	Endorsements	Mathur (2018); Brison (2016)
	Events	Michael Colin (2016); Berthon (2012)
Branding	Build brand awareness	Castronovo and Lei (2012) Lee and Youn (2009)
	Corporate /business reputation	Choi and Rifon (2012) Katja et al., (2013) Lee and Youn (2009)
	Brand community	Habibi et al. (2016)

Table 2.6: Advantages SMEs face when adopting and using SM-eWOM

2.4.1.1 Audience

SM builds one-to-many connections and SM recommendations have an augmented reach, which is superior to person recommendations. For example, the mean number of Facebook friends per user is greater than 100, and the mean number of Twitter followers exceeds 200. Therefore, a positive

recommendation posted on both platforms potentially has an average reach of 500 friends and followers. Additionally, with the functionality of retweeting and reposting, recommendations can yield additional viral impressions in multiplicatively expanded social networks (VanMeter, 2018).

Consumers use SM to interact with friends, find businesses and brands. Brands are taking advantage of this new promotional dimension to strengthen their consumer relationships. Relationships between consumer contentment and loyalty with the platform are critical components for its success. The more a user interacts with a business on SM, the more loyal the consumer is to the business and its brand, which in turn, reaps positive performance results for both the user and the business. More accurate measures for explaining systems would benefit users assessing the site, as well as employees within the organisation evaluating their offerings (Yoon et al., 2013; Rapp et al., 2012; Davis, 1989; Kirtiř and Karahan, 2011).

2.4.1.2 Sales

SM introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organisations, communities, and individuals (Kietzmann et al., 2011). A central benefit SM provide to businesses is the potential for sales. SM activities can affect the purchase decision making process for customers. Brands can play a key role in consumer decision making and can guide consumers in deciding of whether to buy. If businesses believe in the benefits of using SM in sales, they need to build organisational competence and commitment (Katja et al., 2013; Guesalaga, 2016). Endorsements are another benefit for businesses, where celebrities are turning to SM tools, such as Twitter, to promote brands and interact with fans resulting in sales for businesses (Choi and Rifon, 2012).

2.4.1.3 Branding

Many businesses are allocating resources into their SM presence as they acknowledge and appreciate the need to engage in SM conversations. The main reasons business engage in SM is to protect their corporate or brand reputation. The positive effects of these SM engagements on eWOM activities, brand awareness, and purchase intention are solid influences for the relevance of SM in respect to the management of brands (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Katja et al. 2013; Lee and Youn, 2009).

SM significantly changes the landscape for brand management businesses, as it can increase brand awareness and reach with limited budget expenditure. While business generated brand stories are typically consistent and coherent over time, consumer generated brand stories are more likely to change over time and may give the brand another meaning. Brand awareness greatly influences the generation of WOM and the consumer intention to try the brand (Barreda et al., 2015; Gensler et al., 2013; Hootsuite, 2014; Failte Ireland, 2018).

Building brand awareness on SM is a key step in promoting a product or service. SM has a higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing; it also has a higher number of SM followers that improve brand trust and credibility, representing social proof. Building an audience on SM can improve conversion rates on existing traffic (DeMers, 2014; Barreda et al., 2015).

Consumers can communicate with a brand and other consumers by posting user-generated content online and by commenting on or liking a post created by other community members and/or the brand managers and employees. Collectively, these activities build brand loyalty. In building a strong brand, the organisation's employees are particularly important because when the source of customer value creation shifts from physical products to services, frontline staff are responsible for delivering on promises and predominantly shape customer brand perceptions (Ang, 2011; Berry, 2000).

Brand initiated eWOM is potentially visible to the entire friend network of the customer who engaged in sharing the branded post. Even though this exposure can provide significant advantages to building brand awareness, the question is whether these types of incentives are used to encourage customer-to-customer (C2C) exchanges, because the incentive detracts from the credibility of the eWOM message (Ryu and Feick, 2007).

Increasingly, businesses need to refine their branding strategies for the internet. Simmons et al.'s (2010) four pillars of i-branding conceptual framework is presented in Figure 3.1. Each of the four pillars only contribute to internet branding through the interaction with other pillars. The potential interactions with other pillars need to be considered in order to ascertain i-branding opportunities in the creation of brand equity.

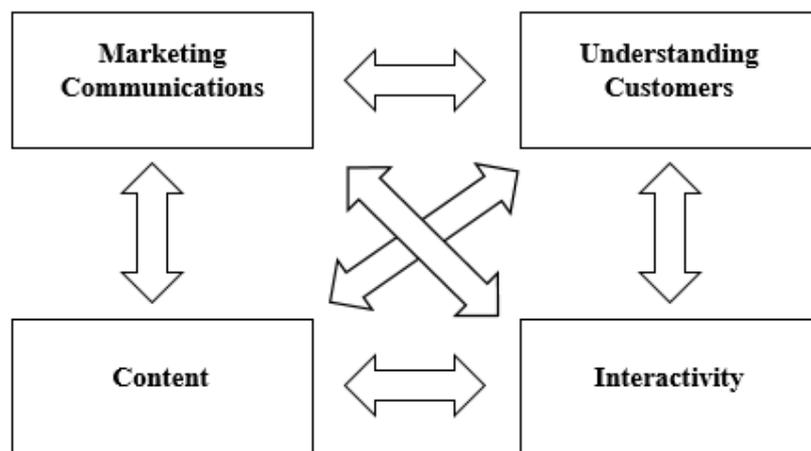


Figure 2.1 Four Pillars of i-Branding Conceptual Framework (Simmons et al., 2010)

How well employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector understand and interact with these pillars is of interest to this study. These employees are the company's face on SM and the company's reputation is built on a person-to-person basis (Rokka et al., 2014).

Employee branding is as a process whereby employees internalise the company brand image and project that image to customers and other

stakeholders (Miles and Mangold, 2004). Hence, if content posted on SM by employees is perceived as valid, the customers who receive these messages develop a positive approach towards the products and brand. By understanding the effectiveness and impact of persuasive eWOM messages, employees can create more significant marketing campaigns (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2017).

Indeed, brand awareness significantly influences the generation of eWOM and the consumer intention to try the brand. Vital to the success of eWOM efforts is ensuring employees in the agri-food and drink sector are aware of their business brand and the story their employers want told (Barreda et al., 2015; Gensler et al., 2013; Hootsuite, 2014). The question is whether employees believe their use of SM builds brand awareness. Of further relevance is the extent to which employers have informed employees of their brand identity and what they want their employees to convey via SM.

Brand managers are constantly searching for new information about customer needs. They want to create new brand experiences that shape and nurture profitable customer relationships. SM analysis is a useful tool for businesses to examine engagement, but it is still underutilised, particularly with respect to understanding brand communities (Hamedi, 2014).

2.4.1.4 Engaging SM Community

Brand communities are a group of ardent consumers organised around the lifestyle, activities, and ethos of the brand (McCann and Barlow, 2015). Brand communities offer a platform through which consumers can share their information and experiences about a product or service. Brand communities also offer marketers a means for categorising consumer needs and wants by endorsing brand loyalty involvement (Keegan and Rowley, 2017). Of interest to this research is how employees monitor, interact, and manage these communities.

Strong brand communities are generated based on understanding consumers' specific social needs and connecting consumers along these lines through affiliation with the brand itself. This affiliation is required for the success of a brand community because it stimulates a high level of consumer loyalty, brand authenticity, and marketing competence. Businesses must consider brand communities in their strategies. Businesses should focus on building the community, which allows community members to manage and control the community, also defining the level of participation required by the community and the business. This level of interaction is more beneficial for customers than simply promoting the brand all the time (McCann and Barlow, 2015).

Brand communities based on SM are not easily managed. In this setting, customers are more powerful than before. They can interact and share their ideas with each other, while businesses have increasingly less ability to manage the information in the online space (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Employees must work with the SM tool and engage with these communities to promote and protect their brand.

Customers, who regularly engage with brands on SM sites, are primarily the brand's heaviest and loyal users (Nelson-Field et al., 2012). The greater the experience consumers are known to have with a brand, the more creditable are their claims and recommendations, regardless of whether they positive or negative. Identifying the eWOM source, as an opinion leader or market maven in the community, is important for businesses (Corey, 1971; Feick and Price, 1987; Nelson-Field et al., 2012). How employees manage these communities has not been researched and there is a question as to whether engaging brand communities aid employee adoption and use of eWOM.

Reviewing the research related to the advantages associated with work-related eWOM, there are gaps in the literature. The questions are whether employees who are tasked with work-related eWOM, adopt and use SM for their businesses and whether an engaging SM community affects employees'

adoption and use of SM. Based on this gap the following hypothesis is proposed:

2.4.2 Work-related eWOM Challenges for SMEs

The challenges business face when adopting and using SM are organised into themes in Table 2.5. Despite the growth in SM and the benefits associated with adopting and using SM, managers are still unclear as to how SM benefits their business (Ang, 2011). Further, managers also need to be aware of reputation management in using SM. Managers need to discuss with employees, who are the business online voice, how they want their employees to control and monitor their business reputation (Fournier and Avery, 2011).

Challenge	Description	Research
Technological	Blending of personal and professional roles	Gibbs et al. (2015); Ardill (2019); Saunders and Lewis (2018); Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016); Xu (2014a)
	Complexity and high speed of technological change of SM	Gibbs et al. (2015); Donnelly et al. (2012)
	Evolving SM tools	Saunders and Lewis (2018); Gibbs et al. (2015)
	Information quality about job/work relevance	Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016); Gibbs et al. (2015); Vitak et al. (2011), Simmons et al. (2007)
	Limited resources	Davis and Vladica (2006); Andzulis et al. (2012); Donnelly et al. (2012)
Environmental	Legal and regulatory issues	Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016); Vitak et al. (2011); Simmons et al. (2007); Simmons et al. (2010); Gibbs et al. (2015); Ardill (2019); Xu (2014a); Simmons et al. (2013); Truong et al. (2012)
	Ethical issues	Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016); Gibbs et al. (2015); Madera (2012)
	eWOM credibility	Abendroth and Heyman (2013); Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016)
	Business market orientation	Didonet et al. (2012); Simmons et al. (2013)
	Organisational culture change	Gibbs et al. (2015); Palmer et al. (2015); Gibbs et al. (2015); Gibbs et al. (2015); Palmer et al. (2015)
Organisational	Issues of misconduct	Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016); Simmons et al. (2007); Simmons et al. (2010); Ardill (2019); Xu (2014a); Simmons et al. (2013); Truong et al. (2010); Saunders and Lewis (2018); Wu (2011); Berk (2008). Palmer et al. (2015); Gibbs et al. (2015); Palmer et al. (2014)
	Lack understanding of SM	Gibbs et al. (2015); Ardill (2019); Simmons et al. (2013); Wu (2011); Palmer et al. (2015); Guinan et al. (2014); Vitak et al. (2011); Berk (2008); Martins et al. (2014)
	Lack of knowledge of laws and regulations and fear to violate them	Simmons et al. (2007); Simmons et al. (2010); Simmons et al. (2013)
	Lack of top management support and internal guiding policies	Wu (2011); Palmer et al. (2015); Gibbs et al. (2015)
	Expense of using SM	Simmons et al. (2008)

Table 2.7: Challenges SMEs Incur When Adopting and Using SM – Adapted from Poba-Nzaou et al. (2016)

2.4.2.1 Technology Issues

SME resources are often limited and it is difficult to decide whether SM should reside within sales and marketing or IT. Andzulis et al. (2012) investigated the role SM has on the sales force and the sale process. They believe the use of SM must be determined by a deep understanding of the customer. Therefore, SM should be owned by sales and marketing, as these functions know the customers best (Andzulis et al., 2012). In contrast, Potts (2008), who researches co-creation between consumers and marketers, believes if SM is expanded to all stakeholders, it enables businesses to create more dialogue and, in turn, generate more brand awareness.

Ireland still has poor broadband penetration rates, which in some rural areas limits the extent to which businesses may use SM (Lillington, 2018). Some workers are working out of hours on social media. The Irish government are currently drafting laws to allow for employees the right to disconnect, which gives workers the legal standing to avoid work emails outside working hours, will be considered by government (The Journal, 2019; RTE, 2019).

2.4.2.2 Environmental Risk

Although SM applications (SMA) are free and easily accessible, making them ideal for marketing and communications, they are not generally designed on secure platforms and are not well supported by the SMA vendors. Moreover, these SMA vendors may retain access to users' communications and other posted information (Wang et al., 2016). Users of these applications risk losing their private information, as happened recently with Facebook users and Cambridge Analytica's privacy breach (Lillington, 2018.). Confidence in Facebook plunged by 66% due to the revelation that Cambridge Analytica inappropriately acquired data on tens of millions of Facebook users (Wong, 2019). The business risk of data breaches is still a concern for businesses adopting and using SM (Ali et al., 2018b).

2.4.2.2.1 eWOM Credibility

With regards to eWOM credibility, recommendations delivered online should demonstrate a strong confidence in the brand, as without, there is reputational risk if other online users disagree or contradict these recommendations (Gibbs et al., 2015). If the initial recommendation is publicly repudiated, a user may lose face in front of a social network of friends. Additionally, the credibility of future posts, comments, and recommendations may be called in to question.

There are concerns regarding the rising trend of brand-initiated eWOM on SM, which reimburses customers in exchange for spreading positive, business-generated eWOM communications on their personal network or friend network. This brand-induced eWOM may conflict with the receiver's own verdict based on their previous branded experiences, which could detract from the credibility of the eWOM message and impact the relationship between the receiver and the eWOM source in a negative way (Abendroth and Heyman, 2013).

It is interesting to note that most of the research on eWOM is customer-related, rather than employee-related. A review of recent literature on the credibility of eWOM is outlined in Table 2.8. Constructs of interest for this study include *competence* and *trust*. Companies should manage their strategies to improve usability for online communities by providing relevant information and encouraging customers to share their experiences to attract the users (Hussain et al., 2018).

Author(s)	Constructs	Key Findings
Hussain et al. (2018)	Source credibility, perceived risk, food products, customers' information adoption	Expertness, trustworthiness, objectivity and homophily have some influence on a consumer's perceived risk.
Moran and Muzellec (2017)	Community, competence, content and consensus	4Cs framework of eWOM credibility identifies how consumers evaluate eWOM credibility, which has implications for brand managers attempting to leverage a user's interpersonal networks to spread eWOM content.
Shamhuyenhazva et al. (2016)	Trustworthiness, homophily, authority, and interestingness	Homophily, authority, and interestingness have a significant positive impact on source trustworthiness, and source trustworthiness has a positive impact on eWOM credibility.

Table 2.8: Recent Literature on eWOM Credibility

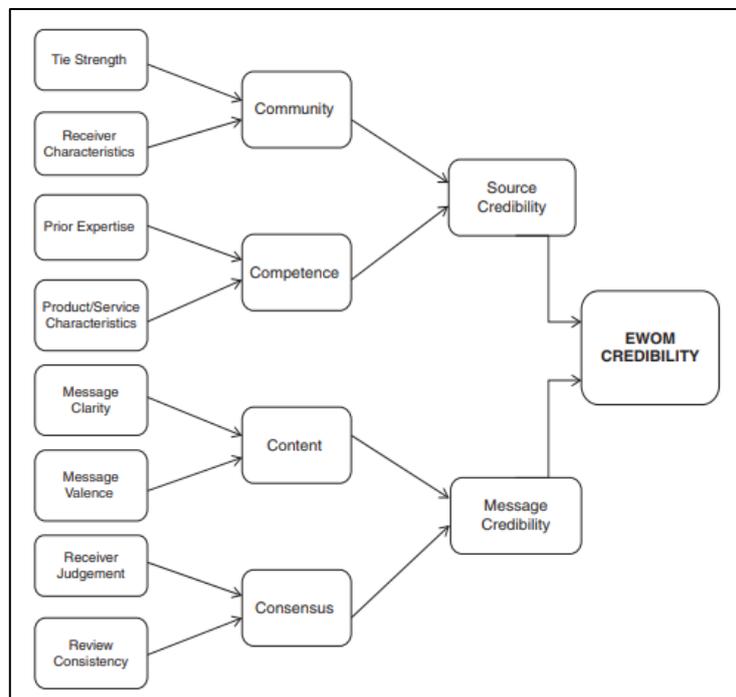


Figure 2.2: 4Cs of eWOM Credibility (Moran and Muzellec, 2017)

Moran and Muzellec's model (2017) of the 4Cs of community, competence, content and consensus is presented in Figure 2.2. The *community* construct describes the level of community engagement with a firm's SM accounts and whether it is easy for employees to engage and create eWOM content (Moran and Muzellec, 2017). The *competence* construct identifies whether employees have the expertise and knowledge to engage with SM. The *content* construct

ascertains whether an employee's eWOM message is clear and whether within the community there is a *consensus*, as evidenced by the number of likes and/or shares on the eWOM content.

2.4.2.2.1.1 Difficulties of eWOM Credibility

One detractor of eWOM credibility is that the majority of eWOM websites allow the sender's identity to be private or anonymous. Sender motivations are normally considered to be altruistic, rather than manipulative of a fellow online user. Hence, a private consumer is most likely to share their opinions and experiences out concern for others (Phelps et al., 2004). Employees posting eWOM messages would not be experiencing this credibility issue because of the business branding. Still, if users leaving messages are anonymous, it is difficult to know who are the firm's audiences/customers.

Another threat to eWOM credibility is employees posing as satisfied customers and spreading positive content in a deceitful attempt to bolster brand reputations (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009). Such deceitful practices, if discovered by consumers, results in negative reputational consequences for a business (Cheung et al., 2009).

Another criticism is that consumers consider WOM to be a more reliable source of information than messages from sales representatives and marketers (Murray, 1991). Consumers on SM more readily trust the opinions of family and friends than from promotional sources and businesses (Xu, 2014). eWOM information can be produced by almost every user on the internet, therefore, credibility and quality of information has become more critical. However, employees have family and friends on SM, which begs the question whether their eWOM posts would be perceived as credible.

2.4.2.3 Organisational Issues

SMEs avail of SM because of the market opportunities it promises. Although, adopting SM is not without its challenges. SMEs acknowledge they do not fully understand how the technology affects their business (Dahnil et al., 2014a). This limited understanding means companies need to be careful in deciding which platforms to adopt and which employees are tasked with the responsibility for SM actions and activities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Companies exhibit difficulty in articulating their SM objectives, due to their lack of understanding of SM as a marketing channel (Keegan and Rowley, 2017).

Some studies suggest SM use in the workplace is counterproductive. Management have voiced their concerns about employees *cyberloafing* and *cyberslacking*; in other words, wasting time and losing productivity by using SM for personal matters while at work (Andreassen et al., 2014; Vitak et al., 2013). The issue employees face is whether to accept friend requests from their employers and co-workers, and how to manage their personal information and conversations that might spill over from online platforms into the workplace (Peluchette et al., 2013).

The most significant predictor of SM use is organisational competence. That is, the company knowledge of SM productivity, as well as employee expertise with SM. Building SM competence may prove a challenge for businesses. Having an employee with the relevant skills and time is significant. Further, assigning SM activities to employees with limited resources, leads to poor implementation (Dahnil et al., 2014b; Davis, 2016; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016). Employee competence is central for this research and has been linked to IT theory (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and organisation theory (Guesalaga, 2016).

2.4.2.3.1 SM Strategy

SM planning is recognised as vital for SMEs, creating an interface with the external environment in which they operate (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004). Increasingly, marketers are using SM as an integral part of their digital marketing strategy to the point that it has become indispensable. SM, along with more personalised and interactive forms of communication, have altered consumer expectations (Lapierre and Pierre, 2010).

If there is no SM strategy or SM policy within a business, then the expectation for employees to use SM is challenging (Guinan et al., 2014). A SM strategy is effective only if it is part of a properly planned HR and management strategy. If businesses have a SM presence, it will need to develop a SM business usage policy to establish the expectations of staff members when using their own SM accounts. The business usage policy sets guidelines with respect to the administration and posting of content on SM platforms for the business. The intent is to promote the business' brand and more importantly protect it from reputational damage, breach of copyright, and other failings (Field and Chelliah, 2013).

In some cases, the significance of having a clear SM strategy is so that employees understand, regardless of whether they are at work or on personal time, their use of SM can impact their employment status (Parker et al., 2019). From a productivity perspective, there is some evidence within the literature regarding the banning employee use of SM at work (Bizzi, 2017; By Courteney, 2013). Organisations continue to struggle with work communication on SM with employers imposing procedures that monitor employee communication and behaviour within online platforms to mitigate reputational, legal, and business risk (Petter, 2018). However, this study investigates work-related use of SM.

Having an employee who has the authority and expertise to work with SM is vital for businesses. This role may be strategic in evolving competence, but

also commitment through a flawless strategy on SM and a communication campaign. Using social technologies, value can be achieved from collaborating with different stakeholders in many ways, however, it is not easily forecast (Guinan et al., 2014).

Management strategies and company policies should be executed in ways that neither hinder employees' communicative freedoms, nor limit opportunities to construct engagement (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). This study focuses on the use of eWOM by employees who are delegated the tasks. The question is whether these tasks are in line with the overall business objectives.

2.4.2.3.2 Return on Investment (ROI)

Many businesses are still unclear as to how to make money and achieve a return on investment by using SM. Much less is known about how to use SM strategically to maximise the positive impacts. For example, even though it is relatively easy to target online users who are likely to click on paid advertisements, little is known about how to target strategically those users who are likely to interact socially (i.e., like, share) with SM content (Cheah et al., 2018).

There are limitations and weaknesses to the SM analytics provided by the major platforms. Hence, it is important to integrate analytics from different SM platforms to give an overall picture of the brand reach (Keenan and Rowley, 2017). Businesses need to consider the benefits associated with SM, such as brand awareness, community development, and global reach as ways to recoup their investment in the technology (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012).

2.6 Social Media Summary

This chapter discusses the rise of SM among Irish businesses and the different types of SM definitions which have evolved over time. SM helps businesses to communicate better with customers. Employees are able to create and

manage content for businesses, and SM incorporates users' opinions, experiences and perceptions.

Research on the increase of SM adoption amongst both national and internal businesses has been discussed (The Marketing Institute et al., 2019; Salesforce, 2019; Gartner, 2018; Econsultancy, 2019). This chapter outlines the many benefits businesses achieve by adopting and using eWOM, specifically: enhancing brand awareness, sales, customer reach, and customer relations through engagement with community.

Regarding the challenge's employees face when adopting and using work-related eWOM, three themes emerged: technological, environmental and organisational. Technical issues and poor broadband penetration rates are still a challenge for Irish businesses. Environmental risk is associated with the credibility of eWOM; for example, users are mindful of the accuracy of messages posted online. Noted in this chapter is how confidence in the SM application Facebook has decreased since the analytics scandal. The organisational issues focus on how to establish social media objectives as part of an overall SM strategy and how to measure ROI from SM efforts.

The research gap identified is whether an engaging SM community affects the adoption and use of SM. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H4 Engaging SM community significantly affects employee intention to adopt and use SM.

Research Gap: Lack of research on whether having an existing social media community makes it easier for employees to adopt and use SM.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND USE

3.1 Introduction

It is recognised that SMEs have limitation and acceptance barriers when adopting a new technology. SMEs face many challenges due to the cost of conducting business, limited resources, funding, and poor implementation of technology, which may have a drastic effect on SMEs' performance. In some businesses, face-to-face communication is still necessary to conclude important business (Dahnil et al., 2014; Meadows, 2009; DJEI, 2014; Wang et al., 2016) However, SM is changing the way people conduct business (Dahnil et al., 2014; Durkin et al., 2013).

Many theories are associated with the adoption and use of technology (see Table 2.1). These theories were developed through the review, mapping and integration of four dominant theories and models: The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT and UTAUT2).

With the evolution of technology adoption and use models displayed in Table 3.1, the importance of *behaviour intention*, *subject norms* and *behaviour use* are still central to the latter models (i.e., TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2). These models have additional constructs, such as *effort expectancy*, *social influence*, *facilitating conditions*, which are all relevant to this study.

Theoretical Model	Model Description
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	Drawn from social psychology, the theory has shown that behavioural, normative, and control beliefs provide the basis, respectively, for attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2012).
Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)	Extended TRA by adding construct of perceived behaviour control which when used by Ajzen (1991) outlined that successfully used, TPB predicts intention and behaviour in a wide variety of settings.
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	TAM is tailored to IS contexts and was designed to predict information technology acceptance and usage on the job. This model excludes attitude in order to look at intention frugally. TAM has been widely applied to a diverse set of technology and users (Davis, et al., 1989).
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)	UTAUT has four key constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions that influence behavioural intention to use a technology and /or technology use.
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)	UTAUT2 incorporates all the constructs and moderators of the UTAUT model: gender, age and experience, drops the moderator voluntariness and adds the moderators of hedonic motivation, price/value and habit.

Table 3.1: Technology Adoption and Use Theories

3.2 Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed in 1967 (see Figure 3.1). Throughout the early 1970s the theory was reviewed and expanded by Ajzen and Fishbein. By 1980, the theory was used to study human behaviour and develop appropriate interventions.

3.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour

In 1988, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (see Figure 2.2) was added to the existing model of reasoned action to address the inadequacies that Ajzen and Fishbein had identified through their research using the TRA (Ajzen, 1985; Miles and Mangold, 2004; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977).

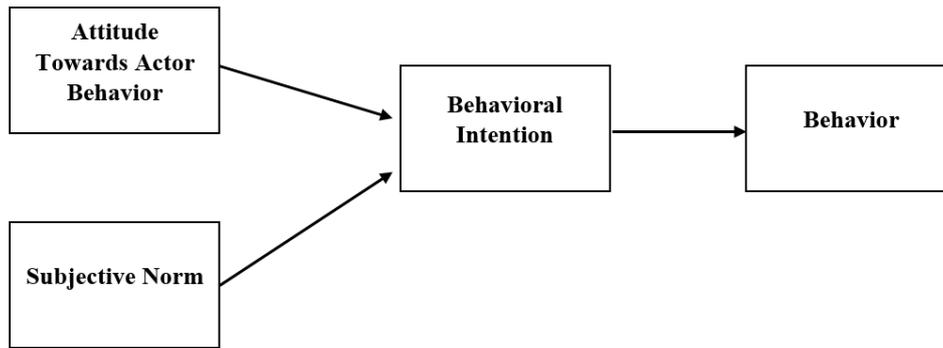


Figure 3.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

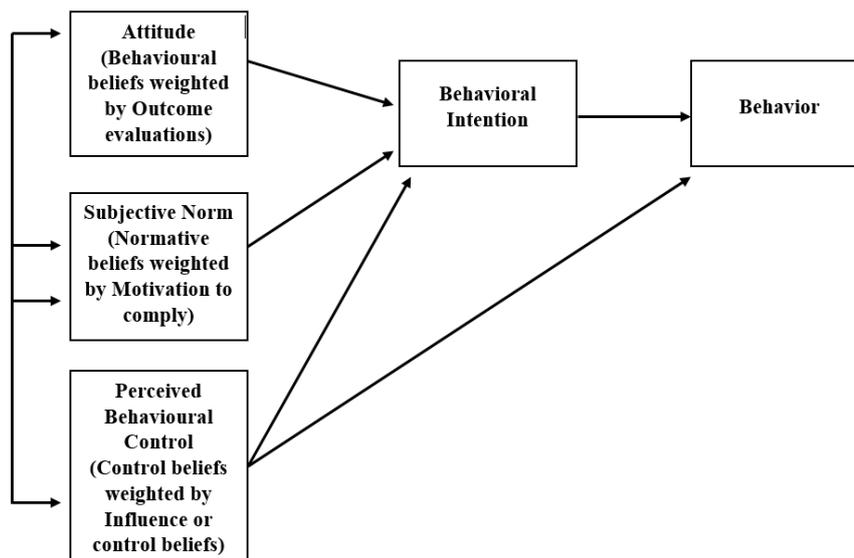


Figure 3.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Both theories hypothesise that an individual’s intention to perform the behaviour in question is a determinant of that behaviour. Intentions are “[i]ndications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). Therefore, the person’s attitude toward the behaviour and the subjective norm determines the intention. Attitude toward the behaviour raises to the degree to which a person has a positive or negative evaluation of the behaviour in question. Subjective norm denotes the perceived social pressure to accomplish or not to accomplish the behaviour (Grandón et al., 2011).

In the context of this study, do employees have the intention to use work-related SM? What is their attitude towards SM? Is there pressure from social norms to adopt? Recent research using the TRA is summarised in Table 3.2. This research has evolved over time, but still highlights the importance of *subjective norms, attitude, and influence* associated with the adoption and use of SM.

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	Key Findings
Branley (2018)	Risky behaviour via SM: The role of Reasoned and Social Reactive Pathways	Prototype favourability is a strong predictor of willingness for risk. Decision making may shift to more reasoned pathway in adulthood.
Wang and Sun (2016)	Social influence or personal preference? Examining the determinants of usage intention across SM with different sociability	Social influence factors play a more important role for high-sociability media users, while attitude strong; impacts on intention for low-sociability media users.
Erkan (2016)	The influence of eWOM in SM on Consumers' Purchase Intentions: An Extended Approach to Information Adoption	Determinants (Information quality, information credibility, needs of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption and purchase intention) of eWOM in SM that influence purchase intention.
Kim (2015)	Norms in SM: The Application of Theory of Reasoned Action and Personal Norms in Predicting Interacting with Facebook Page Like Ads	Found that subjective norms, personal descriptive norms, and personal injunctive norms were shaped by interpersonal influences (e.g., family).
Chih-Yu (2015)	Facebook Users' Motivation For Clicking the "Like" Button	The identity of the posters and the number of "Likes" triggered hedonic, utilitarian, compliance, conformity, and affiliation motivations in the users.

Table 3.2: A Review Recent Literature on TRA

For this study the constructs of interest from the TRP and TPB include *behavioural intention, behaviour, attitude and subjective norm*. The reasons for using these constructs is because the author seeks to evaluate employees' intention to use SM; their attitude towards this technology; whether they use it for personal use; and whether their attitude changes if they must use this technology for employment purposes.

Recent research cited using the Theory of Planned Behaviour is summarised in Table 3.3.

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	Key Findings
Lowe-Calverley (2018)	Selfie Love: Predictors of Image Editing Intentions on Facebook	First to use Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to predict 'selfie' editing. TPB model is extended through control variables and the inclusion of narcissism.
Gauld (2017)	Smartphone Use While Driving: What Factors Predict Young Drivers' Intentions to Initiate, Read, and Respond to Social Interactive Technology?	Three behaviours of initiating, monitoring/reading, and responding. Strong support for predictive utility of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.
Cheung (2016)	Service Co-creation in SM: An Extension of The Theory of Planned Behaviour	Perceived usefulness is an antecedent of attitude toward co-creation in SM.
Mou (2015)	Exploring Podcast Adoption Intention Via Perceived Social Norms, Interpersonal Communication, and Theory of Planned Behaviour	Descriptive norm and perceived control are significant predictors of attitude; injunctive norm is a significant predictor of perceived control.
Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014)	Understanding Consumers' Social Networking Site Usage	Attitude, compatibility, relative advantage, complexity, normative influences and self-efficacy come into play when determining SNS usage activities.

Table 3.3: A Review of Recent Literature on TPB

Reviewing the research in Table 3.3, it is clear TPB is central to SM. Recent research using the TPB includes newer constructs such as: *narcissism*, *co-creation*, and *compatibility*, which are relevant to the use of SM. For this research the TPB constructs of interest include *attitude*, *behaviour intention*, *behaviour use*, and *perceived behavioural control*.

3.4 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The TAM model was created by Davis (1989) to clarify computer usage behaviour. The original TAM (see Figure 3.3) suggests the purpose for using a technology is subjective to the user's perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of a technology. Perceived usefulness should relate to the adoption

of information technology for an extrinsic task, and the user's trust that the technology will enhance their job performance. Perceived usefulness is a significant reason in determining whether a user revisits the website. Perceived ease of use can also be stated as the point to which a user trusts a specific technology is effortless to use (Davis et al., 1989; Shang et al., 2005; Castañeda et al., 2007).

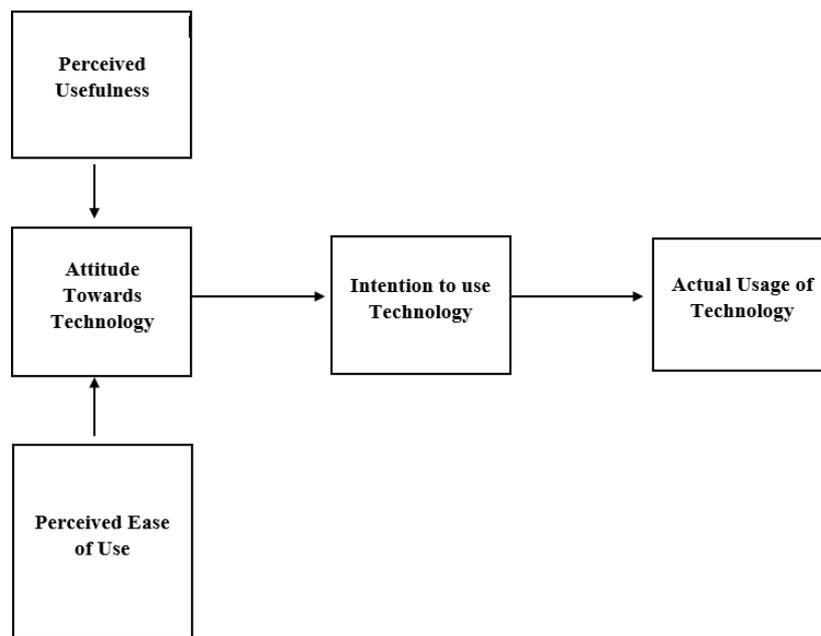


Figure 3.3 Technology Adoption Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989)

TAM generally focuses on the individual usage of a computer with the concept of *perceived usefulness* and neglects the essential social processes of information development and implementation (Riggai et al., 2012). TAM ignores the *social influence* on adoption of technology, so it has limitations in being applied outside of the workplace. As the intrinsic motivations are not addressed in TAM, its application in a customer context is limited, where the acceptance and use of information technologies is not only to achieve tasks, but also to fulfil the emotional needs (Taherdoost, 2018). This limitation associated with TAM also applies to an employee context, where *social influence* and employees' emotional needs of are not considered. It is these criticisms of TAM, regarding the lack of consideration for social influences,

which has led to the development of competing theories and models addressing technology adoption and use (Lee et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, this study recognises the importance of attitude and behavioural intention, which are two components from TAM. Behavioural intention is selected instead of behaviour because the aim of this study is to identify whether employees' intent to use SM is based on certain factors. Behavioural intention is the antecedent of actual behaviour by several theories, such as TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and TAM (Ajzen, 1985; Davis et al., 1989; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977). This research examines, TAM and how perceived usefulness and ease of use give rise to SMEs adopting SM technology. Recent research using the TAM on is summarised in Table 3.4.

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	Key Findings
Singh and Srivastava (2019)	Social Media for Outbound Leisure Travel: A Framework Based on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Model has been extended to include perceived trust (PT) and social capital (SC) as important constructs to explain the travellers' use of SM. Disposition readiness (DR) of the user towards SM is found to influence all the four constructs.
Alenazy (2019)	Validation of TAM Model on Social Media Use for Collaborative Learning to Enhance Collaborative Authoring	All the hypotheses are supported; the findings demonstrate the use of SM positively and are significantly related to collaborative authoring through collaborative learning between researchers in higher education.
Nuri (2017)	Online Marketing Enterprise of Jombang Culinary From TAM and VEM Perspective on Social Media	There is no effect between TAM and trust. In addition, there is a direct and positive influence of VEM on trust. Trust and TAM have a positive effect on buying intention.
Lin and Kim (2016)	Predicting User Response to Sponsored Advertising on Social Media Via The Technology Acceptance Model	TAM is a valid framework for studying sponsored advertising adoption via Facebook. Privacy concerns influence product purchase intentions.
Rauniar (2014)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Media Usage: An Empirical Study on Facebook	Supports all the hypotheses of SM usage behaviour and additional key variables: critical mass, capability, perceived playfulness, and trustworthiness.

Table 3.4: A Review of Recent Literature on TAM

The constructs of interest from TAM include *perceived use*, *perceived ease of use*, and *attitude*. The reasons for using these constructs is to evaluate employee intention to use SM, their attitude towards this technology; whether it is for personal use; and whether their attitude changes if they must use this technology for employment purposes.

3.4 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) (see Figure 2.4) purports to clarify user intentions in employing an information system and their use behaviour. The UTAUT model embraces four main concepts: *performance expectancy*, *effort expectancy*, *social influence*, and *facilitating conditions*, which are direct factors of use intention and behaviour. The key moderators for this model include *gender*, *age*,

voluntariness of use, and *experience*. Prior to the existence of UTAUT, TAM had been widely used to study IS/IT adoption within the IS discipline (Dwivedi et al., 2018; Venkatesh et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2009).

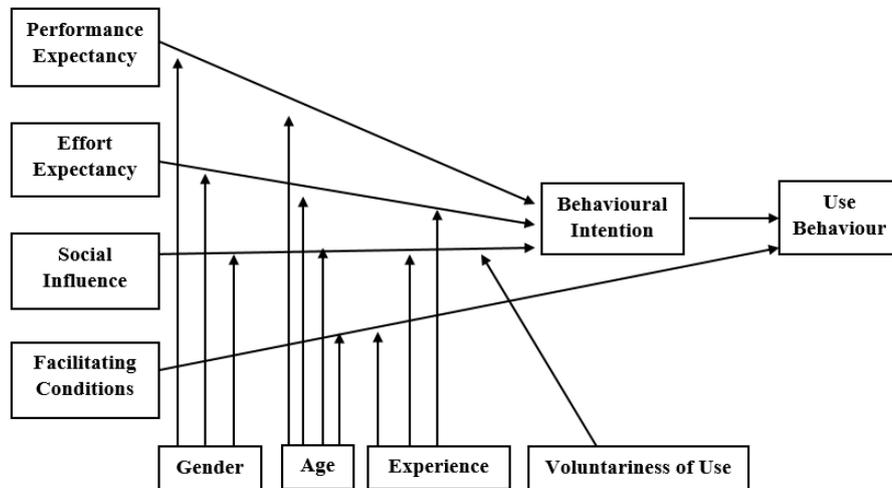


Figure 3.4: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003)

Performance expectancy relates to the level to which an employee trusts that using the system will aid him or her to reach advances in their job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This research examines whether the employees in the agri-food and drink sector believe whether using SM will help their organisation attain their goals and targets.

Social influence relates to the level to which an employee perceives others trust the employee to use the new system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the employee in the agri-food and drink sector perceive they must use a SM technology?

Facilitating conditions relate to the level to which an employee trusts organisational and technical infrastructure exists to maintain the use of the technology. Aspects in an environment that employees agree make a specific task easy to accomplish (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Thompson and Higgins, 1991).

Effort expectancy relates to the level of ease associated with the use of SM (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the SM technology provide advantages to small business employees in performing certain activities? Is the level of ease linked with the employee's use of the SM technology?

Voluntariness of use relate to the degree to which use of the innovation is perceived as being voluntary or through one's free will. For example, when a user voluntary posts on SM and is not required or encouraged to do so (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Recent research cited using the UTAUT is summarised in Table 3.5. Central to all the studies are the constructs of *ease of use*, *usefulness*, *use behaviour*, *trust*, and *IT adoption*. Also, what is interesting is the increase use of SEM as a form of analysis with the UTAUT model. Dwivedi's (2019) paper re-examines UTAUT model to address recent research and offers a revised theoretical model, suggesting attitude is central to behavioural intentions. Also, usage behaviours partially mediate the effects of exogenous constructs on behavioural intentions and has a direct influence on usage behaviours.

The UTAUT model has been developed for an organisational context and has been tested in longitudinal field studies of employee technology acceptance (Arnaboldi and Coget, 2016; Fischer and Reuber, 2011; Rapp et al., 2012).

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	Key Findings
Singh et al. (2020)	Determining Factors in The Adoption And Recommendation of Mobile Wallet Services in India: Analysis of The Effect of Innovativeness, Stress to Use and Social Influence	Findings confirm that ease of use, usefulness, perceived risk, attitude, to have significant effect on user intention.
Cabrera-Sánchez and Villarejo-Ramos (2020)	Acceptance and Use of Big Data Techniques in Services Companies	The findings confirm UTAUT (it comes from and unifies eight previous models), as the best model in Technology Acceptance, as it explains more variance than previous models, such as the most tested and known TAM.
Dwivedi (2019)	Re-Examining the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT): Towards a Revised Theoretical Model	The SEM analysis indicates attitude is central to behavioural intentions and usage behaviours partially mediate the effects of exogenous constructs on behavioural intentions, which have a direct influence on usage behaviours.
Faud and Hsu (2018)	UTAUT for HSS: Initial Framework to Study Health IT Adoption in The Developing Countries	Since IT adoption is a time-dependent process, this framework allows for multiple assessments periodically that could be compared to measure the progress of adoption.
Abdullah (2018)	Adoption of Financial Technology (Fintech) in Mutual Fund/Unit Trust Investment Among Malaysians	Contrary to the UTAUT, the effect of effort expectancy on behavioural is insignificant; both behavioural intention and facilitating conditions are found to affect the actual usage behaviour.

Table 3.5: Recent Research on Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Having reviewed UTAUT, the moderator *voluntariness of use* is omitted from this study, as the employee is the key subject in this research and the act of working with SM is not voluntary. Also, the moderators of *age*, *gender* and *experience* are not considered for this study due to the number of constructs in the proposed model, however, they could be considered in future research.

3.5 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012)

The UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012) incorporates all the constructs and the moderators of the UTAUT model: *gender*, *age*, and *experience*. The UTAUT2 (see Figure 3.5) drops the moderator *voluntariness* and includes three new constructs: *hedonic motivation*, *habit/experience*, and *price/value*. The extensions in the UTAUT2 produce considerable improvements in the variance described in behavioural intention and technology use. This study examines the constructs and moderators, as described in UTAUT2 (Lian, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

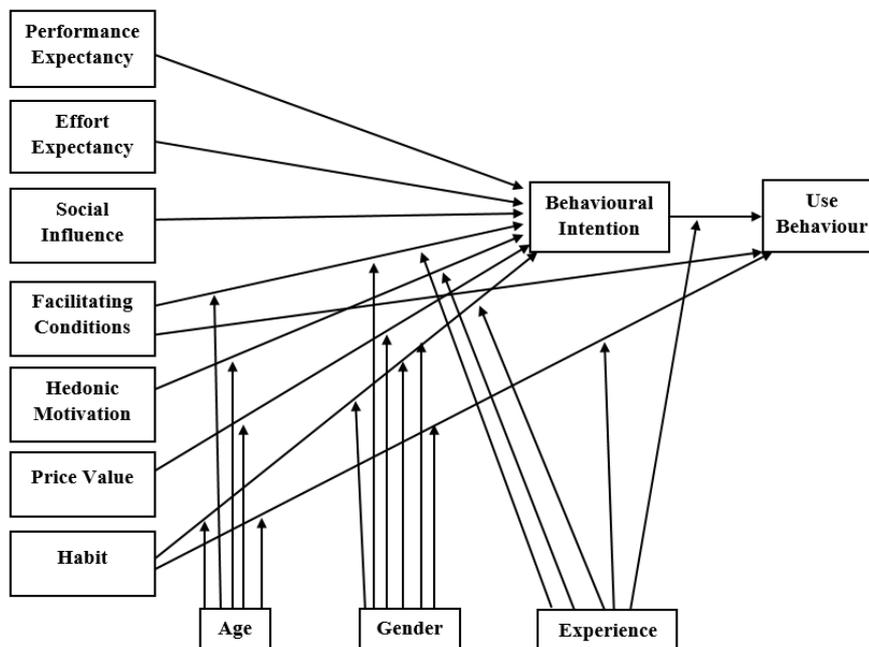


Figure 3.5: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012)

Hedonic motivation relates to the degree to which the employee finds pleasure from using a technology (Brown and Venkatesh, 2005; van Der Heijden, 2004). This research reviews employees' level of pleasure in using SM technology, as well as the employees' motivation to using SM.

Habit/experience relates to how people use information system in different ways. Increased system use develops stronger habits with respect to that system. The higher frequency use with a system leads familiarity with the system, which generates positive users. Positive relationships between similar system experience and effort expectancy applies not only the adoption of a system, but also its continued usage. The superior the habit of individuals leads to increased intention and, in turn, the increased chance of usage (Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2013; Andrews and Bianchi, 2013; Limayem et al., 2007). This research explores whether the level of SM experience/habit among employees and whether it will influence their use and continued use of SM.

Price/value has been integrated to address the cost issue of technology use. This moderator draws from the marketing literature in which monetary cost/price has long been conceptualised as an influential factor of perceived value of products or services (Venkatesh et al., 2012). As SM technology is mostly free to use, there is no actual price for this technology. Hence, the author has eliminated this construct from this study.

Post studies have addressed limitations of UTAUT2, adding additional constructs such as *trust* (Alalwan et al., 2017), *general privacy/system related privacy* (Morosan and DeFranco, 2016) and *social commerce constructs* (Sheikh et al., 2017). Several authors have adopted and used UTAUT2 as part of their studies, which is summarised in Table 3.6.

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	Type of Analysis and Key Findings
Alalwan et al., (2017)	Factors Influencing Adoption of Mobile Banking by Jordanian Bank Customers: Extends UTAUT2 With Trust	Two stage structural equation modelling approach, evaluating all the UTAUT2 constructs, with the addition of the construct of trust. All the hypotheses except for social influence on behavioural intention to adopt Mobile banking were found significant.
Hegner-Kakar et al., (2018)	Explaining The Adoption of Social Networks Sites for Sharing User-Generated Content: A Revision of The UTAUT2	Behavioural intention is directly influenced by performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, and the habit of using SNS to share user-generated content. Effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and privacy concerns have no significant direct influence on the intention to use.
Macedo (2017)	Predicting The Acceptance and Use of Information and Communication Technology by Older Adults: An Empirical Examination of the Reviewed UTAUT2	Evaluate the predictive relevance of UTAUT2 to explain older adults' intention behaviour and use of ICT. PLS SEM analysis was conducted. Two constructs of UTAUT2 are not supported, the direct effect of facilitating conditions on use behaviour and to the effect of price value on behavioural intention to use ICT.
Lian (2015)	Critical Factors for Cloud-Based E-Invoice Service Adoption In Taiwan: An Empirical Study	Effort expectation, social influence, trust, and perceived risk serve as critical factors for the adoption of cloud-based e-invoicing. Performance expectation, facilitating conditions, and security concerns are less critical.
Parameswaran et al., (2015)	Measurement Invariance of The UTAUT2 Instrument: Assessment With User Technology Engagement Variables	UTAUT2 instrument shows full or partial invariance for respondents' technology usage pattern and gender. UTAUT2 scales were found to be invariant for general IT knowledge but non-invariant for specific IT knowledge.
Dečman (2015)	The Acceptance of E-Learning In Higher Education: Influence of Education and Gender	UTAUT model in e-learning settings, social influence and performance expectancy significantly influence the intention to use the technology.
Pascual-Miguel et al., (2015)	Influences of Gender and Product Type on Online Purchasing	Product type significantly influences the relationship between perceived risk and purchase intention for women, but not for men.
Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, (2013)	Online Drivers of Consumer Purchase of Website Airline Tickets	Findings confirm the validity of UTAUT2 in explaining the online purchase intention and the online purchase use.

Table 3.6: A Review of the Literature of Authors Who Have Utilised UTAUT2

Reviewing the research in Table 3.6, scholars are still trying to understand the factors that facilitate the adoption and use of technology. Also noted is the constructs from UTAUT2 that have not been validated. For example, Macedo's (2017) findings have not validated the constructs *facilitating conditions* and *use behaviour*, which are central to this research and the UTAUT2 model.

With the influx of SM platforms, new queries emerge about how these systems and the interactions that take place within them affect individual's perception and knowledge of their own social networks. Do employees of these systems know particular SM networks better and stick to it for their work-related task? No matter what the knowledge outcomes of online social networks are, they lead to a second set of questions regarding the implications for individual behaviour and experience of the social setting (Whelan et al., 2018).

3.6 Constructs of Interest

3.6.1 Social Influence

Burgess and Akers (1966) integrated concepts derived from psychology's operant behaviourism with Sutherland's nine principles of differential association. That success laid the foundation for the social learning theory (Akers 1973; Akers, 1998) that drew on work by psychologists of learning (Bandura 1977; Bandura 1986). The social learning theory by (Bandura, 1977) draws attention to the process of observational learning from the social environment. People pay attention to individuals around them and are likely to imitate the behaviour of these individuals.

Social influence refers to how an individual in a social network is influenced by the behavior of others to conform to community behavior patterns (Venkatesh & Brown, 2001). Lee, et al. (2006) indicated that social influence is a learning process. Before deciding whether to accept it, individuals observe successful experiences acquired by their social groups.

Deutsch and Gerard (1955, p 629) differentiate two types of social influence, informational and normative. Informational social influence is "influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality," while

normative social influence refers to “the influence to conform to the expectations of another person to group.”

Social influence can shape an individual’s attitudes, beliefs and actions. Theories of social influence have been fundamental to IS researchers who look to ascertain the acceptance and usage of IT systems. Social influence has been adapted from Ajzen (1967) The Theory of Reasoned Action to, Venkatesh and Davis (2000) UTAUT, and extending Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model 2 to incorporate subjective norms as a predictor of intention, usage and adoption.

Prior IS studies have also drawn heavily from social influence to explain the adoption and use of social networking services (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Escobar-Rodriguez et al., 2013; Huang and Shiau, 2015; Pornsakulvanich, 2017), knowledge management systems (Wang et al., 2013), virtual worlds (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2014), blogs (Hsu and Lin, 2008; Wang and Chuan Lin, 2011), and mobile banking (Alalwan et al., 2017; Baptista et al., 2015; Oliveira et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020).

Social influence theory suggests co-workers may influence individuals’ technology use behaviours. Acknowledging the research on social networking services, noted is the limited research that explains how such social influence assist in the adoption and use of eWOM for organisations. Based on this concept the following research gap and hypothesis is presented.

Research Gap: Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM.

H1 Social influence significantly affects employee intention to use SM.

3.6.2 Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions are the degree to which an individual believes that a technical infrastructure exists to support technology use. It reflects perceptions of external constraints on behavior that encompass resource and technology facilitating conditions (Ajzen, 1991; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Taylor and Todd, 1995b).

Venkatesh et al. (2003) define facilitating conditions in the context of UTAUT model, as the degree to which an individual believes that an organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support technology use. They identify that behavioural intention and facilitating conditions were two direct determinants of adoption behavior.

Prior research in the IS literature on facilitating conditions has been in the area of information systems (Park et al., 2011; Teo, 2010; Zhou et al., 2019), online shopping (Yang and Forney, 2013; Martin and Herrero, 2012; Ratnasingam, 2004), social media (Nawi et al., 2019; El Ouiridi et al., 2016) and e-government (Batara et al., 2017; Alraja, 2016)

Determining the key factors that facilitate user acceptance of information systems (IS) is one of the most mature and central research streams in contemporary IS literature Venkatesh et al. (2003). However, although researchers have proposed various theoretical models over the past two decades, relatively little effort has been made to empirically examine the effects of both individual and group-level variables from a multilevel perspective. In an organisation, employees are commonly embedded in groups, and groups are embedded within the organization. In this nested, hierarchical structure of an organisation, organisational factors may have direct or moderating effects on the behavior of individual members working (Vallerand, 1995).

Drawing from this idea the focus on this research is to identify if employees within the food and drink industry in Ireland have the support and the facilities in their organisations to assist in the adoption and usage of eWOM. It is noted the research on facilitating conditions is on social media, however this is in the context of student's entrepreneurship use and employee recruitment. There is limited research on eWOM adoption and use for the food and drink sector. Based on this the following research gaps and hypothesis was identified:

Research Gap: Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment to work with SM.

H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.

3.6.3 Effort Expectancy

Many theories and models have been developed to explain and predict whether people find using information system technologies a lot of effort. This point is of prime importance in the workplace, where use may not be optional. Early work included the development of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and its successor, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), the Model of Personal Computer Utilisation (Thompson, Higgins, & Howell, 1991) Motivational Model (Deci et al., 1991) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The main thrust of this work has been to provide a framework through which the factors that influence and drive users' acceptance of technology could be investigated.

Effort expectancy can be defined with respect to how easy an individual find using a technology, essentially how much strength of ease is there in usage of technology. Based on the technology usage behavior (either easy or difficult) users decide whether the technology option is feasible in their practical lives (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Sair and Danish, 2018).

When consumers perceive that using technology is free of effort, it speeds up their adoption and use of that technology. Previous researchers found that effort expectancy had a significant influence on performance expectancy of information technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In the context of mobile commerce (Sair and Danish, 2018), effort expectancy significantly affects attitude toward using mobile technology (Onaolapo and Oyewole, 2018; Kang et al., 2015; Park et al., 2007), user adoption of mobile banking

(Gharaibeh et al., 2018; Zhou, Lu, & Wang, 2010), and mobile shopping services (Yang, 2010). Based on the research findings, it is expected the degree of ease of use of the eWOM may lead to positive effort expectancy, favourable attitude, and adoption of the eWOM, which may contribute to employees' high levels of involvement with social media.

Research is evident in the area of social media, in the following areas; effort expectancy of third level staff in social media use (Gruzd et al., 2012) and employee recruitment (El Ouiridi et al., 2016), noting the research gap in the area of eWOM. Therefore, the following research gap and hypothesis has been developed:

H3 Employee efforts affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.

Research Gap: Lack of evidence on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.

To summarise the hypothesis and research gaps see Table 3.7.

Hypothesis	Research Gaps
H1 Social influence significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM
H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment to work with SM
H3 Employee efforts affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.	Lack of evidence on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.

Table 3.7: Hypothesis by Research Gaps

3.6 Technology Adoption and Use Summary

This chapter reviews the recent literature on technology adoption and use. Highlighted are the key constructs of importance from relevant theories in the area of technology adoption and use. These key constructs include *behaviour intention* and *behaviour use*, which are drawn insights from the TAM model.

The main reason for choosing the UTAUT2 model is because it has been applied to an organisational context. This research applies the UTAUT2 model to Ireland's agri-food and drink sector. The constructs of interest for this study include: *social influence* (i.e., Do employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector perceive others trust them to use the new system?), *facilitating conditions* (i.e., Do employees believe they have the facilitates in their organisation to adopt and use eWOM?), *hedonic motivation* (i.e., Are employees motivated to adopt and use eWOM for work-related duties?), and *behavioural intention and use* (i.e., Do employees intend to adopt and use eWOM?).

In reviewing the literature on technology adoption and use, there are research gaps on whether *social influence* is a factor for employees when adopting and using SM; whether employees trust their organisation has the technical infrastructure to aid the employee with completing eWOM tasks; and whether employees enjoy using SM as part of their job roles.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: ORGANISATION CONTEXT

This chapter discusses theories relating to the organisational context, in particular: employer responsibility, employee engagement, and organisational commitment.

From the organisational perspective, there are many benefits for businesses to use SM, which has been discussed in Chapter Two on SM. This chapter discusses the overall management of SM, delegation of SM among the work force, the changing dynamic of SM, and how employees who are tasked with this role are educated and supported.

Public perceptions of businesses along with their reputations are increasingly formed by the online content users encounter while using SM (Kietzmann et al., 2011). SM is a game changer with regards to the types of content, resources and capabilities businesses need, as well as online strategies they may adopt in order to capitalise effectively on their SM presence (Nah and Saxton, 2013).

When businesses address employees' informational needs, they nurture a supportive communication environment that improves the interaction between both parties. This continued supportive interaction from employers provide employees with the feeling they are valued in the workforce (Walden and Kingsley Westerman, 2018).

The key theories from organisation literature pertinent to this study include: Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Homans, 1958); Conceptual Framework on SM Usage in Sales (Guesalaga, 2016), and the Model of The Effects of Satisfaction, Trust and Commitment on Advocacy (Fullerton, 2003). These theories are discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.1 Social Exchange Theory

Developed in the 1950s and based on psychology, social exchange theory (SET) (see Figure 4.1) embraces the fundamental concepts of modern economics as a foundation for analysing human behaviour and relationships to determine social structure complexity. The SET study suggests beliefs that drive intention are reciprocity, reputation, and trust (Homans, 1958). There have been many extensions and adaptations of SET, which include electronic commerce transactions (Salam et al., 1998), employee volunteerism (Peloza et al., 2009), online group buying acceptance (Tsai et al., 2011), and online social networks (Chia-An Tsai and Kang, 2019).

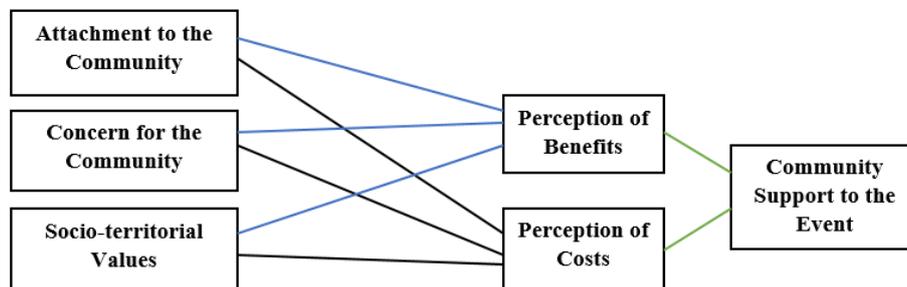


Figure 4.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans 1958; Settoon et al. 1996, Slack et al., 2015) suggests two forms of exchange in organisations. The first, economic exchange between the organisation and employees is usually explicit and contractually based with defined terms and monetarily rewarded. The second, the social exchange is a more generalised exchange fulfilling, for instance, a personal self-interest or the personal satisfaction of societal enrichment, not being stipulated in advance.

In recent decades, SET has received increased attention in organisational research as it provides the conceptual underpinnings for understanding employee's workplace behaviour (Settoon et al., 1996; Tse and Dasborough,

2008; Wayne et al., 2002) and provides explanations of employee’s positive outcomes (Bartlett, 2001; Kang and Stewart, 2007). Recent research using the SET is displayed in Table 4.1.

Author	Journal Title	Key Findings
Chiu and Ng (2015)	Enhancement of organizational commitment through propensity to trust	Contrary to prediction, propensity to trust does not show significant relationship with both affective and continuance commitment.
Paraskevaidis and Andriotis, (2017)	Altruism in tourism: Social Exchange Theory vs Altruistic Surplus Phenomenon in host volunteering	ASP, as opposed to SET, was considered more appropriate to interpret the behavior of the members of the two associations.
Wang et al. (2019)	Employee brand love and love behaviors: Perspectives of social exchange and rational choice	Main findings are that forgiveness behavior may be strengthened through a hierarchy culture, that supportive voice behavior can be strengthened via clan culture, and that helping behavior can be strengthened under a hierarchy organizational culture.

Table 4.1 Recent Research on Social Exchange Theory

However, SET also considers intrinsic rewards; Blau’s (1964, p.427) study states that: “rewards that are exchanged can be either intrinsic (for instance, love, affection, respect) or extrinsic (for instance, money, physical labour)”. Blau (1964, p.260) also states that “organized philanthropy provides another example of indirect social exchange”, thus implying that altruism is an additional factor, which affects social interactions.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005, p. 874) claimed that the SET “*is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviour*”. Additional and relevant to this research, Saks (2006) regarded SET as providing a strong theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement in discretionary activities.

Directed by social exchange theory (SET), this research recommends communicating with employees in ways that are appropriate and supportive to harness increased organisational commitment in employees. Those

employees who experience strong commitment are more likely to speak positively and act as brand advocates for their organisation to external audiences via SM.

This research explores the engagement of individual employees with social media and the organisational context impediments that may impair such engagement. The SET is employed to help understand individual employee perceptions of their engagement of social media for the organisation.

4.1.1 Employer Responsibility and Commitment

Employer information about employees' abilities is valuable for the organisation because the employer has the incentive to provide and pay for the relevant training, even if the employees' skills are across a broad spectrum (Acemoglu, 1997; Acemoglu and Pischke, 1998; Pendleton and Robinson, 2011; Zetinoglu and Cooke 2009). The idea is to increase productivity in a given profession with on-the-job training, which in turn builds a strong purpose for this skill.

If businesses identify and retain qualified employees and combine their talents with existing employees more effectively than their competitors, they can accomplish a significant business advantage (Boxall, 1996). In demonstrating to employees their business is a great place to work, employees develop into true supporters and advocates. Employers need to communicate the meaning of its business brands and by delivering on the brand promises, so that passionate employees can evolve into brand advocates (Badrinarayanan and Sierra, 2018).

In order to empower employees, the employer commitment to SM is necessary. This commitment is seen as the extent to which the company has invested in SM, as well as developed and communicated a strategy about its use. These two factors should positively relate to the organisation's use of SM (Guesalaga, 2016). The onus is also on government bodies charged with

supporting small businesses, to provide the access, initial training, and interpretation skills to use marketing intelligence for planning (Donnelly et al., 2012).

Employees need to know the different types of SM interactions that are likely to occur on different types of SM platform sites. This distinction is important when considering how communication takes place on these sites. What is the likely motivator for these interactions? Employees need to understand the types of communication, social relevance and intended audience of user generated content posted on these platforms. It is vital to ensure successful interactions with users. SM training and teaching employees about suitable responses on SM. Also, critical is that employers support their employees with these postings and helping them to understand their communications has a potential impact on the business brand (Dahl, 2015; Schwartz, 2016).

Recent research on employer motivation on social media lies in the area of supporting public relations practitioners (Sweetser and Kelleher, 2011), bloggers (Zhang et al., 2018) and students learning (Lai, 2019). However, there is limited research on the motivations of employees within SMEs in the food and drink industry, and particular in the area of eWOM. Based on this thought, the following hypothesis and research gap was identified.

H5 Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to adopt and use SM.

Research Gap: Lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business

4.1.2 Employee Organisation Commitment

Organisational commitment is the emotional dependence employees have for their organisations (Ahrholdt et al., 2019). Organisational commitment results

from the employee's investment (i.e., retention, attendance and job performance) in their role and in the organisation (Hegner-Kakar et al., 2018; Schirmer et al., 2018).

Employees who have strong organisational commitment to their employer believe the organisation values their exchange relationships, and employees are likely to perform additional duties to support their organisation (Walden and Kingsley Westerman, 2018). Another type of commitment is *affective commitment*, which is the attitude towards the organisation, whereas continuance commitment and normative commitment focus on an employee's attitude towards precise behaviours (Luo et al., 2018).

4.1.3 Employee SM Behaviours

The employees' SM behaviour represents an opportunity for businesses. With the increased personal use of social networking sites, every employee engaging with SM has a relationship with key stakeholders, whether they are current or future clients, suppliers, or potential job candidates. This reality motivates firms to encourage employees to promote their business in positive and productive ways (Cervellon and Lirio, 2017).

When considering the behaviours of employees using SM, research by Pagani et al. (2011) classify SM behaviour as either passive or active. Passive SM browsers lurk; they do not comment on post or create content. In contrast, active SM users create original content, join discussions, and make new friends.

Research on work/non-work boundary theory explains how people can construct boundaries to simplify their environments and differentiate domains of life experiences. For example, people develop unique preferences for separating or integrating work/non-work elements, which in turn influence the strategies they use to manage conflicting demands between domains. Of interest for this study question is whether this work/non-work boundary

theory applies to employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector, who work on SM for their business, and separate the boundary from their own personal domain (Ahrholdt et al., 2019).

With the omnipresence of new media in social and organisational life, employees cultivate rules and preferences for communicating on these platforms across their personal/non work, professional/work roles (Schirmer et al., 2018). Studies have established that boundary management preferences are related to engagement (Ahrholdt et al., 2019; Rosenbusch et al., 2018). Regardless of employee boundary preferences, work communication on SM plays an important role in building employee engagement, rather than merely representing or demonstrating it (van Zoonen et al., 2014).

There is a gap in the literature as to whether employees' behaviours change from their work-related use of SM compared to their personal use of SM. Do employees blur the lines of these two domains? For example, do employees share content posts and likes from their work-related eWOM on their personal profiles?

4.1.4 Employee Motivation

In a progressively disengaged world, businesses need to engage their employees to boost motivation, productivity, satisfaction, and loyalty (Osborne and Hammound, 2017). If employers expect their employees to use SM technology, they need to identify ways to overcome the potential lack of apathetic motivation of the employees that might exist (Hansen and Levin, 2016).

Motivation theorists categorise motivation into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, represents the motivation to do something due to inherent satisfaction. This type of satisfaction has been known as one critical factor that influences the learning process. Therefore, intrinsic motivation is a significant motivator that affects learning, adaptation, and

competencies, which are necessary for human development. Intrinsic motivation is a powerful source of behavioural drive when a person has opportunities to decide their behaviours autonomously (Bizzi, 2017; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a valued outcome, such as improved job performance, pay, and promotions. Intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations appear as distinct motivations and at times can coexist (Hansen and Levin, 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

A difficulty with eWOM is the motivations behind the sharing of eWOM are unknown and difficult to interpret. Customers or employees may well be compensated by brands for posting positive endorsements (Schmitt et al., 2011). With the rise of SM influencers and brand ambassadors, are employees in the agri-food and drink sector engaging in eWOM? Are these motivations intrinsic or extrinsic? Finally, are employees been compensated for being brand advocates? Nevertheless, employees' constant connection to SM may prove significant with customer engagement.

4.1.2.1 Trust

Prior research in organisational studies suggest trust, in terms of perceived organisational backing, has been closely related to higher level of employee engagement on SM (Wang and Hsieh, 2013). Previous research in consumer trust confirms, trust between businesses and customers, loyalty, and PWOM are positively associated (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014).

In relation to customers who use SM, trust is a critical component for them to engage and purchase online. This online forum gives customers peace of mind, which creates more satisfaction, patronage, and brand equity. Trust and feedback are key pieces of an organisational learning environment represented in dialogue and inquiry (Hardeep, Chahal and Rani, 2017; Song et al., 2009).

However, many businesses do not trust employees' use of SM and have responded by blocking employees' access to SM and adopting preventive SM policies (Piligrimiene et al., 2015). Employers' lack of control over mobile devices, tablets, computers along with the ready availability of SM, is likely to reduce productivity (Schwartz, 2016).

How do employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector trust SM as a tool to perform engagement with the business customers? Do employees have the trust of their employers to engage and use SM? Research is required to identify the level of trust that employees have in their organisations regarding the technology.

4.1.2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as *"a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences"* (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). Employee well-being and satisfaction is particularly important to generate natural PWOM (Rokka et al., 2014). Employees who identify and understand the preferred business brand image and feel psychologically safe and satisfied in their job roles are likely to use the eWOM in a way that is consistent with the business guidelines and goals (Schwartz, 2016).

Businesses can engage their employees to boost productivity, satisfaction, and loyalty. Employing SM (e.g., groups, pages) can nurture stronger employee engagement. However, a minimum of trust-based employee engagement must exist to establish these tools successfully (Storey et al., 2008; Wang and Hsieh, 2013).

Much of the literature on satisfaction and advocacy relates to consumer theory (Fullerton, 2003). The conceptual model (see Figure 4.2) presents, from a customer perspective, the effects of satisfaction, trust, and commitment on advocacy. It highlights the important role motivation plays in customer

willingness to act as advocates on behalf of organisations with which they do business.

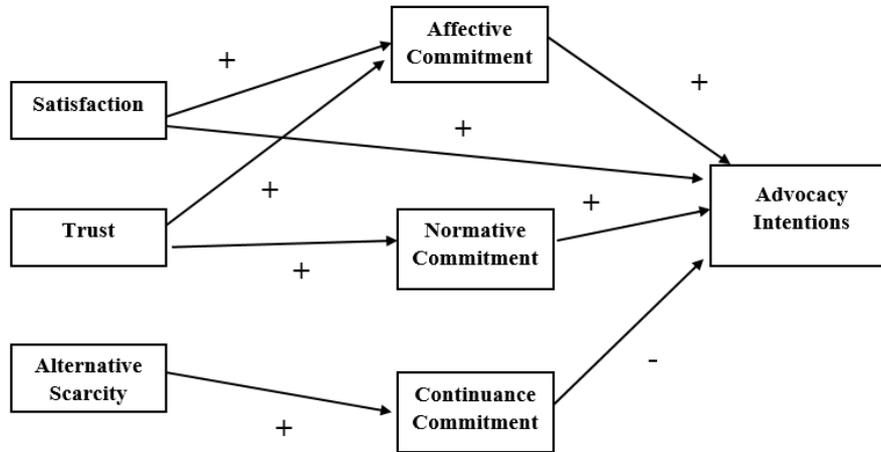


Figure 4.2 Model of the Effects of Satisfaction, Trust and Commitment on Advocacy (Fullerton, 2003)

From an employee perspective, there is little research on the motivations to adopt and use eWOM. Without employees instigating dialogue with customers, businesses will not receive any of the benefits from SM, as cited in the literature. How employees instigate eWOM with consumers on SM has prompted the following hypothesis:

4.1.5 Employee Experience and Competence

Individual competence in SM improves as the individual becomes proficient and familiar with the SM tools. Reviewing Guesalaga's (2016) research (see Figure 4.3), the construct *person factors* reflects the individual competence in using SM. The *situation factor* reflects the organisation competence and commitment in SM. These constructs have been tested for SM usage in sales. The individual commitment to SM is the extent to which an individual actively engages in SM. These two factors should positively relate to the organisation use of SM. However, Guesalaga (2016) ignores important constructs, such as *perceived value* of SM, or *ease of use*, which have been studied in the context of the TAM/UTAUT framework.

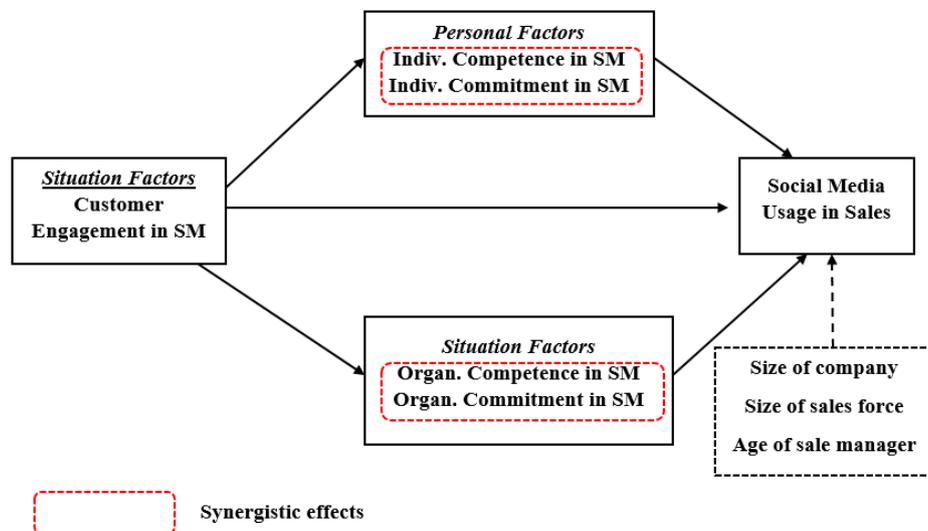


Figure 4.3: Conceptual Framework SM Usage in Sales (Guesalaga, 2016)

Parise et al. (2015) suggest employees with a diverse Twitter network, one that exposes them to people and ideas they do not already know, tend to generate better ideas. Therefore, encouraging employees to use SM is vital for business growth and innovation.

For this research, employee commitment and competence are of interest. Personal and situational factors are applicable, as the author is researching the factors that lead employees to engagement (adopt and use) with eWOM activates on the behalf of their employers. Also deliberated is the employee’s habit with using SM, which has been discussed in the Chapter Two on technology adoption and usage, as habit is one of the validated constructs from the UTAUT2 model (Ventatesh et al., 2012). Therefore, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

4.1.6 Employee SM Use

SM use in organisations can contribute to internal knowledge management, social interaction, and the promotion of businesses performance (Tajudeen et al., 2018; Nduhura et al., 2017). SM use can exert a positive effect on social capital (Ali-Hassan, 2016). In turn, social capital has a positive effect on individual job performance (see Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4: SM Positive Effect on Social Capital which has a Positive Effect on Job Performance

There is considerable research on the area of SM use. Table 4.3 summaries the recent research according to author, SM use factor, and constructs of interest.

Author(s)	SM Use Factor	Constructs
Charoensukmongkol (2014)	SM use and intensity at work	Co-worker support, supervisor support, job-related demands
Leftheriotis (2014)	SM use for work	Utilitarian and hedonic values
Van Zoonen (2014)	Work-related SM	Need for work-related information, social, and professional information.
Trainor (2014)	SM technology use	Social CRM, SM technology use, customer relationship performance
Brooks (2015)	Personal SM usage	SM usage, happiness, technostress, task performance
Bretschneider (2016)	SM Use and frequency	Organisational rule, standardisation, and rule clarity
Jiang (2016)	SM use in work-related communication	Years of experience, organisational type and size, size of staff and roles
Go and You (2016)	SM usage patterns	SM applications, SM usage patterns
Schmidt (2016)	Percentage of co-worker SM connections	SM connections, organisational support, organisational spontaneity
van Zoonen (2017)	SM use for work	SM, employee's organisational reputation
Tajvidi (2017)	SM use for online and offline	SM, branding, innovation and firm performance
Tajudeen (2018)	SM use for information search, for marketing, for building customer relations	Technology, organisation, and environment framework
Drummond (2018)	SM use of Facebook and Twitter	SM, resource mobilisation, entrepreneurship, artisan food & craft breweries
Corral de Zubielqui (2019)	SM for internal use	SM, innovativeness, HR, firm performance,

Table 4.2: SM Use in Businesses Research Adapted by Zhang (2019)

Key to the research in Table 4.2 is Zhang (2019), who has investigated how different purposes of SM usage affect employees' organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention in the Chinese market (see Figure 4.5). The key finding is that SM usage for different purposes (e.g., work and social) positively affects employees' engagement. Further, employees' organisational engagement positively affects their organisational commitment, while the effect of employees' job engagement on

organisational commitment is not significant. Zhang’s (2019) findings concur with those of Drummond (2018) and Saks (2006). Drummond (2018) has found SM usage is positively related to engagement. Saks (2006) has found organisational engagement is a much stronger predictor of organisational commitment, than job engagement.

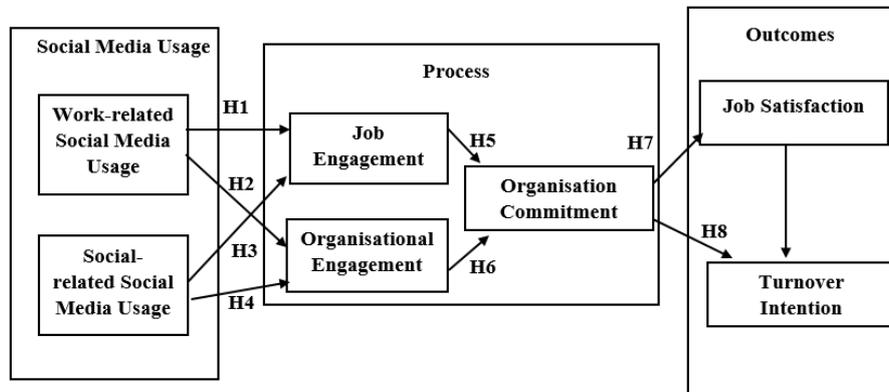


Figure 4.5: SM Usage Affects Employees Job Satisfaction & Turnover Retention (Zhang et al., 2019)

4.1.7 Employee Brand Advocacy

Employee advocates are those that actively promote the company for which they work. This advocacy can be through eWOM messages on SM, word-of-mouth referrals, or by becoming an expert or spokesperson for their organisation (Gilliland, 2018).

Employees of a business are in direct communication with stakeholders both inside and outside of the workplace. Therefore, employees can be the best advocates of a business in promoting the business. In addition, they are an important asset in using SM for public relations (HRMID, 2017).

When employees believe they are supported by their employer through a mutually beneficial relationship, employees are free to engage in discretionary behaviours that go beyond their normal job role and support the business (Tremblay and Landreville, 2015).

Organisation citizen behaviour (OCB) refers to employee efforts that go beyond formal job duties, which are discretionary and not explicitly rewarded by organisations (Organ, 1990). Key areas where OCB has been cited in the literature includes relationships as role stressors (Eatough et al., 2011), online community participation (Chang et al., 2012), and counterproductive work behaviour (Ng et al., 2016). However, there is little research on the employee intention to recommend their employers on SM beyond their formal job roles.

Employee advocacy is like OCB because the employee takes a voluntary step beyond their job expectations to help the organisation. Since advocacy involves sharing good news about a business and defending a business against criticism in this sphere, a strong relationship between an employee and their business is needed (Men, 2014).

Figure 4.6 displays Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018) model for Front Line Employees (FLEs) and Brand Advocacy. Their study examines the underlying role of emotions in how frontline employees' evaluations of vendors and customers trigger and temper brand advocacy efforts. The findings confirm the quality of the relationship between frontline employees with vendors and the vendors' perceptions of product quality, positively influence brand advocacy.

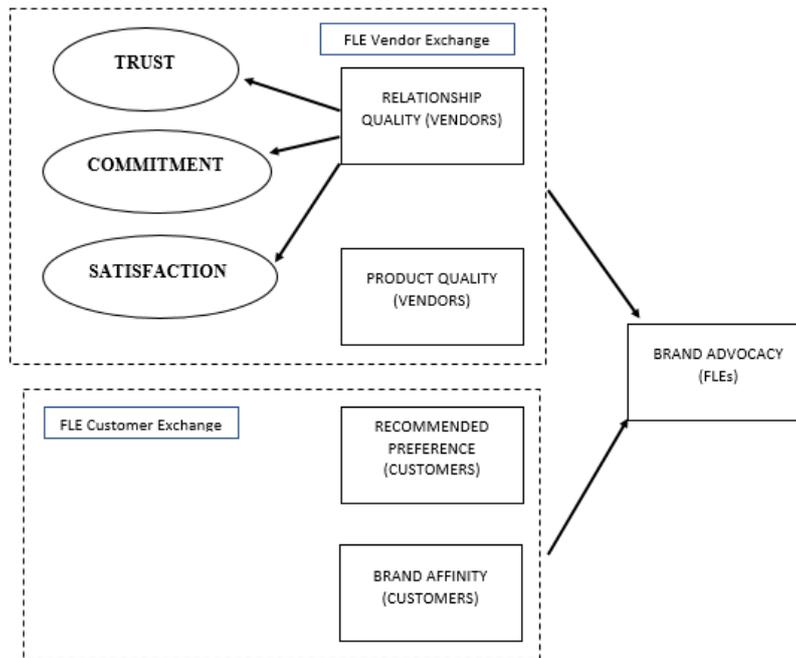


Figure 4.6: Front line Employees (FLEs) and Brand Advocacy (Badrinarayanan and Sierra, 2018)

Highly committed employees are more inclined to advocate for their organisation. Commitment is an important connection between the communication elements of interaction supportiveness, information flow and information adequacy and advocacy. Employee advocacy is important because employees have access to a large SM network, and their actions can greatly impact a firm’s reputation (Walden and Kingsley Westerman, 2018).

The recent research on employee brand advocacy lies heavily in the area of consumer base (Molinillo et al., 2019), brand managers (Golant, 2012), and corporate identify (Glanfield et al., 2017). Acknowledging the work by (Badrinarayanan and Sierra, 2018; Schepers and Nijssen, 2018) on front line employees, this research wishes to expand this research to SMEs analysing the use of eWOM. Based on this concept the following hypothesis and research gap has been identified:

H6: Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicate brand advocacy.

Research Gap: Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.

4.2 Organisation Summary

This chapter reviews the literature on organisation context and its significance to this study. Homans' (1958) SET model is presented, which focuses on reciprocity, reputation, trust, and drive intention. The theory has relevance to this study, as the main focus of this research is whether employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink industry invest in their work-related SM.

SM behaviours of employees, particularly the work/non-work boundary theory, is of relevance to this study with regards to employee intention to use eWOM. The question is whether employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector have preferences for separating or integrating their SM personal and work profiles.

Employee motivation is explored, and two key themes emerged: trust and satisfaction. Are employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector trusted by their employer to adopt and use eWOM, and are they satisfied in their position (Fullerton, 2003)? The Trust Model of the Effects of Satisfaction, Trust and Commitment on Advocacy are two models which focuses from a customer perspective. However, these models highlight the important role motivation plays in customers' willingness to act as advocates. Also, Guesalaga's (2016) conceptual framework discusses how individual competence in SM improves, as the individual becomes proficient and familiar with SM tools.

Employee engagement with SM is examined through Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) Building Blocks to Brand Co-Creation Dialogue. This model identifies four building blocks of importance for consumer engagement: access, dialogue, risk, transparency. Applying this research to employees within Ireland's agri-food and drink sector is of interest to this study, to evaluate whether the employees are applying some or most of the

four building blocks in their engagement efforts on SM. Employees need to initiate conversations and engage with customers on SM. The questions are whether employees have full control of the firms' SM accounts and whether employers trust employees in dealing with the responses from the community.

Zhang et al.'s (2019) SM Usage Affects Employees Job Satisfaction and Turnover Retention shows how SM usage for different purposes (e.g., work and social) positively affects employees' engagement. It also confirms that employees' organisational engagement positively affects their organisational commitment. Zhang et al.'s (2019) model relates to the focus of this research, as to whether employees have a positive effect on work-related SM engagement, and whether this engagement affects their commitment to the organisation.

Employee brand advocacy, in particular OCB, refers to the effort's employees extend outside of their formal job duties (Organ, 1990). Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018) model on Front line Employees (FLEs) and Brand Advocacy demonstrates that highly committed employees are more inclined to advocate for their organisation.

The gaps in the literature identified above on the motivation by employers in the adoption and use of eWOM from an employee perspective and whether adoption and use correlate to employee brand advocacy. Based on these gaps, the following hypotheses have been developed and displayed in Table 4.3:

Hypothesis	Research Gaps
H5: Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	Lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business
H6: Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicate brand advocacy.	Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.

Table 4.3 Hypothesis Five and Six and Research Gaps

There are many aspects relating to SM and the benefits organisations receive. However, noting the many challenges SMEs within Ireland's agri-food and drink experience, the question is how organisations are using SM for their advantage. Does employer commitment encourage employees to use this technology? Are there certain personal employee factors, such experience with using SM, facilitate its use?

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY, DESIGN AND APPROACH

5.1 Introduction

This study aims to develop a model, describing the factors that lead agri-food and drink employees to adopt and use eWOM, for the purpose of brand advocacy. Thus, it is important to determine the methodology to achieve the research objectives, to explain the way in which the constructs are to be measured, and to present the research design, including the data analysis techniques. The suitable choices of procedures and methods are important to establish the validity of the survey results. Methodology is defined as the nature of research design and methods. The research strategy outlines how the research is conducted. Methods, on the other hand, are instruments employed in the data collection and analysis (Cohen et al., 2013; Sarantakos, 2005).

In this chapter the design and methodology of this study is presented. The chapter provides a description of the specific steps taken to address the research problem and test the hypotheses. The chapter discusses issues related to the chosen research methodology, as well as the data collection and analysis methods used to conduct the research.

5.1.2 Ontology Epistemology and Methodology

Ontology looks at the nature of reality as seen through the lens of the researcher (Saunders et al. 2012). It signifies what there is to know about the reality of the world, which is made up of underlying physical and ecological systems and inhabited by individuals whose opinions are based on their values. The values are affected by the individual's experiences, which also lead them to seek out knowledge to achieve their wishes (Allen & Varga 2007).

There are two viewpoints associated to ontology, these include; objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivists view the world as being separate or external to the social actors (Saunders et al. 2012) and that the world predates individuals (Holden & Lynch 2004). Objectivism visualizes the phenomenon under investigation as tangible and measurable.

The origins of epistemology lie in the Greek word ‘epistêmê’ meaning ‘knowledge’ (Krauss 2005). Epistemology is the philosophy of how we come to acquire knowledge and the beliefs on the way to generate, understand and use knowledge that are deemed to be acceptable and valid (Wahyuni 2012). According to extant literature, epistemology comprises differing, and sometimes complimentary, philosophies such as positivism, interpretivism and realism (Saunders et al., 2012).

5.1.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy comprises of a blend of beliefs and suppositions regarding the methodology and source of data collection for the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. The method and way of data collection are selected at the starting of the research. The research philosophy outlines a framework to select an appropriate methodology amongst different alternatives, which best suits to answer the research question (Quinlan, 2011).

There are two main forms of philosophy; positivism and interpretivism (Sanders, 2016) who explains that positivism results in unambiguous and accurate knowledge and it can involve using existing theory to develop an idea. Denscomber (2014) also explains positivism as focusing on facts, figures and statistics and encourages the researcher to sustain a detached and objective approach.

A positivist believes true knowledge can only be gained by observing and measuring (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). In positivistic researchers, only the collected data and its objectives interpretation is dependable. Analysis is only

made based on quantitative observations and statistics. Positivist philosophers hold a practical idea that only human experience can produce knowledge (Zorn et al., 2011). The key advantage of the positive strategy is that it allows researchers to test their hypotheses and rely on objective measures to support their findings (Wicks and Freeman, 1998).

The purpose of interpretivist research as described by Saunders (2016) is to create a new body of research, one that holds deeper understanding and interprets different contexts by looking at different groups and the perspectives of others. The interpretivist stance proclaims that it is vital for the researcher to understand differences between human beings as social actors. Researchers take on an empathetic and understanding approach when conducting this type of research. Interpretivist aims to probe into the social world of those being studied and comprehend the world from the subject's viewpoint.

The main epistemological approaches considered for this study were positivism, interpretivism and a combination of the two. The research philosophy adopted in this research is positivism. Existing theory on the topic of employee adoption and use was needed as a basis for this research and the quantitative analysis was the primary source of data collection through which facts and figures could be developed.

5.1.2 Research Approach

There are three kinds of approaches in research; deduction, induction and abduction. With deduction, the validity of assumptions is measured, while in induction, new generalisation or theories are proposed. Abduction focuses on the surprising evidence or puzzling facts and to explain these phenomena (Mitchell, 2018).

The main difference between deduction and induction is that deductive reasoning begins with a statement or hypothesis and then tests to see if it's

correct through observation, where inductive reasoning begins with observations and moves backward towards generalisations and theories lies in the hypothesis significance (Benson, 1978; Miessler, 2019).

Research by Horn, (2012) on deductive states that in order for the conclusion of a study to be true, which in turn validates the argument, then the reasons or premises must also be true, also known as top-down reasoning. “Deductive logic is the study of validity and not the truth” (Krishnaswamy, 2006, pg 12).

Inductive logic, on the contrary, observed evidence or fact is where the researcher begins. By looking at the evidence presented they draw conclusions which explain them. Yet, this assumption may be only one of many possible explanations and is therefore usually referred to as supporting the conclusion rather than proving it. This is referred to as bottom-up reasoning (Horn, 2012). Consequently, when new contradictory evidence is observed, the conclusion has to be abandoned (Krishnaswamy, 2006).

The differences between deductive and inductive approaches are summarised Table 5.1 (Saunders and Thornhill, 2007)

Induction	Deduction
Gaining an understanding of meanings humans attach to events	Scientific Principles
A close understanding of the research	Moving from theory to data
Collection of qualitative data	The need to explain casual relationships between variables
A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as research process	Collection of quantitative data
Is less concerned with the need to generalise	The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition

Table 5.1 Deductive verse Inductive (Saunders and Thornhill, 2007)

The researcher deliberated the factors to be considered in determining whether an inductive or a deductive approach should be taken. Deductive research can be faster to complete and can also be lower risk in terms of strategy. It is a very structured approach and founded on scientific principles where the researcher is independent of the research. Induction emphasises a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis and a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process. It is less concerned with the need to generalise (Saunders, 2015). Therefore, this research avails of a deductive approach because the theoretical framework is drawn from reviewing the literature

5.1.3 Research Type

In relation to this research, the descriptive and analytic method has been chosen. According to (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003), investigations is often involved in descriptive studies to verify the facts. Further clarification of these findings is supported through interviews.

Two types of research strategy can be adopted: the theory-then-research strategy and the research-then-theory strategy. The theory-then-research strategy assumes a hypothesis testing approach to research. It formulates hypotheses from theory and uses collected data to examine them. This approach includes developing a theoretical model for testing, generating several hypotheses that reflect relationships between the constructs, designing research measures to examine the model and its associated theories (Johnson and Reynolds, 2012).

The research-then-theory strategy considers empirical studies should not be restricted to improving theories by testing hypotheses, but also discover new theories (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The research should begin with observing the phenomenon's aspects and, in turn, look for data to develop theories about them (Johnson and Reynolds, 2012). For this research, a theory-then-research strategy is proposed, as the hypotheses have been derived from the theory, the data is collected, and a theoretical model is presented for testing.

5.1.4 Research Methods

Research can be categorised into quantitative and qualitative. Choosing research methods for an exacting research study may be challenging because decisions cannot be taken on the suitability of a certain method in separation of the context in which the research problem is found (Downey and Ireland, 1979).

Given the research questions, it is important to select a suitable methodology. Some research questions require certain types of strategies and may not leave much room for flexibility (Remenyi et al., 1998). Qualitative and quantitative research are equally legitimate. Therefore, selecting the type of methodology is about its suitability (Sarantakox, 2005).

The benefit of adopting research methods is that the individual can be questioned in relation to different topics and their answers can be described. In studying business research, the data is gathered to evaluate the concepts of interest, which may reflect people's attitudes, satisfaction levels, and so on (Benson, 1978).

5.1.5 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research can be defined as classifying the collected data and illustrating the relationship between theory and practice. In quantitative research, the relationship between measuring variables and applying statistical techniques can be examined. In collecting quantitative data, it is important to take a random sample, research is also needed on the type of instrument needed to collect the data. It is easy to show a quantitative study's findings, make summaries, comparisons, and generalisations (Benson, 1978).

In quantitative research it is normally obvious what confirmation is required, and this confirmation may regularly be collected within a fixed structure. Thus, in the social sciences, data collection is usually collected using survey questionnaires (Remenyi et al., 1998).

Quantitative methods are applied within the positivist research pattern by means of numerical data, which test research questions, conceptual frameworks, and designs. It relies on the researcher's competence to evaluate the investigated phenomena and analyse the collected data statistically. Quantitative methods in business research include questionnaires, field, and laboratory experiments (Cavana, 2001).

Quantitative research can be defined as research including the use of structured questions, where the response choices have been predetermined, and a large number of respondents participate. The quantitative method focuses on the statistical generalisation of findings, so as to clarify and predict

results by searching for regularities and cause-effect relationships between constructs (Creswell, 1994).

5.1.6 Qualitative Research

Qualitative methods typically aim to obtain richness of detail, rather than statistical generalisations. The detailed descriptions facilitate the understanding of the examined phenomenon through observation and involvement (Benson, 1978). The major distinction of qualitative research is the study of people, things, and events in their natural settings (Punch, 2005).

In this respect, qualitative research is an approach to the study of the social world, which aims to explain and analyse the culture and behaviour of human beings and their group from the subject's perspectives. However, qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of generalisability, being too dependent on researchers' subjective explanations, and the inability for subsequent researchers to replicate the research (Benson, 1978). Table 5.2 outlines some of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Reality is subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in a study.	Reality is objective and singular, and apart from the researcher.
Researchers interacts with those being researched.	Researcher is independent of those being researched.
Research is value-laden and biased with values generally made explicit.	Research is assumed to be value-free and unbiased.
Theory can be causal or non-casual and is often inductive.	Theory is largely casual and deductive.
Meaning is captured and discovered.	Hypotheses are tested.
Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalisation.	Concepts are in the form of distinct variables.
Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher.	Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardised.
Data are in the form of words from documents, observations and transcripts.	Data are in the form of numbers from precise measurements.
There are generally few cases or subjects.	There are generally many cases or subjects.
Research procedures are particular, and replication is rare.	Procedures are standards, and replication is assumed.
Analysis by extracting themes or generalisation from evidence and organising data to represent a coherent consistent picture.	Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables or charts, and discussing how what they show relates to the hypothesis.

Table 5.2: Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches Adapted from (Cavana, 2001)

5.1.7 Triangulation

Business research often avails of mix methods of data collection and analysis. This mixed approach can be conducted by using different data collection methods, which are either all quantitative or qualitative. For example, a multi-method approach might use a combination of either quantitative (web/paper survey) or qualitative (interviews and focus groups). An alternative is for researchers to use both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. For example, a mixed method approach may include surveys, interviews, and action research (Greener, 2008).

A motive for this triangulation is that different methods of data collection and analysis enriches and confirms the picture collected about a situation. Survey results are used to map a broad view of the research question and to provide themes/areas for in-depth investigation through interviews (Greener, 2008).

One element of triangulation, albeit an element that is not discussed extensively in the literature, is that of respondent validation or member checks. Respondent validation involves research participants responding either to forms of initial data, (e.g., transcripts of interviews, or observations of activities) in order to check them for accuracy. Respondent validation may also involve first drafts of interpretive reports, where participants not only respond to their accuracy, but also to the interpretive claims being made (Bloor, 1978; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Wu, 2011). Figure 5.1 outlines the triangulation process.

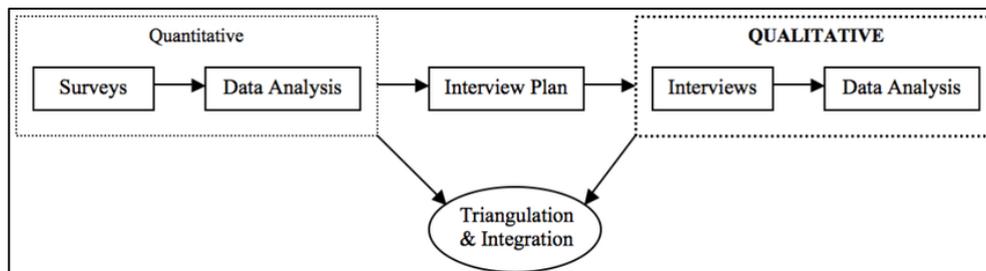


Figure 5.1 Triangulation and Integration Approach (Wu, 2011)

This research avails of triangulation in the form of a mix method approach. Reasons for choosing this type of approach is the benefit of being able to avail of two different methods of data collection. Surveying, as well as interviewing employees in Ireland’s food and drink sector, allows for a greater analysis and confirms the research question of this study.

The first phase/second phase approach is also of interest to this study, because clarity can be found from the results from the first phase, through further analysis of the second phase. First phase, the researcher collects and analyses quantitative data from the surveys completed by participants. Second phase,

based on the findings from the quantitative data, an interview plan is created to probe further and explain the findings through the qualitative method. The overall findings are analysed via triangulation.

Finally, one of the main reasons for choosing triangulation is that this study provides an analytical result while at the same time further descriptive reasons is provided which can confirm the reasons employees answered questions.

5.1.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential when conducting research. It is important to inform participants of the potential benefits, the potential harm, as well as other issues to participating in the research (Saunders and Lewis, 2018).

To mitigate concerns related to confidentiality and anonymity, participants need not give their name and email address. To protect participants' privacy, no personal information is recorded. All participants receive the information sheet (see Appendix 1) to inform them about the research purpose and implied content. By completing the questionnaire participants are giving implied consent for the data to be used solely for this research endeavour.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participants are informed they can withdraw at any time during the process by not submitting the form online or to the author. The information sheet gives participants the relevant information regarding the researcher, research purpose, how the data collected is used, and the outcomes associated with their participation. No deception has been used in this research.

5.1.9 Research Question, Objectives and Hypotheses Revisited

The main research question of this thesis is:

Does the adoption and use of eWOM by employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector correlate to brand advocacy?

To revisit Chapters 2, 3 and 4 discuss the literature review on social media, technology adoption and usage and organisation. The highlights from these chapter has identified several gaps in the litterer, these are summaries below

Social Media This chapter highlighted the rise in SM in Ireland amongst businesses, eWOM and the different types of eWOM as well as the advantages and disadvantages to eWOM. Noted from the research is the importance of SM community's and how they can promote brand awareness for businesses. Based on this concept the following research gap on whether having an engaging SM community affects the adoption and use of eWOM. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis has been developed:

Technology Adoption and Usage: This chapter discussed the many theories associated with technology adoption and use, TRA, TPB, TAM, UTAUT and UTAUT2. Noted in this chapter is the importance of three constructs namely, social influence, facilitating conditions and effort expectancy which have derived from the UTAUT model. Gaps in the literature around the area of whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM, also on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment have to work with SM, finally of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.

Organisation: This chapter focuses on the SET Theory, in particular the area of employer responsibility and commitment, organisation commitment, employee SM behaviour and the motivations to use SM, and employee brand advocate. From the research two key research gaps emerged in the area of employer motivation and employee brand advocacy. Questions regarding the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM

for their business and whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.

Table 5.3, and 5.4 on the following pages, shows how the research constructs are aligned to the research hypotheses and objectives, as well as the sources from which they are drawn from.

Literature	Research Construct	Descriptions	Research Gaps
Social Media	Engaging SM Community	Refers to whether having an engaging SM community benefits employee with the adoption and use of eWOM.	Lack of research on whether having an existing social media communities makes it easier for employees to adopt and use SM.
	Employee Brand Advocacy	Refers to employees who promote the company for which they work through SM. This promotion is achieved through posts on SM, word-of-mouth referrals.	Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.
Technology	Social Influence	Relates to the level to which an employee perceives others trust he or she to use the new system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the employee in the food and drink sector perceive they must use a SM technology?	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM
	Facilitating Conditions	Relate to the level to which an employee trusts organisational and technical infrastructure to maintain the use of the technology. Aspects in an environment that employees agree make a specific task easy to accomplish (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Thompson and Higgins, 1991).	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment have to work with SM
	Employee Effort	Refers to the level of effort employees in the agri-food and drink sector have with regards to adopting and using eWOM initiatives.	Lack of evidence on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.
Organisation	Employer Motivation	Motivation plays an important role in the formation of intention to use the social media on behalf of the business (Hansen and Levin, 2016). This research reviews an employee's level of pleasure in using SM technology.	Lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business
	Employee Brand Advocacy	Refers to employees who promote the company for which they work through SM. This promotion is achieved through posts on SM, word-of-mouth referrals.	Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.

Table 5.3: Research Construct Descriptions and Gaps

Research Constructs	Research Hypotheses	Research Objectives	Research Gaps	Research Sources
Social Influence	H1 Social Influence significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	To investigate whether social influence is a factor in employees adopting and using SM.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry are influenced by others when adopting and using SM	Venkatesh et al. (2012)
Facilitating Expectancy	H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.	To investigate the level to which employees' trust the organisational and technical infrastructure to make the social media task easy to accomplish.	Lack of research on whether employees in the food and drinks industry have the facilities within their employment have to work with SM	Venkatesh et al. (2012), Huh (2018)
Employee Effort	H3 Employee effort affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.	To ascertain whether employees' efforts with SM facilitates in using SM as part of their job roles.	Lack of evidence on the level of effort required for the employees to adopt and use SM for business use.	Venkatesh et al. (2012), Moran and Muzellec (2017), Guesalaga (2016)
Engaging SM Community	H4 Engaging SM community significantly affect employee intention to adopt and use SM.	To ascertain whether having an engaging SM community affects employees' adoption and use of SM.	Lack of research on whether having an existing social media communities makes it easier for employees to adopt and use SM.	Moran and Muzellec (2017)
Employer Motivation	H5 Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	To evaluate the levels of motivation and encouragement employees receive from employers in adopting and using social media.	Lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business	Guesalaga (2016), Fullerton (2003), Huh (2018)
Employee Brand Advocacy	H6 Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicates brand advocacy.	To ascertain whether employees' adoption and use of eWOM initiatives is indicative of employee brand advocacy.	Lack of research on whether employees who adopt and use SM as part of their job roles can be considered brand advocates.	Fullerton (2003), Moran and Muzellec (2017)

Table 5.4 Research Constructs, Hypotheses, Objectives, Gaps and Sources

Figure 5.2 depicts the proposed conceptual model and identifies the survey questions associated with each construct relating to the research by; (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Venkatesh et al., 2003; Davis, 1989; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Huh, 2018; Fullerton, 2003; Pitt et al., 2018).

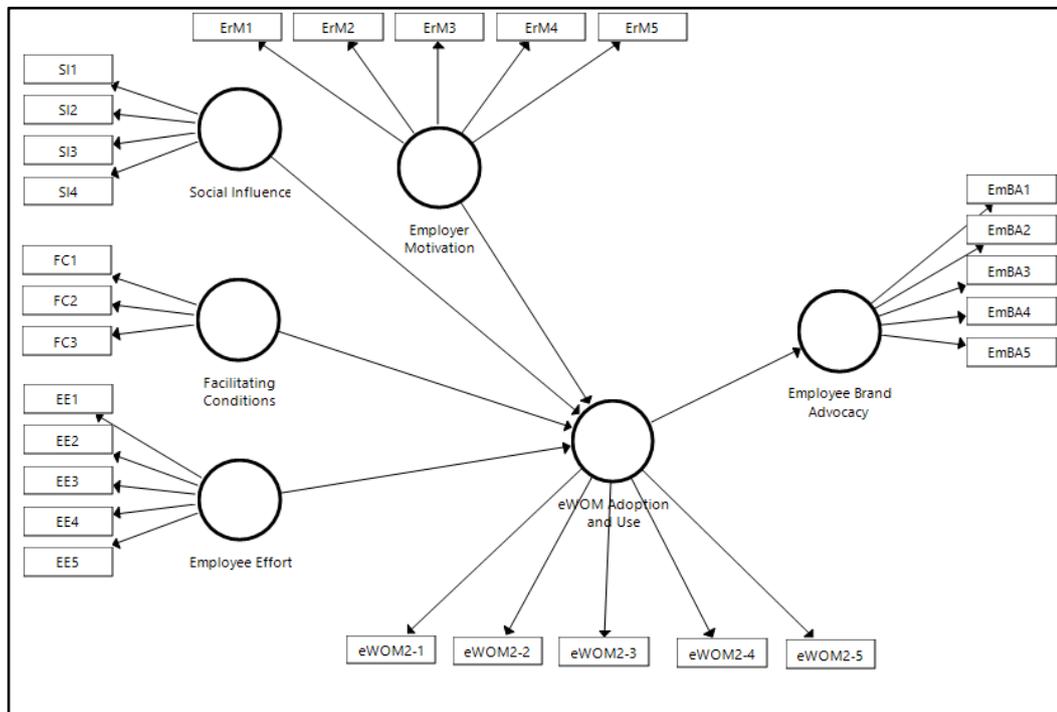


Figure 5.2 Proposed Employee eWOM Adoption and Use Model

5.2 Phase 1 Quantitative Research

This section discusses the research sample, the different structural equational modelling approaches, data collection, and survey validity.

5.2.1 Data Collection

This research method is taking a triangulation approach and there are two stages to the data collection:

- (a) Quantitative Method - online survey data collection
- (b) Qualitative Method - interview data collection

The following sections discuss the tools and procedures for data collection, and the two-stage data collection process is presented.

5.2.1.1 Questionnaire Design and Rationale

The purpose of questionnaire design is that the questions deliver the exact meaning of the research constructs, afford the appropriate way to collect precise information from the respondents, and decrease the time-consuming factors which require the respondents to analyse the questions (Saunders and Lewis, 2018).

Using the scale questionnaire means the set of questions has been tested in previous studies, which saves time and money in developing a new one. Also, the results can be compared to other studies' findings. As this research draws on two theories, Venkatesh et al.'s (2012) UTAUT2 and Guesalaga's (2016) Conceptual Model, the author has availed of the existing questionnaires to measure the related characteristics in these models. The researcher has also introduced new questions relating to employee brand advocacy, which draw on recent research (Huh, 2018; Fullerton, 2003; Pitt et al., 2018).

5.2.1.2 Survey Data Collection

The primary research involves a structured online questionnaire with SME employees, in order to understand their adoption and use of eWOM. Businesses have been selected according to their registration with Bord Bia. To be eligible for selection, each company must have fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover and/or balance sheet of less than €10 million (Enterprise, 2007). A total of 350 companies have been contacted. Participants have been contacted via phone, to identify the correct person who has the most responsibility with social media for the businesses. In some cases, several people have had access to the business social media. However, for the scope of this research, only one person from each company has been asked to complete the survey to avoid bias.

In most cases, those people contacted have been interested in the survey and the findings; they have supplied an email address to send the survey. In all cases, individual companies have been contacted three times and reminders have been sent to encourage the response rate for this survey. Two national events held in Ireland in September 2018 have facilitated responses rates: the Irish Food and Drink Expo in City West, Dublin and the Ploughing Championships in Tullamore, Co. Offaly. At these two events, the researcher has been able to obtain responses from the business using a hardcopy of survey. Snowballing effect has also been conducted; for example, one business in the brewery sector has forwarded the survey to other craft brewery business in their network.

Clear instructions on how to answer questions reduced the questionnaire's non-response rate. The questionnaire design is attractive to encourage respondents to complete it. For example, the questionnaire cover is an appealing colour, it offers high quality interface, is limited to six pages, and there are no crowded sentences. It is optional for respondents to provide their personal email address. As an incentive to provide their email address and complete the survey, respondents have been entered in a competition to win one of two €150 One4all gift cards. Those that have completed the survey are sent a summary of the survey results.

The questionnaire consists of six parts: *employer motivation, employee's motivation, employee's experience and habit, facilitating conditions, social influence, engaging SM community, employee adoption and use of eWOM, and employee brand advocacy.*

5.2.1.3 Survey Questionnaire Validity

This research aims to establish the questionnaire validity by checking content validity, also known as face validity, which refers to the extent that the measure reflects the content of concepts in questions (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The objective of checking content validity is to ensure the selection of

scale items extends past empirical issues and to include theoretical and practical considerations (Hair et al., 2013).

Content validity is usually established by asking other people whether the measure captures the concept that is the focus of attention and is pre-tested with multiple subpopulations (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Hair et al., 2013). After the questionnaire content validity has been established, the questionnaires are distributed (i.e., between April and October 2018) to employees within the agri-food and drink sector.

5.2.1.3.1 Pilot Testing

This survey has undergone two pilot tests, and which have been the focus of two conference papers for the Academy of Marketing Conference 2017 and the Irish Academy of Management 2018. A sample, representing the different agri-food and drink sectors, have tested the survey. Participant feedback from have improved the survey, which is presented in Table 5.5.

Improvement Type	Survey Comment
Technical	Identify the person in the SME who is tasked with SM, as sometimes it is an employee or the owner who fulfils that role. Some questions were geared to employees, rather than employers, which required a not applicable response, if it was completed by the employer.
	Employ a matrix with a Likert scale, to reduce the appearance of the number of questions, by allowing more questions to be grouped.
	Ensure consistency in presentation of questions using the <i>Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree</i> Likert scale, where strongly disagree is always positioned on the left and strongly agree is positioned on the right
Textual	Reduce the amount of text, explaining the survey, in the email and on the survey cover page.
	Include a question regarding compatibility (e.g., <i>Social Media is compatible with my website</i>) to enhance clarity for respondents.
	Clarify a question relating to the personal use of social media by including the phrase: <i>outside of my work commitments</i> .
	Change the terminology in one question from: <i>which sector best describes your interest</i> , to the phrase: <i>which sector is your business in</i> , to avoid the skewing of results.
	Change the term: <i>Do you think</i> to: <i>Do you believe</i> .
Presentation	Include a page timer, enabling respondents to gauge their progress in completing the survey.
	Explain the acronym eWOM by including a definition before the questions relating to electronic word-of-mouth.
	Offer an option, at the end of the survey, to supply an email address for the inclusion in a draw.

Table 5.5: Survey Improvements by Type

5.2.1.3.2 Survey Sampling Design

The required sample size relies on factors such as the proposed data analysis techniques (Malhotra, 2007). See Table 5.6 for suggested sample sizes, depending on the number of variables/constructs being tested in a model. The minimum sample size for using SEM is 100 (Cliff, 1987; Hair et al., 2013a).

Constructs	Sample Size Required
< 5 Constructs	100
< 7 Constructs	150
7 + Constructs	300 minimum

Table 5.6 Sample Size Required by Construct

There are many businesses within the various sub-sectors in the Irish agri-food and drink sector. The sub-sectors of interest for this study are the farm-to-fork SMEs, which are summarised in Table 5.7.

Stratum	Number of Companies	Sample Required	Number Answered Survey
Bakery	147	22	14
Beverages	178	30	26
Confectionery	56	9	18
Dairy	111	19	19
Horticulture	47	7	14
Prepared Foods	348	62	30
Total Required	887	149	121

Table 5.7: Irish Agri-Food and Drink SMEs Sampled

The sample size calculations for the sub-sectors across the six different strata is given in Figure 5.3. From the test in Minitab 18, the statistics indicate a mean sample size of 148 is required. The standard deviation is 110 and the median is 129.

Statistics											
Variable	N	N*	Mean	SE Mean	StDev	Variance	CoefVar	Minimum	Q1	Median	Q3
Stratum	6	0	147.8	45.1	110.4	12187.0	74.68	47.0	53.8	129.0	220.5
Variable	Maximum										
Stratum	348.0										

Figure 5.3 Sample of Companies Required Based on Descriptive Statistic using Minitab 18

The analysis of the survey data is conducted by applying statistical techniques. The next section discusses the different types of statistical analysis that is available.

5.2.2 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

To proceed with measuring the model fit, there are some interrelated statistical techniques usually used to analyse the data in a supportive stream. Hence, this section explores the reliability scores for the construct measures such as structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is a family of statistical techniques which has become increasingly popular in business and social science research. SEM's capability to model latent variables, to take into consideration various forms of measurement error, and to test entire theories makes it valuable for all types of research questions (Henseler et al., 2016a).

Two types of SEM can be distinguished: covariance and variance-based SEM. Covariance-based SEM estimates model parameters using the empirical variable covariance matrix, and it is the method of choice if the hypothesised model consists of one or more common factors. In contrast, variance-based SEM first creates proxies as linear combinations of observed variables, and then estimates the model parameters using these proxies. Variance based SEM is the method of choice, if the hypothesised model contains composites (Henseler et al., 2016a).

SEM is a covariance-based approach using model fitting to compare the researcher's model, as given by theory, to a best possible model fit. In other words, the indices and residuals indicate how closely the proposed model fits the data, as opposed to a best fitting covariance structure (Gefen et al. 2000). SEM reduces the difference between the covariance and those predicated by the theoretical model using a maximum likelihood (ML) function (Chin and Newsten 2003). Thus, SEM is more focused on explanation and is a more appropriate tool for theory testing (Hair et al., 2013).

Scholars are using two different approaches of SEM: CB-SEM and PLS-SEM. Ali et al. (2018a) have assessed the application of CB-SEM and PLS-SEM in hospitality and tourism by conducting three comparative studies. The findings highlight the differences in the requirements, applications, and

analysis of each approach. CB-SEM requires normally distributed data because non normal data can result in a lack of stability in the weights and potentially inflated R^2 . Hence, it is appropriate to use PLS-SEM for theory development and CB-SEM for theory confirmation. In addition, CB-SEM exhibits a lower value of R^2 and accounts for a larger number of deleted indicator items to get a better model fit. Both approaches exhibit similarities in terms of variances in the endogenous variables (R^2 s) and path coefficients (standardised beta) and differences in the significance of the relationships between the constructs. On the other hand, at the stage of theory development, the PLS-SEM approach permits the retention of indicator items and higher factor loadings.

5.2.2.1 PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares) Versus Covariance SEM

Within the literature, covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) is the extensively applied approach of SEM, and many scholars refer to CB-SEM as SEM (Astrachan et al., 2014). However, Hair et al. (2014) believe this naming is inaccurate because PLS-SEM is also an advantageous and increasingly applied method for assessing structural equation models. Both CB-SEM and PLS-SEM analyse relationships between theoretical constructs. However, each method differs with respect their basic assumptions, estimation procedures, and outcomes (Sarstedt et al., 2016).

CB-SEM uses a maximum likelihood estimation procedure for reproducing the covariance matrix (i.e., minimising the difference between the observed and estimated covariance matrix), without focusing on explained variance. Whereas, PLS-SEM follows a regression based ordinary least squares estimation procedure to explain the variance of unobserved construct by minimising the error terms and maximising the R^2 values of the target endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2013).

The increased application of SEM has led to a variety of problems and prolonged misuses and oversights in practice. Reviews on SEM reveal several

discrepancies in its application (MacCallum and Austin, 2000). These difficulties include problems of perspective, design and strategy, mechanical aspects of model specification, data analysis interpretation and presentation. These difficulties can significantly impact the quality of the information produced in SEM applications, as well as on the validity of the interpretations and conclusions. Academics have stressed researchers are applying different SEM approaches without understanding and reporting their assumptions related to fit, indices, sample size, multivariate normality, and estimation methods (Hair et al., 2012; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011; Zhong and Yuan, 2011).

5.2.2.2 PLS-SEM

Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) has recently received considerable attention in a variety of disciplines, including marketing (Hair et al., 2018). Since 2012, Hair et al.'s (2012) article is the most cited publication in the *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, the most cited publication in the *Journal of Academy Marketing Science*, and the fifth most cited publication in the *MIS Quarterly*, indicating the rise in popularity of PLS-SEM amongst other researchers.

PLS-SEM follows a composite model approach in which linear combinations of indicators have defied the composites. These statistically generated composite variables represent the conceptual variables of interest in the theoretically established model. In other words, instead of following a deductive approach of creating and testing a specific model, the researchers critically review the initial results and improve the model by means of an inductive approach. The inductive improvement process, deductively tested in several iterations, leads to a final model that more accurately matches the theory with the data, than the earlier models could provide (Sarstedt et al., 2016; Rigdon et al., 2017; Ringle et al., 2018).

PLS-SEM path models are officially defined by two sets of linear equations: the measurement model (i.e., outer model) and the structural model (i.e., inner model). The measurement model specifies the relations between a construct and its observed indicators (i.e., manifest variables), whereas the structural model specifies the relationships between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2016). Figure 5.5 depicts the PLS-SEM path model.

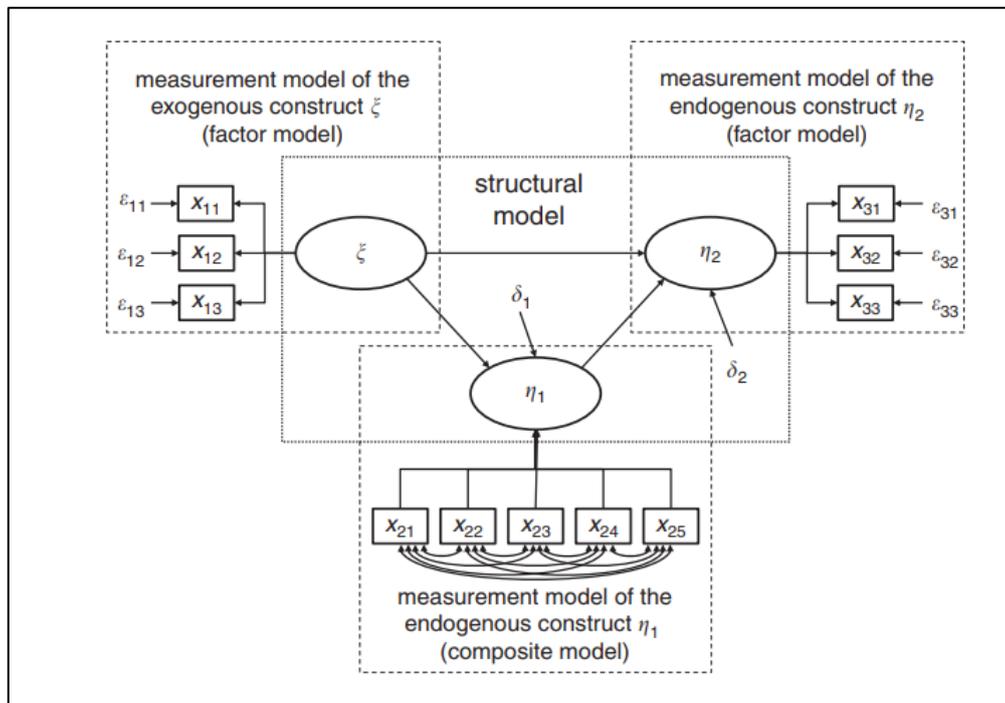


Figure 5.4: PLS Path Model (Henseler et al., 2016)

PLS-SEM is designed to explain variance, variance-based, like OLS multiple regressions (Gefen et al., 2000). Therefore, the focus is much more on prediction (Hair et al., 2013). PLS-SEM estimates the parameter, such that it minimises the residual variance of all the dependent variables in the model, rather than estimating the variance of all observed variables as in covariance-based SEM (Gefen et al., 2000). Although PLS-SEM can be used for confirming the theory, it can also be used to suggest whether relationships exist and to propose relationships for further testing. In general, PLS is a prediction model (Chin, 1998; Chin and Newsted, 2003).

With regards to the sample sized in PLS, the maximum number of arrows pointing to construct in the research model is five, suggesting 70 respondents as the minimum sample size (Dichter, 1966). Therefore, this study sample size of (n=150) is sufficient to generalise the research results. Compared to other SEM estimators, PLS has much better capabilities, but *“it will be the nature of the population that justifies the small sample size, and not the small sample size that justifies the choice of PLS”* (Gudergan et al., 2008, p. 600). Table 5.8 explains the differences between SEM and PLS SEM.

Issue	PLS	SEM
Objective of Overall Analysis	Reject a set of path-specific null hypotheses of no effect	Show that the null hypothesis of the entire proposed model is plausible, while rejecting path specific null hypotheses of no effect
Objective of Variance Analysis	Variance explanation (High R square)	Overall model fit
Theory Base	Does not necessarily require a sound theory base. Supports both exploratory and confirmatory research	Requires a sound theory base. Supports confirmatory research.
Assumed Distribution	Relatively robust to deviations from multivariate distribution	Multivariate normal, if estimation is through ML/ Deviations from multivariate normal are supported with other estimation techniques
Sample Size	At least 10 times the number of items in the most complex constructs	At least 100-150 cases

**Table 5.8: Table Comparative Analysis Between PLS and SEM
Adopted from Gefen et al. (2000)**

The following points are valid reasons to use PLS-SEM model estimation specification and evaluation:

1. PLS-SEM’s small sample size capabilities are real.
2. Models with formatively specified constructs should be analysed with PLS-SEM.
3. PLS-SEM is superior to regression analysis when assessing mediation.
4. Researchers should use the two-stage approach to moderator analysis,

5. Research should use the HTMT criterion for discriminant validity testing.
6. Researchers do not necessarily need to assess a PLS path model's goodness of fit.
7. PLS-SEM results should be assessed for both in-sample explanatory power and out-of-sample predictive power.
8. Examining unobserved heterogeneity should be part of a PLS-SEM analysis.
9. Endogeneity can be assessed with PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019b).

After lengthy consideration, the author has decided the best system to test the model for this research is to use PLS-SEM. CB-SEM is not suitable because it is a theory-confirming approach and this model is introducing new variables (i.e., *engaging SM community*, *eWOM adoption and use*, and *employee brand advocacy*) and is relying on theory development, not its confirmation. Also, PLS-SEM can identify whether a relationship exists between variables (Chin, 1995).

Other reasons for using PLS-SEM include the foundation of the proposed model is been derived from validated constructs developed by Venkatesh et al. (2012; 2003), which are used in the UTAUT and UTAUT2 models. Given the sample size of 150, PLS-SEM provides at least one justification for its usage, mainly related to sample size or data characteristics. PLS-SEM provides a better explanation for complex relationships and it can accommodate a minimal sample size and a sample distribution. However, the study used PLS-SEM to compensate because it can accommodate minimal sample size. PLS is also widely adopted by business researchers (Taiwo and Downe, 2013; Hair et al., 2019a; Xu, 2014a). Among variance-based SEM methods, PLS-SEM path modelling is regarded as the “*Most fully developed and general system*” (McDonald, 1996, p. 240). Table 5.8 displays the variables of interest and how they were measured in previous research. The PLS-SEM analysis has been conducted using the SmartPLS 4.0 software.

Constructs	Sources for Measurement Items
Employer Motivation	Derived from UTAUT (PLS tested)
Employee Effort	Derived from UTAUT (PLS tested)
Engaging SM Community	New construct for this new theory
Facilitating Conditions (FC)	Derived from UTAUT (PLS tested)
Social Influence (SI)	Derived from UTAUT (PLS tested)
eWOM Adoption and Use	Derived from TAM, TPB and UTAUT (PLS tested)
Employee Brand Advocacy	New construct for this new theory

Table 5.9: Constructs and Sources for Measurement Items

5.2.2.2.1 PLS-SEM Guidelines

When using PLS-SEM, researchers need to be knowledgeable of the method and its appropriate application. Prior research has produced several guidelines and recommendations on how to use PLS-SEM (Henseler et al., 2016a; Sarstedt et al., 2017a; Chin, 2010). New guidelines were derived by merging PLS-SEM fundamentals with findings from recent PLS-SEM methodological improvements (Hair et al., 2018b). The guidelines are based on four aspects of a structured PLS-SEM analysis process (see Figure 5.5):

1. Determine the research goal
2. Measurement model specification
3. Structural model specification
4. Results evaluation.

A two-stage approach is used to evaluate PLS-SEM results (see Figure 5.5)

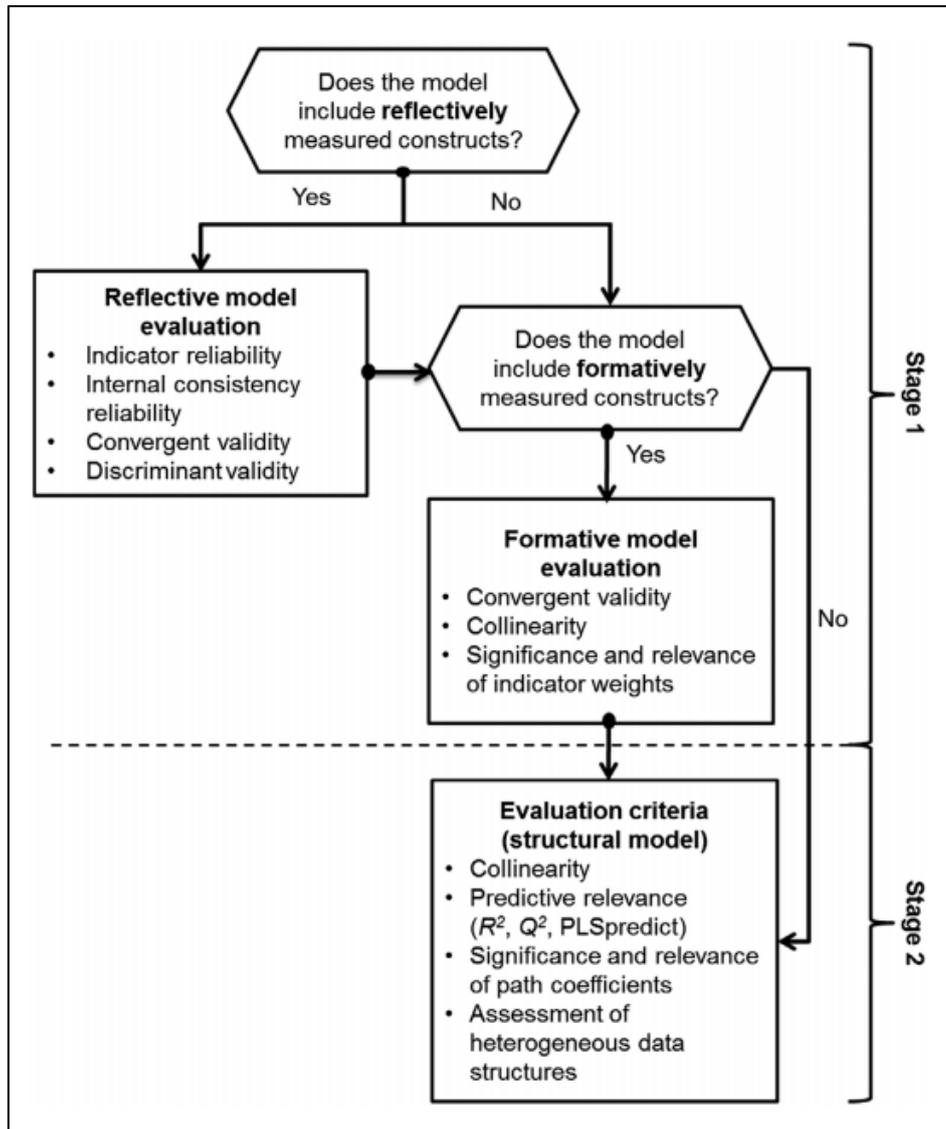


Figure 5.5 Two Stage Approach to Evaluate PLS-SEM results

5.2.2.3 Stage 1: Reflective Model Measurement

When assessing measurement models, researchers need to differentiate between reflectively and formatively specified constructs. An initial assessment helps to distinguish between the formative and reflective modes. If a researcher has used reflectively measured constructs, the indicator loadings should be examined. Standardised loading over 0.70 is desirable (Chin, 2010).

5.2.2.3.1 Internal Reliability Consistency

The results of the three reliability assessments usually differ, with Cronbach's representing the most conservative criterion, and the composite reliability representing the most liberal criterion. Researchers should also assess the convergent validity. The average variance extract (AVE) is a suitable criterion for this purpose (Ringle et al., 2018).

5.2.2.3.2 Discriminate Validity

One of the most significant aspects of measurement model assessment includes establishing discriminant validity. Precise assessment of discriminant validity is significant because it ensures each construct is empirically unique and captures a phenomenon not represented by other constructs in a statistical model. When studying relationships between constructs that lack discriminant validity, researchers cannot be confident whether results confirming hypothesised structural paths are real or whether they are a result of statistical discrepancies (Chin, 1995; Ringle et al., 2010a).

While many approaches to discriminant validity testing have been proposed, researchers using PLS-SEM typically rely on the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This criterion is met when, for each of the two constructs, the average variance extracted (i.e., shared variance within) is greater than the squared correlation between constructs (i.e., shared variance between). It suggests items share more variance with their intended underlying construct, than the individual constructs share with another construct (Ringle et al., 2010b).

However more recently, Hair et al., (2017b; 2019a) have demonstrated the Fornell-Larcker criterion is largely unable to detect a lack of discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. Researchers using PLS-SEM should base their discriminant validity analysis on Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), which differentiates the indicator correlations between constructs with the correlations within indicators of the same construct.

For discriminant validity to be established Ringle et al. (2005) suggest different thresholds the HTMT statistic should not surpass, depending on whether the constructs are conceptually similar (0.90), or not (0.85). Researchers can formally test whether the HTMT value is significantly lower than (1.0) using bootstrapping.

5.2.2.4 Stage 2: Structural Model Measurement

Evaluating the structural model, researchers need to check for collinearity, predictive relevance, and significance and relevance of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2019a). In the structural model, researchers establish links between construct through a set of paths, which usually reflect the hypotheses. The relationship between constructs can capture direct, indirect (i.e., mediated), and interaction (i.e., moderated) effects (Ringle et al., 2018).

5.2.2.4.1 Collinearity Issues

5.2.2.4.2 Significance and Relevance Testing

Researchers using PLS-SEM often take the R^2 as indicative of their models' predictive power. The R^2 statistic is suitable for assessing a model's in-sample explanatory power, but it is not an indication of the model's out-of-sample predictive power (Shmueli and Koppius, 2011).

Acknowledging the differences between in-sample explanatory power and out-of-sample predictive power has vital consequences far beyond a need for more careful language. Solely focusing on the R^2 value to assess the adequacy of a theoretical model is problematic because it may cause researchers to over-fit their model to the point it overly accommodates both the information and the idiosyncratic noise in the data (Hair et al., 2019a).

5.2.2.4.3 Goodness of Fit Test

The goodness of fit test proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2004) has received criticism in the literature. Henseler and Sarstedt (2014) have challenged the usefulness of the goodness-of-fit conceptually and empirically. Their research confirms the goodness-of-fit does not represent a goodness-of-fit criterion for PLS-SEM. Unlike fit measures in CB-SEM, the goodness-of-fit is unable to distinguish valid models from invalid ones.

Shmueli et al. (2016) note goodness-of-fit assessment in PLS-SEM is unnecessary and is insufficiently developed to be considered valid. Instead, researchers should assess the PLS path models out-of-sample predictive power using advanced statistical techniques, such as PLS Predict.

5.2.2.5 Advanced Statistical Techniques

5.2.2.5.1 PLS Predict

Researchers should also estimate their models out-of-sample predictive power (Chin, 1995) by means of a training sample (Chin, 1995). To assist such analyses Shmueli et al. (2016) have developed PLS Predict, a holdout sample-based procedure that produces case-level predictions on an item or a construct level. Opposing to standard structural model evaluation metrics like R^2 and Q^2 , PLS Predict offers a means to assess effectively a model's out-of-sample predictive power.

5.2.2.5.2 Mediation

Mediation examines a statistical model in which a construct (i.e., the mediator construct) intervenes between two other constructs. Analysing a mediator model involves examining whether a change in the exogenous construct produces a change in the mediator construct, which in turn produces a change in the endogenous construct, where the mediator construct facilitates the relationship between the exogenous and the endogenous constructions (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2019b).

5.2.2.5.3 Moderator

Moderation describes a situation in which the relationship between two constructs is not constant, but depends on the values of a third variable, referred to as a moderator variable. The moderator variable, or construct, changes the strength or even the direction of a relationship between two constructs in the model. For example, prior research has shown the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty differs as a function of the customers' switching barriers (Hair et al., 2018c).

PLS-SEM can assess contingency arguments through moderation analysis and using multi-group analysis. PLS-SEM is mainly suitable, as the method has practically no limitations when integrating one or more interaction terms into the path model (Ringle et al., 2018). Yet, when testing a moderation analysis, the researcher must carefully choose an appropriate approach to compute the interaction term. Researchers using PLS-SEM often study moderation models in which the relationship between two constructs is not constant but depends on the values of a third variable (Hair et al., 2017a).

When estimating moderating effects using PLS-SEM, researchers can choose from different approaches to model the moderator's influences on the relationships between the two constructs. These approaches include the product indicator approach (Chin et al., 2003) and the two-stage approach (Ringle et al., 2009). Rigdon et al. (2010) give an overview of prospective methods, which include the product indicator approach, the orthogonalising approach, the hybrid approach, and the two-stage approach (see Table 5.10). This study incorporates a two-stage approach, which performs much like the product indicator approach with standardised indicator data in a model that only includes reflective measurement models (Ringle et al., 2009).

Variable	Description
Dependent Variable	The selected dependent variable for which a moderating effect will be estimated.
Predictor Variable	Field to define the predictor variable for which a moderating effect will be estimated.
Moderator Variable	Field to define the moderator variable for which a moderating effect will be estimated.
Calculation Method	Selects the method of interaction term construct in PLS path modelling. There are three options: (1) Product Indicator (2) Two-stage (<i>default</i>) (3) Orthogonalisation.

Table 5.10: Moderation Settings in Smart-PLS

5.2.2.5.4 Unobserved Heterogeneity

Researchers should check for heterogeneity, which, if not considered can comprise PLS-SEM results. Researchers can address heterogeneity validity threats by making use of multi-group and moderator analyses, complemented by measurement invariance assessment, which have recently been proposed in a PLS-SEM context (Henseler et al., 2016b).

Sarstedt et al. (2017b) have suggested a systematic procedure for identifying and treating unobserved heterogeneity that draws on a combination of latent class procedures. In the initial step, researchers should run FIMIX-PLS to ascertain whether heterogeneity is an issue. FIMIX-PLS is particularly valuable in this regard by producing model selection criteria that guide the decision on how many segments to retain from the data (Hair et al., 2016).

5.2.2.6 Quantitative Research Summary

The sections relating to Phase 1: Quantitative Research, discuss the different statistical methods and techniques and the benefits associated with using PLS-SEM over CB-SEM. The two stages involved in assessing the conceptual model are Stage 1: Reflective measurement model analysis and Stage 2: Structural Model Analysis. The next section proposes how findings from the quantitative leads to further probing in the form of qualitative analysis.

5.3 Phase 2: Qualitative Research

For the second stage of the triangulation method, qualitative research entails interviews with employees from Ireland's agri-food and drink sector. Results from Phase 1 Quantitative Research, regarding hypothesis acceptance or rejection is to analyse through semi-structured interviews. These interviews have been based on a random sample of respondents who have completed the survey.

5.3.1 Interview Data Gathering

For the phase two of the triangulation approach, qualitative research entails interviews with employees within Ireland food and drink sector. There are two types of interviews, unstructured and structured. Unstructured interviews are informal conversational interviews in which respondents may not even know they are being interviewed. In contrast semi-structured interviews use a written guide to focus the interview on particular topics or issues. The topic guide is prepared prior to the interview and interviewers tend to stay focused (Sanders et al., 2012; Patton, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews have been chosen as there the questions posed will seek to understand constructs that were rejected in phase one. The businesses were selected from a random sample to take part in the interview process. Out of the 150 companies who took part in the survey, 20 businesses were selected at random to answer the themed questions. It was important to select companies who had completed the survey to gain a deeper understanding of the core themes of this research.

5.3.2 Interview Coding and Analysis

Coding in its most basic form is the simple operation of identifying segments of meaning in your data and labelling them with a code, which can be defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient,

essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2015, p 3).

Auerbach (2003) recommends that you keep a copy of your research concern, theoretical framework, central research question, goals of the study, and other major issues on one page in front of you to keep you focused as the page focuses your coding decisions. As a way of encouraging more qualitative research, Auerbach (2003) developed a step-by-step procedure for designing and conducting a qualitative study (see Table 1) For this study column two in Table 5.10 shows for this study how the steps have been conducted.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) Steps	Applied to this Research
State your research concern or question	Does the adoption and use of eWOM by employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector correlate to brand advocacy?
Define your theoretical framework	Theoretical Framework was defined in Chapter 5
Choose a single sample to begin the research	The sample researched was the Food and Drink Industry in Ireland
Design interview questions or observations.	Interview questions were derived from rejected constructs from phase 1
Generate raw text from transcripts or process notes.	Each interview was provided with the same list of questions on the one-word document. At the top of the document the interview was coded.
Identify relevant text.	Questions posed in phased one, that were rejected was identified as the questions for interview questions
Group segments of relevant text into repeating ideas.	Questions were grouped by themes Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions and Existing SM Communities
Group repeating ideas into themes.	Three themes emerged Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions and Existing SM Communities
Check with participants for feedback on themes.	By random sample 20 companies were selected
Organise themes into theoretical constructs.	Three themes emerged Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions and Existing SM Communities
Create a theoretical narrative.	Questions relating to the three themes formed the bases of the narrative

Table 5.10: Steps in the Design of a Qualitative Research Study

In smaller projects with a limited amount of data, Linneberg and Korsgaard, (2019) notes that simple colour coding with markers may suffice, with one colour for each code. Or alternatively use the copy-and-paste function in Microsoft Word or Excel. This will also allow you to copy portions of text from your data documents into new documents (making sure the data origin is visible, e.g. "interview #5").

For this study as the sample was small and considering that the first phase of triangulation involved in dept quantitative analysis it was considered that coding analysis was not necessary. A more descriptive approach would provide an expressive understanding as to the reasons why employees answered questions.

5.3.3 Interview Sampling Design and Interview Data Analysis

The selection of participants in qualitative research is considered an important task to ensure that participants willingly provide information representative of the target population (Cavana, 2001). The period of qualitative data collection is from March to August 2019.

The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews is to explore the survey results in further detail. The participants have been asked questions relating to their responses to the online survey. Twenty interviews have been selected at random with each subsector being equally represented. The interviewees have been tasked with managing the social media accounts for their employers. The duration of the interviews is between 35 and 40 minutes. Four interviews have been recorded digitally, while the rest of the interviewees wish to remain anonymous.

5.4 Methodology Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the research design, methodology, data collection and analysis methods to conduct the research. The chosen methodology addresses the research objectives identified in Chapter One, which are drawn from the review of the literature, presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches are discussed, and triangulation research design is confirmed. The main reason for choosing triangulation research design is that it tests the consistency of findings

acquired through different instruments and increases the chance to assess some of the threats or multiple causes influencing results. This research avails of the two-phase sequential method to achieve the research objectives.

Phase one avails of a quantitative approach with agri-food and drink employees completing an online survey. This chapter deliberates the two types of SEM: CB-SEM and PLS-SEM. CB-SEM is a theory-confirming approach (Chin, 1998) and is not suitable for this research, which is introducing new variables: *engaging SM community*, *eWOM adoption and use*, and *employee brand advocacy*. Hence, PLS-SEM is more appropriate for theory development and this research. Guidelines on how to assess reflective model measurement is discussed in order to validate the results of this research in line with PLS standards, which have been set out by Chin (2010), Hair et al. (2018), and Ringle et al. (2018).

Three advanced statistical techniques are reviewed. First, PLS predict assesses a model's out-of-sample predictive power. Second, mediation facilitates the relationship between the exogenous and the endogenous. Third, moderation changes the strength or the direction of a relationship between two constructs in the model. This type of analysis is important for this study; it affords future analysis on the data gathered to evaluate whether there is a difference based on applying a moderator. Also, using PLS predict could prove beneficial to this research in predicting the factors influencing employees to adopt and use eWOM and whether the result is brand advocacy.

Phase two avails of a qualitative approach, specifically the semi-structured interviews based on the quantitative findings, where questions are posed to employees within the food and drink sector.

The next chapter outlines the research findings, discusses findings of the findings, and suggests directions for further research.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, which verify and validate the research model presented in Chapter Five. An analysis of the survey data and the confirmation of results gathered through in-depth interviews is outlined. The results from data refinement, multivariate analysis and hypothesis testing are also presented.

The survey, which has been distributed to a random sample of 187 SMEs within Ireland’s agri-food and drink sector, examines the constructs: *social influence*, *Facilitating Conditions*, *Employee SM Experience*, and *Employer Motivation*, *eWOM Adoption and Use*, and *Employee Brand Advocacy*. The constructs and hypotheses are listed in Table 6.1.

Research Constructs	Research Hypotheses
Social Influence	H1 Social Influence significantly affects employee intention to use SM.
Facilitating Expectancy	H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.
Employee Effort	H3 Employee efforts affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.
Engaging SM Community	H4 Engaging SM community significantly affect employee intention to adopt and use SM.
Employer Motivation	H5 Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to use SM.
Employee Brand Advocacy	H6 Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicates brand advocacy.

Table 6.1: Constructs by Hypothesis

6.1.1 Survey Response Analysis

The primary research consists of an online survey with Ireland's agri-food and drink sector employees, to understand their adoption and use of eWOM. Businesses have been selected according to their registration with Bord Bia. To be eligible for selection, each company must have fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover and/or balance sheet of less than €10 million (Enterprise, 2017).

A total of 510 companies have been contacted; 187 companies have completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 36%. Out of the 187 companies, 171 companies have used social media, and 16 have not used social media. The survey considers employees, employers and marketing professionals, who may be tasked with social media duties. Of those surveyed, 88% are employees, 12% are SME owners and none are marketing professionals. To avoid bias, one survey per business has been completed by the person with the most responsibility for social media.

Businesses have been contacted by phone to identify the main person who is tasked with managing the business social media efforts and permission was sought to email the survey to this individual. The participants' responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (i.e., strongly disagree) to 5 (i.e., strongly agree), except for their behaviour with respect to using social media, which has been measured on a five-point scale range from 1 (i.e., never) to 5 (i.e., many times).

Assurance has been provided to participants that their responses remain confidential. Respondents have been offered the chance of guaranteeing their anonymity, as some questions are sensitive (e.g., I have a good relationship with my employer). It is specifically stated there are no right or wrong answers to the survey.

6.1.2 Respondents and Demographic Profiles

As this research focuses on farm-to-fork businesses, the sectors of interest for this study are bakery, beverages, confectionery, dairy, horticulture and prepared foods. Businesses have been selected by random from Bord Bia's website. Table 6.2 outlines the number of businesses within each sector, the sample required for this study and the sample that has been achieved. The sample is overrepresented by the prepared foods businesses, as there are large number of businesses within this sector.

Sector	Number of Companies	Sample Required	Sample Achieved
Bakery	147	22	24
Beverages	178	30	37
Confectionery	56	9	20
Dairy	111	19	24
Horticulture	47	7	14
Prepared Foods	348	62	68
Total	887	149	187

Table 6.2: Number of SMEs within the Irish Food and Drink Sectors, Survey Sample Required and Survey Sample Achieved

Figure 6.1 calculates the sector breakdown of the six different strata over the number of businesses in those sectors. Using Minitab 18, the statistics propose a mean sample size of 148 is required. The standard deviation is 110 and the medium is 129.

Statistics											
Variable	N	N*	Mean	SE Mean	StDev	Variance	CoefVar	Minimum	Q1	Median	Q3
Stratum	6	0	147.8	45.1	110.4	12187.0	74.68	47.0	53.8	129.0	220.5
Variable	Maximum										
Stratum	348.0										

Figure 6.1 Sample of Companies Required Based on Descriptive Statistic using Minitab

The breakdown of the survey respondents' profiles is displayed in Table 6.3. More males than females have completed the survey. The employees tasked with using social media for their organisation range between the ages of 36 and 50 years and have worked with the organisation between 10 and 20 years. This age profile conflicts with existing literature, which suggest some organisations implement social media for their business from a bottom up approach, concentrating their efforts on newer, younger members of the staff especially recent college graduates (Guinan et al., 2014). Most of the businesses have between 11 and 30 employees, which confirms that small businesses are at the forefront of this sector in adopting and using eWOM.

Respondents' Profiles				
Gender	55% male		45% female	
Age	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-50 years	51 years+
	10%	25%	52%	13%
Employees	0-10	11-30	31-60	60-100+
	30%	32%	29%	9%
Length of Service	< than 5 years	5-10 years	10-20 years	> than 20 years
	20%	35%	36%	9%

Table 6.3: Respondents' Profiles

Figure 6.2 identifies the reasons businesses chose not to use social media. Of the 187 businesses participating in the research, 16 choose not to use social media, primarily because:

- *“Employees do not have the time to work with social media.”*
- *“Cost of using social media initiatives, like paid advertising, is expensive.”*
- *“Social media is not necessary for my business.”*

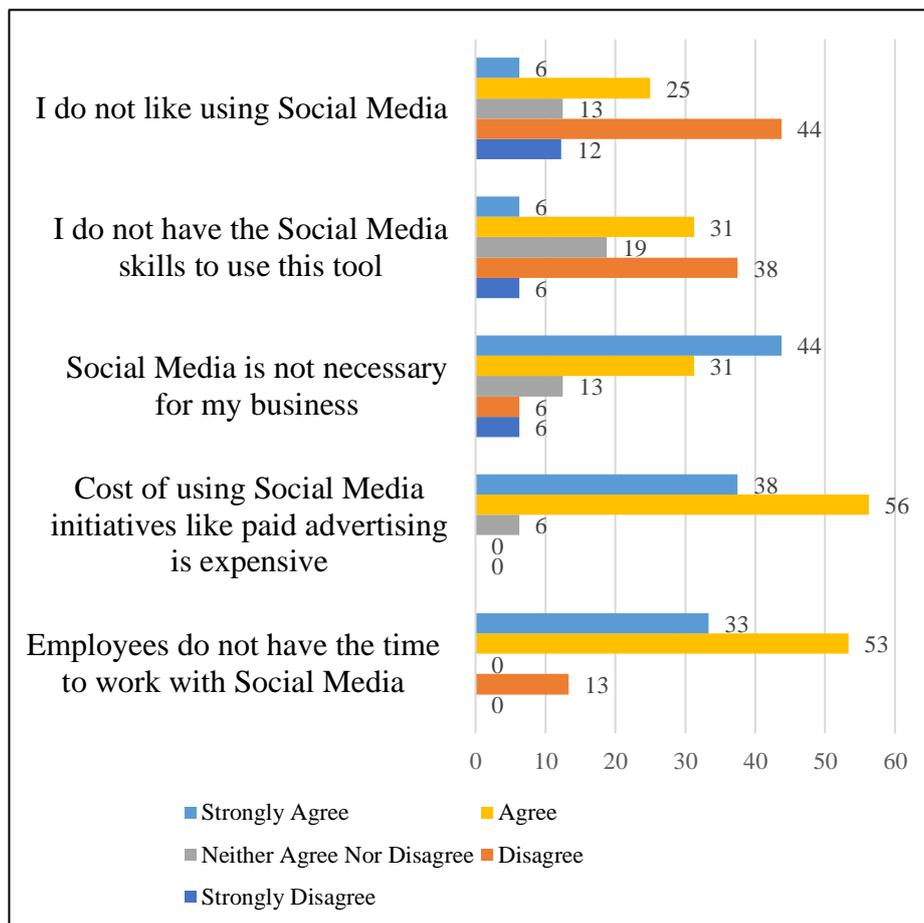


Figure 6.2: Reasons Why Businesses Do Not Use Social Media

Many businesses are investing in their SM presence because they appreciate the need to engage in existing social media conversations in order to protect their brand reputation (Lee and Youn, 2009). The reasons businesses use social media are included in Figure 6.3.

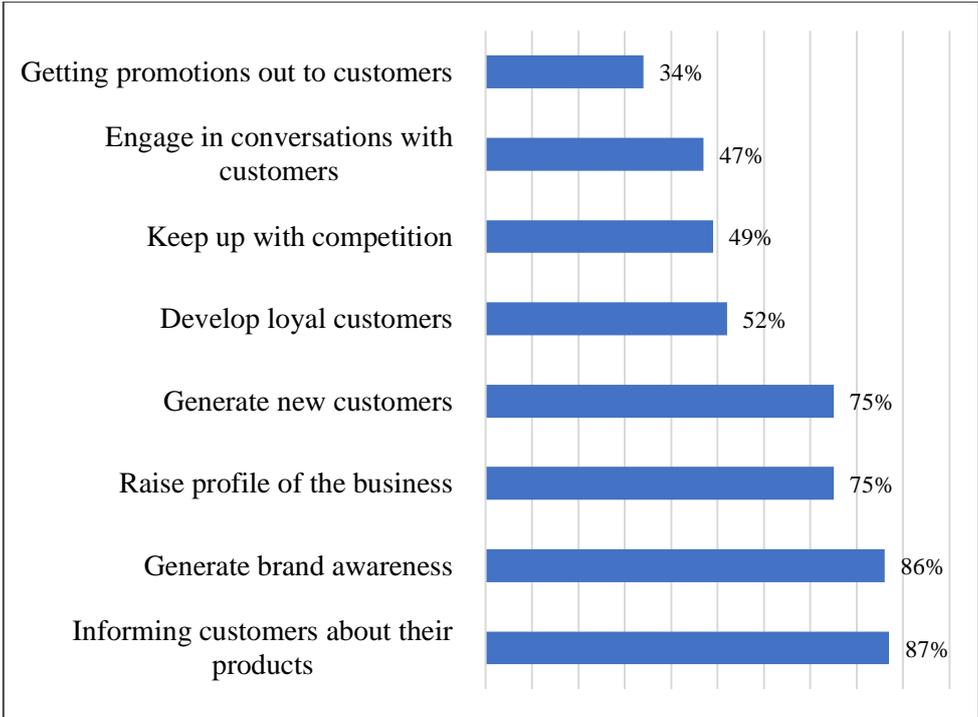


Figure 6.3: Reasons Businesses Uses Social Media

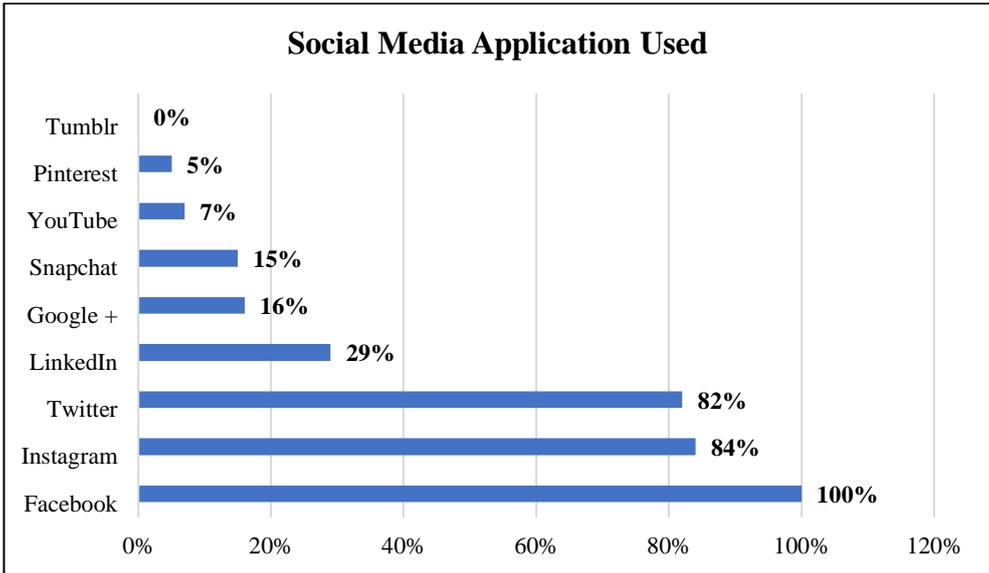


Figure 6.4: Type of Social Media Application Used

Regarding the applications businesses use (see Figure 6.4), Facebook is the dominant application, followed closely by Instagram and Twitter. It is interesting to note that 16% of employees still recognised Google+ as an important application, even though this application is no longer available due to the 2018 data breach (Gudergan et al., 2008).

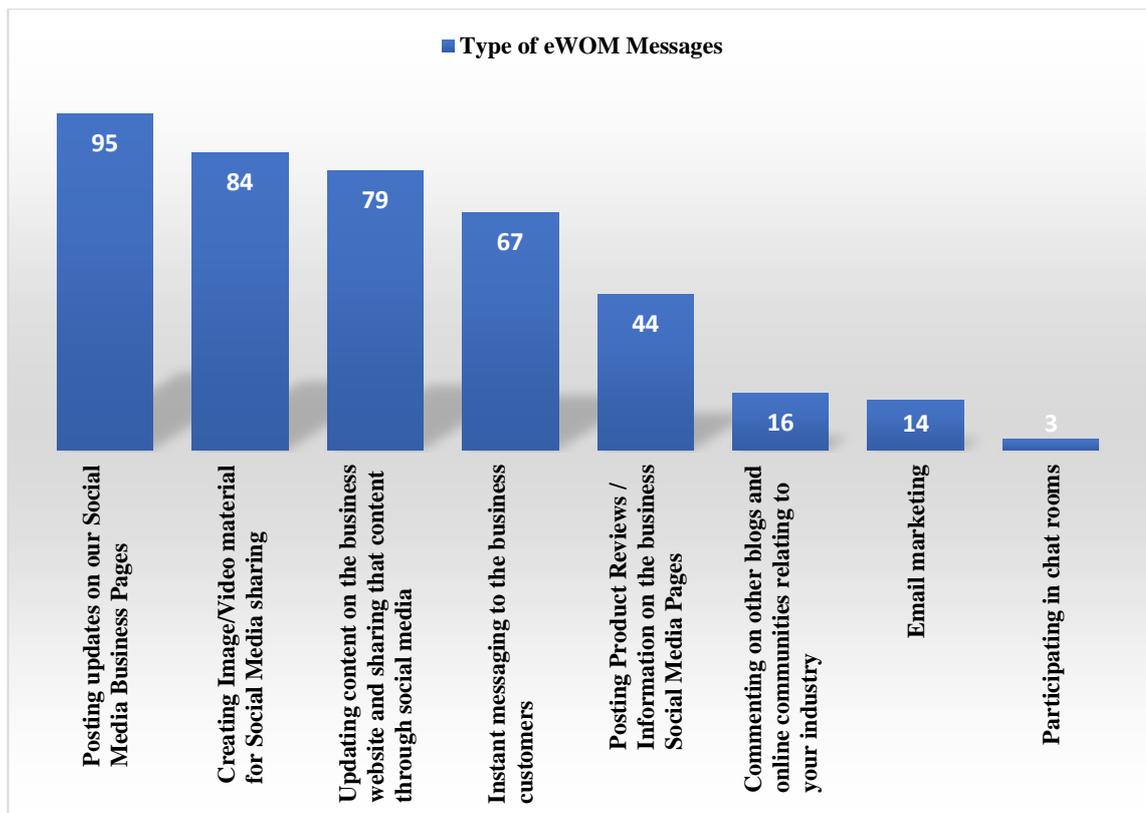


Figure 6.5: Types of eWOM Messages

Figure 6.5 displays the types of eWOM messages employees send, which largely focus on posting updates on SM business pages (95%); creating video and image material (84%); updating content on the business website; and sharing that content through social media (79%); and instant messaging to the business customers (67%). What is surprising is the low level of email marketing (14%) considering that 68% of Irish consumers use their phones to check their personal email at least once a day, Irish smartphone users look at their phones 55 times a day on average (Deloitte, 2018b).

Regarding, the long-term use of social media amongst employees, most of the respondents (96%) agree with the statement: *“I intend to continually use Social Media.”* This finding confirms employees’ trust and satisfaction with the technology. Further, most respondents (71%) view social media positively.

When asked, *“My employer has a business SM strategy”*, most participants (67%) disagree with the statement. If there is no social media strategy or

policy employed in a business, then the expectation for employees to use social media is challenging. A successful brand strategy for social media provides ways for users to be invited into everyday lives of businesses (Fournier and Avery, 2011; Guinan et al., 2014).

Another finding is that 48% of participants disagree with the statement: *“I am allocated enough time in my job to work with SM”*. Concerning the cost of using social media, time is the biggest factor that businesses incur. A high percentage of employees (71%) believe their businesses should increase their time on social media. This finding is also relevant in the literature, as having an employee with the relevant skills and time is significantly important to realising the firm’s online strategies. There are many issues with assigning social media activities to employees, such as the lack of understanding of how-to using SM for the business, lack of knowledge of SM, lack of top management support, lack of an internal guiding policy (Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016; Gibbs et al., 2015). Within SMEs, employees are balancing different job tasks, meaning that social media may not be given the time it needs (Manto and Wilson, 2001). Appropriate employee engagement with social media occurs when employees feel trusted and supported by the management (Liu et al., 2018).

Finally, 66% of employees agree with the statement *“I often feel disappointed with our business SM pages because the community does not respond to my eWOM messages”*. This finding highlights the growing pressures employees are under to engage with communities and the competitive nature to create posts.

6.1.3 Employer Analysis

In some SMEs, the person tasked with using social media is the employer. Not to omit their thoughts on social media use, questions from the survey are posed to them. When asked to comment on the following statements: *“I encourage staff to be creative with electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) posts on SM”*, only 35% of employers agree with the statement. One interesting finding is that only 25% of employers agree with the statement: *“I have*

encouraged staff to undertake SM training/ courses". This finding shows employers have little emphasis on training in this study. Acemoglu (1997) states there is an incentive for employers to pay for relevant training for their employees, even if the employee skills are broad, in order to help and encourage staff with tasks that are deemed necessary for the organisation.

Hays Recruitment's survey to 2,100 employers and employees across Ireland (Hays, 2018), indicates 57% of employers provide upskilling opportunities to staff. However, 63% of employees note they are covering the cost of training themselves (Ardill, 2019). This finding indicates there is little encouragement to employees to be creative or take courses to enhance their skills in using SM. Another finding is that businesses provide little support when it comes to covering the cost of these upskilling courses. Hence, there is little emphasis within these businesses to use SM.

The majority of employers (65%) disagree with the statement: *"I provide my staff with incentives for achievements made on SM"*, which suggests any successes employees receive in promoting the business accounts are not rewarded. This finding confirms that for staff to be able to work with SM, training is required and incentives for using this technology are needed.

Only 25% of employers have a SM strategy. When asked, *"I rarely discuss with staff my goals and objectives for social media"*, an overwhelming 65% of employers agreed with this statement. Companies exhibit difficulty in articulating their social media objectives, due to their lack of understanding of social media as a marketing channel (Keegan and Rowley, 2017).

Additionally, 45% of employers state they rarely give feedback to staff on how well they are doing regarding social media. A lack of understanding and knowledge in SM, means businesses find it perplexing to ensure it benefits the firm (Stockdale and Standing, 2006).

Finally, 70% of employers believe “*My staff and I have a really good working relationship*”, which is a promising signal that these SMEs could develop and foster this good relationship by encouraging and motivating staff through training, incentives, and encouragement.

6.2 SMART-PLS Results

6.2.1 Introduction

Data from the online questionnaire has been analysed using partial least squares structural equations modelling (PLS-SEM) software SMART-PLS 3.5. PLS-SEM is used to test these constructs: *social influence, facilitating conditions, employee habit and experience, employer motivation, eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*. PLS is most suited to test these effects because there are several interaction terms (Chin et al., 2003). For this study, survey questions have been adapted from Ali et al. (2016), Guesalaga (2016), and Venkatesh et al. (2003). The online survey is composed of close-ended questions. Table 6.4 displays the constructs aligned to the survey question and Smart-PLS indicator.

Constructs assessed using SMARTPLS, address the following research hypotheses:

- **H1:** Social influence significantly affects an employee intention to use SM.
- **H2:** Facilitating conditions significantly affect an employee intention to use SM
- **H3:** Employee efforts affect their intention to use and adopt SM for their employer.
- **H4:** Engaging SM community significantly affect an employee intention in the adoption and use of SM.
- **H5:** Employer motivation significantly affects an employee’s intention to use SM.

- **H6:** Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicates brand advocacy.

6.2.2 Missing Data and Outliers

The online survey data has been through ten stages of extraction and cleaning, as summarised in Table 6.4. Sixteen respondents do not use social media, which means this data is discarded for PLS testing. As the focus of this study is on employees, the twenty employers who have completed the survey are also excluded for PLS testing. One respondent has not fully completed the survey and because an insufficient number of questions have been answered, it has been removed from the dataset. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), any variable having less than five percent of missing values can be ignored. None of the variables in this dataset have missing values of more than five percent. To have the data ready for PLS, each survey question has been aligned to a construct and an indicator.

	Stages of Extracting and Cleaning Data
Stage 1	Ensure survey questions are weighted correctly, reverse code any negative survey questions. Extract data from survey monkey to .csv file for numerical values output.
Stage 2	Remove questions that will not be assessed with Smart PLS.
Stage 3	Grouping of survey question by construct of interest.
Stage 4	Removal of businesses who do not use SM, employer and marketing professional responses leaving just employee's responses.
Stage 5	Condense the columns from the 4 Likert scale to one column reflecting the value.
Stage 6	Label the survey questions with an indicator name that is linked to its construct.
Stage 7	Remove questions headings, leaving indicator name and the numerical value.
Stage 8	Enter 0 for any empty fields not completed by respondent.
Stage 9	Save the file as a .CSV.
Stage 10	PLS Ready.

Table 6.4: Stages of Extracting and Cleaning Data

Hair et al. (2013), cited two power test, G*Power and Cohen's (1992). For this study the researcher has utilised Cohen's (1992) suggestion. Cohen notes that if the maximum number of independent variables in the measurement and structural models is five, one would need 45 observations to achieve a statistical power of 80% for detecting R² values of at least 0.25 (with a 5% probability of error) provided that measurement models have an acceptable quality in terms of outer loadings. Please see Figure 6.6 Cohen (1992) Statistical Power of 80%.

Exhibit 1.7 Sample Size Recommendation a in PLS-SEM for a Statistical Power of 80%

Maximum Number of Arrows Pointing at a Construct	Significance Level											
	1%				5%				10%			
	Minimum R ²				Minimum R ²				Minimum R ²			
	0.10	0.25	0.50	0.75	0.10	0.25	0.50	0.75	0.10	0.25	0.50	0.75
2	158	75	47	38	110	52	33	26	88	41	26	21
3	176	84	53	42	124	59	38	30	100	48	30	25
4	191	91	58	46	137	65	42	33	111	53	34	27
5	205	98	62	50	147	70	45	36	120	58	37	30
6	217	103	66	53	157	75	48	39	128	62	40	32
7	228	109	69	56	166	80	51	41	136	66	42	35
8	238	114	73	59	174	84	54	44	143	69	45	37
9	247	119	76	62	181	88	57	46	150	73	47	39
10	256	123	79	64	189	91	59	48	156	76	49	41

Source: Cohen, J. A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 155–519.

Figure 6.6: Cohen 1992 A Power Primer

Other research by Dichter, (1966) states that sample size in PLS, the maximum number of arrows pointing to construct in the research model is five, suggesting 70 respondents as the minimum sample size. Therefore, this study sample size of (n=150) is sufficient to generalise the research results. Compared to other SEM estimators, PLS has much better capabilities, but “*it will be the nature of the population that justifies the small sample size, and not the small sample size that justifies the choice of PLS*” (Gudergan et al., 2008, p. 600).

As presented in Chapter Five, the proposed conceptual model is shown in Figure 6.7. The latent variables are created in Smart-PLS. The indicators are

assigned to each relevant latent variable using the reflective measurement approach. Finally, the relationships between each variable is created.

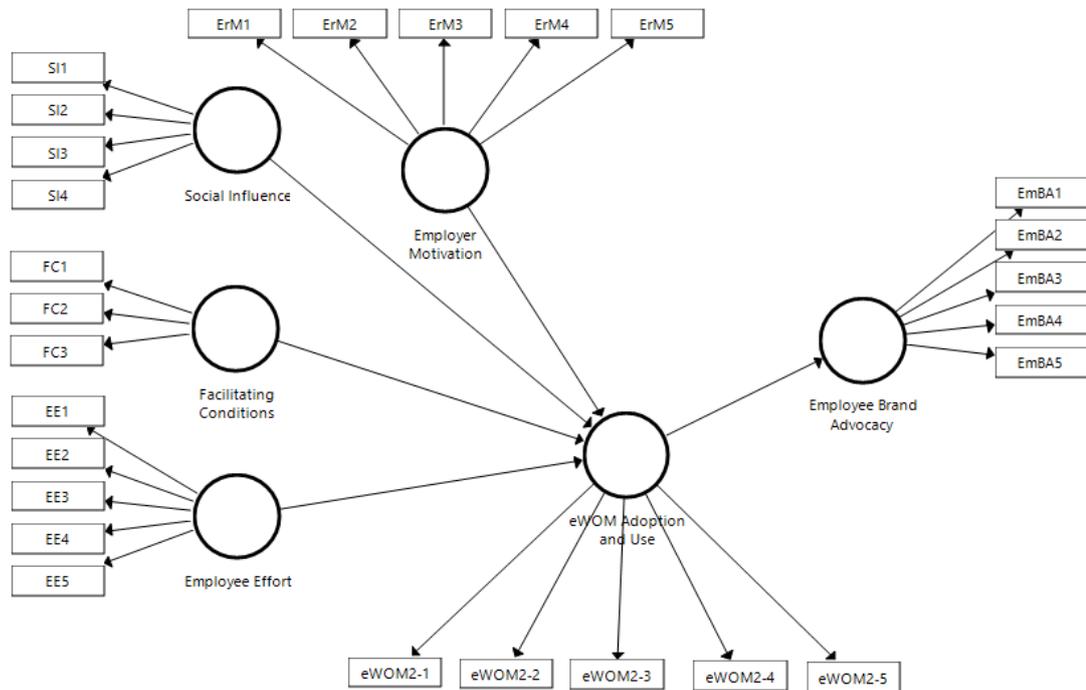


Figure 6.7 Proposed Conceptual Model

The assessment of PLS-SEM involves a two-step approach:

1. The evaluation of the reflective measurement model; and
2. The assessment of the structural model (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2017b).

Table 6.5 outlines the different constructs, indicators, survey question, and the source adapted by prior research by Alalwan et al., (2017); Davis, (1989); Venkatesh et al., (2012); Venkatesh et al., (2003), Escobar – Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013) Zhang (2010) Lian (2014) Guesalaga, R, (2016) Tsarenko et al., (2018) Alhidari, Abdullah. (2015), Walsh et al. (2016) Cervellon, et al., (2017), Huh (2018), and Badrinarayanan and Sierra’s (2018)

Constructs	Indicator	Survey Question	Adapted from Authors
Social Influence	SI1	People who are important to me believe that I should use SM.	Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi, (2016) Escobar – Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013)
	SI2	People who influence my behaviour believe that I should use SM.	Venkatesh (2012), Escobar – Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013)
	SI3	Colleagues in my industry have been helpful in how to use SM.	Venkatesh (2003), Salim (2012)
	SI4	In general, the industry has supported the use of SM.	Venkatesh (2003), El Ouiridi (2016) Venkatesh & Zhang (2010)
Facilitating Conditions	FC1	I have the resources necessary in work to use SM	Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi (2016) Escobar – Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013)
	FC2	I have the necessary knowledge to use SM	Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi (2016) Escobar – Rodriguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2013)
	FC3	SM is compatible with all other applications I use (i.e., website)	Venkatesh (2003), Venkatesh (2012)
Employee Effort	EE1	It is easy for me to become skilful using SM	Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi, 2016 Escobar – Rodriguez (2013)
	EE2	I find social media easy to use	Venkatesh (2012), Davis (1993), Davis (1989), Escobar – Rodriguez (2013)
	EE3	Learning to operate SM is easy for me	Venkatesh (2012), Davis (1993), Escobar – Rodriguez (2013), Lian (2014)
	EE4	I am comfortable using SM	Venkatesh (2012)
	EE5	My interaction with Social Media is clear and understandable	Venkatesh (2012), Escobar – Rodriguez (2013)
Employer Motivation	ErM1	My employer encourages me to be creative with electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) posts on SM	Guesalaga, R, (2016)
	ErM2	I am allocated enough time in my job to work with SM	Guesalaga, R, (2016)
	ERM3	My employer provides me with incentives for achievements made on SM	Tsarenko et al., (2018)
	ERM4	My employer frequently discusses with staff their goals and objectives for SM	Tsarenko et al., (2018)
	ERM5	My employer has encouraged staff to undertake SM training/ courses?	Guesalaga, R, (2016)
eWOM Adoption and Use	eWOM2-1	I try to be creative when crafting eWOM posts for my employer to encourage a response from the community	Alhidari, Abdullah. (2015), Walsh et al. (2016)
	eWOM2-2	I believe eWOM messages can influence our business customers intention to purchase	Alhidari, Abdullah. (2015), Walsh et al. (2016)
	eWOM2-3	I would respond(constructively) if my contacts criticise my employer brand products or services on SM	Cervellon, et al., (2017)
	eWOM2-4	I have assistance from my employer when dealing with negative eWOM messages on SM	Lian (2014), Walsh et al. (2016)
	eWOM2-5	If the business receives nWOM on SM pages I have the support from my employer in dealing with it	Lian (2014), Walsh et al. (2016)
Employee Brand Advocacy	EmBA1	With my personal SM account, I follow my business SM pages	Cervellon, et al., (2017)
	EmBA2	I speak positively about my business on my personal SM accounts	Cervellon, et al., (2017), Huh (2018), Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018)
	EmBA3	I praise the achievements of my employer on my personal SM a/c	Cervellon, et al., (2017)
	EmBA4	I recommend my employer brand products & services to my contacts on my personal SM accounts	Cervellon, et al., (2017), Huh (2018), Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018)
	EmBA5	On my personal SM pages, I like content posted by my employer	Cervellon, et al., (2017)

Table 6.5: Alignment of Constructs and Indicators with Survey Questions

6.3 Reflective Measurement Model

The assessment of reflective measurement model involves evaluation the measures reliability (i.e., indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability) and the validity (i.e., convergent and discriminant validity). After the model had been properly built in the SmartPLS software, essential statistics were estimated by running a PLS algorithm (i.e., 300 maximum iteration, standardised values and centroid weighting scheme). This process is commonly called measurement (outer) model. The algorithm resulted in loadings larger than 0.70 to ensure indicator reliability, which is confirmed in Table 6 (Hair et al., 2018c).

Having reviewed the outer loadings of the indicators in Table 6.6 and Figure 6.8, indicators that have an outer loading of greater than 0.40 and less than 0.70 were reviewed for impact on AVE and Composite Reliability (Hair, et al., 2017). Based on this process, three indicators (i.e., EMBA1, SI4, eWOMAU1) were retained as they are close to the 0.70 threshold and add an important variation to the data. The indicators and their associated survey question are as follows:

- EMBA1 (0.698) – *“With my personal SM account I follow my business SM pages.”*
- SI4 (0.670) – *“In general the industry has supported the use of SM.”*
- eWOMAU1 (0.685) – *“I speak positively about my business on my personal SM accounts.”*

Under the Construct Reliability and Validly test in Table 6.7, the AVE values for these indicators succeed the 0.50 requirement. Hence, retaining these three indicators proved to be valuable.

	Employee Brand Advocacy	Employee Effort	Employer Motivation	Facilitating Conditions	Social Influence	eWOM Adoption and Use
EE1		0.864				
EE2		0.916				
EE3		0.895				
EE4		0.728				
EE5		0.741				
ERm1			0.766			
ERm2			0.733			
ERm3			0.731			
ERm4			0.796			
ERm5			0.790			
EmBA1	0.698					
EmBA2	0.751					
EmBA3	0.774					
EmBA4	0.786					
EmBA5	0.845					
EmBA6	0.808					
FC1				0.873		
FC2				0.849		
FC3				0.884		
SI1					0.840	
SI2					0.704	
SI3					0.736	
SI4					0.670	
eWOMAU1						0.685
eWOMAU2						0.744
eWOMAU3						0.779
eWOMAU4						0.757
eWOMAU5						0.754

Table 6.6: Outer Loadings

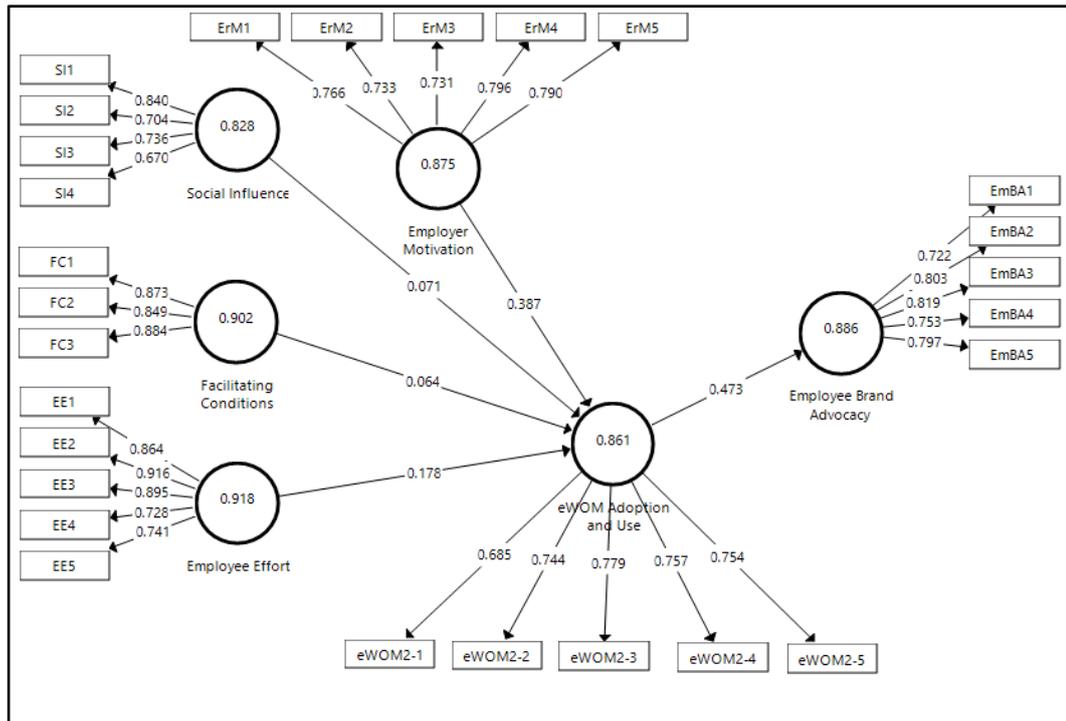


Figure 6.8: Proposed Model-Path Coefficients Outer Weights-Loadings Composite Reliability

6.3.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

6.3.1.1 Step 1: Cronbach Alpha

Cronbach alpha can be considered the lower bound and composite reliability the upper bound of the true internal consistency reliability. After reviewing the initial PLS algorithm testing of the variables in SMART-PLS 3.5, the following results (see Table 6.7 and Figure 6.9) are observed:

- Social Influence (0.737)
- Facilitating Conditions (0.837)
- Employee Effort (0.887)
- Employer Motivation (0.826)
- eWOM Adoption and Use (0.799)
- Employee Brand Advocacy (0.838).

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Influence	0.737	0.781	0.828	0.548
Facilitating Conditions	0.837	0.838	0.902	0.755
Employee Effort	0.887	0.902	0.918	0.693
Employer Motivation	0.826	0.847	0.875	0.584
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.799	0.800	0.861	0.554
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.838	0.841	0.886	0.608

Table 6.7: Construct Reliability and Validity

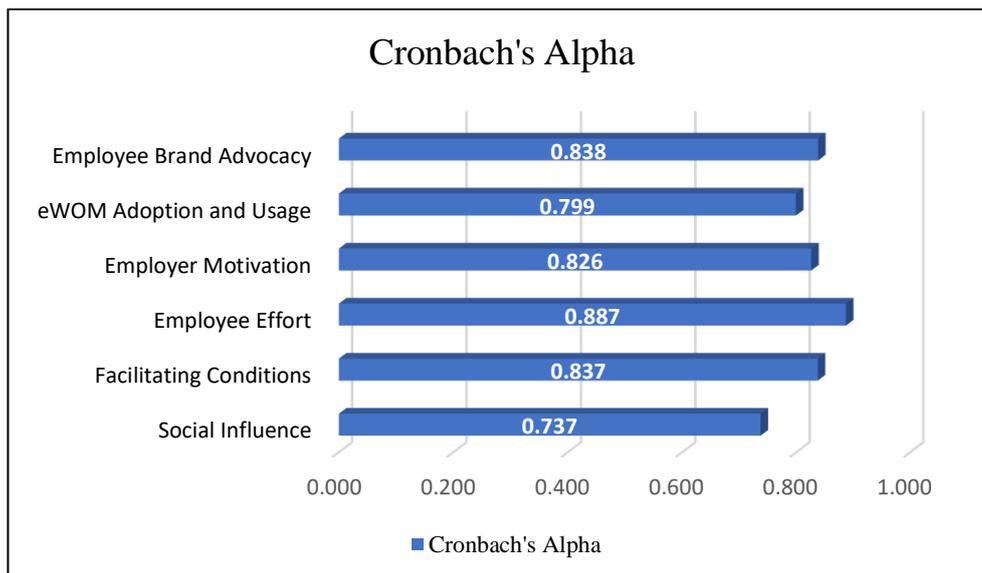


Figure 6.9 Cronbach's Alpha Results

6.3.1.2 Step 2: Composite Reliability Test

To establish internal consistency reliability, composite reliability should be higher than the threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018c).

- Values greater than 0.60 (>0.40 – very liberal) is required for early research
- Values of at least 0.70 is required to establish constructs

All the latent variables have achieved composite reliability requirements (see Table 6.7 and Figure 6.10). The internal consistency reliability's with reflective indicators was 0.75 and higher, suggesting the scales were reliable (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

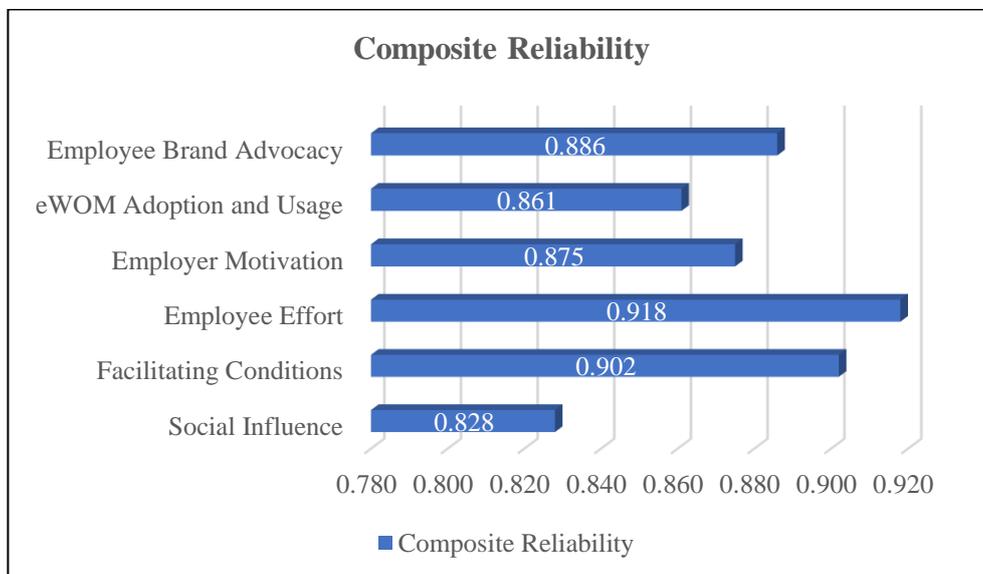


Figure 6.10: Composite Reliability Results

6.3.1.3 Step 3: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

To establish AVE, the variance should be larger than 0.50, which allows for assessing convergent validity (Hair et al., 2018c). AVE scores above 0.50 indicate strong convergent validity, meaning that more than 50 percent variation in a construct is explained by the stipulated indicators (Chin and

Newsted, 1999). The data in Table 6.7 show that AVE has been accomplished.

6.3.1.4 Step 4 Discriminate Validity

Discriminant validity is reached if the square root of the AVE of each construct is greater than its bi-variate correlations with other constructs, and if the indicators load higher on their respective constructs when compared to other indicators (Chin 1998; Compeau, Higgins and Huff, 1999).

Instead of using traditional methods for discriminant validity assessment, such as cross loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), researchers should apply the Heterotrait Monotrait Rate of Correlation (HTMT) criterion when using PLS (Hair et al., 2018a; Henseler et al., 2016b).

Two tests were conducted to confirm discriminate validity for this study:

1. Fornell and Larcker (see Table 6. 8)
2. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (see Table 6.9)

6.3.1.4.1 Step 1: Fornell and Larcker

By using discriminate validity, the reliability of measure, item loadings, and convergent validity, the measurement model is assessed. If an item's loading is greater than 0.70, then its reliability is proven. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to assess the convergent validity, AVE must be higher than a standard minimum level of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Please see Table 6.8.

	Employee Brand Advocacy	Employee Effort	Employer Motivation	Facilitating Conditions	Social Influence	eWOM Adoption and Use
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.780					
Employee Effort	0.487	0.833				
Employer Motivation	0.531	0.406	0.764			
Facilitating Conditions	0.393	0.655	0.423	0.869		
Social Influence	0.322	0.504	0.306	0.516	0.741	
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.473	0.413	0.508	0.381	0.312	0.745

Table 6.8: Discriminate Validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

6.3.1.4.2 Step 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The recommend using cut-off values of 0.85 and 0.90 or testing whether HTMT is significantly different from 1.0. Using cut-off values is problematic because sampling variability introduces uncertainty to the HTMT computation (Henseler et al., 2014b).

Table 6.9 displays the Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio results for this study. All the values are lower than the threshold value for conceptually similar constructs which is 0.90 (Hair et al., 2017a) and 0.85 requirement (Henseler et al., 2014a).

	Employee Brand Advocacy	Employee Effort	Employer Motivation	Facilitating Conditions	Social Influence	eWOM Adoption and Use
Employee Brand Advocacy						
Employee Effort	0.569					
Employer Motivation	0.628	0.462				
Facilitating Conditions	0.471	0.766	0.500			
Social Influence	0.415	0.632	0.380	0.674		
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.569	0.480	0.589	0.460	0.377	

Table 6.9: Discriminate Validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

6.4 Structural Model Assessment

Once it is confirmed the construct measures are reliable and valid, the next step addresses the assessment of the structural model results. This process involves examining the model's significance, predictive capabilities, and the relationships between the constructs. Figure 6.11 outlines a systematic approach to assessment of structural model results, which this study follows to validate the proposed model (Hair et al., 2018c).

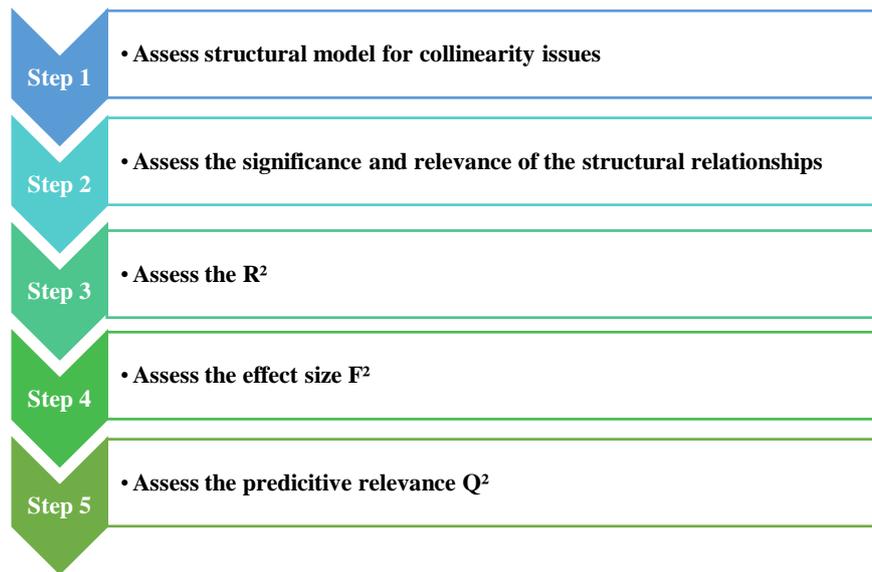


Figure 6.11: Structural Model Assessment Procedure | (Hair et al., 2018b)

6.4.1 Step 1: Assess Structural Model for Collinearity Issues

Analogous to the assessment of structural measurement models, it is necessary to consider tolerance values below 0.20 (VIF value above 5) in the predictor constructs to assess collinearity. If a critical level of collinearity is indicated by the tolerance of VIF guidelines, one should consider eliminating constructs, merging predictors into a single construct, or creating higher-order constructs to treat collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2013a).

Reviewing the inner VIF values in Table 6.10 and the outer VIF values in Table 6.11, all the values are below the threshold value of 5. When looking at the outer VIF values, the highest VIF value is 5.088. Ringle et al., (2015) states- "5" as the maximum level of VIF. However, Hair et al., (1995) would argue that having a maximum VIF value under 10 is acceptable, for this study as this value is just over 5 it is retained.

Regarding the Total Effects in Table 6.14, each column represents a target construct, whereas the rows represent predecessor constructs. For example, with regards to *eWOM adoption and use*, it can be observed that *employer motivation* (P value 0.000). However, *social influence* (P value 0.373) and

facilitating conditions (P value 0.516) show a negative effect on *eWOM adoption and use* (Hair et al., 2014).

	Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use
Employee Brand Advocacy		
Employee Effort		1.928
Employer Motivation		1.269
Facilitating Conditions		1.986
Social Influence		1.466
eWOM Adoption and Use	1.000	

Table 6.10: Inner VIF Values

	VIF
EE1	2.324
EE2	5.088
EE3	4.490
EE4	1.636
EE5	1.642
ERm1	1.435
ERm2	1.627
ERm3	1.882
ERm4	2.072
ERm5	2.041
EmBA1	1.711
EmBA2	2.308
EmBA3	2.437
EmBA4	2.053
EmBA5	2.333
FC1	2.028
FC2	1.775
FC3	2.265
SI1	1.823
SI2	1.584
SI3	3.690
SI4	3.344
eWOM2-1	1.440
eWOM2-2	1.667
eWOM2-3	1.671
eWOM2-4	1.781
eWOM2-5	1.743

Table 6.11: Outer VIF Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Employee Effort -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.084	0.087	0.044	1.897	0.058
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.178	0.175	0.080	2.235	0.026
Employer Motivation -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.183	0.187	0.056	3.245	0.001
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.387	0.381	0.078	4.935	0.000
Facilitating Conditions -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.030	0.032	0.046	0.655	0.513
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.064	0.071	0.098	0.650	0.516
Social Influence -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.034	0.043	0.038	0.872	0.384
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.071	0.091	0.079	0.892	0.373
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.075	6.324	0.000

Table 6.12: Total Indirect Effects

Tables 6.12, 6.13, 6.14 summarise the Total Indirect Effects, Specific Indirect Effects and Total Effects. Table 6.14 Total Effects evaluates how strongly each of the reflective constructs ultimately influences the key target variable *employee brand advocacy*.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.084	0.087	0.044	1.897	0.058
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.1.83	0.187	0.056	3.245	0.001
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.030	0.032	0.046	0.655	0.513
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.034	0.043	0.038	0.872	0.384

Table 6.13: Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Effort -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.084	0.087	0.044	1.897	0.058
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.178	0.175	0.080	2.235	0.026
Employer Motivation -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.183	0.187	0.056	3.245	0.001
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.387	0.381	0.078	4.935	0.000
Facilitating Conditions -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.030	0.032	0.046	0.655	0.513
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.064	0.071	0.098	0.650	0.516
Social Influence -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.034	0.043	0.038	0.872	0.384
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.071	0.091	0.079	0.892	0.373
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.075	6.324	0.000

Table 6.14: Total Effects

6.4.2 Step 2: The Significance and Relevance of the Structural Model Relationships

In SmartPLS 3.5, it is possible to apply a bootstrapping procedure for the significance of the path coefficient with two-tails significant level of 5 per cent. If T-values are greater than the critical value (1.96) and P-values smaller

than 0.05, the statistical significance of the hypothesis is accepted (Hair et al., 2018b).

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.071	0.091	0.079	0.892	0.373
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.064	0.071	0.098	0.650	0.516
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.178	0.175	0.080	2.235	0.026
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.387	0.381	0.078	4.935	0.000
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.075	6.324	0.000

Table 6.15: Path Coefficients, Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

Reviewing the path coefficients in Table 6.15, the T-values for *employee effort*, *employer motivation*, and *eWOM adoption and use* are greater than the critical value of (1.96) and all have smaller p-values than 0.05. This finding confirms the significance for these constructs; hence, these hypotheses are accepted. However, the t-values and the p-values for *facilitating conditions* and *social influences* do not meet the requirements, therefore, these constructs are rejected.

6.4.3 Step 3: Bootstrapping Coefficient of Determination R Square

The bootstrapping for this model ran 5,000 times. What this bootstrapping explains is that 95% of the construct interval would include the true value. Given that R² will increase as predictors are added to the model, it will select a more complex model. Regression researchers have widely used the Adjusted R², which attempts to correct for model complexity by including a

penalty proportional to the number of predictors in the model. However, the Adjusted R^2 lacks formal justification and is not suitable for assessing a model's predictive accuracy (Berk, 2008).

Shmueli et al. (2016) state the standard assessment criteria, should be considered, as well as the coefficient of determination (R^2), when assessing model accuracy. The blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure Q^2 , and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients is considered for the out of sample power assessment of the model.

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.224	0.218
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.316	0.297

Table 6.16: R Square and R Square Adjusted

Researchers using PLS-SEM often interpret the R^2 as their models' predictive power. The R^2 statistics are appropriate for assessing a models in-sample explanatory power but are not an indication of the model's out-of-sample predictive power (Becker et al., 2018a; Hair et al., 2018c; Hair et al., 2019b). R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 are respectively considered to be substantial, moderate and weak. R^2 values of 0.90 and higher are typical indicative of over-fit (Hair et al., 2019a).

Table 6.16 displays the R^2 and the R^2 Adjusted for the two constructs *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use*. This finding confirms both *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* has a weak fit. The level of R^2 is a rough guide and its interpretation depends on the discipline.

In the context of research using the UTAUT2, the following R² is recorded in Table 6.17. This finding indicates the R² recorded from this study is on par with recent research related to the constructs *use behaviour on intention to adopt*.

Author(s)	Journal Article Title	R ² Recorded	Construct Recorded
Alhassany and Faisal (2018)	Factors Influencing the Internet Banking Adoption Decision in North Cyprus: An Evidence From the Partial Least Square Approach of the Structural Equation Modelling	44%	The intention to adopt
		54%	Perceived usefulness
Macedo (2017)	Predicting the Acceptance and Use of Information and Communication Technology by Older Adults	38%	Use Behaviour
		57%	Behaviour Intention
Alalwan et al. (2017)	Factors Influencing Adoption of Mobile Banking by Jordanian Bank Customers: Extending UTAUT2 with Trust	32%	Adoption
		65%	Behavioural Intention
Flavian et al. (2006)	The Role Played by Perceived Usability, Satisfaction and Consumer Trust on Website Loyalty	22%	Usability
		41%	Loyalty

Table 6.17: R² Cited in the Literature Using UTAUT2

MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams' (2004) research has shown the bias-corrected version of the bootstrap percentile method outperforms the regular bootstrap percentile method in terms of statistical power and accuracy of the confidence intervals. Bias corrected confidence intervals give the best indication of indirect effects. Table 6.18 discusses the confidence intervals bias corrected for this study, reviewing the figures in 2.5% and 97.5%, indicate a weak effect with *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Bias	2.5%	97.5%
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.178	0.175	-0.003	0.012	0.333
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.387	0.381	-0.005	0.237	0.527
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.064	0.071	0.007	-0.117	0.251
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.071	0.091	0.020	-0.091	0.213
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.011	0.301	0.601

Table 6.18: Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected

6.4.4 Step 4: F Square Effect Size

The F^2 effects (Table 6.19) assess how strongly one exogenous construct contributes to explaining a certain endogenous construct. In terms of F^2 , the rule of thumb is:

- $0.02 \leq F^2 < 0.15$ = Weak effect
- $0.15 \leq F^2 < 0.35$ = Moderate effect
- $F^2 > 0.35$ = Strong effect (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2013b)

	Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use	Significance
Employee Effort		0.024	Weak
Employer Motivation		0.173	Moderate
Facilitating Conditions		0.003	Weak
Social Influence		0.005	Weak
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.288		Moderate

Table 6.19: F Squared Effect Size

However, even though the F^2 effect size for following constructs: *employee effort*, *employer motivation*, *facilitating conditions*, *social influence* is weak, the construct *eWOM adoption and use* is dependent on these weak constructs. Considering there is an effect with *eWOM adoption and use* has on *employee brand advocacy*, it is possible to identify that employee effort is the significant construct within the model.

The F^2 value for the constructs *facilitating conditions* and *social influence* is extremely low and is providing little effect to the model. Future analysis of these constructs is to be evaluated through follow-up qualitative interviews.

6.4.5 Step 5: Accept the Predicative Relevance Q^2

Q^2 looks at the out-of-sample predictive power. Using blindfolding, $Q^2 > 0$ is indicative of predictive relevance; the values of 0.02, 0.15, 0.35 correspond to a weak, moderate, and strong degree of predictive relevance (Chin, 2010, Hair et al., 2017a).

Blindfolding for this study has not been considered because it does not truly predict the model and important data is omitted when it compiles. In this case,

it is best to use PLS Predict (Sarstedt et al., 2017b). PLS Predict is conducted in the advanced statistical analysis section later in this chapter.

6.5 Analysis Chapter Summary

This chapter analyses the quantitative data from phase one. The 150 online questionnaires have been completed by employees within Ireland's agri-food and drink sector. Preliminary findings indicate only 35% of employers encourage staff to be creative using eWOM and only 25% of employers encourage staff to participate in SM training courses.

Based on the guidelines set out for the assessment of reflective measurement models, the analysis involves four steps: Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, AVE, and discriminate validity. Three indicators (i.e., EMBA1, SI4, eWOMAU1) are retained, as they are close to the 0.70 threshold and add an important variation to the data.

Based on the tests conducted, all the constructs are validated from a reflective measurement perspective. The structural model assessment comprises of five steps: assessing for collinearity, significance and relevance, bootstrapping, f square effects, and predict analysis. From this assessment two constructs, *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*, have p-values and t-values that have a negative effect on eWOM adoption and use. Therefore, these constructs are rejected.

This analysis chapter confirms the R² power of this model in that *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* has a weak fit. Chapter Seven discusses the findings from the analysis of the data.

7.0: CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS

7.1: Reflective Measurement Model Hypothesis Findings

This section revises each of the hypotheses and the above tests conducted under the reflective measurement model to assess whether there is a significant difference between the constructs. Figure 7.1 displays the constructs with indicators.

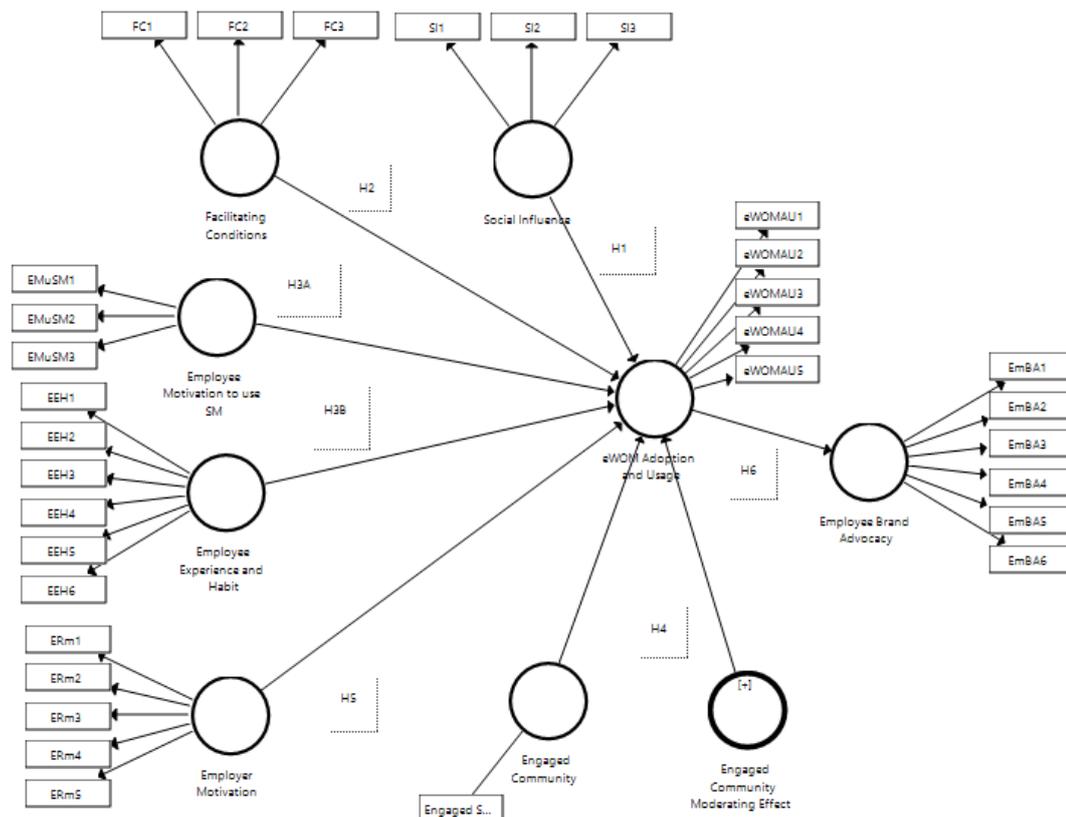


Figure 7.1 Proposed Model with Constructs and Indicators

7.2 H1: Social Influence (SI) Significantly Affects Employee Intentions to Use SM

Three of the indicators for the construct *social influence* have surpassed the 0.70 threshold and are at SI1 (0.840), SI2 (0.704) and SI3 (0.736). However, SI4 (0.670) was retained as previously discussed in Chapter 6. Considering internal consistency reliability test, Cronbach alpha is at (0.737),

composite reliability is at (0.828), and AVE is at (0.548) all within the specified limits. HTMT values close to 1 indicate a lack of discriminant validity and this finding (0.415) confirms there are no collinearity issues from *social influence on employee brand advocacy*. The structural model assessment and considering collinearity values the inner VIF value of (1.466) is below the 5 required for *social influence on eWOM adoption and Use*. Evaluating the outer VIF values of (1.823) (1.584), (3.690), (3.344)), the latter two values are a little high at over 3, however, they are still below the 5 thresholds.

When considering the path coefficient results, there is a high P value of (0.373) and a high T value of (0.892). Considering the F effects for *social influence* correlation to *eWOM Adoption and Use*, there is a weak effect of (0.024). Consequently, this hypothesis (H1) is rejected.

Research by Hair et al., (2018c) found the construct *social influences*, although presenting smaller coefficient weights, had a significant effect on intention. Also, Davis (1989) found *social influence* had a significant effect on ICT behaviour intention.

7.3 H2: Facilitating Conditions (FC) Significantly Affect Employee Intention to Use SM

All the indicators for the construct *facilitating conditions* have surpassed the 0.70 threshold and are at FC1 (0.873), FC2 (0.849), and FC3 (0.884). Starting with internal consistency reliability test, Cronbach alpha is at (0.837), composite reliability is at (0.902), and finally AVE is at (0.755) all within the requirements for validation.

Looking at discriminate validity the HTMT values of (0.471) are not close to 1 and therefore does not indicate a lack of discriminant validity.

Considering the collinearity, the inner VIF value of (1.986) is below the 5 required for *facilitating conditions* to *eWOM adoption and use*. The outer VIF values (2.028), (1.775), (2.265) which confirms no collinearity issues with this construct.

However, when reviewing the path coefficient results, there is a high P value of (0.516) and a high T value of (0.650). Also, considering the F effects for *facilitating conditions* correlation to *eWOM Adoption and Use*, there is a weak effect of 0.003. These findings confirm *facilitating conditions* do not significantly affect employee intention to use SM. Therefore, this hypothesis (H2) is rejected.

Taiwo and Downe's (2013) studies using UTAUT also found a small effect size for *facilitating conditions* on use behaviour. Additionally, Hair et al. (2018b) and Sarstedt (2019) found no significant effect for *facilitating conditions* on actual use of internet adoption. Finally, Hair et al.'s (2018c) results showed *facilitating condition* influenced intention behaviour, but when testing the direct effect of *facilitating conditions* on *actual use*, there was no significant effect was found in the relationship, which is consistent with the findings from this study.

7.5 H3 Employees Effort Affect Their Intention to Use and Adopt SM for Their Employer

All the indicators EE1 (0.864), EE2 (0.916), EE3 (0.895), EE4 (0.728), EE5 (0.741), are aligned to the construct *employees effort* succeed the 0.70 threshold for composite reliability. Reviewing internal consistency reliability for this construct, Cronbach alpha (0.887), Composite Reliability (0.918) with AVE (0.693) exceed the 0.50 threshold, passing the reflective measurement requirements.

Looking at discriminate validity, the HTMT values close to 1 indicate a lack of discriminant validity on employee brand advocacy, which is not the case

with the results of 0.569. Reviewing the structural model assessment and considering collinearity values, the inner VIF value of 1.928 is below the 5 required for *employee effort to eWOM adoption and use* confirming that there are no collinearity errors. Evaluating the outer VIF values of EE1 (2.324) EE3 (4.490). EE4 (1.636). EE5 (1.642), which are still significantly below 5, confirms there are no collinearity issues with this construct. However (EE2 5.088) should be removed from further analysis as discussed in Chapter 6.

The F effect of 0.024 indicates *employee effort* has a weak effect on *eWOM adoption and use*. The Path Coefficients, Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values in Table 6.15, displays a T value of 2.235 and a P Values of 0.026. These tests for this hypothesis (H3), confirm *employee effort* significantly affect and employee intention to adopt and use SM.

7.6 H5: Employer Motivation Significantly Affects Employee Intention to Use SM

All the indicators ERm1(0.766), ERm2 (0.733), ERm3 (0.731), ERm4 (0.796), ERm5 (0.790) align to the construct *employer motivation* and exceed the 0.70 threshold for composite reliability. Reviewing internal consistency reliability; Cronbach alpha (0.826), Composite Reliability (0.875) with AVE (0.584) for this construct exceed the 0.50 threshold.

Regarding discriminate validity, the HTMT values close to 1 indicate a lack of discriminant validity on *employee brand advocacy*, which is not the case with the results of 0.628. Reviewing the structural model assessment and considering collinearity values, the inner VIF value of 1.269 is below the 5 required for *employer motivation* to influence *eWOM adoption and use*. Evaluating the outer VIF values of ERm1(1.435), ERm2 (1.627), ERm3 (1.882), ERm4 (2.074) ERm5 (2.041), they are still significantly below 5, which confirms there are no collinearity issues with this construct. The F effect for 0.173 shows *employer motivation* has a moderate effect on *eWOM adoption and use*.

The Path Coefficients, Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values in Table 6.15, display a T value of 4.935 and a P Values of 0.000. These tests for this hypothesis (H5), confirm *employer motivation* significantly affects and employee intention to adopt and use SM.

7.7 H6: eWOM Adoption and Use of eWOM Initiatives Indicates Brand Advocacy

Having reviewed the indicators for the construct *eWOM Adoption and Use*, some indicators (i.e., eWOMAU1 (0.685), eWOMAU2 (0.744), eWOMAU3 (0.779), eWOMAU4 (0.757), and eWOMAU5 (0.754)) did not pass the 0.70 threshold. However, having discussed earlier the importance of these indicators and that they surpass the average AVE of (0.50) value, they are retained. The internal consistency reliability test Cronbach alpha is at (0.799), composite reliability is at (0.861), and AVE is at (0.554), which exceeds the validation threshold.

Reviewing the collinearity values, the outer VIF values of (1.440), (1.667), (1.671), (1.781) and (1.743) confirms that this construct passes the structural model assessment. However, when considering the F effect size for *eWOM adoption and use* on *employee brand advocacy*, this value is moderate at (0.288). Additionally, regarding the Path coefficient results, there is a P value of (0.000) and a high T value of (6.324). Therefore, this hypothesis (H6) is accepted.

7.8 Advanced Statistical Analysis

7.8.1 Moderator Analysis

When estimating moderating effects within PLS-SEM, researchers can select from a range of approaches to model the influence of a moderator on a relationship between two constructs by producing different interaction terms. Theory may advocate that a moderator variable influences the power, or even

the direction of the relationship between constructs in the structural model (Ringle et al., 2009, Becker et al., 2018b; Hair et al., 2017a).

For this study, the construct *engaged SM communities* is used as a moderator to assess whether having an *engaging SM community* assists employees with their adoption and use of social media. That is, does having an engaged community encourage employees to use social media because the community is more active? The moderator applied to the proposed conceptual model with the following constructs; *social influence*, *facilitating conditions*, *employer motivation* and *employee effort*.

To distinguish the significance effect of the moderator on this reflective model a two-stage approach was conducted. This approach uses the latent variable scores of the latent predictor and latent moderator variable from the main effects model (without the interaction term). These latent variable scores are saved and used to calculate the product indicator for the second stage analysis that involves the interaction term in addition to the predictor and moderator variable (Hansen and Levin, 2016).

7.8.1.1 H4: Engaged SM Communities affects employees' intention to use and adopt SM for their employer

All the constructs influence *eWOM adoption and use* except *facilitating conditions*. When the moderator *engaged SM community* is applied in the model (see Figure 7.2), there is a slight decrease in the effect value of *eWOM adoption and use*. It is interesting to note that when the moderator is applied to the constructs, it has a no effect on any of the constructs except for *employer motivation*, which has a slight increase from 0.085 to 0.089. This finding confirms the employer is more motivated to encourage the employee when there is an engaged SM community.

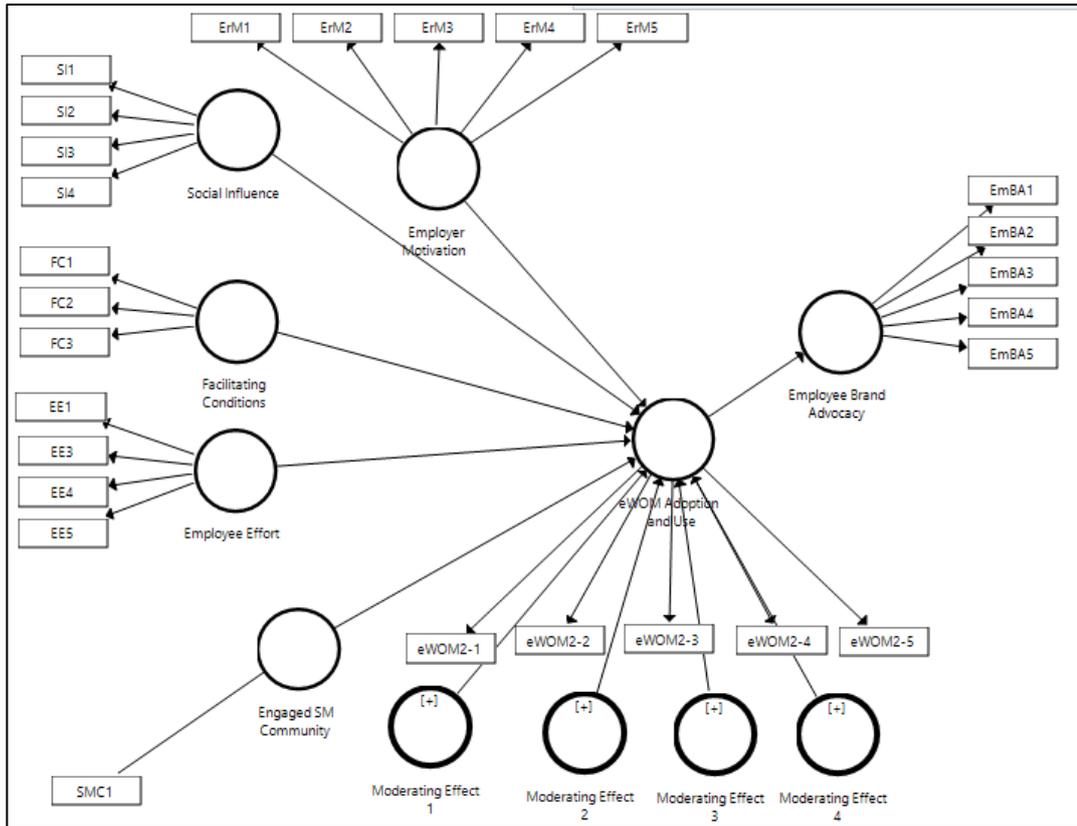


Figure 7.2: Proposed Model with Engaged Community Moderator Applied

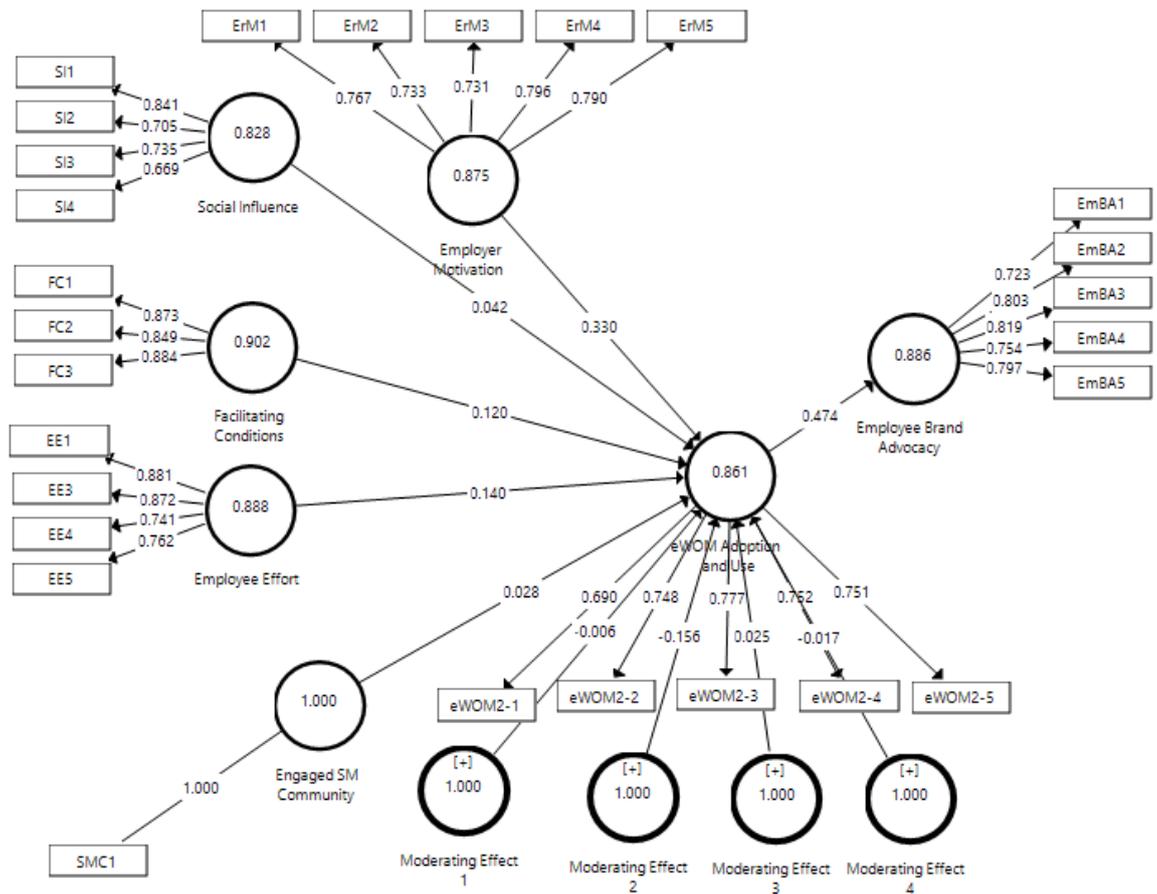


Figure 7.3: Path Coefficient, Composite Reliability Outer Weight Loadings

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.066	0.075	0.047	1.403	0.161
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.156	0.163	0.048	3.235	0.001
Engaged Community -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.013	0.010	0.040	0.333	0.739
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.057	0.054	0.048	1.181	0.238
Moderating Effect 1 -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.003	-0.010	0.059	0.045	0.964
Moderating Effect 2 -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.074	-0.073	0.054	1.353	0.177
Moderating Effect 3 -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.012	0.006	0.057	0.211	0.833
Moderating Effect 4-> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.008	0.004	0.055	0.149	0.882
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.020	0.024	0.045	0.439	0.661

Table 7.1: Specific Indirect Effects with Engaged SM Community Moderators

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Effort -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.066	0.075	0.047	1.403	0.161
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.140	0.153	0.091	1.530	0.127
Employer Motivation -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.156	0.163	0.048	3.235	0.001
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.330	0.336	0.078	4.243	0.000
Engaged Community -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.013	0.010	0.040	0.333	0.739
Engaged Community -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.028	0.017	0.081	0.345	0.730
Engaged Community Moderating Effect EE -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.003	-0.010	0.059	0.045	0.964
Engaged SM Community Moderating Effect EE -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.003	-0.010	0.059	0.045	0.964
Facilitating Conditions -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.057	0.054	0.055	0.104	0.918
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.120	0.117	0.102	1.186	0.236
Moderating Effect ERm -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.074	-0.073	0.054	1.353	0.177
Moderating Effect ERm -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.156	-0.145	0.099	1.566	0.118
Moderating Effect FC -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.012	0.006	0.057	0.211	0.833
Moderating Effect FC -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.025	0.010	0.115	0.221	0.825
Moderating Effect SI -> Employee Brand Advocacy	-0.008	0.004	0.055	0.149	0.882
Moderating Effect SI -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.017	0.011	0.111	0.154	0.878
Social Influence -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.020	0.024	0.045	0.439	0.661
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.042	0.051	0.093	0.453	0.651
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.474	0.482	0.081	5.816	0.000

Table 7.2: Total Effects of Engaged SM Community Moderator

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.063	0.077	0.047	1.332	0.183
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.047	0.055	0.041	1.144	0.253
Engaged Community -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.012	0.019	0.020	0.592	0.554
Engaged Community Moderating Effect EEH -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.000	0.009	0.013	0.003	0.998
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.000	0.008	0.011	0.007	0.994
Moderating Effect ERm -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.023	0.037	0.038	0.602	0.547
Moderating Effect FC -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.000	0.015	0.021	0.017	0.987
Moderating Effect SI -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.006	0.013	0.017	0.332	0.740
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.016	0.026	0.028	0.575	0.565
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.412	0.468	0.178	2.322	0.021

Table 7.3: F² Effects of the Proposed Model with Engaged Community Moderator

F ² Effects Without Moderator Engaged Community			F ² Effects with Moderator Engaged Community		
	Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use		Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use
Employee Effort		0.024			0.014
Employer Motivation		0.173			0.110
Engaged Community					0.001
Facilitating Conditions		0.003			0.011
			Moderating Effect 1 (EE)		0.000
			Moderating Effect 2(EmrM)		0.031
			Moderating Effect 4 (FC)		0.000
			Moderating Effect 5 (SI)		0.000
Social Influence		0.005			0.002
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.288			0.290	

Table 7.4: F Effects with and without Engaged Community Moderator

7.8.1.2 Moderator Discussion for Engaged Communities

Reviewing the data from Figures 7.2, and 7.3 as well as from Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4, it is possible to analyse the results of the total effects, specific indirect effects, and the F effects with the moderator included. These two-step approaches display first the conceptual model with its constructs, and second the conceptual model with the addition of the moderator. This approach indicates whether having an *engaged SM community* makes it easier for employees to participate in eWOM activities for their business.

Table 7.4 shows the results of the F effects with and without the moderator *engaged SM community*. When reviewing the data without the moderator, all the constructs influence *eWOM adoption and use* except *facilitating conditions* and *social influence*. However, when the moderator *engaged SM community* is included in the model, there is a slight increase in the F effect value of *eWOM adoption and use* from 0.288 to 0.290, confirming that having an *engaged SM community* leads to better *eWOM adoption and use*.

It is interesting to note that when the moderator is applied to the constructs, the F effect for *employer motivation* decreased from 0.173 to 0.110. This finding means *employer motivation* is less significant when the community is engaged.

The *social influence* construct, prior to the moderator addition, influenced *eWOM adoption and use*. However, when *engaged SM community* is added, it results in a weak effect on the construct from 0.005 to 0.002. This finding confirms *social influence* is less significant when there is an active engaged community.

The construct *facilitating conditions* has a weak effect on *eWOM adoption and use*. Additionally, when the moderator is applied, this effect improves slightly from 0.003 to 0.011, indicating that with or without an *engaged SM community* *facilitating conditions* is not significant in this model.

However, with the construct *employee effort* decrease with an *engaged SM community* from 0.024 to 0.014. Confirming that *employee effort* is stronger without an engaged community.

Table 7.5 displays the R² with/without moderator *engaged SM community*. With R Square with Engaged Communities at .224 and with Engaged Community it rises slightly to .225. There is minimal difference in the R² Adjusted 0.218 (without *engaged SM community*) and 0.219 (with *engaged SM community*). This finding indicates *employee brand advocacy* is slightly more powerful with an *engaged SM community*.

Concentrating on the R² for *eWOM adoption and use* construct there is a slight increase with the moderator addition 0.316 (without *engaged SM community*) to 0.349 (With *engaged SM community*). This finding confirms that having an *engaged SM community* is more powerful on *eWOM adoption and use*. Analysing R² Adjusted for *eWOM Adoption and Use*, increases with the moderator addition from 0.297 to 0.307.

To summarise, R² is slightly stronger with the addition of the moderator *engaged SM community* for *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*. R² Adjusted for both *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* is stronger with the moderator addition, confirming this hypothesis is partially accepted.

	Without Engaged Community Moderator		With Engaged Community Moderator	
	R Square	R Square Adjusted	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.224	0.218	0.225	0.219
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.316	0.297	0.349	0.307

Table 7.5: R Squared/ R Squared Adjusted With/Without Engaged Community Moderator

7.8.1.3 Length of Service

Another interesting analysis is to see whether the *length of service* (i.e., length of employment) employees have with their business has an impact on their *adoption and use of eWOM*. Data relating to this assessment can be found in Appendix 1. From the online survey results the following lengths of services recorded are:

- 0-5 years (20%),
- 5-10 years (35%),
- 10-20 years (36%),
- 20+ years (9%).

There is a no change for F effects for the following constructs: *employee effort, facilitating conditions* and *social influence*. However, there was a decrease in F effects for *employer motivation*, and *eWOM adoption and Use* from 0.169 to 0.164. Reviewing the power of the model from the analysis on the moderator *length of service* there is no effect on *employee brand advocacy*. However, there is a slight increase in the R² for *eWOM adoption and use*. This finding means that length of service is only significant on eWOM adoption and use, and does not influence brand advocacy.

7.8.1.4 Business Size

Do *business size* influence employees to adoption and use eWOM? The following data analysis relating to this assessment can be found in Appendix 2. The size of businesses that completed the online survey are:

- 0-10 employees (29%),
- 11-30 employees (32%),
- 31- 60 employees (29%),
- 61-100 employees (7%).

There is a slight increase in the F effects for *employee effort*. However, there was a decrease in the F effects for: *employer motivation, social influence* and *eWOM adoption and use*. The power of the model with the inclusion of the moderator *business size* confirms there is an increase in the R² for *eWOM adoption and use* and there is no change for *employee brand advocacy*. Further research is encouraged for this moderator.

7.8.2 PLS Predict

PLS Predict is based on the concepts of separate training and holdout samples for estimating model parameters and assessing a model's predictive power. A holdout sample is the outstanding part of the dataset not used for model estimation. A training sample is a portion of the overall dataset used to estimate the model parameters (e.g., the path coefficients, indicators weights, and loadings) (Saunders and Lewis, 2018; Shamhuyenhazva et al., 2016).

As a relatively new area using advanced analysis with PLS Predict, it is possible to predict the employee characteristics needed to adopt and use social media, and in turn lead to be brand advocates for businesses. The PLS Predict algorithm uses training and holdout samples to generate and evaluate predictions from PLS path model estimations. Three important principles of predictive evaluation include examining out-of-sample prediction errors and the metrics based on them, benchmarking the model predictions against a naive alternative, and assessing over-fit (Shmueli et al., 2016).

When running a PLS Predict procedure, researchers are required to make a series of choices, which include the:

1. Number of folds
2. Number of repetitions
3. Selection of adequate prediction statistics to quantify the degree of prediction error

7.8.2.1 Prediction Metrics

In prediction studies, performance is analysed based on prediction errors on a holdout sample and on summaries of these errors by using common prediction metrics. Popular statistics include the root mean squared error (RMSE), mean absolute error (MAE), and mean absolute percentage error (MAPE). These metrics are suitable for numerical outcomes (Shmueli et al., 2016).

Reviewing the data in Table 7.6, this test focuses on two important constructs of the conceptual model: *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*.

	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q²_predict
EmBA1	0.700	0.463	18.797	0.148
EmBA3	1.020	0.891	38.760	0.159
EmBA5	0.906	0.729	32.052	0.145
EmBA4	1.024	0.915	42.213	0.143
EmBA2	1.026	0.901	39.594	0.132
eWOM2-4	1.046	0.845	34.295	0.134
eWOM2-5	0.952	0.742	29.371	0.148
eWOM2-3	1.057	0.832	34.857	0.166
eWOM2-1	0.655	0.452	14.176	0.162
eWOM2-2	0.882	0.653	22.479	0.071

Table 7.6: PLS MV Prediction Summary

However, each of these metrics has advantages and weaknesses in terms of what is captured and what is missed regarding error distribution. Figure 7.14 displays the process in assessing the Q²_predict in PLS-SEM.

The MAE, MAPE and RMSE are scaled such that smaller values indicate higher predictive power. However, their absolute levels are difficult to interpret in a single model, as their values depend on the scaling of the depended construct's indicators making any threshold arbitrary. Using the simple indicator level average as a naïve benchmark from the training sample, as this procedure is like assessing the blindfolding-based Q^2 statistic in PLS-SEM. This procedure is referred to as $Q^2_{predict}$, which uses the mean value of the variables in a training sample as predictions of the variables in the holdout sample.

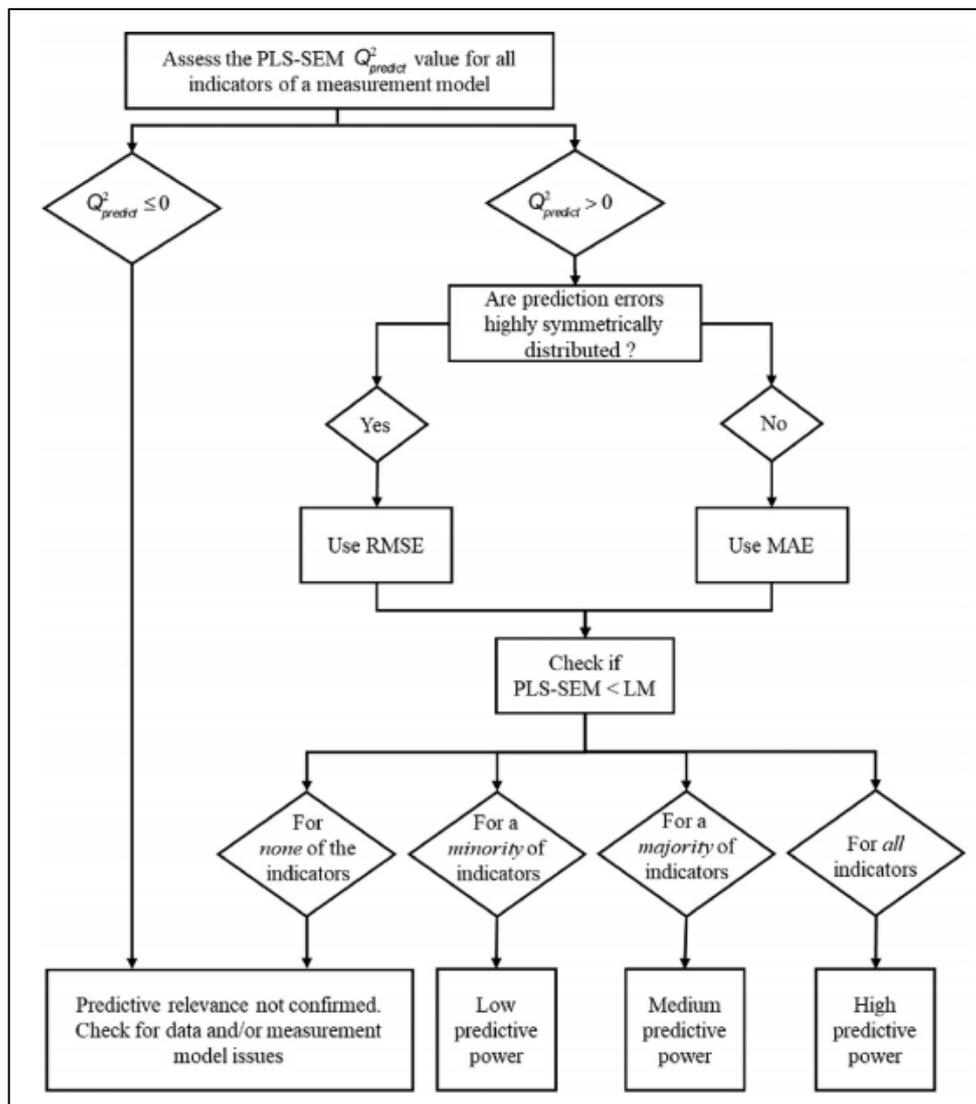


Figure 7.4: Guidelines for interpreting PLS Predict Results (Xu, 2014a)

PLS-SEM					L Model				
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q ² _predict		RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q ² _predict
EmBA1	0.7	0.463	18.797	0.148	EmBA1	0.691	0.486	17.848	0.169
EmBA3	1.02	0.891	38.76	0.159	EmBA3	1.052	0.83	35.847	0.106
EmBA5	0.906	0.729	32.052	0.145	EmBA5	0.967	0.764	32.286	0.025
EmBA4	1.024	0.915	42.213	0.143	EmBA4	1.071	0.871	40.213	0.063
EmBA2	1.026	0.901	39.594	0.132	EmBA2	1.1	0.901	39.097	0.003
eWOM2-4	1.046	0.845	34.295	0.134	eWOM2-4	1.127	0.904	36.533	-0.005
eWOM2-5	0.952	0.742	29.371	0.148	eWOM2-5	0.977	0.751	28.568	0.102
eWOM2-3	1.057	0.832	34.857	0.166	eWOM2-3	1.098	0.865	34.739	0.101
eWOM2-1	0.655	0.452	14.176	0.162	eWOM2-1	0.675	0.501	15.171	0.109
eWOM2-2	0.882	0.653	22.479	0.071	eWOM2-2	0.921	0.689	23.412	-0.013

Table 7.7: Comparing PLS-SEM to LM results PLS Predict

The last step is comparing the RMSE value with the Linear Model (LM) Value of each indicator. It is appropriate to check whether the PLS-SEM analysis (i.e., compared to the LM) yields lower prediction errors in terms of RMSE (or MAE) for all (i.e., high predictive power), the majority (i.e., medium predictive power), the minority (i.e., low predictive power), or none of the indicators (i.e., lack of predict power) (Xu, 2014a). Evaluating the construct results in Table 7.6 and 7.7 and following the guidelines as displayed in Figure 33, the results are summarised by the two construct *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*.

7.8.2.1 Employee Brand Advocacy Prediction

The Q^2_{predict} is greater than 0 for EMBA1 (0.148). EMBA2(0.132). EMBA3(0.159), EMBA4(0.143), EMBA5(0.145) As these indicators are greater than zero, RMSE is considered. Reviewing the RMSE indicator results for the construct *employee brand advocacy* in Table 7.7, the values for each indicator is less for PLS than for LM for most of the indicators. Additionally, reflecting on the guidelines for evaluation set out in Figure 33, this construct demonstrates high predictive power.

7.8.2.2 eWOM Adoption and Use

The Q^2_{predict} is greater than 0 for the following indicators: eWOM2-1 (0.162), eWOM2-2(0.071), eWOM2-3 (0.166), eWOM2-4 (0.148)and eWOM2-5 (0.134) Reviewing the RMSE results for the construct *eWOM adoption and use* in Table 7.7, the values for each indicator for PLS is less than for LM for all the indicators. Additionally, reflecting on the guidelines for evaluation set out in Figure 7.14, this construct demonstrates high predictive power.

7.8.2.3 Engaged Community Moderator -PLS Predict

With the addition of the moderator *engaged SM communities* in Table 7.8, the Q^2_{predict} is greater than 0 for all the indicators. Reviewing the RMSE

indicator results for the construct *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* in Table 7.8, the values for each indicator is less for PLS than for LM for all the indicators. Additionally, reflecting on the guidelines for evaluation set out in Figure 7.14, with the addition of this moderator demonstrates high predictive power.

PLS with Moderator Engaged Community					Linear Model (LM)				
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q ² _predict		RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q ² _predict
EmBA3	1.058	0.933	40.732	0.091	EmBA3	1.033	0.818	35.328	0.135
EmBA1	0.717	0.476	19.399	0.102	EmBA1	0.698	0.489	17.988	0.147
EmBA5	0.925	0.745	32.884	0.108	EmBA5	0.96	0.756	31.681	0.039
EmBA4	1.042	0.927	43.047	0.113	EmBA4	1.045	0.834	38.56	0.108
EmBA2	1.062	0.936	41.307	0.071	EmBA2	1.095	0.887	38.676	0.012
eWOM2-3	1.115	0.87	37.006	0.071	eWOM2-3	1.109	0.875	35.084	0.081
eWOM2-1	0.657	0.433	13.833	0.152	eWOM2-1	0.671	0.503	15.057	0.115
eWOM2-2	0.899	0.642	22.668	0.031	eWOM2-2	0.915	0.689	23.33	-0.002
eWOM2-4	1.076	0.869	36.131	0.083	eWOM2-4	1.134	0.912	36.803	-0.018
eWOM2-5	1.003	0.775	30.97	0.056	eWOM2-5	0.986	0.758	28.882	0.089

Table 7.8: PLS Predict with the Conceptual Model with the Moderator Engaged SM Community

7.8.3 PLS Predict Application

Despite prediction and predictive assessments obvious relevance for the field, PLS Predict applications are still scarce, probably because of its recent development and the need for straightforward guidance and illustration of its usage (Xu, 2014a).

Comparing models in terms of composite score-based prediction error (e.g., using the RMSE or the MAE statistic) enables researchers to identify a parsimonious model that is more likely to exhibit higher predictive power and generalise to other samples. Furthermore, a path model with a weak explanatory power, but a strong predictive performance, might point to the need to extend the existing theory or develop a new one. That is, research could investigate why predictions are so accurate and whether their underlying correlations could be linked to a causal theory thus heralding a theory building process (Xu, 2014a).

Following the PLS Predict guidelines (Shmueli et al., 2019) confirms the high predictive power of the two constructs *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy* for the conceptual model. Plus, with the addition moderator *engaged SM communities* demonstrates high predictive power. Future research on PLS Predict will aid with comparing the results from this study with other scholars so to set a benchmark of findings.

7.9 Smart PLS Summary

As part of this first step in the triangulation analysis. This PLS-SEM analysis follows a two-step approach to assess the: 1) in-sample power of the model and 2) outer-power model. Table 7.9 summaries the acceptance, partial acceptance and rejection of the hypothesis relationships with the in-sample power of the model. The outer power assessment has been conducted using the PLS Predict and is outlined in Table 7.10.

Relationship Examined			Results
Employer Motivation	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Employee Effort	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Facilitating Conditions	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Rejected
Social Influence	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Rejected
eWOM Adoption and Use	->	Employee Brand Advocacy	Accepted
Engaged Social Media Community (Moderator)	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Engaged Social Media Community (Moderator)	->	Employee Brand Advocacy	Partially Accepted

Table 7.9: Summary of Research Hypothesis Acceptance and Rejection

Construct	Results
eWOM Adoption and Use	High Predictive Power
Employee Brand Advocacy	Medium Predictive Power
Engaged Social Media Community (Moderator)	Low Predictive Power

Table 7.10: PLS Predict Outer Power Assessment

7.10 Qualitative Interviews to Confirm SMARTPLS Findings

Given the results from the quantitative study with SMART-PLS, the hypotheses that need further clarification are: *facilitating conditions* (i.e., rejected) and *social influence* (i.e., rejected), and *engaged SM community* (i.e., partially accepted). The list of businesses that completed the interviews is outlined in Table 7.11.

Sector	Business	Job Role
Bakery	Lainey Handmade Foods	Employee tasked with SM
	Gallagher's Bakery	Marketing Manager
	O'Donoghues Bakery Ltd-Penny Loaf	Employee tasked with SM
Beverages	Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited	Marketing Manager
	Wild Liqueurs Limited	Manager tasked with SM
	Stonewell Cider	Employee tasked with SM
Confectionary	Lorge Chocolatier	Employee tasked with SM
	Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates	Employee tasked with SM
Dairy	Mossfield	Employee tasked with SM
	Cuinneog	Employee tasked with SM
Horticulture	Beechlawn Organic Farm	Employee tasked with SM
	Castlefarmshop	Employee tasked with SM
Prepared Foods	Kilbride Classic Cuisine	Employee tasked with SM
	Adora Flax Co	Employee tasked with SM
	Kilbeggan Organic Foods	Marketing Manager

Table 7.11: Business Interview Profiles

7.10.1 Interview Results

In order to confirm the rejection of the constructs from the first stage analysis, the following questions have been posed to a total of 20 businesses from the different sectors of the Food and Drink sector (see Table 7.11). The interview questions have been categorised into the following themes: *social influence*, *facilitating conditions*, and *engaging SM community* (see Table 7.12).

Construct	Indicator	Focus of Interview Question	Survey Result
Social Influence	SI1	People who are important to me believe that I should use SM.	61% Strongly Agree/Agree
	SI2	Colleagues in my industry have been helpful in how to use Social Media.	46% Agree
	SI3	In general, the industry has supported the use of Social Media.	48% Strongly Agree/Agree
<i>Additional SI Question Added</i>		People who influence my behaviour believe that I should use SM.	
Facilitating Conditions	FC1	I have the resources necessary in work to use Social Media.	67% Strongly Agree/Agree
	FC2	I have the necessary knowledge to use SM.	56% Strongly Agree/Agree
	FC3	SM is compatible with all other applications I use (i.e., website).	57% Strongly Agree/Agree
<i>Additional FC Question Added</i>		A specific person is available for assistance with SM difficulties.	
Engaging Social Media Communities	SMC1	Customers regularly comment, like and share eWOM messages on our business SM pages.	64 % Strongly Agree/Agree
	SMC2	It takes little effort posting eWOM messages on my employer's SM pages, as the community is engaged.	29% Strongly Agree/Agree
	SMC3	It takes a lot of effort posting eWOM messages on my employer's SM pages, as the community is disengaged.	87% Strongly Agree/Agree
	SMC4	Customers never comment, like and share posts on our business SM pages.	40% Strongly Agree/Agree
	SMC5	I often feel disappointed on our business SM pages because the community does not respond to my eWOM messages.	65% Strongly Agree/Agree

Table 7.12: Qualitative Interviews Questions

7.10.2 Social Influence

The quantitative results from Smart-PLS on *social influence* indicate it does not influence employees who adopt and use eWOM. This theme aims to understand why employees within Ireland's agri-food and drink sector do not perceive *social influence* as being important. Employees have been asked, if

a person who is important to them (e.g., supervisor, colleague, mentor) were to suggest they use eWOM for their business, would they use it. An overwhelming majority of respondents believe people who are important to them suggest they should use social media for their business. Some examples from the respondents include:

“Yes, everyone believes we should use social media, at this stage social media is central to all our marketing campaigns.” Gallagher’s Bakery

“Using social media is good for our, so we can network with other companies to see what they are doing.” Mossfield

“Some people believe I should [use it], however, too much of social media is not good either.” Kilbride Classic

These responses highlight the many benefits businesses receive by using social media. For example:

“Yes, ... people expect [the business is] using social media at this stage.” O’Donoghues Bakery Ltd

“If I didn’t use social media, it would be because I’m not familiar with it. Or the fear of messing up online [and] causing more harm than good; you might damage your reputation if you didn’t know what you were doing.” Cuinneog

Some businesses do not feel the need to use social media all the time. Other businesses do not see *social influence* as an important reason to use social media, as they have already developed a clientele through other means and do not feel the need to promote their business through SM. For example:

“My employer understands that Social Media is important for the business. However, at the moment we are really busy with orders, as we have built up a reputation with businesses over the years and do not feel that we need to put our time and energy into marketing our business as much through social media” Lorge Chocolatier

Key areas of concern amongst the employees is time management when using social media, and the lack of experience in dealing with nWOM, which can be detrimental to business reputation.

To assess whether colleagues in the sector have been helpful in the adoption and use of social media for businesses. A majority of businesses indicate that colleagues in the sector are helpful in how to use of social media. Some responses include:

“Yes, I have undertaken a good few courses on social media.”
Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates

“Yes, [when] networking at different events, the topic of how people are doing on social media is constantly asked; and people share their stories.” Kilbeggan Organic Foods.

However, another company notes:

“We do receive leaflets of courses and workshop. However, it is not of importance for us at the moment.” Lorge Chocolatier

When asked whether the sector has been supportive, the majority agree it has been supportive. For example:

“Yes, there are numbers of workshops, seminars provided by Bord Bia [and] local enterprise boards on different applications of social media like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.” Gallagher’s Bakery

“Yes, there has been support offered to businesses to help them get online and even set up ecommerce.” Kilbride Classic

Some interesting findings from two businesses are:

“The industry is pushing food business to use social media more. However, the courses provided with the relevant agencies were outdated and follow-up support was not given to businesses.” Adora Flax Co.

“Not really, I did a course on social media and it was mainly about trying to get as many followers, rather than how to keep your followers and what information you want to give. I have a lot of people following me that are absolutely no use to my businesses whatsoever.” Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited

The sector is supportive in providing courses on social media. Businesses have mentioned receiving literature on different events and workshops to help them promote their business. However, three businesses disagree and believe other businesses portray they are doing well on SM, when it is not necessarily the case. They note that businesses in the sector are working on their own. For example:

“I wouldn’t agree, everyone is working in silos.” Adora Flax Co.

“Not really, everyone is doing their own thing.” Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited

“People within companies that are good on social media give a great image of the company - that if they are always on social media, and they are always putting up stuff – well, that company is doing brilliant, but they may not be. But it is important to give a great image that you are doing well.” Cuinneog

Most businesses agree that people who influence their behaviour believe they should use social media. For example:

“People expect to see content for the business on social media and for it to be posted regularly.” O ‘Donoghues Bakery Ltd

“Yes, social media is probably the best way to link through to our customers, as they are always on it.” Wild Liqueurs Limited

“Yes, it is important for the business that I keep up to speed on the changes with social media.” Kilbeggan Organic Foods

With the increasing complexity and rate of change associated with SM means is another demanding challenge for firms to keep up (Bruque and Moyano,

2007). A lack of understanding and knowledge in using SM means firms find it perplexing to ensure the use of SM benefits the firm (Stockdale and Standing, 2006).

With the widespread adoption of SM applications, people assume all businesses have a SM presence. Hence, *social influence* is no longer considered to be an important factor for employees in the adoption and use of eWOM

Regarding *social influences*, the key findings indicate employees believe they should use social media. The sector has been supportive in offering courses and workshops to help businesses with social media. Although, some businesses suggest the content could be more relevant and updated. The influence from colleagues and friends is not as significant as it may have been in the past. Given the vast adoption of SM, it is expected businesses to use it. Future research on the adoption of eWOM should consider excluding the *social influence* construct, as this study demonstrates it is no longer seen as important, as the adoption and use of social media is widely accepted.

7.10.3 Facilitating Conditions

Arising from the first stage analysis, the *facilitating conditions* hypothesis has been rejected. To understand the reasoning behind this rejection, interview questions around this theme have been posed.

One business states they are not active in social media, as their products are more B2B than B2C. Some businesses have the necessary resources to aid in the development of content for social media:

“Yes, we have all the equipment [for social media] and have a graphic designer to help with imagery.” Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited

“Yes, I have access to software, camera equipment etc. to develop content for social media.” Stonewell Cider

Concerns about the precarious nature of work with employees and the increased expectation that employees remain constantly connected to work with their smartphones has been raised by scholars (Simmons et al., 2010). Smartphones have potential negative effects on employees by blurring boundaries between work and private life (Derks et al., 2015). However, smartphones might also help employees in accomplishing their work tasks and increase their personal flexibility. An issued employees have raised is not having the time to work with SM. For example:

“Allocation of time to use it would be an issue, as we have a limited number of staff who have other duties at the moment.” Lorge Chocolatier.

“Only doing social media for a few hours a week. It can be difficult to fit it in with other jobs that I have. I would like to learn more, as it’s changing all the time.” Beechlawn

The majority of the businesses note the difficulty with internet connectivity when working with social media. For example:

“I have the equipment, however, strong internet is not one of them.” Ballyshiel

“Internet speed is still a problem. We use our phones a lot to take snaps of the farm and the vegetables.” Beechlawn

“There is no set hours to work on social media. We would use the phone for some posts, but for a long thought out content involving images, we would use the PC, but the internet connection can be very slow for updating. Internet connection is not fast, which is a big problem for us.” Cuinneog.

Big Red Cloud’s 2018 survey with Irish SMEs has noted an overwhelming 96% of SMEs believe rural businesses are at a competitive disadvantage due to inadequate, poor-quality broadband. The Irish National Broadband Plan’s goal is to address this problem, but its slow pace of progress is the source of considerable frustration for many SMEs. Of the 2.3m premises across the

island of Ireland, 31% do not have access to high-speed broadband (O'Donnabhain, 2018).

Regarding whether employees have the necessary knowledge to use social media, most of the business have a basic knowledge of social media. For example:

"I have limited knowledge in social media, as Facebook keeps changing and it takes so much time. My posts are limited to updates when I get time to work with it." Adora Flax Co.

"Yes, with regards to posting content, limited knowledge regarding sponsorship and building likes etc." Lorge Chocolatier.

Others who have more experience with using SM state:

"Yes, I have a degree in marketing and have done a few courses in social media." Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates

Yes, we would have the necessary knowledge for social media, but it requires much effort; we are constantly thinking outside of work about ways to be creative with our content post. Thinking of posts in the middle of the night and in our spare time [about how] to be different and unique online." Cuinneog

"I have learnt a lot by myself online, through trial and error." Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited.

Most businesses do not have a specific person to assist them with SM difficulties. For example:

"No, I would not know who to call if something bad happened." Lorge Chocolatier

"No one really; we haven't experienced any difficulties." Cuinneog

This finding highlights the training need for how to deal with nWOM. Other employees state they would contact their colleagues or employer. For example:

“I can ask my boss, but I don’t think they would know[any] more than I do on social media.” Adora Flax Co.

“I could ask my colleagues here in work for their thoughts. However, I just make sure I respond to any difficult messages online quickly and as professionally as possible.” Stonewell Cider

“I would talk to my boss if I had any problems.” Beechlawn

In some cases, these employees would rely on their employer for help. However, if the employer is not skilled or knowledgeable in dealing with eWOM, it may prove difficult. Finally, some employees mention they are yet to have difficulties with SM.

“We haven’t had any difficulties with social media., I find that if you respond quickly to any negative messages from consumers online, it can alleviate any difficulties. In some cases, offering products free of charge if customers are not happy, just to keep our good reputation.” Gallagher’s Bakery

“No, but I think I would be able to handle any difficulties that might arise.” Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates

Regarding whether their social media efforts are compatible with other applications, most businesses integrate social media with their websites. For example:

“Yes, it’s all integrated together.” Gallagher’s Bakery

“There is a link on the website to our social media pages.” Beechlawn

What is interesting to note, is that some businesses do not have or do not use their website and solely rely on social media. For example:

“No, we don’t have a website, [we] just use Facebook and Instagram to promote our business.” Adora Flax Co.

*“We don’t have a website currently; we used to, but the cost of updating and hosting, [meant] it was cheaper to use social media.”
Lainey Handmade Foods*

This finding concurs with the literature in that social media is the first port of call for customers engaging with businesses, other than their website and phone number. All the businesses have *facilitating conditions* to work with SM. Still, a high number of businesses find working with social media difficult due to broadband issues. Although most businesses have a basic knowledge of social media, they prefer to use social media, rather than their website to connect to their community. Only a few businesses have dedicated, skilled employees to work with content creation. The most interesting finding is that when dealing with difficulties on social media, most businesses do not have resources or people to advise them. More support amongst the community and sector is needed to assist employees.

7.10.4 Engaging Social Media Communities

Regarding whether customers regularly comment, like and share eWOM messages on business SM pages, the majority indicate the community is engaged. For example:

“Yes, existing customers do [comment, like and share].” Beechlawn

“Some [customers comment]; it all depends on what we post, but most [customers] will like our content.” Adora Flax Co

“Sometimes ... some posts get a better response than others. If we try and get users to like or share a post or have a competition, we get more responses than just a picture post.” Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited

All respondents note it takes a lot of effort to post eWOM messages on the business SM pages and it is harder to engage communities. For example:

“Yes, it takes a lot of effort. We try and take our time with our posts, so we get a good response. Being creative and different is important and some of our posts are not about our products. We try and time our post right, [and appropriate for the] season.” Cuinneog

“It’s getting harder and harder [to engage], as people’s walls are getting busy. So, we have had to really spend time thinking of our post to get customers to like and comment on it.” Gallagher’s Bakery

“I usually take photos showing our products, or cakes [we have] just made. So from that point of view, it’s relatively easy, as I just use my phone and post it then.” Lorge Chocolatier

Over half of the interviewees agree with the statement, *Customers never comment, like and share posts on our business SM pages*. All respondents feel disappointment when the community does not respond to their eWOM messages. For example:

“Sometimes ... but I think it’s just getting harder to get your message out.” Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates

“In the past but we take our time with our post, we don’t post every day. We make sure we post at the right time and put effort into what we are putting our on our pages.” Kilbeggan Organic Foods

7.8.1.3.1 Construct Clarification Drawn from Employee Interviews

The clarifications emerging from the employee interviews on the constructs of *social influence, facilitating conditions, and engaging SM community* are as follows:

Social Influence: All employees believe they should use SM for their businesses. Most employees want courses to develop their knowledge of SM and to learn how to retain followers online. Some employees highlight the

courses and workshops the sector provide are outdated and do not deal with the continual changes across the different applications.

Facilitating Conditions: All employees update their SM business pages at work. There are a high number of employees who use their smartphone for work purposes. Many businesses experience barriers to adopting social media due to poor internet connectivity. Most employees do not have anyone specific to contact for assistance with nWOM or with difficulties in using SM.

Engaging SM Community: All employees agree it takes considerable effort posting content on social media and they need to spend time on their posts to engage the community. All employees are disappointed when dealing with a disengaged community. Employees believe workshops on creative content and engaging customers would benefit them.

7.11 Proposed New Research Framework

Regarding the constructs, *social influence*, *facilitating conditions* *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use*, Table 7.14 compares the survey findings (by the degree of consistency of high, moderate, and low) with the insights deriving from the employee interviews. A high/moderate degree of consistency has been achieved between the two methods.

The results from the triangulation analysis indicate a new research framework should be considered. The proposed new research framework omits the constructs/moderators that were not significant (i.e., *social influence*, *facilitating conditions* and *length of service*). The moderator *engaging SM community* is only partially accepted for this research and has only a slight effect on employee brand advocacy. However, it does influence *eWOM adoption and use*; it is for this reason it is retained in the new framework. The new framework includes the moderator *business size*, as the advanced analysis presented in Chapter Seven suggests there is an impact on *employee*

brand advocacy. The constructs for this new framework are outlined in Table 7.13 and the framework is depicted in Figure 7.5.

Construct	Description
Employee Effort	Refers to the level of SM experiences employees have with regards to adopting and using eWOM initiatives.
Employer Motivation	Motivation plays an important role in the formation of intention to use the social media on behalf of the business (Hansen and Levin, 2016).
Employee Brand Advocacy	Refers to employees who promote the company for they work for through SM.
Engaging SM Community	Refers to whether having an engaged social media community, assists employees with the adoption and use of eWOM.
Business Size	Considers whether business size influences employee adoption and use of SM.
eWOM Adoption and Use	Refers to employees who adopt and use eWOM initiatives for their employer

Table 7.13 Proposed New Research Framework Constructs

Construct	Indicator	Interview Question	Survey Findings	Interview Findings	Degree of Consistency
Social Influence	SI1	People who are important to me believe that I should use Social Media.	61% Strongly Agreed/Agreed	Yes, all should use SM Time Management with task can be an issue	High, consistency
	SI2	Colleagues in my industry have been helpful in how to use Social Media.	46% Agreed	Support from industry on courses	Moderate consistency
	SI3	In general, the industry has supported the use of Social Media.	48% Strongly Agreed/Agreed	Some course content is not relevant or is outdated	High consistency
<i>Additional SI Question Added</i>		People who influence my behaviour believe that I should use SM.		Yes	
Facilitating Conditions	FC1	I have the resources necessary in work to use Social Media.	67 Strongly Agree/Agree	All have resources necessary to use it. Internet Connection is still an issue	High Consistency
	FC2	I have the necessary knowledge to use Social Media.	56 Strongly Agree/Agree	Majority have a basic knowledge of SM	High Consistency
	FC3	Social Media is compatible with all other applications I use (i.e., website).	57% Strongly Agree/Agree	Few websites are compatible SM is used more than company website	Moderate Consistency
<i>Additional FC Question Added</i>		A specific person is available for assistance with Social Media difficulties.		No one available Rely on employer Some would deal with eWOM themselves	
Engaging Social Media Community	SMC1	Customers regularly comment, like and share eWOM messages on our business SM pages.	63% Agree/Strongly Agree	Some customers do not engage, businesses take their time concentrating on posts	Moderate Consistency
	SMC2	It takes little effort posting eWOM messages on my employer's SM pages, as the community is engaged.	29% Agree/Strongly Agree	All disagreed it takes a lot of effort, some of the community is engaged	Moderate Consistency
	SMC3	It takes a lot of effort posting eWOM messages on my employer's SM pages, as the community is disengaged.	86% Agree/Strongly Agree	All agreed it takes a lot of effort, some of the community is engaged	High Consistency
	SMC4	Customers never comment, like and share posts on our business SM pages.	41% Agree/Strongly Agree	Some do not comment, and employees understand the competitiveness of SM	Moderate Consistency
	SMC5	I often feel disappointed on our business SM pages because the community does not respond to my eWOM messages.	66% Agree/Strongly Agree,	How to deal with poor engagement on SM	Moderate Consistency

Table 7.14: Comparison Survey and Interview Findings

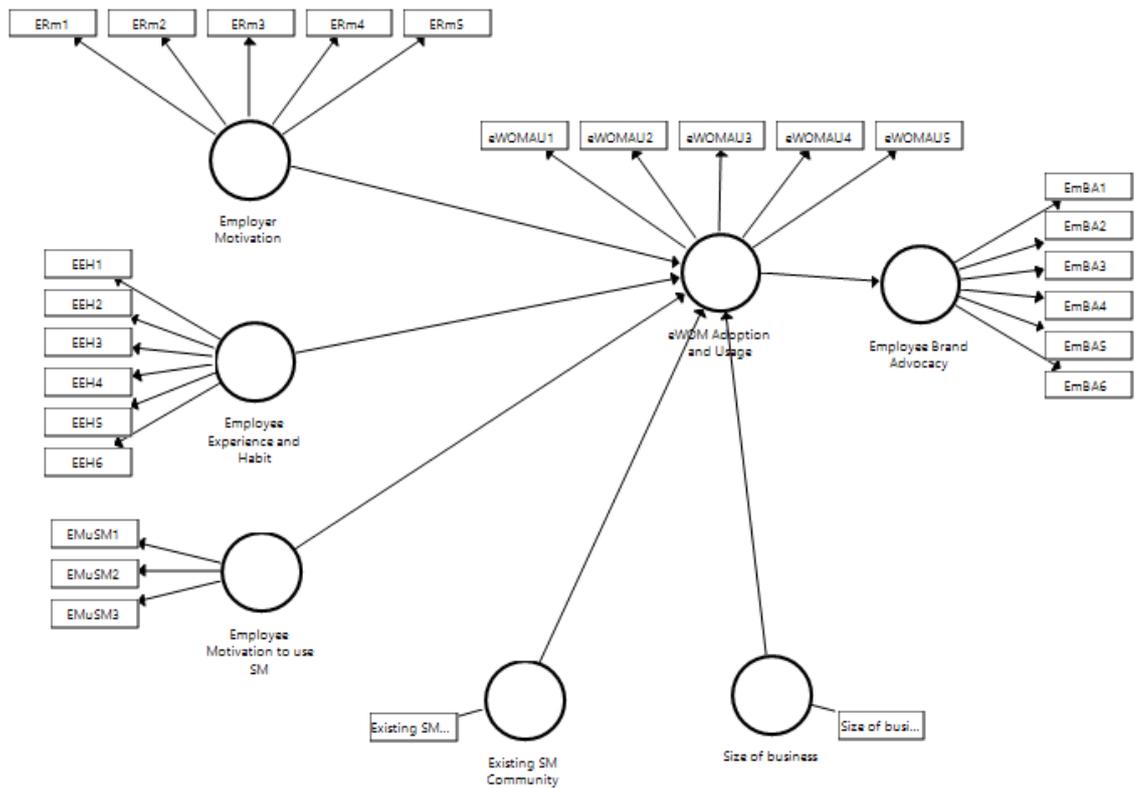


Figure 7.5: Proposed New Research Framework

7.12 Findings Summary

This chapter presents the findings that verify and validate the research model presented in Chapter Five. An analysis of the survey data and the confirmation of results gathered through in-depth interviews is outlined. The key findings from the survey data is that most of the respondents (96%) intend to continually use SM. However, only (33%) of businesses have a SM strategy. Half (48%) of the participants note that they are not allocated enough time in their job to work with SM. The majority of employees (66%) feel disappointed with their business SM pages, because the community is not engaged to their eWOM efforts.

The results from data refinement, multivariate analysis and hypotheses testing is presented. The key points from the PLS-SEM analysis confirm that through the reflective and structural measurement model assessment. The following

constructs. are accepted *employee effort* (0.024) *employer motivation* (0.173) because they have a strong effect on *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*. However, *social influence* (0.005) and *facilitating conditions* (0.003) are rejected because they have a weak effect on *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*.

With the inclusion of the moderator, *engaged SM community*, it has an effect on *eWOM adoption and use*, however, it has little effect on *employee brand advocacy*. Additional analysis examines *length of service* and *business size* as moderators. This analysis confirms that *length of service* is only significant on *eWOM adoption and use*, and does not influence *employee brand advocacy*. With respect to *business size*, it is significant for both *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use*.

Follow-up interviews are used to clarify hypotheses rejected from the initial quantitative analysis. The key points from the interviews is summarised by constructs. Regarding *social influence*, all employees believe they should use SM for their businesses. Some employees highlight the courses and workshops provided by the sector are outdated and do not deal with the continual changes in the different applications. Regarding, *facilitating conditions*, all employees update their SM business pages at work. There are a high number of employees who use their smartphone for work purposes. Many businesses experience barriers to adopting social media due to poor internet connectivity. Regarding *engaged SM community*, employees agree it takes considerable effort posting content on social media and they need to spend time on their posts to engage the community. All employees are disappointed when dealing with a disengaged community. Employees believe workshops on creative content and engaging customers would benefit them.

This chapter discusses the prediction of the conceptual model using PLS predict and confirms the high predictive power for the constructs *eWOM adoption and use* and a medium predictive power for *employee brand advocacy*. With the addition of the moderator, *engaged SM communities*, the model demonstrates low predictive power.

This chapter presents a new research framework for future research, which omits the rejected constructs *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*. The constructs for the new research framework are: *employee effort*, *employer motivation*, *employee brand advocacy*, *engaging SM community*, and *business size*.

The conclusion chapter discusses the contributions of this research to theory and practice. Suggestions for future research and concluding remarks are also discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research findings to compare and contrast them with the literature review, as presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. The aim of this study is to investigate the adoption and use of eWOM by employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector and whether it correlates to brand advocacy.

8.2 Research Findings

This research comprised of size hypothesis within three themes social media, technology adoption and use and organisation. To summarise the key findings from the literature review and the triangulation approached will be presented by each hypothesis.

H1 Social influence significantly affects employee intentions to use SM.

From the literature review Chapter 3 it was evident that social influence is heavily cited in the IS journals, particularly in the area of adoption and use of social networking services (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Escobar-Rodriguez et al., 2013; Huang and Shiau, 2015; Pornsakulvanich, 2017), knowledge management systems (Wang et al., 2013), virtual worlds (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2014), blogs (Hsu and Lin, 2008, Wang and Chuan Lin, 2011), and mobile banking (Alalwan et al., 2017; Baptista et al., 2015; Oliveira et al., 2016, Singh et al., 2020). Acknowledging the research on social networking services, there is limited research that explicates how such social influence assist in the adoption and use of eWOM for organisations.

Based on this research the findings confirm the rejection of H1. It is noted that this construct passed the reflective measurement model assessment. However, the reasons this hypothesis was rejected was due to failing the Structural Model Assessment, particularly the path coefficient results, there

is a high P value of (0.373) and a high T value of (0.892). In addition, the F effects for *social influence* correlation to *eWOM Adoption and Use*, there is a weak effect of (0.024).

The interview findings on *social influences* confirm that employees believe they should use SM. The sector has been supportive in offering courses and workshops to help businesses with social media. Although, some businesses suggest the content could be more relevant and updated. However, employees believe that influence from colleagues and friends is not as important as it may have been in the past. As the vast adoption of SM, it is expected businesses to use it. Future research on the adoption of eWOM should consider omitting the *social influence* construct, as this study demonstrates it is no longer seen as important, as the adoption and use of SM is widely accepted.

The findings from this study conflicts research by Hair et al., (2018c) who found the construct *social influences*, although presenting smaller coefficient weights, had a significant effect on intention. Additionally, Davis (1989) found *social influence* had a significant effect on ICT behaviour intention. However, research by Tsai et al. (2013) who research consumer adopting in banking confirmed that *social influence* has no significance on intention of use. Also, Workman (2014) who researched new media adoption such as social media and smart device rejected *social influence*.

Regarding *social influence*, Venkatesh et al. (2003) found that older individuals would have greater difficulty in dealing with new technology, and would feel greater affiliation needs thus placing increased salience on social influences. In contrast, Trottier (2012) research on social influence found that younger users are sensitive to peer pressure to adopt SM compared to older users. Considering the findings from this research further research on age with *social influence* and whether it is a factor of eWOM adoption.

H2 Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM.

The findings from the literature review highlights the use of facilitating conditions has been in the area of information systems (Park et al., 2011; Teo, 2010; Zhou et al., 2019), online shopping (Yang and Forney, 2013; Martin and Herrero, 2012; Ratnasingam, 2004), social media (Nawi et al., 2019; El Ouiridi et al., 2016) and e-government (Batara et al., 2017; Alraja, 2016).

Findings from the research on facilitating conditions is on social media, however this is in the context of student's entrepreneurship use and employee recruitment. There is limited research on eWOM adoption and use for the food and drink sector.

Based on this research the findings confirm the rejection of H2. This construct passed the reflective measurement model assessment. Nevertheless, the reasons that this hypothesis was rejected was due to failing the Structural Model Assessment, particularly the path coefficient results, there is a high path coefficient results, there is a high P value of (0.516) and a high T value of (0.650).

The interview findings on *facilitating conditions* mainly confirms that Irish businesses find working with SM difficult due to broadband issues. Even though most businesses have a basic knowledge of SM, they prefer to use SM, rather than their website to connect to their community. Very few businesses have a dedicated, skilled employees to work with content creation for SM. The most interesting finding is that when dealing with difficulties on SM, most businesses do not have resources or people to advise them. Future research and support amongst the community and sector is needed to assist employees dealing with nWOM.

The findings from this study conflicts research by Taiwo and Downe's (2013) who found a small effect size for *facilitating conditions* on use behaviour.

Additionally, Hair et al. (2018b) and Sarstedt (2019) found no significant effect for *facilitating conditions* on actual use of internet adoption. Hair et al.'s (2018c) results showed *facilitating condition* influenced intention behaviour, but when testing the direct effect of *facilitating conditions* on *actual use*, there was no significant effect was found in the relationship, which is consistent with the findings from this study. However, facilitating conditions were not influential for small business owners (Mandal & McQueen, 2012).

Finally, research by (Venkatesh et al., 2003) confirmed that the effect of facilitating conditions on usage behavior is stronger for older workers with more experience with the technology. Additionally, El Ouiridi et al., (2016) states that high educational levels and managerial positions are expected to be associated with high levels of technology literacy and reduced reliance on facilitating conditions. Further research on age and technology literacy of employees in Irelands food and drink sector is required for *facilitating conditions*.

H3 Employee efforts affect their intention to adopt and use SM for their employer.

The literature review highlights research on effort expectancy of third level staff in social media use (Gruzd et al., 2012) and employee recruitment (El Ouiridi et al., 2016), noting the research gap in the area of eWOM.

Based on this research the findings confirm the acceptance of H3. The reasons that this hypothesis was accepted is due to passing the following tests with SmartPLS, in particular the Path Coefficients displays a T value of 2.235 and a P Values of 0.026. The F effect of 0.024 indicates *employee effort* has a weak effect on *eWOM adoption and use*. These tests for this hypothesis (H3), confirm *employee effort* significantly affect and employee intention to adopt and use SM.

The acceptance of employee efforts from this study is supported by Lu. J et al.,(2017) who found that effort expectancy was significant mobile shopping continuance intention. Also, Yee-Loong Chong, A. et al., (2015) found effort expectancy of RFID(Radio frequency identification) to be the strongest predictor of RDIF adoption. Finally, research by Zhou et al., (2010) states that when users feel that Internet is easy to use and does not require much effort, they will have a high expectation towards acquiring the expected performance; otherwise, their performance expectancy will be low

H4 Engaging SM community significantly affect employee intention to adopt and use SM.

In Chapter two on social media, one of the advantages for adopting and using eWOM for businesses is to engage with SM communities. The research gap identified is whether an engaging SM community affects the adoption and use of SM. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis has been developed:

In this study, *engaging SM community* has been applied as a moderator. R^2 is slightly stronger with the addition of the moderator *engaging SM community* for *eWOM adoption and use* and has no effect on *employee brand advocacy*. R^2 adjusted for *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* is stronger with the moderator addition, confirming the partial acceptance of the hypothesis:

Findings from this study confirms that R^2 is slightly stronger with the addition of the moderator *engaged SM community* for *eWOM adoption and use* and has little effect on *employee brand advocacy*. R^2 Adjusted for both *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use* is stronger with the moderator addition, confirming this hypothesis is partially accepted.

Key findings from the interviews note that respondents feel disappointment when the community does not respond to their eWOM messages. All respondents believe it takes a lot of effort to post eWOM messages on the

business SM pages and it is harder to engage communities. Regarding whether customers regularly comment, like and share eWOM messages on business SM pages, the majority indicate the community is engaged.

This study has tested engaged SM community as a new construct by extending the UTAUT model. The construct was applied as a moderator to the conceptual model. As this is a new construct there is no prior studies that can compare the results from the findings. However, noted in research is the importance of an engaged SM community. Businesses should focus on building the community, defining the level of participation required by employees in the business (McCann and Barlow, 2015). Also, Nelson-Field et al., (2012) notes that customers, who regularly engage with brands on SM sites, are primarily the brand's heaviest and loyal users. To summaries, having an engaged SM community, with employees that are participating encourages customer relations and brand awareness.

H5 Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to adopt and use SM.

As this research employs the Social exchange theory (SET) (Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans 1958; Settoon et al. 1996, Slack et al., 2015) The findings from Chapter 4 identifies areas of interest including employer responsibilities and commitment. There was a lack of research on the types of motivation employees receive from employers to adopt and use SM for their business.

One of the key findings from the survey is that 48% of participants disagree with the statement: *"I am allocated enough time in my job to work with SM"*. Concerning the cost of using SM time is the biggest factor that businesses incur. A high percentage of employees (71%) believe their businesses should increase their time on social media.

From the quantitative analysis The Path Coefficients, Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values in Table 6.15, display a T value of 4.935 and a P Values of 0.000. These tests for this hypothesis (H5), confirm *employer motivation* significantly affects and employee intention to adopt and use SM. Based on this research the findings confirm the acceptance of H3. The reasons that this hypothesis was accepted is due to passing the following tests with SmartPLS

This is also supported by research by Venkatesh et al., (2012) found that motivation is a critical determinant of Behavioral intention and was found to be a more important driver than performance expectancy is in non-organisational context. Additionally, Fagan et al. (2019) and Escobar-Rodríguez et al., (2014) found motivation as significant construct for behavioural intention of use.

Additional research by (Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016; Gibbs et al., 2015) notes that there are many issues with assigning SM activities to employees, such as the lack of understanding of how-to using SM for the business, lack of knowledge of SM, lack of top management support, lack of an internal guiding policy. Within SMEs, employees are balancing different job tasks, meaning that social media may not be given the time it needs. More research is needed on ways employers can assist their employees.

H6 Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicate brand advocacy

The findings from the literature review Chapter Four on Employee Brand Advocacy lies heavily in the area of consumer base (Molinillo et al., 2019), brand managers (Golant, 2012) corporate identify (Glanfield et al., 2017). Pertinent to this research is work carried out by (Badrinarayanan and Sierra, 2018; Schepers and Nijssen, 2018) on front line employees. Research gaps were identified in the area of SMEs in particular with the use of adopting and using eWOM for brand advocacy.

Based on this research the findings confirm the acceptance of H3. The reasons this hypothesis was accepted is due to passing the following tests with SmartPLS in particular the path coefficient results, there is a P value of (0.000) and a high T value of (6.324). Therefore, this hypothesis (H6) is accepted.

This research has extended the UTAUT model by including the construct employee brand advocacy. Therefore, there is a lack of research results. However, findings from this study on behavioural intention is also supported by Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi et al. (2016), and Martins (2014) on behavioural intention.

Conceptual Model Findings

In summary, of the constructs within the proposed conceptual model, four are accepted: *employer motivation*, *employee effort*, *eWOM adoption and use*. The two rejected constructs are *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*, as they are not significant to *eWOM adoption and use*. However, *eWOM adoption and use* confirms *employee brand advocacy*. The moderator, *engaged SM community*, is not accepted for *employee brand advocacy*, but is accepted for *eWOM adoption and use*. The validation of the constructs is summarised in Table 8.1.

Construct		Relationship Examined	Result
Employer Motivation	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Employee Effort	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Facilitating Conditions	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Rejected
Social Influence	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Rejected
eWOM Adoption and Use	->	Employee Brand Advocacy	Accepted
Engaged SM Community (Moderator)	->	eWOM Adoption and Use	Accepted
Engaged SM Community (Moderator)	->	Employee Brand Advocacy	Partially Accepted

Table 8.1: Accepted and Rejected the Research Constructs

The power of this conceptual model is expressed by the R^2 determinative coefficient in relation to the endogenous latent variables, which proves to be moderate on the first level and moderate on the second level. The R^2 statistics are appropriate for assessing a model's in-sample explanatory power, but are not an indication of the model's out-of-sample predictive power (Becker et al., 2018a; Hair et al., 2018c; Hair et al., 2019b). Considering the R^2 which assesses the in-sample prediction power of this conceptual model, the conceptual model is significant in that it explains:

- 22% of variance in *employee brand advocacy*, and
- 32% of variance *eWOM adoption and use*.

Nevertheless, the F^2 value is weak for the constructs: *employee effort*, *employer motivation*, *facilitating conditions*, and *social influence*. However, the construct *eWOM adoption and use* is dependent on these weak constructs. Considering *eWOM adoption and use* has a moderate effect on *employee brand advocacy*, it is possible to identify the significant constructs within this conceptual model, which are: *employee effort*, and *employer motivation*. The F^2 value is extremely low for *facilitating conditions* and *social influence* and is providing little effect to the model. Therefore, it is suggested to omit these two constructs in future studies.

Reviewing the power of the model from the analysis on the moderator *length of service* (i.e., length of employment), there is no effect on *employee brand advocacy*. However, there is a slight increase in the R^2 for *eWOM adoption and use*.

The power of the model with the inclusion of the moderator *business size* confirms there is an increase in the R^2 for *employee brand advocacy* and *eWOM adoption and use*. Confirming that this moderator should be considered for future studies.

Clarification on the hypothesis relationships are presented in Table 8.2.

Construct		Hypothesis	Result
Social Influence	->	H1: Social influence significantly affects employee intentions to use SM	<i>Rejected</i>
Facilitating Conditions	->	H2: Facilitating conditions significantly affect employee intention to use SM	<i>Rejected</i>
Employee Effort	->	H3: Employees efforts affect their intention to use and adopt SM for their employer.	Accepted
Engaging Social Media Community (Moderator)	->	H4: Engaging SM community significantly affect an employee intention to adopt and use of SM	<i>Partially Accepted</i>
Employer Motivation	->	H5: Employer motivation significantly affects employee intention to use SM.	Accepted
Employee Brand Advocacy	->	H6: Employee adoption and use of eWOM initiatives indicates brand advocacy.	Accepted

Table 8.4: Examination of Hypotheses Relationships

PLS Predict assesses the out-of-sample predicative power of the conceptual model, which considers the Q^2 . Following the PLS Predict guidelines (Shmueli et al., 2019), the analysis confirms the high predictive power for the constructs *eWOM adoption and use* and medium predictive power for *employee brand advocacy* for the conceptual model. The addition of the moderator, *engaged SM communities*, also demonstrates low predictive power.

8.5.1 Contribution to Theory

This research contributes to the literature by explaining further the factors required for employees in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector to adopt and use eWOM. This research addresses the knowledge gaps identified in the relevant fields and has significant theoretical and practical implications. Given the high explanatory power of the model, this research and makes five key contributions.

First, from a theoretical perspective, this study provides a framework to examine the determinants of employee adoption and use of eWOM. The

theoretical sharing lies in extending the UTAUT2 model. The *eWOM adoption and use* construct mediates the relationship between brand advocacy significantly with the constructs; *social influence*, *facilitating conditions*, *employee effort*, and *employer motivation*. The findings of this study confirm research on UTAUT2 by Venkatesh (2012), El Ouiridi et al. (2016), and Martins (2014).

Second, this research provides a more robust understanding of the factors that help employees adopt and use social media, and whether it correlates to employee brand advocacy. The academic significance of the research lies in the examination of the dimension of *eWOM adoption and use*, and *employee brand advocacy*, in the agri-food and drink sector from a quantitative analytical approach.

Third, the application of structural equation modelling (SEM) method in adoption and use of eWOM can be perceived as being methodological significant because only a few publications have applied PLS analysis to the agri-food and drink sector. Hence, this research contributes to the validation of this technique and encourages academic researchers to employ it in future studies.

Fourth, the constructs and hypotheses drawn from the theory tested their coherence; most constructs and hypotheses have been accepted (i.e., *employee effort*, *employer motivation*). However, the constructs *social influence* and *facilitating conditions* have been rejected, which has led to useful conclusions for this study. The main contribution to the literature is the need to omit the constructs *social influence* and *facilitating conditions* in future adoption and usage models relating to SM. The findings from this study is parallel to research from Tsai et al. (2013), Workman (2014), Taiwo and Downe's (2013), Hair et al. (2018b) and Sarstedt (2019) who found no significance with social influence and facilitating conditions.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the agri-food and drink sector identified the construct of *social influence* as un-impactful. Employees believe SM is already widely adopted and used; therefore, *social influence* is perceived as insignificant. With regards to *facilitating conditions*, businesses have the technology to use SM in their organisations. Employees have access to SM applications on their smart phones. Although areas of Ireland still have poor broadband penetration rates, out-of-work smartphone use mitigates the difficulties employees may face in using SM on behalf of the firm for which they work. All participant employees have mentioned they have the tools necessary to work with social media and that *facilitating conditions* are not significant in their adoption and use of eWOM.

Fifth, this study progresses theory on technology adoption and use and eWOM, by suggesting the inclusion of the moderator *business size* in the new proposed framework (see Figure 7.15). The prediction analysis confirms employee brand advocacy is more powerful without the moderator, *engaged SM community*. However, *eWOM adoption and use* is more powerful with engaged SM community.

Sixth, this study contributes to the research on adoption of social media by businesses focusing on the use of eWOM. This study extended the UTAUT2 model by evaluating eWOM adoption and usage. The key insights from the quantitative analysis confirms the significance of the construct while the qualitative analysis confirms the difficulty employees face with day challenges by using eWOM. These challenges are mainly technical and organisational; poor broadband (Lillington, 2018), difficulty articulating SM objectives (Keegan and Rowley, 2017), limited time and skills (Dahnil et al., 2014b; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016).

8.5.2 Contribution to Business Practice

The findings provide important implications for businesses that use SM as a platform for its consumers. Employers from the agri-food and drink sector are

interested this study's findings, as it gives them a better understanding on how to encourage their employees to interact with their business community through eWOM on SM. With this knowledge, employers are provided with six insights:

First, the findings suggest time is the biggest barrier to using eWOM. Businesses need to allocate their employees more time to SM activities to ensure high customer engagement. Also noted is the number of employees who work out-of-hours using SM on behalf of their employers. How this work is recognised and rewarded is important in motivating and supporting employees' efforts. Dahnil et al., (2014b) verifies that having an employee with the relevant skills and time is significant. Further, assigning SM activities to employees with limited resources, leads to poor implementation

Second, employees do not know the SM goals their employers seek. Many businesses in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector need a clear SM strategy. This SM strategy should be aligned to the overall business brand message, itemised into achievable tasks, and communicated clearly to employees. Businesses need to provide coherent goals and tasks for employees to achieve. Rewarding employee accomplishments is important for sustaining the business strategy. Guinan et al., (2014) notes that if there is no SM strategy or SM policy within a business, then the expectation for employees to use SM is challenging

Third, the findings suggest how to encourage employee brand advocacy through adopting and using eWOM. Employers and employees within the agri-food and drink sector need training on the value of brand advocacy and how to encourage staff members to become brand ambassadors. Businesses need to identify the employees who have SM skills and are active on SM platforms. Support and guidance need to be offered for employees who are vocal on SM, to ensure the eWOM messages are aligned with the business brand message. empower employees, the employer commitment to SM is

necessary. Guesalaga, (2016) confirms that company commitment to invested in SM, as well as developed and communicated a strategy about its use are the two factors which will positively relate to the organisation's use of SM

Fourth, given the pace of change in SM platforms and the different types of eWOM, businesses need support from the sector in dealing with all types of eWOM, and especially NWOM. Many businesses had no one with whom they could consult in addressing SM difficulties, such as dealing with negative SM messages from dissatisfied customers. Awareness is needed in dealing with the response while also maintaining their business reputation. Research by Wright et al. (2016) suggests consumers' negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) reviews on SM platforms are more influential than positive reviews, based on this further support from the Industry is needed to assist businesses.

Fifth, there is a lack of knowledge amongst employers and employees on how to evaluate SM activities. Education is needed on how to monitor eWOM messages on different SM channels, how to analyse eWOM engagement and customer interaction, as well as what eWOM works best. Employers and employees need to understand how to set goals and targets for SM and that these targets need to align with the overall business goals. Noted by (Keegan and Rowley, 2017) is that companies exhibit difficulty in articulating their SM objectives, due to their lack of understanding of SM as a marketing channel.

Sixth, the courses provided in the sector need to be adapted to reflect the changing pace of SM. There needs to be more co-operation within the business community and the sector partners. Network groups need to encourage dialog amongst its members and share success stories to help businesses experiencing difficulties in using SM. The community needs to assist each other instead of working in silos and it is the industry networks which should encourage this level of engagement.

Seventh: From a business practice point of view, this study has provided clarity on the importance eWOM and the difficult employees face. This research extends the UTAUT2 theory by incorporating eWOM adoption and use as a construct for behavioural intention. The findings from this study shows how to think about eWOM differently with increase adoption and use of SM and the use of positive eWOM persuasive eWOM, neutral eWOM and negative eWOM, employees within Ireland's food and drink sector need to be trained with dealing with all types of eWOM.

8.5.3 Limitations

This research examines the adoption and use of eWOM and whether it correlates to employee brand advocacy. Limitations associated with the research are:

First, the scope of this study is limited to Ireland's agri-food and drink sector, specifically farm-to-fork businesses. Sectors omitted from this research include: meat, fish, and seafood. The main reason for their exclusion is that this study focuses on artisan food businesses because their products are hand-made and use traditional methods. The prepared food sector (i.e., 348 SMEs) represents 39% of all farm-to-fork businesses (i.e., 887 SMEs); hence, it is a noted presence in the sample population.

Second, this study does not avail of SEM analysis to assess employer perceptions on *eWOM adoption and use* and *brand advocacy*. Hence, this research does not address the reasons employers do/not develop a SM strategy and whether they do/do not motivate employees to use SM on behalf of the firm.

Third, in some businesses more than one employee is tasked with using SM. To avoid bias, one employee per SME has been asked to complete the survey. However, this research did not consider whether multiple employees adopt

and use eWOM. Hence, the assessment of employee brand advocacy is limited to one employee.

Fourth, this research concentrated on SMEs with the agri-food and drink sector and did not research larger firms. Hence, this study did not address whether there are differences/similarities between smaller and larger firms' adoption and use of SM.

Fifth, employees' level of employment (i.e., full-time/part-time) has not been evaluated. Hence, it is difficult to assess whether there is a correlation between level of employment and the adoption and use of eWOM. Hence, this study did not distinguish between employees who work full-time on SM activities and employees who are tasked with a few hours to work on SM activities.

Sixth, an employee's personal SM network has not been considered for this study. Hence, it is difficult to assess whether employees with a higher personal network correlates to higher brand advocacy.

Seventh, the quantitative analysis avails of close-ended questions, validated in other studies, which limit the options for participant response.

8.5.4 Future Research

Based on this study, ten suggestions for future research are proposed:

First, to examine the proposed new research framework, presented in Chapter Seven, which includes the constructs: *employee SM experience*, *employer motivation*, *employee brand advocacy*, and *engaging SM community*. To evaluate whether adoption differs between larger firms and smaller firms, the new framework includes *business size* as a moderator.

Second, as this research primarily focuses on the employee, it would be worthwhile to review the model from an employer perspective. This approach could evaluate the level of motivation and encouragement afforded to employees.

Third, to assess employees' size of personal SM network and whether it influences employee brand advocacy.

Fourth, to evaluate whether there is a difference between having one employee or several employees, who adopt and use work-related SM.

Fifth, to research how SM business objectives are communicated to employees and whether employers consider eWOM brand message in these objectives. Also, to identify the different types of branding messages businesses use.

Sixth, further research with PLS using FIMIX-PLS would test the sub-population, to see whether there is a difference between the different sectors in Ireland's agri-food and drink sector (i.e., bakery, beverages, confectionery, dairy, horticulture, and prepared foods). The advantages of this approach would be to detect any heterogeneity within the model.

Seventh, further research with PLS using other moderators could assess whether there is a difference with regards to age, gender, and experience.

Eighth, this research focuses solely on the use behaviour of eWOM initiative. It would be interesting to analyse the level of SM usage.

Ninth, eWOM credibility has been identified as one of the challenges for SM. It would be interesting to analyse whether it is a factor for employees when posting SM messages.

Tenth, to evaluate the different kinds of branding messages employees send across SM platforms and whether the messages are aligned to the business branding strategy.

Eleventh, further research on how increase adoption and use of eWOM and how employees can deal with positive eWOM, persuasive WOM, neutral WOM and negative WOM. How employers can support their employees who are tasked with work related eWOM.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

This research conducts a comprehensive literature review and a thorough examination on the model, Unified Theory of Adoption and Usage Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012), which has been commonly used in an organisational context. Guesalaga's (2016) Conceptual Framework on Social Media Usage in Sales discusses how individual competence in SM improves as the individual becomes proficient and familiar with SM tools. Badrinarayanan and Sierra's (2018) Front-Line Employee Brand Advocacy Conceptual Model is relevant to this study as it demonstrates that highly committed employees are more inclined to advocate for their organisation.

Based on the research question, six hypotheses have been generated, and a conceptual model presented. Three hypotheses have been accepted: *eWOM Adoption and Use, employee effort, and employer motivation*. One hypothesis has been partially accepted: *engaging SM community*, and two hypotheses have been rejected: *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*.

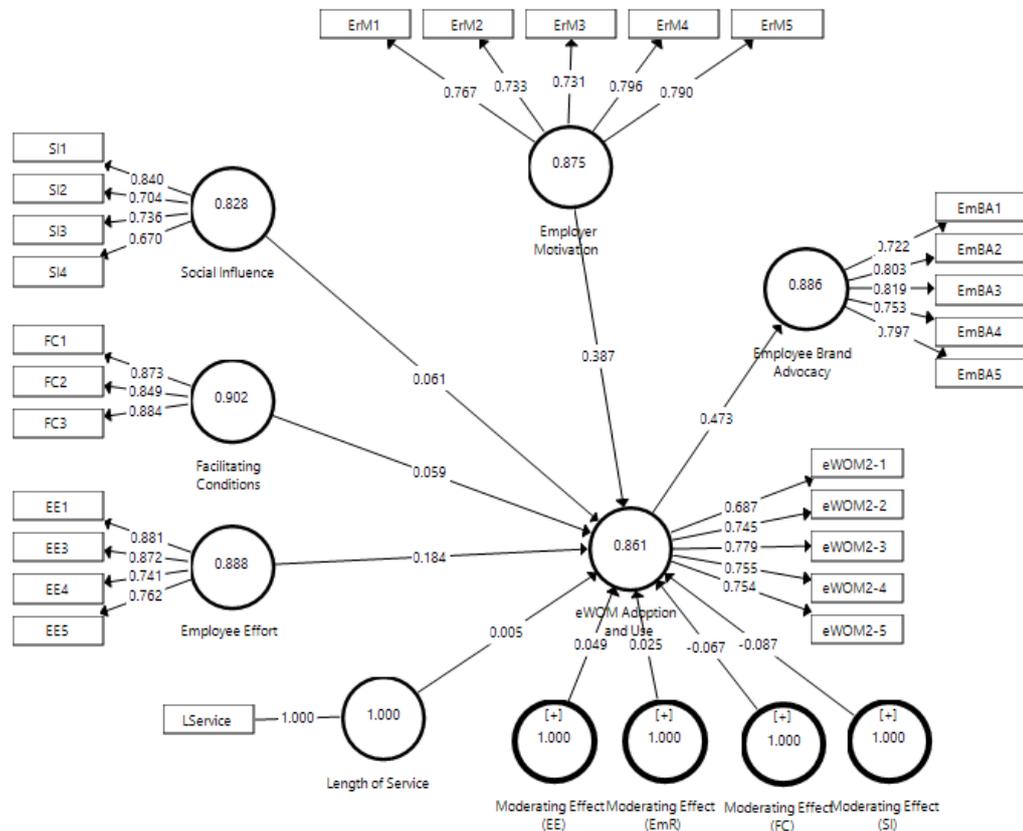
Within the scope of this research, the author has examined and compared the adoption and use of eWOM by employees in the agri-food and drink sector. Based on the research findings, an employee's intention is influenced by their level of motivation, experience, and employer motivation to use eWOM. More importantly, the constructs *social influence* and *facilitating conditions*

do not influence SM adoption and use. Reviewing the outer power of this proposed conceptual model, this research confirms the high predictive power of the two constructs *eWOM adoption and use* and *employee brand advocacy*.

Many opportunities exist for further research with this topic, which include: the new research framework proposed in Chapter Seven, the inclusion of a new moderator *business size*, evaluating whether employees' personal network correlates to their work-related SM, and assessing how SM strategy and objectives are communicated to employees.

9.0 APPENDICES

9.1 APPENDIX ONE: EMPLOYEE LENGTH OF SERVICE



Appendix Figure 9.1: Length of Service Total Effects, Composite Reliability Outer Weight Loadings

F Effects <u>Without</u> Moderator Length of Service			F Effects <u>with</u> Moderator Length of Service		
	Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use		Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use
Length of Service					0.000
Employee Effort		0.025			0.025
Employer Motivation		0.169			0.164
Facilitating Conditions		0.003			0.003
			Moderating Effect (EE)		0.002
			Moderating Effect (Emr)		0.001
			Moderating Effect (FC)		0.003
			Moderating Effect (SI)		0.008
Social Influence		0.004			0.004
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.288			0.288	

Appendix Table 9.1: F Effects With and Without Moderator Length of Service

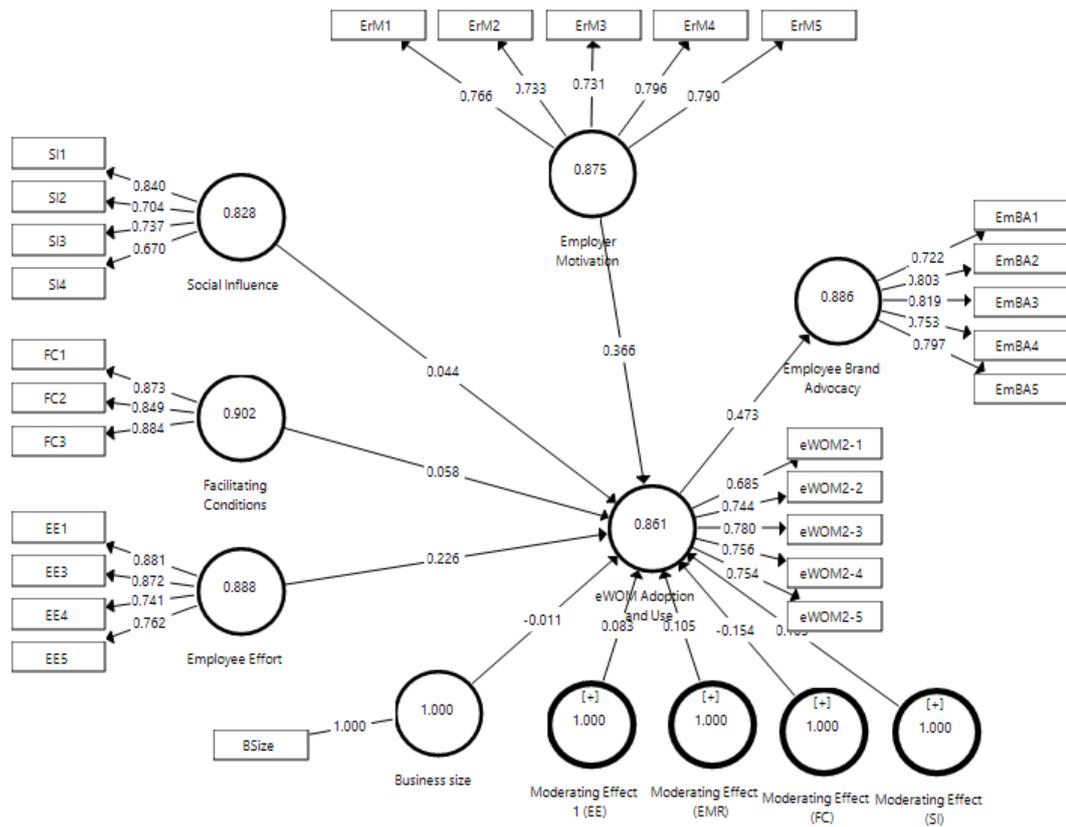
R Squared with Moderator Length of Service			R Squared Without Moderator Length of Service	
	R Square	R Square Adjusted	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.224	0.219	0.224	0.218
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.3317	0.288	0.317	0.298

Appendix Table 9.2: R Squared with Length of Service

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.184	0.192	0.090	2.044	0.041
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.387	0.381	0.087	4.467	0.000
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.059	0.064	0.104	0.567	0.571
Length of Service_ -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.005	0.003	0.074	0.074	0.941
Moderating Effect (EE)_ -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.049	0.041	0.094	0.520	0.604
Moderating Effect (EmR) -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.025	0.027	0.090	0.277	0.782
Moderating Effect (FC) -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.067	-0.066	0.108	0.622	0.534
Moderating Effect (SI) -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.087	-0.082	0.090	0.971	0.332
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.061	0.078	0.090	0.672	0.502
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.079	6.015	0.000

Appendix Table 9.3: Path Coefficients

9.2 APPENDIX TWO BUSINESS SIZE



Appendix Figure: 9.2 Path Coefficients Outer Weights Loadings, Composite Reliability with Moderator Business Size

F Effects <u>Without</u> Moderator Business Size			F Effects <u>with</u> Moderator Business Size		
	Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use		Employee Brand Advocacy	eWOM Adoption and Use
Business Size					0.000
Employee Effort		0.025			0.037
Employer Motivation		0.169			0.153
Facilitating Conditions		0.003			0.003
			Moderating Effect 1 (EMR)		0.017
			Moderating Effect 2(FC)		0.021
			Moderating Effect 3(SI)		0.011
			Moderating Effect 4 (EE)		0.005
Social Influence		0.004			0.002
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.288			0.288	

Appendix Table: 9.4 F Effects With and Without Moderator Business Size

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Business Size -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.011	-0.007	0.086	0.125	0.900
Employee Effort -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.226	0.229	0.088	2.567	0.011
Employer Motivation -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.366	0.357	0.081	4.541	0.000
Facilitating Conditions -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.058	0.061	0.097	0.602	0.547
Moderating Effect EMR -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.105	0.094	0.081	1.290	0.198
Moderating Effect FC -> eWOM Adoption and Use	-0.154	0.143	0.097	1.585	0.114
Moderating Effect SI -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.103	0.085	0.088	1.168	0.243
Moderating Effect EE -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.083	0.082	0.109	0.761	0.447
Social Influence -> eWOM Adoption and Use	0.044	0.064	0.094	0.470	0.638
eWOM Adoption and Use -> Employee Brand Advocacy	0.473	0.484	0.081	5.871	0.000

Appendix Table 9.5: Path Coefficient with Moderator Business Size

R² with Moderator added			R² without Moderator	
	R Square	R Square Adjusted	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Brand Advocacy	0.224	0.218	0.224	0.218
eWOM Adoption and Use	0.346	0.303	0.317	0.298

Appendix Table 9.11: R Squared Adjusted with Moderator Business Size

9.3 APPENDIX THREE: COMPANY DESCRIPTIONS

Agri-food Sector	Company Name	Year Established	Location	Website URL	Products	Comments
<u>Bakery</u>	Lainey Handmade Foods	2014	Kilquade, Co. Wicklow	www.laineyshandmadefoods.ie	Confectionary products: dark chocolate biscuit cake, milk chocolate biscuit cake and carrot cake flapjacks	Award-winning Dark Chocolate Biscuit Cake
<u>Bakery</u>	Gallagher's Bakery	1968	Ardara Co. Donegal	www.gallaghersbakery.ie	Loaves and bread rolls: white, wholemeal, seeded, malted and multigrain. Bakery treats: queen cakes and hot cross buns.	Owned and operated by the Gallagher family.
<u>Bakery</u>	O'Donoghues Bakery Ltd.	1989	Tullamore Co. Offaly	www.odonohuesbakery.ie	Yeast and soda bread products to the retail sector with key customers including the main multiples and independent stores.	Now in its 4th Generation, O'Donohues continue to manufacture
<u>Beverages</u>	Anchor Spirits Ireland Limited	2012	Waterford City	www.anchorspirits.ie	Three main products: Thin Gin, Muldoon Irish Whiskey Liqueur, and Spice Island Spiced Rum	Winner of the spice island rum award 2018, and the Irish Gin Medal winner 2017
<u>Beverages</u>	Wild Liqueurs	1980	Birr, Co. Offaly	www.wildfoodmary.com	Two award winning products are: Wild Damson Liqueur and Beech Leaf Liqueurs	Foraging is part of her lifestyle and she organises foraging wild food courses and trips Run by Mary Bulfin
<u>Beverages</u>	Stonewell Cider	2013	Cork	www.stonewellcider.com	Free of all artificial additives and colourings.	International multi-award-winning cider.
<u>Confectionary</u>	Lorge Chocolatier	1986	Kenmare	www.lorge.ie	Handmade and high quality chocolates for gourmet shops	Benoit, originally a native of Lorraine in France, and is a true French artisan, creating unique chocolates
<u>Confectionary</u>	Ballyshiel Toffees and Chocolates	1998	Ferbane Co. Offaly	www.ballyshiel.com	gluten-free Dulce de Leche and handmade chocolates	Karina Gaetani the owner has a south American twist on chocolate making.
<u>Dairy</u>	Cuinneog	1990	Co. Mayo	www.cuinneog.com	Irish Farmhouse Country Butter and Natural Buttermilk for the past 25 years	3 Gold Stars Great Taste Award 2015 & Top 50 Food
<u>Dairy</u>	Mossfield Organic Farm	1970	Birr Co. Offaly	www.mossfield.ie	Our bottled milk is not homogenised or standardised so you get to enjoy milk in its natural form, our natural yoghurt has no milk powders added	Awarded The Waitrose Trophy for 'Best Cheese in Specialist Cheesemakers section'.
<u>Horticulture</u>	Castlefarm Shop	2009	Athy, Co. Kildare	www.castlefarmshop.ie	Castlefarm Shop specialises in organic beef, vegetables, pork, eggs, honey, juice, and cheese	Jenny and Peter Young are the fourth generation of Young's at Castlefarm.
<u>Horticulture</u>	Beechlawn Organic Farm	2002	Ballinasloe Co. Galway	www.beechlawnfarm.org	Beechlawn grow their vegetables using only natural methods	They grow their veg using only natural methods, and source organic veg from other Irish Growers.

Appendix Table 9.12: Irish Agri-food Businesses Interviewed

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