

**Emerging Social Media Platforms for Marketing Small Businesses:
A Study of Snapchat Adoption in Edmonton, Alberta**

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EMERGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING SMALL BUSINESSES

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

To my mother, Erica,
you are a remarkable woman—a beacon in my life.

I shall admire you always.



To my family and friends,
thank you for your unwavering support.

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Abstract

Background: Small businesses are the engines of Canadian economies. As an economic leader, Edmonton sustains a highly diverse labour market. Emerging social media (SM) platforms, like Snapchat, provide many opportunities and challenges for small businesses.

Aims: The aim of this study is to examine: (a) the extent of emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses; (b) the main factors influencing SM adoption; (c) the industries most likely to embrace emerging SM; and (d) the effectiveness of Snapchat as a marketing tool.

Method: There were three focus groups of small business owners, marketing managers, and IT staff (n=19). Using a thematic analysis, transcripts were coded and developed into global themes.

Findings: In Edmonton, the food, retail, and accommodation industries are the most likely to adopt emerging SM. Other key findings include positive relationships between education; gender; SM experience; comfort with technology; firm size; resources; and the propensity to adopt SM. Conversely, age was negatively correlated to SM adoption. Surprisingly, firm size and resources, despite direct correlations to the propensity to adopt SM, did not translate into actual SM adoption. Moreover, the effectiveness of Snapchat for marketing remains unclear.

Conclusions: Edmonton small businesses show moderate enthusiasm to integrate Snapchat into their marketing toolkits. This study helps small business owners/managers to understand the potential of emerging SM for marketing. Additionally, an average SM adopter index can be developed to assist economic development programs that wish to increase adoption rates and drive the economy. Further research on how variables from this study influence each other is recommended. Comparisons to other metropolitan cities and small businesses in the public and non-profit sectors may also be beneficial.

Keywords: small businesses, emerging social media, Snapchat, social media marketing, mobile technology, diffusion of innovations

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Social media is currently undergoing a stage of growth due to improved Internet and mobile technologies. Increasingly, with limited barriers to entry, businesses are integrating social media (SM) into their marketing mix. Unfortunately, many small businesses, with less than 100 employees, lack the basic understanding of how to leverage social media to promote their brands. As a result, countless opportunities to engage customers are missed. Furthermore, as SM platforms develop, small businesses often struggle to adapt to the ongoing changes.

Extant literature has revealed that emerging SM platforms, like Snapchat, offer businesses innovative ways to reduce marketing expenses, improve brand awareness, and cultivate meaningful customer relationships. Yet, despite the benefits, small businesses have lagged behind larger organizations in adopting SM marketing (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Mackenzie, 2014; Young, 2014). Consequently, there is a significant gap in the existing literature on how small businesses can utilize emerging SM to further their marketing initiatives.

Wildly popular in the U.S. and Europe, Snapchat is gaining momentum in Canada. Therefore, it is crucial that small business owners/managers make a deliberate effort to stay abreast of the evolving ecosystems in which they operate. This research aims to (a) evaluate the extent to which small businesses in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, adopt an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) for marketing; (b) determine the general characteristics of SM adopters; and (c) evaluate the effectiveness of Snapchat as a marketing tool.

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Edmonton small businesses. Small businesses are the linchpin of the Canadian economy. In Canada, 98% of businesses are considered small with fewer than 100 employees. Moreover, small businesses contribute to 30% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), and roughly 48% of its total labour force (Industry Canada, 2013). According to the Conference Board of Canada (CBC), in 2013, Edmonton's economic output grew significantly faster than any other major Canadian city (as shown in Figure 1). In fact, the CBC has forecasted that "Edmonton will remain one of Canada's fastest growing economies for years to come" (as cited in Enterprise Edmonton, n.d., para. 2).

GDP Growth Rate, Major Canadian Cities (2013)



Note. Reprinted from GDP growth rate, major Canadian cities (2013). In *Welcome to one of Canada's top performing economies*, by Enterprise Edmonton. Retrieved from <http://enterprisedmonton.com/why-edmonton/#top>. Copyright 2016 by Edmonton Economic Development Corporation. Reprinted with permission.

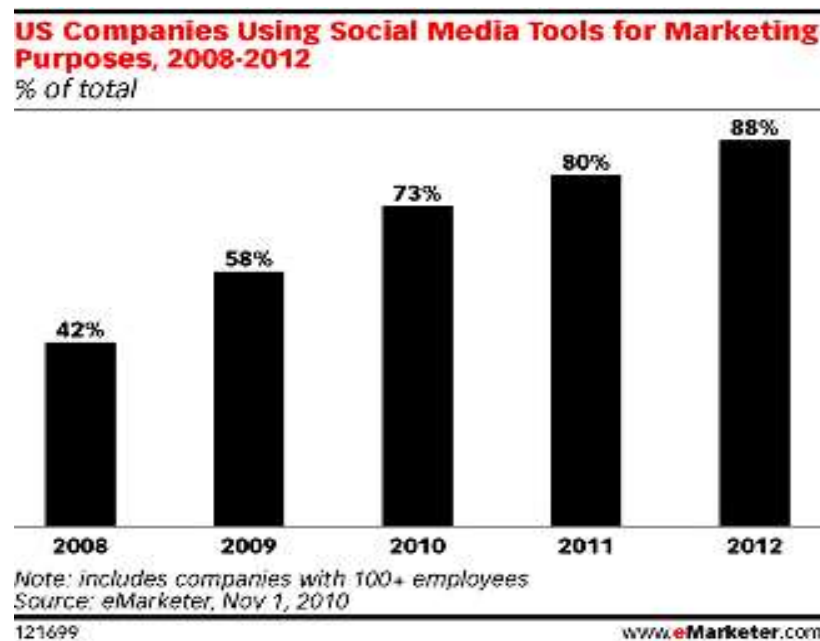
Figure 1. Graph of the GDP growth rate of major Canadian cities, 2013.

Additionally, with unique drivers like the Alberta oil sands, entrepreneurship, and the government sector, the CBC has rated Edmonton as one of the most diverse economies in Canada (as cited in Enterprise Edmonton, n.d., para. 3). Because small businesses have such a

substantial impact on Canada's economy, it is important to explore ways in which they can be strengthened and sustained in one of the most robust Canadian marketplaces—Edmonton.

Moreover, Edmonton hosts a highly diverse population; and therefore, results from this study can be extrapolated to other societies and geographic locations.

1.1.2. Social media marketing. In recent years, social media (SM) technology has become a crucial agent in driving the growth of businesses globally. Indeed, SM marketing is a steadily growing trend among businesses (Bayne & Cianfrone, 2013; Evans, 2012; Hassan, Nadzim, & Shiratuddin, 2015; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Figure 2 depicts the growing SM marketing trends among U.S. companies. Simply defined, SM marketing refers to promotional activities which occur via social media channels (such as social media networks, blogs, wikis, and online discussion groups).



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Figure 2: Bar chart showing the growth in SM marketing among U.S. companies.

1.1.3. What is Snapchat? Debuted in September 2011, Snapchat is an emerging SM application for mobile devices, developed by Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy (Hempel, Lashinsky, Jones, & Bessette, 2014). Unlike typical SM platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, that store messages; Snapchat allows users to send free, time-limited photos and videos called *snap*s to a controlled list of subscribers. Hence, Snapchat's distinguishing feature is its self-destructing capability—each snap has a set expiration time up to ten seconds.

In contrast to other applications that import Facebook or Twitter contacts, Snapchat uses the phone numbers listed on the mobile device or direct input of a person's username to add members. Snapchat users are not required to share any information among existing SM networks. Consequently, Snapchat *friends*, because they are derived from personal phone numbers and usernames, are most likely known in the real world by users. This makes Snapchat a uniquely intimate type of SM platform than found elsewhere.

Furthermore, Snapchat users do not maintain profiles; people simply take snaps (arbitrarily adding text, drawings, and captions) and send them to as many subscribers as they wish. To view a snap, recipients must devote all of their attention to the message before it disappears. This is, perhaps, the most alluring feature for marketers since it guarantees 100% of users' attention, unlike other forms of media. However, it should be noted that Snapchat also allows users to create *stories* (or a narrative of snaps) which can last for 24 hours. Additionally, Snapchat is undoubtedly a youth-oriented product with a core demographic between the ages of 13 and 25. Thus, it is no surprise that Snapchat currently boasts more than 400 million snaps daily (Hempel et al., 2014).

Besides specifying how long the message can be viewed, Snapchat provides feedback on when snaps are opened; whether a *screenshot* (or a copied image of the display screen) is taken;

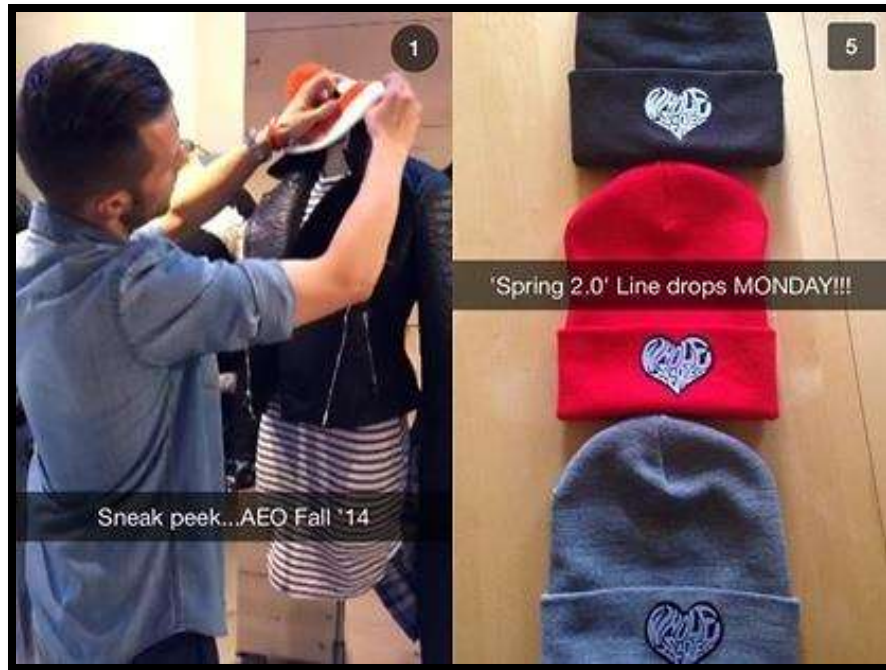
or if the recipient is available for live chat. Within the Snapchat interface, there are many embedded moments of drama and tension. For instance, was the photo or video viewed? Did anyone reply? Was there a screenshot? And, what are people's stories? These are the types of playful activities that make the application so appealing.

1.1.4. Marketing opportunities. To view a message on Snapchat, recipients must pay attention before it vanishes. In those brief moments, they are glued to their mobile devices. This is the perfect opportunity for advertisers and marketers to capitalize on. However, Snapchat's fleeting nature, lack of formal business options, and absent performance analytics have deterred many of them—but, not all. For instance: Amazon, Audi, General Electric, Heineken, Samsung, Taco Bell, and several other companies have successfully experimented with Snapchat campaigns (Figures 3 and 4 offer examples).



Note. Reprinted from How Taco Bell is exploiting Snapchat stories, by Wasserman, T. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2013/10/10/taco-bell-snapchat-stories/#TJ.CPUmskmqK>. Copyright 2005-2016 by Mashable, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 3: An example of Taco Bell's Snapchat promotions.



Note. Reprinted from Eight brands experimenting with Snapchat for social marketing, by Moth, D. Retrieved from <https://econsultancy.com/blog/66015-eight-brands-experimenting-with-snapchat-for-social-marketing/>. Copyright 2016 by Econsultancy.com Limited. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 4: American Eagle uses Snapchat to publicize its Fall clothing line.

In response to apprehensive marketers, Ross Simmonds, a digital strategist, explained that SM marketing is here to stay. He insisted that Snapchat and similar applications are valuable to marketing toolkits. Thus, Simmonds suggested that brands should leverage Snapchat to meaningfully connect to their fans. His other recommendations included creating unique and compelling, brand-specific content that drives promotions and sales; embracing Snapchat *stories* and *screenshots* so that messages last longer; and lastly, using subsequent sales and revenues to measure performance (Simmonds, 2014).

Interestingly, Snapchat's rejection of Facebook's \$3 billion buyout offer has confirmed that its social media rivals covet what it has created. Nevertheless, Snapchat must still convince advertisers and marketers that, "The benefits of reaching its youth audience outweigh the relative anonymity of that audience" (Hempel et al., 2014, p. 87). With over \$100 million in venture

capital, Snapchat has ample resources to try new ideas to generate revenue. One such possibility could involve offering premium services with upgraded features to members. But given the current speed of innovation, Snapchat must act promptly.

1.1.5. Why Snapchat? As an emerging SM network, Snapchat has certainly enjoyed a relatively rapid rise to prominence in the digital world. What began as an obscure SM platform has gone mainstream and is attracting the attention of large digital firms and investors. For this study, Snapchat was chosen as the emerging SM platform under investigation for two reasons. Firstly, as of 2015, Snapchat is the fastest growing social media network boasting over 8 billion video views daily (Morrison, 2015). What's more, Snapchat has one of the highest usage figures in Canada, where it has surpassed Facebook Messenger (Mander, 2014). Nevertheless, in spite of its immense popularity in Canadian markets, Snapchat remains underutilized by businesses for marketing.

And secondly, Snapchat's ephemeral messages demand full user attention. Unlike Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where people can scroll past content and decide later whether to heed or ignore; Snapchat creates a greater sense of urgency—requiring 100% of customer attention before the message disappears. For these reasons, Snapchat exemplifies an ideal emerging SM platform with unique and compelling marketing features for businesses.

1.2. Significance

Advancements in social media (SM) technologies represent a seismic shift in how businesses communicate and interact with their customers. Every day, enterprising Edmontonians devote their time, energy, and ingenuity into building small businesses that are integral parts of the Canadian economy. According to Hajli (2014), the benefits of using SM as a marketing tool are particularly important for small businesses with limited financial and human

resources. This research project explores these challenges, drawing on Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory to reveal how Edmonton small businesses are assimilating emerging SM platforms into their marketing schemes. Consequently, these small businesses can strategically adjust their business and marketing strategies to increase profitability, strengthen brand-consumer relationships, and succeed in a burgeoning marketplace.

The results from this study contribute to the understanding of the main factors influencing SM adoption for marketing small businesses. These findings can help business development programs, like the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) and other regional entities, to promote initiatives to increase SM implementation among small businesses.

1.3. Statement of Purpose

This study's primary research objectives are to examine the extent to which Edmonton small businesses adopt an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) for marketing, and to identify the main determinants of SM adoption.

The majority of the literature has focused on large U.S. and European corporations (Mackenzie, 2014; Young, 2014). In addition, research has shown that small businesses are less likely to embrace emerging SM than their larger counterparts (Lucchetti & Sterlacchini, 2004; Montazemi, 2006). The weakness of such literature is that small businesses have unique characteristics compared to larger firms. Thus, previous research does not necessarily apply to small businesses. This study examines Edmonton small businesses from a broad range of industry sectors. The goal is to gain insight into the main factors influencing emerging SM adoption among small businesses; describe the overall characteristics of adopters; and evaluate the effectiveness of Snapchat for corporate marketing.

1.4. Research Questions

This research project aims to address the following questions: (a) to what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging SM platforms as marketing tools; (b) what are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes; (c) what segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies; and lastly (d) how effective are emerging SM platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses?

1.5. An Inductive Approach

After conducting and transcribing three focus groups with Edmonton small business owners, marketing managers, and information technology (IT) professionals; I used an inductive thematic analysis (TA) to collect, code, and analyze the data simultaneously. Unlike using a quantitative content analysis which refers to “the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 18); a thematic analysis allowed me to determine codes, categories, and themes without having to place the data into pre-existing frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This is well-suited for investigating under-researched topics or a nascent phenomenon like Snapchat.

Data was coded manually in an iterative process involving identifying codes; establishing basic themes and sub-themes; and subsequently developing global themes. Furthermore, the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory was used to guide the literature review and later to evaluate the propensity of Edmonton small businesses to adopt emerging SM (Snapchat). The DOI theory is commonly used to help explain how, why, and at what rate do innovations (meaning new ideas and technologies) diffuse through a population.

Moreover, although data analysis and coding were inductively approached, results from this study were plotted using the DOI curve. By doing so, I could determine the extent of Snapchat adoption among Edmonton small businesses and the characteristics associated with each adopter segment.

1.6. Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research project and summarized the background; significance; purpose; research questions; and inductive approach to the study. The lack of research on social media adoption by the small business sector is the motivation behind this study. This research project addresses this gap and contributes to the existing literature. This project opens by reviewing the prevailing literature on the topic, followed by a methodology section explaining the data collection and analysis procedures. Subsequently, the findings, discussion, and conclusion segments provide an extensive report of the key findings revealed from this study.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Marketing is an essential activity that helps to determine a business' success and survival. Today, businesses have more marketing opportunities than ever due to increasing Internet and mobile technologies (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). For example, the explosion of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, has created new possibilities for businesses to communicate with their existing and potential customers (Jantsch, 2010). Indeed, social media has gradually become an effective marketing tool, particularly among larger corporations (or those with over 100 employees). Progressively, emerging social media platforms, like Snapchat, offer businesses innovative ways to promote their brands and manage customer relationships (Hassan et al., 2015).

Snapchat was introduced in 2011 as a means for young Millennials, or digital natives, to share whimsical content via free, time-limited photos and videos called “snaps”. These *snaps* or ephemeral messages afford users greater control over their digital dossier—abating fears that incriminating information could later jeopardize their reputations, job careers, or pose other lifelong repercussions (Poltash, 2013). In this sense, Snapchat is much more akin to traditional, casual conversation—organic, spontaneous, and fleeting.

According to Walter Ong (1982), a student of prolific media theorist—Marshall McLuhan, this type of electronic communication ushered us into the age of *secondary orality*. For Ong (1982), secondary orality was a phenomenon where digital communication in the virtual world affected people as though it was real, face-to-face interaction. Thus, electronic media can create closely connected communities that span distance and time. Similarly, McLuhan (1962) coined this concept as the ‘global village’.

In spite of its infancy, Snapchat is increasingly becoming popular among large, astute U.S. and European corporations (including General Electric, McDonald's, Audi, Heineken, Amazon, Taco Bell, Starbucks, and many others). These large organizations use emerging social media to develop a more natural dialogue with their customers—increasing business exposure and generating revenues (Mackenzie, 2014; Young, 2014).

Furthermore, businesses using social media continue to report measurable benefits including increased sales; improved customer relationships and satisfaction; and reduced marketing expenses (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Stelzner, 2015; Stockdale, Ahmed, & Scheepers, 2012). However, companies also experience negative implications associated with social media marketing such as a shift in accountability that may threaten the reputation of the organization; a lack of privacy and security to protect information; trademark and copyright issues; and inadequate tools to measure the returns on social media investment (Hensel & Deis, 2010; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014).

Additionally, research has shown that small businesses, with less than 100 employees, are known for their essential role in every country's economic and developmental growth (Montazemi, 2006). However, they have been slower to embrace social media as a marketing tool. Reasons attributed to this include: limited financial and human resources (Blanchard, Huiban, Musolesi & Sevestre, 2013; Hajli, 2014); technology competence (Lucchetti & Sterlacchini, 2004; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014); and management characteristics (Ghobakhloo, Sabouri, Hong, & Zulkifli, 2011; Keupp, Palmié, & Gassmann, 2012; Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 1992; Petina, Koh, & Le, 2012; Wamba & Carter, 2014).

Based on these challenges, it is vital for small business owners/managers to understand the factors that affect their ability to master social media marketing. Nevertheless, the majority of

social media research has concentrated on large organizations, focusing more on established social media fora such as Facebook and Twitter (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Hence, the value of social media for small businesses, particularly emerging social media, like Snapchat, remains unclear.

To address this gap in the current research, the aim of this review was to: (a) determine the antecedents of innovation adoption; (b) evaluate the propensity of small businesses to adopt an emerging SM platform (Snapchat); and (c) assess the ideal strategies for measuring its success. Moreover, as an emerging SM platform, research on Snapchat as a marketing tool is scarce. Thus, I specifically targeted studies that used Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory. The DOI theory is a common approach to investigating new or emerging technology adoption and diffusion by organizations. The following sections present the methodology used to search and analyze the literature; a description of the theoretical approaches to studying social media; and a discussion of the major themes and limitations of the literature.

2.1. Methodology

This literature review took the shape of a narrative, synthesizing the findings of multiple studies and analyzing the key themes within the literature. This analysis will inform a larger capstone project exploring the research questions (RQs) listed below:

RQ1: To what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools?

RQ2: What are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes?

RQ3: What segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to

incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies?

RQ4: How effective are emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses?

Ultimately, the results of this review sought to determine: (a) the key factors influencing innovation adoption; (b) the propensity of small businesses to adopt social media for marketing, using the DOI theory; and finally (c) the optimal metrics for gauging Snapchat's effectiveness as a marketing tool.

2.1.1. Search strategy. A systematic technique for sourcing literature in this area was developed to identify studies that looked at social media (SM) adoption by small businesses, with an emphasis on how they used SM for marketing. For the purpose of this research project, the literature search targeted resources from a range of disciplines such as advertising, business, communication, economics, and marketing.

To locate relevant studies, I performed searches in EBSCO; ABI/INFORM Complete; Communication and Mass Media Complete; eMarketer; CBCA Complete; and Google Scholar, with final searches completed by October 15, 2015. The search strategy used a combination of keywords and phrases; for example, Snapchat (social media OR social networking OR innovation OR technology OR information technology OR digital technology OR mobile technology) and marketing (advertising OR branding OR promotion OR communication OR mobile marketing OR Internet marketing OR digital marketing OR online advertising). The search terms were kept consistent across all databases. In addition, I examined grey literature (or materials where commercial publishing is not the primary outcome) such as books, conference proceedings, government websites, and industry reports primarily from the fields of advertising,

business, communication, economics, and marketing. There were no limitations in terms of the place, year, or discipline of the study. However, the language was restricted to English since most of the studies involved English speaking countries. As a result of this localization, the overall analysis may lack invaluable insights from studies using alternative languages. Furthermore, only full-text articles were reviewed and selected based on the criteria described below.

2.1.2. Selection criteria. Literature was included based on the following criteria: (a) studies assessing social media technology as a means of promoting corporate marketing; (b) studies investigating the willingness of business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals to implement social media marketing; (c) studies exploring the value of social media for marketing purposes; and (d) studies describing how to measure the outcomes of social media marketing. To reiterate, only the studies involving social media adoption and use for the purpose of marketing (that is, increasing brand awareness, engaging with customers, generating revenues, and boosting productivity) were considered. Moreover, studies evaluating large and small organizations were included since separate analyses of small businesses were scarce. Likewise, studies containing both the intended and the actual application of social media marketing by organizations were reviewed. Lastly, all studies that met the inclusion criteria were used, regardless of year, location, discipline and/or industry examined.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria entailed: (a) social media studies that were not available in full-text; (b) studies that were not in English; and (c) studies where marketing was not the primary focus for implementing social media; for example, to support internal operations and/or employee recruitment.

All studies were vetted for quality using an adaptation of Young and Solomon's (2009)

assessment tool. Young and Solomon (2009) outlined a number of questions to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an article. The assessment involved: (a) the relevance of the study's research question; (b) whether the study added new information to the field; (c) the appropriateness of the study's research design in relation to the research question; (d) potential sources of bias or conflicts of interest; (e) whether the data analysis was correctly performed; and (f) whether the conclusions were justified by the data (Young & Solomon, 2009). More specifically, studies were critically appraised for the validity, reliability, and credibility of the findings; methodological rigor; theoretical consistency as well as the relevance to my topic of interest. Additionally, the literature was scrutinized based on the reputation and expertise of the author. The author's reputation was determined by his/her credentials, connections to the subject, authority in the field, and the number of published and/or peer reviewed articles.

2.1.3. Results of literature search. For this review, the data gathering process was twofold and iterative. Firstly, the titles, keywords, and abstracts of studies were checked for relevance to my research questions; and secondly, the full-text articles were obtained and examined. Initially, a total of 95 references were managed using RefWorks. Subsequently, each reference was inserted into a data assessment tool, using an adaptation of Young and Solomon's (2009) work, and subjected to the aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria. After this systematic assessment and removal of duplicates, 78 articles remained. Of these 78 articles, the majority (n=49) was sourced from the EBSCO database. Twenty-six (26) references were found in ABI/INFORM Complete, and the remaining 3 articles in CBCA Complete. Overall, the literature stemmed from the business, economics, and marketing disciplines.

The resulting references were compared and contrasted, colour-coded, and developed into several themes: (a) theoretical approaches to studying social media (which justified the use of the

DOI theory); (b) factors influencing innovation adoption; (c) effects of social media usage (which helped to determine the propensity to innovate); and lastly (d) measuring social media usage.

2.2. Theoretical Approaches to Studying Social Media

In recent years, there has been significant interest in the adoption of social media by organizations. However, much of the previous research has been qualitative, focusing largely on behavioural theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model [TAM] (Harrison, Mykytyn, & Riemenschneider, 1997; Riemenschneider, Harrison, & Mykytyn, 2003; Toker et al., 2015). These behavioural frameworks analyze an individual's willingness to adopt technology based on its perceived functionality and ease of use.

Although effective at the individual level, some scholars have criticized the TPB and the TAM, arguing that these theories are inadequate for assessing organizations (Picoto, Bélanger, & Palma-dos-Reis, 2012). Alternatively, researchers like Kuang-Wei and Yan (2010), Picoto et al. (2012), and Zhu, Kraemer, Xu and Dedrick (2004) have suggested using the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) theory to explore the factors driving social media adoption and usage at the organizational level.

However, diffusion theorists, like Everett Rogers, have disagreed with the alleged ineffectiveness of behavioural approaches to evaluate organizations (Lundblad, 2003; Mustonen-Ollila & Lyytinen, 2003). Instead, Rogers, the founding father of the widely applied Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, has asserted that although organizations are more complex social systems, they are still essentially aggregates of individuals (Rogers, 1995). This notion is particularly applicable to small businesses that often comprise of individuals who assume multiple roles within a company. And thus, from this perspective, behavioural approaches are

indeed relevant to technology adoption at the organizational level.

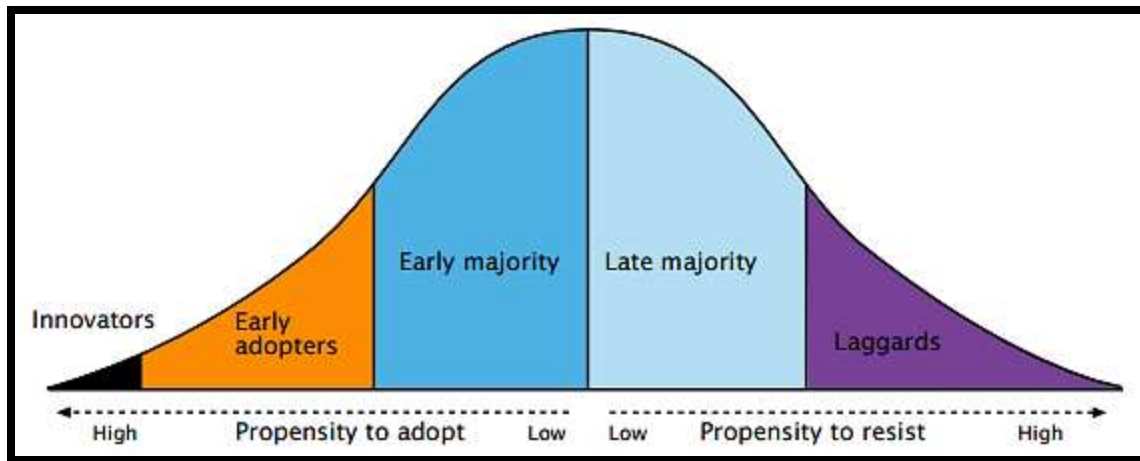
Consequently, this research project utilizes the DOI theory which is a meta-theory, encompassing several theoretical perspectives that relate to the overall concept of technology diffusion. In fact, the DOI theory (which is fundamental in disciplines such as sociology, political science, education, information technology, communication, healthcare, etc.) has borrowed some constructs of the TAM theory as well as other behavioural models. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the DOI theory is not without its limitations. There have been some concerns over the DOI theory's predictive power since discrepancies have occurred between actual and theoretical diffusion patterns (Lennstrand, 1998; Moore, 2006).

Further pitfalls of the DOI theory include: (a) the over-simplification and generalization of innovations by using distinct and measurable attributes (Hai, 1998; Rogers, 1995); (b) the disregard for the complexity of large organizations and the fact that innovations are socially constructed (Pinch & Bijker, 1987); and (c) the assumption that complex technologies diffuse in sequential stages (Lyytinen & Damsgaard, 2001). However, in spite of the criticisms, Rogers' DOI theory remains a dominant framework for much research on innovation adoption and diffusion. Hence, for small businesses with restricted resources and other challenges, the DOI theory may help to determine whether to adopt or reject emerging SM platforms for marketing.

2.2.1. Diffusion of innovations. Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory attempts to explain how, why, and at what rate do innovations (meaning new ideas, behaviours, practices, or technologies) diffuse through a society or population. In other words, the DOI theory analyzes the factors that cause innovations to spread; how innovations fulfill the needs of a group; why some technologies spread more quickly than others; and lastly, why some innovations fail altogether (Rogers, 2003).

In addition, Rogers (2003) claimed that there are five factors that influence an innovation's rate of diffusion: (a) *relative advantage* which is the degree to which an innovation supersedes its predecessor; (b) *compatibility* or the extent to which an innovation is consistent with the needs and values of its potential adopters; (c) *complexity* which refers to the perceived ease or difficulty to adopt an innovation; (d) *trialability* or the ability to test an innovation before adopting it; and (e) *observability* meaning the degree to which its results are observable or tangible. Other considerations include the communication channels used in the adoption process and the element of time (which can help to determine whether the innovation is ultimately accepted or rejected).

On another note, for diffusion researchers, populations of social systems can be categorized into five distinct segments based on their propensity to adopt an innovation. These include innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Robinson, 2009). Figure 5 illustrates these five population segments. *Innovators* (2.5%) are the technology enthusiasts. They readily understand and apply the complex technical knowledge essential for innovation adoption. Next, the *early adopters* (13.5%) are the visionaries. They tend to be well informed about an innovation and likely hold leadership positions in the social system. Thus, other members may consider early adopters as role models, seeking their subjective evaluations and approval of an innovation. Subsequently, the *early majority* (34%) is pragmatic and deliberate, usually investing more time in decision-making. Similarly, the *late majority* (34%) is conservative and analytical about an innovation and its outcomes. These members wait for most of their peers to adopt an innovation first. Lastly, *laggards* (16%) are skeptics and the strongest resisters to an innovation. They are either last to adopt or likely to become non-adopters (Rogers, 2003).



Note. Reprinted from Diffusion scholars believe any population or social network can be broken down into five segments, for any given innovation, by Robinson, L., 2009. Retrieved from http://www.enablingchange.com.au/Summary_Diffusion_Theory.pdf. Copyright Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 5. Diffusion of innovations adopter categories (Robinson, 2009, p. 4).

2.3. Factors Influencing Innovation Adoption

For this review, it was worthwhile to explore the various factors that influence innovation adoption by businesses. Previous research has suggested three main antecedents of innovation adoption: (a) technological; (b) organizational; and (c) environmental contexts (Ainin, Parveen, Moghavyemi, Jaafar, & Mohd Shuib, 2015; Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014; Ghobakhloo et al., 2011; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Wamba & Carter, 2014). Subsequently, the remaining themes, derived from the literature, discuss the effects of social media usage on organizational performance as well as the means of measuring social media marketing.

2.3.1. Technological context. Research has indicated that social media adoption by small businesses is heavily dependent on the perceived benefits of the technology (Jantsch, 2010; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). For Rogers (1995), the adoption of an innovation is directly influenced by five attributes as perceived by potential adopters. These attributes include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trialability. Many empirical studies that follow Rogers' DOI theory have generally supported these five attributes as catalysts for

innovation adoption (Bouchard, 1993; Harrison et al., 1997; Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Wang, Wang, & Yang, 2010).

Similarly, Tornatzky and Klein's (1982) meta-analysis of 75 innovation studies identified that relative advantage and compatibility were the dominant variables associated with innovation adoption. However, relative advantage was the only attribute that was consistently recognized as the leading predictor of innovation adoption (Cragg & King, 1993; Premkumar, Ramamurthy, & Nilakanta, 1994). Moreover, for Premkumar et al. (1994), a technology's perceived benefits to an organization determined the probability of its adoption. The perceived benefits such as improving a company's image, gaining a competitive advantage, and bolstering customer relationships were more influential on adoption than the actual benefits provided. Likewise, as argued by Rogers (2003), relative advantage is the "degree to which an innovation is *perceived* as being better than the idea it supersedes which has a direct impact on the likelihood of adoption" (p. 229).

Additionally, many researchers have examined the effects of compatibility on innovation adoption and have found both positive and negative results. Compatibility, as defined by Rogers (1995), refers to the extent to which a technology fits the values and needs of a potential adopter. For instance, while investigating South Africa's retail sector, Brown and Russell (2007) discovered a positive relationship between compatibility and the adoption of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology. Similarly, Wang et al.'s (2010) study surveyed 133 manufacturers in Taiwan, assessing the influence of capability on RFID adoption. Like Brown and Russel (2007), Wang et al.'s (2010) results showed a significant correlation between compatibility and innovation adoption. However, for both studies, the main limitation was restricted sampling caused by targeting specific industries, in particular countries, which made

the generalization of findings difficult.

Conversely, Ramdani, Kawalek, and Lorenzo's (2009) research on the factors influencing the adoption of enterprise systems concluded that compatibility was an insignificant factor. Likewise, Low, Chen, and Wu's (2011) study investigated 300 small and medium-sized enterprises (or SMEs) and the antecedents of adopting cloud computing. Low et al. (2011) agreed that compatibility had no significant impact. Again, a major weakness in both of these studies was the geographic and industry restrictions which made comparisons and generalizations problematic. Therefore, whether compatibility affects innovation adoption remains inconclusive.

2.3.2. Organizational context. There is a growing consensus on the organizational characteristics that influence technology adoption by small businesses. The main determinants include firm size, resources, technology competence, and management characteristics (Ghobakhloo et al., 2011; Keupp et al., 2012; Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 1992; Wamba & Carter, 2014).

2.3.2.1. Firm size. One of the key predictors of innovation adoption is an organization's size (Love, Irani, Standing, Lin, & Burn, 2005; Premkumar, 2003; Wamba & Carter, 2014). For instance, Wamba and Carter's (2014) survey involving 453 SME managers from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and India found that firm size has a significant impact on social media adoption by SMEs. However, it must be noted that SME sizes differed across regions. In the U.S. and U.K., for example, SMEs referred to businesses with less than 500 and 250 employees respectively. Conversely, Australia categorized SMEs as firms with up to 200 workers; while, in India, SMEs consisted of up to 100 staff members. Nevertheless, the key strength of the study was its sizeable sample, gathered from multiple countries. Consequently,

Wamba and Carter's (2014) results were effectively able to demonstrate patterns in innovation adoption across several countries.

Similarly, research has revealed that firm size is an essential factor in information technology (IT) adoption within the small business sector (Alpar & Reeves, 1990; Thong & Yap, 1995). Thong and Yap's (1995) survey of 166 Singaporean small businesses (representing firms with less than 200 employees) highlighted that firm size was an important determinant between adopters and non-adopters of IT. Likewise, Alpar and Reeves (1990) argued that even amongst small firms; the larger the firm, the greater its ability to hire staff with specialized skills such as those with an understanding of IT. As a result, a more specialized in-house staff helped to increase IT adoption (Alpar & Reeves, 1990). These studies have shown that larger companies within the small business sector have a greater penchant for adopting technology than smaller ones.

2.3.2.2. Resources. Typically, small businesses have been characterized by their restricted access to resources compared to their larger counterparts (Ghobakhloo et al., 2011; Keupp et al., 2012; Nieto & Fernández, 2005). Previous literature has revealed that limited financial and non-financial resources hinder small businesses from adopting innovations (Blanchard et al., 2013; Hajli, 2014; Keupp et al., 2012). For example, limited financial resources have forced small business owners and managers to be cautious about their technology investments (Ghobakhloo et al., 2011). Findings from another study by Nguyen (2009) illustrated that innovation adoption requires long term investment which only small businesses with adequate resources should undertake.

In contrast, other researchers have claimed that a lack of human resources with technical expertise is a greater concern than the financial obligations associated with innovation adoption

(Cragg & Zinatelli, 1995; Thong, 2001). However, these studies' main limitation results from evaluating SMEs that intend to adopt innovations as opposed to those that have already implemented the technologies.

2.3.2.3. *Technology competence.* Small businesses that lack experience with technology are less likely to take the risk of adopting an innovation (Lucchetti & Sterlacchini, 2004; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Lucchetti and Sterlacchini's (2004) work suggested that existing technologies in an organization influence the likelihood of future adoption. Similarly, other studies have shown that SMEs suffering from an internal staff without prior technical expertise will likely impede the process of innovation adoption (Chau, 1995; Fink, 1998; Petina et al., 2012). Thus, technology competence is crucial to influencing innovation adoption, especially in small businesses with restricted resources to allocate toward employee training.

On the other hand, some research has argued that a lack of technical skills is not an insurmountable barrier to technology adoption. Instead, small businesses can gain potential resources from networking (Fletcher, 2002; Nguyen, 2009; Tourigny & Le, 2004). Consequently, networking is a critical way for small businesses to acquire access to external resources and knowledge necessary for successful innovation adoption and implementation (Nguyen, 2009).

2.3.2.4. *Manager characteristics.* Small business managers are effective predictors of innovation adoption. Research has shown that small business managers handle many corporate functions like finance, marketing, and day-to-day decision-making. As a result, they are likely able to articulate and reinforce the organization's values, vision, and overall outlook toward change (Dahnil et al., 2014).

Likewise, other studies have posited that, in the context of small businesses, managers positively influence innovation adoption by creating a supportive environment (Bruque &

Moyano, 2007; Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 1992; Tarafdar & Vaidya, 2006). Therefore, small businesses that have adopted innovations (or have expressed their intentions to adopt) are very likely to be spearheaded by managers who are well informed about emerging technologies and possess positive attitudes toward innovation adoption (Thong & Yap, 1995).

2.3.3. Environmental context. Prior research has identified that environmental characteristics positively influence a firm's decision to adopt and use an innovation. Generally, the two main environmental factors include (a) the industry sector, and (b) the competitive landscape (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Firstly, studies have recognized a link between a firm's industry sector and its adoption and use of technology. For instance, Oliveira and Martins' (2010) research investigated the adoption of e-business technology by European firms. Their findings disclosed that (a) the innovation was more important to the manufacturing industry than the tourism sector, and (b) e-business adoption was highly dependent on the type of industry and its specific characteristics as opposed to the country to which the firm belonged.

In stark contrast, a recent study conducted by Wamba and Carter (2014) emphasized that there is a substantial relationship between social media adoption and an organization's geographic location. However, a major flaw in Wamba and Carter's (2014) study was the limited sample and narrow focus on a specific social media—Twitter. This restricted the researchers' ability to generalize findings. Nevertheless, while the type of industry is an antecedent of a firm's adoption of an innovation, the significance of geographic location remains uncertain.

Secondly, other research has identified that competitive pressure is an important determinant of innovation adoption. This is due in part to the proliferation of Internet and mobile technologies that have increased globalization, creating a new competitive environment

(Damanpour & Schneider 2006; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Zhu et al., 2004). Furthermore, this new landscape, according to Askool and Nakata (2011), has helped more small businesses to adopt innovations—leveraging new technologies to outperform their rivals and achieve a competitive advantage. Consequently, in a highly competitive market, businesses are generally more motivated to adopt advanced technologies and emerging social media.

2.4. Effects of Social Media Usage

2.4.1. User-generated content. Social media adoption by businesses has shifted the dynamics of traditional marketing. More specifically, consumers are no longer the passive recipients of marketing messages; instead, they actively initiate and co-create the exchange. Thus, social media adoption has resulted in user-generated content (UGC) where consumers take marketing into their own hands, communicating their opinions, and shaping the products and services that they receive (Fader & Winer, 2012). For Fader and Winer (2012), UGC has made today's consumers more like co-marketers. Therefore, modern consumers embrace social media as a means to interact with brands and participate in word-of-mouth marketing.

Similarly, Eagleman (2013) explained that social media adoption offers businesses a unique opportunity to collaborate with customers, and by extension more accurately forecast their purchasing behaviours. However, Eagleman's (2013) research was centred on the sports industry which restricted the ability to generalize the results.

2.4.2. Social media and organizational performance. Organizational performance, for the purpose of this review, refers to the actual financial and non-financial benefits received by organizations from using social media marketing. Generally, previous research has explored the organizational usage of social media like Facebook and Twitter. However, only a handful of studies have examined the impact of social media marketing on organizational performance. For

example, Rodriguez, Ajjan, and Peterson (2014) demonstrated that social media technologies positively impact an organization's sales performance. Likewise, Schaupp and Bélanger (2014) found that:

Engaging in social media efforts can help generate exposure and increase traffic for a small business at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing approaches. The main financial cost of social media marketing is the time it takes to realize the benefits of the effort put forth. However, overall marketing costs can potentially be reduced or eliminated by using social media. (p. 188)

Furthermore, there are many other non-financial advantages of social media marketing. For instance, Stelzner (2015) surveyed over 3,700 marketing managers on the use of social media marketing to promote their businesses. Results indicated that the majority of respondents (92%) agreed that social media technologies are important for their businesses, especially in regards to promoting brand awareness, attracting new customers, and building loyalty. Moreover, Stelzner's (2015) enormous sample size, spanning multiple industries and countries, can be widely applied as a result.

Similarly, other research has demonstrated that social media usage by organizations has a positive effect on enhancing human capital, increasing sales revenues, improving customer relationships and satisfaction; and reducing marketing expenses (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Hassan et al., 2015; Kwok & Yu, 2013; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Picoto et al., 2012; Stockdale et al., 2012). Therefore, when organizations adopt and use social media, they are likely to achieve positive impacts on both their financial and non-financial organizational performance.

2.5. Measuring Social Media Usage

Social media is becoming a ubiquitous and integral part of the marketing mix. For Sterne (2010), what customers are saying about a brand online is more important than its advertising activities and bottom line figures. Social media marketing enables businesses to skillfully craft public sentiment by converting prosaic marketing messages into insightful brand-customer conversations. Additionally, Stockdale et al. (2012) explained that although measuring the value of social media efforts is challenging, even for large organizations, it is necessary. There is also a common misconception that social media marketing is free; however, to be properly undertaken as a marketing tool, companies must invest the required time, commitment, and resources. This may be easier for large organizations to achieve, but very daunting for small businesses that have an acute dilemma in providing these requirements (Blanchard, 2011; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Nevertheless, a growing consensus in the research has revealed that while the costs of social media marketing are fairly easy to identify, it is not necessarily true for the less tangible benefits (Melville, Kraemer, & Gurbaxani, 2004; Romero, 2011; Stockdale et al., 2012). Therefore, businesses must evaluate their social media outcomes beyond mere quantitative metrics which typically involve the number of online visitors, views, and/or sales. These quantitative measures do not automatically translate into value. Instead, business managers should incorporate qualitative assessments such as behavioural changes in customers; improvements in user experience; customer satisfaction; brand perception; and product quality (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011; Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014).

Conversely, some researchers have continued to emphasize the benefits of quantitative metrics for calculating the return on investment (ROI) of social media usage. They have asserted that the ROI provides the most effective way for organizations to attain evidence of value in both

the short and long term (Blanchard, 2011; Geho, Smith, & Lewis, 2010; Prananto, McKay, & Marshall, 2003). According to Blanchard (2011), regardless of a company's preferred assessment method, the key to measuring success is aligning social media communications with broader business goals so that the ROI and overall progress can be calculated. However, there is no silver bullet or magic formula for companies to evaluate the success of their social media efforts. Key performance indicators (KPIs) differ by organization and are linked to specific business objectives and individual preferences.

2.6. Summary of Literature

In sum, social media marketing is changing the way in which businesses communicate, promote their brands, maintain relationships, and boost their performance. The majority of the literature on social media adoption and use has concentrated on large organizations with established social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Consequently, the value of social media marketing for small businesses, particularly emerging social media, like Snapchat, is uncertain.

To address this gap, this review presented eight key findings: (a) social media adoption is heavily dependent on the perceived benefits of an innovation; (b) based on the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, relative advantage is a leading predictor of technology adoption; (c) an organization's size directly influences its propensity to innovate; (d) limited resources and low technology competence hinder a firm's ability and willingness to adopt an innovation; (e) managers positively influence innovation adoption by creating a supportive environment and reinforcing company values; (f) the type of industry and the vitality of the competitive landscape significantly impact innovation adoption; (g) social media technologies directly influence an organization's performance; and lastly (h) there is no optimal strategy to evaluate the success of social media efforts—key performance indicators (KPIs) depend on individual business

objectives.

Based on the above findings, this review provided a theoretical context for examining the adoption of emerging SM platforms, like Snapchat, as marketing tools for small businesses. Assuming that the future is predicated on the past, like its predecessors (Facebook and Twitter), there is no obvious reason why small businesses cannot adopt and integrate Snapchat into their marketing strategies. More specifically, despite the challenges faced by small businesses, there is no indication that Snapchat will be unable to diffuse amongst small businesses to become a viable marketing tool—especially with adequate understanding, training, and planning in a robust economy like Edmonton, Alberta.

Grounded on the DOI theory, another goal of this review was to determine the propensity of small businesses to adopt social media marketing. However, due to the comparatively limited references on social media adoption by small businesses, it can be deduced that small businesses currently dwell within the late majority and laggard categories.

2.7. Conclusion and Limitations

Despite the benefits of reducing marketing expenses, improving brand awareness, and cultivating customer relationships; small businesses have been lagging behind larger organizations in adopting social media marketing. As a result, there is a significant gap in the existing literature on how small businesses can leverage emerging social media (Snapchat) to further their marketing schemes.

Another major drawback is the absence of research involving Canadian cities like Edmonton. Indeed, a primary weakness of the literature occurred when findings could not be easily generalized due to geographic and industry-specific restrictions. Furthermore, this review uncovered that the definition of social media marketing was inconsistent throughout the various

resources.

In addition, the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, although applicable to exploring new or emerging innovations, was largely criticized for its disregard for the complexity of organizations and its assumption that innovations diffuse in a sequential manner.

Nonetheless, further research is required to compare which of the eight key variables are most influential and how they impact on one another. These findings can help small business owners/managers to more accurately grasp the antecedents of social media marketing as well as the best avenues in which to allocate their limited resources. This is important to provide new insights in an area of the communications field that is becoming increasingly ubiquitous.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

A review of the literature has revealed that small businesses, despite their influence on every country's economy, do not leverage social media marketing like their larger counterparts (Lucchetti & Sterlacchini, 2004; Montazemi, 2006). Generally, the research has focused on large U.S. and European organizations that market their brands on Facebook and Twitter. Consequently, there has been little regard to the impact of social media marketing on small businesses in other countries.

In Edmonton, small businesses are the engines of the economy. Indeed, Edmonton has been dubbed one of the fastest growing Canadian economies, with a highly diverse labour market (Enterprise Edmonton, n.d.; Industry Canada, 2013). Thus, using Edmonton as a prime example of a technologically advanced and thriving economy, teeming with small businesses (Industry Canada, 2013); the purpose of this study is to explore the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools?

RQ2: What are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes?

RQ3: What segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies?

RQ4: How effective are emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses?

This chapter discusses in greater detail the research design involving three focus groups of six to eight small business owners, marketing managers, and IT personnel. These participants, residing in Edmonton, have either adopted Snapchat to market their small businesses or intend to do so in the future. Moreover, focus groups, combined with a thematic analysis of the data, are useful to examine under-researched topics. The remainder of the chapter explains the participant recruitment; selection criteria; research instruments; procedures; data analysis; reliability and validity considerations; and limitations. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

3.1. Research Design

To examine the research questions, I used three focus groups or “small group discussion[s] dedicated to a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher” (Tonkiss, 2004, p. 194). Generally, multiple focus groups are recommended to offset atypical occurrences that may develop when using a single focus group. These irregularities may include abnormal member composition, interaction, or contribution (Krueger, 1994; Saldana, 2009; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Moreover, multiple focus groups helped to identify the point of ‘saturation’ where no new insights relevant to the topic were provided (Krueger, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Thus, by conducting three focus groups, the widest range of data input was likely obtained.

Each focus group comprised of six to eight small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals in Edmonton. I selected the participants based on inclusion and exclusion criteria which are discussed in the next section. The size of these focus groups was appropriate since research has shown that groups between six and nine members run more smoothly than those consisting of ten or more. In larger groups, the discussion may lack substance and participants have a tendency to rely on others to speak (Cronin, 2008; Peek & Fothergill, 2009).

Furthermore, due to the exploratory nature of my research, focus groups enabled me to draw upon the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences in a way that other data gathering strategies, such as face-to-face interviews or questionnaire surveys, could not. In fact, focus groups often enhance and enrich discussions due to the interaction of participants who may not have disclosed certain details independently (Morgan, 1997; Peek & Fothergill, 2009). Unlike separate interviews, aimed at unearthing individual attitudes and opinions, focus groups elicit a diversity of views within a group setting.

Focus groups also differ from group interviews by emphasizing the interactions among the participants as opposed to between the researcher and the participants. Moreover, focus groups are especially valuable for investigating the level of consensus on a particular subject (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993).

3.2. Participants

I attempted to recruit six to eight participants for each of the three focus groups, using a snowball sampling technique as well as several selection variables. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method where researchers ask an initial person to identify or nominate other candidates. The researcher then evaluates the recommended subjects and the process continues until obtaining a sufficient number of participants.

The leading advantage of snowball sampling is its usefulness in locating subjects in rare or limited populations as in the case of Snapchat. However, a major drawback is that subjects are nominated by people that they tend to know well and most likely share similar characteristics. Thus, there is a high probability that the sample will represent only a small subset of the total population (Creswell, 2007; Noy, 2008).

Nevertheless, the basic inclusion criteria for each focus group are described below, followed by the exclusion criteria. Also worth noting is that participants were designated to specific groups defined as ‘Class 1’, ‘Class 2’, and ‘Class 3’ based on the number of employees, i.e. the firm size of their respective businesses. Prior research has demonstrated, as mentioned in the literature review, that firm size also affects small businesses and their likelihood of adopting technology (Love et al., 2005; Premkumar, 2003; Thong & Yap, 1995; Wamba & Carter, 2014). Therefore, it is likely that variations in firm size within the small business sector may also impact the results of this research project—especially regarding **RQ2: What are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes?**

Furthermore, studies have indicated that the type of industry in which a business operates influences its adoption of innovations (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Oliveira & Martins, 2010); thus, a broad range of industry sectors was exemplified in each focus group. This will assist in tackling **RQ3: What segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies?**

3.2.1. Inclusion criteria. The focus groups were divided into three subcategories (Classes 1, 2, and 3) based on the number of employees in each small business. The inclusion criteria for each group are described below.

3.2.1.1. Focus group 1: Class 1. The inclusion criteria for the first group included: (a) small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals, located in Edmonton, who have either adopted Snapchat for marketing purposes or have intentions to do so in the future; (b) a firm size between 1 and 24 employees; (c) participants representing a broad range of industry sectors; and (d) participants that were English speaking.

3.2.1.2. Focus group 2: Class 2. The second focus group was organized using: a) small business owners, marketing managers, and IT staff, within Edmonton, who have adopted Snapchat to market their brands, products, and services or are contemplating doing so; (b) small businesses that employed between 25 and 49 workers; (c) participants embodying a wide range of industries; and (d) group members that were English speaking.

3.2.1.3. Focus group 3: Class 3. The characteristics of the third and final group involved: a) small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals, situated in Edmonton, who have adopted Snapchat as a marketing tool or intend to do so; (b) small businesses with 50 to 99 employees; (c) participants representing a wide variety of industries; and (d) members that understand and communicate in English.

3.2.1.4. Other inclusion considerations. All participants that met these basic inclusion criteria were considered regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, or background whether cultural, economic, political, or religious. Lastly, the reason for selecting small business owners, marketing managers, and IT staff (who have already adopted Snapchat or are willing to) is that these individuals tend to be the main enablers of innovation adoption, especially in small businesses with limited resources. They typically embody the values of a firm, serve as role models, and/or play supportive roles that positively influence technology adoption and diffusion (Bruque & Moyano, 2007; Dahnil et al., 2014; Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 1992; Tarafdar & Vaidya, 2006).

3.2.2. Exclusion criteria. This study's exclusion criteria comprised of six variables: (a) businesses with 100 or more employees; (b) small businesses with less than 100 workers, but affiliated with medium or large corporations (e.g., a Subway restaurant franchise); (c) businesses located outside of Edmonton; (d) job positions outside of small business owners, marketing

managers, and IT staff; (e) those using Snapchat for reasons other than marketing; and finally (f) non-English speaking individuals.

3.3. Site and Recruitment

Firstly, prior to commencing recruitment, I received approval for the study from the University of Alberta's Ethics Board. Later, I gained permission to host the focus groups in a quiet room at the University of Alberta's downtown campus in Edmonton, Alberta. The focus groups were conducted during the winter of 2016. The campus location was conducive to the focus groups because (a) it was a convenient distance for most of the participants, and (b) it offered a quiet venue with semi-circular seating which facilitated easy recording of the sessions.

Initially, I conducted an Internet search for small businesses in Edmonton and also contacted the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) for a list of potential participants that met the selection criteria. Then, I contacted participants via telephone and/or e-mail to establish a rapport, explain the purpose of the study, discuss the selection criteria, and exchange contact information. Each eligible participant was then asked to recruit others using a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is an effective, multistage process that involves identifying key individuals of interest who can themselves recruit other eligible candidates for the study (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, snowball sampling was an appropriate recruitment method that granted me access to a population that I may not have been able to sample due to low numbers associated with the nascent Snapchat phenomenon.

As participants began contacting me, I provided them with an information sheet (see Appendix A) that explained the study and its procedures. I also assured them that their identities and responses would be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms in the final report. Additionally, all e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and other personal identifiers were promptly

deleted as soon as the focus groups were completed. Furthermore, the participants were informed of their freedom to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If they agreed to participate, I e-mailed the participants a copy of the consent form and thanked them for their participation. The e-mail also reminded them of the research topic, the particulars of their individual focus group session (date, time, and location), and that light refreshments would be served.

Lastly, I attempted to over-recruit by two or three people to mitigate cancellations or no-shows and followed-up with participants the day before each focus group was scheduled. Each group session varied between 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the discussion.

3.4. Research Instruments

This study incorporated two data collection techniques: (a) a structured questionnaire to obtain participant demographics (Appendix D), and (b) a focus group guide with a semi-structured interview (Appendix E). Two primary reasons for collecting demographic data were: (a) participant demographics partially informed the findings for RQ1 and RQ2, and (b) demographic data helped to describe the sample so that readers could account for similarities and differences across focus groups. Both instruments were pre-tested to ensure that the wordings were suitable and easily understood by participants.

3.4.1. Pretest. There were two face-to-face rounds to pretest the demographics questionnaire and the semi-structured interview consisting of ten people (or 5 testers per round). These ten people represented the target population of small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals. They were randomly chosen based on the over-recruitment of participants during the recruitment process.

For the first pretest round, 5 testers were invited to the University of Alberta's campus in downtown Edmonton at a mutually agreed upon date and time. Testers were given the demographics questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions. They were asked to comment on any ambiguity in the phrasings or meanings of questions, the appropriateness regarding the length of questions as well as provide any other comments. After collecting feedback from the first 5 testers, I revised the demographics questionnaire and the interview questions, as necessary, based on their comments. Once all of the changes were incorporated, I repeated the pretest with the remaining 5 testers.

3.4.2. Resulting research instruments. Firstly, a structured questionnaire (demographics sheet), containing 10 questions, was administered to the respondents. Structured questionnaires are characterized by only using closed-ended questions. They are rigid—presenting lists of options for participants to select from, for example, yes/no questions or multiple choice. Therefore, responses are limited to those provided on the questionnaire with no opportunity for respondents to clarify their answers. Nonetheless, the main benefits of structured questionnaires include (a) the relatively quick and easy way to code and interpret responses, and (b) the ease of standardizing responses since every participant is asked the same question in the same way (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000).

Likewise, the structured questionnaire used in this research project provided a reliable way of obtaining, coding, and interpreting the sample population's demographics. These features (such as gender, age, and education) may have played a role in a respondent's decision (or intention) to adopt Snapchat for marketing purposes. Figure 6 illustrates an excerpt from the structured participant questionnaire given to all three focus groups. The full version is available in Appendix D.

Education
Highest level of education completed

- ☐ No schooling completed
- ☐ Nursery school to 8th grade
- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- ☐ Some college credit, no degree
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

Figure 6. An excerpt from the structured participant questionnaire.

Secondly, the primary research instrument was a focus group guide containing a semi-structured interview. Unlike structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews combine pre-determined, open-ended questions with the opportunity for the moderator to explore specific themes as well as participant responses (Galletta, 2012). Therefore, semi-structured interviews increase the substance and validity of findings by allowing participants to elaborate on their beliefs, experiences, and opinions. Nevertheless, an inexperienced interviewer can be a drawback of semi-structured interviews since he/she may not be able to probe into situations, ask for explanations, or query reasons behind responses (Kajornboon, 2005).

Furthermore, to address the research questions, I designed the semi-structured interview around three broad themes: (a) barriers affecting small businesses from adopting Snapchat for marketing purposes; (b) enablers of Snapchat adoption for marketing small businesses; and (c) the effectiveness of Snapchat as a marketing tool. These themes were developed using Rogers' (1995) Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory that listed five main determinants of innovation adoption: (a) relative advantage; (b) compatibility; (c) complexity; (d) trialability; and (e)

observability. Thus, to answer RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, the first two themes were designed to assess the barriers and enablers to adopting an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) by small businesses. Moreover, participant responses to these two themes helped to determine which of Rogers' five attributes would be most influential on Snapchat adoption.

Additionally, in response to RQ4, the third theme was introduced to evaluate the effectiveness of emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for small businesses. Extant literature has revealed ambiguity surrounding how businesses measure the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of their social media marketing efforts (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011; Culnan et al., 2010; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Figure 7 shows a segment of the semi-structured interview. The complete focus group guide is included in Appendix E. Subsequently, the following sections explain the procedures used to collect, code, and analyze the participant feedback from these research instruments.

1. BARRIERS AFFECTING SNAPCHAT ADOPTION BY SMALL BUSINESSES
Q1.1 What are the most important factors that prevent a small business from adopting Snapchat for marketing? Prompt: Resources, Snapchat familiarity, fear of the learning curve/ fear of risk-taking, support from management, not enough evidence that Snapchat works because it is new, etc.

Figure 7. A segment of the semi-structured interview in the focus group guide.

3.5. Procedure

Each focus group began with an introductory procedure that included having the participants sign a consent form (Appendix B), complete a demographics questionnaire (Appendix D), and review a definitions sheet for the study (Appendix C). I reminded the participants about the digital audio recorders and that their responses would be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. I also explained that there were no right or wrong answers and requested that

they allowed others to finish speaking before interjecting. This would aid the recording, note-taking, and transcription phases.

I began the discussion with the focus group guide including a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, probes, and prompts (Appendix C). These questions were intended to provide structure to the focus group without rigidly dictating its flow. I also included prompts, encouraging participants to expand on their original answers and followed-up on concepts raised by the participants themselves.

Each focus group lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and continued to the point of ‘saturation’ or until new insights had been exhausted (Kreuger, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Lastly, to conclude each discussion, I provided a summary of the main points and offered the participants the opportunity to clarify and confirm them. This technique helps to ensure the appropriate interpretation of responses and the accuracy of the data summary (Morgan, 1993).

3.6. Data Analysis

After transcribing the responses and reviewing the field notes, I used qualitative content analysis to simultaneously collect, code, and analyze the data so that they mutually shaped each other. This inductive approach is called a thematic analysis (TA) which consists of six stages: (a) transcribing, reading, and re-reading data; (b) creating initial codes; (c) collating the codes and identifying themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) naming and defining themes; and lastly (f) finalizing themes and producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Indeed, one of the main advantages of TA is that codes, categories, and themes emerge without having to place the data into pre-existing frameworks or theoretical contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This is well-suited for investigating under-researched topics or emerging phenomenon like Snapchat. Nevertheless, like other forms of qualitative analysis,

TA is usually very time-consuming, requiring intensive reading and re-reading of the participant responses and other materials.

3.6.1. Coding process. I coded the data manually in an iterative process of analyzing, altering, and reflecting on the ideas as they emerged. I followed Attride-Stirling's (2001) recommendations for creating valid codes and themes by (a) identifying codes; (b) separating the text into segments; (c) having a second coder review the codes for consistency and validity; (e) establishing basic themes and sub-themes; and lastly (f) refining and arranging themes into global ones. This coding process was repeated after each focus group to analyze the transcripts individually as well as collectively to discern patterns. Consequently, I was able to construct several global themes—assigning them names, descriptions, and supporting examples. The thematic map for this study is included in Appendix F.

3.6.2. Reliability and validity considerations. Reliability and validity are two vital components that determine the trustworthiness of research studies. Reliability refers to the likelihood of yielding the same results when the research method is reproduced (Selltiz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976). To improve this study's reliability, I transparently presented the data collection and analysis methods so that the procedures could be repeated.

Furthermore, an important aspect of a thematic analysis (TA) involves a researcher's ability to observe and accurately interpret themes from large amounts of data. However, due to the broad range of interpretations that can occur, there are often reliability concerns associated with this method. Thus, to increase the reliability when using a TA approach, I considered the ideas of Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) to adopt an iterative process—systematically moving between the design and implementation stages to ensure congruence among the various components of the research project.

Conversely, validity refers to the extent to which research findings are actually representative of the data. Thus, at the end of each focus group, I summarized the main points and asked participants for confirmation that I had appropriately interpreted their contributions (Denzin, 1970; Morgan, 1993). Moreover, validity concerns the degree to which research findings can be generalized to other contexts (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). By recruiting a sample that was representative of the total population of Edmonton small businesses, generalizations can more readily be applied.

Similarly, to improve the validity of a thematic analysis and its subsequent findings, Miles and Huberman (1994) have recommended using multiple analysts to code and develop themes. As a result, I solicited the services of an independent reviewer to evaluate the codes and test the compatibility of the themes throughout the transcripts. This guaranteed that the appropriate themes were used to adequately address the research questions.

3.7. Limitations

There were limitations to this study. A drawback was caused by using snowball sampling—I had no real control over the recruitment process. A lack of recruitment control was not necessarily negative. However, if the process was too heavily reliant on the initial candidate's ability to identify and select other participants; this may have led to a *sampling bias*. A sampling bias occurs when participants are not representative of the overall target population (Morgan, 1997). Consequently, the generalization of findings may have been difficult or impossible to make—jeopardizing the validity of the results.

Additionally, despite the flexibility of a thematic analysis, the method has been strongly criticized for oversimplifying the complexities of interpretation and sense-making (Liamputtong, 2013). As a result, there is often ambiguity surrounding the relationships between two or more

themes and how they influence each other. Again, this affects the validity of the research.

3.8. Summary of Methodology

For the purpose of this study, there were three focus group sessions conducted with Edmonton small businesses. Two research instruments in the format of a structured demographics questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were the main data collection sources.

Furthermore, data was analyzed inductively using a thematic analysis (TA) which is well-suited to nascent phenomenon like Snapchat. After coding, different themes were identified for each focus group. In an iterative process, these themes were checked for similarities and differences across all three groups—developing global or universal themes.

Overall, the results provided insight into the extent of emerging SM adoption by small businesses in Edmonton. The research findings also highlighted the opportunities and challenges facing small businesses considering emerging SM platforms for marketing. Thus, these findings can help small business owners/managers to make more informed decisions regarding SM marketing. Additionally, business development programs, like the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC), can apply these results to initiatives geared toward increasing SM adoption by small businesses.

Small businesses affect the buoyancy of global economies. It is important that they not only survive, but thrive. Often, however, small businesses are plagued by resource constraints. As a result, small business owners/managers must leverage the marketing opportunities offered through social media. This study explained, in part, the main factors influencing emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses. These insights may be applied to small businesses in other regions that share common characteristics with Edmonton. The next chapter interprets and reports the findings of this study.

Chapter 4.

Findings

Businesses of various sizes use social media to bolster their marketing schemes. The majority of research, however, focuses on the social media practices of large organizations, with little emphasis on small businesses (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014).

Nevertheless, small businesses are the vital linchpin of most economies—contributing to employment, income, and quality of life. With the explosion of social media networks and mobile applications, it is important to examine how small businesses can leverage emerging social media platforms for marketing.

Using Edmonton for its diverse labour market and steady economic growth (Enterprise Edmonton, n.d., para. 3); this study strives to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1:** To what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools?
- RQ2:** What are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes?
- RQ3:** What segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies?
- RQ4:** How effective are emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses?

Altogether, there were three semi-structured focus group interviews containing 19 Edmonton small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals. These participants represented

small businesses from a broad range of industries that have either adopted, or intend to adopt, an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing.

The groups were separated into three categories depending on the firm size of their respective businesses (Class 1: 1-24 employees; Class 2: 25-49 employees; and Class 3: 50-99 employees). Along with the interviews, participants also completed a demographics sheet (Appendix D) which allowed the researcher to compare and contrast additional factors related to the research questions. For instance, transcript and demographic data confirmed a correlation between manager characteristics and social media adoption.

This chapter highlights (a) the analysis procedure; (b) the steps that were taken to address reliability and validity concerns; and (c) the presentation of data which provides a detailed description of the research findings. These findings can help us to understand the adoption patterns and challenges confronting small businesses that are considering emerging social media platforms for marketing.

4.1. Procedure: Thematic Analysis

As discussed in the methodology section (on p. 43 of this report), the thematic analysis involved an iterative coding process in which I thoroughly read and re-read each of the three focus group transcripts, underlining salient responses to the research questions. By identifying codes and separating the text into segments, I carefully developed basic themes with brief descriptions based on the commonalities that arose from participant responses. Each time I observed content suitable to a particular theme, I highlighted the text and selected pertinent quotes. Thereafter, I reviewed and scrutinized the transcripts several times to capture any themes that I may have missed. The basic themes and theme descriptions were adapted and arranged accordingly.

Subsequently, a second coder vetted the themes for consistency and offered recommendations. Taking these suggestions into account, I revisited and revised the basic themes to more accurately portray the patterns across groups. Finally, once verified with the second coder, I constructed three global themes as well as sub-themes and supporting examples. These major themes and sub-themes are discussed later in this chapter and illustrated in a thematic map in Appendix F.

4.2. Issues with Reliability and Validity

To be trustworthy, it is important for research to be reliable and valid. As previously explained, reliability refers to the ability to consistently yield the same results when the research method is repeated (Selltiz et al., 1976). Thus, to tackle reliability issues, I maintained transparency—clearly presenting the data collection and analysis methods so that the procedures could be replicated. Similarly, Leininger (1991) added that transparency aids in establishing trust between researchers and respondents. For Leininger (1991), trust is needed before researchers can obtain any credible or reliable data. Therefore, to build trust during the focus groups, I carefully relayed the nature and purpose of the study, the participants' rights to confidentiality, and the option to withdraw without penalty.

Another major concern regarding the reliability of research is sampling bias which refers to an error that arises when participants over-represent or under-represent the phenomenon under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In response to a potential sampling bias, I selected focus group members that embodied a broad range of industry sectors, ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other demographics. Furthermore, there was a roughly balanced gender ratio of 10 males to 9 females. As a result, the participants adequately reflected the target population, improving the study's reliability.

Likewise, to further increase data reliability, I conducted three focus groups instead of one. This is generally recommended to offset instances where one group may be aberrant in terms of member composition, interaction, or contribution (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Krueger, 1994; Vaughn et al., 1996; Saldana, 2009). Furthermore, multiple focus groups helped to determine the point of ‘saturation’ which occurs when no new insights relevant to the topic are forthcoming (Kreuger, 1994; Saldana, 2009). Thus, by using more than one focus group, the full breadth of the data was likely obtained.

Additionally, to enhance the reliability of the thematic analysis, I immersed myself in the transcripts via an iterative process for coding, categorizing, and developing themes. Afterward, I enlisted the services of a second coder who confirmed the compatibility and consistency of the themes. This is known as intercoder reliability and is widely used in research as the standard measure of research quality (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).

In contrast, validity is concerned with two areas: (a) *internal validity* or the extent to which the research findings are truly representative of the data, and (b) *external validity* or the degree to which research findings can be generalized to other contexts (Denzin, 1970; Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Therefore, to address internal validity, I summarized the main points at the end of each focus group and encouraged feedback from the participants. This ensured the appropriate interpretation and representation of the data (Morgan, 1993). Moreover, to enhance the external validity, I recruited a sample that was representative of the total target population. As a result, generalizations of the research findings can more readily be applied to other contexts or settings.

4.3. Participant Profile

In total, 19 participants, representing a variety of industry sectors, completed the focus groups. In addition, there was a fairly even gender distribution of males (53%; n=10) and females (47%;

n=9). The mean age was 37 years, while education levels ranged from high school diplomas to undergraduate degrees. Table 1 illustrates a summary of the participant profile. The associated Class type (based on firm size); pseudonym; gender; age; education level; job position; industry type; company SM experience; and propensity to adopt social media (based on a 7-point Likert scale) are highlighted for each participant. Figure 8 offers additional descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Profile

#	Class type	Pseudonym	Gender	Age (yrs)	Education (highest level completed)	Job position	Industry	Company SM experience (years)	Propensity to adopt SM (%)
1	Class 1 (1-24 employees)	Sophie	F	32	Some college	MM	Accommodation	> 5	71
2		Henry	M	30	High school	MM	Real Estate	2-3	29
3		Anna	F	35	High school	SBO	Retail	4-5	71
4		Frank	M	26	Bachelor's degree	IT	Professional Services	3-4	86
5		*Lucy	F	32	Bachelor's degree	IT	Food Services	> 5	100
6		Scott	M	45	Bachelor's degree	SBO	Other Services	4-5	71
7		Robert	M	49	High school	SBO	Wholesale Trade	1-2	14
8	Class 2 (25-49 employees)	Adam	M	47	Trade school	SBO	Construction	1-2	14
9		Clark	M	33	High school	IT	Other Services	4-5	57
10		Lauren	F	31	Associate's degree	MM	Food Services	1-2	71
11		Kate	F	49	High school	MM	Insurance	3-4	14
12		Amy	F	38	Trade school	SBO	Professional Services	3-4	43
13		*Roger	M	29	Bachelor's degree	IT	Retail	> 5	100
14	Class 3 (50-99 employees)	Alex	M	53	High school	SBO	Insurance	3-4	29
15		Erica	F	32	High school	MM	Accommodation	> 5	71
16		Carla	F	29	Bachelor's degree	IT	Other Services	4-5	71
17		Rose	F	41	Bachelor's degree	MM	Professional Services	> 5	57
18		Mark	M	50	Trade school	SBO	Construction	2-3	43
19		Troy	M	25	High school	IT	Wholesale Trade	< 1	43

Note. SBO: Small business owner; MM: Marketing manager; IT: Information technology professional; *Early adopter

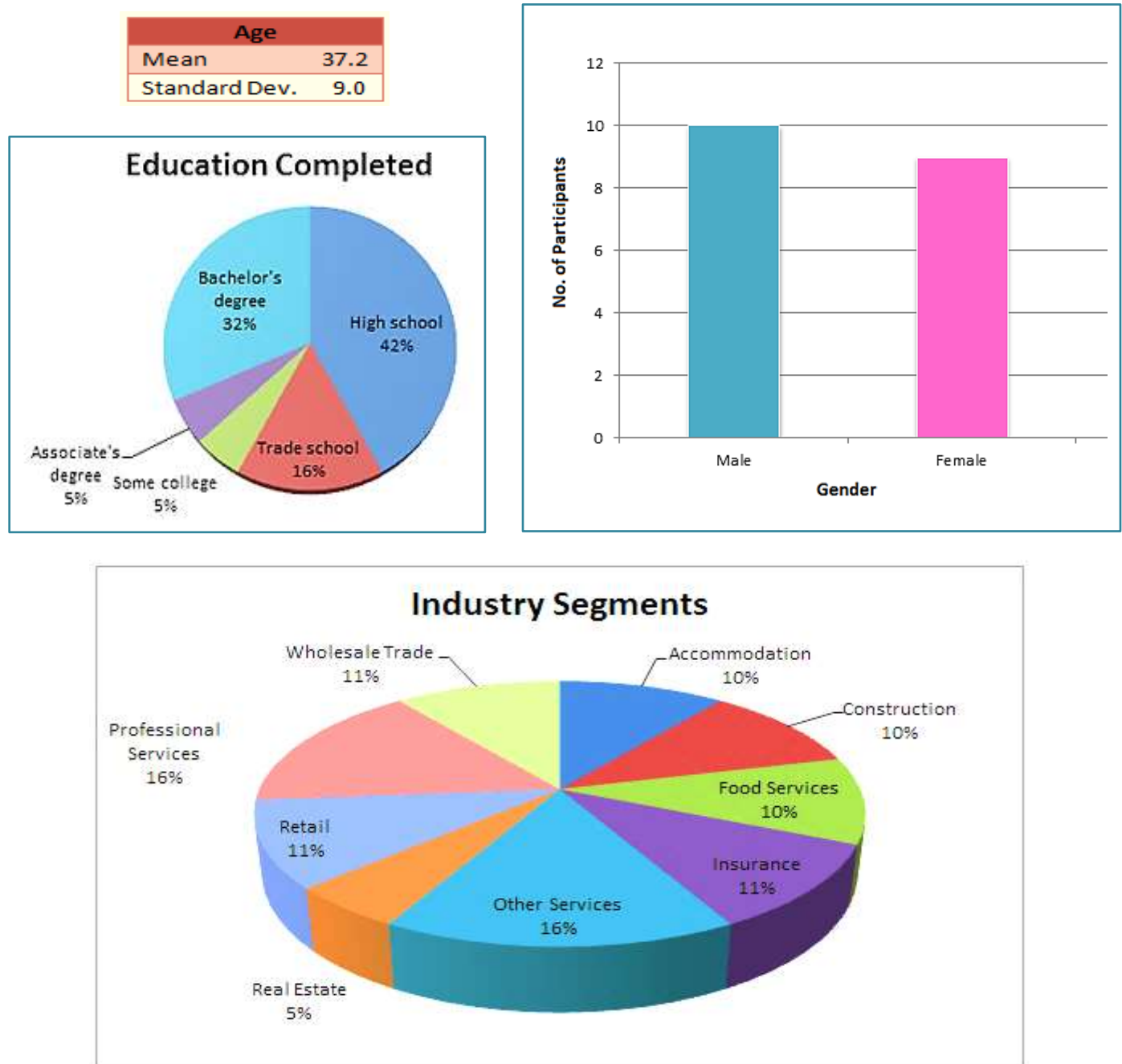


Figure 8. Illustrations of descriptive statistics.

4.4. Presentation of Data

Overall, three global themes were identified from the analysis: (a) awareness of social media marketing; (b) determinants of social media adoption; and (c) rate of Snapchat adoption. Firstly, as shown in Table 2, this chapter depicts each global theme and corresponding sub-themes in

relation to the research questions. Note that themes and sub-themes help to clarify more than one research question.

Table 2

Summary of Themes, Sub-themes, and Related Research Questions

Global themes	Sub-themes	Research questions
Awareness of social media marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awareness of advantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost effectiveness - Customer relationships - Brand awareness - Engagement ◆ Awareness of disadvantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Privacy and security - Time investment 	RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4
Determinants of social media adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Manager characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age - Comfort with technology - Education - Gender ◆ Firm size and resources ◆ Industry characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition - Industry sector ◆ Relative advantage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attention - Customer insight and customization 	RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4
Rate of Snapchat adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Early majority ◆ Late majority 	RQ1 and RQ3

4.5. Awareness of Social Media Marketing

This theme partially responds to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4. Although all participants had a corporate website and Facebook presence, only 68% (n=13) engaged their consumers daily on social media. Furthermore, participants articulated their understanding of social media marketing in two ways: a) awareness of the advantages, and (b) awareness of the disadvantages. Overall, social media marketing was reported by participants in a positive light.

4.5.1. Awareness of advantages. Participants expressed four key benefits of social media marketing: (a) cost effectiveness; (b) customer relationships; (c) brand awareness; and (d) engagement. These benefits are described below.

4.5.1.1. Cost effectiveness. Unanimously, all participants agreed that cost effectiveness was the foremost benefit of social media marketing. Participants from the study claimed that this was especially true for small businesses with limited budgets. Henry and Rose, marketing managers of real estate and professional services companies, stated:

Social media marketing is ideal for small businesses since it is comparatively cheaper than traditional marketing. Access to the majority of social media platforms is free and usually requires nothing more than an e-mail address to sign-up. Businesses with smaller marketing budgets, like ours, can run highly successful campaigns using social media (Henry, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Social media is the best option for companies strapped for cash. There is little or no cash investment. Plus, the costs of social media marketing are substantially less than TV, radio, and print ads. What's even better is that social media content can go viral, spreading within and across networks—reaching thousands and millions quickly—all for practically nothing (Rose, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

4.5.1.2. Customer relationships. Most participants (89%; n=17) stated that social media marketing, if properly undertaken, can effectively create meaningful customer relationships. However, the findings also showed that, like any other relationship, strong customer bonds require time, trust, and consistency. Scott and Carla, an owner and an IT professional at firms providing other services, commented:

Businesses must be consistent and patient when dealing with customer relationships. It takes time to earn trust, sometimes years. Unfortunately, one bad exchange can turn a good relationship on its head. [...] Social media helps us [businesses] to preserve healthy relationships and repair weak ones. This way, we can grow with our customers by speaking, listening, learning, and adapting. These days, businesses can congratulate and reward customers or ask for forgiveness when things go wrong (Scott, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

The proper use of social media marketing can make, maintain, and mend customer relationships. Customers should always be at the centre of every social media plan. It's true that businesses online are in a glass bowl. Customers can share how they've been treated and negative relationships can spread quickly by word-of-mouth. That's why paying attention, being considerate, and delivering on promises can help improve customer relationships (Carla, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

4.5.1.3. Brand awareness. Similarly, most of the participants (84%; n=16) claimed that brand awareness is a leading benefit of social media marketing. Brand awareness was frequently described as the first step in building and sustaining customer relationships. Clark, Alex, and Erica (members at companies within the other services, insurance, and accommodation industries) noted:

Increasing awareness is a top priority for many companies. With so much competition out there, businesses need to be known to their customers. As businesses, we not only need to create strong brands, but let customers know that we exist and how we can satisfy their needs. I think it's important to share who we are, what we offer, and why we do what we do. Finding an effective way to introduce companies and share information is at the heart

of social media marketing. It also helps businesses, like us, to gain a presence in the market, share our culture, form friendships, and build loyalty (Clark, personal communication, February 18, 2016).

We can't be friends, if you don't know me. And you won't trust me, if we're not really friends. For companies on social media, brand awareness opens the door to meeting new contacts and changing them into lifelong friends. These lifelong friends spread positive views (Alex, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

At my company, we pride ourselves on providing some of the best rates in the industry. That being said, one of our main objectives is to get as many people as possible aware of that fact. Customers today are intelligent. They know when you're being genuine. Using social media to increase brand awareness is a great way of reaching potential clients, making a good impression, and building relationships. It's basically digital networking. Strong relationships develop from the first 'hello' and hopefully last a lifetime (Erica, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

4.5.1.4. Engagement. The majority of participants (79%; n=15) across all groups explained that increased engagement is an invaluable aspect of social media marketing. Engagement, according to participants, allows businesses and customers to mutually shape the communication message. This two-way communication enables the reciprocity of ideas—producing greater insight into both the company's and its customers' needs. As Sophie, Lauren, and Mark (representatives of the accommodation, food services, and construction industries) explained:

Social media marketing improves engagement. It requires the attention and participation of a company and its customers. Together, they have a conversation where both sides can

contribute. What this creates is collaboration, a meeting of the minds, where everyone can try to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome (Sophie, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Increased engagement is a major advantage. In the past, marketers would push messages on their customers. Now, because of social media marketing, companies are forced to listen to the real-time feedback that they receive. They [companies] must be responsive to customer needs. The best part is that open and honest engagement increases efficiency and satisfaction across the board (Lauren, personal communication, February 18, 2016).

Social media engagement should be fun and interactive. Unlike traditional media, it [social media] has shifted the dynamics of communication. Today, businesses “talk with” and not “talk at” people. They’ve learnt to listen to their customers in an effort to truly understand them (Mark, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

Lastly, participants listed other advantages including (a) increased revenues (47%; n=9); (b) improved customer service (42%; n=8); (c) the ability to target audiences (37%; n=7); and (d) access to large audiences (21%; n=4).

4.5.2. Awareness of disadvantages. In contrast, participants also voiced two main weaknesses of social media marketing: (a) privacy and security, and (b) time investment.

4.5.2.1. Privacy and security. In general, participants (79%; n=15) shared that privacy and security issues are major obstacles facing businesses on social media. Many of these participants suggested that businesses take preemptive measures against legal disputes and reputation damaging fiascos. To minimize these risks, business owners/managers should familiarize themselves with the privacy and security policies of the marketplaces in which they

operate. For example, Troy, an employee of a wholesale trade company, raised the following concerns:

Small business owners can't afford to be oblivious. They should make an effort to know and abide by all privacy and security standards. This applies to both the social media sites themselves as well as government laws. Expensive lawsuits, and worse yet brand image erosion, can mean the death of a company (Troy, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

4.5.2.2. Time investment. Overall, most participants (74%; n=14) believed that social media (SM) marketing requires considerable time investments. For companies without a dedicated marketing team, managing and monitoring social media platforms may seem daunting. According to Anna (the owner of a small retail business):

A company can't expect to dabble occasionally in social media marketing and be successful at it. Someone has to be responsible for uploading/posting and monitoring feedback. A company must be dedicated to not only sharing information, but answering questions within a reasonable amount of time. It can be time-consuming (Anna, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Participants also indicated other disadvantages including (a) negative feedback (47%; n=9); (b) no short-term return on investment (26%; n=5); and (c) copyright issues (21%; n=4).

Figure 9 illustrates the overall awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of SM marketing.

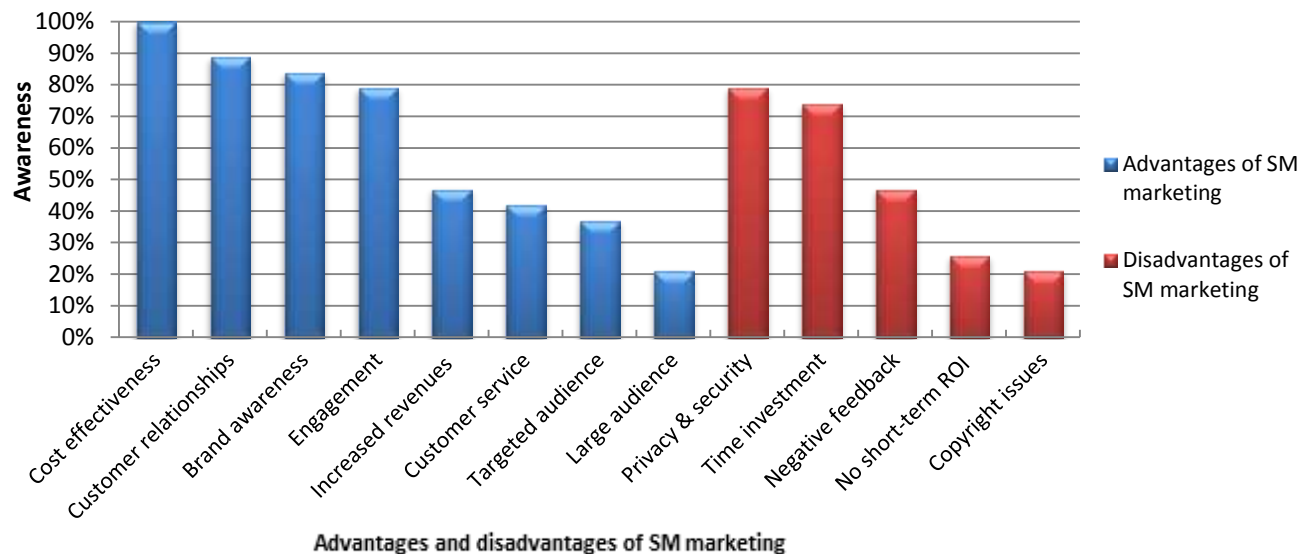


Figure 9. Bar graph showing the awareness of SM marketing advantages and disadvantages.

4.6. Determinants of Social Media Adoption

In reference to RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4, this theme reveals the antecedents of Snapchat adoption by Edmonton small businesses. Based on participant responses, there were four primary factors: (a) manager characteristics; (b) firm size and resources; (c) industry characteristics; and lastly (d) relative advantage.

4.6.1. Manager characteristics. This section details the relationships between participant age; comfort with technology; education; gender; and the propensity to adopt an innovation.

4.6.1.1. Age. Participant ages ranged from 25 to 53 years old. The results showed a low negative correlation between age and the willingness to adopt an innovation. In general, as age increased, the willingness to adopt Snapchat for marketing decreased (see Figure 10). This finding conformed to previous literature regarding age increases and declining rates of social media adoption (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006).

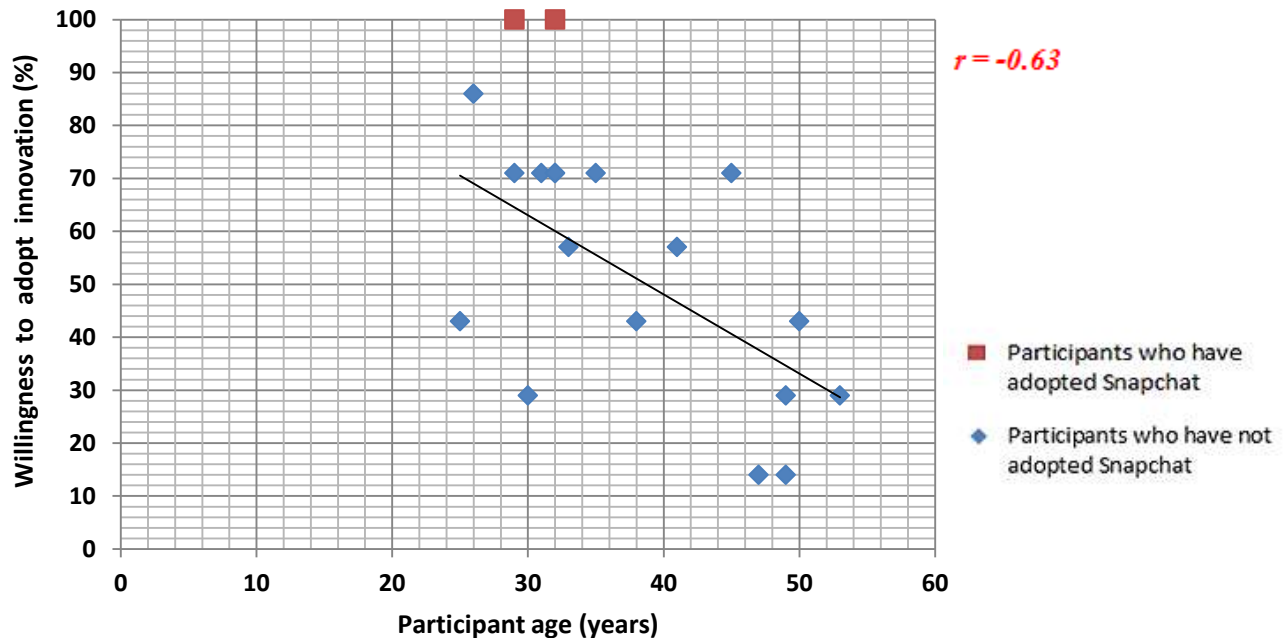


Figure 10. Scatter plot showing a low negative correlation between participant age and the willingness to adopt social media.

4.6.1.2. Comfort with technology. In contrast, there was a significant, positive relationship between previous SM experience, comfort with technology, and the propensity to adopt emerging SM. Overall, findings from a 5-point Likert scale (used for measuring comfort levels) revealed that increased SM experience in the workplace elevated comfort levels with technology, and increased the propensity to adopt innovations. Table 3 and Figure 11 summarize the direct relationship between SM experience, comfort with technology, and the propensity to adopt emerging SM.

Table 3

Social Media Experience, Comfort with Technology, and the Propensity to Adopt an Innovation

Company SM experience (years)	Individual comfort with technology (%)	Average comfort (%)	Individual propensity to adopt an innovation (%)	Average propensity (%)
< 1	40	40	43	43
1-2	20, 40, 80	47	14, 14, 71	33
2-3	20, 60	40	29, 43	36
3-4	100, 20, 20, 20	40	86, 14, 43, 29	43
4-5	80, 100, 60, 60	75	71, 71, 57, 71	68
> 5	80, 100, 100, 80, 40	80	71, 100, 100, 71, 57	80

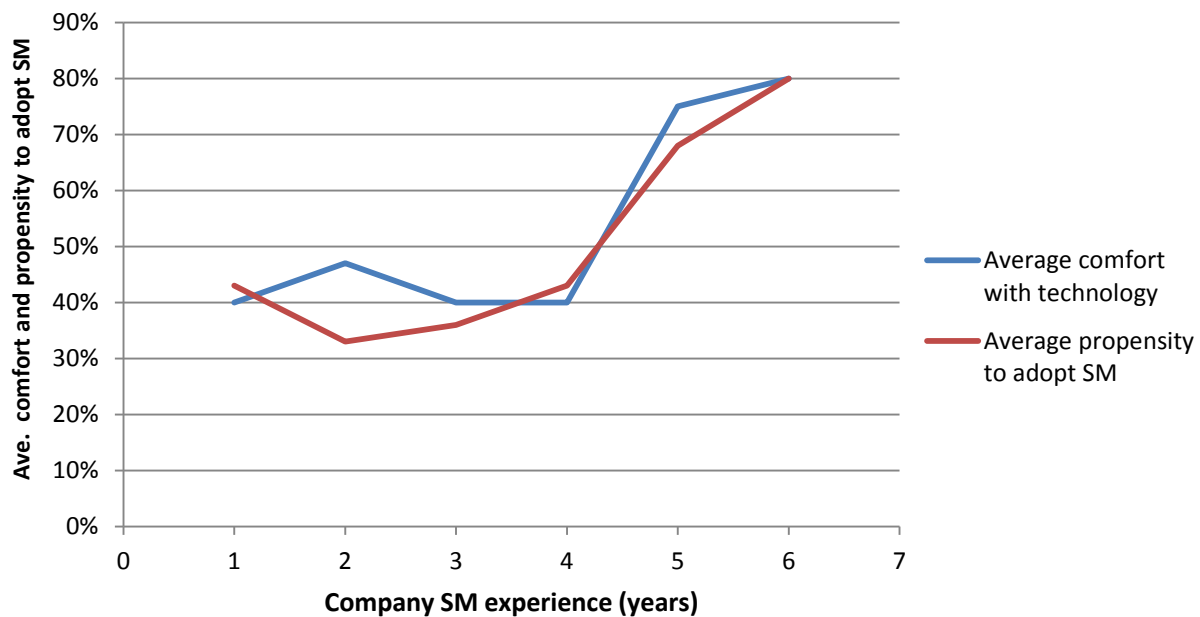


Figure 11. Line graph illustrating the relationship between SM experience, comfort with technology, and the propensity to adopt emerging SM.

4.6.1.3. Education. In terms of education, actual Snapchat adopters (11%; n=2) shared the same education level (a bachelor's degree). Initially, the graph comparing education and the average propensity to adopt emerging SM fluctuated considerably. However, subsequent findings showed a direct correlation between the two variables (see Figure 12). More specifically, the average propensity to adopt emerging SM increased noticeably between trade school certification (33%) and a bachelor's degree (81%). In essence, the more educated the individual, the higher the inclination to adopt an emerging SM platform (Snapchat). Table 4 illustrates the education levels completed by participants in relation to their propensity to adopt emerging SM. Average percentages were calculated and plotted in Figure 12. Furthermore, a trend-line was included which forecasts the trajectory of emerging SM adoption if employees were to attain graduate or doctoral degrees.

Table 4

Summary of Education Completed and the Propensity to Adopt Emerging SM

Education completed	Individual propensity to adopt emerging SM (%)	Average propensity (%)
High school	29, 71, 14, 57, 14, 29, 71, 43	41
Some college	71	71
Trade school	14, 43, 43	33
Associate's degree	71	71
Bachelor's degree	86, 100, 71, 100, 71, 57	81

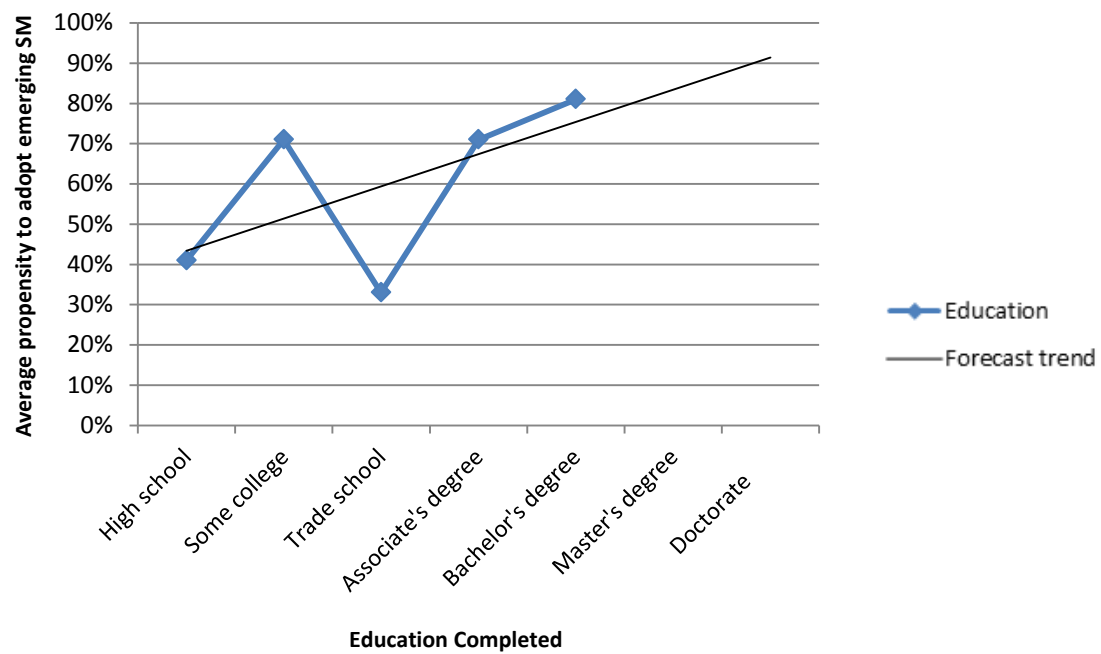


Figure 12. Graph showing the relationship between education and the average propensity to adopt emerging SM.

4.6.1.4. Gender. Focus group participants were assigned to adopter categories based on their propensity to adopt an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) for marketing. According to the findings, gender percentages fluctuated significantly across all adopter categories. Furthermore, although actual early adopters (11%; n=2) equally represented both genders; there was an additional male who expressed an 86% propensity to adopt Snapchat in the upcoming months.

Consequently, he was grouped with the other early adopters. In this manner, all other participants were designated to adopter segments.

Moreover, findings from this study revealed that males dominated 60% or three out of the five adopter categories. Conversely, females led only one of the adopter segments—the early majority. Thus, it can be deduced that while females have a greater inclination to adopt emerging SM at the onset of an innovation; males will likely contribute more in the long term. This type of information may be beneficial to economic program developers who may want to target specific adopter segments to increase adoption rates and promote various initiatives. Based on the propensity to adopt an innovation, Figure 13 shows the gender ratios of participants in relation to the adopter categories that they most exemplify.

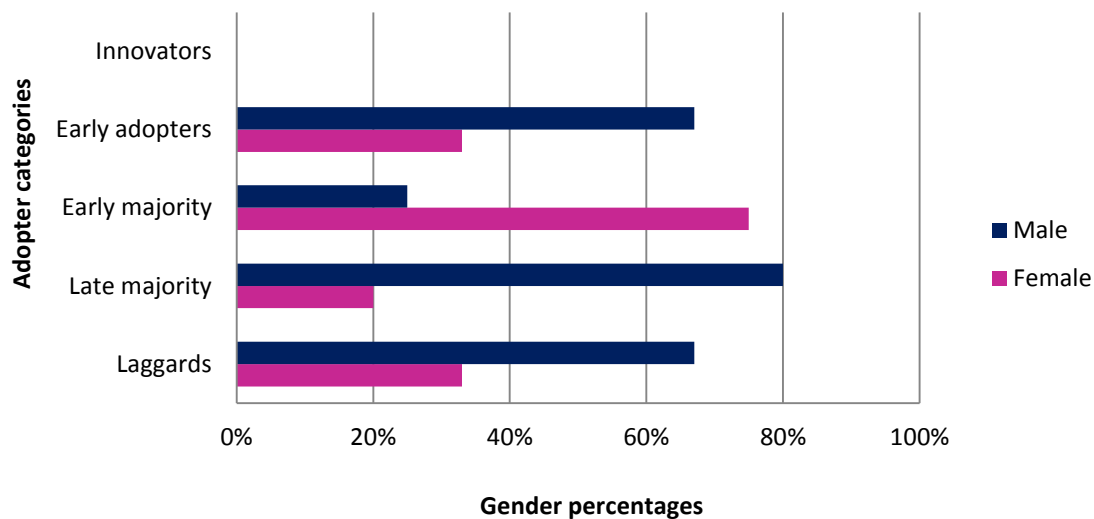


Figure 13. Bar graph illustrating gender proportions in relation to adopter segments.

4.6.2. Firm size and resources. Similar to previous research that found a direct relationship between firm size, resources, and the propensity to adopt technology within the small business sector (Alpar & Reeves, 1990; Thong & Yap, 1995); this study revealed a positive correlation between these variables. Table 5 and Figure 14 illustrate that, generally, as firm size and resources increased, the propensity to adopt SM also increased. Surprisingly,

however, study results indicated that actual early adopters (11%; n=2) belonged to either Class 1 or Class 2. Figure 15 shows the proportion of actual early adopters to non-adopters. Therefore, the usual ability and attraction of larger (Class 3) firms to adopt emerging technologies did not translate into actual SM adoption.

Table 5

Summary of Firm Size, Resources, and the Propensity to Adopt Social Media

Firm size	Individual SM marketing budget/ month (CAD)	Average SM marketing budget/ month (CAD)	Individual propensity to adopt SM (%)	Average propensity to adopt SM (%)
Class 1: 1-24 employees	749, 249, 499, 749, 749, 499, 249	535	71, 29, 71, 86, 100, 71, 14	63
Class 2: 25-49 employees	249, 999, 999, 249, 999, 2000	916	14, 57, 71, 14, 43, 100	50
Class 3: 50-99 employees	249, 2000, 2000, 749, 749, 249	999	29, 71, 71, 57, 43, 43	52

Note. Non-financial resources were beyond the scope of this study.



Figure 14. Graph showing correlation between firm size, resources, and the average propensity to adopt social media.

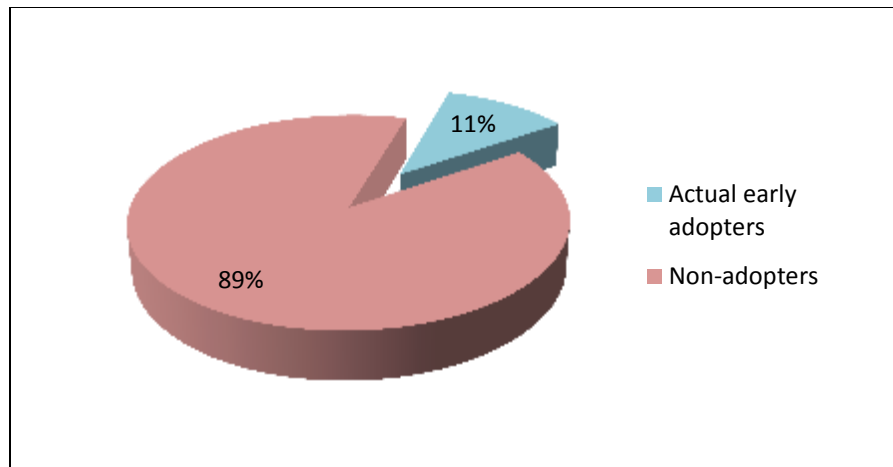


Figure 15. Pie chart depicting the proportions of actual early adopters and non-adopters

4.6.3. Industry characteristics. Findings revealed two industry characteristics—competition and industry sector—as leading factors influencing social media adoption.

4.6.3.1. Competition. Many participants (58%; $n=11$) expressed that competition is fierce in a highly competitive landscape like Edmonton, racked by rival products and services. Additionally, with the spread of globalization and few barriers to entry into the marketplace, participants reported further anxieties. Typically, in such an environment, businesses feel pressured to leverage new ways to remain relevant and ahead of the competition. Results showed a positive and significant association between competition and the propensity to adopt emerging SM for marketing. According to Frank and Rose (employees in the professional services industry):

There's a constant threat of competition here in Edmonton. Our team holds bi-monthly meetings where we discuss our competitors and ways to keep abreast of changes. We're usually eager to find new alternatives to gain the upper hand. The higher the competition, the more motivated we are to distinguish our company. It's definitely an ongoing effort, but it'll be worth it in the long run (Frank, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Competition is inevitable, especially in a global market. To be successful, you have to be proactive. What works today, may not work tomorrow. To survive, it's important to be open to innovations and embrace change. There can be no reward without risk (Rose, personal communication, February 24, 2016).

4.6.3.2. Industry sector. Findings revealed that some industries were more inclined to adopt social media platforms than others. On average, food services, retail, accommodation, other services, and professional services were approximately two to three times more likely to adopt Snapchat than the construction, real estate, wholesale trade, and insurance sectors. In addition, it is worth noting that all participants worked in the private sector. Table 6 and Figure 16 display the various industry segments in relation to their individual tendencies to adopt Snapchat within six months. Average percentages were calculated based on responses to a 7-point Likert scale on the demographics sheet (Appendix D).

Table 6

Industry Segments and the Propensity to Adopt Snapchat

Industry segment	Individual propensity to adopt Snapchat (%)	Average propensity (%)
Accommodation	71, 71	71
Construction	14, 43	29
Food Services	100, 71	86
Insurance	14, 29	22
Other Services	71, 57, 71	66
Real Estate	29	29
Retail	71, 100	86
Professional Services	86, 43, 57	62
Wholesale Trade	14, 43	29

Note. The two participants, with 100% propensity to adopt Snapchat, had already done so.

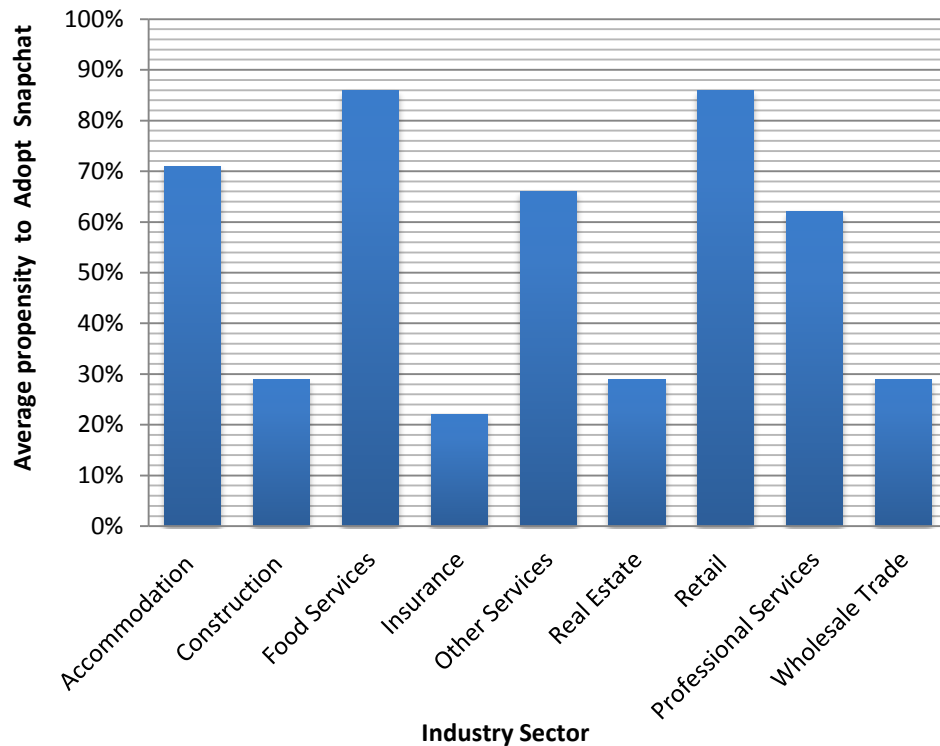


Figure 16. Bar graph showing industry segments and the average propensity toward Snapchat adoption.

4.6.4. Relative advantage. As previously discussed, relative advantage originates from the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory (Roger, 2003) and refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being superior to its predecessor. In terms of Snapchat, the majority of participants (68%; $n=13$) believed that there are two sets of relative advantage. These include (a) consumer attention, and (b) customer insight and customization.

4.6.4.1. Attention. Overall, participants conveyed positive attitudes toward Snapchat. For many participants, Snapchat's most appealing and yet unnerving feature is its time-limited content. Snapchat captures customer attention in a way that is unparalleled by any other social media platform on the market. Unlike Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where users can scroll past content, Snapchat requires the recipient to give his/her undivided attention, before the message vanishes. Thus, customer attention is perhaps the leading contributor to Snapchat's

relative advantage as perceived by marketers. Lucy, an IT professional in the food services industry, further explained:

Snapchat dominates other social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, in terms of consumer attention. There's nothing like it. And, although people can take screenshots of the message, they still have to catch it in time. Not many companies are using it as yet so the grounds are fertile. As more people gravitate towards Snapchat, businesses can benefit from all that consumer attention (Lucy, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

4.6.4.2. Customer insight and customization. As a general rule, participants (58%; n=11) considered Snapchat as a platform driven by collaborative and customizable content. Paralleling natural, everyday conversations, businesses can share messages and receive real-time feedback and customer insights. For example, companies are notified when their messages are viewed or a screenshot is taken. As a result, marketers are able to discern what types of messages (photos or videos) are opened more frequently. With this knowledge of user patterns and preferences, businesses can customize their messages accordingly. Robert and Kate, members of the wholesale trade and insurance industries, clarified:

Personalized messages on Snapchat help to humanize businesses by creating a more open and responsive setting. It is more analogous to customer service than advertising. As businesses considering Snapchat for marketing, we need to understand that it's about creating conversations, not 'photoshopped' messages and advertising spiels. Snapchat is an organic marketing tool and we need to appreciate that (Robert, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Snapchat provides a treasure trove of customer insights. Similar to Facebook that has gleaned Millennial data for over a decade. Snapchat has found a less invasive way of observing customer behaviour through casual conversations. It is much more like learning new things about someone as the relationship progresses. [...] This is the new road that Millennials prefer (Kate, personal communication, February 18, 2016).

4.7. Rate of Snapchat Adoption

Reinforcing RQ1 and RQ3, this theme draws on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory to illustrate the rate of Snapchat adoption by Edmonton small businesses. This study revealed that Edmonton small businesses reside primarily within two adopter categories: (a) early majority and (b) late majority.

4.7.1. Early majority. The largest participant segment (42%; n=8), based on the propensity to adopt an innovation, displayed characteristics typically associated with the early majority. These participants portrayed a high propensity toward innovations and were more inclined to adopt them. That said, the early majority members generally required proof of an innovation's effectiveness.

In general, the main differences among the early majority members were gender, age, and industry sector. Females (75%; n=6), between the ages of 29 and 41 (with an average age of 33) dominated the early majority group. Furthermore, 33% (n=2) of these women worked in the accommodation industry. Conversely, males between the ages of 33 and 45 (with an average age of 39) accounted for only (25%; n=2) of early majority adopters. These males were exclusively employed in the other services industry.

Nevertheless, there were also commonalities among early majority members. For instance, the average education level ranged between high school diplomas and undergraduate

degrees. This finding complemented the positive correlation found between education and innovation adoption, as discussed earlier in this study. Likewise, the average early majority adopter had accrued between 4 to 5 years of SM experience within their relative companies. Again, findings from this study revealed a direct relationship between SM experience and the willingness to adopt an innovation. Lastly, there was a relatively even distribution of early majority members across all focus groups (Class 1: 38%; Class 2: 25%, and Class 3: 37%). Table 7 illustrates the overall profile of early majority members from this study.

Table 7

Characteristics of the Early Majority

Gender	Distribution in category (%)	Average age (years)	Education range	Average company SM experience (years)	Average Industry
Male	25	39	Between high school & bachelor's	4-5	Other Services
Female	75	33	Between high school & bachelor's	4-5	Accommodation

4.7.2. Late majority. The second largest participant group (26%; n=5) relative to the propensity to adopt an innovation, exhibited features of the late majority category. Unlike the female dominated early majority segment; 80% (n=4) of late majority adopters were males with an average age of 40. In addition, findings indicated that high school was the average education level completed in this category.

Regarding SM experience within the workplace, late majority members possessed an average of 2 to 3 years. Generally, their SM experience was less than their early majority equivalents. Moreover, late majority adopters stemmed primarily from Class 3 or the larger firms in the small business sector. Nevertheless, the results showed no preference for any industry

within the late majority category. Table 8 outlines the main attributes associated with the late majority segment.

Moreover, members of the late majority were often classified as being skeptical of change, analytical, and conservative about innovation adoption. Similar to early majority adopters, late majority members also preferred confirmation of an innovation's effectiveness. They typically waited for other businesses, regardless of size or industry, to use and evaluate an innovation before they decided whether to invest. Amy and Roger, representatives of the professional services and retail industries, remarked:

In a fast pace environment plus a limited budget, we need to know where to best allocate our resources, time, and energy. We are certainly not averse to risk, but we only take calculated risks. One wrong decision can have devastating effects (Amy, personal communication, February 18, 2016).

Social media marketing is only one aspect of our marketing mix. Unless there is proof that a new platform works, we simply can't afford to waste time on a learning curve that produces little to no results. We're results focused and unproven methods are too unreliable (Roger, personal communication, February 18, 2016).

Table 8

Attributes of the Late Majority

Gender	Distribution in category (%)	Average age (years)	Education range	Average company SM experience (years)	Average Industry
Male	80	40	High school	2-3	No preference
Female	20	38	Trade school	3-4	Professional Services

Note. Only one female contributed to the late majority segment. Therefore, averages could not be determined.

Lastly, focus group participants were classified into adopter categories depending on which category most exemplified his/her propensity toward innovation adoption. Based on the findings from this study, Figure 17 displays the number of participants in relation to each adopter category (using an adaptation of Robinson, 2009, p. 4). Similarly, Figure 18 demonstrates the various adopter categories and the overall propensity to adopt emerging social media (SM) platforms for marketing. As illustrated, the bulk of participants (68%; n=13) conformed to the characteristics of either early or late majority adopters. Please note that zero participants embodied the features of the innovator category.

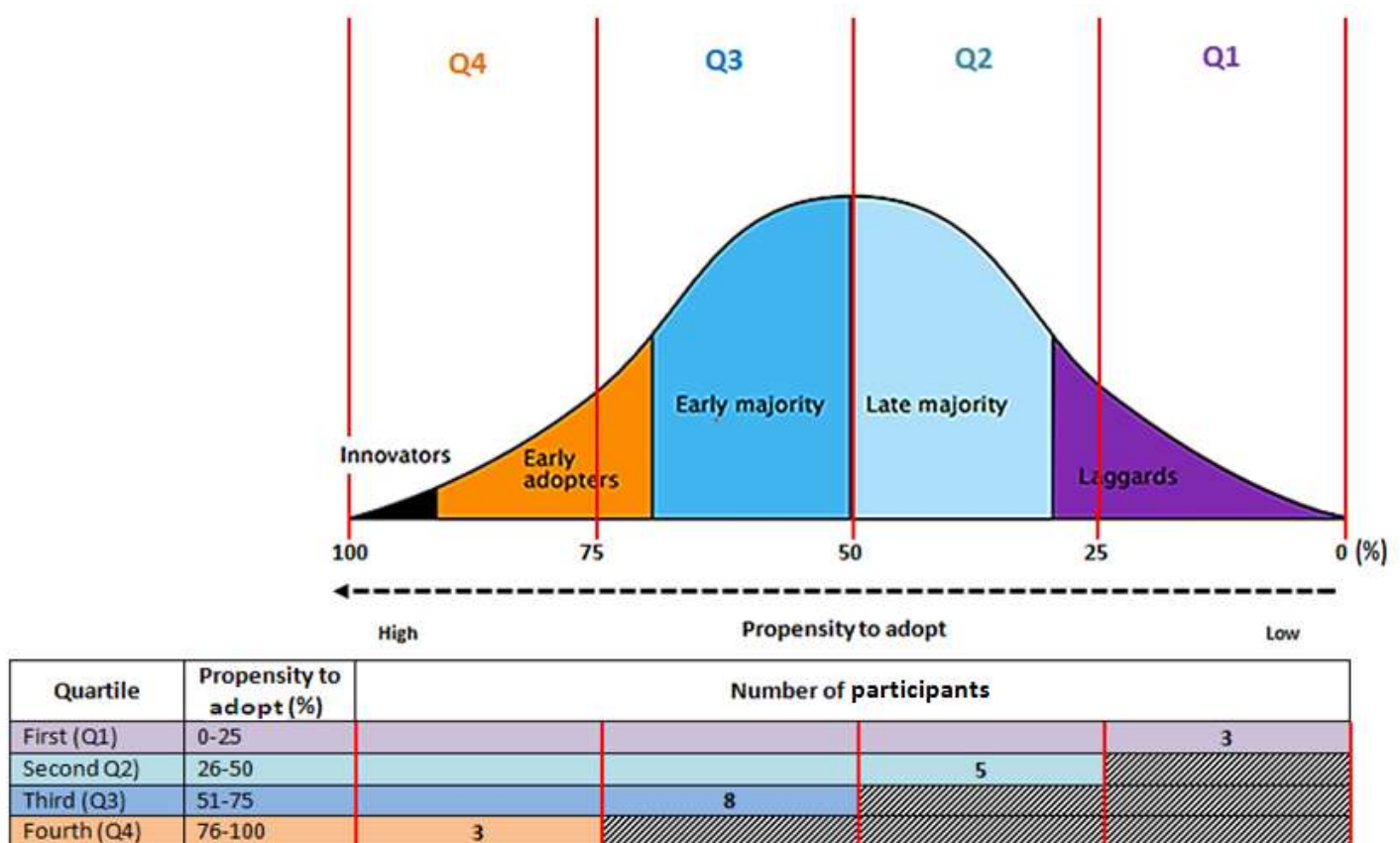


Figure 17. Number of participants in relation to adopter categories (adaptation of Robinson, 2009, p. 4).

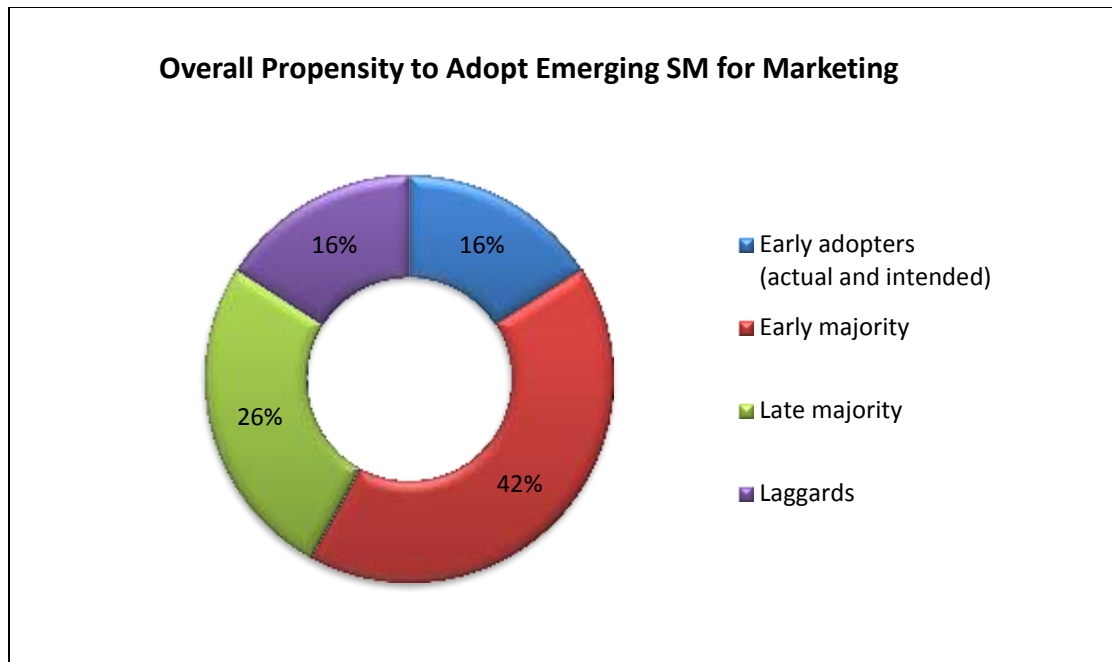


Figure 18. Diagram showing adopter categories and the overall propensity to adopt emerging SM for marketing.

Chapter 5.

Discussion

The above findings highlight the main themes derived from the thematic analysis. The study's main goal was to examine the extent of emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses and the factors influencing adoption. This chapter discusses each of the four research questions in detail, incorporating the literature review and study findings, where applicable.

Firstly, pertaining to **RQ1**: To what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools? Findings from this study revealed that Edmonton small businesses are likely to recognize the benefits and drawbacks associated with social media (SM) marketing. In general, participants voiced positive opinions on SM marketing, stressing that SM platforms offer cost effective avenues to bolster brand awareness, customer relationships, and engagement. These value perceptions are corroborated by previous studies on social media usage and organizational performance. For instance, researchers have argued that when businesses use SM marketing, they are prone to achieve positive financial and non-financial gains. Some of these rewards include enhanced human capital, improved customer relationships, reduced marketing expenses, and increased sales revenues (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Hassan et al., 2015; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Stockdale et al., 2012). Admittedly, participants also acknowledged that SM platforms are time-consuming for marketing and frequently pose privacy and security threats.

Nevertheless, despite the inherent challenges, 11% (n=2) of focus group participants have already integrated Snapchat into their marketing schemes. This minority group resembles early adopters or visionaries who represent opinion leaders (Rogers, 2003). Similarly, a substantial portion of participants (42%; n=8) expressed intentions to adopt the emerging SM platform

(Snapchat) in the near future. These group members are characteristic of early majority adopters who are receptive to new opportunities to nurture their businesses. Consequently, the extent of emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses is currently low, but is likely to increase.

Additionally, 26% (n=5) of participants displayed the traits of the late majority category. These individuals are analytical and typically more conservative about adopting innovations (Rogers, 2003). They wait for the majority of the population to adopt and assess an innovation, before they consider it themselves. Therefore, the late majority's willingness to adopt an innovation is heavily contingent on the behaviours and opinions of others. This adopter category is not opposed to innovation adoption, but treads carefully. Thus, by interpreting these findings, many Edmonton small businesses are likely to adopt Snapchat (or other emerging SM platforms) for marketing in the future.

Secondly, after investigating **RQ2: What are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes?** Findings from this study illustrated four leading factors that influence small business owners/managers contemplating the adoption of emerging SM: (a) manager characteristics; (b) firm size and resources; (c) industry characteristics; and (d) relative advantage.

Based on the analysis, there is a low negative correlation between age and innovation adoption. More specifically, as age increases, innovation adoption simultaneously decreases. This justifies why the youngest participant age bracket (between ages 25 to 34) has been associated with the early adopters. Similarly, several studies addressing the impact of manager characteristics on SM adoption have confirmed that younger managers are more inclined to adopt social media tools (Ghobakhloo et al., 2011; Keupp et al., 2012; Wamba & Carter, 2014).

Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that CEO gender shapes the attitudes and openness toward innovation adoption. According to some researchers, males and females (within comparable organizations and job positions) impact innovation adoption and growth differently (Davis, Babakus, Englis, & Pett, 2010; Venkatesh & Morris, 2000). Likewise, this study posits that gender is associated with emerging SM adoption as a whole. Findings from this study indicated that females are more likely to adopt an innovation in the early stages; whereas, males may eventually contribute more adopters in the long run. Nonetheless, additional research is required to examine the connections between gender and various adopter categories.

In terms of education, early adopters shared the same educational attainment (a bachelor's degree). However, responses from the majority of participants clearly suggest a positive correlation between education and the willingness to adopt emerging social media. In essence, as education increases, the propensity to adopt emerging SM increases. Similarly, previous literature has claimed that a manager's education level enables openness and receptiveness to innovations. For Damanpour and Schneider (2006), educated managers are more likely to foster a favourable atmosphere for innovation adoption and implementation.

Moreover, findings portrayed a direct relationship between social media (SM) experience, comfort with technology, and the willingness to adopt an innovation. As a general rule, as SM experience increases, comfort with technology and adoption rates also increase. This is consistent with previous research that found a positive correlation between technical competence and innovation adoption and use (Dahnil et al., 2014; Thong & Yap, 1995). Thong and Yap (1995) concluded that businesses spearheaded by astute managers, who are well informed and confident using technologies, have a higher propensity toward innovation adoption. On a similar note, Rogers (2003) claimed that *complexity* (or the perceived ease or

difficulty to adopt an innovation) plays a pivotal role in determining the rate of innovation adoption.

Other factors connected to emerging SM adoption include firm size and resources. Results illustrated a direct relationship between firm size, resources (financial), and readiness to adopt social media. Prior research by Love et al. (2005), Thong and Yap (1995), and Wamba and Carter (2014) support this finding. Yet, surprisingly, early Snapchat adopters in this study belonged to the smaller segments (Class 1 and Class 2) of the small business sector. Therefore, this conflict indicates that, within the small business context, firm size may not be as influential on SM adoption as anticipated. Further research is required to explore how firm size affects SM adoption by variously sized small businesses. Likewise, additional research is needed to evaluate the influence of human or non-financial resources on SM adoption.

In addition, results demonstrated that SM adoption by small businesses varies depending on competition and industry sector. Generally, as competitive pressures increase (internally and externally), SM adoption increases. This increase in SM adoption allows businesses to remain relevant amidst high competition and globalization. According to the literature, a competitive environment motivates small businesses to outperform their rivals by adopting innovations (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Zhu et al., 2004).

Furthermore, SM adoption by small businesses fluctuates across industry sectors. For example, food and retail services are more likely to adopt emerging SM than construction and insurance industries. Thus, future research should examine why these disparities occur. Perhaps, technologically advanced industries (such as automotive, health, and manufacturing) are more inclined to innovation adoption.

Rooted in the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, relative advantage is the degree to

which an innovation is perceived as being superior to what it replaces. Most participants identified two sets of relative advantage that influence Snapchat adoption. These include (a) consumer attention, and (b) customer insight and customization. Unlike Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where users can scroll past content, Snapchat requires the recipient to give his/her undivided attention, before the message vanishes. Therefore, Snapchat has a disproportionate amount of consumer attention compared to other social media platforms. This serves as one of Snapchat's greatest opportunities and threats. On one hand, 100% of customer attention presents massive marketing potential; and on the other hand, it creates a host of problems for marketers who are accustomed to traditional marketing strategies.

Moreover, Snapchat's ability to use real-time customer insights to tailor messages is another powerful relative advantage. With this heightened level of content customization centred on user patterns and preferences, businesses can more meaningfully engage customers. In agreement, researchers have consistently recognized the concept of relative advantage as a dominant predictor of innovation adoption (Cragg & King, 1993; Premkumar et al., 1994; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982).

Thirdly, based on **RQ3**: What segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies? Results demonstrated that food (86%) and retail (86%) services are tied as the leading industry sectors in Edmonton most likely to incorporate Snapchat as a marketing tool. This is not surprising since these top two industries frequently target Millennials (or those between ages 18 to 34) as a core demographic. Similarly, actual early adopters from this study are between the ages of 25 to 34 and work in the food or retail industries, managing either a restaurant or clothing store. Furthermore, the accommodation (71%), other (66%), and professional (62%) services are

the next most likely contenders to adopt emerging SM platforms.

Lastly, in regards to **RQ4**: How effective are emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses? Only the responses from actual early adopters (11%; n=2) were used to assess the effectiveness of Snapchat as a marketing tool. In the absence of formal Snapchat analytics, early adopters measure the return on investment (ROI) by counting the number of views and screenshots taken of their marketing messages. However, it is unclear whether these metrics are appropriate for measuring ROI without actual proof that shifts in revenues and/or sales correspond to Snapchat campaigns.

Consequently, as an effective social media platform for marketing, Snapchat remains unknown. It may be too premature to determine if this nascent phenomenon can truly deliver any measurable value to Edmonton small businesses. Nonetheless, early adopters insist that Snapchat is effective in offering customers: (a) behind the scenes content; (b) exclusive offers and promotions; and (c) fun interactions that share the story of the brand on a more personal level.

5.1. Limitations

A major limitation of this study is that each of Edmonton's industry segments has a unique set of characteristics and issues. Thus, each segment should be observed and analyzed separately. If not, it may be difficult to generalize findings. Another drawback involves the classification of small businesses into specific industry sectors. Sometimes, businesses can operate in several industries simultaneously. Again, this may affect the generalizability of findings. Although this study's sample size was adequate, participants may not have fully represented the range of industries available in Edmonton. This could have negatively impacted the reliability and validity of the results.

Moreover, this study examined small businesses in the context of Edmonton alone.

Further research is required to enhance the applicability of findings to other geographic locations. Another limitation of this study is that industries belonged solely to the private sector—neglecting the public and non-profit sectors entirely. Thus, comparisons among these various sectors are impossible to deduce. This may also interfere with the validity of the results.

Additionally, the extent to which global themes influence each other was not a goal of this study. Future research is needed to investigate how these themes directly, and indirectly, affect each other and the rate of emerging SM adoption. Finally, this study used only the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory as the underlying theoretical framework. In the future, other behavioural theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) should be included to improve the reliability of the findings.

5.2. Summary of Discussion

The likelihood of Edmonton small businesses to adopt emerging SM platforms, like Snapchat, is moderate. Most participants (68%; n=13) exhibited the traits of early or late majority adopters. Although, past research has claimed that small firms are typically reluctant to adopt innovations (Blanchard et al., 2013; Keupp et al., 2012); overall, Edmonton small businesses seem relatively enthusiastic to embrace Snapchat for marketing. Moreover, findings from this study revealed several factors that influence Edmonton's SM adoption patterns for corporate marketing. These include: (a) manager characteristics; (b) firm size and resources; (c) industry characteristics; and (d) relative advantage.

Based on these factors, several positive and negative correlations between data variables have been identified. For example, the main negative correlation exists between age and readiness to adopt emerging SM. This presents a key challenge for small businesses to overcome. Whereas, positive relationships occur between (a) education and SM adoption; (b) SM

experience, comfort with technology, and the willingness to adopt innovations; and lastly, (c) firm size, resources, and the propensity to adopt emerging SM. As a general rule, results from this study also highlighted that gender is associated with innovation adoption as a whole.

However, to what extent requires further exploration.

Remarkably, despite corroboration from previous research that larger firms within the small business sector would likely be first to adopt SM, results have indicated the opposite. The early Snapchat adopters belong to the smaller divisions (Class 1 and Class 2), and not the anticipated Class 3 group. Further research is needed to test the impact of firm size on emerging SM adoption by variously sized small businesses.

In addition, other findings showed that food, retail, and accommodation services are the top three industries in Edmonton most likely to use Snapchat as a marketing tool. If adopted, small businesses could enjoy the benefits of lower marketing revenues while simultaneously enhancing brand awareness, customer relationships, and engagement. However, due to the small percentage (11%; $n=2$) of actual Snapchat adopters, and the lack of formal analytic tools, the effectiveness of Snapchat for marketing is unclear.

This study's goal was to examine the extent of emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses and the main factors influencing adoption. These findings can help small business owners/managers to understand the opportunities and challenges of adopting emerging SM platforms for marketing. Furthermore, insights garnered from this study can aid the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) and other regional organizations in developing programs to increase the number of early adopters and provide support for small businesses to adopt emerging SM.

In the next chapter, concluding remarks are provided based on the overall analysis of the research questions as discussed in the previous chapters.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

The proliferation of social media (SM), such as Facebook and Twitter, has created new opportunities for businesses to engage their customers (Jantsch, 2010). Indeed, SM has gradually become an effective marketing tool, particularly among larger corporations (or those with over 100 employees). Conversely, the small business sector has been slower to adopt this form of marketing. There is a widening gap in the extant literature on this topic since most of the research concentrates on large corporations in the U.S. and Europe (Hassan et al., 2015).

Thus, to address this gap in the literature, this study focused on the adoption patterns of an emerging SM platform, Snapchat, which has recently transitioned from obscurity to mainstream. Selecting Edmonton for its diverse labour market and blossoming economy, this study began with the fundamental questions: (a) to what extent do Edmonton small businesses adopt emerging SM platforms as marketing tools; (b) what are the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging SM platform (Snapchat) for marketing; (c) what segments of the small business sector in Edmonton are most likely to incorporate Snapchat into their marketing strategies; and lastly (d) how effective are emerging SM platforms as marketing tools for small businesses?

The results from this study can help small businesses to approach SM marketing with more confidence. In an increasingly competitive global market, these small businesses (which are typically characterized by limited resources) can incorporate emerging SM platforms, like Snapchat, into their business and marketing models. By doing so, small businesses can potentially increase sales; improve customer relationships; and reduce marketing expenses (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Stelzner, 2015; Stockdale et al., 2012). Nevertheless, SM marketing is

not without its drawbacks, some of which include: a lack of privacy and security; demanding time investments; copyright issues; and inadequate evaluation metrics (Hensel & Deis, 2010; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014).

Furthermore, results contributed to theory by demonstrating the main antecedents of emerging SM adoption by Edmonton small businesses. Therefore, new insights were revealed concerning the barriers and enablers to SM adoption as well as the opportunities and challenges facing the small business sector. These findings can assist business development programs, like the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) and other regional entities, in creating an index outlining the characteristics of small businesses that adopt emerging SM. This index can be used to increase the number of early adopters by promoting support, training, and workshops for small businesses. Additionally, the index can help to develop metrics for measuring the success of SM marketing.

The remainder of this chapter provides a brief overview of the key findings, limitations of the study, implications for practitioners and researchers, and recommendations for future research.

6.1. Key Findings

Three focus group sessions were conducted with small business owners, marketing managers, and IT professionals to answer the research questions. A thematic analysis was used to assess the data and develop global themes across the groups. Data from the study was presented and discussed in the previous sections. Results revealed that small businesses considered cost effectiveness; customer relationships; brand awareness; and engagement as the leading advantages of social media marketing. In contrast, the main drawbacks to SM marketing were privacy, security, and time investment issues.

Although, previous studies have reported a general reluctance to innovate among small businesses (Blanchard et al., 2013; Keupp et al., 2012); overall, 68% of study participants (n=13) shared the characteristics of early or late majority adopters. Based on the propensity to adopt an emerging SM platform, the typical member of the early majority category was female, with an average age of 33, plus 4 to 5 years of on-the-job SM experience. The accommodation industry represented the main industry in the early majority segment. Furthermore, the education levels of the early majority ranged from high school diplomas to undergraduate degrees. These findings complemented the direct relationships found between education, SM experience, and the propensity to adopt an innovation.

In contrast, the average late majority adopter exhibited the following traits: male, age 40, with high school education, and 2 to 3 years of SM experience in the workplace. Results also indicated that there was no industry preference in this category. However, late majority adopters stemmed from small businesses on the latter end of the scale with 50 to 99 employees (Class 3). This revealed one of the most interesting findings of the study—that firm size and resources were positively correlated to *intended* Snapchat adoption; yet, actual adopters belonged to businesses with fewer employees and resources.

Thus, additional research is needed to compare and contrast the contexts surrounding intended versus actual SM adoption. This will create a more comprehensive picture of the adopter categories and characteristics. Moreover, making the distinction between actual adopters and prospective adopters can help differentiate between the actual and perceived benefits of SM marketing. Hence, the true effectiveness of Snapchat as a marketing tool is ambiguous.

Additionally, findings confirmed prior research on the effects of age on innovation adoption. More specifically, as age increases, SM adoption simultaneously decreases. Similarly,

former studies have agreed that younger managers are more inclined to adopt new or emerging technologies (Ghobakhloo et al., 2011; Keupp et al., 2012; Wamba & Carter, 2014). Likewise, results from this study suggested that there is a positive correlation between education and the willingness to adopt social media. Essentially, as education increases, the propensity to adopt emerging SM increases. Previous literature has supported that a manager's education level enhances employee receptiveness to innovations (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006).

In spite of age and education, however, males outnumbered females in 60% of the adopter categories—all but the early majority segment. Consequently, it can be deduced that females, with the attributes described earlier, may adopt emerging SM at a faster rate than their male counterparts. However, in the long-run, males may most likely contribute more to the diffusion of Snapchat as a marketing tool for small businesses. Future research is needed to examine the extent to which gender correlates to SM adoption since actual adopters of Snapchat represented both genders equally.

Generally, results showed that as competitive pressures increase, SM adoption increases. This is not surprising since prior studies have recognized that high competition and globalization motivate small businesses to maintain competitiveness by adopting innovations (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Zhu et al., 2004). Perhaps, a more compelling finding was that, in Edmonton, food and retail services (86%) are the leading industries most likely to integrate Snapchat for marketing. This is plausible since these two industries frequently target Millennials, the core demographic of Snapchat. Indeed, the two actual adopters of Snapchat from this study worked either in a restaurant or clothing boutique. Other industry segments predisposed to adopting emerging SM platforms include: the accommodation industry (71%), other services (66%), and professional services (62%) in that order.

Lastly, researchers have consistently determined that relative advantage (or the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than what it replaces) is a dominant predictor of innovation adoption (Cragg & King, 1993; Premkumar et al., 1994; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). Likewise, Snapchat's relative advantage, as perceived by the sample of Edmonton small businesses, was due to its unparalleled ability to gain customer attention and produce highly customized marketing via effective customer insights.

6.2. Limitations

This study contains a number of limitations. Six of the main drawbacks include: (a) Edmonton industries possess unique characteristics, and therefore, each should be analyzed individually to discern patterns within each sector; generalizations may be difficult to make across industries (b) small businesses may operate in more than one industry sector simultaneously; again, the generalizability of findings may be hard to achieve; (c) small businesses were examined only in the context of Edmonton which is diverse, but may not represent the attributes of other geographic locations; (d) only the private sector was investigated, and thus, comparisons to the public and non-profit sectors were impossible to deduce; (e) the degree to which variables (for instance: age, education, gender, and SM experience) influence each other was not investigated; and finally (f) the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory was the underlying theoretical framework, other theories (behavioural or otherwise) could yield additional insights.

6.3. Implications

As Internet and mobile technologies develop, new social media platforms are emerging. Mobile devices, particularly smartphones, give consumers easy access to information. Consequently, consumers are gradually migrating to mobile devices. Small businesses will need to understand how to leverage emerging SM, like Snapchat, which are geared towards mobile devices.

Furthermore, this will provide an opportunity for researchers to examine consumer behaviour as it relates to social media adoption and mobile devices.

In addition, emerging SM platforms have created the need for specialized management to articulate company values; engage customers; respond to feedback; improve business practices; and nurture brand-customer relationships. Thus, companies that embrace emerging SM, like Snapchat, will retain their customers as they increasingly transition to mobile technologies; attract new customers; and perfect their businesses.

Another implication is for researchers to develop clear methods of evaluating the return on investment (ROI) of emerging SM. This study revealed that although early adopters have introduced Snapchat into their marketing strategies; they are unsure of how to gauge its success. Research can help management to appropriately allocate resources toward implementing and measuring emerging SM platforms as marketing tools.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, future research should evaluate the similarities and differences between intended and actual SM adopters. Furthermore, researchers should examine the interplay among the various antecedents of emerging SM adoption by small businesses. As a result, owners/managers may be able to determine which variables are more influential when combined. This may help small businesses to become effective in allocating their restricted resources.

In addition, future researchers may perform a similar study with small businesses from the public and non-profit sectors as well as in other metropolitan cities. By doing so, a complete index of the behaviours and traits associated with emerging SM adoption by small businesses can be developed. Subsequently, this index can be applied to small businesses in a variety of

industries, locations, and contexts. Likewise, further research should compare and contrast the strategies used to evaluate the effectiveness of SM marketing by small businesses. A resulting report on the best practices for measuring emerging SM marketing can later benefit these businesses.

On another note, it may be worthwhile for future researchers to study small businesses that have adopted emerging SM for marketing, but have been unsuccessful. Through this investigation small business owners/managers can learn from the struggles of others and circumvent similar challenges.

6.5. Summary

In sum, the expansion of Internet and mobile technologies has created a social media driven environment. As a result, it is crucial for small businesses to understand the dynamics behind using social media marketing. Emerging SM platforms, like Snapchat, provide small businesses with innovative ways to not only reach a wide variety of publics, but to target specific user segments for marketing. Therefore, small businesses can benefit tremendously from adopting emerging SM platforms. In any event, they should attempt to understand how to properly use and measure the effects of SM marketing to engage customers, foster customer relationships, and increase revenues.

Similarly, business development programs, such as the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) and other regional entities, should strive to analyze and construct emerging SM adopter profiles. This could help to increase early adoption rates and potentially propel the Canadian economy further. This research expands the discourse into the role of SM marketing by small businesses and offers insight into the primary contributors to emerging SM adoption.

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Appendix A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Emerging Social Media Platforms for Marketing Small Businesses: A Study of Snapchat Adoption in Edmonton, Alberta

Investigator/researcher:

Chardelle Prevatt
587-404-8472
prevatt@ualberta.ca

Purpose of Research

This research project aims to understand (a) the extent of Edmonton small businesses that adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools; (b) the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes; (c) the segments of the small business sector in Edmonton that are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies; and lastly (d) the effectiveness of emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses. The findings from this project may help small businesses which are the backbone of Canada's economy to extend their reach and enhance customer relationships, while promoting their brands.

Procedures

To participate in this research, you will be asked to join one of three focus groups. The focus group will use semi-structured interviews with small business owners, marketing managers, and IT staff. The interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. The audio recordings will be transcribed into text format for analysis. Completion of the interviews is completely voluntary.

Duration of Participation

Participation should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Risks

The risks associated with completing this research are minimal.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, the findings from this study may help small business owners/managers and business development programs by providing new insights on social media marketing.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this research study.

Confidentiality

All information collected will be coded to protect the participant's privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Before releasing data to the University of Alberta, all participant identifiers will be removed. Your identity and personal data, such as your contact information, will not be released to any other individual. False names (pseudonyms) will be used on all transcripts as well as in the final report. If you have any questions, please email the researcher at prevatt@ualberta.ca or call her at 587-404-8472. Data will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following the end of the research project and, when suitable, will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to partake, you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

Withdrawal from Study

You have the right to not participate and refuse to answer any question without stating a reason. You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without negative consequences. Please note that a focus group is based on the answers of its participants. Therefore, to not interrupt the flow of the conversation, your data cannot be removed—even if you choose not to continue. There are no known risks or personal benefits from participation in this study.

Questions?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact:

Researcher: Chardelle Prevatt, prevatt@ualberta.ca or 587-404-8472

Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, gordon.gow@ualberta.ca or 780-492-6111

Thank you!



Appendix B

Emerging Social Media Platforms for Marketing Small Businesses: A Study of Snapchat Adoption in Edmonton, Alberta

Investigator/researcher:

Chardelle Prevatt
587-404-8472
prevatt@ualberta.ca

Researcher will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore: (a) the extent of Edmonton small businesses that adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools; (b) the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when considering the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes; (c) the segments of the small business sector in Edmonton that are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies; and lastly (d) the effectiveness of emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses.

The findings from this project may help small businesses which are the backbone of Canada's economy to extend their reach and enhance customer relationships, while promoting their brands. This study is conducted by Chardelle Prevatt, a student in the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology (MACT) program at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension. This research is part of the requirements for her capping project supervised by Dr. Gordon Gow. The findings of this project will not be used for any commercial purposes.

Methodology

Three focus groups using semi-structured interviews with small business owners, marketing managers, and IT staff will be completed. The interviews will occur during the winter of 2016 and will last around 60 to 90 minutes each. The interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. The audio recordings will be transcribed into text format for analysis. The researcher will include whichever parts of the transcript that she deems fit to use in the final report. Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary.

Confidentiality

All information collected will be coded to protect the participant's privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Before releasing data to the University of Alberta, all participant identifiers will be removed. Your identity and personal data, such as your contact information, will not be released to any other individual. False names (pseudonyms) will be used on all transcripts as well as in the final report. If you have any questions, please email the researcher at prevatt@ualberta.ca or call her at 587-404-8472. Data will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following the end of the research project and, when suitable, will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

Other Uses

Research results will be written and presented in a final report by Chardelle Prevatt as part of her capping project in the MACT program. Under no circumstance will your personal identifiers be used. To protect your identity and ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be assigned to participants in all transcripts and the final report. Please review the confidentiality section listed above. The findings of this project will not be used for any commercial purposes. By signing this document, you consent to the possibility of having this research published in journal articles and/or used for professional presentations (teaching and/or conferences).

Questions?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact:

Researcher: Chardelle Prevatt, prevatt@ualberta.ca or 587-404-8472

Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, gordon.gow@ualberta.ca or 780-492-6111

Ethics Approval Statement

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and the ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Withdrawal from Study

You have the right to not participate and refuse to answer any question without stating a reason. You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without negative consequences. Please note that a focus group is based on the answers of its participants. Therefore, to not interrupt the flow of the conversation, your data cannot be removed—even if you choose not to continue. There are no known risks or personal benefits from participation in this study.

Participant Informed Consent

I acknowledge that the research procedures have been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that audio from the interview will be recorded. In addition, I know that I may contact the person(s) designated on this form, if I have further questions, either now, or in the future. I have been assured that the personal records related to this study will be kept anonymous. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and I will not be asked to provide a reason.

Signature and Date:

By signing below, you are indicating that you understand what your participation in this project entails and that you are willing to participate. There are two copies of this informed consent form: one to be signed and returned to the interviewer and the other for you to keep for your records.

DATE

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

PRINTED NAME OF INVESTIGATOR

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

Appendix C

DEFINITIONS SHEET

Mobile application: A mobile application, most commonly referred to as an app, is a type of application software designed to run on a mobile device such as a smartphone or a tablet computer.

Social media: Internet-based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of text, photos, audio, video, and other information.

Emerging social media: Innovative and interactive social media platforms for marketers to connect and share ideas with consumers online.

Social media marketing (SMM) is a form of Internet marketing that utilizes social networking websites as a marketing tool. SMM can help a company to increase brand exposure, broaden customer reach, and so on.

Snapchat is a photo and video-messaging mobile application launched in 2011. Snapchat is unique in that all photos and videos only last up to ten seconds before they disappear forever. However, users can take a screenshot of messages to save them in picture form.

Snap is the term for a message sent via Snapchat.

Appendix D

RESPONDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**(Demographics Sheet)**

Note: All the information collected here will be kept strictly confidential. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you can leave it blank.

Gender

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Age

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 years
- ☐ 18 to 24 years
- ☐ 25 to 34 years
- ☐ 35 to 44 years
- ☐ 45 to 54 years
- ☐ 55 to 64 years
- ☐ Age 65 or older

Education

Highest level of education completed

- ☐ No schooling completed
- ☐ Nursery school to 8th grade
- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- ☐ Some college credit, no degree
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

How comfortable are you with using social media platforms?

0 1 2 3 4 5

Not at all comfortable ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Totally comfortable**Industry Sector**

Which industry do you work in?

- ☐ Administrative, Management, Support & Waste Services
- ☐ Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation, Food & Recreation
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate
- ☐ Information
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Oil & Gas
- ☐ Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
- ☐ Retail & Wholesale Trade
- ☐ Transportation & Warehousing
- ☐ Other Services

Company Size

Which one best describes the size of your company?

- ☐ 1 - 24 employees
- ☐ 25 - 49 employees
- ☐ 50 - 99 employees
- ☐ Over 100 employees
- ☐ Don't know

On average, how many hours a week does your company engage in social media marketing?

- ☐ Less than 1 hour/week
- ☐ 1 to 5 hours/week
- ☐ 5 to 10 hours/week
- ☐ 10 to 20 hours/week
- ☐ 21 to 40 hours/week
- ☐ Over 40 hours/week

What is your company's social media marketing budget per month?

- ☐ Less than \$249
- ☐ \$250 - \$499
- ☐ \$500 - \$749
- ☐ \$750- \$999
- ☐ \$1,000 - \$2,000
- ☐ Over \$2,000
- ☐ Would rather not say

How long has your company been using social media for marketing?

- ☐ < 6 months
- ☐ 6 months - 1 year
- ☐ 1 - 2 years
- ☐ 2 - 3 years
- ☐ 3 - 4 years
- ☒ 4 - 5 years
- ☐ Over 5 years

How likely is your company to adopt Snapchat for marketing in the next 6 months?

[illegible]

Appendix E

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**INTRODUCTION****1. Introduction of Researcher**

Welcome and thank you for coming today. My name is Chardelle Prevatt and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology program. I will be exploring: (a) the extent of Edmonton small businesses that adopt emerging social media platforms as marketing tools; (b) the main factors influencing small business owners/managers when contemplating the use of an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) for marketing purposes; (c) the segments of the small business sector in Edmonton that are most likely to incorporate an emerging social media platform (Snapchat) into their marketing strategies; and lastly (d) the effectiveness of emerging social media platforms as marketing tools for Edmonton small businesses.

I will be leading today's discussion. My role, for the most part, is to make certain that we get through our agenda, keep to the time frame, and make sure that you all have a chance to talk. In addition, I will be audio taping the focus group which will ensure that the discussion is accurately recorded. Today's session will take around 90 minutes.

2. Participant Introductions

Now, let's go around the room and have each of you introduce yourselves; give your first name and any other information about yourself that you want to share with the group.

3. Purpose of the Focus Group Session

As I mentioned earlier, you are gathered here today to talk about your experiences with Snapchat as a marketing tool for small businesses. I'm interested in three things (a) what are the barriers that you've witnessed when trying to adopt Snapchat for marketing purposes; (b) what are the enablers of Snapchat adoption for marketing; and (c) what are the perceptions of Snapchat's effectiveness as a marketing tool.

4. Confidentiality

All of the information that I collect here today is confidential. I will not identify any of the participants. I will not use your name, address, or any other identifying information in reports or other materials related to this study. I ask you to respect each other's privacy and do not disclose information about anyone in the group, nor anything about what is discussed here today.

5. Consent Forms and Participant Questionnaire

Before we begin the discussion, I would like you to sign the consent form that you received when you first arrived. The consent form will be my record that you agreed to participate in the focus group and that you agreed to the audio-taping.

I would also like to collect the questionnaires that I asked you to complete earlier. As I explained before, the questionnaire will give me some information about your background. I will use this information for descriptive purposes only. In other words, I will never use any identifying information such as your name or your company's name or your address, etc. in any of my reports.

INSTRUCTIONS

Let me begin our discussion by reviewing a few things about how I will run the session.

During the discussion, I would like you to focus on topics that are of particular interest to me. I am interested in what everyone has to say about the discussion topics. If someone throws out an idea that you want to expand on, or if you have a different point of view, please feel free to speak up. Occasionally, I may have to interrupt the discussion in order to bring us back to a particular topic to make certain that we cover everything on the agenda.

There are some very basic guidelines that we will follow during this session:

1. I want all of you to express your opinions about the discussion topics. I am interested in multiple points of view about them. There are no right or wrong answers and I am not here to resolve any issues you may bring up.
2. Please do not hold side conversations. We want to be able to hear from everyone and side conversations will disrupt the discussion. Because I am also recording the session, it would really help me if everyone could speak up.

Does anyone have any questions so far?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS:**1. BARRIERS AFFECTING SNAPCHAT ADOPTION BY SMALL BUSINESSES**

Q1.1 What are the most important factors that prevent a small business from adopting Snapchat for marketing? Prompt: Resources, Snapchat familiarity, fear of the learning curve/ fear of risk-taking, support from management, not enough evidence that Snapchat works because it is new, etc.

Q1.2 What Snapchat services does your company need, but is unable to get? Probe: Are there ways to track or measure your marketing efforts, e.g. analytic tools?

Q1.3 What concerns do you have about Snapchat as a marketing tool for small businesses? Probe: Snapchat is synonymous with sexting and privacy issues, Snapchat appeals to a specific demographic.

2. ENABLERS OF SNAPCHAT ADOPTION BY SMALL BUSINESSES

Q2.1 What factors made your company decide to adopt (or want to adopt) Snapchat for marketing purposes? Probe: Reduces marketing costs, reaches millions of potential customers, Snapchat's high-level of customer engagement, etc.

Q2.2 What industries do you know that have adopted Snapchat for marketing purposes?

Q2.3 What would be the single most important factor that encouraged your company to adopt (or want to adopt) Snapchat?

3. EFFECTIVENESS OF SNAPCHAT AS A MARKETING TOOL

Q3.1 Are Snapchat services appropriate for marketing a small business in your industry? Why or why not? Probe: Are you satisfied with the options you have for Snapchat services?

Q3.2 What is the single most important benefit of Snapchat for marketing purposes? Probe: Creates a natural conversation with customers, company gains customer insights, builds brand awareness, lowers marketing costs, builds brand loyalty, increases sales and revenues, etc.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS (cont'd):

Q3.3 What do you use to measure your company's Snapchat marketing efforts? Probe: Analytic tools, website auditing software, number of visitors/views/clicks/purchases, etc.

CLOSING: Provide a summary of the main points and offer the participants the opportunity to clarify and confirm them.

Is there anything else that you would like to add? Are there any questions that I can answer before we end the session?

Thank you very much for participating in this focus group. The information that you have provided has been very helpful. This information will be used to help Edmonton small businesses to make informed decisions about adopting emerging social media platforms as marketing tools.

Appendix F

Thematic Map

