The Influence of Social Media on E-commerce: Fast Fashion Multinational Companies

Mariama Manneh – 9109271008

Second Cycle

2017-01-23

Supervisor: PHD. Maria Fregidou-Malama
Examiner: PhD. Akmal Hyder
ABSTRACT

Title: The Influence of Social Media on E-commerce: Fast Fashion Multinational Companies

Level: Master Thesis In Business Administration

Author: Mariama Manneh

Supervisor: Maria Fregidou-Malama

Examiner: PhD. Akmal Hyder

Date: 23 January 2017

Aim: The aim of this thesis is to analyse the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce multinational businesses and to identify the aims of Corporations using social media and why they adopt it as a marketing strategy to meet their long term objectives.

Methodology Approach: This research study utilised a qualitative approach which comprises of primary and secondary data in order to conduct research and gather empirical evidence to evaluate the research aims and questions and to fill the gap that previous researches have not sufficiently covered. This thesis involved the use of a multiple case study by interviewing four international fast fashion companies based in Sweden, Stockholm. These companies are Bik Bok, River Island, Monki and Vero Moda. The researcher used a face to face interview method and telephone method. In total ten (10) interviews have been conducted.

Findings: The main finding of this research study is that the four e-commerce companies employed social media as a marketing strategy. Through thorough analysis it was found that Instagram was the most dominant of all social media platform. The use of social media marketing is vital for these fast fashion e-commerce businesses as they can have direct contact with their customers, attract new customers and to get to know their target market. These four companies opened an e-commerce business to offer product datasheet and to expand market for niche products. However, social media have also influenced few of these e-commerce businesses by the use of word of mouth.

Limitations: The limitation of this study is the lack of having the perspective of managers in the department of social media. The work could have been improved if the researcher was able to be in contact with those people in order to have a better validation of this research study. Moreover, there were inadequate resources or authors that have specifically covered the influenced of social media on fast fashion e-commerce firms and how they operate. This could be seen as the research gap.

Suggestions For Further Research: As this research study only covers the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce businesses. Further study can be conducted on the perspective of fast fashion e-commerce customer’s perspective. Moreover, a bigger sampling of respondents can be collected rather than only collecting data from 2 or 3 people from each company. There might be a possibility if the chosen
sampling was bigger; the researcher could have had more concrete and solid research study.

**Keywords:** Social Media, E-commerce, Fast Fashion, Retailer, Social Marketing
I would like to say a special thank you to my wonderful and amazing supervisor Maria-Fregidou Malama. Without the caring and support that I got from my supervisor I would not know what I would have done or how my thesis would have been. Maria has given me strength and hope that a student would need in order to be motivated and not lose hope as this thesis is written by only one person rather than two as the other students in my class. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Aksu and Karina for being the best opponent towards my thesis as the best as they could. These two students have given me many advices and suggestions on how to improve my thesis and without their suggestions I might not have known the important aspects that were missing in my thesis. Lastly, I want to thank all the students in my class for given me their inputs and thought into my thesis after presenting them my work.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Under this section the general overview of the research study would be presented. Additionally, this section will also present the background, research problem discussions, research motivation, research questions and lastly the limitations of the study.

1. E-commerce Businesses and Social Media

In the previous years, the internet especially the web has set up a communication revolution which has the capacity to send and retrieve information everywhere in all around the globe. As a result the internet has changed the way people live and work. The web portals can be seen as content aggregators whereby it can provide efficient information and online services (O'Murchu, Breslin and Decker, 2004). The Web is known to be an electronic gateways or entrances that provide several links to other internet sites and information. Additionally, they can also provide a main focus point and a source of information that can be personalised (O'Murchu, Breslin and Decker, 2004). Moreover, the internet permits people to have access to information and gather detailed information. As a result, the internet plays a vital role amongst the online communities as users seek out to gather more information. Users such as profit and non-profit business organisation can have valuable opportunities to reduce the time consuming tasks such as information dissemination and administrative tasks (O'Murchu, Breslin and Decker, 2004).

The advancement of electronic commerce has benefited consumers to no longer have the need to be physically present when transaction occurs when purchasing products (Jahanshahi, Zhang and Brem, 2013). Now consumers can use the internet for their purchasing. Thus, it has created changes in both the retail and service industries (Jahanshahi, Zhang and Brem, 2013). With the e-commerce consumers can be at their homes and offices to buy products online. The consumers also have the ability to see the products and goods on their digital device and view information about how the organisations products are manufactured (Jahanshahi, Zhang and Brem, 2013). E-commerce is mainly the process of purchasing and selling goods or services on the World Wide Web or the purchase and sale of products, information and services being exchanged via the network of information such as the internet (Yuliandre, 2013).
In the last previous years, the commercial internet has been seen as a disruptive technology which would completely change the way on how people interact to one another. Since in the mid-1990s, the sales on e-shopping or online shopping have increased intensively. The growth in business to consumer (B2C) electronic commerce, consumers regularly buy from or sell to other consumers on the internet (Rotem-Mindali and Weltevreden, 2013). The online retailing or online shopping is also a form of e-commerce which permits consumers to buy goods or services directly from a seller via the internet by using a web browser. There are several different names of online shopping or online retailing; e-store, e-shop, web-store, internet shop, virtual store and online store (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013).

The electronic commerce (e-commerce) have become a famous topic in the mass media and as well in the informatics circles. The impacts of e-commerce are probably most visible in the areas of retailing and financial services (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002). In a short period of time the e-commerce have raised. Those initiatives involve online banking, online trading of stocks, online retailing, and innovative smart cards to facilitate e-commerce, remote payments and electronic checking. People have become comfortable with the use of internet and have begun to appreciate its ability to provide a wealth of diverse data from all around the world. Millions of Web sites are just a click away, opening up new opportunities for trade and an exchange of data. (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002) The use of internet is no longer new, it has become a part of people’s daily lives just as telephones and television. As people have experienced the growth of internet revolution now people are experiencing the second internet revolution which is the electronic commerce. The growth of e-commerce is growing rapidly as in 1997 the estimation of the global e-commerce market was 10 billion Dollars which have dramatically increased to 200 to 300 billion Dollars in 2002 (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002).

In the last past years the advancements in the internet have made new systems available to firm such as the social media. The internet has permitted people to have the opportunity to use the social media to twitter and Facebook from email and to communicate with individuals without having the need to meet physically. This advancement have been facilitated by the Web 2.0 applications (Hajli, 2013). With the growth of online communities and social media, people can easily access and share information. Social media provide different values to businesses such as facilitating word of mouth communication, improve brand popularity, generating social support for consumers, increasing sales and sharing information in an enterprise context (Hajli, 2013). Due to the speedy development of the Web 2.0 and social
media, electronic commerce have changed to a social and customer centred one from product orientated environment. As a result, consumers have access to social experiences and knowledge to support them in better to understand the buying purpose on the internet and to be more informed and effective buying decisions (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). The social media have help e-commerce firms to capture the behaviours of their customers that gives them a better insight into their customers shopping expectations and experiences. This help online firm to develop effective business strategies for their organisation (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

Additionally, social media have become popular whereby it has created a new delivery platform in electronic commerce. Social media encourages users to share product information with other online users or sell products or services through social media (Liang, Ho, Li and Turban, 2012). Online customers might also consult their social community to look for advice based on their online buying decisions (Liang, Ho, Li and Turban, 2012).

Based on what have been said in this first chapter, the internet has grown to the extent that it has changed the way businesses do business. The use of the internet has helped many different type of businesses into this world market. The e-commerce business is one of the businesses that have benefited with the use of internet and social media. Moreover, with the use of social media, e-commerce businesses can capture their customers behaviours based on their shopping experiences and expectations. Additionally, with the use of social media, electronic commences provide product information to their online customers.

With all been said to continue with this chapter, fast fashion e-commerce businesses will be the main focus by illustrating how social media have influenced this type of business. According to Parsons, (2011) the amount of people that use social media is growing whereby firms such as fashion companies try their best to figure out how to use social media in order for them to gain the millions of consumers that daily uses social media.

1.1. Fast Fashion

In Today's market place for fashion become competitive in the fashion industry, whereby fashion industries need to change constantly their product ranges. This means that there is an inevitable move by several fashion retailers to extend the number of clothing seasons according to every season in the year (Christopher, Lowson & Peck, 2004, 368). In 1998, for
instance the sales of consumer goods on the internet grew to an estimation of 108 billion from 7.7 billion in 2003 (Brynjolfsson & Smith, 2000, p. 564). The term fashion can be characterised as consumer behavioural phenomenon, surrounding both intangible and tangible contexts, within the domain of social influence and diffusion. Fashion also acts as a sign and aids to differentiate social identity, taste and cultural capital (Watson and Yan, 2013). In the early days, retailing fashion e-commerce firms were viewed to be unsuccessful, as customers needed to try on and touch the clothes. Nevertheless, the level of footwear and clothes sold through the internet grew steadily whereby since 2000 the online revenues for fashion products grew between 25% to 30% (Rowley, 2009).

The fashion clothing industry has emerged over the last two decades with many retailers undertaking global expansion to operate internationally. This predominant trend has developed a changing dynamics in the fashion industry such as demand for lower cost, fading of mass production, modified structural characteristics in the supply chain, and flexibility in logistics, design and distribution (Mo, 2015). Fast fashion is referred to be the transformation of trendy design into articles that can be purchased by the public. The aim of fashion industry firms is attract consumers into stores as regularly as possible in order for the firms to have the capacity to raise the frequency that people buy fashionable styles (Turker and Altunas, 2014). Their aim can be accomplished through the low price and low cost garment that remains on the shelves for a less period of time than the traditional apparel industry. This leads in making the market cycle to become shorter, more seasons and many organisational purchasing requirements, such as design capabilities and flexible manufacturing, blending trendy apparel raw material and suppliers at a short lead times (Turker and Altunas, 2014).

Many fashion retailers identify themselves to be in a state of constant evolution and transformation. In the last past years, the internet have transformed many aspect in the fashion business to how fashion retailers interact with their customers from the way the products are distributed (Sands, Harper and Ferraro, 2011). Currently, the social media have changed the way retailers engage with their customers and vice versa. Social media is becoming a common marketing and communication strategy and was predicted to grow at an annual rate of 34% in 2012, and by 2014 it would have reached to USD$3.1 billion (Sands, Harper and Ferraro, 2011). It have been reported that approximately 70% of customers visited social media sites to gather product information and 49% customers purchase products based on the information gathered through social media (Sands, Harper and Ferraro, 2011). Due to that retailers have increasingly benefited in harnessing and utilising the power of social networking websites in order to improve their overall marketing strategy. The social media gives the retailers to
benefit to learn about the needs of their customers and then respond proactively. Customers are increasingly using social networks in order to gather information on which to base their purchase decisions (Pookulangara and Koesler, 2011). Moreover, online customers are using different online formats such as social networks, wikis, blogs, bulletin boards and podcasts to share views about a given brand, service or product (Pookulangara and Koesler, 2011). With the help of social networks, retailers use the technology to sell their products or services via the internet, offer additional products and services based on previous purchase, respond to consumer enquiries and lastly to evaluate the satisfactions of their consumers with their offerings, all without having the need to deal with the consumers physically (Pookulangara and Koesler, 2011).

1.2. Research Problem

In this study scholars have discussed how the advancement of internet have changed the way on how people interact to one another and how businesses do business. Authors have also discussed with the use of internet electronic commerce firms use the method of social media as a marketing strategy (Hensel and Deis, 2010). However, the main problem for this research study that business organisations face is by providing internet privacy and security for their online customers (Hensel and Deis, 2010). Additionally, business marketers might have a concerned about spending significant amount of money to build trust to online users to make sure that any information obtained from the companys social media page will not be misused (Hensel and Deis, 2010). With these issues that business organisations might face when using social media as their marketing strategy, why do firms still use social media as it might cause some threats to their company.

1.3. Motivation of the Research

The traditional management and marketing of fast fashion businesses have experienced a revolution due to the development of electronic commerce. Since the electronic commerce was introduced into the world, firms have been able to benefit from the internet by decreasing the costs associated with buying, streaming logistics and inventory, managing supplier relationships, and emerging strategic advantage and effective implementation of business re-engineering (Zhenxiang and Lijie, 2011). During in the past 20 years, the fashion industry have experienced a huge change with the advent of fast fashion which have revolved around
to offer the newest garments as effectively and fast as possible with an affordable price (Hyunsook, Choo and Namhee, 2013). According to Öztamur and Karakadılar (2014) firms that have started to use social media as a business strategy are using unique qualities of web and have changed their market strategy to electronic commerce. The internet has become to be the most profitable tools to for companies to promote their products and services in order to be able to attract their target customers. Some of these firms got into the market to become an electronic retailer and some others have become to be a content provider, transaction broker, and service provider or market creator.

Today, the perception of social media is now on top of many business executives agenda. Decision makers try to identify ways in which businesses can make profitable use of applications. It have been discovered that businesses seem to act comfortably where customers can freely speak about their opinions among themselves. Moreover, there has been a rise in firms of having less control over the information about them via the internet (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, social media have allowed enterprises to engage with millions of consumers simultaneously. This ability permits information to be delivered quickly via feedback which has a long lasting influence via the establishment of long term relationships. This type of tool requires a low investment compared to other communication in marketing (Gamboa and Goncalves, 2014). The social media also represent a huge benefit for all type of businesses, from the smallest of electronic based outfits to old and established bricks and mortar organisations with a presence on the web. This is considered to be one of the reasons why firms have increasingly joined the social media (Gamboa and Goncalves, 2014).

With all been said this research will analyse the effects of social media on fast fashion e-commerce businesses. In order to identify the issues, the study will conduct a research on four fast fashion firms that are both on e-commerce and social media. The research gap of this study has been identified. Based on my research I have discovered that other studies have not studied the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce businesses. As a result, this is considered as the research gap for this study as there are no other studies that have published this particular topic. Therefore, this gave me a motivation to focus on this particular area. In order to fulfil the gap four fast fashion companies; Vero Moda, Bik Bok, River Island and Monki have been conducted.
1.4. Research Aim and Question

As the gap is the use of social media in fast fashion e-commerce businesses, the aim of this research is to analyse the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce businesses.

The two research questions will be a guideline of this study on how fast fashion e-commerce firms are influence with such marketing tool. By identifying the aim and the research questions, the study will be able to fulfil the gap of this research study and also a contribution into the literature. The two research questions are presented as follows:

Why e-commerce companies use social media for their marketing strategy?
What type of social media platform do e-commerce enterprises use?

1.5. Delimitation

The study focuses on four multinational e-commerce fast fashion businesses that are based in Stockholm, Sweden via a qualitative interview in order to fulfil the aim of this study. The delimitation of this study is the fact that this study only focused on these four companies that are based in Sweden. The managers’ perspectives of these companies might be different in other companies that are located in another country. Those other companies that operate abroad might use another or different business strategy for their businesses instead of using social media. This can be viewed in the statement of Phui-Wei and Yazdanifard (2014) that when an international business operates in different countries they might either use a standardisation marketing strategy for their business or a marketing adaptation.

1.6. Study Disposition

In this section an overview of the study will be outlined in order to present structure of the whole paper by briefly describing each chapter.

Chapter 1 – Introduction
Under this section the general overview of the research study would be presented. Additionally, this section will also present the background, the motivation, problem discussions, research questions and lastly the limitations of the study.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review
In this section a theory of fast fashion industries, e-commerce and social networks will be discussed as a background to support the research study whereby a theoretical framework will be also be presented.

Chapter 3 – Methodology
This section will present the methodology process on how this study has been conducted. In order to achieve the aim and research questions of this study, an interview qualitative method have been used. Further on, the validity, reliability, ethnic consideration and methodology limitation will also be considered into this section.

Chapter 4 – Empirical Findings
Under this section the researcher will explain the most important findings of the research results of the four fast fashion e-commerce businesses (Bikbok, Monki, River Island and Vero Moda). Moreover, this section will also briefly discuss each of these four fast fashion companies background information. All of these four companies’ interview findings will also be discussed and determined in order to identify the two research questions of this research study.

Chapter 5 – Analysis/Discussion
This chapter will link the literature review with the empirical findings in order to analyse and determine the similarities and connection between these two chapters. By doing that, this section will be divided into three sections; definition of social media, Company's aim of using social media and social media marketing.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion
This section will answer the two research questions of this research study and also to identify all the main findings of the empirical findings and analysis. Moreover, the implication and limitations of this study will also be implied into this section.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section a theory of fast fashion industries, e-commerce and social networks will be discussed as a background to support the research study whereby a theoretical framework will be also be presented.

2. E-commerce

According to Standifird (2001) electronic commerce is defined as any economic transaction where the seller and the buyer come together via the electronic media of the internet from a contractual agreement regarding the delivery of specific services or products and the price and also the transaction completion via delivery of payments and services or products as contracted.

Moreover, e-commerce stands for electronic commerce. This type of commerce have enhanced the standard among the business community in the globe, about the opportunities that e-commerce have offered businesses (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). The e-commerce is not only the transaction of electronic payment on the internet but also other several application areas such as publishing involving marketing, distribution, management, electronic distribution, banking activities and sales portals covering sales. There are three different types of e-commerce; Business to Business (B2B), Business to Consumer (B2C) and Consumer to Consumer (C2C) (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). Additionally, Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani (2002) also defined electronic commerce as an emerging area that encompasses processes indirectly and directly related to the selling, buying and trading of services, products and information through the internet.

However, the electronic commerce can be defined into four different perspectives; online perspective, communication perspective, business process perspective and service perspective. The online perspective in e-commerce is the ability to sell and buy products and information on the internet as well as other online services (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002). Communication perspective in electronic commerce is the delivering of information, service/product or payment through the telephone line, internet and any other electronic means (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002). Based on the business process perspective of e-commerce, this type of technology is the application of technology towards the
automation the transaction of a business and work flows (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002). Lastly, service perspective in electronic commerce is a strategy that point out the firm’s needs, management and customer to cut the costs of services at the same time enhancing the quality of the goods and raising to increase the delivery service (Gunasekaran, Marri, McGaughey and Nebhwani, 2002).

Globalisation has increased the international economic competition and the economic interdependence of national economies globally via a speedy growth in the expenditure movement of services, goods, capital and technology (Yuliandre, 2013, p. 206). The development of technology has increased firms competitiveness and product sales by the use of electronic commerce (e-commerce) that have helped market a huge range of services or products, either digital or physical (Yuliandre, 2013, p. 206). The e-commerce has changed the way that firms buy and sell products and services. In the modern world, the concept of e-commerce has also changed the method of how organisations do business (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). Additionally, the E-commerce business is growing at an exceptional rate. The Visa Company which is a credit card firm stated that in 2000 their clients purchased on the internet have reached to 13 billion USD (Gefen, 2000). Due to the advent of e-commerce many organisations in the retail sector have benefited great opportunities of these advanced technologies (Forbes, Kelley and Hoffman, 2005). The growth of consumer online spending has increased dramatically in the e-commerce retail sector. In 1999, the online spending of consumers reached to 19 billion Dollar which later on grew twice higher in 2000 to 38 billion Dollars, this growth rose to 54 billion Dollars in 2001 (Forbes, Kelley and Hoffman, 2005). Even though, all the hype of surrounding the electronic commerce spending revolution have subsided, the amount of people spending online is increasing and the electronic retail sector is increasing in all around the world (Forbes, Kelley and Hoffman, 2005).

2.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of E-commerce

Due to the development of communication technology and information technology and the popularity of the internet, the electronic commerce is sweeping through all walks in the globe with an irrevocable trend. The electronic commerce have many advantages for the commercial world such as convenient and efficiency, however there are also some disadvantages of electronic commerce (Zhang, Deng, Wei and Deng, 2012). This electronic commerce enhances the information flow and reduces the inefficiency and the cost of transactions (Jahanshahi, Zheng and Brem, 2013). Despite the benefits that e-commerce organisation can
profit of, the application of electronic commerce have been hindered by several barriers and constraint. The main barriers are doubts about privacy and security, the high cost of user support and the running and maintenance costs exceeding the expected levels (Jahanshahi, Zheng and Brem, 2013). The electronic commerce is a fast procedure of buying and selling on the internet as well as way to easily find products and is also 24/7 opened. Moreover, the cost of operational is low and has a better quality of services (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). The firms do not need to be physically present when setting up the company and is also easy to start and manage. Lastly, it is easy for customers to select products from different providers without having the need to physically move around (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). Multinational organisations such as fashion industries may benefit from e-commerce in many different ways. First the company might gain new customers from both foreign and domestic market. Secondly, it can create customers loyalty to a specific product by attracting customers to retain them. Thirdly, to reduce the cost of paper based data production, distribution, search, storage and processing (Yuliandre, 2013). Additionally, the main advantage of consumers shopping online is that it is a costless information search and fast opportunities, convenience and vast array of online information about products and stores. The online consumers have the advantage to find more easy information concerning a product, online store, brand and price compared to offline shoppers (Korgaonkar, Petrescu & Becerra, 2014).

Due to the series of transaction between the relationships of the online retailer and the customers might be at a risk. The reason for that is because consumers most likely evaluate the online transactions and check whether the transaction is convenient for them to take a decision in either to continue to purchase the product or not (Hjort & Lantz, 2016). Some electronic sites of the online retailers eat up the money of their customers whereby the company does not guarantee the quality of their products. Moreover, a mechanical failure might cause an unpredictable effect on the total processes (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). As there is a minimum chance for the company to have direct interaction contact with their customers and the loyalty of the customers is always on check. Finally, an electronic commerce site, payment gateways, services are always prone to attack as there are many hackers that look for opportunities to hack these sites (Niranjanamurthy, Kavyashree, Jagannath and Charhar, 2013). Additionally, online buyers have less abilities to inspect the products before they purchase online which might render the reputation of the business all the more importance (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, 2015).
2.1.1. **Global E-commerce Sales**

It has been reported that the sales by e-commerce businesses is growing rapidly in all areas of the globe. The number of e-commerce stores is increasingly growing due to the fact that these types of online businesses eliminate sales pressure, convenient and saves time. For instance, in Europe the online retail stores have risen to 18% from 2009 to 2010. In 2016 the European online sales will have a compound yearly growth rate to 171.9 billion Euros from 96.7 billion Euros in 2011 (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013). The table below shows the annual growth rate of e-commerce businesses in UK, Sweden and US and also the increased rate of online buyers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Annually Growth Rate (Billion)</th>
<th>Proportion of Online Buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>£30.1 (2011) to £51 (2016)</td>
<td>75% (2011) to 85% (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>72% (2011) to 86% (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$176.2 (2010) to $278.9 (2015)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013)

This table below also illustrates the share of the total revenue from online transactions in high income countries including their yearly growth in 2004 to 2014. The table shows two categories of the greatest online presence; apparel and footwear, and electronics and appliances (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, 2015). After 20 years of electronic commerce growth and the ubiquitous presence enterprises like eBay and Amazon, online sales in high income countries still represent only small fraction of the entire retail sales, on average accounting for 6% of the overall retail sales. However, this average somehow misleads the overall retail sales due to the fact that there was a huge difference among these nations (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, 2015). For example, in the UK the online retail share is 10% compared to less than 2% in Italy. Across consumer goods industries, the electronic commerce has heavily concentrated in categories such as electronics and appliances, and apparel and footwear, where the online sales accounted for 15% and 20% of retail volume in high income nations, reached to 18% and 30% in the US. In the period from 2004 to 2014, the share of online sales across all high income countries have experienced a double digit growth (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, 2015). On the other hand, online sales have remained an insignificant fraction of
grocery retailing with an estimation of 1% of sales transacted over the internet. This result was not surprising as groceries are bought more regularly than any other retail category, in one part this is because the consumption sometimes closely follows purchase (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, 2015).

Table 2
Share of Online Purchases and Annual Percentage Growth Rates by Region and Industry for Selected High-Income Nations
(share in 2014 in percent; annual percentage growth from 2000–2014 underneath in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>All high-income nations</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(6.7)</td>
<td>(9.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13.7)</td>
<td>(15.4)</td>
<td>(16.4)</td>
<td>(11.2)</td>
<td>(17.7)</td>
<td>(12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel and footwear</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15.7)</td>
<td>(16.3)</td>
<td>(34.1)</td>
<td>(15.4)</td>
<td>(16.5)</td>
<td>(12.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics and appliances</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13.0)</td>
<td>(20.0)</td>
<td>(14.4)</td>
<td>(10.1)</td>
<td>(28.3)</td>
<td>(9.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery items</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
<td>(12.5)</td>
<td>(13.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Bronnenberg and Ellickson, p. 121, 2015).

2.1.2. Fashion E-commerce Online Shopping

The popularity of online shopping has increased in the business development and the number of businesses that opened online stores have risen (Ogonowski, Montandon, Botha and Reynneke, 2014). It has become increasingly common for customers to purchase services and products from online retailers because it provide the consumers a convenient and fast shopping environment and saves time and money and also high quality of products and services (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013). Therefore, online retailers have become a vital retailing channel and many of these online stores have been established and are experiencing to continuing to increase their sales (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013). As a result, it is vital for online retailing managers to know how to manage the business and the marketing strategies as the success of their electronic store depends on the effectiveness of the management and an appropriate marketing strategy (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013). Moreover, online shopping have become severely vital to online retailers whereby it has become a vital part of the retailer strategy. Thus, it is important for e-stores to know the needs of their consumers and how these
online retailers can meet those needs (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013). Online retailers are well received, highly visible and are a famous type of electronic commerce that sells and buys services and products over the internet. Online retailers are part of the retail channel and electronic commerce which includes e-stores, online shops and online stores that sell services or products to consumers from businesses (Chui, Tzeng and Li, 2013).

Online fashion consumers are enthusiastic by their senses, this means that many online fashion shoppers feels that shopping online is the best way to shop than physical clothing stores. Online retailers reduce the possibilities of high buying risk of online apparel products by the use of features that permit online buyers to have the feeling that they are interacting with the product (McCormick and Livett, 2012). This way has become more progressively crucial to the success of e-commerce. There are many online buyers that analyse a number factor on how the clothes can be worn with other clothing items, how the cloth would look on themselves and sensory and aesthetic data (McCormick and Livett, 2012).

Additionally, the online shopping has become a vital channel or business model for many organisations. Online sellers have shifted their attention to adopt their online channels to motivate buyers to repeatedly buy their products from inducing customers via these channels, as the online retailing market have become increasingly competitive (Chui, Wang, Fang and Huang, 2014). An online store can benefit from their customers, an average customer must shop four times on that online company. Therefore, it is vital for online sellers to understand the reasons why their customers constantly shop from their online store (Chui, Wang, Fang and Huang, 2014). According to customers see value as the most vital predictor of repeating buying intention. Customers search online for services, products and websites that provide value. It have been indicated that online buyers seek for functional value and that 93% of those online buyers demand for innovation, freshness and discovery to satisfy their intrinsic needs (Chui, Wang, Fang and Huang, 2014).

The growth population of internet users have become familiar with this medium, activities such as searching on the internet to gather information about a product have become widespread. On the other hand, shopping online is not a commonplace. This is because, in 2000, in about 70% of the internet users browsed, compared products and searched (Sismeiro and Bucklin, 2004). However, more than 65% of those people did not use the internet to make an actual purchase. The reluctance to adopt the Web as a retail channel, by combining the high
amount of people that have visited on the Web for searching information, have produced low rates of visit to purchase conversion. It have been discovered that the rates of conversion are less than 2% for an estimation of 70% of the commercial Web sites surveyed and that they usually vary to 4% from 1% (Sismeiro and Bucklin, 2004). Therefore, the low rate of visitor to purchase conversion refers to predict and to understand online buying behaviour of utmost vital for electronic commerce Web site to the managers. Even a small change in convention might result in considerable growth into the sales revenue (Sismeiro and Bucklin, 2004). Though, not much is known about the influence of what visitors do at a site and to what the visitors is exposed at a Web site on their propensity to purchase on the internet (Sismeiro and Bucklin, 2004).

Online shoppers have a high level of interest to view the products in different angles whereby the e-retailers offer fashion information or use image interactivity technology (IIT) to give the online shoppers sensory information in order to decrease the level the risks of shopping online. The image interactively technology holds specific importance in online fashion retailing as it permit the clothing product presentation to be as new as possible accordingly to create a more stimulating online experience (McCormick and Livett, 2012). Briefly the fashion information is the collection of data concerning fashion trends. Online shopping websites are more successful to provide innovation to transmit clothing product information to their customers with up to date trends and sharing cutting edge fashion advice than physical stores. Online retail offers the opportunities for the retailers to promote and communicate the products to the end consumers in a more much efficient method than any other styling advices from sales assistant in physical stores (McCormick and Livett, 2012). Regular fashion information and updates have become very useful and relevant for shoppers. Features on fashion retailers’ websites such as online magazines, stylish tips, blogs and social networking sites can emphasise their fashion consciousness to the online buyers (McCormick and Livett, 2012).

2.2. **Fashion Industries**

In nearly about 30 years ago, the current organisational changes in the fashion industry commenced when the traditional fashion of luxury industry's long established a stable structure. This type of fashion industry faced different type of challenges into their business organisation such as the environment changes especially the globalisation, changes in their customer base and also the entrance of competitors into previously protected markets (Turker
and Altunas, 2014). Until then, the industry of fashion followed a steady calendar of trade fairs and shows by presenting the forthcoming seasons trends. Due to that the fashion industry markets were able to forecast demand as long as a year before the time consumption based on the last sales data. Under the effects of particular factors, this fixed situation have developed towards a new model known as “street fashion”, “quick fashion” or fast fashion (Turker and Altunas, 2014).

In the market of apparel, the competitive strategy of retailers are commonly based on the differentiation of both product and price as there is a significant polarity among customers more concerned about the brand and/or product and the price. The apparel market can be segmented into non fashion conscious and fashion conscious customers. Fashion can be defined as “a broad term that typically encompasses any product or market where there is an element of style that is likely to be short-lived” (Hayes and Jones, 2006). Fashion can also be referred as accessories and garments that fits in with the definition above. This definition means that the fashion conscious segment of the market is most likely to be quickly changing, volatile and hard to predict. In the last past years, fashion retailers relied on forecasting future trends rather than to use the real time data in order to assess their customers’ needs and wants. It have been discovered that this process can commence sometimes 18 months before the product is sold out (Hayes and Jones, 2006).

Moreover, the fashion industry can be segmented into three sectors; diffusion, haute couture, bridge and mass market. This mass market can also be referred as fast fashion that combines a focus on fashion with prices. For instance, H&M, Zara and Gap are well known fast fashion companies that have entered into the market that have sustained consumption internationally in the apparel sector despite the previous economic crisis (Arrigo, 2010).

2.2.1. Fast Fashion Industries

A fast fashion system is the combination of rapid response production efficiency with improved product design capabilities to design “hot” products that captures the latest trends of the customers and the achievement of minimal production lead times match with demands that are not uncertain (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). Businesses in the fashion clothing industry such as H&M, Zara and Benetton have highly embraced the philosophy of “Fast fashion” retailing. In most particularly, fast fashion system is the combination of two elements (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). The first component is that the short production and distribution lead
time, is able to close a matching of supply with uncertain demand and the second component is the highly fashionable product design (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). Fast fashion retailers produce low cost knockoffs of the most updated high end fashion and deliver it to the customers every few weeks rather than every fashion season. Due to the low cost prices and trendiness of the garments, consumers buy fast fashions impulsively and buy more than ever (Hyun-Mee, 2014). Moreover, the principle basis of fast fashion is the reduction of lead times to be delivered to from concept to customers. Fast fashion is a concept whereby the retailers adapt their organisation strategies to decrease the time taken to deliver products into stores, working on a system of in season purchasing in order for the product ranges to be consistently updated during the season (Liz and Gaynor, 2010).

Throughout the years, fast fashions have turned out to be the most well-known business model in the fashion industry because of their remarkable performance in the global market. During in the 18th century, since the Industrial Revolution, several innovations and inventions have been shaped to develop the fashion industry within a complex scope and system (Hyunsook, Choo and Namhee, 2013). Fast fashion firms have developed their supply chain management, retail technology and merchandising techniques which encompasses nearly every aspect of the fashion business. Fast fashion firms have accomplished steep growth in most countries due to these competitive advantages (Hyunsook, Choo and Namhee, 2013). Over the last past years, the phenomenon of fast fashion have transformed the apparel industry. Changing the attitudes of customers to clothing consumption, connected with low cost production and the materials being sourced from external industrialised markets have led to a culture of impulse purchasing in the fashion industry, where every week new clothing styles are available to the average consumers (McNeil and Moore, 2015). High street retailers routinely source new trends in the field in order to retain their customers and also on weekly basis consumers can buy new items that have been introduced into the store and replenish stocks (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang and Chan, 2012). Additionally, fast fashion is a modern term which has been used by the fashion retailers in order to acknowledge that designs move from runway items to store in the quickest time to capture the current trends in the market. The clothing products are designed and manufactured in a low price and rapidly to enable the mainstream customers to benefit from the current apparel styles at a low cost (Zhenxiang and Lijie, 2011).

Due to their well-known business model, fashion companies are now using social media as a tool for their marketing strategy. Social media is known to be everywhere in the marketers’ world nowadays, whereby their growing importance was rapidly acknowledged by businesses
Fashion companies have a clear understanding of what social media can do for their business, whereby they have developed a clear strategy of how they can improve their consumers experience and opinions of their business brands (Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011).

2.3. Social Media

According to Mohapatra (2013, p. 155) the internet has changed the lives of people and the way how people used to interact with each other and carry out their business operations. Additionally, the internet has also changed the advertisement, promotional and marketing activities. The influence of the internet on brand equity has risen a bit. Constantinides & Foutain (2007) defined Web 2.0 as “a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users ‘networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing / refining of informational content’.

Social media employ web based and mobile technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which communities and people co-create, discuss, share and modify user generated content. These are the ones that represent the phenomenon of social and also the one that is significantly influenced of an enterprises sales, reputation and survival (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011). Furthermore, online social networks are Web sites in which individuals can create their own home page to post photos, share ideas, write blogs and connect to other Web locations which they have interest on (Lai and Turban, 2008). There have been huge growths of user generated content on the internet via the use of a series of appliances in the last previous years which have been defined as social media even though other technology terms have been used such as Web 2.0 (Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutierrez-Tano and Diaz-Armas, 2011). This area is happens to be the quickest growth segment on the web that involves social sharing views via social photo and video sharing, blogs and microblogs, social bookmarking, social sharing of knowledge and many other forms user generated content. This type of tool permits people to organise, search, annotate, share and contribute to contents in a cooperative method (Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutierrez-Tano and Diaz-Armas, 2011).
Moreover, business organisations can assess the strategic tools of developing a platform or applications, or to use them for business marketing. Firms or marketers can create a social media content which is free of charge (Wienberg and Pehlivan, 2011). Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) also stated that the social networking sites are the latest online communication tool which permits online users to create social networks and to interact with other users in their networks. The communication forums of the internet varies which include applications such as email, instant messaging, and chat rooms and also internet sites such as social networking sites, blogs, photo and video sharing sites such as YouTube (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). Both Small and large business organisations are being involved into the social media bandwagon as they are aware of its usefulness. Businesses have tweeted on Twitter, created fan pages on Facebook and posted videos on YouTube. Today, many business firms acknowledge the importance of social media as they know it will and be remained vital fabric commerce for their business (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011).

(Mohapatra, 2013) Moreover, as consumers are surfing the net more and more, the strategists are using the internet to create a competitive advantage. The internet has also changed the competitive playing field whereby it helps established brands in online channels. As a result, e-commerce strategies are becoming an attraction for internet savvy consumers. Mohapatra (2013, p. 155) also stated that “To become relevant to online buyers and take full advantage of new media, e-commerce strategists must rethink their brand investments. They must intelligently balance their brand strategies between the physical and online worlds. They must cleverly blend traditional media with online approaches to provide customers with a rich, interactive experience”.

Furthermore, social network sites are one of the most successful sharing elements of social media. There are many reasons why people use the social networking sites either to focus on a particular objective or to interact with other people in terms of social networking (Bulut and Dogan, 2017). For instance, Twitter is used as a microblogging and Instagram as a video and photo sharing platform while LinkedIn is used to positioned for a business networking site. Nearly, the entire social networking site features and services are free of charge. This might be one of the reasons why social networking sites is has grown in all over the globe (Bulut and Dogan, 2017).
2.3.1. Social Media Users

Due to the advancement of technology, the internet has provided a unique feature of social media interactively whereby it has become an irreplaceable part of life's rich pageant. With the social network sites, individuals can share exceptional amount of photos, information, news, data, etc. By using social network sites people from all around the globe with different cultures, nations and religions have the opportunities to share their opinions, stories, news, etc. to the world (Bulut and Dogan, 2017). It have been researched that 58% of the people use one of the social media according to Statistic Brain. These are 14% of the people have LinkedIn, 56% have Facebook, 9% have Google+ profile and 11% Twitter. However, Facebook is known to be the biggest social network site with around 1.5 billion users. On the other hand, more than 200 million users have Tumblr, Instagram, Google+, Baidu and Twitter (Bulut and Dogan, 2017).

The table below shows an example on how social media can be useful to both consumers and firms as this can help consumers to gather information. As it shows on the table, 70% of the customers have used social media websites such as blogs and other social networking sites as much as enterprises website to gather brand or product information. 60% consumers mentioned that they use social media to transfer data (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011).

Table 3

<p>| Online Sources People Have Visited To Get Information On A Company, Product Or Brand |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media websites</th>
<th>Company websites</th>
<th>Online news</th>
<th>Review sites</th>
<th>Wikis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Kirtis and Karahan, p. 262, 2011).
Additionally, Öztamur and Karakadılar (2014) also stated that firms that have started to use social media as a marketing strategy are using unique qualities of web and have changed their market strategy to electronic commerce. The internet has become to be the most profitable tools to for companies to promote their products and services in order to be able to attract their target customers. Some of these firms got into the market to become an electronic retailer and some others have become to be a content provider, transaction broker, and service provider or market creator.

The improvement of social networking applications such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and particularly Instagram have increased to a new electronic commerce paradigm known as social commerce (Kim and Park, 2013). Social commerce is the subset of electronic commerce that make use of social communication and contributions to ease the online shopping and selling different type of products and services (Kim and Park, 2013). Briefly, social commerce (s-commerce) is the combination of electronic commerce and social media of online firms to offer customers daily deals from local establishment (Kim and Park, 2013).

2.3.1.1. Facebook

Facebook is one of the most famous social networking sites with more than 4 million active users. Firms have the ability to create their own customised and profile page and share vital information in the creation of the company’s own brand community rather than only offering different advertising programs. More, firms are able to have a unique opportunity to specifically target their audience and create a two way communication with the company and the consumers (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). Facebook is known to be the most used social media platform whereby retailers create more than only an electronic commerce within a Facebook frame. In the last past 2 years, many retailers have it possible for consumers to browse a subset of their selling products on the firms Facebook page, however, these retailers normally rely on their electronic commerce site for their transaction to be completed (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshi, 2012). This is a step in the accurate direction, however, for the retailers to benefit from Facebook, they must make it simpler for the customers on the site to interact with one another about the promotions, products and reviews and seamlessly buy the products (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshi, 2012).
Retailers are using Facebook as a method to communicate with their customers as it has been reported that there are 600 million Facebook users. With this type of social media, retailers are able to reward their followers by giving the users Facebook-only discounts and sneak peeks of their upcoming products (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012). One example, of this effective promotion strategy is Lowes. On a Black Friday, this company ran a Facebook campaign in which the Lowes offered a limited number of items at an unbelievable price for only their Facebook followers. Most of the items at Lowes.com were in the range of 90% and were limited to the first 100 followers to check out with the product (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012).

2.3.1.2. Instagram

Boy and Uitermark (2016) stated that Instagram have been established in 2010 and since then this social networking have rapidly become the most used social media platform. It have been reported that over 200 million Instagram users in all over the world use this survive whereby 70 million pictures per day is been shared to the world. Its users produce information as they navigate the users’ everyday lives, smartphones in hand. According to Sheldon and Bryant (2016) Instagram is currently the quickest growing social network site in all around the world as it an online mobile phone of sharing pictures and video sharing and also a social network service which permits Instagram users to take videos and photos and then share them on other platforms. It have been reported that online adults use Instagram which is more women than men with an account of 28% in August 2015. (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016) Moreover, Instagram provide opportunities for individuals to engage social media community as well. The practice of hash tagging is one way that social engagement takes place. All the users on Instagram can see the hashtags as a result it contributes to the social network sites community. Sloane (2015) also stated that e-commerce businesses have started to slowly to embrace Instagram as it was its first marketing campaigns that could transform views into buyers with a single click. (Sloane, 2015) Due to that retailers could link their product pages from their Instagram ads. Rather than a “Buy” button, Instagram allows marketers to more simply link to checkout pages online.

In March 2015, was Instagram’s first linking capabilities when they launched carousel ads that allowed firms to post slideshows of photos that end with a button to view extra
content. The main purpose for this is to allow retailers to be able to send their customers directly to where they could purchase what they saw in an Instagram ad (Sloane, 2015).

It have been reported that more than 58% of the global 50 top companies post an average of 5.6 times every week on Instagram. Nowadays every person in this world is walking around with cameras in their pockets and would be using visual social media more in the future (Oren, 2015). It is not surprising that consumers are changing to image based social media sites such as Tumblr, Pin interest and Instagram to document their lives and by extension the service and products they use (Oren, 2015). As a result, consumers are rapidly to act on social media trends and companies are also taking to these social media sites for their brands. There is a huge number of consumers and companies that have realised that stories are been told on via the photos on social media. Retailers have numerous advantages of using Instagram for their business strategy (Oren, 2015). One example is that when customers post pictures of a retailers product on Instagram, it turns out to be an effective form of advertising the company’s product as other users can view the photo. Another example is that of a firm view its products are being used in a novel matter, it can tap into that information and re-distribute it via their own company channels (Oren, 2015).

2.3.2. Business Organisations Aim of Using Social Media

The rapid growth of the internet have provided both firms and customers many new opportunities during in the last past years. Attracted by the speedy penetration of social media into society, the growth of business organisations that use social media as a part of their brand building and marketing activities have highly increased (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Organisations that use social media can benefit from brand reach and awareness, customer communications via referrals, transactions and reputation management. Moreover, the firms are also able to tap into wisdom of their customers, sharing their expertise and knowledge, engage prospects via consumer evangelism and the ability for consumers to help other consumers (Neti, 2011).

Additionally, social media can help businesses to promote their brands, offer useful information to their consumers and also can drive more traffic to their company's websites (Montague, Gazal, Wiedenbeck and Shephard, 2016). There are also some businesses that use social media to increase their sales by promoting and displaying their products on the internet.
and to create more brand/product awareness (Tchach, Lease and Barton, 2016). Social media can also increase sale when customers visits the company’s page which can cause traffic on the web site and more online sales. For instance, in 2012 Sony gained an extra million pounds on sales via Twitter and Dell also gained an extra of $3 million through Twitter (Tsiminos and Dimitriados, 2012).

2.3.2.1. Social Media Marketing

Due to the recent global economic recession, many business organisations marketing strategies were affected by this as well as the perceptions and behaviours of the consumers. During and after the global economic recession, marketing function play a huge role for firms to be able to survive and remain profitable and customer responsive (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011). With the help of using social media as a marketing tool, it has helped firms to reduce their costs. It does not cost firms to use social media to promote their brands and other marketing activities (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011). This has been the most convenient business approach for firms to market their products to their target market. Marketers are intensively using social media for their business strategies to be in a lower cost as it is one of the most powerful approaches in business practices (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011). Organisations use social media as it has relations, audience, cost advantages and time. Social media can decrease the cost as the distribution part is in a mass media. However, most social media outlets are accessed free of charge (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011).

During in the previous decades, the business of marketing and promotion has changed drastically. The use of social media as a marketing strategy have increased significantly while physical means of promotions such as billboards, radio, magazines and newspapers have fallen. The Web have been labelled to be the greatest communication strategy that have ever been invented before, which have resulted a rapid shift in the marketing environment with technology advances (Montague, Gazal, Wiedenbeck and Shephard, 2016). Due to that firms had to transform how they plan and implement their marketing messages in order to be able to fit in with growing demands of evolving communication technology. Social media is one of the highest extensive contemporary marketing strategies that have been developed as a result of the rise of digital market (Montague, Gazal, Wiedenbeck and Shephard, 2016). Social media is currently among to be the best available opportunities for companies to connect with their prospective customers. This innovation of media have won the trust of customers by connecting with them at a very
deep level. In the early of 2010, social media marketing have become the mantra for several business organisations (Neti, 2011). In a short definition, social media marketing is a company’s method of trying to persuade customers that their products and/or services is worthy by use of social media. This is done via using social networks, online communities, blog marketing and more (Neti, 2011).

Today marketers, view social media as a great opportunity to increase the market share figure. Moreover, marketers see social media as a new set of channels via which to promote and market their goods or services. The social media have become a very significant topic for many companies nowadays (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012). This enable firms to establish a communication channel with their clients, build brand equity, market their products and increase customer faithfulness. However, this networking sites is a two way channel which demands a lot of care and effort for companies to be able to manage this communication (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012).

2.3.2.2. Communication Tool

Moreover, the usage of social media for companies can be an effective approach to enhance their credibility by providing useful information and can generate business through promotions, discounts and so on. Firms can show their quality of work through videos and pictures, highlight special promotions and offer customers to have a direct line with the company’s customer’s service in order to solve a problem (Mazurkiewics, 2015). As social media offer businesses a technique to be able to communicate directly with their consumers and to build relationships, it is vital for every business organisation to deal with negative feedback positively. For instance, if a customer have written a negative feedback on social media about the company's product or service, the company should turn that negative feedback into a positive criticism as an advantage (Minter, 2013). Besides the obvious use of communicating and searching for information without any limitation, nowadays it is possible for individuals to use social media to express their feelings and thoughts (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Social media is the opportunity for companies to connect with their customers by using richer media with a greater reach. The interactive nature of these digital media does not only permit companies to exchange and share information with their consumers, but to also permit their customers to exchange and share information with other customers (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).
Consumers actually add value to the interaction, generating content which can result into the buying decisions of others in peer to peer communications. Enterprises can use social media to reach out to other customers that cannot be reached (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Additionally, social media can also establish and increase brand awareness, as the social media appliances permit enterprises to have an access on millions of people. Since there is a high amount number of individuals that visit social, a company’s brand name presence all over those network can aid individuals to be informed about the brand and familiarised with the company and to create brand awareness (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).

Although, social media help businesses to communicate with their customers from all around the place, it also influences businesses in many different ways through the word of mouth (WOM).

### 2.3.2.3. Word of Mouth

Herr, Kardes and Kim (1991) confirmed that word-of-mouth (WOM) communication often have a huge impact into the buying decisions of customers when purchasing products or services. Chen, Fay and Wang (2011) also stated that with the internet development, especially the Web 2.0 technologies, the social media have provided an unparalleled platform for consumers to publish and share their product opinions and experiences via customer’s reviews or word-of-mouth. There is a high evidence that online word-of-mouth has a significant impact on customers buying behaviour (Chen, Fay and Wang, 2011). The word-of-mouth communication is a vital facilitator of learning and can have a huge influence into the buying decision of customers. There are some situations where this influence can be amazing as the people optimally ignore private signals to rather rely entirely on the information that have been informed to them by the aggregate behaviour of other customers (Chen, Fay and Wang, 2011).

“Prior to the Internet, a spreader of word-of-mouth information would primarily impact her local group of friends and family, with dispersion to a wider audience occurring only gradually. However, electronic communication, via online consumer review sites, has enabled an immediate information flow to a much wider audience as a single message can affect all site visitors. Recent empirical studies have shown that the volume and valence
of online consumer reviews significantly impact product sales” (Chen, Fay and Wang, 2011). Additionally, Consumers are highly influenced by the decisions and opinions of another consumer. The consumer to consumer communication can change the buying decision of a customer as highly considered to be a reliable and valid source of product information (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). In the marketing process, the information sharing via word-of-mouth is known to be a crucial into this business process, as the customers tend to greatly rely on the advice of other consumers when they decide to make a purchase, particularly when the purchase is psychologically or financially risky (Castronovo and Huang, 2012).

The WOM is even more effective to have an impact into an individual’s buying decisions than traditional advertising channels and to maintain consumers over time (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). Customers are highly motivated to give information through WOM communication when they are either dissatisfied or satisfied with a product and are highly loyal towards the product company (Castronovo and Huang, 2012).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Who Report They Passed Along The Information They Found Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social media websites</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Kirtis and Karahan, p. 263, 2011)

The table above illustrates the percentage of consumers that have transferred information on what they have discovered on the internet. The results of this table were based on a research study back in 2008. Based on this research the researcher discovered that 60% of those consumers interviewed use social media sites to pass along information to other online (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011). Within those 60% of the consumers, 45% of those individuals have
searched for information through social media sites that was engaged in a WOM while on the other hand 36% of those people found information on a news site or the firms’ website (Kirtis and Karahan, 2011).
2.4. Theoretical Framework – The Influence of Social Media in Business Organisations

This figure below illustrates how social media is used in an e-commerce business organisation’s marketing strategy. As it is shown below there are two types of social media platforms that e-commerce use the most; Instagram and Facebook. With this two types of social media platforms, it helps e-commerce businesses to enhance their marketing tool. By using them as a marketing strategy, it can benefit the firm in several different ways such as marketing/promoting, increasing their brand awareness, increasing sales and drive traffic on their company e-commerce website. E-commerce firms can also have the advantage to attract new customers and can also keep in touch with their existing customers when using social media as marketing tool. Moreover, using social media as a marketing tool is free of charge. However, offering product information to their online customers can be beneficial for both firm and customer at the same time the e-commerce business can be influenced by the word of mouth.

*Figure 1. Social Media in Fast Fashion E-commerce*

Source: Own construction
To go on further with this theoretical framework, the researcher has used other important authors to support the theoretical model that has been shown above. First of all to continue in this section, social media is served as a tool to facilitate intra and inter organisational activities between consumers, people, organisations and business partners such as collaborative product development, implementation of corporate dialog at financial institution, creation of knowledge sharing communities, collaborative learning and creativity and marketing strategies for brand management (Ngai, Tao and Moon. 2015). Moreover, the development of internet based social media have given people and organisations the opportunity to engage with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the firms that provide them. One of the most common communication method that organisations use to communicate with their target audience is integrated marketing communications (IMC) (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This type of communication attempts to control and coordinate the different types of promotional mix such as personal selling, advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, publicity and public relations. IMC use these elements to produce a unified customer focused message and as a result to achieve different organisational objectives (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). However, the strategies and tools for communicating with consumers have significantly changes with the advent of the phenomenon known as social media (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Table 5. List of Authors with their theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Fast Fashion E-commerce's Reasons of Using Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Own construction
According to McCormick and Livett (2012) online website (e-commerce) has the advantage to provide a better innovation to transmit clothing product information, promote and engage with their consumers than physical stores. Regular fashion information and updates have become helpful and relevant for online consumers. Additionally, McCormick and Livett (2012) also mentioned that the features on fashion retailers’ websites can have emphasis their fashion consciousness to the online customers. It have been reported by Kirtis and Karahan (2011) that 70% consumers use social media to gather product or brand information.

Social media have become a market strategy for many e-commerce businesses as it is one of the most profitable tools to promote their products and services and also to attract their target customers. This also permit users to exchange and share information with their customers (Oztamur and Karakadilar, 2014; Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).

The use of social media for a retailer can be seen as a competitive advantage as the platform is free of charge, less cost for the business (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2012; Kirtis and Karahan, 2011). Due to the fact that social networking sites are do not cost it has grown in all over the world (Bulut and Dogan, 2017). This type of marketing strategy for business organisations have also become a competitive strategy for those businesses as it aids brands in online channels and consumers are becoming more attracted to internet (Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011). Additionally, businesses can benefit from social media for brand awareness and brand reach and lastly, to increase their sales (Neti, 2011; Tchach, Lease and Barton, 2016; Montague, Gazalm, Weidenbeck and Shepard, 2016; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014).

Instagram is known to be the quickest social media platform in all over the globe with about 200 million Instagram users. People use this type of social media to take videos and upload pictures either for personal or business use. Instagram is also used as a business strategy for my business organisations as they can upload their products online for consumers to see by advertising their brands (Boy and Uitermark, 2016; Sheldon and Bryant, 2016; Sloane, 2015; Oren, 2015). However, according to Chain store age (2012) & Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi (2012) Instagram and Facebook is the most used social media in the world which permit users to share and comment on the pictures that they post. It have also been reported that there are approximately 600 million Facebookers whereby retailers use this social media platform to also to communicate with their potential customers (Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi, 2012).
Furthermore, the use of social media has also allowed online customers to talk about their purchase experiences via the word of mouth (WOM). This type of method have an impact on the buying behaviour and buying decisions of the potential customers (Chen, Fay and Wang, 2011; Castronovo and Huang, 2012). In the marketing process, the word of mouth is crucial into the any business organisations process as customers sharing information to one another can have a strong consumer decision making.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This section will present the methodology process on how this study has been conducted. In order to achieve the aims and research questions of this study, an interview qualitative method have been used on four fast fashions e-commerce multinational companies (Vero Moda, Monki, River Island and Bik Bok). Further on, the validity, reliability, ethnic consideration and methodology limitation will also be considered into this section.

3. Research Approach

As the aim of this research paper is to investigate and illustrate the influence of social media on e-commerce fast fashion businesses, an inductive approach is used under the research method of qualitative.

Qualitative methods seek to explain and elaborate a particular topic/subject instead of seeking to reach a general profile regarding the study population. On every case, the qualitative method provides conclusions which account for the particular phenomenon (Hyde, 2000). Moreover, the reason why qualitative method have been chosen for this research study in particular is to produce a wealth of detailed information on a small number of people (Hyde, 2000).

There are two fundamental methods to analyse qualitative approach; deductive and inductive approach (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). One of the reasons why an inductive approach have been used for this research study rather than a deductive approach is because an inductive approach is to analyse data with few or no predetermined theory, framework or structure and uses the actual data itself to derive the structure of the analysis (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). This method is considered to be comprehensive, time consuming and the most common approach used to analyse qualitative data. This type of qualitative method is most suitable where few or nothing is known about the phenomenon of the research study (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008).
3.1. Research Strategy

In order for the research aim and questions to be answered an exploratory research method has been conducted. The reason for choosing an exploratory research for this research study is because an exploratory research is conducted to discover potential business opportunities or clarify ambiguous situations. This research is a first step that is conducted with the expectation that extra research will be needed to provide more conclusive evidence. It is sometimes conducted to guide and refine these subsequent research efforts (Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2013, p. 52). Exploratory research is a primary data collection method. The exploratory data is conducted for a given research project for which relevant data do not exist. The main purpose for an exploratory research is to shed light on the nature of a situation and to determine if a researcher should collect extra research (Neelankavil, 2007, p. 104). Additionally, this type of research method employs qualitative research approach that is helpful to understand a subject thought processes and to provide insights into perceptions and attitudes. Lastly, it is also useful in defining problems and useful to generate ideas for execution (Neelankavil, 2007, p. 104).

Moreover, the major emphasis of this research method is on the discovery of ideas. Researchers devote a significant portion of their work on this type of method only when there is little to be known about the issue being examined. The main idea of using an exploratory research is to clarify concepts and make more extensive research on them (Majumdar, 2005, p. 23). Additionally, the advantage of an exploratory research studies are less time requirement and low cost. Lastly, another reason for conducting an exploratory research for this research study is by the means of a survey of knowledgeable individuals, analysis of few cases along with an extensive scanning of a secondary research (Majumdar, 2005, p. 23).

In order to fulfil this exploratory research, the researcher have chosen to use a case study into the research study in order to have a better investigation of a real life situation which are the four fast fashion e-commerce multinational companies.
3.2. Case Study

“A case study is as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Zainal, 2007). A case study research method permits researchers to closely examine the data within a particular phenomenon. In most cases, this method is the selection of a small geographical area or a very limited number of people as the subject of the study (Zainal, 2007). A case study should be conducted when the focus of the study is to answer “Why” and “how” questions and when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because they believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under the research study (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Furthermore, a case study investigates and explore contemporary real life context via detailed contextual analysis of small number of conditions or events and their relationships (Zainal, 2007). A case study in a research method can be used in many different situations in order to contribute to our knowledge of individual, organisational, group, political, social and related phenomena. This case study method has been a common research method in political science, social work, education, anthropology, community planning and most importantly business (Yin, 2013). Whatever the field of interest is, the distinctive need for a case study method arises out of the desire to understand a complex social topic area. Briefly, this method permits researchers to focus on a “case” and retain a holistic and real world views such as in studying an organisational and managerial processes (Yin, 2013).

Once the research questions have been determined and have been answered in the best way via a qualitative case study. The type of case study must be considered to be conducted into this research study (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The selection of a particular type of a case study design will be guided by the overall purpose of the research study. These types can be holistic case studies, single case studies and multiple case studies (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

As this research study in particular contains more than a single case then a multiple case study have been conducted. The reason for conducting a multiple case study is that it has allowed the researcher to analyse within each setting and cross settings (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This case study examines different cases to understand the differences and similarities between the cases. Multiple case studies can predict contrasting result but for predictable purpose and also to predict similar results (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Additionally, a multiple case study approach allows researchers to compare in order to clarify if an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic
to a single case or it is usually replicated by different cases. This study creates more robust theory due to the fact that the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Lastly, constructs and relationships are more specifically delineated because it is simpler to identify accurate definitions and levels of construct abstraction from multiple cases (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

3.3. Method of Data Collection

In order to complete the methodology approach for this paper, both primary data and secondary data have been conducted via the qualitative research method. Based on the primary data, a face-to-face interview method and telephone interview was conducted under the structure of a questionnaire method and few open and close questions. Moreover, the secondary data have covered the literature review. The chosen companies that the researcher has conducted a multiple case study research on are Monki, River Island, Bik Bok and Vero Moda.

3.3.1. Primary Data

As this study was to identify and illustrate on how social media has influenced fast fashion e-commerce multinational industries, a qualitative face to face and telephone interview method was conducted to identify the research questions of this paper study. The interview questions consisted of 6 unstructured questions and 9 structured listed questionnaires which are a total of 15 questions.

The first step that the researcher did to start the research study was to contact all the four stores that is located in Stockholm through the telephone to ask when the store manager would be in store before going to the store directly. As the workers would give the specific date and time, the researcher went to the store on that particular time to meet with the store managers. All the respondents that the researcher interviewed did not have a second thought for not participating into this research study as the researcher told them it was a student project. As all the interview took place, the estimation time for all the face to face interview process took approximately not more than 30 minutes as the questions were very simple and few questionnaires were listed which was easy for the interviewees to answer.
Lastly, to understand more of this section, below the researcher has briefly explained primary data into more details.

Primary data is the original data that have been collected in the research data. This is usually imagined as the application of statistical method (Glass, 1976). The reason for choosing a qualitative market research for this study is because according to Gill et al. (2008) qualitative methods such as interviews provide a better and deeper understanding of social phenomena. Gill et al (2008) also mentioned that there are three types of fundamental research interviews such as unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. A structured interview is a verbal administered questionnaire with a list of questions to be asked. This type of method research is believed to be a fast and easy method and can be easily clarified to the interviewee of any misunderstood questions. Moreover, Chen & Weng (2009) described questionnaire as a collection of data method that the respondent completes it in a written format. The closed answers questionnaire data can be a list of mutually exclusive categories and also a list where the respondents can chose more than one response from the list of categories.

Whereas, unstructured interviews is an open ended or narrow interviews whereby the interviewee would have control over the course of the interview. Both the interviewer and interviewee share experiences by coming together to create a context of conversational legimacy in which the interviewee would feel comfortable to respond to the questions (Corbin and Morse, 2003). And semi-structured interviews are in depth interviews where the interviewees must answer pre-set open ended questions whereby this type of interview method are conducted only once which takes approximately 30 minutes to more than an hour (Jamshed, 2014).

One of the reasons of conducting a face-to-face interview for this research study is because Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2012) stated that this type of interview method compels more small talking interaction, nonverbal communication and politeness routines between the interviewer and the interviewee and also a way on how the participants can be more fully to express their point of view. Additionally, when conducting a face to face interview the interviewer can give additional information which can be added to the answer of the respondent of the question (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012).

Face-to-face interview in qualitative research are often more used than telephone interview in qualitative research. Although, the telephone interview might be seen as a “Versatile” data collection tool. In this type of qualitative research the interviewees are known be to be more
relaxed and are willing to communicate freely and to disclose information (Novick, 2008). Moreover, the telephone data is also vivid, rich, detailed and of high quality. The advantages that qualitative researcher might benefit from telephone interview compared to face-to-face interview is the decreased of cost (Novick, 2008). Additionally, it also increases the access to geographically disparate subject, increases the researchers’ safety, decreases the space requirements and lastly the interviewer is able to take note unobtrusively (Novick, 2008). However, telephone interview methods can make the interviewees can feel more discomfort when expressing sensitive topics over the telephone rather than face-to-face interview (Szolnoki and Hoffmann, 2013). It is also believed that many respondents prefer to be interviewed face-to-face than telephone as the participants can be controlled within the survey environment (Szolnoki and Hoffmann, 2013).

Table 6. Respondents Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>Drottninggatan (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>20 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>Drottninggatan (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>15 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Visual Merchandiser Manager</td>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>Sergel (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>15 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>Hamnsgatan (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>20 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>Gallerian (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>27 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>Mall of Scandinavia</td>
<td>22/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>24 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>Gallerian (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>23/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>24 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>Kungsgatan (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>24/11/2016</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>15 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>Hamnsgatan (T-Centralen)</td>
<td>24/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>18 Mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 10</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>Sergel</td>
<td>24/11/2016</td>
<td>FtoF</td>
<td>22 Mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own construction
3.3.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data are information that already exist and published such as survey, qualitative studies, surveys conducted by the national government and the state (Rew, Koniak-Griffin, Lewis, Miles, O'Sullivan, 2000). Moreover, the secondary data is also a set of research endeavours that uses data that already exist to answer their research questions that might or probably not have been proposed when the original data was collected (Rew, Koniak-Griffin, Lewis, Miles, O'Sullivan, 2000).

Based on this research study, the secondary data have been conducted to gather and analyse information in the literature review on how social media have influence e-commerce fast fashion businesses. Moreover, with this method the research had the benefits in gathering reliable and valuable literature. Those secondary data that have been collected are scientific journal articles on Google Scholar, electronic books on Google Books and websites such as the companies’ background information.

3.4. Presentation and Data Analysis

The data analysis and collection are emerged together in an iterative process which is known be to an advantage for researchers as it permit for theory development which is grounded in empirical evidence. Apart from the development of categories and a careful description of the data in which to place behaviours or process that have been proven to be a vital step in the process of analysing the data (Kohlbacher, 2006). Then, the data might be organised around some certain subjects, central questions or key themes and then finally, the data must be examined to see how far they fit or fail to fit in the expected categories (Kohlbacher, 2006).

Moreover, analysing data involves in tabulating, examining, testing, categorising or recombining both qualitative and quantitative evidence to state the initial propositions of the research study. Once a pattern have been identified, it is then later interpreted in terms of a social theory or the setting in which it occurred and that the qualitative researcher moves from the description of a historical event (Kohlbacher, 2006).

In this research, the literature review and the interview questions have been categories into three sections; Most used social media, social media marketing and reasons to used social media apart from marketing. As this method would help the researcher to identify the most
important aspects from the interview questions and literature review. The researcher have also linked every questions too each answers and with the companies. Once all of the questions have been answered by all of the respondents, the researcher was able to identify the similarities and differences of the interviewees. For instance in question 8, 10, 11 and 12 the questions were not set as a questionnaire as the other questions. Therefore, for the researcher to be able to analyse their data, the researcher collected answers that were similar to one another or used the terms that had the same meaning as the other respondents to be able to determine the patterns. By doing that the researcher was been able to determine the similarities and differences of the patterns and use them as research evidence into the empirical finding and discussions.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

According to Golafshani (2003) when a researcher designs the study, analyse the results and judging the quality of the research it is vital for any qualitative researcher to consider the validity and reliability of the study. However, Brink (1993) stated that many qualitative researchers try to avoid using the term of validity and reliability and use terms such as value, trust, applicability, trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, consistency.

In qualitative research the term validity means “appropriateness” of the processes, tools or data (Leung, 2015. This is to know if the research questions are valid for the desired outcome, the methodology is validly designed, the choice of the methodology is appropriate to answer the research question, the sampling and the analysis of data is appropriate and lastly the results and the conclusion of the research study are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). The researcher made sure to conduct a valid interview questions that were valid for this research study. Based on the interview questions, there were few questions that the researcher realised that they were not valid and irrelevant to the topic (social media). Therefore, those questioned were deleted and constructed concrete valid questions in order for the answers to be used as a valid resource for this research study.

According to Brink (1993) “reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informant’s accounts as well as the investigators’ ability to collect and record information accurately. It refers to the ability of a research method to yield consistently the same results over repeated testing periods. In other words, it requires that a researcher using the same or comparable methods obtained the same or comparable results every time
he uses the methods on the same or comparable subjects”. In another word Roberts, Priest and Traynor (2006) stated that reliability describes the way on how far a specific tool, procedure or test such as questionnaire will produce similar results in different circumstances by assuming nothing else have altered.

The interview answers were not difficult to answer neither was the questions to much, therefore, all the managers took their time to respond to the questions as honest as they could without being in rush. Moreover, the answers given by the four companies can been seen as a reliable source, however, their answers might change in the future. This is because social media is a type of platform whereby the developments of new technologies are still growing. In the near future there might be another platform that e-commerce businesses might use for their business strategy.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

According to Burton and Steane (2004.p. 52) it is vital for every research students to consider when writing a research study is the ethics of their research. However, the ethical considerations are also important to both administrative level and professional level. Either at doctoral studies or masters, there are expected standards about the appropriate method or structure and the research report (Burton and Steane, 2004.p. 52). At most universities there are expectations for student researchers to pay attention and justify to the ethical considerations as the university that the student attend to is the formal entity from which the student engage in the research (Burton and Steane, 2004.p. 52). Consequently, the research student is the public face of the university in the way the student research and in how individuals view the research (Burton and Steane, 2004.p. 52). Based in the ethical considerations, researchers must be worthwhile and must not make any unreasonable demands on participants and the participants must be based on informed content/agreement (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston, 2014, p. 77). Furthermore, the confidentially and anonymity of the participants involved must be respected and those participants should be voluntary and free from pressure or coercion (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston, 2014, p. 77).

In this study, the researcher has applied the ethical considerations and has also taken it seriously, as the researcher is aware how vital it is to acknowledge the ethical considerations. Before, conducting the research, the researcher introduced herself as a student from Gavle University in order to assure all the participants that their data would not be published on the
internet. As the participants agreed to participate into the researcher’s study project, some of the interviewees wanted their name to be private. Therefore, all the respondents have been named anonymously in order to respect their privacy. Moreover, in chapter 4 (empirical findings) no personal data of the researcher have been including only the information of the respondents. This is done to gain reliable and valuable data and to be completely honest with this research study.

3.7. Limitation of the Methodology

The limitation of this study is the lack of having the perspective of managers in the department of social media. The work could have been improved if the researcher was able to be in contact with those people in order to have a better validation of this research study. As other managers that are responsible of all social media platform of their company might probably know the statistics of their followers and which social media is most valuable for their company for instance. Additionally, the e-commerce business might have better insight of the influence of social media into their online store. Based on some questions there were few respondents that would give reasons for their answers that’s why in the table of the empirical findings in the answer column is blank.
CHAPTER 4 – EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Under this section the researcher will explain the most important findings of the research results and a brief background history of each company. According to Drotar (2009) this section is vital as it would illustrate and determine the key findings of the gathered results. Moreover, it would also make it easier for the reader to understand the result findings of the primary data of this research study. Based on the results, the findings will be based on how social media has influenced fast fashion e-commerce multinational business (Bik Bok, Monki, River Island and Vero Moda). To discuss and examine the findings of the participants, a primary face-to-face interview and telephone interview of data collection through the method of qualitative research method have been conducted.

4. Bik Bok Background

Bik Bok is comprised by one of the biggest and leading textile companies in Scandinavia with approximately 11000 employees and 1500 stores in eight countries that represent this company including Norway (Varner.com). Furthermore, Bik Bok is an international fast fashion business for young women that are both an online store and a retail store. Bik Bok was first launched by two Norwegians in 1973 where the owners first had an idea to only create fashion jeans brands for young girls (Bik Bok.com). By only focusing on jeans in those days the Bik Bok jeans started to become popular throughout the whole city in Norway and Sweden (Bik Bok.com). Due to their jean success, Bik Bok started to create an entire women collection and opened their first store in Oslo in 1978. Currently, Bik Bok have opened 200 stores in Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Austria and Norway (Bik Bok.com).

4.1. Bik Bok Interview Responses

The three respondents defined social media as a famous way for customers to be up to date of products being sold and also a way to communicate with customers. Bik Bok uses Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat, however Instagram is the most valuable social media function for this company which the company have been active by the use of social media since approximately 3 years. Bik Boks aim of using social media is to keep in touch with existing customers, attract new customers and to also for marketing and promotion purposes. One of the reasons why social media marketing is important for Bik Boks e-commerce is to have direct contact with their customers. As a result, social media is the best way for this company’s marketing approach. This is because
many people use social media such as Instagram which is known to be the one of the best method to reach out to their customers. By doing that Bik Bok can display the products which the company have both in store and online. According to all respondents social media have influenced their e-commerce business by the use of word of mouth because many people buy their products when they see it on social media. According to the respondents in the world we live in, the majority of the people nowadays check products on social media and then they tell their friends about the products that Bik Bok have on their online store.

Moreover, the interviewees also mentioned that the staff members at Bik Bok try do their best to make their customers happy by pleasing them, in another word Bik Bok react to the negative comments with positivity. Bik Bok checks and stay on top of the latest updates on social media by following up the trends and check what customers want to see. Moreover, the respondents have agreed that the use of social media have also increased Bik Bok’s sales. However, based on how social media have helped the company’s e-commerce business, the three respondents had different answers. Respondent 6 and 9 mentioned that equip customers with information have helped their e-commerce business while the other manager stated that it has helped the e-commerce business to drive conversions and sales. Furthermore, respondent 9 also pointed out that social media have also aided their company to boost brand awareness.

Finally, on the last question all respondents had agreed that Bik Bok have opened an e-commerce site in order to expand the market for niche products. Additionally, respondent 6 and 9 had another similar answer on the second choice which stated that Bik Bok have an e-commerce business to offer product datasheet while the other manager chose recording the buying habits their customer. Based on the last option all three managers had different reasons on why Bik Bok have opened an online store. According to respondent 6 is to comprise warranty information while respondent 5 and 9 wrote for the customers to have different variety of product choices which is available for them 24/7 whereby they can shop online in their homes.

4.2. River Island Background

River Island is a family business that started their clothing business in 1948. However, this multinational company first started by selling knitting wool, vegetables and fruits on market stool in a Blitz damaged North London. In 1988, the owners opened their first fast fashion retail store in London (Business of Fashion, 2015). Due to their early success and being the first fashion retailer to target teenage market in the United Kingdom, this family business became part of a
history for innovation across two other brands (Business of Fashion, 2015). These are Chelsea Girl and Lewis Separates. Additionally, in 2015 River Island has over 300 stores, 40 of those stores are situated in abroad; Middle East, Continental Europe and Australia (Business of Fashion, 2015). River Island launched their first online store in 2013 alongside with an IPad and IPhone app (River Island, 2013). This is to make it easier for customers to shop everywhere they are located in the world and to also be able to be up to date with the products that River Island offers (River Island, 2013).

4.2.1. River Island Interview Responses

According to respondent 2 and 4 social media can be defined in several ways. These are to reach out to their customers, give out information about new in and upcoming products. However, the main factor of social media is on how River Island can be active for their customers. River Island uses different types of social media which are Facebook (little), Instagram and their main company website. However, these two respondents stated that Instagram is the most valuable function of social media that the company uses the most. Based on the answers of the interviewees, River Island have been active by the use of social media for 5 to 6 years approximately. Moreover, the aim of River Island to use social media is to attract new customers, to market and promote their products and also to keep in touch with their existing customers. Social media marketing is known to be important to their e-commerce business as it helps the organisation to have direct contact with their customers and also the fact that it is free of charge.

Additionally, is it also the best marketing strategy whereby respondent 2 stated that nowadays people have switched up from paper magazines to digital whereby by most of the people use their smart phones to check on products. On the other hand, respondent 4 stated that social media have made it easier for customers to be able to see the products that the company offer. It is believed that the word of mouth have influenced River Island by the use of social media. One of the main tasks of the employees at River Island is to interact with their customers in stores to make sure the customers say positive comments about their stores to other people. On the other hand, respondent 2 and respondent 4 stated that River Island use the negative comments from their customers as a positive critic therefore the company is careful on how the business organisation treats and please their customers. According to respondent 4, in order for River Island to be able to stay up to date on the new platforms in social media, the company have a specific group team to keep on track on what their customers are using.
Both of the interviewees agreed that the use of social media have helped River Island to boost up their sales and have also helped the company to equip customers with information and increase their brand awareness. However, based on the last question of why River Island have opened an e-commerce site, the respondents have given two similar answers which is to record the buying habits of the customers and to expand market for niche products. Based on the results, according to respondent 2 the other reason why River Island have an e-commerce site is to reach out to customers in all around the world and contrary to respondent 2, respondent 4 mentioned it is to offer product datasheet.

### 4.3. Monki Background

Monki is a clothing retailer that first opened their store in 2012. This retail business is owned by a famous Swedish Company called H&M (Milne, 2012). Currently, Monki has more than 200 stores in 12 countries in Asia and Europe and also an online store that ships to 18 E.U countries (Hunstig, 2016). This year the H&M owned young fashion business celebrated their 10th anniversary of success (Hunstig, 2016).

#### 4.3.1. Monki Interview Responses

Based on the first question on how Monki defines social media, all three respondents agreed that social media is a way of communication by reaching out to their customers. Monki have been using social media for up to 3 years where they both have an Instagram and Facebook account. However, according to respondent 3 Monki also have a YouTube account whereby people can also go there to check up for their latest clothes. However, the main valuable social media for Monki is Instagram. All three interviewees chose all of above of the three options on what’s Monki’s main aim of social media. Those options were attract new customers, keep in touch with existing customers and marketing/promotion and also stated that social media marketing is important for their e-commerce business because it enables Monki to have direct contact with their customers.

Moreover, respondent 10 stated that promoting and rewarding their followers on social media is also another vital social media marketing tool for their online company. The interviewees also stated that social media is the best marketing tool for Monki as the company do not do
any other advertisement apart from social media. This marketing strategy allows Monki to illustrate the products that they offer both online and in store. Additionally, the respondents agreed that social media have not influenced Monki’s e-commerce business by the use of word of mouth as the social media is stronger than the word of mouth because many people have a social media account. Customers use their digital devices to check clothes online rather than taking the words of people and by doing that Monki have had a campaign whereby every customer that follows Monki on Instagram would get a 10% discount of every product item online. Monki try to respond to the negative comment of their customers by taking their comments into consideration and try to answer their negative comment as much as they can with positive feedback.

Well based on one of the interview questions on how Monki check and stay on of the latest updates and the new platforms in social media, responded 3 could not answer to it. However, on the other hand respondent 10 mentioned that Monki check on what social media their customers are most on and respondent 8 said that Monki does nothing to stay on top of the latest social media. Based on the increased sales of Monki the respondents agreed that social media has helped Monki to have an increased of sales. Additionally, on one of the questions respondent 10 mentioned all of the four points which have helped Monki’s e-commerce business by the use of social media, whilst respondent 3 and 8 mentioned equip customer with information.

However, respondent 3 also mentioned that the driven of conversions and sales have helped Monki’s online website while respondent 8 chose the boost of brand awareness. Additionally, all respondent agreed on two reasons why Monki have opened an e-commerce business. Those reasons are to record the buying habits of their customers and to expand their market for niche products. Based on the third chosen option, respondent 10 and 8 chose that Monki have an e-commerce business because they want to offer their customers with product datasheet while respondent 3 stated it is to reach their potential customers that do not have Monki store in their city.

4.4. Vero Moda Background

Vero Moda is a leading E.U fashion business that is owned by a Danish family business under the brand company of Bestseller. In 2012, Vero Moda operated in 22 countries with 650 large stores in all around the globe (Claeys, 2012). Vero Moda was first launched in Denmark in 1987 and
was one of the first brands that Bestseller opened. However, this fashion company first opened their store in Oslo, Norway in 1989 (Lucy, 2013). All the products and brands of Bestseller including Vero Moda are available online. This company is 100% owned by Anders Holch Povlsen who is the CEO and the Holch Povlsen Family (Bestseller, 2016).

4.4.1. Vero Moda Interview Respondents

According to the interviewees social media is defined as a free advertising method. This company uses both Facebook and Instagram for about 2 to 3 years but Instagram is the most valuable social media for the Vero Moda. Respondent 7 stated that Vero Moda’s aim of using social media is to attract customers, marketing and promotion, and to keep in contact with their customers. However, respondent 1 stated did not mention keeping in touch with their existing customer is the aim of Vero Moda to use social media. Moreover, according to respondent 1 the social media marketing is important for their company's e-commerce business is it free of charge whereby social media is the best marketing strategy for this company as it shows the customers the clothes that Vero Moda sells.

On the other hand, respondent 7 stated that social media marketing is vital for Vero Modas e-commerce Company because it is free of charge as respondent 1 said and to have direct contact with the customers, to promote and reward their followers and also to get to know the company's target market. Respondent 7 had a different view if social media is the best marketing tool for their company. The answer was no because there are many other customers that buy their products because of the TV Commercials that the company does. However, both of the managers at Vero Moda agreed that social media have influenced their company's e-commerce by the use of word of mouth. According to respondent 1, the customers buy both of their products in store and online based on the pictures that these people have seen on Instagram. Moreover, based on how Vero Moda respond to negative comments the managers responded that the company try to respond and acknowledge their comments by making sure to make their customers happy.

These two managers did not have an answer on how Vero Moda try to stay on top of the latest social media platform. However, respondent 1 stated that social media have helped the organisation to increase their sales and social media have also helped Vero Moda e-commerce to equip their customers with information by the use of social media. On the other hand, as respondent 7 stated that social media is not the best marketing tool for Vero Moda therefore it have not helped the business to increase their sales. However, the respondent 7 mentioned that
social media have helped Vero Moda e-commerce to boost brand awareness. In the final question both of the managers stated that for Vero Moda to be able to record the buying habits of their customers and to expand market for niche products are known to be the two main reasons why this company have opened an e-commerce business. On the other side respondent 1 also mentioned for Vero Moda to offer product datasheet while the other manager stated to comprise warranty information is the other reason why Vero Moda have opened an e-commerce business.

Table 7. Respondents Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Definition of social media:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>To reach out customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>To reach out customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>To reach out customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Free Advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Companies social media:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Instagram &amp; Facebook</td>
<td>Instagram &amp; Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Instagram, Facebook &amp; Youtube</td>
<td>Instagram &amp; Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Instagram &amp; Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Most valuable social media and how many years social media have been used:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Instagram; 3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Instagram; 5 to 6 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Instagram; 3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Instagram; 2 to 3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Aim of using social media:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Keep in touch with existing customer, attract new customers &amp; marketing/promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Keep in touch with existing customer, attract new customers &amp; marketing/promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Keep in touch with existing customer, attract new customers &amp; marketing/promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Keep in touch with existing customer, attract new customers &amp; marketing/promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Social media marketing importance:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Direct contact with customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Direct contact with customers &amp; free of charge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Direct contact with customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Direct contact with customers, free of charge, get to know their target market &amp; promote and reward their followers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Reason why social media is the best marketing approach:</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>To update their products to customers in both online and stores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>To update their products to customers &amp; paper magazines switched to digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>To update their products to customers as no other advertisement used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Social media not best marketing approach; TV Commercials best method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Has social media influence your e-commerce firm by the use of Word of Mouth?</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik Bok</td>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Yes; Products are bought when customers tell other customers based on what they saw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Island</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Yes; ……(NO REASON)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monki</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>No; Customers check on their social media account rather than the word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vero Moda</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
<td>No; Customers check on their social media account rather than the word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Company     | Respondent | How does the company react to negative comments from customers? | Answer                                      |

56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bik Bok</th>
<th>River Island</th>
<th>Monki</th>
<th>Vero Moda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative comments as a positive critic and try to please their customers
Negative comments as a positive critic and try to please their customers
Try to respond back with positive feedback by acknowledging their comments
Try to respond back and acknowledge their comments to make them happy

How to check and stay on top of the latest updates and new platforms in social media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bik Bok</th>
<th>River Island</th>
<th>Monki</th>
<th>Vero Moda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the latest trend and check what their customers use the most
Specific group teams to keep on track on what their customers use
Check what social media their customers use
……… (NO ANSWER)

Has social media helped your e-commerce business to increase sales?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bik Bok</th>
<th>River Island</th>
<th>Monki</th>
<th>Vero Moda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes
Yes
Yes
No

How has social media helped your e-commerce business?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bik Bok</th>
<th>River Island</th>
<th>Monki</th>
<th>Vero Moda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equip customers with information, drive conversions and sales & boost brand awareness
Equip customers with information & boost brand awareness
Drive conversions and sales & boost brand awareness
Equip customers with information & boost brand awareness

What is the reason to your company have opened an e-commerce site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bik Bok</th>
<th>River Island</th>
<th>Monki</th>
<th>Vero Moda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 &amp; 9</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>3, 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>1 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expand market for niche products, offer product datasheet & different variety of product choices available 24/7
Record the buying habits of customers & to expand for niche products
Record the buying habits of customers, expand for niche products & offer product datasheet
Record the buying habits of customers & to expand for niche products

Source: Own construction
CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS/DISCUSSIONS

This chapter will link the literature review with the empirical findings in order to analyse and determine the similarities and connection between these two chapters. By doing that, this section will be divided into three sections; definition of social and most used social media, company's aim of using social media and social media marketing. The reason for dividing the parts into three sections is to make it easier for the reader and researcher to be able to identify the aim of the research study and the two research questions.

5. Definition of Social Media and Most Used Social Media

Based on the research findings social media can be defined in many different terms, however, most of the interviewees defined social media as a tool to reach out to their customers and to advertise their brand/product. This definition can be agreed by the Mohapatra (2013) who mentioned that social media is a network tool which allows companies to communicate with their potential customers. Additionally, Subrahmaniam et al. (2008) also agreed that social media is one of the newest online communication strategy which allow online users to communicate with one another.

The most social media platform that these four fast fashion multinational e-commerce businesses use are both Instagram and Facebook, but the most social media platform that is used by these online retailers is Instagram. According to Sheldon and Bryant (2015) and Sloane (2016) Instagram is currently the most used social network in this world. Businesses have realised how effective this platform is and have become one of the most quickest used of social media for businesses. As soon as Instagram was launched in 2010, this social media platform spread worldwide (Boy and Uitermark, 2016). This is an example of the three companies (Monki, Bik Bok and River Island) who have started to use social media for about for about 4 to 6 years. According to Oren (2015) more than 58% of the global 50 top business organisations use Instagram whereby they post 5, 6 times per week.
According to Montague, Gazal, Weidenbeck and Shephard (2016) social media aid business companies to promote their business brands by offering useful information to their consumers and also to drive more traffic on their company's website. Bik Bok, River Island and Monki agreed that social media help their e-commerce business to increase their sales. This also results in customers going to their websites which increases web traffic. Tsimonis and Dimitriados (2012) also agreed that social media increases the sales of businesses when customers visits their company's page and then it causes traffic. Most likely, all of the respondents mentioned that they use social media as their business strategy to attract new customers, marketing/promotion and to keep in touch with existing customers. This can be agreed by Öztamur and Karakadılar (2014), Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi (2012) and Boyd and Ellison (2008). These authors mentioned that social media is an effective business strategy for many individuals especially businesses and most particularly retailers. This is because according to the researchers social media is a tool that helps both retailers and consumers to interact with one another concerning their purchase product or to gain more information about the brand or product. Moreover, Minter (2013) also stated that social media is also a method for businesses to attract new customers. Although, these two are the part of the aims of all four companies, according to many researchers social media marketing is very important for all type of businesses.

There are also some other businesses that use social media to increase their sales by promoting and displaying their products on the internet and to create more brand/product awareness (Tchach, Lease and Barton, 2016). With this statement, all four clothing companies that have been interviewed mentioned that one of the main reasons why their company use social media, is because it helps their e-commerce business to boost brand awareness. Moreover, Bik Bok and Monki also mentioned another factor on how social media have helped their e-commerce business which is to drive conversions and sales.

Business organisations that use social media is to reach out to other customers that cannot be reached and to also increase brand awareness to have an access of millions of people (Tsimonis and Dimitriadiis, 2014). River Island and Monki stated that one of their reasons that they have an e-commerce business is to be able to reach out to other customers that are living abroad who do not have their store in their city.
5.2. Social Media Marketing

The business marketing and promotion have changed, whereby social media have been increased as a marketing strategy while physical means of promotion such as radio, magazines and newspapers have decreased (Montaguem Gazal, Weidenbeck and Shephard, 2016). This statement have been supported by River Island that social media is the best marketing strategy. It have been mentioned that nowadays people have swift from paper magazines to digital (smart phones). Moreover, organisations that use social media as a marketing tool can be very helpful for business organisations to build a strong relationship with their customers and to promote their brand (Öztamur and Karakadılar, 2014). Therefore, social media marketing is known to be the best method of marketing for business organisations to attract customers (Neti, 2011). Moreover, there is a high growth of business organisations that use social media as part of their marketing activities and brand building (Tsiminos and Dimitriadis, 2014). Firms that use social media can benefit from brand reach and awareness and customer communication (Neti, 2011). During the interview all the respondents of each fashion company (Vero Moda, Bik Bok, River Island and Monki) all mentioned the reasons why social media marketing is vital for their e-commerce business. The respondents either mentioned that it is because to have direct contact with their customers or because social media is free of charge or to get to know their target market or to promote or reward their social media followers.

Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshimi (2012) also stated that nowadays, marketers see social media as a great opportunity for their business to increase their market share figure, to promote and market their good and services. Firms are now able to interact with their customers, build brand equity, market their products and increase customer loyalty. According to all of the respondents that were interviewed, all of them mentioned that one of the reason why their clothing company have opened an e-commerce business is to expand their market for niche products.

5.2.1. Direct Communication

More and more consumers are surfing therefore businesses use the internet to create a competitive advantage for their firm. This has helped e-commerce businesses to establish their brands in online channels as they have noticed that consumers are attracted to the internet (Mohapatra, 2013). When the interviewer asked the store managers why social media marketing was important for their e-commerce businesses, they all most likely responded to have direct contact with their customers. Similarly to Mazurkiewics (2015) social media can
help organisations to promote their products and for the company to have direct contact with their customers and to attract customers in a new and unique way. Social media is the best marketing tool for all four fast fashion companies, as it is a method to reach out to customers and for customers to gather product information. The effect of social media have influenced Bik Bok, Vero Moda, River Island and Monki's e-commerce business, due to the fact that many customers use social media and recommend it to their friends to purchase products from their online retail store. Social media is one of the most effective sharing elements. That is why many people in all around use social media to interact to one another or to share their photos, opinions and information’s (Bulut and Dogan, 2017).

Saravanakumar and Suganthalakshmi (2012) also stated that retailers that have social media, use it as a communication tool to communicate with their customer. For instance, it have been reported that in 2012 there were 600 million Facebookers in all around the globe whereby retailers used it to interact with their consumers. With this type of social media the retailers are also able to reward their followers or customers by giving them discounts. This can be viewed in the response of Vero Moda as they also use social media to reward their followers or even Monki. Monki gives each of their followers 10% discounts on every product that is displayed on their online store if they follow them on Instagram.

Based on one question on how these clothing companies respond or react to the negative comments of their customers, they all had the same respond. All the respondents mentioned that they try their best to respond back to the negative comments of their customers with positive responses. By acknowledging their negative comment, their aim is to please their customers therefore they take their negative comment as a positive criticism. As social media offer businesses a technique to be able to communicate directly with their customers and to build relationships it is vital for every firm to deal with negative comments from their customers positively (Minter, 2013). Customers that have written negative feedback on a company's social media account about their specific product or service, the company should turn that negative feedback into a positive criticism (Minter, 2013).
5.2.2. Free of Charge

According to River Island and Vero Moda one of their other reason why they use social media as a marketing tool is because it is free of charge. Kirtis and Karahan (2011) and Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) mentioned that firms create or use social media as a marketing approach help those business organisations to decrease their business cost. When businesses use social media to promote their brands and other marketing activities their cost less or even free. Most of the social media outlets are accessed free of charge.

5.2.3. Gather information

According to Mazurkiewics (2015) the usage of social media for business organisations can be an effective method to enhance their business credibility by providing useful information and to generate business through discounts and promotions. Firms can show the quality of work via videos and pictures. Firms also offer their customers a direct line to be in contact with them. Moreover, Kirtis and Karahan (2011) social media is both useful to consumers and firms as it help them to gather information. 70% of the customers have used social media to gather brand or product information. Bik Bok, River Island and Vero Moda said that social media help their business to equip customers with their product information and also to offer product datasheet (Bik Bok and Monki).

5.2.4. Word of Mouth

According to Tsiminos and dimitriadis (2014) social media does not only allow companies to interact with their customers but is also allow the customers to share information among themselves. Based on the results in the empirical findings, Bik Bok and River Island stated that social media have influenced their company by the use of word of mouth. The respondents have mentioned that customers buy their clothes based on the information that other customers give them. This means that all the items that have been displayed on their social media, the customers spread information to one another which can have an influence into their buying decision. Chen, Fay and Wang (2011) supported the statement above by agreeing that the word of mouth communication is a vital facilitator of learning which can have an influence into the buying decision of the customers.
Furthermore, Castronovo and Huang (2012) stated that consumers are highly influenced by the decisions and opinions of another consumer. The communication between consumer and consumer can change the buying decision of a customer whereby they consider those information reliable and valid sources of product information. Additionally, the word of mouth is more effective into peoples buying decision than traditional advertising channels. On that note Kirtis and Karahan (2011) also stated that 60% of consumers have been reported that they use the social media to transfer data to other people or customers. On the contrary, the other two companies, Monki and Vero Moda stated that their company is not influenced by the use of word of mouth. This is because people rather make their buying decision based on what they see on social media rather than what other people comment or say. Chen, Fay and Wang (2011) also stated that there are some situations where the influence of word of mouth can be privately ignored instead of people entirely rely on the information that people inform.

With all been said to link the answers with the theoretical model, it have been discovered that fast fashion multinational e-commerce businesses use social media as a marketing tool in order to be in touch with their potential customers. Another reason is for their business to be more successful and all the above that have been mentioned on the theoretical model. Although, using social media to be part of their marketing strategy it might influence the business such as the word of mouth. The word of mouth is believed to be the strongest influential factor that online customers listen the most. This factor can have an influence into an online customer’s buying decision either in a positive or negative way. However, to sum up social media can be seen as one of the best method for online firms to use as a marketing strategy as it has many different benefits that online firms can benefit from.

Based on all the findings of this research study, the gap can be fulfilled. As the gap was lack of academic studies that have covered all three terms (e-commerce, fast fashion and social) together. This research study was able to combine all three terms and was able to find out how social media influences fast fashion e-commerce multinational businesses.
CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

This section will answer the two research questions of this research study and also to identify all the main findings of the empirical findings and analysis. Moreover, the implication and limitations of this study will also be implied into this section.

6. The Influence of Social Media on Fast Fashion E-commerce Firms

The development of internet has helped many fast fashion e-commerce businesses to use social media as a business strategy. The growth of e-commerce businesses in every type of business sizes have increased over in the last past years. E-commerce businesses use this type of business in order to be able to attract new customers and most particularly to reach and sell products both internationally and domestically. Opening online stores for businesses have become a very famous way for e-commerce firms to provide goods and services online to their potential customers as this has also become a vital retail strategy. It is very important that every type of business or size to react to their customers negative comments on social media with positivity. All of these four companies acknowledge how important their customers comment is even if it is negative. These companies always try to respond back to the negative comments of their customers with positivity. Fast fashion e-commerce all view it as a positive criticism that why they all try their best to make their customers happy in order to avoid their negative comments in the future. To go more further, this section will divide the section into two headings according to the research questions in order to identify and determine the aim of the study.

What type of social media platform do e-commerce enterprises?

To answer this question, the researcher discovered that e-commerce companies have a social media account to be part of their marketing strategy. The most common social media platform that e-commerce companies use the most for their e-commerce business is Instagram. However, apart from Instagram, Facebook is also been used. These two social media platform are the most used in this world whereby there are millions of people that either have Instagram or Facebook. Instagram have been introduced into the world since 2010 which have permitted people especially retailers to display their products or services on the internet. This is done by sharing pictures and videos for their customers to see and a way to attract them.

With the success of Instagram and any other social media platform it have been discovered e-commerce companies have been using social media for about 3 years now. However, there are
some other e-commerce companies have been using the social media platform especially Instagram for more than 5 years for their marketing strategy.

*Why e-commerce companies use social media for their marketing strategy?*

It have been founded that there are many different reasons why e-commerce firms have been using social media for their marketing strategy. However, most of the e-commerce companies use social media to attract new customers and to keep in touch with their existing customers. One of the main factors that have been discovered is that e-commerce companies have acknowledge how important social media is to their business and marketing strategy whereby other e-commerce companies stated that social media is not as vital as a marketing strategy than traditional advertising although they also use it as a marketing tool. On that note e-commerce companies aim of using social media is to market and promote their business. The reason why social media marketing is important for their e-commerce business is to have direct contact with their customers. On the other hand, few e-commerce firms also mentioned that it is free of charge. When businesses open a social media account, it helps those firms to reduce their business cost when marketing their brand or products. Due to their reasons of using social media as a marketing tool, these firms agreed that social media is the best marketing tool/strategy for their business. As social media have helped these companies to update their products on the internet by informing their customers more about the clothing products that these companies offer both in stores and online. Companies have noticed that customers have swift from traditional advertisement such as radio or paper magazines to digital media (smart phones). Contrary to some e-commerce companies, social media is not the best marketing tool for their business as most of their customers buy their products based on what is shown on TV commercials than any other social media platform. As a result, the social media have not helped this e-commerce firm to increase their sales.

Due to the advance of technology especially in the field of social media, it has influence few e-commerce firms by the use of word of mouth. Customers are highly influenced based on what other customers tell them about a specific product or brand. They can easily be influenced into their buying decision either positively or negatively. There are many customers that spread product information to other customers and among customers they strongly rely on each other’s comments as the customer to customer interaction is considered as a reliable and valuable source of product information. On the other hand, other e-commerce firms stated that social media have not influenced their e-commerce business by the word of mouth. This is because most of their customers buying decisions is based on what they see on social media instead of what other customers say or comment about their products or company.
Moreover, social media have helped these online businesses to equip their customer’s information and to boost brand awareness. Social media help business organisations to expand their brand name and products globally. E-commerce firms also provide their customers information about a specific product whereby they have also mentioned that offering product datasheet is one of the reasons why they have opened an e-commerce site. This is to provide more detail about the product. By doing that some of the companies also mentioned that the purpose for also opening an e-commerce business is to expand their business for niche products.

6.1. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Several implications in this research study have been identified. According to Ang (2014, p. 273) the first implication that covers the contribution of a research study is the theoretical implication. In this section it is important for the researcher to ensure the theoretical implication is aligned with the aim of the research study. Firstly, in the theoretical implication it have been discovered that social media have different meaning and purposes for any type of business organisations. This means that it is used differently into their business strategy. The researcher also found out that within the social media platform Instagram and Facebook are the most common social media network in all over the world. However, it is believed Instagram is the most used and valuable for these retail e-commerce businesses (Monki, River Island, Bik Bok and Vero Moda). Business organisations aim for using social media is to attract new customers, keep in touch with existing customers and for marketing and promotion purposes. There are some businesses use social media as a marketing tool in order to have direct contact with their customers, to get to know their target market, promote and reward their followers. Some businesses also use social media for marketing to decrease their spending cost as this approach is free of charge. With the use of social media it has helped other businesses to increase their sales however it might not be the case for other businesses. The use of social media has influenced some e-commerce businesses or any other normal businesses by the use of word of mouth. This means that the communication process between customers is strong and influential. Between customers they listen to one another and strongly consider their comment about a specific product or brand. As a result this can influence their purchasing decision either they will continue to buy the product or not.
Based on the Managerial implications is it how other managers would use the research findings. This is by relating this to the outcome and independent variables. The outcome variables are what the managers should try to achieve. Moreover, the managerial implications should connect with the relationship that have been discovered in the research study and also to advise managers on how they can improve the independent casual factor to work towards the desired and better outcome (Ang, 2014, p. 273). To link this theory with the researchers managerial implications, is that other managers from different online business organisations can learn that social media have been considered to be one of the best methods for marketing. As it is believed that Instagram and Facebook are the world most known social media platform, therefore the researcher would recommend other managers to use these two social media platforms when marketing their business. This is because nowadays, there are millions of people such as online customers that use these two social media platforms daily basis either for their personal lives or to gather information about a specific product or brand. However, based on this research study other managers in other companies can learn that even though social media can bring success into a company’s goal it can also be influenced by the word of mouth of other online customers.

Based on the contribution of this study the researcher has discovered that no other academic studies have fully discussed the influence of social media in fast fashion multinational e-commerce businesses. This means that other authors have only done researches on fashion companies or e-commerce businesses in general rather that specifically focusing on fast fashion e-commerce or fashion e-commerce businesses. Therefore, other studies can use this research for their future research to determine how social media can influence fast fashion e-commerce businesses. However, the main contribution of this research is that other researchers can use this research into their future studies knowing that social media positively influences this type of businesses in particular. The main social media platform that fast fashion e-commerce use apart from Facebook is Instagram which have helped these companies to be able to have direct contact with their customers, promote, attract new customers and also to able to study their target market. Although, it have been mentioned that social media positively influences fast fashion e-commerce businesses, it also have some negative influences such as the word of mouth of online customers. If other future researchers want to study how social media can influence fast fashion e-commerce businesses by the word of mouth, they can use this study research to find the answers of their future studies as no other academic studies have specifically discussed fast fashion e-commerce.
6.2. Limitation and Reflection of Study

The limitation of this entire study is that there were no enough resources or authors that have specifically covered the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce firms and what are their purposes to use social media as a business strategy. The only resource that could be found was general information about how business organization's use social media rather than how fast fashion e-commerce businesses use social media and how they are influenced by this. Additionally, there were no scientific articles have discussed fast fashion e-commerce businesses. The only articles that exist is either fast fashion or e-commerce but no other articles have combined these two together. Therefore, this can be seen as the research gap of this study. Another limitation for this research study is that based on question 10 and 12 of this interview questions there were few respondents of these fast fashion e-commerce companies managers did not explain their reasons for their responses. This can be seen as a limitation because one of the possible reasons why those respondents did not give their answers could probably be because they might not be permitted to give answers based on those questions or they did not have the answer for their reasons.

Based on the reflection of this study, the researcher has learnt that if the study did also include a quantitative approach rather than only conducting a qualitative approach. The research study could have been better; this is because according to Hussein (2009) a triangulation method a mixture of qualitative and quantitative method can help the researcher to increase the wider and deep understanding of the study phenomenon and also to increase the credibility of the study. Another aspect that the researcher would have done differently in this research study is by adding the customers’ perspective too. By doing that the researcher would have also known some information outside the box besides the views of the managers. For instance, what are the reasons why customers check on e-commerce firms’ social media account before purchasing their products and how do they trust their webpage when making a payment. Adding the perspectives of the customers into this research study, more information can be gathered and different views can be obtained on how social media influence fast fashion e-commerce business. However, these points that have been mentioned can also be used in suggestion for further research.
6.3. Suggestion For further Research

As this research study only covers the influence of social media on fast fashion e-commerce businesses. Further study can be conducted on the perspective of fast fashion e-commerce customer’s perspective. Moreover, a bigger sampling of respondents can be collected rather than only collecting data from 2 or 3 people from each company. There might be a possibility if the chosen sampling was bigger; the researcher could have had more concrete and solid research study.


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**Online Newspaper Articles**


Website


Blogs


APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. How do you define social media?

2. Which social media/s does your company use?
   a) Facebook   b) Instagram   c) Twitter   d) Pinterest   e) YouTube   f) Other ____________

3. Which of the following social media function are seen most valuable for your organisation?

4. For how long has your company been using social media?
   a) 2 to 3 years   b) 3 to 4 years   c) 5 to 6 years   d) 7 plus years

5. What is the company's aim of using social media?
   a) Attract new customers   b) Keep in touch with existing customers   c) Marketing/Promotion

6. Why social media marketing is vital for your e-commerce business?
   a) Free of charge
   b) Direct contact with customers
   c) Promote and reward your followers
   d) Get to know your target market

7. Is social media the best marketing tool/strategy for your company as you see it?
   a) Yes   b) No

8. Please give reasons for any chosen answer

9. Has social media influenced your e-commerce company by the use of Word-of-Mouth?
   a) Yes   b) No

10. If yes, How has the word-of-mouth influenced your company?

11. How does your organisation react/meet to consumers negative comments?

12. How does your company check and stay on top of the lastest updates and new platforms in social media?

13. Has social media helped your organisation to increase sales?
   a) Yes   b) No

14. Choose the following options below on how social has helped your e-commerce business
   a) Better understanding of customers
   b) Equip customers with information
   c) Drive conversations and sales
   d) Boost brand awareness

15. What is the reason open an e-commerce site? Choose three
   a) Reduce the cost of maintaining and managing inventory
   b) Record the buying habits of customers
   c) Offer product datasheet
   d) Comprise warranty information
   e) Expand market for niche products
   f) Other reason ____________________________