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**EFFICACY OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION ON CLIENT GROWTH FOR  
INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS**

by

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## **Abstract**

This study provides information and insight relating to the influence of social media adoption on client growth for independent management consultants. The relationship between the number and types of social media platforms used and their influence on client growth was examined in this research design that used a descriptive explanatory study. The study offers insight into the understanding of how independent management consultants are adopting social media. The research questions sought to determine if there was a significant relationship between client growth and the number of social media platforms used or the types of social media platforms used. The population includes U.S.-based independent management consultants. Insufficient data was available to prove or disprove a significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth. However, the original quantitative data collection effort was expanded to include observational data about how independent management consultants used social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) to influence client growth potential. These observations were used to evaluate the quantitative and observational data collected. The study further describes the relationship between social media adoption and client growth potential.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this body of work to my wife Astrid for her unselfish support and understanding; to my daughter Jade for her support; to the brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. that pressed me to pursue my goal and consistently offered support and encouragement along the journey and in the loving memory of Samuel C. Gregory and Dr. Ervin L. Caraballo.

## **Acknowledgments**

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I thank Dr. Daniel Mays for his statistical insight and helping me to understand how to convey my study in statistical language.

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## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

This paper is a quantitative study to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between social media adoption and client growth within independent management consulting practices. The organization of this paper includes the background, the business problem, the research questions, the rationale, the research purpose, the significance, a definition of terms, the theoretical framework, any assumption and limitations, and the organization of the remainder of the study. Social media scholars (Pliska, 2012; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Taneja & Toombs 2014) advocate for the adoption of social media to achieve desired business outcomes. Such studies reveal that manager-owners must learn how to use technology to their advantage by leveraging social media to enhance business capacity.

### **Background**

Management consulting is a growing industry. Consulting organizations represent themselves through internet-based media (Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012). Consulting practices concentrate on client growth both in the context of creating better value for clients and creating better services. Small business owners are under the misunderstanding that social media adoption is irrelevant to their business (Mershon, 2012).

Scholars indicated compelling reasons why independent practices should adopt social media to achieve desired business outcomes (Gruzd et al., 2012; Pliska, 2012; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Taneja & Toombs 2014; Durkin, McGowan, & McKeown, 2013). Social media

is the preferred tool in the information age to leverage sales, engage customers, and build rapport with existing clients (Taneja & Toombs, 2014, p. 249). The evidence from this study revealed that small business owners reported gaining 50% of new customers through social media, specifically social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. Likewise, 51% of Facebook users and 64% of Twitter users were more likely to purchase from the brands followed (Mershon, 2012). Leveraging multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter offer the capability to increase client volume and revenue by increasing the capacity to extend services (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). In contrast, independent consulting practices insufficient adoption of social media may inadequately cultivate new clients and may create an undesirable outcome.

Social media adoption is a method to reach potential clients that can ultimately create desired outcomes (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Practices can adopt and design the social media approach to enhance a client's involvement—which delivers tangible value for all stakeholders (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The value created can sustain existing clients and promote new client generation. The Unified Theory of Acceptance Use of Technology (UTAUT) model (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003) can help gain a better understanding of the social aspects of social media adoption on client growth.

### **Business Problem**

In a dynamic global environment, technological innovation offers significant opportunities for independent management consulting practices to achieve competitive advantage and grow their client base. The technical innovation of social media is widespread across the business landscape (Pliska, 2012; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Taneja & Toombs

2014; Durkin et al., 2013). Social media is changing the way businesses approach existing and future customer growth by transforming the way people interact (Taneja & Toombs, 2014).

The general problem is in the difficulty in measuring the impact of social media adoption and client growth in the professional services industry. The specific problem is an insufficient understanding of the relationship of social media adoption on client growth for independent management consultants. This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between social media adoption and client growth for individual management consulting practices. The ability to survive in a dynamic global business landscape is constructed around technological innovation that depends on management, the external environment, and the ability to connect with potential clients (Taneja & Toombs, 2014); social media is a common link between these elements. Social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram may offer significantly greater opportunities to increase client growth

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this quantitative explanatory study is to examine the relationship between social media adoption and client growth within independent management consulting practices. A secondary data source was the instrument to extract data from a public database of independent management consultants to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The proposed study is a significant addition to the existing body of knowledge in the field of management consulting. Independent management consulting practices can leverage the results of this study to better understand the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. Social media adoption can help firms grow clients and promote their business (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Social media adoption is important because over 80% of all Americans use social networks. In fact, the average user has 130 friends and is linked to 80

pages, events, and groups. Nearly 75% of Facebook users are outside the United States with accounts accessible in 70 languages (Singh, Lehnert, & Bostick, 2012).

More importantly, independent management consultants must understand how a greater understanding of social media adoption influences client growth. Ovanessooff and Purdy (2011) asserted that, "some companies have a wealth of information about their customers but don't know how to translate this into better decisions (p. 91)." Management consultants must understand their clients so they constantly seek ways to achieve desired outcomes. In an age of social media dominance, a clearer understanding of how social adoption can be leveraged to achieve desired outcomes is essential. The study determined if there was statistical significance between social media adoption and client growth benefitting management consulting practices.

### **Research Questions**

The existing research (Durkin et al., 2013; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Taneja & Toombs 2014) insufficiently examined the relationship between social media adoption and client development in independent management consulting practices. The research consists of data drawn from secondary data sources. These below questions were the focus of the study.

- 1) Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth?
- 2) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the number of social media platforms used and client growth?
- 3) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the type of social media platforms used and client growth?



## **Rationale**

This study provides information and insights relating to the influence of social media adoption on client growth for independent management consulting practices. In contrast, very little has been concluded concerning the use of social media as a critical success factor (Hibbler-Britt & Sussan, 2015). Scholars have noted the need for research in social media adoption behaviors and more generally in the marketing/technology interface (Durkin et al., 2013). Schaupp and Bélanger (2014) suggested that competitive rivalry was not the motivating force that drove the decision to adopt social media, but rather the need for customers; therefore, customer volume was a significant aspect of social media adoption. The examination examines a deeper understanding of the statistical relationship between social media adoption and client growth in independent management consulting practices. The study offers insight into the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. The findings can benefit individual management consultants. The study further provides insight into the relationship between the type of social media platforms that influence client growth.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was a quantitative explanatory examination to determine the statistical significance of social media adoption on client growth in independent management consulting practices. Independent management consultants are driven to adopt social media in a socially connected business environment (Durkin et al., 2013). The base theory that best comprehends the phenomena is the UTAUT model (Venkatesh, 2003).

The UTAUT model (Venkatesh, 2003) is widely accepted as the most precise means to study Information Technology (IT) adoption, intention, and use of social media. The theory examines the relationship between social media adoption, consultant use, and client volume. The

UTAUT model directs attention to understanding the acceptance of information technologies (Venkatesh, 2003).

Additionally, the UTAUT model (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012) comprises eight theories: the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and the technology acceptance model (TAM); Davis, 1989). The UTAUT model also includes the combined theory of planned behavior (TPB), and technology acceptance model (TAM) (Taylor & Todd, 1995; Davis, 1989), the motivational model along with PC utilization model (Thompson, Higgins, & Howell, 1991), and diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003). The main objective of the UTAUT model is to gain an understanding of user acceptance of IT in a combined view as it relates to the relationship between social media adoption and client growth.

The UTAUT theory (Venkatesh et al., 2012) comprises four significant constructs, which include performance expectancy, social influence, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions. Considering the four aspects of this theory offers a deeper understanding. The four areas of the UTAUT theory address client intent and behavior as well as technological aspects that influence the relationship of social media adoption on client growth for independent management consultants. Intent, behavior, and technology are the antecedents to social media that shape cultural trends.

The eight individual theories comprising the UTAUT model insufficiently address the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. However, collectively the theories offer insight to the independent management consultants understanding of how social media adoption is leveraged to increase their client base. Businesses can leverage the knowledge of existing trends to achieve desired business outcomes (Durkin et al., 2013). The desired business

outcomes may translate into operational measures such as which social platforms to use, how many platforms to use, and client growth. As social media usage widens, it is essential for consultants to understand the significance of these tools and take advantage of every available opportunity to grow their client base effectively.

The theoretical framework examines the factors influencing technology usage from the perspective of the practitioner and the user. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the UTAUT model (Venkatesh, 2003). The benefit to the practitioner is that it will directly address the factors that lead to strategy development and indications of consumer habit that is the foundation for describing the relationship between social media adoption and client growth.

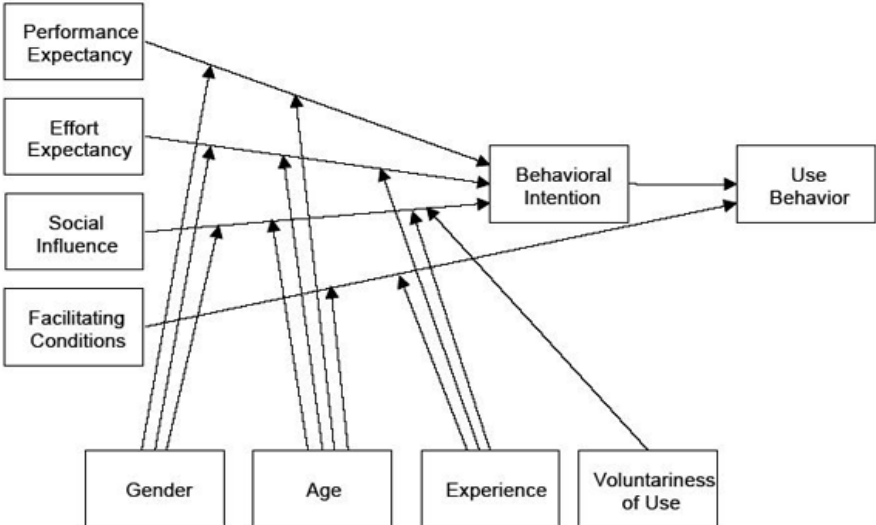


Figure 1. Adapted from the UTAUT model from “User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view,” by V. Venkatesh, M. G. Morris, G. B. Davis, and F. D. Davis, 2003, *MIS Quarterly*, 27, p. 425-478.

**Significance**

Existing literature insufficiently addresses the statistical significance of social media adoption on client growth in independent management consulting practices (Durkin et al., 2013; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014; Taneja & Toombs 2014). This study adds to the existing body of

knowledge of how social media adoption influences client growth in independent management consulting practices. Furthermore, the research provides independent management consulting practices with a clearer indication of how social media adoption can be utilized to influence client growth. According to Taneja and Toombs (2014), businesses leverage social media platforms such as Facebook (70.3%), LinkedIn (58.2%), Twitter (39.8%), and Bing (33.2%) promote services through either business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B) channels. The study addresses concerns that preclude a wider acceptance of social media adoption (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013). The study examines the statistical significance of social media adoption on client growth in independent management consulting practices.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Adoption:* For the purpose of the study adoption is synonymous with “practice,” “utilization,” and “acceptance” (Nah & Saxton, 2012).

*Clients:* This is a generic term used to identify managers, administrators, or organizations using management consultants for public, private, enterprise, or government use (Kubr, 2002).

*Client Growth:* This is characterized by the desired level of increase in the customer base (Dutta & Roy, 2006).

*Independent Management Consultant USA:* The IMCUSA refers to the licensing of individual certifications. For the purpose of the study, the word “individual” and “independent” are synonymous (IMCUSA, 2015). The independent management consultants operate a private practice, not as a part of a firm.

*Management Consultant:* This is a generic term for individuals that perform any of various types of consulting functions in the field of business management (Kubr, 2002).

*Social Media*: Social media is a general term encompassing blogs, wikis, Internet communities, and online discussions (Franklin, Hogan, & Langley, 2009).

*Unified Theory of Acceptance Use of Technology (UTAUT)*: A model that explains intentions and usage of various technology adoption models (Venkatesh, 2003).

*Value Creation*: This refers to any factor that creates value that may include resources, efficiencies, revenue, or activities. This includes actions that increase the worth of goods, services, or client growth (Amit & Zott, 2000).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study was grounded in a number of assumptions related to the research data, theories, methodology, and participants. The assumptions are the theoretical assumptions and relevant hypotheses. The first assumption was that the sample was selected randomly from the IMCUSA database of management consultants and was truly representative of the population. The random sample offered each member in the selected population equal possibility of selection (Creswell, 2013). The second assumption was that all consultant social media information was true and accurate. The third assumption was that all web-linked information was up to date. The fourth assumption was that the demographic data was true and accurate. The next assumption was that the researcher would not introduce bias or error. The next assumption was that the research would be conducted in such a way that the results were credible. All privacy, confidentiality, and security were maintained (and will continue to be maintained). All research was conducted in an ethical manner.

The primary limitation of the study was the expansive breadth and depth of social media. This study was confined to the narrow aspect of the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. A further limitation of the study was the accuracy of the database reflecting

the accuracy of active members. The study was limited to the posted membership demographic data, client feedback, and client listings. Furthermore, the data was limited by the accuracy of the self-reported information.

Another limitation was the UTAUT model by Venkatesh (2003) that measures four significant constructs (1) performance expectancy, (2) social influence, (3) effort expectancy, and (4) facilitating conditions that describes the factors that exclusively contribute to social media adoption from a manager and consumer aspect. Statistical methods were used to describe the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. A delimitation of the study was the performance measures in the UTAUT model that were used to explain the effects of social media and not the metrics for determining statistical outcomes.

### **Organization for Remainder of Study**

The organization of the remainder of this study incorporates the following sections. Chapter 2 is a literature review of related research of social media adoption and diffusion with defining characteristics and historical context. Chapter 3 details the research design and methodology for this study. Chapter 4 offers results drawn from the study and analysis of the data. In closing, Chapter 5 postulates a summary of findings, resultant conclusions, and suggests recommendations for future exploration.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Chapter 2 is divided into eight sections: theoretical framework; social media influences on business operations; social media adoption impact on individual management consultants; social media challenges; trends in individual management consultant operations; impact of global social media adoption of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn; and other platforms; related research and debate; and summary. The IMCUSA consists of active certified management consultants that operate public and private practices. The IMCUSA is populated sufficiently with certified individual management consultants with social media profiles to determine a statistically sufficient relationship between social media adoption and client growth. The gaps in the literature were addressed through available information in the existing literature supporting the research. The literature review examined the research emphasizing the influences of social media adoption on independent management consultants. Existing literature was analyzed. The literature included books, published journals, and scholarly articles relevant to the various dimensions of social media using a quantitative approach.

There are several key terms in use in this literature review chapter, including social media, independent management consultant, business operations, and UTAUT model (Venkatesh, 2003). Secondary databases were used to develop this chapter, including works from the *Academy of Management Journal*, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *FTI Journal*, *Journal of Service Management*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, and *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* among others.

### UTAUT Model

This section of the literature review attempts to construct a theoretical conception of the UTAUT model relating to the study subject matter. The UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2012) comprises eight theories: the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989). It also includes the combined model; theory of planned behavior, TPB, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Davis, 1989), the motivational model along with PC utilization model (Thompson et al., 1991), and diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003).

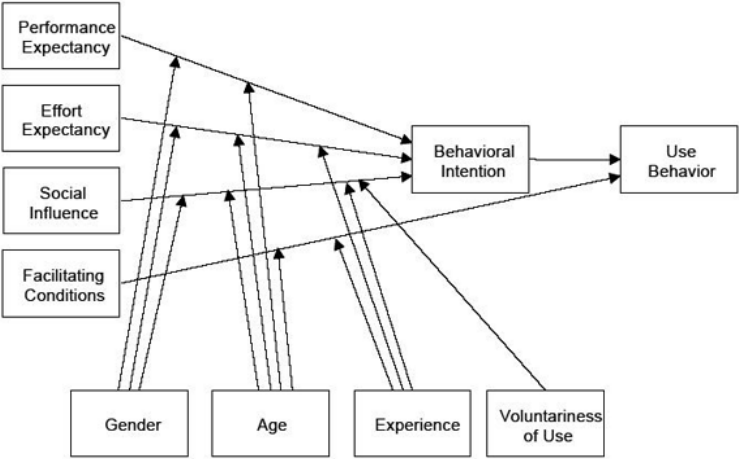


Figure 2. Adapted from the UTAUT model from “User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view,” by V. Venkatesh, M. G. Morris, G. B. Davis, and F. D. Davis, 2003, *MIS Quarterly*, 27, p. 425-478.

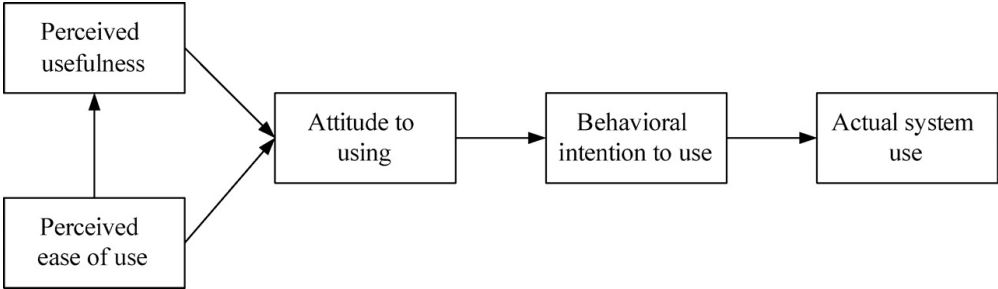
The main objective of the UTAUT model is to promote user acceptance of IT in a combined view. The UTAUT theory (Venkatesh et al., 2012) also comprises four significant constructs, which include performance expectancy, social influence, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions. Considering the four aspects of this theory will prove beneficial to enrich



understanding of the influence of social media adoption on independent management consultants.

An attempt has been made to link the theoretical concept with the research objectives. The original purpose of designing social media was for socialization, communication, and community building, notwithstanding geography, economic, and social barriers. Likewise, because social media was created for social purposes, organizational or business adoption remain subject to various limitations (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014).

Organizations seek competitive advantages from social media as its popularity increases globally. Stephen and Galak (2012) indicated that organizational leaders expect social media to perform as a hybrid to the promotional mix, which although effective, often raised many complexities in smoothening marketing progress. Stephen and Galak (2012) further argued that leaders also expected it to deliver benefits as an open channel to communicate with stakeholders, which alternatively created advantages reaching organizational objectives. Also, marketing techniques relay information, as the organization needs, to interact with the customers or other interested groups using a social media platform. Further evidence indicates that the extensive use of TPB and TAM theories or notions in marketing strategies, with the inclusion of Web 2.0 highlights expectations of organizational leaders when using social media (Chen, 2013).



*Figure 3.* Adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model from “Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology,” F. D. Davis, 1989, *MIS quarterly*, p. 319-340.

The TAM and two variations of the TPB were linked to assess which model best supported an understanding of IT acceptance. The models were connected using student data drawn from 786 potential users of a computer resource center (Taylor & Todd, 1995). Behavior data was comprised from monitoring 3,780 visits to the resource center over a 12-week period. Weighted least squares estimation revealed that all three models did well regarding fit and was equivalent regarding the ability to describe behavior. Deconstructing the belief structures in the TPB offered a sufficient increase in the justification of behavioral intention (Taylor & Todd, 1995).

The phenomenological research on the TAM identified perceived usefulness (PU) and ease of use as a significant precursor of a person’s intention to use technology (Davis, 1989). The PU showed that the research was associated with performance expectancy while perceived ease of use (PEU) was equated to effort expectancy (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Performance expectancy and effort expectancy were posited as a determinant of an individual intention to use a specific technology. The research was conducted as a case study of combined factors of Behavioral Intent (BI) and PU.

Ajzen (2002) described BI as a sign of a person’s inclination to perform a certain behavior. The outcome is assumed an immediate antecedent of behavior. Likert scale response choices were used to measure the relative strength of intention. The results were represented in a measurement by other synonyms such as "I plan to [behavior]") and is separate from comparable concepts such as desire and self-prediction (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Ajzen (1991) argued that BI reflected how hard a person was willing to try, and how motivated he or she was, to

perform the behavior. Two main ideas used in health communication including BI were the TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral intent, these two theories share the variables of attitude toward performing the behavior and subjective norms. The variables serve as perceptions of the significance of what others lines of thought about the behavior.

Perceived usefulness examination established and confirmed new scales for two specific variables, PU and PEU, which were hypothesized to be central determinants of user acceptance. The definitions of the variables were used to promote scale items that were pretested for content validity and subsequently tested for reliability and construct validity in two studies involving an aggregate of 152 users and four application programs. The steps were refined and streamlined, resulting in two six-item scales with .98 reliabilities for usefulness and .94 for ease of use. The scales demonstrated high convergent, discriminant, and factorial validity. Perceived usefulness was significantly correlated with both self-reported current usage  $r = .63$  (Study 1), and self-predicted future usage  $r = .85$  (Study 2). Perceived ease of use was also significantly correlated with current usage  $r = .45$  (Study 1) and future usage  $r = .59$  (Study 2; Davis, 1989). These factors are important to the understanding of why consumers use social media and to what extent.

Anand, Gardner, and Morris (2014) and Stenmark and Zaffar (2014) shared the view linking the theories of reasoned action, planned behavior, TAM, and TPB with the use of social media by organizational leaders. The perspectives stressed the way leaders used social media implied an expectation to act as an appropriate medium to obtain information about market trends, reflecting the tastes as well as preferences of the customers. Social media sites are being used by the modern organizations and management consultants focused on value creation abilities in the dimension of personal relations (Kim & Ko, 2012; Verhaegen, Vandevenne, &

Duflou, 2012). Magdalena and Baridwan (2015) presented topical changes that social media were steering the banking sector, based on the UTAUT theories of TPB, TAM, and perceived risks. Likewise, social networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn have also been leveraged for HR purposes including recruiting practices (Varma & Lambert, 2013).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) provided critical literature that studied beliefs, intentions, and attitudes. The results shaped the antecedents that affected social media influences on modern businesses. The authors discovered more than 500 operations that included standard attitude scales (e.g., Likert, Guttman, and Thurston). Indicators across various unwritten items included single statements of feelings, opinions, knowledge or intentions; observations of one or more overt behaviors; and physiological measures.

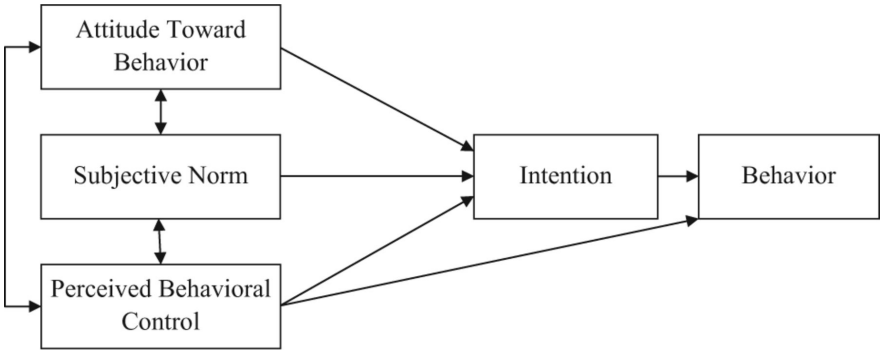
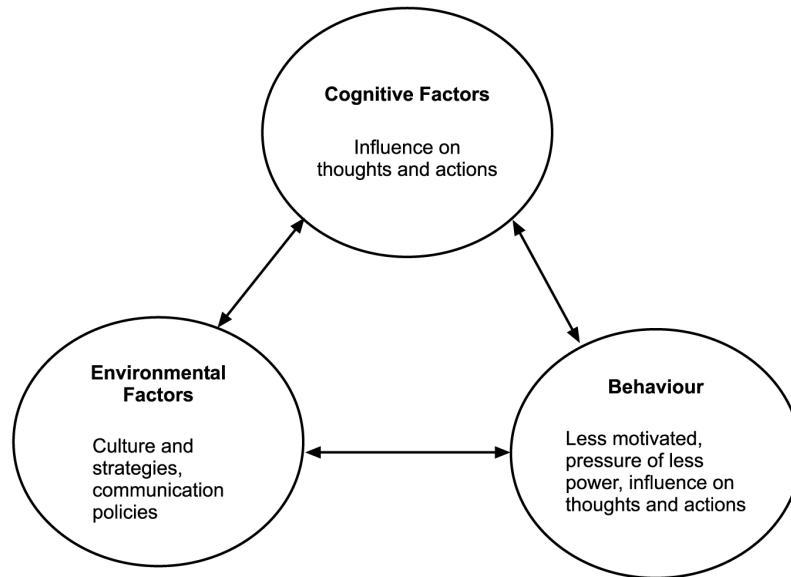


Figure 4. Adapted from “The theory of planned behavior,” I. Ajzen, 1991, *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 50(2), p. 179-211.

Another dimension of the UTAUT model concentrates on effort expectancy to assess social media characteristics. The theories of diffusion innovation and social cognition explains the Web 2.0 technology as a blend the features of both traditional and contemporary communication and promotion channels used by businesses (Baruah, 2012). In comparison, it offers the benefits of PR and brand publicity, it also demands increased efforts from the consultants to control information, which is yet considered to be in its developing phase

(Furusten, 2013; Baruah, 2012). Information generated, shared, and created through social media demands that an organization be efficient and this would, in turn, guarantee increased prospects for brand management (Verhoeven et al., 2012).



*Figure 5.* Adapted from “Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory,” A. Bandura, 1986, Prentice-Hall, Inc, p. .

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura (1986) developed a behavioral model called the social cognitive theory (SCT), founded on a model of causation. The methodology was a grounded theory using experimental research. The author measured the effects of behavior using observational learning.

Observational learning is measured by four processes: (a) attention, (b) retention, (c) production, and (d) motivational and reinforcement processes. The significance of Bandura’s (1986) work suggested the social cognitive behavior was an antecedent to the widespread use of social media as a cultural phenomenon. Businesses can translate that cultural phenomenon into desired business outcomes.

Sultan (2013) acknowledged social media functioned as an open channel for communications, which, increased the risks of spreading false information through unreliable sources and supported a limited scope of control on the reactions of the public to the information communicated. Importantly, Sultan (2013) argued the transmission of positive and negative information through these channels had equal potential giving rise to relative perceptions amid the targeted stakeholder groups. Sultan (2013) argued the disruptive capacity of cloud computing by stating the impact on the economy of the business landscape. The study shows how the proliferations of internet-based solutions are not only disruptive to the marketplace but can create opportunities for businesses. Consultants are delivering increased efforts to organize operations in a goal-oriented manner when dealing with information management tactics in social media. Businesses that develop core teams comprising both independent consultants and the PR professionals from the internal business environment to manage these issues and retain the positive benefits expected from social media (Verhoeven et al., 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

The demographic and cultural influences on social media are two vital dimensions of the UTAUT model. The impact of social media has been undeniable since its emergence in modern era preferences (Bolton et al., 2013). Evidence indicates the participation rate of Gen Y has been higher as compared to other age groups of the global community when sharing information through social media, which implies clear demographic and cultural influences as these relate to social media preferences (Bolton et al., 2013). Even the obstacles that Facebook and many other global networking sites had to face in China implies the strong social effects that consultants face when involving social media in their business process on behalf of their clients (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Review of the literature also revealed a public interest in social networking sites shifted with trending innovations, which forced consultants to develop agile tactics to deliver the expected performance benefits through platforms like LinkedIn (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014). Sinha, Subramanian, Bhattacharya, and Chaudhuri (2012) argued cultural openness and adaptability features of the UTAUT model also played a crucial role in defining the strategies of consultants and its effectiveness to manage information in social media. The examples of Indian, Dutch, and European business contexts exemplify the social influences directing consultants' approaches towards information and brand management on social networking sites (Sinha, Subramanian, Bhattacharya, & Chaudhuri, 2012; Verhoeven et al., 2012).

Organizations adopting social media are focused primarily on brand management, customer relationship management (CRM), knowledge management systems (KMS), social imaging, human resources (HR) concerns, and marketing (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argued that strategic directions were complex and demanding. Therefore, consultants must pay strict adherence towards organizing the information. The absence of best practices and policies also play a central role in the objectification of information communicated through the social media (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

### **Social Media Influences on Business**

Communication has been a key facet of human development (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Human civilization has been dependent on information sharing through varied forms of communication. How people communicate has evolved as an intrinsic part of modern society development. The ways people communicate has not only affected the social dimension of modern lifestyle but has also created a viable mechanism for the business sector. The introduction of social media is regarded as the milestone achievement in communications

development, transforming the definition. By the end of 20<sup>th</sup>-century, cases of social media utilization revealed that different forms of communication were developing rapidly (Stephen & Galak, 2012). For example, mobile technology played a crucial role in mitigating barriers of geography, economics, and cultural differences. The technology does not limit a user to a confined space such as an office or a particular geographical location. In early 2000, a dynamic mode of communication was gaining popularity—social media over mobile technology. Since its launch, social media transformed how information was shared globally. Social media is one of the foremost methods of communication today. It is a more efficient means of communication and thus, presents many advantages to businesses (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

Business functions can be influenced by social media. The wide-ranging effects of social media can be observed relative to Customer Relationship Management (CRM). In contrast, gaps can be identified in the context of the business as it relates to customers. Harsono and Suryana (2014) suggested most business leaders believed brand awareness could be enhanced through social media as well as facilitating advocacy customer loyalty. In contrast, only a limited number of customers believe that social media can be used to advocate for a particular brand (Stephen & Galak, 2012). The existing gaps in the perceptions of consumers and business differentiate social media from other channels of communication that may be considered as a key factor used by management consultants. Harsono and Suryana (2014) defined social media also as Web 2.0, which allowed users to share user-created content, build or join virtual communities, and exchange information online. Social media sites may consist of both mobile services and Internet-based services (Harsono & Suryana, 2014). For example, social media sites include blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter,



LinkedIn, and similar others), media sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest), and virtual gaming sites.

Different dimensions of the social media structure are designed to deliver distinct advantages to users, which may determine the user's degree of interest and perceptions towards the media. However, from the perception of management consultants, the focus remains concentrated on the promotion of brands, which might be a key reason for the differing perceptions between the two primary user groups of social media today (Harsono & Suryana, 2014). Comparatively, its advantages and disadvantages also vary among these user groups. The behavioral intentions of the users need to be decoded to understand these variations, which are considered as dependent on their performances and effort expectancies along with social influences as well as prevailing conditions, aligned with the UTAUT theory. Age, gender, experience, and ability to use the media also determine the behavioral traits of the users when considering the consumer groups (Mandal & McQueen, 2012).

Social media adoption is extensive and consumes various dimensions of business communication strategies, which attempts to combine both the traditional and contemporary ideologies of consumerism. Social media adoption also presents a significant field of research. According to Constantin (2012), social media offers a method of establishing business-related efficiencies in the modern era. Social media creates efficiencies by enabling interactions between businesses, individuals, and groups that share common interests. The study examined small to medium sized businesses in Romania and offered prescriptive measures of how social media adoption could generate global access and foster client growth. Constantin (2012) argued that social media replaced traditional word-of-mouth promotion techniques. Social media also

created new opportunities for cultural influences and synthesis of activities and resources as well as a tool to generate awareness.

The implications of social media adoption simply for ad awareness are changing. Constantin (2012) contended social media was not considered an instrument for socialization, but more specifically a scientific framework for businesses to build customer relationships and generate brand awareness. The multidimensional nature and a high degree of value attributed by the CRM has attracted the attention of scholars (Constantin, 2012; Trottier & Fuchs, 2015) resigned to study the unique significance of social media and its contribution to reshaping the utilization as an effective business tool.

Constantin (2012) assessed the business attributes of social media on the ideology of consumerism. Trottier and Fuchs (2015) acknowledged social media as a promotional mix element benefitting managers with a dual advantage of generating brand awareness as well as interpreting and anticipating market trends by studying the psychology of consumers. Trottier and Fuchs (2015) elaborated on the political influence that social media could create, which further increased its significance within the context of business.

### **Social Media Adoption Influence on Independent Management Consultants**

Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) advocated the central theme that social media adoption assisted many businesses to create value and to develop efficiencies through strategic partnerships and relationships with suppliers and consumers through regular communication, which was both time and cost efficient. These authors based their findings and justifications on a survey of business owners and managers in 246 small to medium sized enterprise (SME) from Nairobi, which revealed that social media channels possessed the ability to leverage market accessibility. Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) purported through evidentiary findings that the

advantage of increased accessibility to the market business leaders and managers could build stronger CRM frameworks. Jagongo and Kinyua (2013) contended that social media acted as a decisive medium to gather information about the market structure, consumer preferences, and competitive practices, allowing organizations to develop strategies that were more effective. Bolton et al., 2013 further developed this notion by acknowledging that Gen Y customers were a primary target audience of businesses and service providers. This audience represents the highest level of involvement in social media. As a result, the Gen Y consumer group contributes to a positive trend in sales.

Bolton et al. (2013) suggested there was significant involvement in searching and sharing content on preferred brands, online gaming, political participation, socialization, as well as cultural activities. These authors also noted that Gen Y customers were active, receptive, and participative through social media. Social media interaction delivers many advantages to businesses by increasing customer lifetime value. According to Bolton et al. (2013), to retain these benefits, service manager focus on building a corporate identity through their customer-facing positions by targeting Gen Y users of social media.

Kim and Ko (2012) asserted that social media helped to shape the brand identity or corporate identity. They also argued that social media assisted management personnel to frame corporate identity in an accessible manner, taking into account the feedback obtained from the customers and other stakeholders communicated through social media. Kim and Ko (2012) suggested that business leaders were working continually to gain greater insight on how to utilize social media to develop their corporate identity to engage customers in a more personal manner. On a broad scale, the personalized services can be leveraged as a contributing factor to the

degree of loyalty expressed by clients, leading to increased sales prospects and competitive advantages linked to long-term sustainability (Kim & Ko, 2012).

In contrast, Kim and Ko (2012) only delivered a theoretical elaboration of the concept that lacked sufficient inclusion of empirical evidence for the inferences drawn. Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, and Pauwels (2013) filled the gap by utilizing the Vector Autoregression (VAR) modeling approach as justification. According to Peters et al. (2013), users of the social media accelerate the potential for viral marketing through word-of-mouth. Independent consultants may also host referral programs that allow loyal customers to share positive reviews with other users of the platform and to refer other clients to purchase the product/service as well. The growing trend might have also been referred to as *community marketing*, which denoted how word of mouth (WoM) and social media can benefit independent practices to expand their customer base (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013).

Chui et al., (2012) presented divergent perspectives. The focus was on the efficiencies created and advantages attained by businesses that leveraged social media adoption. The report revealed that more than 70% of organizations globally have social media accounts. A social media presence benefits independent practices and business leaders by fostering efficient communication with clients (Chui et al., 2012). Social media presence not only contributes to generating brand awareness, but it also assists independent practices by interactively engaging clients and identifying strategic opportunities and obtaining a competitive advantage. Further examination revealed that real-time two-way communication enables the process between the business and its stakeholders (Chui et al., 2012). Chui and colleagues (2012) stated that as independent practices shared their capabilities on social media networks, clients could increase their confidence level of the practice and gain sufficient knowledge about the services/products

offered. Social media, therefore, helps to develop a strong association with the brand, which contributes to customers' acceptance of the brand that in turn augments brand sustainability at large (Chui et al., 2012).

### **Social Media Challenges**

Existing firm disadvantages prevent independent management consultants from obtaining maximum benefits from social media. Okazaki and Taylor (2013) emphasized the notion that dimensions of traditional and contemporary business communication channels blended through social media in an expanded form, which presented many virtues but not without certain critical disadvantages. According to Okazaki and Taylor (2013), one of the primary limitations of social media adoption, as it relates to communicating with clients, is the reliance on technology.

Okazaki and Taylor (2013) further underscored the viewpoint that the influence of networking capability leads clients to control the quality and quantity of sharing, creating, organizing, and generating information as a continuous process. Thus, from a business perspective, social media leverages the bargaining power of consumers and increases competitive pressure on practices.

Okazaki and Taylor (2013) suggested another fundamental limitation of social media adoption was building a corporate identity. Independent practices anticipate greater dependence on the way social media adoption supports business development. For example, the Chinese

government prohibited one of the leading social media platforms, Facebook; therefore, any business leveraging social media focused to penetrate the Chinese market could be ineffective.

The result forces the company to localize products and services for Chinese consumers using the local social media channels to facilitate organizational objectives (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Sashi (2012) presented a divergent perspective as it related to potential consumers on social media as fans of a specific brand. Sashi (2012) acknowledged that businesses could obtain

comprehensive benefits of social media promotion when the consultants could develop customers into supporters of their brands. Sashi (2012) emphasized that this transformation occurs through an extensive process involving many phases. The phases include generating interest and meeting customer satisfaction to the greatest extent possible. The findings revealed that efforts to motivate customers' fosters repeat purchase among clients who shared their satisfaction with others. Sashi (2012) found that the behavioral traits of consumers as it related to managers or consultants lacked sufficient control of the perceptions that often arose. Considerable challenges of uncontrolled or manipulated transmission of information were increasing the risks of damage to corporate identity.

There are other significant limitations of social media adoption. Social media levies a substantial impact on brand management (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013). The central argument recognized that if brand management strategies functioned as intended, huge benefits to the businesses were a possible outcome (Gensler et al., 2013). Evidence revealed many advantages contained within theoretical limitations. Although, the practical implications reflected social media adoption could significantly increase risks to brand management. It could be assumed that because of this gap created by this risk, consumers could develop negative views that misrepresented the businesses thereby influencing negative outcomes. Likewise, the risk associated with negative views could also hinder the degree of client loyalty. Consequently, insufficient client loyalty negatively influences the sustainability of the business (Gensler et al., 2013). Guo and Saxton (2013) agreed that social media could present a severe impact on organizational reputation. An enormous challenge for small businesses or private practice is repairing the damage resulting from a negative reputation. Baruah (2012) asserted social media could impose a significant effect on the individuals as well as groups. The

result of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction has a significant effect on businesses. These influences tend to reshape the behavioral traits of consumers (Baruah, 2012). Attempts were undertaken to redefine preferences, perceptions and interests towards services delivered through social media. Baruah (2012) argued that businesses often faced challenges in forecasting changes in cultural and social shifts in client preference reflecting overall market trends. This challenge increases the manager's ability to gain a strategic advantage in the market (Baruah, 2012).

According to Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, and Azad (2013), social media was not only used to network, but it was also utilized as a medium to share opinions. Clients sharing positive opinions can benefit the practice. Clients serve as recommendation agents for the practice that contribute to the overall brand value. In contrast, Majchrzak et al. (2013) argued that when customers were dissatisfied, negative comments could drive potential clients away resulting in a loss of business or decline in revenues. Accordingly, client generated information on social media may prove beneficial or negatively reflect the level of service or quality. The results of negatively circulated information of complaints could damage the brand, negatively influence revenues, or restrict business development (Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, & Azad, 2013). Likewise, Bolton et al. (2013) noted the possibility of negative results when businesses adopted social media as a marketing and promotion tool.

The same behavioral traits associating positive social media interactions could also create a negative social media interaction. The results of a negative social media interaction may reflect a real business development capacity or impede the development of the practice. The findings imply that the effectiveness of social media on businesses depends on the user behavior and the behavioral traits of clients.

## **Trends in Independent Management Consultants Operations**

Management consultants are professionals that provide consultation services to businesses, organizations, or individuals. Characteristics of the practice determined by individual operations vary from one industry to another, possibly on a regional basis (Turan, 2015). Research revealed the role of management consultants presented gaps in the field of study. However, consulting has been a common practice for centuries (Furusten, 2013). Traditional and modern approaches to the management consulting follow modern trends. Operational practices by management consultants become noticeable through the literature that further help in the determination of its corresponding differences and assess its link with the attributes of social media.

### **Traditional Approach**

In the late 1900s (Turan, 2015), the U.S. and European industrial sectors witnessed many significant changes within the management-consulting realm, which was considered as a part of the fundamental management model of the businesses. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, management consulting was recognized as more of the industrial tool. In contrast, the existence of some international practices delivering consulting services to companies on trade strategies implied that management consulting existed before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Formerly in traditional practices, management-consulting firms lacked a separate identity or recognition in the industry. The lack of notoriety created a significant challenge (Ciumara, 2014) identifying service providers and receivers. Ciumara (2014) further noted that in the 1920s, before World War II, companies like AT&T recorded significant spending on services related to management consulting. The practice was also identified as management engineering, as it related to organizational efforts for research and development services. Records also revealed that Business leaders on Wall Street and



analysts forecasted almost twice the growth of revenue earned by corporate entities for management consulting service during the same period. In contrast, consulting firms were not characterized as such in the 1900s (Turan, 2015), but rather as a facet of business. The author also noted that independent management consultants' firms faced a slow-moving growth rate. Sudden growth and significant industry development were realized in the 1930's. The growth rate was drawn from the precipitous outcome of fluctuations in traditional management consultation practices (Turan, 2015). For example, in the 1920's and 30's significant fluctuations occurred in the context of industry growth and development. The growth included trade legislation and welfare structures. The fluctuations drove businesses to find sources of specialized opinion including accountants, lawyers, merchant bankers, engineers, and those otherwise now categorized as creative management consultants (Ciumara, 2014).

In the 1960s and 1970s, professional use of management consultants became more prominent. The profession was developing as a distinct modern management science. Theorists (Turan, 2015) argued the central focus of the professional aspects of management consultation was inspired by the thoughts of Taylorism. Although Turan (2015) alleged that management consulting profession was void of the notion of Taylorism, observable literature revealed relative similarities between its traditional practices and the principles of scientific management. This idea indicated that the school of thought might be influenced by an increase in management consulting business activity. The core principle of Taylorism (Turan, 2015) asserts that businesses should be directed towards effective decision-making based on a scientific procedure wherein collaborations between the managers and the employees need to be preserved for the effective accomplishment of established goals.

In comparison, Ciumara (2014) suggested that early practices of independent management consulting were focused on developing collaborative relationships with the various sectors of the business model. The impact of management consulting growth and development was jeopardized by the transformation and fluctuation that occurred in the external business environment during the late 1900s. Ciumara (2014) noted as an example; a state-led dictatorship in Spain sheltered the economy from the involvement of foreign companies in the 1970s. Management consulting firms from the United States penetrated the Spanish market in a measured approach to gain a stronger foothold in its semi-public market structure. The U.S. market penetration delivered improved advantages through collaboration within the different sectors of the market. The influence of U.S. market penetration created incentives including wider Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) inflows and the creation of a growing platform facilitating localized management consulting firms (Ciumara, 2014).

Ciumara (2014) illustrated the evolution of the management consulting profession in the U.S. Ciumara (2014) explored the prominent development of the application of laws and policies demanding separate identities for commercial banking systems and the investment banking systems (e.g., the Glass-Steagall Banking Act of 1933). Initially, these norms were intended to limit various core banking operations from being performed by commercial banking companies. The transition was recognized as an ideal turning point for business modeling for independent management consulting firms. Businesses immediately recognized the increased production and efficiency of the client firms and the creation of a diverse range of innovative strategic approaches (Ciumara, 2014). These trends marked the embryonic stage of consulting practices and the common culture within states limited the advancement of these procedures. Scholars

believed that through the concept of Taylorism, consultants could preserve their ideologies for expected growth and development (Ciumara, 2014).

### **Modern Approach**

Consultation practices were gaining an increased level of scholarly attention during the internet revolution in the late 1990s, as an alternative business function. Management consultation firms are more inclined toward individual business goals and issues by advocating the core principle of Taylorism (Furusten, 2013). In contrast, independent management consultant firms do not rely on data-driven analysis but deliver a meaningful and quantitative understanding of the rational approaches adopted by the business. According to David, Sine, and Haveman (2013), the development of independent consulting was a subjective phenomenon. Furthermore, the services delivered by independent management consultants could differ in depending on business needs and external environmental conditions. The cultural practices within the firms established a particular phenomenon rather than a scientific approach to decision making (Furusten, 2013).

Furusten (2013) further stated that businesses seeking consultation from independent professionals in a particular field discovered the experience of consultants. Subjective aspects about consulting capacity as well as decision-making skills influence identifying the right firm. Likewise, David et al. (2013) described similar justification in the significance of customer-client relationship in independent management consulting practices to foster client growth.

David et al. (2013) applied Luhmann's systems theory. The theory highlighted various communication mediums within the context of management consultation services. The authors acknowledged divergent lines of thought in the internal and external decision-making process. Internal decision-making processes are characterized by an adapted functioning model. These

external decision-making processes are characterized by the involvement of independent management consultants. The collaboration between clients and consultants was impacted significantly when they functioned as individual archetypes. The theoretical limitation acknowledged by David et al. (2013) suggested the inclusion of social dynamics to bridge the gap between the two systems. David et al. recognized that social media adoption could also play a significant role. In contrast, the gaps in the literature challenged the traditional ideologies of management consulting. The significance of this limitation exposed the involvement of independent consultant's decision-making capacity in the interest of their clients. Consultants are required to assess business problems in an unbiased manner and deliver suggestions and actionable recommendations to increase organizational capacity and take advantage of opportunities (David, Sine, & Haveman, 2013).

In the last decade, the demand for independent management consultation services increased. Consulting services are perceived as an advantage. Furusten (2013) suggested client demand for more sophisticated and specialized consulting services facilitated industry-specific consultation services for legal, human resource, and marketing management. Western business is more inclined to make a significant investment in management consultation services. Likewise, a similar trend is being realized in the Eastern business culture (David et al., 2013). In comparison, the rising modern trends present countless opportunities (Furusten, 2013) as well as challenges for independent management consultants. The increased utilization of management consulting services is a modern phenomenon indicating a rising demand in across industries characterized by growing demands for specialized services. The demand has become a business requirement for the modern day competitive environment to gain an advantage by leveraging the various scopes of differentiated services. In contrast, clients in the sector are investing more in

developing innovations to mitigate decision-making management matters that may consequently decrease the demand for consultation services creating self-sufficiency (David et al., 2013).

Furusten (2013) contended that there were factors responsible for the shift in the management-consulting sector. Business leaders are in conflict in determining whether to involve independent management consults in the strategic process (Furusten, 2013). David et al. (2013) suggested there was evidence that companies bore a significant cost investment without a guarantee of success. David and colleagues (2013) attributed the findings to management consulting as a non-scientific approach.

Likewise, Furusten (2013) asserted that consultants functioned more as regulators assisting their clients in aligning agendas and methods in a strategic decision framework versus functioning as external decision makers. The result is the promotion of management innovation along with effective modification and adoption. On the other hand, management-consulting practices are expected to provide narrowly defined solutions that may be perceived as insufficient when measured against the exogenous dynamics in the external environment that influences sustainability (David et al., 2013). The management consulting industry still requires a dynamic social mechanism to increase the collaboration and relationship development between clients and consultants.

### **Global Social Media Adoption in the Modern Era**

Scholars (Sinha et al., 2012; Verhoeven et al., 2012; Rincón-Argüelles, Minshall, & Mortara, 2013; Natarajan, Balakrishnan, Balasubramanian, & Manickavasagam, 2014; Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012) examined the role of social media adoption from a global perspective. The utilization of social media along cultural lines further explained the significance of social media adoption among independent management consultants. Internal and external

environmental aspects of client organizations play a vital role in determining the efficiencies created in social media adoption. This subsequent review examines social media adoption from the perspective of Dutch, Indian and European cultures respectively.

### **Dutch Independent Management Consultants Social Media Adoption**

Rincón-Argüelles, Minshall, and Mortara (2013) contend the cultural settings in the Dutch society involved informal knowledge sharing. The Dutch culture is receptive to informal knowledge sharing that can be beneficial to stakeholders. Dutch consulting firms can gain competitive positioning in an information sharing culture. On the other hand, the benefits offered through informal knowledge sharing of an innovative tool presents challenges and limits efficiency in social media adoption (Rincón-Argüelles et al., 2013).

The benefits of technological innovation in Dutch management consulting practices have been extensive. Technological innovation as it relates to management consulting services requires collaboration between clients and consultants. The demand for co-creation and collaboration requires an alignment between the services of clients and consultants. The consultants' services require delivering an increased degree of flexibility to adjust to the needs of the clients (Rincón-Argüelles et al., 2013). Failure to assure the expected level of flexibility results in discrepancies within the service innovation process (Rincón-Argüelles et al., 2013). Implementing social media made this particular limitation affect the comprehensive benefits that clients could have otherwise obtained through the communication tool. Although its demographic and socio-economic factors support social media exposure, technical challenges related to information organizing, sharing, and monitoring abilities of the management consultants obstruct the full benefits of social media. Consequently, narrowing the focus on

client-consultant relationships within the sector, make an efficient use of social media (Rincón-Argüelles et al., 2013).

### **Indian Independent Management Consultant Social Media Strategies**

Indian business social media adoption concentrated more on the Human Resource Management (HRM) contrasted against social media adoption in the Dutch culture focusing on stakeholder communication (Sinha et al., 2012). The Indian businesses demonstrate a trend to leverage social media adoption as an instrument to obtain information through behavioral analytics. The current percentage of social media usage by companies in India is growing significantly on HR practices, consequently increasing value to marketing practices. Employees from countries like China and Brazil have translated marketing and advertising practices in a more positive outlook by adopting social media (Sinha et al., 2012).

According to Sinha et al. (2012), employees identify with adopting social media for marketing and advertising. Social media adoption fosters transparency, emotional responsiveness, identification with the workforce, as well as its stakeholders, and demonstrates the willingness of the organization to collaborate and build a dedicated workforce. Indian consulting firms play a crucial role in their brand management strategies by examining customers' sentiments concerning services and products to forecast user preferences (Sinha et al., 2012). Indian consulting firms observe the social media analytics framework when focusing on the marketing aspects. The procedure most notable in Indian practices concerning social media adoption can be observed in Figure 6.

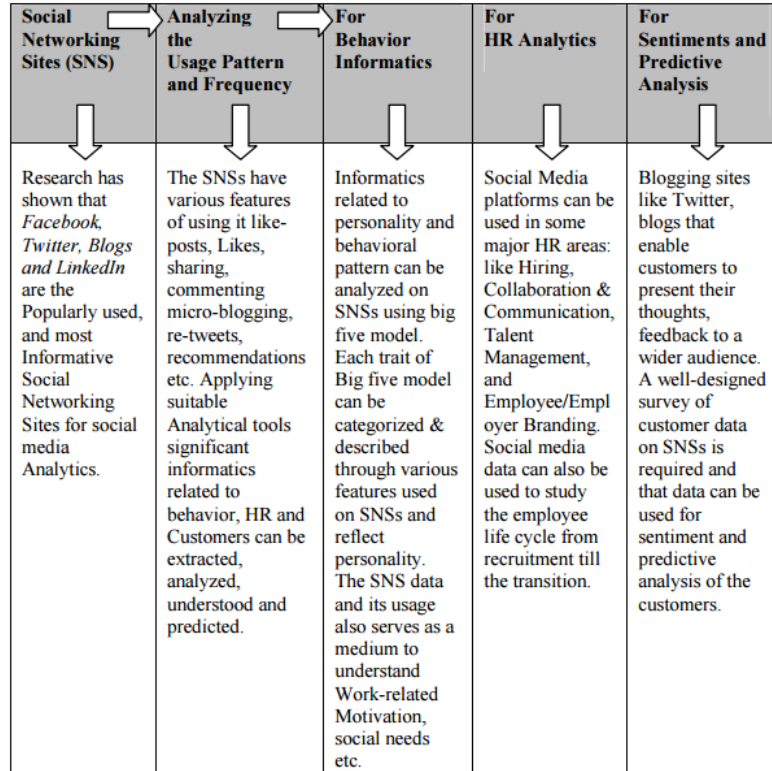


Figure 6. Adapted from “The contemporary framework on social media analytics as an emerging tool for behavior informatics, HR analytics and business process,” V. Sinha, K. S. Subramanian, S. Bhattacharya, and K. Chaudhuri, 2012, *Management*, 17(2), p. 65-84.

Natarajan, Balakrishnan, Balasubramanian, and Manickavasagam (2014) a globally renowned independent management consulting firm revealed that Indian companies’ social media adoption was focused on developing brand awareness among internal and external stakeholder groups. This focus draws attention to a brand advertisement while engaging customers in organizational processes and activities. Consulting firm’s intention to adopt social media as a tool for reputation management mandates two-way communication. In contrast, the trend in Dutch cultures is a significant departure from Indian practices. Indian companies that leverage consulting firms face challenges with information management on social media platforms in the cultural setting (Natarajan et al., 2014). Key evidence indicates that modern



practices of the management consulting industry are prevalent in the Indian culture. Medium and large companies in India are making efforts to implement a hybrid model, comprised of core decision-making unit consultants and social media agencies (Natarajan et al., 2014).

### **European Independent Management Consultant's Social Media Adoption**

European management consultants are focused on creating efficiencies in operating digital communication systems by increasing the significance of social media adoption. Verhoeven et al. (2012) argued the importance of social media adoption of digital communication methods could be beneficial to clients. Client organizations have taken considerable measures to reduce the risks associated with social media communication. In comparison to Indian and Dutch settings, European-based firms project the ability to contend with the challenges of social media adoption as it relates to organizing and managing the capabilities of the consultants or the clients. Likewise, European Public Relations (PR) consultants face similar social media challenges from prospective clients. Verhoeven et al. (2012) noted the primary issue with PR in social media adoption was its candidness in targeting communication. The communications challenges seem universal in every dimension of the social framework. Social media is a bi-directional tool and allows every user to share information in a public forum that may levy significant damage to brand reputation or clients (Verhoeven et al., 2012).

Social media adoption in Europe has been concentrated in marketing. This practice is believed to contribute significantly to brand awareness. Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) argued that social media adoption expanded innovation in digital communication practices. For example, users create a connection through the organization's fan page. Companies post to the respective fan page permitting users to "Like" and "Follow" the company on a particular social

network. The “Like” feature also allows users to view the business’s information and express opinions about products or services. Vries et al. (2012) revealed that sharing positive comments through the social media platform could be translated into “Likes” received. Evidence indicated that the percentage of observations found were nearly equal in all cases reflecting some “Shares” with positive or negative comments. The research from these authors uncovered that social media translated to brand loyalty.

In contrast, Vries et al. (2012) examined the potential of miscommunication and misrepresentation of the company through fan pages. In the early years of management consulting practices, fan pages were considered a key shortcoming of social media adoption in business. Managers and consultants of PR were hired by European companies and charged with the responsibility to monitor, test, assess, and convey information through social media to increase brand awareness and generate popularity to mitigate this limitation (Vries et al., 2012). The outcome increased efficiencies and led to desired outcomes critical to the success of European organizations.

Smaller and medium sized organizations faced increased challenges adopting social media. Social media was recognized as an evolving factor in the Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) of modern management consultancy practices (Sultan, 2013). Sultan (2013) argued employees lacked sufficient understanding of the best practices to communicate through social media. The result was significant mistakes and false information shared throughout the business environment. This caused users and employees alike to become disillusioned with the effectiveness and effort required to use KMS. As a result, employees sharing unfiltered information or sharing inappropriate information either misrepresented the brand or caused withdrawal from participating in the process to avoid reprisal (Sultan, 2013).

Studies (Sultan, 2013; Verhoeven et al., 2012; Vries et al., 2012) revealed European social media adoption as a PR strategic tool was prevalent. The authors noted advantages were not yet realized equally across Europe. The reason can be credited to the limitations of management consultants (Sultan, 2013). Independent management practices are developing social media best practice guidelines and creating a core team to manage information shared on social media (Sultan, 2013). In contrast, similar strategic measures were not practicable for smaller practices. The demand for practical rules and governance is challenging for smaller independent practices (Sultan, 2013).

### **Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other SM Platforms**

Independent management consultants do not fully understand the comprehensive benefits of social media adoption (Vries et al., 2012). The lack of understanding points toward the absence of a firm's understanding of governance. An independent consultant's limited knowledge and experience managing information on social media platforms creates challenges associated with the technical aspects and may cause critical aspects to be overlooked (Vries et al., 2012). Bhavnani and Watts (2014) contend that organizations face increased challenges to understand how to leverage social media networks fully. The authors (2014) further acknowledge that independent management consultants seek assistance from subject matter experts to realize social media capabilities fully.

Social media adoption for independent management consultants is demanding. Complications are associated with regulatory limitations and brand managements. Social Media networks like Facebook and LinkedIn are capable of delivering substantial information regarding potential human resources and connecting with the mass population (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014; Broughton, Foley, Ledermaier, & Cox, 2013). A driving force behind the creation of social

media networks was communal development for personal efficacy. The lack of quality assurance was created as it related to regulatory constraints (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014). The limitations of quality assurance created a need for innovative procedures to contend with the changing cultural trends. The cultural trends facilitated a need to align organizational efforts with the social media network that best fit the needs of the managers and clients to create overall value (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014).

Social media transformations may increase the risks to brand reputation. Organizations limited the use of social media in the workplace to reduce liabilities because of improper sharing of workplace activities or organizational specific information on Facebook or Twitter. Employees excessively viewing YouTube videos lead employers to restrict social media use or limit access (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014) to deal with workplace efficiencies. The decreasing level of confidentiality created by social media usage creates significant risks for many businesses. The limitations associated with the businesses application of social media usage in the workplace indicate a need to impose certain controls on organizational usage when sharing information (Bhavnani & Watts, 2014).

Social media networks function as a vital resource for managers to exchange information and market products and services to potential consumers creating values for both internal and external stakeholders. In contrasts, the limitations presented by social media adoption influence knowledge management capabilities within an organization. Organizations seem more inclined to leverage social media platforms emphasizing its knowledge-based structural ability to collaborative activity with independent management consultants. In comparison, organizations and consultants alike that focus on a one-way communication approach using social media platforms, such as Twitter, are facing decreased challenges and complexity compared to

organizations using the platform as a tool for two-way communication (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014). The authors further noted that leveraging social media sites developed innovations among client organizations and independent management consultants' ability to process information. However, a need still exists for improved process implementation for handling of publicly displayed information on social media sites.

### **Related Research and Debate**

Management consulting practices have transformed over the past decades. Turan (2015) contended the concept of management consulting was considered a planned intervention by a third communication system in the organizational decision-making process. The author's study could be explained as a basic premise to bridge the existing gaps between the scientific management approach adopted by businesses and the state-led communist policies. Turan (2015) argued that in the early decades of its emergence, consulting practices served as a negotiator between state-permitted and client based practices to gain incentives through profitable activities. By the late 1900's, the philosophy of gaining incentives through profitable client-based activities contributed to increased conflicts in the traditional businesses environment (Turan, 2015).

The evidence revealed that international exposure was sought during business development. Likewise, scientific management approaches were being developed to create an increasingly self-sufficient manner of management. Consequently, the applicability of normal methods of management consultation for independent management consultants started changing across organizations. The transformation raised questions related to the effectiveness of uniform consultations (Turan, 2015). The development of independent consultation varied across industries that further gave rise to various manners of specialized consulting (Turan, 2015). It

made the trends of management consulting practices more subjective in nature and applicable in a global business environment.

In comparison, there is a need to sustain consultant-client collaboration efficiencies that are a key quality of consultancy services (Turan, 2015). The collaborative relationship between consultants and clients provides increased opportunities to understand the clients' needs better and incorporate innovation into the business process. Turan (2015) held a view that the transformed consultant client collaborative relationship created challenges. He further noted the practice created a divergent relationship between the acceptability of client firms versus independent practices. This view further emphasized the need for independent management consultants to gain recognition and acceptance through social dynamism created with the inclusion of social media adoption (Turan, 2015).

Key findings in the literature indicated the significance of social media based interactions between clients and consultant's global capacity achieve social dynamism for independent management consultants. Social media networks are used extensively for business development. Socially based interaction created a virtual environment to create value for independent practice. Stenmark and Zaffar (2014) contended that management consultants sought innovative opportunities to deliver valuable services to their many clients including businesses and individuals from various professions and socio-political backgrounds. On the other hand, independent management consulting practices have been encouraging their client organizations to communicate actively through social media (Stenmark & Zaffar, 2014). These authors (2014) argued that social media offer considerable advantages to independent management consultants in the form of actual information and customer relation management opportunities. The efficiency of social media regarding "visibility, persistence, editability, and association," which

can be essential to businesses, in the modern era, to manage information and to sustain positive business outcomes (Stenmark & Zaffar, 2014).

In contrast, technology limitations of social media may not permit the realization of comprehensive benefits for independent management consulting practices. Stenmark and Zaffar (2014) argued that business costs to leverage technology are not always favorable because it conflicted with the senior management controls and promoted centralized management from consulting practices. On the other hand, Constantin (2012) suggested that social media was suitable for the independent management consultant's business operations. He further noted that social media was a growing trend based on existing growth in the adoption of social media technology. Companies interested in adopting social media directed their time, attention, and money towards social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Twitter and others to gain a competitive advantage (Constantin, 2012).

Ravensdale (2015) suggested that incomparable evidence that many businesses adopting social media lack governance to facilitate controls on information sharing across social media platforms. In many organizations, employees do not receive training or sufficient controls allowing the firm to manage their brand image through the social media or control the information shared on the site (Ravensdale, 2015).

Businesses maintain a practice of abstaining from monitoring or scrutinizing employee published contents on social media sites about the organization. The situation creates complications and raises risks for social media governance (Ravensdale, 2015). The finding in the author's survey revealed that social media as business operations and a customer relationship management (CRM) tool had not matured fully. CRM may not be considered as a reliable mechanism for building public relations or promoting brands. Social media presents many

challenges for firms today (Ravensdale, 2015) because many of the business advantages and limitations are still unknown. Business clients continue to seek consultation with management consulting firms acting on behalf of clients to determine how to best gain competitive advantage (Ravensdale, 2015).

Existing social media challenges and potential risks do not preclude the forecasting opportunities for substantial growth. Ravensdale (2015) affirmed that social media allowed informal sharing of information through various knowledge groups that operated as a significant driver of innovation in business practices. However, the growing popularity of social media created a significant challenge for independent management consultants in determining how to use it as an innovative tool to create value, business development, and achieve sustainable success (Ravensdale, 2015). The author further noted that social media as a management tool functioned contradictory to the traditional top-down, centralized approach to decision-making once popularized by early management consultant practices. The author implied the initial adoption of social media was perceived as being a more feminine approach. Evidence revealed that the informal knowledge sharing process allowed greater reach to the extent that collaboration with clients was not limited to local boundaries. As time passed, social media adoption became more acceptable as a means to manage product and service marketing and real-time client-based efficiencies. Collectively, social media maximized business operations by positively contributing to the overall strategic objectives (Ravensdale, 2015).

Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) emphasized the use of Twitter for independent management consultants to communicate in connecting with stakeholders. Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) proved that social media channels, like Twitter, facilitate interactive communication with suppliers, strategic partners, and clients. Twitter develops better



transparency and maximizes stakeholder engagement. Increased stakeholder engagement contributes to the collaborative decision-making process for managers. In contrast, evidence indicated responses offered a lack of balanced information sharing and comparable expectation management among different stakeholder groups in disparate geographic locations. Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) argued that potential employees, investors, social organizations, and media experts expected increased interactivity through social media; however, customers showed little or no interest in interacting with their purchased or preferred brands through the social media. The effects of the internal and external social media adoption influence management consultation are clear (Martin & Bavel, 2013).

Martin and Bavel (2013) illustrated the trends of social media exposure practiced by its client organizations through the lens of an independent media strategy consultant firm originated in Italy. The authors discovered that firms believed social media was beneficial to interact with stakeholders. Furthermore, social media was perceived as being risky. The result was a hesitance to adopt social media within the client-based practices. Smaller organizations faced similar challenges (Martin & Bavel, 2013) focusing on the need for increased assistance—similar to the larger management-consulting firms. A similar trend is prevalent in the modern-day business environment.

Smaller management consulting practices can transcend global reach challenges through the assistance of social media consultants. Small organizations in Italy face significant challenges extending their global reach (Martin & Bavel, 2013). Social media consultation can contribute to the client's efficiency by offering to train and facilitate strategic decision-making (Martin & Bavel, 2013). Martin and Bavel (2013) presented a complicated method of social media management supporting businesses, client organizations, and independent management

consultants. On the other hand, Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) presented evidence more simplistic and goal oriented. The research by Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) focused on social media adoption trends by non-profit organizations, businesses, and independent management consultants.

The public exchange of information using social media has been a result of increasing trends among management consultants (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014). However, the interactions deliver minimal benefits in relationship building or business development. The central problem associated with the business use of social media is the relation to traditional public relation instruments. In contrasts, non-profit organizations use social media to facilitate one-way communication methods to relay information rather than to obtain information. This approach inherently decreases the degree of risks associated with social media usage for these types of organizations (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014).

The literature focused on the individual social media platforms to assess their effectiveness and gaps related to the influence of management consulting. Evidence revealed a variety of social media platforms for business use including blogs, virtual gaming networks, online communities, and multimedia chat-rooms. Management consultants should focus their efforts on clients' web-based interests (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014) to create the most significant advantages and reduce the limitations as it relates to individual platforms.

Inauen & Schoeneborn (2014) argued that management consultants needed to understand the different characteristics of each social media platform as it applied to their clients and to select the most appropriate platform. Social media adoption and platform selection is beneficial for the business development of client-based relationship management and information sharing (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014; Martin & Bavel, 2013).

Many scholars argued that the use of social media was a complex modern phenomenon, with tremendous reach across industries and geographical boundaries with internal and external business operation implications (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014; Martin & Bavel, 2013; Ravensdale, 2015; Turan, 2015). Application of social media for business related purposes could be challenging for independent management consultants. The evidence indicates the most prominent barrier to the effective implementation of social media adoption is the unavailability of best practices, guidelines, and constitutional governance to minimize risks and maximize value (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014; Martin & Bavel, 2013).

### **Summary**

The literature established that social media adoption research had developed over the past decade with greater growth potential. The relationship between the factors using UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). The UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) was discussed in this literature review that attempted to explain the relationship between user beliefs, attitudes, intentions and actual system use that included the following theories: theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory of planned behavior (TPB), and technology acceptance model (TAM) underscores the development and reasoning. The research offered valuable understanding regarding the applicability of the UTAUT model (Venkatesh, 2003) in social media adoption, as it applied to the study of independent management consultants. The population is independent management consultants located in the United States. The sample population are members of the IMCUSA organization.

The implications of social media adoption as a business tool have some advantages. The phenomenon of social media also has disadvantages. Traditional communication methods such as newspaper, radio, and television are still dominated sources of marketing and advertising for

businesses (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012; Taneja & Toombs, 2012). The interest in social media is attributed to cultural trends and generational differences directly attributed to clients' receptiveness to marketing and promotional campaigns received through social media or similar platforms. The growth of social media adoption is a central location to gather a significant number of potential consumers. Statistical evidence revealed that clients build groups and communities that interact with one another beyond geographical boundaries. Human behavior may be considered a crucial element to social media's widespread acceptance in a personal context and among the business community.

The literature offered a clearer understanding of the influence of social media adoption for independent management consultants. However, the literature provided examples of insufficient evidence related to the application and adoption of social media in the modern business environment. For example, studies (Inauen & Schoeneborn, 2014; Martin & Bavel, 2013; Ravensdale, 2015; Turan, 2015) were viewed from divergent perspectives either underscoring the negatives of social media or highlighting the positives. Another perspective the literature review focused on included the efficiencies and gaps of organizations adopting social media to achieve organizational strategic goals. Likewise, examples of insufficient evidence offered an explanation as it related to the level of participation of management consultants in the social media implementation process. The matter of independent management consultant involvement in the process was an exploration of the involvement independent management consultant's role in the application and adoption of social media. Consequently, the role and extent of the participation social media participation remain unclear.

The literature insufficiently examined the usage of social media applications by independent management consultants. This study leveraged the UTAUT to increase

understanding of the adoption of social media. Distinct variables are used to acknowledge the behavioral intention and behavior relating to the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the methodology and research design of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study is to explain the relationship between social media adoption and client growth for independent management consultants. The methodology was an explanatory quantitative approach. The chapter focuses on the research problem, population, sample, and research questions and hypotheses, the research design, sample, setting, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

### **Design and Methodology**

The research design is an explanatory quantitative approach to study the statistical relationship of social media adoption on client growth. A quantitative approach is best suited to achieve the objectives of the research questions because the relationships are best covered by quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2013, p. 143). The research questions investigated specific statistical relationships using a quantitative approach. A qualitative study was insufficient to measure the statistical relationship between social media adoption and client growth of small independent management consultants because qualitative studies would focus on general or complex elements of the significant phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative research is characterized by “researcher immersion in the phenomenon to be studied, gathering data which provide a detailed description of events, situations, and interaction between people and things, providing depth and detail” (Creswell, 2013, p. 146). The research questions align the purpose with the methodology because this was a quantitative study and the research questions sought to determine statistically significant relationships between client growth and the number of social media platforms used and the types of social media platforms used.

## **Population and Sampling**

The population includes U.S.-based independent management consultants. The management consultants analyzed represented a population of certified and non-certified management consulting professionals. The IMCUSA membership meets global standards for competence, ethics, and results (IMCUSA, 2016). The IMCUSA contains management consultants that have evolved in the information age. This evolution makes the IMCUSA members ideal to meet the research objectives. The sampling frame included active management consultant members of the IMCUSA. Individual management consultants were selected randomly from the existing database of active registered members of the IMCUSA database.

The IMCUSA database consists of 12,000 members. All actively registered members in the database were eligible for participation in the study. The information is publicly available secondary data. The size of the sample was a function of the difference in the population parameters under study and the approximating exactness needed to conduct the research (Cooper, 2013). A minimum sample size was calculated using a medium effect size, an alpha of .05, and 95% confidence level or Z-score of 1.96 interval and standard deviation of the number active members listed in the IMCUSA database. The minimum sample size calculation determined a need to have responses from at least 119 IMCUSA members.

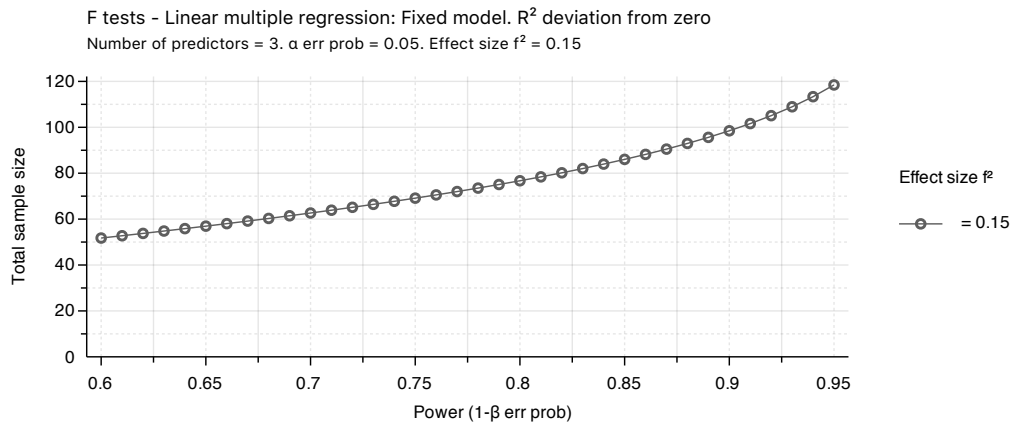


Figure 7. Graphical representation of G\*Power to determine sample size calculation using effect size number of predictors 3,  $\alpha$  err prob = 0.05,  $f^2 = .15$  total sample size of 119.

The probability of selection was reflected as a known nonzero probability (Cooper, 2013). The sample accurately reflected the probability of random selection of any individual management consultation without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, or any other demographic category. The justification for using simple random selection as an unrestricted method was that it was the purest form of probability sampling (Cooper, 2013). A limitation of the sample was only the available information could be used for the data collection and analysis.

### Setting

The data was collected from the Institute of Management Consultants USA (IMCUSA) based in North Palm Beach, Florida. The data was drawn from a publicly accessible online database. The study was set within the context of the small independent management consultants contained within the database. The organization was selected because the membership met the profile requirements to achieve the objectives of the study.

The study benefits the organization by showing a statistically significant relationship between client growth and social media adoption and future implications. The study further provides insight as to how the number and type of social media platforms influence client



growth. Small independent management consultant professionals can leverage the information to create desired business outcomes. The study benefits the members of the organization because the study directly addresses a gap in understanding the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. The study is beneficial to the practitioner to better understand the relationship between social media adoption and client growth better. Meske and Stieglitz (2013) suggested an examination of social media adoption would significantly benefit the business. Furthermore, social media adoption can explore a deeper understanding of the statistically significant relationship between client growth and social media adoption in independent management consulting practices.

### **Data Collection**

The data will be collected directly from the Institute of Management Consultants USA (IMCUSA) database. The data collection effort will entail navigating to each participant's profile entry in the IMCUSA member directory, and then identifying and recording specific information about each participant's use of social media. Additionally, participant websites will be visited when linked in the IMCUSA profile directory to determine and record specific information about the participant's usage of social media. The presence of a link or badge to a social media service will qualify as social media usage for each service. Finally, identified social media services will be visited via links provided either on the IMCUSA profile page or as found and linked on the participant's website.

Data analysis will be performed on the study hypotheses to assess the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. Based on the study design, a linear multiple regression with three predictor variables and one dependent variable per testing were used. Under those circumstances, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013, p. 123) recommend having a sample

size of  $N \geq 50 + 8m$  where  $m$  is the number of predictor variables or a total minimum sample size of 119. Using G\*Power sample size calculating software ver. 3.1, multiple regression with three predictor variables, an effect size of .15 (medium), an alpha of .05, and a power coefficient (1 - beta) of .95, a minimum sample size of 119 was recommended. These two methods were used because they were significantly aligned. Individual management consultants were not be contacted for this data collection effort. Rather, data about social media usage was gleaned from each consultant's IMCUSA public profile and each consultant's public domain website. Because the websites being used were in the public domain, informed consent was not being solicited.

### **Hypotheses**

The study focused on the research questions and the following hypothesis statements:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth?

H<sub>10</sub>: social media adoption and client growth are not significantly related.

H<sub>1a</sub>: social media adoption and client growth are significantly related.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the number of social media platforms used and a number of clients?

H<sub>20</sub>: the number of social media platforms and client growth are not significantly related.

H<sub>2a</sub>: the number of social media platforms and client growth are significantly related.

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the type of platform and the number of clients?

H<sub>30</sub>: the types of social media platforms used and client growth are not significantly related.

H<sub>3a</sub>: the types of social media platforms used and client growth are significantly related.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed using statistical analysis techniques that indicate a relationship between social media adoption, the number of social media platforms, and the types of social media platforms, and client growth in small independent management consultants. A combination of factors was used to determine client growth. Client growth was measured by using social media feedback from client's, testimonials, client listings within member profiles, and length of time in business to measure and determine growth. Inferential questions or hypotheses conveyed variables or linked groups regarding variables so that inferences could be drawn from the sample to the corresponding population (Creswell, 2013). A linear regression test was used to compare the social media adoption of two groups on a single measure to determine if there was a statistical difference. The data analysis was completed to determine whether there was a statistical relationship between the number of social media platforms used for client growth in small independent management consulting practices. The data determined whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the type of social media platforms and client growth in independent management consulting practices.

Regression tools were used to determine the statistical relationship between the types of social media platforms and the number of social media platforms on client growth in individual management consulting practices. The t-test was used to determine if the correlation coefficient was significantly different from zero, and, to establish further evidence of an association between the two variables (Albery & Munafo, 2008). All data was captured in a Microsoft Excel for Mac (ver. 15.20) Worksheet. The worksheet was the source from where the raw data was created for the t-test. StatTools version 7 was used to calculate the results. The t-test had a 0.05 significance level. The statistical significance was determined using statistical analysis tools.

The data was summarized within the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The data was captured in an Excel spreadsheet and separated by columns and rows. The number and type of social media platforms were identified. The data was represented as a 3-character alphanumeric character. The number of social media platforms was listed as well as the types of platforms and the number of clients or subjects.

The tests identified a single number that described the degree of relationship between two variables. The data was summarized within the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The value of the Pearson's correlation coefficient was reflected in a scatterplot diagram to display the results. The limitations of the correlation coefficient were only linear relationships between X and Y for a relationship to exist; therefore, changes in X required a constant proportionate change in Y. The result is inaccurate if the relationship is not linear. The study endeavored to find a symmetrical relationship in the number and types of social media used and client growth. Symmetrical conditions are regularly discovered when two variables are alternative indicators of another cause or independent variable (Cooper, 2013).

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are essential for evidence-based research. Validity is characterized as the extent to which a model is accurately measured in a quantitative study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Validity and reliability of results on instruments lead to meaningful interpretations of data (Creswell, 2013). Validity is a specific measurement focused on the extent that a test measures what the research is essentially quantifying. No instrument is used in this study; therefore, validity concerns are not warranted in this research.

Reliability relates to the consistency of a measure (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Results can draw significant and valuable inferences from the study (Creswell, 2013). Reliability is a

distinctive form of measurement focused on accuracy, precision, and consistency. Reliability is not a concern in this study. Based on the random sampling of the 12,000 members within the IMCUSA database, the consistency of the information will yield consistent results regardless of how many times the membership data is polled.

Reliability is achieved through different measures. The first measure is through internal consistency. The internal consistency is validated using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is the most commonly used test to determine the internal consistency of an instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  result is a number between 0 and 1. An acceptable reliability score is one that is 0.7 and higher (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

The second measure is stability. Stability is tested using an alternate form of testing. For an instrument to demonstrate stability, there should be a high correlation between the data each time data is collected from a subject. A correlation coefficient less than 0.3 indicates a weak correlation, 0.3–0.5 is satisfactory, and greater than 0.5 is strong (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

The third measure is an equivalence. Equivalence measures consistency between responses of various users of an instrument, or among alternative forms of an instrument. The consistency of the data capturing process is an inter-rater reliability. The consistency of the outputs is about the level of the inter-rater reliability of the data collection (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues were considered in the sampling procedures and data collection. The study was comprised of randomly selected third-party participants. There was no requirement for consent. All sampling and data collection remain confidential. The accuracy of data analysis and the research reporting was strictly monitored. Each participant in the study received the same treatment under the same circumstances. The ethical considerations in the study was minimal

because the research was conducted anonymously using secondary data drawn from participants within the publicly available database registry in the U.S. that would not have any personal or harmful information exposed. All data used for the study is maintained in a lock box at a local bank for the required seven years.

## **CHAPTER 4. RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

This purpose of this quantitative explanatory study was to examine the relationship between social media adoption and client growth for independent management consultants. This study addressed three research questions and the corresponding sub-questions to test for relationship and significance. This chapter provides the data collection results, the descriptive analysis, an analysis of the hypotheses, and a summary.

### **Data Collection Results**

The subjects for this study were selected randomly from a publicly available database from IMCUSA. A sample represents similar characteristics that offer the capacity to generalize the population (Creswell, 2013). Each subject represented a single management consultant member profile—not of a group, organization, or other business entity. The data examined the types of social media platforms used, the number of platforms used, or whether the subjects used social media to influence client growth. A sample size of 119 independent management consultants represented the minimum sample population size.

More than 119 consultants' profiles were observed to achieve a sufficient sample to meet the research objectives. An examination of member profiles revealed a significant number of incomplete profiles or those with insufficient information to meet the minimum requirement to satisfy the objectives of the study. An independent examination was conducted of more than 595 social media sites representing more than 119 independent management consultants. Each profile was independently examined to determine the number of social media platforms used, the types of social media platforms used, the number of “Likes” or “Followers” per social media platform, and whether the person was a certified consultant. The most popular social platforms used were

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube. Each social media site and website were examined for consultant content, client interaction, and frequency of activity. A comprehensive profile examination included certification status, social media platforms, websites, and other external links designed to generate business activity. The subjects reflected wide-ranging variations of specializations and expertise.

The data collection results were limited by the number of complete profiles, profile availability, and available website data. Complete member profiles offered biographical information, demographical information, and social media information. The number of IMCUSA members with incomplete profiles represented a limitation of the data collected. An incomplete profile offered information short of a complete profile. Another limitation was the number of members in the directory with unavailable profiles because these offered no information.

A significant limitation of the data collection was from websites. A significant number of websites offered only partial client listings. Likewise, the number of repeat clients was limited. The number of repeat clients is a fundamental component to establish client growth. A significant limitation of the study was the ability to establish a growth measurement for the number of clients during a given period. The web traffic data was measured over a six-month period to determine whether the results influenced client growth capacity. The client number could not be established from the start to the end of the web activity tracking.

SimilarWeb, a digital market intelligence company, was used to analyze web traffic. SimilarWeb analyzes more than 80 million websites, across 240 categories, in more than 60 countries (Similar Web, 2016). Website visits were analyzed over a six-month period using SimilarWeb. Another limitation of SimilarWeb is that it is not a direct analysis tool. In many cases, the site was unable to capture data for websites with less than 5,000 web visits. The data



was represented with a no data available marking not to confuse the data with independent management consultant websites with negative traffic or no traffic.

Unfortunately, the planned quantitative data collection effort did not yield sufficient information about client growth making a substantive inferential analysis infeasible. The original quantitative data collection effort; however, yielded observational data focused on how independent management consultants are using social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) to influence client growth potential.

### **Evaluation of Hypotheses**

The study examined whether there was a statistically significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth. More specifically, the research examined whether there was a statistically significant relationship in the number of social media platforms used and client growth. The research also examined if there was a statistically significant relationship in the type of social media platforms used and client growth. The research questions were supported by the following hypothesis statements:

H1<sub>0</sub>: social media adoption and client growth are not significantly related.

H1<sub>a</sub>: social media adoption and client growth are significantly related.

H2<sub>0</sub>: the number of social media platforms and client growth are not significantly related.

H2<sub>a</sub>: the number of social media platforms and client growth are significantly related.

H3<sub>0</sub>: the types of social media platforms used and client growth are not significantly related.

H3<sub>a</sub>: the types of social media platforms used and client growth are significantly related.

An insufficient quantity of data was available to prove or disprove that social media adoption and client growth were significantly related. Thus, in all cases, the null hypothesis had

to be retained. Client growth information was only available for 3.36% of the sample population (Table A12). Insufficient data was obtained; therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. However, observational data collected indicated social media may contribute significantly to client growth potential.

The most commonly used social media platforms were Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube. The examination revealed that each platform was used to target a specific audience and intent. The commonly identifiable audiences were colleagues, business professionals, and prospective clients (existing clients are grouped with prospective clients). The frequency of posts was influenced by the intended audience. The number of social media platforms used was influenced by the number of targeted audiences. Additional social media platforms used were Instagram and Pinterest.

An observation of 119 independent management consultant profiles in the IMCUSA publicly available database inconclusively determined the frequency with which information was posted. This data excluded the percentage of member profiles that used a particular social media platform. The exclusionary data included 35% of independent management consultants that did not use Facebook (see Table A3); 45% of independent management consultants that did not use Twitter (see Table A4); 12% of independent management consultants that did not use LinkedIn (see Table A5). On the other hand, 77 of 119 independent management consultants used Facebook to create posts in an indiscernible frequency (see Figure A1). Likewise, 66 of 119 independent management consultants used Twitter to create posts in an unclear frequency (see Figure A2). In addition, 105 of 119 independent management consultants used LinkedIn created posts in an equal frequency (see Figure A3).

Additionally, the study revealed that independent management consultants were posting content on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) related to the various specializations of management consulting. The observational data collection indicated that independent management consultants were posting content on social media related to various specializations. An examination of 119 profiles revealed varying specializations such as biotech, business services, engineering, healthcare, IT, real estate, retail, law/legal, and transportation. Independent management consultants were posting content on the most popular social media platforms to sustain existing relationships and to create new relationships with prospective clients. The content targeted specific audiences to promote individual services in certain specializations. The content was posted to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest. The examined content suggested that, in many cases, social media messaging was designed to redirect clients to the host website.

The quantitative data collection indicated that independent management consultants were posting content on social media related to various specializations. Table A3 reflects that 77% of independent management consultants were posting to Facebook. Table A4 reveals that 66% of independent management consultants were posting to Twitter. Table A5 indicates that 88% of independent management consultants were posting to LinkedIn. Table A6 reflects that 31% of independent management consultants were posting to YouTube. Table A7 reveals that 44% of independent management consultants were posting to Google+.

The study uncovered that independent management consultants were interacting with readers on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube). The observational data examination revealed inconclusively that independent management consultants were interacting with readers on social media. A significant number of examined

member profile had regular interactions with readers. In contrast, a significant number of independent management consultants established a social media presence with insignificant or no interaction. An independent examination of more than 595 social media sites represented more than 119 independent management consultants revealed Facebook business pages or “Fan Pages” with 0 “Likes.” The results indicated that a social media presence existed but reflected no significant traffic.

Independent management consultants are interacting with readers using multiple social media platforms. For example, independent management consultants interact with readers on Instagram using photos and videos. Instagram offers integrative features allowing the independent management consultant to expand messaging through Facebook or Twitter. The observational data compiled uncovered a generational use of social media interaction geared toward target audiences.

The observation data inconclusively revealed the frequency of social media activity. In comparison, the data revealed significant website traffic. Table A8 reflects that 92% of the independent management consultant profiles examined received significant website visits. The data indicated no significant relationship between the number of social media platforms and the number of website visits (see Table A2).

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The descriptive data was based on the examination of the research questions. The questions sought to identify a significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth. The variables used to measure the statistical relationship were the number of social platforms and the types of social media platforms used by independent management consultants.

The results describe the means, standard deviation, and ranges (Creswell, 2013). The results are described in Table A1, which denotes the one variance descriptive summary of results.

### **Number of Social Media Platforms**

The means, standard deviation and ranges for the number of social media platforms was examined. The mean for the number of social media platforms is 2.849 (Table A1). The mean for the types of social media platforms is reflected individually by Facebook “Likes,” Twitter “Followers,” Google+ “Followers” are 3358.12, 1224.16, and 26.14, respectively (Table A1). The standard deviation for the number of social media platforms is 1.577 (Table A1). The result indicates the data points are closer to the mean. The standard deviation for the types of social media platforms is reflected individually by Facebook “Likes,” Twitter “Followers,” Google+ “Followers” are 32147.24, 8601.28, and 179.40 respectively (Table A1). The results indicate the data points are spread over a broader set of values. The range for the number of social media platforms is five. The results reflect five social media platforms examined. The range of the types of social media platforms is reflected individually by Facebook “Likes,” Twitter “Followers,” Google+ “Followers” are 350,070, 92,800, and 1,919 respectively (Table A1). The range is represented by a set of values from largest to smallest (Anderson, 2014). The results revealed that Facebook experienced the most significant level of client interaction.

### **Number of Facebook “Likes”**

The means, standard deviation, and ranges for the number of Facebook “Likes” was examined. The mean was 3358.12 (Table A1). The results reflect the average number of social media platforms for 119 member profiles examined. The standard deviation was 32147.24 (Table A1). The results indicate the data points were spread over a wider set of values. The range was 350070 (Table A1).

### **Number of Twitter “Followers”**

The means, standard deviation, and ranges for the number of Twitter “Followers” was examined. The mean was 1224.16 (Table A1). The standard deviation was 8601.28 (Table A1). The range was 92800 (Table A1).

### **Number of Google+ “Followers”**

The means, standard deviation, and ranges for the number of Google+ “Followers” were examined. The mean was 26.14 (Table A1). The standard deviation was 179.40 (Table A1). The range was 1919 (Table A1).

### **Number of Website Visits**

The means, standard deviation, and ranges for the number of Twitter “Followers” was examined. The mean was 40062.39 (Table A1). The standard deviation was 322532.70 (Table A1). The range was 3368907.67 (Table A1).

Website data was collected to support the research objectives. Examination of the social media content referenced services and publicly available offerings on the independent management consultant’s website. The websites contained geographic data, demographic data, social media links, services, offerings, testimonials, and customer relation management information. This study focused more on the services, offerings, and social media links.

Measuring website traffic was a key to answering the research questions.

The website traffic data served as a factor for determining trends that influenced client activity. Website client activity is significant to social media reader interaction and involvement. The website traffic data measured activity over a period of six months. The measurement of website traffic was significant to identify the activity the independent management consultant was involved that achieved desired or undesirable business outcomes. This finding is significant

because it shows both peak and non-peak periods. Correlation and covariance of the data were measured to find the extent to which random variables tended to deviate from the expected values (Creswell, 2013). The data results revealed no significant relationship was determined between the number of social media platforms used and the number of web visits (see Table A2).

### **Summary**

The quantitative data collection of client growth data did not yield sufficient information about client growth to reject the null hypotheses; thus, making inferential analysis infeasible. However, the original quantitative data collection effort was expanded to include observational data about how independent management consultants were using social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) to influence client growth potential. These observations were then used to evaluate the hypotheses. The quantitative study described the relationship between social media adoption and client growth with inconclusive results; but probative practitioner value.

Data was collected from 119 member profiles within the IMCUSA publicly available database. The member profiles provided demographic data, geographic data, biographical, social media, and web-based information. Each complete member profile was examined for social media presence and content and website presence and content. An examination of 595 social media was conducted to identify the level of traffic as measured by the number of Facebook “Likes,” Twitter “Followers,” LinkedIn “Followers,” Google+ “Followers,” YouTube “Followers,” and any other social media platforms used by the independent management consultant. The examination uncovered a significant number of independent management consultants that used other social media platforms, in addition to, or in place of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, or YouTube such as Instagram and Pinterest.

The descriptive data was based on the examination of the research questions and observed data collection. The questions were intended to identify a statistically significant relationship between social media and client growth. The variables used to measure the statistical relationship were the number of social platforms and the types of social media platforms used by independent management consultants. The quantitative data collection indicated that no clear evidence existed to suggest that independent management consultants posted regularly on social media. Observation of 119 independent management consultant profiles in the IMCUSA publicly available database inconclusively determined the frequency with which information was posted. This data excluded the percentage of member profiles that used a particular social media platform.

An observation of 119 independent management consultant profiles in the IMCUSA publicly available database inconclusively determined the relationship between social media adoption and client growth. In contrast, significant observational data revealed how independent management consultants adopted social media to influence client growth potential. The observable data collection identified whether independent management consultants posted regularly (monthly, weekly, or daily) on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube). The results indicated there was no clear evidence to suggest that independent management consultants regularly posted on social media.

The evaluation of the data collected revealed that independent management consultants were posting content on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) related to the various specializations of management consulting. Observational data collection indicated that independent management consultants posted content on social media related to



various specializations. The observational data collection indicated that independent management consultants were posting content on social media related to various specializations.

The observational data revealed that independent management consultants were interacting with readers on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube). The data collection results revealed that independent management consultants were interacting with readers on social media. A significant number of examined member profiles had regular interactions with readers. A further observational evaluation of the social media interaction indicated that independent management consultants were interacting with readers on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube.

## **CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS**

### **Introduction**

The primary objective of this chapter is to summarize the discussion of the results, conclusions, and recommendations relating to the relationship between social media adoption and the influence on client growth potential for independent management consultants. This chapter provides an evaluation of the research questions, the fulfillment of research purpose, the contribution to the business problem, recommendations for further research, and conclusions. The quantitative data collection results did not produce suitable information to prove or disprove that a significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth existed. However, the original quantitative data collection effort was expanded to include observations of how independent management consultants used social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube) to influence client growth potential. These observations were used to further evaluate the research questions based on the collected quantitative data.

### **Evaluation of Research Questions**

The study focused on the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth?

The relationship between social media adoption and client growth was not possible to determine due to data limitations on client growth. The data collected was not sufficient to prove or disprove a significant relationship between social media adoption and client growth for independent management consultants. The data in Table A12 reflected 3.36% of client growth data available. In addition, the data displayed in Table A2 indicated a weak correlation and

covariance in the relationship between the number and types of social media platforms used. Although the correlation was weak, the data indicated, there was a slight correlation.

An observational data evaluation consisted of a review of 595 social media sites of 119 member profiles. The examination of social media sites revealed a dispersion of strategic and tactical uses of social media to draw attention to services and offerings, build or grow client relationships, and direct traffic to websites. There was a substantive argument for the adoption of social media. The descriptive examination of social media sites uncovered the difference that resided in the application and implementation of the platform.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the number of social media platforms used and a number of clients?

The relationship between the number of social media platforms used and a number of clients was inconclusive. Insufficient data was collectible; therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. The quantitative data results indicated 7% of independent management consultant profiles examined did not use social media platforms for business (see Table A10). In contrast, 19% of independent management consultant profiles examined used five social media platforms for business (see Table A10). The highest saturation of social media platforms used was three totaling 24% of examined profiles (see Table A10). Data results revealed 13% of independent management consultant profiles examined used two social media platforms for business (see Table A10). The results also revealed 17% of independent management consultant profiles examined used four social media platforms for business (see Table A10).

An examination of independent management consultants social media sites and websites revealed links to additional social media platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest to promote

services and offerings.. The social media platform used was relative to the services and offerings promoted.

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the type of platform and the number of clients?

The relationship between the type of social media platform used and the number of clients was inconclusive. Insufficient data was available; therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. The descriptive data results revealed a significant usage of Facebook and LinkedIn. The data results show that 65% of the examined independent management consultants used Facebook. Likewise, 88% of the examined independent management consultants used LinkedIn. Further data results revealed 55% of the examined independent management consultants used Twitter. Data results showed 31% of the examined independent management consultants used YouTube. Likewise, 44% of the examined independent management consultants used Google+.

An observational data examination revealed that based on the target audience and the type of service offering determined which social media platform was used and how the platform was employed. The social media sites examined indicated that independent management consultants displaying videos, presentations, or recorded offering used YouTube. Independent management consultants providing services and offering shared among a group of professionals, peer groups, or colleagues used LinkedIn. Likewise, Google+ was used to share with services and offerings with business professionals and their extended connections. Facebook was used to share general photos, news, and customer relations management. Twitter was used for general information, news releases, and customer relation management.

## **Fulfillment of Research Purpose**

The purpose of this quantitative explanatory study was to examine the relationship between social media adoption and client growth within independent management consulting practices. The data indicated no significant relationship between the number of social media platforms and the number of website visits (see Table A2). However, the website data served as a factor for determining trends that influenced client growth potential. The study is a significant addition to the existing body of knowledge in the field of management consulting because it helps independent management consultants better understand how social media is adopted by their colleagues and leveraged to influence client growth potential.

More importantly, the examined website traffic identified peak and non-peak periods of activity. The peak activity served as an indicator to sustain a particular activity. An observational evaluation presents dissimilar findings. The observation of non-peak periods helps the independent management consultant understand where and possibly when to implement changes. The changes may be represented in policy, practice, or procedure. The research supports the management problem. The independent management consultant can make decisions that influence policy, procedure, or existing practices.

The examination of the types of social media platforms adopted indicated a weak correlation (see Table A11). Independent management consultants should understand that a weak correlation still suggests a correlation exists. Independent observation of social media sites and websites reflected a link between client activity and business service offerings on the business host website.

The purpose of the research was fulfilled by identifying key areas that supported the resolution of the managerial dilemma. The study illustrated how independent management

consultants were using social media to influence client growth potential. The ancillary statistical data indicated nominal correlation. The objective examination of website information offered testimonials, client feedback, and customer ratings offered a deeper understanding. The nature of client-based relationships can be subjective. The challenge for the manager knows when to sustain activity and when to modify strategy. The research provided independent management consultants a way forward to identify indicators for sustainment or change.

### **Contribution to Business Problem**

The general problem was the existing difficulty in measuring the impact of social media adoption and client growth in the professional services industry. The specific problem was an insufficient understanding of the relationship between social media adoption on client growth for independent management consultants. This study contributed to the body of knowledge of the relationship between social media adoption and the influence of client growth for individual management consulting practices in that it demonstrated a pathway to influence client growth potential. The study examined independent management consultants across industries using both observational and quantitative metrics illustrating how social media was used to attract and retain business capacity through client-based involvement. The member profiles examined revealed social media adoption with the intent to drive clients to the host website.

The web is one of the most effective tools in promoting products and services (Öztamur & Sarper Karakadılar, 2014). The problem is nested in how independent management consultants are using social media to create the potential for client growth. Quantitative examination insufficiently supported a correlation between social media adoption and client growth. In contrast, an observational evaluation of independent management consultant profiles revealed the creation of growth capacity. The data results revealed a partial solution to the

business problem as it related to the creating capacity. The data insufficiently answered the question of how to use social media.

More importantly, key indicators were discovered that supported the managerial decision-making process. The results of an observational examination of social media platforms and the number of social media platforms used offers insight into business strategy. Managers must decide whom to target, how they should be a target, and what tool is best to deliver the message. This study offers the insight through the lens of 119 independent management consultants. A significant number of independent management consultants demonstrated potential to expand client growth. The observational examination provides a roadmap to address the managerial dilemma sufficiently.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The results of the study showed a weak correlation between social media adoption and client growth. Independent observation of 595 social media sites and 119 independent management consultant profiles within the IMCUSA publicly available database showed a link between client interaction and client growth potential. Further research should include a method to identify the existing number of clients at the beginning of a given period and observe the activity for given period. Additional research should seek to measure client satisfaction. The independent observation of independent management consultants' websites contained testimonials. A Likert measurement should be used to determine the level of satisfaction. The results of a Likert measurement would provide a greater understanding of why clients return for repeat services, recommend services to others, or choose another service provider.

The research found two outliers. The outliers accounted for a significant number of website visits without adopting social media. The commonality each outlier shared was the

length of time in the industry. Both independent management consultants had been in the consulting business for a significant length of time. Further research should examine the reasons outliers achieve increased client saturation with the nominal use of social media adoption in an increasingly dynamic business landscape where customer relation management is essential to client development.

Another area for further research is the demographical influence of social media users and independent management consultants on client growth potential. A limitation of this study was that it did not consider generational differences, gender, race, or ethnicity. Further research should examine key demographic data to determine whether gender, race, age, or ethnicity play a role in social media adoption. Social media is a key client interaction based tool. More importantly, if gender, race, age, or ethnicity plays a role in social media adoption—how does it influence customer relations management and client-based activity.

The managerial implications of this study facilitate independent management consultants, consulting managers, and independent consulting practices to weigh the causes and conditions in the business environment. The causes and conditions may be symptomatic of a practice that is strategically moving in the wrong direction. Identifying key success factors can improve client growth potential and business activity. Further qualitative research expanding on the examination of individual website interaction is recommended. This research could be used better to articulate how independent management consultants could reach target audiences and could expand service offering through integrative social media activity and website activity.

Independent management consultants should explore additional methods to develop a better relationship with clients. Expanding client relations capabilities is a recommendation for independent management consultants. Existing clients share experiences by WoM. This



exchange of information may lead to new business for the independent management consultant. Additional methods may include the use of popular messaging platforms. One example of an integrative solution is the messaging system called WhatsApp. According to Statista, there are over 1 Billion WhatsApp users in 180 countries worldwide (Statista, 2016). Additional integrative applications may facilitate the independent management consultant's delivery of services and customer relations management.

### **Conclusions**

The rationale for this study provided information and insights relating to the influence of social media adoption on client growth potential for independent management consultants. The findings can benefit individual management consultants by providing a prescriptive approach to addressing managerial dilemmas as it relates to how to apply social media adoption adequately. The study further provided insight into the relationship between the type of social media platform used and the influence on building client growth potential. Social media measurement is growing in popularity among businesses and scholars (Öztamur & Sarper Karakadılar, 2014). Small to medium size businesses should seek tools that expand the capacity of their business to create scalability and relevance in a dynamic global marketplace.

This research differs from earlier studies in that it takes a comprehensive approach. The research examined social media adoption as a construct then divided the construct into key segments to determine the influence on creating client growth potential. The study examined the social media platforms used, the number of platforms used, and how the platforms were applied. A quantitative examination yielded significant results in the popularity of certain social media platforms. In contrast, the quantitative results did not sufficiently offer insight into the correlation between the number of social media platforms or the types of social media platforms.

In contrast, an observational examination of social media platforms and website traffic data offered relevant insights. The variation in the application of social media adoption illustrated the messaging and marketing strategies of independent management consultants. The differences were based on the specialization, the target audience, and the services and offerings. Metrics such as “Likes,” “Followers,” and website traffic must be adapted for distinctive campaigns (Öztamur & Sarper Karakadılar, 2014). The results reveal that there is no uniquely applicable solution across the spectrum of specializations. Social media adoption should be tailored and leveraged as a tool toward achieving desired business outcomes.

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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL WORK

### Academic Honesty Policy

Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy ([3.01.01](#)) holds learners accountable for the integrity of work they submit, which includes but is not limited to discussion postings, assignments, comprehensive exams, and the dissertation or capstone project.

Established in the Policy are the expectations for original work, rationale for the policy, definition of terms that pertain to academic honesty and original work, and disciplinary consequences of academic dishonesty. Also, stated in the Policy is the expectation that learners will follow APA rules for citing another person's ideas or works.

The following standards for original work and definition of *plagiarism* are discussed in the Policy:

Learners are expected to be the sole authors of their work and to acknowledge the authorship of others' work through proper citation and reference. Use of another person's ideas, including another learner's, without proper reference or citation constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty and is prohibited conduct. (p. 1)

Plagiarism is one example of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own. Plagiarism also includes copying verbatim or rephrasing ideas without properly acknowledging the source by author, date, and publication medium. (p. 2)

Capella University's Research Misconduct Policy ([3.03.06](#)) holds learners accountable for research integrity. What constitutes research misconduct is discussed in the Policy:

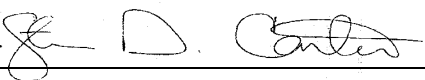
Research misconduct includes but is not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, misappropriation, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. (p. 1)

Learners failing to abide by these policies are subject to consequences, including but not limited to dismissal or revocation of the degree.

### Statement of Original Work and Signature

I have read, understood, and abided by Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy ([3.01.01](#)) and Research Misconduct Policy ([3.03.06](#)), including Policy Statements, Rationale, and Definitions.

I attest that this dissertation or capstone project is my own work. Where I have used the ideas or words of others, I have paraphrased, summarized, or used direct quotes following the guidelines set forth in the *APA Publication Manual*.

Learner name  
and date Steven D. Carter  01/10/2017

## **APPENDIX A. TABLES AND FIGURES**

Table A1

*One Variance Descriptive Summary of Results*

<i>One Variable Summary</i>	Number of SM Platforms Data Set #1	Number of Facebook "Likes" Data Set #1	Number of Twitter Followers Data Set #1	Number of Google+ Followers Data Set #1	Number of Website Visits Data Set #1
<b>Mean</b>	2.849	3358.12	1224.16	26.14	40062.39
<b>Variance</b>	2.485	1033444806.36	73982024.42	32184.84	104027345430.28
<b>Std. Dev.</b>	1.577	32147.24	8601.28	179.40	322532.70
<b>Skewness</b>	-0.1551	10.8145	10.4237	10.1745	9.7774
<b>Kurtosis</b>	1.8752	120.5669	114.5200	110.5060	102.6766
<b>Median</b>	3.000	0.00	8.00	0.00	58.50
<b>Mean Abs. Dev.</b>	1.326	6325.10	2043.28	44.88	75401.61
<b>Mode</b>	3.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Minimum</b>	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Maximum</b>	5.000	350070.00	92800.00	1919.00	3368907.67
<b>Range</b>	5.000	350070.00	92800.00	1919.00	3368907.67
<b>Count</b>	119	119	119	119	118
<b>Sum</b>	339.000	399616.00	145675.00	3111.00	4727361.52
<b>1st Quartile</b>	1.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>3rd Quartile</b>	4.000	36.00	131.00	0.00	313.17
<b>Interquartile Range</b>	3.000	36.00	131.00	0.00	313.17
<b>1.00%</b>	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>2.50%</b>	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>5.00%</b>	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>10.00%</b>	1.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>20.00%</b>	1.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>80.00%</b>	5.000	64.00	244.00	6.00	495.00
<b>90.00%</b>	5.000	294.00	1223.00	25.00	1366.40
<b>95.00%</b>	5.000	1556.00	2546.00	79.00	20999.20
<b>97.50%</b>	5.000	12688.00	8356.00	223.00	164422.80
<b>99.00%</b>	5.000	23660.00	11914.00	323.00	987025.00



Table A2

*Correlation and Covariance*

<i>Linear Correlation Table</i>	<b>Number of SM Platforms Data Set #1</b>	<b>Number of Facebook "Likes" Data Set #1</b>	<b>Number of Twitter Followers Data Set #1</b>	<b>Number of Google+ Followers Data Set #1</b>	<b>Number of Website Visits Data Set #1</b>
<b>Number of SM Platforms</b>	1.000	0.080	0.106	0.181	-0.145
<b>Number of Facebook "Likes"</b>	0.080	1.000	0.986	-0.012	0.011
<b>Number of Twitter Followers</b>	0.106	0.986	1.000	0.018	0.009
<b>Number of Google+ Followers</b>	0.181	-0.012	0.018	1.000	-0.018
<b>Number of Website Visits</b>	-0.145	0.011	0.009	-0.018	1.000

*Note.* No significant relationship was discovered between SM platforms, and number of website visits. A significant relationship was discovered in Facebook “Likes” and Twitter “Followers.”

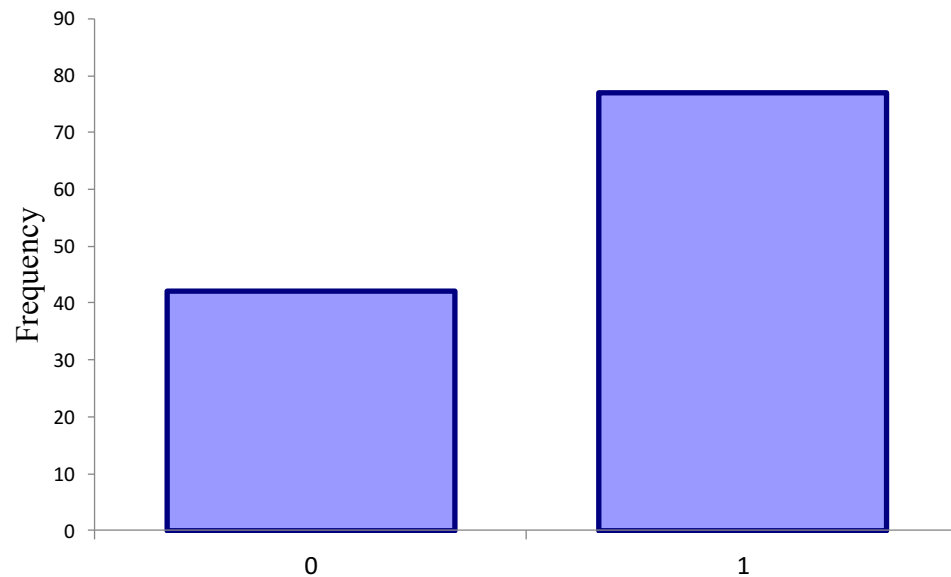
Table A3

*Frequency Table Facebook*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Facebook / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	42	0.35
<b>1</b>	77	0.65
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 35% of independent management consultant profiles do not possess Facebook accounts for business. Values reflect that 65% of independent management consultant profiles possess Facebook accounts for business.

**Bar Chart of Facebook / Data Set #1**



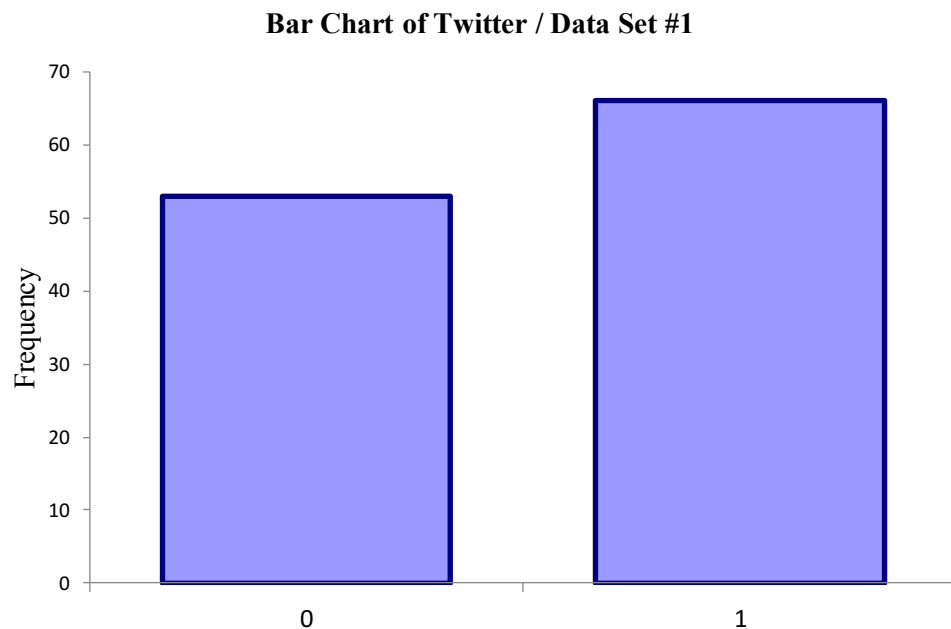
*Figure A1.* Values represents 42 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess Facebook accounts for business. Values reflect that 77 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess Facebook accounts for business.

Table A4

*Frequency Table Twitter*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Twitter / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	53	0.45
<b>1</b>	66	0.55
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 45% of independent management consultant profiles do not possess Twitter accounts for business. Values reflect that 55% of independent management consultant profiles possess Twitter accounts for business.



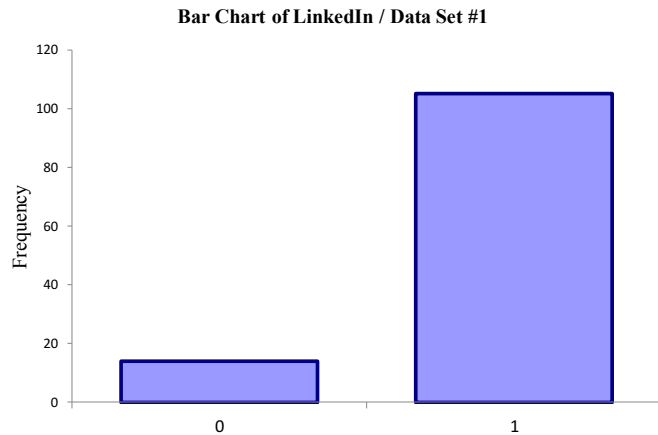
*Figure A2.* Values represents 53 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess Twitter accounts for business. Values reflect that 66 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess Facebook accounts for business.

Table A5

*Frequency Table LinkedIn*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>LinkedIn / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	14	0.12
<b>1</b>	105	0.88
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 14% of independent management consultant profiles do not possess LinkedIn accounts. Values reflect that 88% of independent management consultant profiles possess LinkedIn accounts.



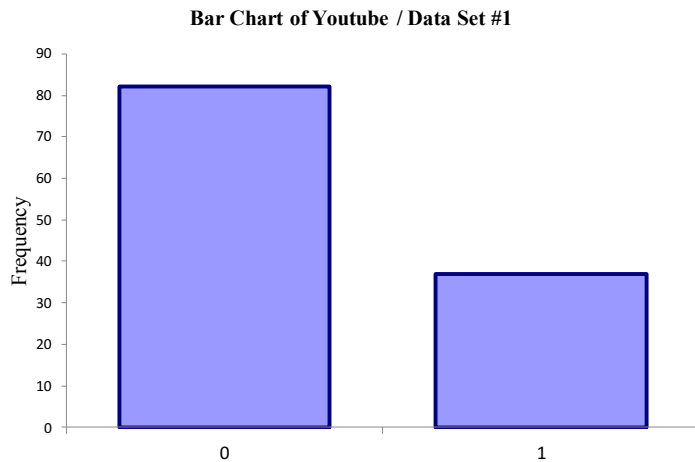
*Figure A3.* Values represents 14 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess LinkedIn accounts for business. Values reflect that 105 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess Facebook accounts for business.

Table A6

*Frequency Table YouTube*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Youtube / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	82	0.69
<b>1</b>	37	0.31
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 82% of independent management consultants do not possess YouTube accounts for business. Values reflect that 37% of independent management consultants YouTube accounts for business.



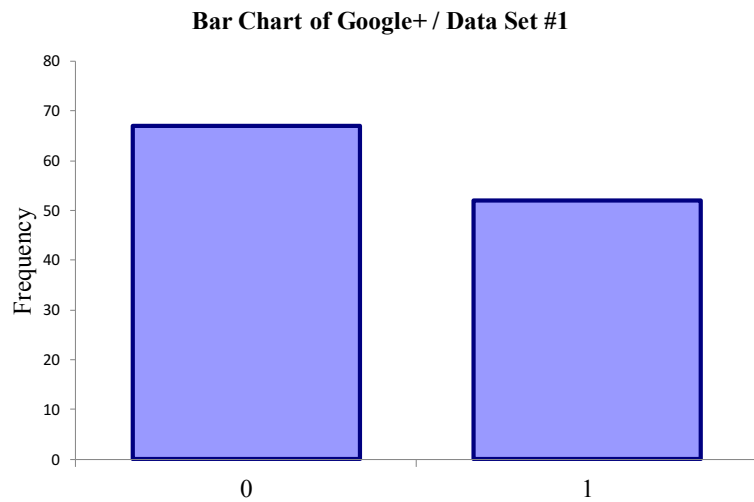
*Figure A4.* Values represents 82 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess YouTube sites for business. Values reflect that 37 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess YouTube sites for business.

Table A7

*Frequency Table Google+*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Google+ / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	67	0.56
<b>1</b>	52	0.44
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 56% of independent management consultant profiles do not possess Google+ accounts for business. Values reflect that 44% of independent management consultant profiles possess Google+ accounts for business.



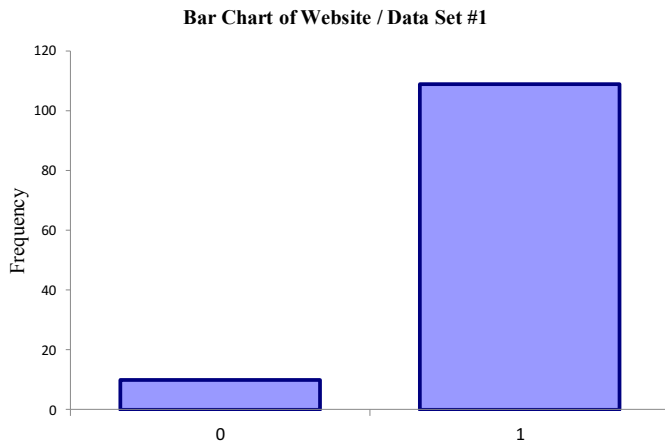
*Figure A5.* Values represents 67 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess Google+ for business. Values reflect that 52 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess Google+ for business.

Table A8

*Frequency Table Websites*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Website / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	10	0.08
<b>1</b>	109	0.92
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 10% of independent management consultants do not possess significant website traffic for business. Values reflect that 92% of independent management consultant profiles possess significant website traffic for business. Significance is defined as < 5000 visits a month or website traffic is too low to monitor using the SimilarWeb website tracking tool.



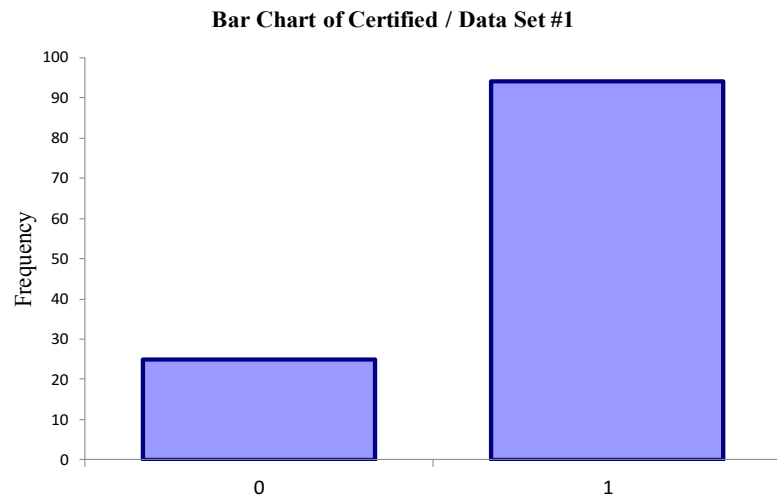
*Figure A6.* Values represents 10 of 119 independent management consultant profiles do not possess significant website traffic for business. Values reflect that 109 of 119 independent management consultant profiles possess significant website traffic for business. Significance is defined as < 5000 visits a month or website traffic is too low to monitor using the SimilarWeb website tracking tool.

Table A9

*Frequency Table Certified Management Consultants*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Certified / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	25	0.21
<b>1</b>	94	0.79
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 21% of independent management consultants do not possess Consultant Management Certification (CMC) and 79% of independent management consultants possess Consultant Management Certification (CMC).



*Figure A7.* Values represents 25 of 119 independent management consultants are not Certified Management Consultants (CMC). Values reflect that 94 of 119 independent management consultants are Certified Management Consultants (CMC).



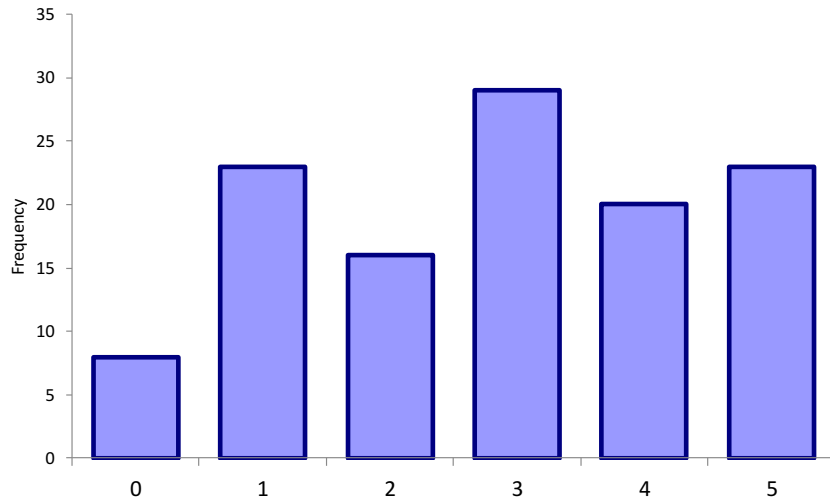
Table A10

*Frequency Table Number of Social Media Platforms*

<i>Frequency Table</i>	<b>Number of SM Platforms / Data Set #1</b>	
	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Rel. Freq.</b>
<b>0</b>	8	0.07
<b>1</b>	23	0.19
<b>2</b>	16	0.13
<b>3</b>	29	0.24
<b>4</b>	20	0.17
<b>5</b>	23	0.19
<b>Freq. Relative to All Categories</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*Note.* The table indicates 7% of independent management consultants do not use social media platforms for business, 19% use one social media platform; 13% of independent management consultants use two social media platforms; 24% of independent management consultants use three social media platforms for business; 17% of independent management consultants use four social media platforms for business; and 19% of independent management consultants use five or more social media platforms for business.

**Bar Chart of Number of SM Platforms / Data Set #1**



*Figure A8.* Values represents 8 of 119 independent management consultants do not use social media platforms for business. Values reflect 23 of 119 independent management consultants use one social media platform. Values represent 16 of 119 independent management consultants use two social media platforms. Values reflect that 29 of 119 independent management consultants use three social media platforms for business. Values reflect that 20 of 119 independent management consultants use four social media platforms for business. Values reflect that 23 of 119 independent management consultants use five social media platforms for business.

Table A11

*Multiple Regression Summary for Number of SM Platforms*

	<b>Multiple R</b>	<b>R-Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R-square</b>	<b>Std. Err. of</b>	<b>Rows Ignored</b>	<b>Outliers</b>
	0.2345	0.0550	0.0301	1.537739246	1	0
<i>ANOVA Table</i>	<b>Degrees of Freedom</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean of Squares</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p-Value</b>	
<b>Explained</b>	3	15.6850506	5.228350201	2.211053608	0.0906	
<b>Unexplained</b>	114	269.5691867	2.364641988			
<i>Regression Table</i>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Confidence Interval 95%</b>	
					<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>
<b>Constant</b>	2.800524244	0.147409172	18.99830382	< 0.0001	2.508507809	3.092540679
<b>Number of Facebook "Likes"</b>	-4.33963E-05	2.66122E-05	-1.63069281	0.1057	-9.61148E-05	9.32223E-06
<b>Number of Twitter Followers</b>	0.000179719	9.94647E-05	1.806862882	0.0734	-1.73197E-05	0.000376758
<b>Number of Website Visits</b>	-6.97388E-07	4.40825E-07	-1.58200912	0.1164	-1.57066E-06	1.75882E-07

*Note.* A significant correlation exists between Facebook “Likes” and Twitter Followers. The ANOVA table reflects that the null cannot be rejected with p-value 0.0906. The regression table indicates weak evidence for the constant p-value < 0.0001 the null value cannot be rejected. The Number of Facebook “Likes” with p-value 0.1057 must reject the null. The Number of Twitter Followers with p-value 0.0734 must reject the null. The Number of website visits with p-value 0.1164 must reject the null.

Table A12

*Client Growth Table*

<b>Subject #</b>	<b>Revenue (in Millions)</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Growth (%)</b>
001	0.15	-	-
002	0.25	-	-
003	1.4	-	-
004	0.25	5	-
005	0.467	30	-
006	-	-	-
007	-	-	-
008	-	-	-
009	0.2	24	-
010	0.25	34	-
011	0.1	-	-
012	0.02	-	-
013	3	300	-
014	-	-	-
015	-	-	-
016	0.4	9	-
017	0.4	13	-
018	83.659	58	-
019	0.2	-	-
020	24.599	-	-
021	0.126	-	-
022	0.15	16	-
023	2.4	129	-
024	0.12	93	-

<b>Subject #</b>	<b>Revenue (in Millions)</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Growth (%)</b>
025	3	206	-
026	0.25	25	-
027	0.114	10	-
028	0.119	64	15
029	1.4	-	-
030	-	-	-
031	0.061	24	-
032	0.146	38	-
033	0.117	-	-
034	0.038	-	-
035	0.125	62	-
036	0.24	-	-
037	1845	-	-
038	0.073	-	-
039	0.25	-	-
040	2.4	-	-
041	-	18	-
042	0.75	185	12.97
043	7	27	-
044	7	27	-
045	7	27	-
046	2.4	60	30
047	1	2	-
048	2.4	-	-
049	-	-	-
050	0.25	9	-
051	-	-	-
052	2.4	-	-

<b>Subject #</b>	<b>Revenue (in Millions)</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Growth (%)</b>
053	-	-	-
054	1.4	1	-
055	-	7	-
056	0.035	13	-
057	0.062	4	-
058	0.117	15	-
059	1.4	59	-
060	1.819	6	-
061	1.819	6	-
062	2.4	-	-
063	-	-	-
064	0.25	6	-
065	-	-	-
066	-	-	-
067	1.2	92	-
068	0.02	-	-
069	-	-	-
070	0.2	-	-
071	0.25	15	-
072	0.388	-	-
073	0.137	183	-
074	0.115	-	-
075	-	-	-
076	-	-	-
077	-	-	-
078	-	-	-
079	0.25	7	-
080	3	-	-

<b>Subject #</b>	<b>Revenue (in Millions)</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Growth (%)</b>
081	0.094	24	-
082	2.4	95	-
083	-	-	-
084	2.4	17	-
085	0.22	-	-
086	2.4	-	-
087	55	-	-
088	0.07	-	-
089	-	-	-
090	0.15	-	-
091	0.16	12	-
092	2.4	5	-
093	2.4	50	-
094	0.12	18	-
095	-	-	-
096	0.18	20	-
097	0.09	-	-
098	0.11	81	-
099	6.13	-	-
100	0.226	64	-
101	2.4	596	31
102	1.4	12	-
103	3.477	65	-
104	-	-	-
105	1.5	-	-
106	1.4	6	-
107	0.08	-	-
108	-	-	-

<b>Subject #</b>	<b>Revenue (in Millions)</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Growth (%)</b>
109	-	-	-
110	0.057	30	-
111	-	-	-
112	-	47	-
113	-	4	-
114	0.4	25	-
115	-	-	-
116	1	-	-
117	0.207	17	-
118	2.4	-	-
119	-	-	-

*Note.* Client growth was measured against revenues in 2016 (Hoovers, 2016; Zoominfo, 2016). Clients were determined by listings provided on each subjects website. Client listings represent partial listings and full listings as available. Only four data points were collected revealing conclusive information. Client growth information was available for 3.36% of the sampled population.