Exploring the Challenges of Incorporating Social Media into Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Abdulaziz Alrajhi

1st March 2021

Candidate's statement about the impact of COVID-19 changes on the thesis.

Dear Examiner,

Many of our HDR candidates have had to make changes to their research due to the impact of COVID-19. Below, you will find a statement from the candidate, approved by their Supervisory Panel, that indicates how their original research plan has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Relevant ongoing restrictions in place caused by COVID-19 will also be detailed by the candidate.

Candidate's Statement:

Although the qualitative interviews revealed rich data and insightful thoughts that assisted with the design of the questionnaire for the quantitative study, I encountered two challenges during the data collection phase due to the difficulty in reaching a remarkably busy business sector during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

1. *Small sample size.* As the study approach, I had planned to administer a face-to-face questionnaire to advertising campaign specialists within Australian and United Arab Emirates advertising agencies. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused major interruptions to the data collection, particularly in Australia, as the pandemic had just spread. As a result, Macquarie University paused all face-to-face data collection, and this remained ongoing pending further notice. Alternatively, I contacted advertising agencies via email and attached a link to the questionnaire. However, most recipients did not respond to the email, a few apologised for not participating in the study and no complete questionnaire was received.

2. *Factor analysis issues.* The small sample size of the quantitative study led to challenges with the factor models. Two constructs appeared to have issues with their factor loadings, as they did not load together cleanly; instead, there were unanticipated loadings scattered across different factors. The observation-to-parameter ratio was well below the goal of 10 to 1. Therefore, I could not obtain divergent validity for two variables in the empirical model. However, the data collection will continue after the thesis submission. I eagerly await additional data to gain a clearer understanding of the research issue. Collecting these additional data will enable me to submit papers to *Journal of Advertising* and *Journal of Advertising Research*. I anticipate that my models will perform better once I have collected the additional data.

Thesis Title: *Exploring the Challenges of Incorporating Social Media into Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)*

Candidate Name: Abdulaziz Alrajhi

Department: Marketing

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I would like to take a moment to thank the people who helped me on this long journey toward completing my dissertation.

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To my mother: Words cannot express how grateful I am for all the sacrifices you have made on my behalf. Despite the long distance between us for many years, your prayers have always been with me. Thank you. To my father: You were waiting for me to finish my studies, but I suddenly lost you. It was a difficult and dark time for me to cope with the grief. Sorry for being late. I miss you. Both of you earned this degree along with me.

I have immense gratitude for my wife and children, even though I cannot thank you enough for your kind encouragement and endless help over these many years. Thank you for your enduring patience, even at times when I was grumpier than normal, whilst I was writing this dissertation. I am sorry for missing many of your social and school occasions and appreciate your understanding.

This thesis is dedicated to

my mother's sacrifices and my father's soul.

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Abstract

The emergence of social media has provided numerous benefits for organisations and become a vital component of their marketing strategies. However, marketers still face several challenges in incorporating social media into integrated marketing communications (IMC) programs. Thus, this thesis aims at understanding how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC and investigates the challenges that advertising agencies in Australia and the United Arab Emirates face in integrating social media into IMC programs. The purpose of this study is to answer the following three questions: first, what are the challenges that advertising agencies face when integrating social media into IMC programs? Second, how do advertising agencies overcome the challenges of integrating social media into IMC programs? Third, what is the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship?

I adopted a mixed methods approach to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research issue. In the preliminary study, I employed semi-structured interviews with 30 advertising campaign specialists responsible for developing social media campaigns and integrating them into IMC programs. The concepts and insights gained from this qualitative study then enabled the development of a questionnaire for a quantitative study. I distributed the questionnaire to 53 advertising campaign specialists, which yielded 159 observations (53 participants × 3 campaigns).

The results reveal seven challenges that influence the incorporation of social media into IMC programs: risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. These challenges are responsible for many conflicts between advertising agencies and clients that decrease the level of

social media integration into IMC programs. Clients may have the required resources, but the major issue underlying the failure to integrate social media into an IMC program is that the resources are not used in a collaborative way. Furthermore, the clients have a greater responsibility and can substantially assist their advertising agencies to avoid or overcome these challenges because they have a significant influence on their advertising agencies. Therefore, clients need to work with their advertising agencies in a collaborative way to effectively share and utilise resources to deliver a high level of social media integration into their IMC program. The thesis concludes by providing theoretical contributions, managerial implications, research limitations and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

As of October 2020, there were 4.14 billion active social media users worldwide (Clement, 2020), representing more than half the global population. Interestingly, while television took 35 years to attract an audience of 50 million (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014), Facebook reached more than 1 billion users in less than 10 years. Therefore, it is not surprising that organisations have embraced social media as a marketing communication tool (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020), and social media expenditures now surpass those in other media categories (Tan, Brown, & Pope, 2019). However, this proliferation of social media has also made the marketing landscape more complex (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2019). Accordingly, organisations must prepare to embrace the many challenges that social media raises (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015).

In a practical sense, social media is defined as 'a collection of software-based digital technologies—usually presented as apps and websites—that provide users with digital environments in which they can send and receive digital content or information over some type of online social network' (Appel et al., 2020, p. 80). With the rise of social media, there is increasing evidence that the advertising industry is in a state of crisis and relationships between advertising agencies and their clients are suffering (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019). Although incorporating social media in integrated marketing communications (IMC) is vital, marketers often fail to integrate social media into their IMC programs (Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2017). Therefore, an

organisation will often contract an advertising agency to integrate social media into its IMC program.

However, the organisation can be its own worst enemy if it views the advertising agency's function as similar to that of other vendors (Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2006). When the client provide an inadequate resources to their advertising agency, it negatively influence the advertising agency work (Vafeas, 2021). The main problem of the research is that most clients lack of the knowledge in integrating social media into IMC programs and they do not provide the required resources to their advertising agencies to develop the integration.

Marketing resources and capabilities are considered to be important elements in identifying customers' needs, distribution channels and other marketing tasks (Barrales, Martinez, & Gazquez, 2014). Sustaining a competitive advantage depends on the resources' strength, which leads marketers to perform better than their competitors. Therefore, if clients do not collaborate with their agencies by providing the required resources, it will be a major problem. The reason of this problem to be a major issue is that without providing the required resources from the client, the advertising agency will not be able to do their work to effectively deliver a high level of social media integration into the IMC program.

There is a considerable body of IMC literature; however, it has paid little attention to this issue in relation to social media integration particularly within the advertising agency context. Many researchers have investigated the role of social media in organisations from the customers' perspective (Valos, Habibi, Casidy, Driesener, & Maplestone, 2016). As mentioned, this issue has not been adequately discussed in the literature; thus, a comprehensive investigation with marketing

professionals and practitioners was required to gain rich data that would assist them in successfully integrating social media into IMC programs. This thesis aims at understanding how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs and investigates the challenges that advertising agencies in Australia and the United Arab Emirates face in integrating social media into IMC programs.

A closer look at the literature reveals that the research has focused on traditional media and its integration (Greene, Choi, & Kumar, 2017), but social media as a marketing tool is poorly understood (Noort, Antheunis, & Reijmersdal, 2012). Knoll (2016) provided an up-to-date review of academic and empirical studies in the field of social media advertising and observed that these studies were relatively rare, and the majority of the existing studies had failed to provide an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis focuses on social media to provide a timely contribution to the existing literature.

To fit this background into a theoretical perspective and explore how to successfully integrate social media into IMC programs, the thesis adopts the resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991). Varadarajan (2020) defined firm resources as all assets, capabilities, knowledge, attributes and other factors that a firm controls for conceiving and implementing strategies to obtain a competitive advantage. The RBV indicates how marketers can identify and utilise an organisation's resources that can secure a competitive advantage, and advertising agencies can use their clients' resources and transform them in a coherent way to integrate social media into the IMC program. The RBV suggests that utilising the appropriate resources and capabilities can lead to better work.

However, it seems that organisational resources are not the only necessity for effectively integrating social media into IMC programs. The agency–client relationship is of key importance to achieving campaign objectives because without effective collaboration, marketing clients and advertising agencies cannot share or utilise resources. That is, if the resources are not utilised in a collaborative way, it will be difficult to successfully integrate social media into the IMC program. While the agency–client relationship is central to marketing theory and is at the crux of the fluctuation, and agencies must maintain and manage client expectations (Schauster, 2019), Koslow (2015) stated that clients can play an important role in improving the work by being open-minded, which motivates everyone internally on the advertising agency side to do great work.

1.2 Research Motivation

Due to the increasing importance of social media as a communications medium, challenges are arising regarding the development of a coherent body of theoretically grounded knowledge of social media marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Agencies depends on clients' resources to deliver the work (Vafeas, 2021); however, advertisers face the challenge of allocating resources across their marketing communication channels (Baxendale, Macdonald, & Wilson, 2015). Thus, a major challenge is that client often do not provide sufficient resources to their adverting agencies to better integrate social media into IMC programs.

When developing IMC programs, marketers often do not consider the effects that social media has on it and do not integrate it into the IMC framework; therefore, these issues remain unresolved (Manfred & Stefanie, 2017). As Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated, 'Unfortunately, the popular business press and academic literature

offers marketing managers very little guidance for incorporating social media into their IMC strategies' (p. 358).

The participants of the thesis are advertising agencies specialist. They may have different jobs or position titles in different departments or agencies; however, the main selection criteria were that they develop social media campaigns and implement them in IMC programs for their clients. Diversity in the participants' positions allowed for improving the development of categories and constructs and including a broad range of perspectives in the research (Childers et al., 2019). In other words, the selected sample established connections among the data collected from participants that served the study aims and provided answers to the research questions.

Drawing on a framework combining the RBV and Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) perspectives, this thesis adopts a mixed methods approach to fill this knowledge gap by examining how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs for their clients and identifying the challenges that advertising agencies face in this endeavour and how they overcome them. It also examines the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. As in previous studies (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014; Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2003), the qualitative study conducted in the first phase of this research provided the foundation for the subsequent quantitative study. For the quantitative study, a questionnaire instrument was developed in accordance with the concepts identified in the interviews in the preliminary study. Both studies were conducted with advertising campaign specialists in Australian and United Arab Emirates (UAE) advertising agencies. It is worth noting here that the aim of this research was not to test the RBV model but to use it in an IMP context. The objective

of applying two theoretical perspectives was to improve the interpretation of the research issue (Johnsen, 2018).

1.3 Social Media within the IMC Context

The idea of IMC is to connect marketing objectives and messages across various media. The IMC concept has arisen with changes in media (Tevi, Koslow, & Parker, 2019), and such changes represent one of the challenges that marketers face in designing an IMC program (Batra & Keller, 2016). More specifically, the growth of social media has radically changed IMC, which was developed 25 years ago (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), and complicated IMC functions (Schultz, Patti, & Kitchen, 2013).

Although digital advertising markets provide many innovative opportunities for organisations (Gordon et al., 2020), both advertising agencies and clients continue to struggle to understand social media (Childers, Haley, & McMillan, 2018) and face challenges in integrating social media into IMC programs (Manfred & Stefanie, 2017; Valos et al., 2016). For example, Zahay, Peltier, Krishen, and Schultz (2014) argued that in most successful IMC programs, challenges arise because of the implementation.

Today, marketing academics are acutely aware of the dramatic transformation in the marketing environment that technology has created (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019), and many researchers have shown that social media platforms are more effective marketing tools than traditional media channels. For example, Greene et al. (2017) found that the effect of social media on sales is four times greater than that of traditional media. However, marketers today cannot ignore either type of media (Schultz et al., 2013). While traditional media channels focus on 'reach' and capturing

attention, marketers must also focus on sustaining this attention through engagement and blending of social and traditional media (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). In the marketing landscape, one of the most important elements is IMC programs (Keller, 2016), and new media have become an integral part of most advertising campaigns (Lynch & West, 2017).

Recent studies have shown that organisations' marketing capabilities enable them to achieve superior performance (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014; Ramaswami, Srivastava, & Bhargava, 2009). However, given the ongoing proliferation of social media (Voorveld, 2019), marketers have been challenged by the new media, and 'the marketing capabilities at most firms are not growing commensurate with the challenge. It is little wonder, then, that the gap is growing' (Day, 2011, p. 185).

The use of social media as a marketing tool has changed IMC programs (Henninger et al., 2017). While marketers are eager to integrate social media in their digital strategies (Voorveld, 2019), they still face several challenges when they integrate social media into the IMC program (Schultz & Patti, 2009). As Henninger et al. (2017) cautioned, marketers should clearly understand how to incorporate social media into their IMC to derive its benefits. Surprisingly, many organisations still do not treat social media at the strategic level and often fail to integrate social media into their IMC programs. Valos et al. (2016) stated that if marketers consider social media as an 'add-on' and not as an important part of their IMC, they can lose out on the benefits offered by social media.

1.4 Research Problem, Objectives and Questions

A problem definition aims to clarify a specific marketing decision or solve a problem, and it specifies the research questions and objectives (d'Alessandro, Winzar, Lowe, & Zikmund, 2020). Marketing academics and practitioners have seen a major shift in marketing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016), and it has become clear that social media offers an opportunity that is hard to ignore (McClure & Seock, 2020).

In reviewing the literature, it became apparent that the research on IMC and its implementation in the social media context is in its infancy (Henninger et al., 2017), and many organisations ignore or struggle to integrate social media in their marketing plans (Ngai et al., 2015). Marketers are unsure of the effectiveness of social media in serving their advertising objectives (Lee & Hong, 2016). These issues lead a large number of marketers to manage social media as a distinct tool from other marketing channels (Yang, Lin, Carlson, & Ross, 2016) or to treat social media as they do other media categories.

When advertising was initiated on television, advertising agencies treated this platform separately from other channels, such as radio and print; today, marketers treat social media similarly, as stand-alone platforms (Angeline, Stefan, & Mihyun, 2017), and not as a part of IMC (Yang et al., 2016). In discussing this issue, Schultz et al. (2013) stated that marketers treat new media separately from other media particularly because this new media requires skill sets that differ from those needed in traditional media. Many other advertisers treat social media like traditional media, for instance, by adopting the same strategy and content.

IMC originated to link marketing objectives and messages across all media channels (Schultz et al., 2013). Organisations might have marketing objectives and messages, but they do not connect them in a coherent way. Some organisations adopt marketing channels including social media platforms but lack the understanding of the IMC program (Henninger et al., 2017). Therefore, they fail to link the channels and platforms to the specific objectives and segments they target (Valos, Maplestone, Polonsky, & Ewing, 2017). The major issue here is that many organisations still treat social media as traditional media in terms of advertising campaign development.

This thesis aims at understanding how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs investigating the challenges they face with the integration process. Thus, the thesis investigates the approaches that advertising agencies adopt to overcome these challenges. Further, it examines the role of resources in the agency–client relationship context. To conduct a comprehensive investigation of the integration of social media into IMC programs and means of overcoming possible challenges, the thesis aims to answer the following main questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges that advertising agencies face when integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ2: How do advertising agencies overcome the challenges of integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ3: What is the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship?

1.5 Research Significance and Contribution

The introduction of new media has presented many challenges by shifting media patterns, which has increased the importance of developing optimal IMC

programs (Batra & Keller, 2016) and required the organisations to utilise many communications opportunities (Childers et al., 2018). The emergence of social media began to 'revolutionize the state of marketing, advertising, and promotions and companies view this new media environment as a mandatory part of their marketing strategies' (Hanna et al., 2011, pp. 272-273). Consequently, one of the most important issues in relation to the future of advertising is how marketers should develop and execute IMC programs (Keller, 2016). A substantial amount of literature devoted to IMC has accumulated for many years (Kitchen & Schultz, 1998, 1999; Ots & Nyilasy, 2015; Seric, 2016); however, surprisingly little is known about the role of social media within IMC (Killian & McManus, 2015; Manfred & Stefanie, 2017).

Few studies have contributed to the literature on social media as a marketing communication tool within IMC; however, the problem remains unsolved and organisations continue to struggle to integrate social media into their IMC programs. Valos et al. (2016) provided insight into the strategic roles of social media from the perspective of senior services marketing executives and developed a modified IMC framework. Batra and Keller (2016) illuminated how traditional and new media interact to affect consumer decision-making. However, neither study provided sufficient guidelines regarding the challenges of developing an effective IMC program. My study does not aim to develop an IMC framework nor to investigate consumers' issues; instead, the study was a deep investigation into how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs and the associated challenges from the advertising agencies' perspective.

The major contribution of this thesis is the combination of the RBV and IMP perspectives to understand how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC

programs, the challenges they face with the integration process and their approaches to overcome these challenges. In addition, it addresses the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship and the impact of client–agency collaboration on social media integration. After reviewing the literature, it appears that most of the research has examined the RBV solely in terms of an organisation's resources for obtaining a competitive advantage. In other words, if the organisation has the required resources, these resources enable it to gain a competitive advantage among its competitors. However, the resources are not the only important factor for social media integration. Agency–client collaboration is crucial for sharing and utilising these resources.

It is apparent that research into social media as a marketing communications channel is limited (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). To the best of my knowledge, no study has investigated the integration of social media into IMC programs based on the RBV and IMP perspectives in an advertising agency context. Therefore, this research contributes to the social media advertising literature by investigating the challenges of integrating social media into an IMC program from the advertising agencies' perspective. It also provides possible approaches for overcoming or even avoiding these challenges. The findings presented in this thesis also contribute useful insights that will enable academics to conduct further research on social media advertising in IMC programs.

In addition, the outcomes of this research offer marketers and practitioners effective strategies for integrating social media into IMC. As stated earlier, many marketers do not recognise the benefits of social media because it is not fully understood as a communication marketing tool. Thus, the findings of this study will

provide marketers with a better understanding of the value of social media advertising as a marketing communication tool and how to integrate it into their IMC programs.

1.6 Research Setting

1.6.1 Research Method Approach

For this thesis, I adopted mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) to ensure that I would have a rigorous approach to answer the research questions (Aramo-Immonen, 2013). While a qualitative approach aims to explore a phenomenon, a quantitative approach explains the results of hypothesis tests (Creswell & Hirose, 2019). Adopting inductive and deductive reasoning allowed me to deeply investigate the issue and test hypotheses in a single study, which is essential for obtaining divergent perspectives and findings (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011).

The mixed methods approach provides a better understanding of the research issue than either a qualitative or quantitative approach can do by itself. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches utilises their strengths and provides a profound understanding of the research problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, the main reason for adopting mixed methods in my research was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in IMC in the context of advertising agencies in Australia and the UAE.

Advertising agencies specialists with expertise in developing social media campaigns and IMC programs were selected to participate in in-depth interviews and questionnaires to explore this issue. These participants are the key informants who possess the knowledge and experience related to the research questions and could

share insights and views through their answers. Each study method will be discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.6.2 Geographical Context: Why Australia and UAE?

The geographical sites of the research were advertising agencies in Australia and the UAE. Both countries are viewed as sophisticated regions in the advertising field and as major advertising hubs. Australia was chosen because it is a developed economy with an advertising system that is similar to those in many Western economies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2015). It is worth nothing that the main reason of choosing two countries is that we do not have enough observations in Australia; thus, UAE has been included.

The UAE was chosen for the following main reasons. First, the UAE has become a the global trendsetter and leader in adopting new technologies (Jose, 2018), and it demonstrates many features and characteristics of developed countries (Ahmad, Abubakar, & Ahmad, 2019). Second, the UAE's development of a strong advertising industry has established the country as a global creative hub (Howe-Walsh, Turnbull, & Budhwar, 2019). Technological development in the UAE has also been so substantial that it has become a global marketing hub (Petratos, Ljepava, & Salman, 2020). Moreover, the UAE has attracted a global client base through advertising agencies that serve multinational clients headquartered in the UAE and those that are foreign based, and it has become a global advertising hub alongside New York, London and Hong Kong (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016). Dubai Media City (DMC) was established by the UAE government as a global media hub for 1,500 organisations representing 142 nationalities (DubaiMediaCity, 2020). Third, there has been rapid adoption of social media in the UAE, and marketers have been using it

increasingly as a marketing tool (Vij, 2017). The earned reputation of the UAE advertising industry together with the previous points provide an appropriate research context for advertising studies (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016).

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are the most significant part of designing research, which can raise several issues, particularly when one is conducting qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviews yield a large amount of data that must be recorded to facilitate the analysis process. After obtaining the participants' approval to record the interviews, each one was assigned a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The data collection in this research presents no foreseeable risk or harm to participants as a result of their participation in this study. Both studies for this thesis were approved by the Faculty Ethics Subcommittees at Macquarie University (see Appendices A and B).

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 has discussed the research background and motivation; social media within the IMC context; the research problem, objectives and questions; the significance and contributions of this research; the research setting; and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework and the literature review on social media integration into IMC programs and related concepts. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to the qualitative and quantitative studies, respectively. Each of these chapters is structured into three main sections: Method, Findings and Discussion. First, the method section justifies the research method and describes the data collection and analysis procedures and adopted

techniques for each study. Second, the findings section presents the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies. Third, the discussion section discusses the findings of each study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a synthesised discussion of both studies and presents the theoretical contributions and managerial implications, limitations, recommendations for future research and general conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research is increasingly examining the effectiveness of new media technology in the marketing practice (Cluley, Green, & Owen, 2020). However, social media, as a marketing communication channel, has brought many challenges for marketers (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). This thesis investigates how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs, the challenges associated with the integration and approaches for overcoming these challenges.

This section is devoted to the literature review in terms of integrating social media into the IMC programs. To provide a road map of this section, it is structured into two main sections. First, it discusses all related constructs to the social media integration into the IMC program – namely, social media integration into IMC programs within advertising agencies, IMC, target audience, agency–client collaboration, client expertise, brand strategy, budget, risk acceptance, and trust. It provides a review of the literature by critiquing and synthesising relevant studies and current knowledge of the role of social media in IMC programs. Furthermore, it discusses the related definitions, concepts and terminology that have been employed and discussed in similar studies. Second, it provides the theoretical framework of the thesis that is consisted of three sections: Resource-Based View (RBV), business relationships from an IMP Perspective, and roles of the agency and the client in the RBV and IMP Context. To guide the empirical studies, it is better to re-state the main research questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges that advertising agencies face when integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ2: How do advertising agencies overcome the challenges of integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ3: What is the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship?

2.1 Social Media Integration into IMC in an Agency–Client Context

2.1.1 Social Media Advertising

2.1.1.1 Definition

The term social media encompasses various platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Sitta, Faulkner, & Stern, 2018). A simple definition of social media: 'Social media is the product of Internet-based applications that build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0' (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012, p. 263). However, a more comprehensive description of social media is 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). This latter definition shows that these new media are based on Internet platforms that allow users (firms and individuals) to carry out dual communications. Digital technologies and social media influence the society and allow people to freely participate in the online world in simpler way (Valentini, 2015).

In examining the complex nature of strategic social media marketing, Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch (2017) defined social media marketing as 'an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (often in combination with other communications channels) to achieve organisational goals by creating value for stakeholders' (p. 123). Social media can assist organisations in

reaching their objectives; however, Felix et al. further argued that due to the complexity of social media platforms, it is important that researchers and marketers clearly understand the role of social media in the marketing landscape.

In the advertising context, social media is defined as 'a general term capturing all forms of advertising – whether explicit (e.g., banner advertising and commercial videos) or implicit (e.g., fan pages or firm-related "tweets") – that are delivered through social-networking sites' (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011, pp. 259-260). Unlike traditional media, consumers are increasingly spend more of their time on these social networking sites (Colliander, Dahlén, & Modig, 2015; Lee, Hosanagar, & Nair, 2018). The dramatic rise of social media platforms has not only modified people's communication but has provided organisations with various opportunities to achieve their advertising goals (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014).

2.1.1.2 Social Media Advertising

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a major transformation has been observed by both marketing researchers and practitioners. Social media has revolutionised the communication landscape (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013) and the marketing landscape (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Schultz & Patti, 2009), and due to the growth of social and digital media platforms, advertising has become more difficult to define (Allagui, 2019). The shift in communication channels, from traditional to social media, requires marketers to successfully adapt to the various types of social media platforms to dramatically improve their firms' performance (Greene et al., 2017). However, organisations are still concerned with how to use social media as a marketing tool effectively (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Thus, it is important that organisations and advertising agencies have a clear understanding of

how to synergise their efforts towards developing better social media campaigns that ultimately improve the IMC capability.

The communications paradigm (see Figure 2.1) shows how the marketing communications process has changed due to the power of social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It illustrates the importance of consumers' voice on the social media platforms involved in the communication process. However, Mangold and Faulds cautioned that marketers must accept and manage the fact that consumers discuss products and services on social media platforms. In other words, the emergence of social media has transformed the firm–consumers interaction from a dialogue to a trialogue (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

Figure 2.1: The New Communication Paradigm
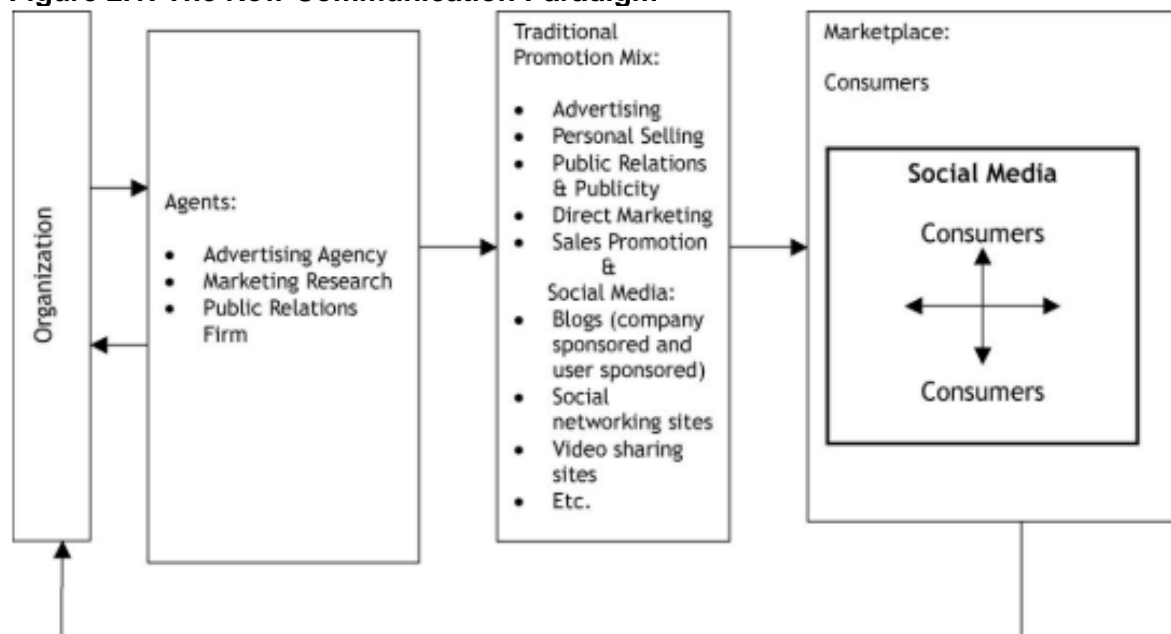
Source: Mangold and Faulds (2009)

Although the literature reveals contradictions among scholars on various issues concerning social media marketing (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013), and current knowledge and studies on how organisations can use social media marketing are rare (Knoll, 2016), social media is nonetheless a powerful marketing tool due to its

interactivity (Park, Im, & Kim, 2018) and ability to improve communication capabilities (Keller, 2016). In a study which involved analysing of 311 cases using online questionnaires, Hutter et al. (2013) investigated how social media activities and users' interactions affect brand perception and ultimately influence the purchase decision process. They stated that when consumers make a purchase decision, social media activities influence the three stages of the hierarchy of effects (HOE) model: cognitive, affective and conative stages. They further found that consumers' engagement with a brand on social media positively impacts consumers' brand awareness, word of mouth and purchase decision.

In a similar study, data were collected from several brands on social networking sites and analysed 355 brand posts to empirically identify factors that improve the popularity of brand posts (de Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). They argued that to motivate interactivity and increase likes on a social media platform, marketers can post vivid interactive content (e.g. videos and contests). They further indicated that social media is an excellent driver for strengthening the firm–customer relationship. Paek, Hove, Jung, and Cole (2013) looked beyond consumers' likes and pointed out that users who click 'like' will carry this desired behaviour relating to the campaign to people offline.

However, it has been cautioned that marketers against relying solely on social media content to evaluate a campaign (Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr, 2014). They additionally found that advertisers can use the communications and conversations on social media to develop and shape campaigns ideas. Moreover, other studies have emphasised that marketers need to manage the conversations on social media platforms and understand the role of each platform that they plan to use (Kietzmann,

Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) to acquire new customers and satisfy their existing customers (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

A systematic literature was conducted and reviewed of 40 research articles on social media deployment in industrial marketing field (Salo, 2017). The author found that the existing literature has been investigating social media as a tactical use more than examining it at the strategic level. He referred to two factors to explain the reason for this research focus: (1) the novelty of the research area and (2) grasping and measuring tactical use is simpler than strategic use. Following the same methodological process, a study consolidated and analysed 46 studies on social media research (Ngai et al., 2015). Their review revealed a high concentration of studies on personal perspectives and attributes and less focus on organisational perspectives. Further, they provided several significant questions that have not been well investigated in the literature and need to be answered, such as 'Most importantly, does social media adoption really contribute to firm performance?' (p. 40).

To answer this question, a study examined organisations' implementation of social media systematically (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). They proposed five hypotheses summed up as follows: social media strategy, active presence, customer engagement initiatives and social media analytics will lead to higher social media performance that will subsequently lead to higher marketing performance. They found that except for the active presence dimension, each dimension had a positive relationship with social media performance and, more importantly, social media performance was ultimately positively related to marketing performance. A possible reason for the active presence dimension failing to improve social media performance is the task complexity of managing brand presence (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Thus, organisations

must understand how to manage their social media as a marketing tool (Lepkowska-White, 2017) to achieve their strategic goals (Wang & Kim, 2017) and ultimately affect their performance (Greene et al., 2017).

As mentioned earlier, social media has provided new platforms to help organisations achieve their marketing objectives (Noort et al., 2012). With the dramatic changes occurring in technology (Lepkowska-White, 2017), social media platforms are fast and interactive channels for reaching one's audience in a short period of time (Valentini, 2015) which allow people to contact business and individuals in different types of communications regardless of their physical location (Ngai et al., 2015). Interactions with consumers on social media provide marketers with a great opportunity to build and maintain desirable relationships (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2015; Pentina, Guilloux, & Micu, 2018). The features of social media do not require a large budget, and such cost-effectiveness is suitable for organisations that have a limited budget (Yang et al., 2016).

Surprisingly, although social media advertising provides numerous benefits for organisations, the majority of firms' managers remain sceptical about social media's power (Wang, Hsiao, Yang, & Hajli, 2016) or unsure about which platform to use (Micu, Micu, Geru, & Lixandroiu, 2017). However, some scholars argued that organisations have recognised the need to adopt social media, but they lack the knowledge of how to utilise and adopt the new media as a marketing tool (Hanna et al., 2011). In particular, organisations struggle to use social media in a strategic implementation process and are concerned about how to effectively implement social media in the marketing setting (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Therefore, these organisations often eschew social media platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Although the literature has

not provided organisations with a perfect way to manage social media, they cannot ignore this communications channel (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014; Sitta et al., 2018), because it has become the 'de facto modus operandi' for consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

2.1.1.3 Social Media Strategies

Earlier in this chapter, social media was defined. A strategy is defined as 'the creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities' (Porter, 1996, p. 68). In aiming to develop a framework to evaluate social media strategies, a social media strategy is defined as 'a goal-directed planning process for creating user generated content, driven by a group of Internet applications, to create a unique and valuable competitive position' (Effing & Spil, 2016, p. 2). They further found that many organisations do not develop strong social media strategies and there is a paucity of refined comprehensive methods and frameworks for developing and analysing these strategies.

Possible reasons for the failure of these organisations to develop social media strategies are as follows: they have unclear policies and/or inconsistent messages and/or they cannot define a social media strategy (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, & Hughes, 2013). It could be due to the limited knowledge of social media and the newness of this phenomenon, marketers struggle to successfully implement social media strategies (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014). They additionally emphasised that marketers must be strategic in creating and designing their content on social media platforms.

Thus, organisations need to have a clear understanding of the social media landscape and develop strategies that are suitable for their social media functionalities

and goals (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In particular, organisations with a limited marketing budget need to measure their efforts in social media marketing and ensure that they develop an optimised strategy (Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, & Shah, 2013) to ultimately improve their social media performance (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Owing to the evolution of social media, organisations have changed their marketing objectives, for example, focusing more on strengthening the relationship with consumers (Hudson et al., 2015), and organisations need to integrate social media into their IMC if they aim to remain competitive in the market (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014). To examine brand strategies on social media, 14 marketing managers developing and managing social media advertisements were interviewed (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The authors aimed to understand why and how they use social media platforms for their brands and identified the policies and strategies they had adopted. Although social media provides numerous benefits for organisations, the important question for marketers is how to use social media optimally as a marketing tool and how social media supports both marketing objectives and strategies (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Therefore, there is mounting research on the effectiveness of the new media in the marketing context (Cluley et al., 2020).

Incorporating social media marketing successfully into a broad strategy is important, and consumers' insights are necessary to develop these strategies (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Felix et al. (2017) stated the following:

On a strategic level, social media marketing covers an organisation's decisions about social media marketing scope (ranging from defenders to explorers), culture (ranging from conservatism to modernism), structure (ranging from hierarchies to networks), and governance (ranging from autocracy to anarchy). (p. 123)

They identified few studies on social media at the strategic marketing level and no study with a holistic framework of social media marketing. In addition, the literature lacks comprehensive frameworks and research that answers how marketers develop and analyse social media strategies (Effing & Spil, 2016).

2.1.2 Integrated Marketing Communications

2.1.2.1 Traditional and Social Media Advertising Channels

Historically, managers have used different media channels to achieve specific objectives, but savvy managers currently aim to choose and customise the channel that is valuable to customers (Killian & McManus, 2015). With the social media revolution, some scholars and practitioners predicted the 'death' of traditional advertising, and many traditional marketers were sceptical about its capabilities (Keller, 2012). However, social media has improved the advertising industry (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011; Childers et al., 2018) and changed and reshaped organisations' marketing communication channels (Rapp et al., 2013) among those seeking ways to use these platforms as marketing communication channels (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). It is argued that traditional media still have their place (Garber Jr, Kim, & Dotson, 2020), and 'As social media gains importance and becomes the proverbial "talk of the town," managers must take care to not

abandon traditional or other forms of advertising, because these have substantial synergies between them' (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016, p. 22).

As consumers have turned away from traditional advertising channels, such as TV and radio, and have been rapidly joining social media sites (Batra & Keller, 2016), marketers have been increasingly utilising these new platforms as advertising channels (Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2018; Lee & Hong, 2016; Zhang & Mao, 2016), and organisations are relying on it as a marketing communication channel (Kumar et al., 2016). Social media can create great opportunities for marketers to advertise on various platforms, making them more active with consumers and able to build and maintain relationships with them (Colliander et al., 2015; Pentina et al., 2018; Swani et al., 2014). Marketers adopt social media to better reach and communicate with existing and potential customers that they may not otherwise reach via traditional media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This also makes it easier for marketers to obtain consumers' data compared to the traditional channels, thus allowing them to improve their understanding of the consumers and, accordingly, develop successful campaigns (Fulgoni, 2015; Schultz et al., 2013).

It has been argued that social media platforms are not simply different technological applications, and the focus should be what these technologies enable consumers to do (Keller, 2012). However, regardless of the marketers' favourite channels and the differences between them, the power of communication that organisations used to have has already been seized by individuals (Kietzmann et al., 2011). According to Keller (2016), the rise of technology, and particularly social media, has changed traditional marketing communications and shifted consumers from

passive to active, as they can now interact with organisations as well as each other (Greene et al., 2017; Kull, Mena, & Korschun, 2016). Organisations using social media platforms to engage with their customers have stronger relationships with them than organisations that do not use social media (Hudson et al., 2015). However, compared to traditional media, interaction on social media is associated with more uncertainty and less control (Hudson et al., 2015). Thus, many marketers struggle to manage and control the social media content, such as addressing consumers' negative comments (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018).

When developing marketing plans, it is crucial for organisations to choose channels that can effectively reach consumers (Percy, 2014) and enable them to communicate with their target market (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Although social media as a marketing channel is more complicated than traditional media channels (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014), organisations should understand the importance of synergising social media with other traditional media channels (Greene et al., 2017) and the relative efficacy for marketing communications (Kumar et al., 2016). The existing research does not assist marketers in how to use old or new media (Batra & Keller, 2016); however, it does suggest that they have a blend of social and traditional media (Hanna et al., 2011). Owing to the proliferation of social media, contemporary marketing communications can mix numerous media options (Garber Jr et al., 2020) and organisations can interact with customers to complement campaigns on other media, such as television (Méndez-Suárez & Monfort, 2020).

2.1.2.2 Integrating Social Media into IMC

Prior to the 1990s, many promotional channels were separately managed and budgeted, and they were not coordinated effectively (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). In

the early 1990s, when the IMC concept was introduced, marketing communications required simple efforts from managers; however, subsequent advancements in digital technology have dramatically changed the world, consumers and IMC programs (Schultz & Patti, 2009). In today's market environment, social media marketing rivals traditional media and has become a valuable part of IMC (Liu, Burns, & Hou, 2017), but marketers are still struggling to develop IMC programs (Batra & Keller, 2016).

In reviewing the literature, it becomes apparent that scholars have studied IMC from different perspectives, but there is no consensus on its definition in the literature (Manfred & Stefanie, 2017). One interpretation of the cause of this disagreement is the rapid dynamism in the business environment (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). In 1989, the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) defined IMC as follows:

> A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, p. 18).

Given that the integration of social media into IMC is still in the early stages (Manfred & Stefanie, 2017), this definition recognises the need for a synergistic marketing communications plan that includes both traditional advertising tools and other marketing communication tools. However, the definition has been criticised for not providing 'a comprehensive articulation of the variety of promotion mix elements that comprise IMC' (Pitta, Weisgal, & Lynagh, 2006, p. 156).

IMC is defined as 'a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programmes over time with consumers, customers, prospects and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences' (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 18). This definition shows a shift in IMC from (or the ability to shift from) a marketing planning process to a strategic business process (Kitchen, Don, Ilchul, Dongsub, & Tao, 2004). The important part of this definition is that it focuses on a business process that enables planning, implementing and evaluating all communications activities to build a strong relationship with customers.

However, other IMC definitions considered the impact of digital technology and produced a more comprehensive definition of IMC as 'an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs' (Kliatchko, 2008, p. 140). This definition includes the impact of new technologies as advertising platforms. Thus, given the importance of social media's contributions to marketing objectives, marketers should not underestimate the value of social media advertising, and they should develop effective strategies for exploiting these platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Social media as a marketing tool has dramatically influenced marketing strategies. There have been debates about IMC in the literature since the 1980s (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015), yet many organisations still lack an understanding of IMC (Henninger et al., 2017). The literature has shown that social media has provided marketers with valuable options for increasing their advertising performance, achieving marketing objectives and enhancing IMC. Upon examining the issues that services marketers face in implementing social media in IMC, Valos et al. (2016)

observed that the majority of IMC frameworks were developed prior to the emergence of social media. They argued that traditional media differ from social media and marketers need to modify their IMC to effectively integrate these media. Although studies have demonstrated the importance of differentiating between social and traditional media, researchers still argue that previous studies have not assisted marketers in choosing old versus new media for developing coherent IMC (Batra & Keller, 2016). The barrier to developing IMC may be due to the lack of synergy across promotional channels (Kitchen & Schultz, 1998).

In most of the literature on IMC, there is consensus that the new media revolution has made social media an important component of the marketing mix for organisations (Greene et al., 2017), and the inclusion of social media in IMC is 'inevitable' (Henninger et al., 2017). To effectively use social media platforms, organisations should integrate them into their business plans, such as marketing and communications plans (Altes, 2011). By incorporating social media into IMC, organisations can pursue cost-effective ways to reach their customers and improve their dialogue with them and ultimately enhance the communication process (Henninger et al., 2017). Social media can enhance the objectives and processes of IMC if organisations implement its use effectively (Valos et al., 2017). Since the use of social media requires different objectives, platforms and creativity (Kover, 2016), and its unique characteristics are different from and impact the traditional marketing framework, the existing IMC framework needs to be modified (Valos et al., 2016).

Integration is not a new idea in the marketing communications field, but social media increases the complexity in brand management (Killian & McManus, 2015). Thus, advertising agencies must understand and deal with these new media platforms

(Childers et al., 2018). Although marketers are enthusiastic to incorporate social media into their IMC programs (Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, & Bronner, 2018), social media is the most challenging to integrate into IMC programs among the range of various technologies (Valos et al., 2017). Due to the profound changes in media and consumers, marketers struggle in designing IMC programs (Batra & Keller, 2016). Some of these challenges: lack of IMC training, restricted industry ecosystems and lack of consumer-centric thinking (Schultz, Chu, & Zhao, 2016). Furthermore, IMC obstacles exist because of decreasing budgets, waiting for authority (from the agency and the client) and ego and turf battles, which ultimately impede IMC efforts (Duncan & Everett, 1993). Some scholars have also uncovered that challenges arise from IMC implantation due to the business culture and the decision-making procedure in IMC (Kim, Han, & Schultz, 2004).

Given the paucity of guidance on implementing social media within IMC (Henninger et al., 2017), the challenges of implementing social media within IMC was investigated by interviewing and distributing questionnaires to 21 senior marketers (Valos et al., 2017). They clarified several difficulties in this regard, such as misalignment between the strategy and tactics, fragmentation of the message, the complexity of technologies and involving specialist agencies in the use of multiple social media platforms. Also, they argued that although IMC models, such as the model developed by Schultz and Kitchen (2000), have integrated an internal database incorporated into IMC, these models do not consider the rapidly changing digital media platforms, such as social media. Therefore, Valos et al. (2017) developed a model (see Figure 2.2) to facilitate IMC development as a marketing communications capability and assist organisations in utilising social media strengths, such as engagement, agility, reach and listing, and managing its complexity. They further

stated that implementing social media effectively will improve the IMC process and enhance its aims, and it could, in turn, transform IMC into a marketing capability that will lead to a competitive advantage.

Figure 2.2: IMC Social Media Marketing Capability Model
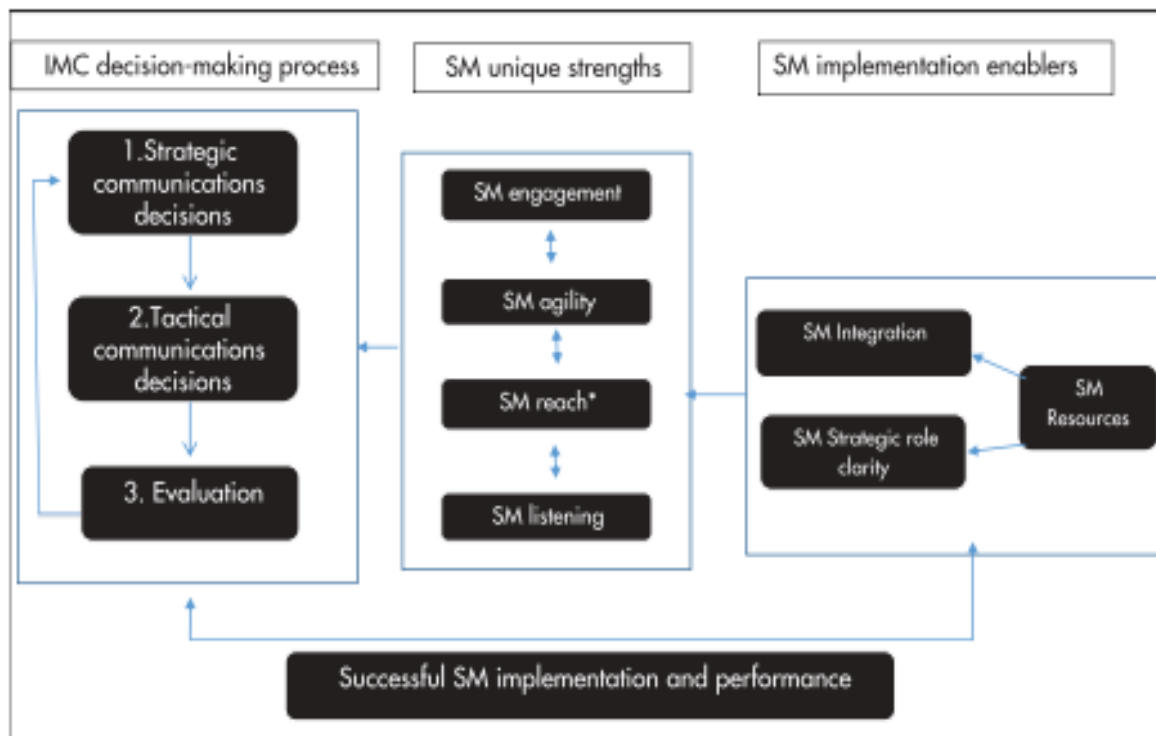
Source: (Valos et al., 2017)

The new marketing communications program sheds light on the significant modifications required in marketers' attitudes about IMC strategy development. For instance, they need to understand that consumers rely more on social media today and no longer receive content passively (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Marketers should assess the capabilities of their IMC and properly leverage the consumer's voice through social media channels (Luxton et al., 2015). Studies have found that the practice of incorporating social media in business operations and IMC programs is still in its infancy (Killian & McManus, 2015; Lepkowska-White, 2017; Manfred & Stefanie, 2017). Therefore, the present study explored the impact that social media can have

on IMC and investigated the challenges that advertising agencies face in integrating social media into IMC programs and the role of resources in this context.

2.1.3 Target Audience

Based on the identified marketing objectives, organisations need to define their target audience and identify which platforms can be the most effective for reaching them (Altes, 2011). Organisations must understand the platform's users and conversations (Killian & McManus, 2015) because each platform has different characteristics, and consumers use these platforms in incredibly different ways (Cabosky, 2016).

Today, many people use social media for various reasons, such as connecting with others, listening to news and gaining information about products. Due to the increased numbers of people spending more time on social media, organisations have shifted their approach to reaching their consumers (Childers et al., 2019). The new media provide opportunities for advertisers to target their audience (Šerić, Ozretić-Došen, & Škare, 2020) at specific locations and times on many different platforms (Gordon et al., 2020). In addition, the data available on social media platforms can assist organisations in targeting consumers with more creative and relevant marketing (Lepkowska-White, 2017).

The social media revolution has provided new opportunities for marketers to reach, connect with, engage and learn about customers (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Consumers often check social media at different times depending on their daily schedule, demographics and psychographics; therefore, organisations should consider these aspects and post their advertisements at the most appropriate time to

reach their target audience (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Social media can also be an important tool to improve marketers' understanding of the customers' brand sentiment (Micu et al., 2017). However, the new media challenges the existing communications approaches to interacting with an organisation's audience (Schultz et al., 2013). For instance, marketers need to be active and make timely responses to customers to show respect and care for them, but they also cautioned marketers that hastily responding can create new problems (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018).

'Marketing is no longer solely about capturing attention via reach; instead, it must focus on capturing and maintaining attention via interactivity and engagement' (Tafesse & Wien, 2018, p. 3). Further, they encouraged organisations to apply different tactics to motivate positive customer behaviour, such as creating content that is emotionally resonant, listening and quickly responding to the customers' feedback and concerns, and rewarding the customers for continuously interacting with the organisations. Organisations have seen the potential of adopting social media as a marketing tool; however, traditional media, such as television, are also important for connecting with customers (Kumar et al., 2016).

2.1.4 Agency–Client Collaboration

The dynamic relationship between advertising agencies and clients still poses a challenge for both parties (Hughes, Vafeas, & Hilton, 2018). Advertising agencies have not understood why organisations (i.e. their clients) change their advertising agencies (Dowling, 1994). Fam and Waller (2008) explained as follows:

The challenge facing an agency lies in understanding how the principles of relationship building can be applied in dealing with its clients… What is important to the client is not always obvious… Knowing one's clients, and staying close to them, is essential if an agency is to be successful. However, a strong relationship can only be developed and conducted over a period of time. (p. 218)

Therefore, developing and fostering a strong agency–client relationship is fundamental.

Agencies have coordinated IMC for their clients for years (Duncan & Everett, 1993). However, the agency–client relationship should be coherent, as it plays an important role in overcoming the challenges of developing campaigns and successfully carrying out the work (Lynch & West, 2017); otherwise, it may negatively impact the work (Heo & Sutherland, 2015). A high-quality agency–client relationship is important for working effectively together (Hughes et al., 2018) and delivering the service the client expects to receive or even producing more creative work (Lynch & West, 2017).

A study investigated the advertiser's expectations of the services provided by the advertising agency during the selection stage (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016). They stated that it is important for advertising agencies to understand the advertiser's expectations if they aim to satisfy the client with the service they provide. They further emphasised that managing these expectations is important for maintaining a long-term relationship with the advertisers. However, clients break and redefine such long-term relationships for several reasons, such as economic imperatives (Sasser & Koslow, 2012b) and rapid media changes.

In light of the digital and technological acceleration today, advertising agencies need to deal with various communications opportunities that new platforms offer (Childers et al., 2018). In addition, clients are increasing the pressure on advertising agencies to develop even more creative campaigns (Gambetti, Biraghi, Schultz, & Graffigna, 2016), and the advertising agencies are exploiting the IMC concept to go beyond traditional media (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). Unlike traditional media, the social media realm is relatively new (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Lee & Hong, 2016), but the number of digital advertising agencies has been rapidly increasing (Sasser, Koslow, & Kilgour, 2013).

As many clients lack adequate professional knowledge (Wang, Dou, Li, & Zhou, 2013), they will search for and hire an advertising agency to develop their campaigns. However, since the advertising agency has more knowledge than its clients, the advertising agency benefits from knowledge asymmetry and wields more power, which is a problem for clients (Wang et al., 2013).

Three main recommendations for establishing the right agency–client relationship for IMC implementation is shown in Figure 2.3 (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019).

Figure 2.3: Three Main Client–Agency Relationship Recommendations for IMC

Relationship management	• Strong management by client throughout project • Clear identification of roles and responsibilities of all parties • Co-creation of brief • Real time meeting and good communication between all parties
Media neutrality & remuneration	• Flexibility to enable creativity and innovation for all parties • Payment linked to KPI and collaborative performance related fees • Flexibility in agencies to respond to client needs • Transparent identification of costs at the briefing stage
Strategic focus	• C-suite support and commitment • Strong marketing voice at board level • Move emphasis from tactical to long term strategic approach by agencies and clients

Client / Agency Relationship for IMC

Source: (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019)

Openness is an important aspect for both advertising agencies and clients to build and maintain a good relationship. If each party is open to the other's ideas, it can facilitate the campaign development process and avoid or overcome possible challenges. When there is openness to ideas in the relationship between an advertising agency and its client, both parties can share their experiences and solve their issues (Hughes et al., 2018). Moreover, the client has a greater responsibility in this regard because the advertising agency will propose many ideas that need the client's approval. However, if the client rejects each of the advertising agency's ideas without providing a reasonable justification, the advertising agency will be unable to work effectively.

Advertising agencies and clients do not have the same perspective on social media integration into IMC program. Therefore, the clients' degree of openness to integrating social media can influence the ideas that advertising agencies propose (Childers et al., 2018). If the client is open to exploring different ideas with the advertising agency, the integration of social media into the IMC program can be effectively developed.

Such clients can motivate their advertising agencies to develop good work (Koslow, 2015). In other words, advertising agencies can be motivated by their clients' encouragement and motivation. However, clients' openness does not mean they must approve every suggestion advertising agencies make. Rather, clients should assist their advertising agencies by being more collaborative (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019).

2.1.5 Client Expertise

Advertising agencies and clients should use their expertise collaboratively to produce better performance and, accordingly, better outcomes. However, the client tends to rely on and influence the advertising agency to deliver the work, but when the work does not achieve the desired results, the client often dismisses the agency and hires a different one (Wang et al., 2013). Moreover, some clients may seek several advertising agencies to achieve an integrated approach because the advertising agencies are functionally orientated (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015) or because they may misrepresent their skills to secure the project (Wang et al., 2013), which is called 'hidden information' (Bergen, Dutta, & Walker, 1992).

The advertising agencies need to acquire the required skills and resources relating to the new media to successfully develop their work. Thus, advertising agencies are currently repositioning themselves to adapt to the new media environment (Belch & Belch, 2013). Mulhern (2009) stated that 'agencies incorporated digital media by adding stand-alone digital units; however, as more media go digital, these units are taking on a more central role' (p.92). Therefore, advertising agencies have responded to the technological transformation by restructuring their expertise and skills to provide their clients with better work. The importance of social media has substantially influenced the agencies' performance by forcing them to concentrate

more on social media advertising to adapt to the new media landscape and better assist their clients (Keller, 2016).

Accordingly, advertising agencies are increasingly employing specialists in social media, technology and other digital media expertise to effectively deliver the clients' campaigns (Lynch & West, 2017). However, the agencies still face challenges in developing and integrating social media into their IMC programs. The relative novelty of social media marketing led to limited experience with this new media for clients and advertising agencies (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). Further, they underlined that this limited experience makes the agency–client relationship more volatile. According to Schultz et al. (2013), 'agencies are in the midst of a major transformation' (p. 18) and finding a talent base in the new media is a serious challenge.

As social media has redefined how organisations communicate with their customers across various marketing channels (Rapp et al., 2013), organisations need expertise to deliver a consistent message across these platforms. However, organisations often fail to deliver their advertising message to the target audience. One way to deliver the message successfully is by crafting a persuasive message. Reinforcing the same persuasive message in different ways across various communication channels can foster a successful IMC program (Batra & Keller, 2016). With multiple media in the campaign, advertisers need to have a persuasive message worth expressing across these media (Tevi et al., 2019). Yet organisations face challenges in remaining consistent on consumer-driven platforms; a mismatch can confuse the customer about which interaction represents the true voice of the brand (Killian & McManus, 2015). Lepkowska-White (2017) confirmed that 'the key is to do

it creatively without confusing consumers by conveying inconsistent information on different platforms' (p. 328).

Organisations utilise many marketing channels, including social media, some of them still lack a sufficient understanding of IMC (Henninger et al., 2017). Consequently, there is a disconnection in reaching the target audience, identifying their needs and connecting these aspects. These organisations should not simply deliver the messages in an 'ad hoc way' that can lead to inconsistency (Henninger et al., 2017). IMC relies on consistency and synergy, meaning that organisations should develop IMC that coordinate their messages across all their advertising channels effectively.

Henninger et al. (2017) results are in line with those of Valos et al. (2017) that it is critical for IMC to involve coordinating and managing all the marketing platforms and ensuring brand consistency. Valos et al. (2017) further stated that marketers see the importance of social media, but these platforms pose challenges regarding aligning objectives with positioning, targeting and segmentation. Therefore, they suggested that when marketers select marketing channels, their decisions should be linked to specific objectives, segments and markets that have been targeted; however, the majority of organisations often fail to follow these guidelines.

IMC originated around connecting marketing objectives and messages across various media platforms (Schultz et al., 2013), and marketers utilise social media to achieve their objectives (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). To successfully integrate social media into IMC programs, marketers should determine their marketing and communications objectives and goals on their marketing channels (Altes, 2011). Historically, marketers have used various media channels to achieve specific

objectives, such as building awareness and increasing purchase intention, and social media can support the achievement of these objectives by highlighting the purpose of users' engagement and moving them through the decision-making process (Killian & McManus, 2015). However, identifying the target audience enables marketers to select the appropriate media channels to provide strategic consistency in the messages (Dewhirst & Davis, 2005). Additionally, they pointed out that this strategic approach differentiates IMC from basically being the tactical coordination of 'one sight, one sound' (p. 86).

2.1.6 Brand Strategy

Marketers have used branding for centuries to distinguish their goods among those of their competitors, which can create value for them and consumers (Keller, 2012). The American Marketing Association (AMA) defined a brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors,' and 50 years later, the AMA now defines a brand slightly differently by adding 'any other feature' (Evans, Starr, & Brodie, 2019, p. 711).

Despite the importance of branding for organisations, most of them face challenges in enhancing their brands, particularly in today's market. Both advertising agencies and their clients complain about, and blame each other for, gaps in carrying out the overall brand management process (Gambetti et al., 2016). The new technologies have opened new markets which have created new consumers and competitors that change the value created by brands (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019). Although many organisations have the ability and expertise to brand traditionally, the pressing issue today is that they struggle to develop a plan, clear goals and guidelines

for their social media platforms to manage and execute their brands online (Lepkowska-White, 2017). Therefore, owing to the digital revolution, marketers need to understand how to utilise social media as a marketing communication tool and how it can contribute to marketing objectives and support marketing strategies (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

With the rise of new media, it has become more crucial to understand the adaptation of advertising strategies (Tevi et al., 2019), and some scholars have asserted that digital and social media have forced the advertising industry to develop innovative strategies (Childers et al., 2019). Marketers can manage their brands by having well-defined and executed brand strategies that can build, shape and manage the brands. Keller (2012) stated the following:

> An effective branding strategy can provide a product roadmap to the future for a brand, clarifying where it can go and how it can get there. It is virtually impossible to manage and maximize the value and equity of a brand without a clear, compelling brand strategy, whether explicitly written down or not. (p. 289)

In other words, marketers should view their brands as valuable assets that must be well managed by adopting effective strategies and work with their advertising agencies as key partners and not as executors (Gambetti et al., 2016).

For organisations, IMC has been widely accepted and diffused into various levels of the organisation and, most importantly, has become an integral part of their brand strategy (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005). Furthermore, they defined an IMC strategy as 'a set of processes that include the planning, development,

execution, and evaluation of coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, employees, associates, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences' (p. 70). However, research has begun to focus on how a well-defined strategy can lead to campaign executional content integration (Tevi et al., 2019).

Integrating social media into IMC strategies can be beneficial for organisations (Henninger et al., 2017) by helping them to effectively achieve their brand communications objectives (Madhavaram et al., 2005). Marketers, in communicating a brand's essence, need to ensure consistency with other brand-related interactions in consumers' interaction with the brand, message content, timing and tone on social media platforms (Killian & McManus, 2015). They further stated that social media, as a marketing tool, adds more complexity in managing brands. However, advertisers are expected to concentrate on delivering more effective and interactive strategies on social media platforms (Mishra, 2019). Although the explosion of new digital media options has increased the complexity of marketing communications, the new options have significantly enhanced marketers' communications capabilities (Keller, 2016). For example, the user-generated content (UGC) data on social media platforms has been recognised as having substantial value for brand managers (Liu et al., 2017) has become an important component that can assist organisations in developing a strong strategy.

2.1.7 Budget

As an important part of an organisation's overall budget, the marketing budget has shifted (Childers et al., 2018), which has been a controversial issue between clients and advertising agencies. Therefore, marketers face challenges in justifying

their advertising budget requests and measuring their advertising effectiveness (Swani, Brown, & Mudambi, 2020). A review of the advertising literature makes it apparent that the question 'How much to spend on advertising?' (Bigné, 1995, p. 17) has not been fully answered. The efficiency of advertising spending and marketing budget allocation has been one of the major obstacles for marketing executives (Pfeiffer, 2010). The challenge that many organisations are still facing is how best to allocate marketing budgets during the business cycle (Peers, Heerde, & Dekimpe, 2017). Recently, this challenge has been aggravated by the rapid proliferation of digital and social media.

For the last 20 years, the dynamics of marketing interactions between organisations and their consumers have been revolutionised by the rise of social media (Hanna et al., 2011). Consequently, organisations have embraced social media (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018) and have dramatically invested in various online marketing channels, including social media (Hudson et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2016). One of the best advantages of social media platforms is that they are more efficient in terms of costs compared to traditional media channels (Ma & Du, 2018). However, expenditure on digital marketing has outstripped expenditure even on other traditional media formats (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016). Some organisations have balanced their spending between online and traditional marketing channels (Pfeiffer, 2010) on the basis of their relative impacts (Baxendale et al., 2015).

Although social media is considered to be a low-cost approach (Dwivedi et al., 2020), advertising agencies face challenges with clients who greatly underestimate the social media costs. Thus, as the usage of these platforms and advertising expenditures grow, advertising agencies are exploring innovative strategies to provide

a substantial return on investment (ROI) to their clients (Childers et al., 2019). However, the interesting paradox is that the clients seek great advertising campaigns from their advertising agencies while failing to allocate the required budget to achieve their expectations (Roca, Wilson, Barrios, & Muñoz-Sánchez, 2017).

2.1.8 Risk Acceptance

In the advertising literature, academic researchers have investigated risk issues between advertising agencies and their clients in developing advertisements (Sasser et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2013; West & Ford, 2001; West, 1999). Risk emerges during agency pitches, where agency personnel often present several ideas to advertisers (West & Ford, 2001). The proposed ideas vary in their associated risks, and the client makes the final decision to accept or reject these risks. Advertising agencies often encourage their clients to accept more risks because great ideas are often associated with higher risks.

However, according to the literature, clients prefer to avoid risky work or are more risk-averse (Roca et al., 2017). In general, clients are more willing to accept work that is associated with a minimum level of risk. While it may be true that clients do not prefer undertaking risky work with traditional media channels, they may be more willing to take risks with digital media, such as social media platforms. When it comes to digital media advertising, clients are more open to pursuing risky work (Sasser et al., 2013).

It is possible that clients are more risk-averse if they lack sufficient knowledge of the advertising agency. For example, the early stages of forging a relationship may be fraught with problems (Ford, 1980), and clients may be more unwilling to take risks

at this point in the agency–client relationship (Lynch & West, 2017). It seems reasonable that if a client does not know its advertising agency, the uncertainty of delivering the work can hold the client back from accepting more risks. However, when the advertising agency and client have a long-term relationship, the client may be more willing to accept more risks gradually. In general, many decisions are related to advertising risk, such as media choice and timing, and bold and creative advertising requires taking risks (West & Ford, 2001). If clients are willing to embrace risks in their campaigns and convey their risk preference to their advertising agencies, the agencies can develop creative work (Wang et al., 2013).

2.1.9 Trust

Trust is defined as 'a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence' (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992, p. 315). Trust is one of the most important aspects of the agency–client relationship for effectively integrating social media into an IMC program. However, trust is not easy for advertising agencies and clients to establish. For example, it may require a long time to ensure that the parties develop trust.

However, the advertising agency and the client can build trust if the former delivers a high performance. Advertising agency's performance is key to ensuring trust between it and its clients (Levin, Thaichon, & Quach Thu, 2016). Another possible way to develop a high level of trust is for clients to provide good brief quality and share their ideas with their advertising agencies at the beginning of the relationship (Chu, Cao, Yang, & Mundel, 2019).

Therefore, it is clear in the literature trust between advertising agencies and clients is a crucial component to produce great work. Trust can facilitate the campaign development process and allow for overcoming possible challenges between the advertising agencies and clients. The marketing strategy should foster trust and faith as fundamental components, and the client should feel confident in trusting relying on the advertising agency (Fam & Waller, 2008). Trust has been shown to be an essential element for the agency–client relationship to work (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In the new communications environment, developing and executing optimal IMC programs means that both clients and advertising agencies must clearly understand how these different marketing communication channels work (Keller, 2016). While many organisations still prefer one-way communication for connecting with existing and potential customers (Colliander et al., 2015), the shift among consumers requires clients and advertising agencies to assess their IMC capability and include the consumer's voice in their IMC programs (Luxton et al., 2015). The integration of social media into IMC programs and the implementation of these programs differ for each organisation, as do the associated challenges. For example, marketers face several obstacles that affect a campaign's performance, such as consumers' options for accessing and using different media and the distribution and sale of the product(s) (Luxton et al., 2015).

Obtaining the required resources to integrate social media into an IMC program is essential; however, the collaboration and complementarity between the advertising agency and client must be ensured to achieve this objective. If the client does not work with the advertising agency as a partner, the agency will not have the resources to

properly integrate across media to produce a high level of social media integration into the IMC program. Thus, this thesis relies on the RBV (Barney, 1991) to examine how IMC as a capability can overcome the challenges of integrating social media into the IMC program and how this approach can allow an organisation to gain a competitive advantage and achieve its campaign's objectives. This is significant because the RBV has been largely discussed in the literature from a one-sided view – that is, from the perspective of a single organisation that can directly access all needed resources. In other words, many studies have discussed the RBV as *one* organisation's job to manage the resources. However, the RBV does not imply a reliance on the organisation's own resources alone; instead, it is more about the collaboration and partnership between *two* organisations – that is, both the advertising agency and client sides. The following sections discuss the RBV and IMP perspectives, respectively.

2.2.1 Resource-Based View

Understanding an Organisation's Resources from the Resource-Based View

The RBV 'is a model that sees resources as key to superior firm performance' (Abdourazakou, 2016, p. 2), and these resources play an important role in enhancing organisational performance. The RBV of an organisation provides a framework to explain and predict the basis of the organisation's competitive advantage and performance (Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011). Resources is defined as 'all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm and that enable it to conceive of and implement strategies that are efficient and effective' (Barney, 1991, p. 101). Twenty years later, Hesterly and Barney (2010, p. 74) defined resources in the RBV as 'the tangible and intangible assets that

a firm controls that it can use to conceive of and implement its strategies' (p. 74). They further defined capability as a subset of an organisation's resources, as 'the tangible and intangible assets that enable a firm to take full advantage of the other resources it controls' (p. 74).

Characteristics of the Resource-Based View

According to the RBV, for IMC to lead to a competitive advantage, they must have *VRIN* characteristics: value, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Luxton et al., 2015). First, IMC are *valuable* when they assist in the conception or implementation of strategies that utilise opportunities and/or neutralise threats in the organisational environment (Yan, Yang, & Dooley, 2017). If a resource is not valuable, it leads to a competitive disadvantage. Second, a resource is *rare* when it is not possessed by a large number of organisations. If a specific valuable organisational resource is possessed by many organisations, none of these organisations can gain a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). When a resource is valuable but not rare, other organisations have the capability to exploit it, which will lead to competitive parity (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Third, valuable and rare resources can lead to a competitive advantage if other organisations *cannot imitate* them perfectly. When resources are valuable and rare but other organisations can imitate them, this will provide a temporary advantage (Shi, 2013). Finally, when a resource is *non-substitutable* (i.e. it has no equivalent substitute) and is, thus, valuable, rare and inimitable, the organisation will enjoy a sustained competitive advantage (Barney & Mackey, 2016).

Owing to the strong similarity between non-substitutability and inimitability, the VRIN framework was altered to *VRIO* (Barney & Clark, 2007; Kull et al., 2016) with the *O* representing *organisational process*. It mainly subsumes the non-substitutability

characteristic under the inimitability condition and adds organisational process to exploit the potential of VRIO resources and leverage them effectively (Barney & Hesterly, 2012; Kozlenkova et al., 2014).

The RBV framework (Figure 2.4) indicates how marketers can recognise and analyse an organisation's resources that will enable the organisation to secure a sustained competitive advantage. In addition to determining the theoretical conditions in which competitive advantage is available, such analyses can provide particular empirical questions to allow for understanding the relationship between a specific organisational resource and sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). IMC capability represents the development of the organisation's IMC ability and strategies for successfully integrating social media into IMC programs and achieving the marketing communications objectives (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2017).

Figure 2.4: Resource-Based View Model

| Firm Resource Heterogeneity Firm Resource Immobility | → | VRIO: Value Rareness Inimitability Organisational Process | → | Sustained Competitive Advantage |
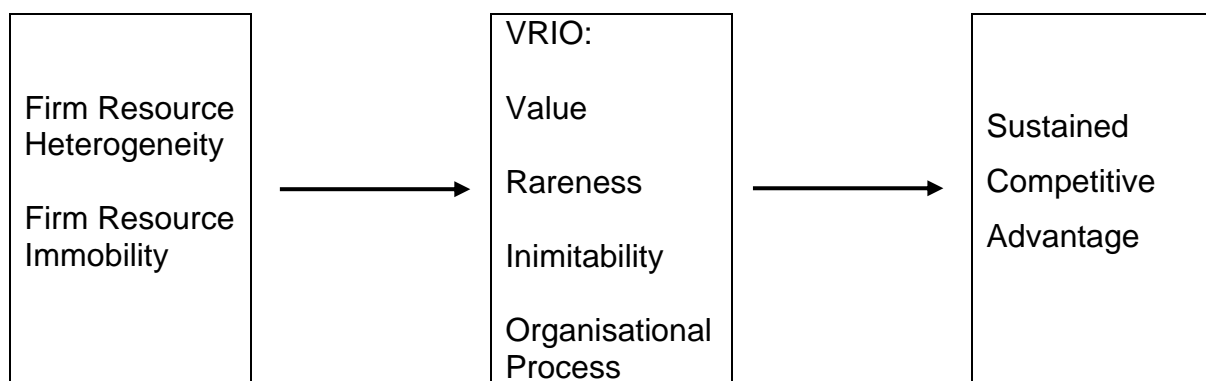
Source: Barney (1991)

In a similar study that drew on the RBV to examine how IMC capability impacts brand performance (Luxton et al., 2015). They found that investment in human resources and finance, besides other organisational resources, must be linked to building IMC capability to continuously strengthen the organisation's ability to develop and implement campaigns. In other words, building a distinctive IMC capability will

improve the effectiveness of campaigns and organisational performance (Wilden & Gudergan, 2015). However, the present study differs from that of Luxton et al. (2015) in that they adopted the RBV to examine how IMC capability influences a brand's financial performance from the organisations' perspective.

Marketing and technological capabilities are the major drivers of an organisation's performance; however, there is insufficient understanding of how these capabilities can allow for maintaining superior performance in a changing environment (Wilden & Gudergan, 2015). Although the IMC literature contains various IMC definitions, concepts, etc. (e.g. Kliatchko, 2005; Lee & Park, 2007; Seric, 2016), few studies have investigated the value of IMC as a capability and its effect on campaign performance (Luxton et al., 2015). More precisely, the RBV has rarely been applied in the marketing field to investigate challenges in the marketing practice (Srivastava, Fahey, & Christensen, 2001). Also, the literature has a little consensus on what constitute marketing resources, and there are few studies on the theoretical foundations and empirical implications of marketing resources and competitive advantages (Davcik & Sharma, 2016).

This thesis argues that providing the required resources to integrate social media into an IMC program from one side of the collaboration, the client, may not be the only issue but also about how the two parties, the client and the advertising agency, work together in a collaborative manner. The integration of social media into the IMC program does not rely on one party; it is important that both parties interact with each other in a complementary way. The following section discusses the importance of relationships between organisations – namely, business-to-business relationships – to better utilise an organisation's resources.

2.2.2 Business Relationships from an IMP Perspective

Understanding Business Relationships

Today, business relationships play an important role in organisations achieving their objectives. Numerous studies have investigated the development of business relationships and networks (Koporcic & Ivanova-Gongne, 2020). In addition, relationship marketing has been discussed in the marketing literature since the 1990s (Grönroos, 1999). In a business-to-business setting, organisations invest heavily in relationship marketing activities to improve their bottom line (Palmatier, Gopalakrishna, & Houston, 2006), and the dyadic relationships between organisations in a business-to-business context are of growing interest (Anderson, Hakansson, & Johanson, 1994).

A relationship is defined as 'an interconnected set of transactions over time involving at least two people' (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 8). This definition includes all main aspects to understand relationships, such as the interaction between two actors as a result of a transactional exchange of services, information or products. This relationship develops over time on the basis of a series of transactions between the parties. It is crucial for organisations to make some strategic decisions to survive and prosper, and decisions about building business relationships are of key importance (Abrahamsen, Henneberg, Huemer, & Naudé, 2016).

An organisation is embedded in a network through sustained business relationships which can enable or constrain its performance (Ritter, Wilkinson, & Johnston, 2004). It is argued that it is crucial for an organisation to share its activities with other organisations to improve its performance through combining resources and

ensuring that new resource dimensions are understood and developed within these business relationships (Gadde, Huemer, & Hakansson, 2003)

Business relationships have a significant impact among many resources, which can be critical for obtaining other necessary resources, such as trust and knowledge. 'Relationships are one of the most valuable resources that a company possesses' (Hakansson, 2015, p. 10). A crucial relationship challenge can arise from an issue relating to resources, such as better utilisation of the resources (Abrahamsen et al., 2016). In general, neither organisation in the relationship possesses all relevant resources to carry out the work, and it consumes time to accumulate them (Bai, Johanson, & Martín Martín, 2019).

However, well-connected organisations utilise their resources that are linked to those with complementary resources (Robson, Katsikeas, Schlegelmilch, & Pramböck, 2019). In a business-to-business setting, establishing and maintaining a strong relationship between organisations can foster a collaborative environment. This type of environment can provide an opportunity for both parties to overcome potential challenges that may accrue throughout their interactions with each other.

The relational and network perspectives can be integrated to optimise the value created for organisations and, thus, enhance their performance (Quinton & Wilson, 2016). Co-creation within business relationships is important because it ensures mutual understanding and the potential to resolve issues between the two parties. Co-creation is defined as 'the active participation, interactions and collaboration of the buyer and seller and other actors in the marketing exchange to develop a deeper understanding of the customer problem solving context' (Franklin & Marshall, 2019, p.

171). Resources are not limited to concepts or objects but also include both parties in the business relationship, as they can enhance the performance.

From a value co-creation viewpoint, customers are resources that participate actively in marketing actions, not passive objects (Cossío-Silva, Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vázquez, & Palacios-Florencio, 2016). Co-creation between organisations provides advantages to both parties that enhance their relationship. For example, as the act of co-creation requires trust to manage the risk as a result of the information exchange between partners, it has been found that co-creation builds trust (Franklin & Marshall, 2019), which is a precious resource for organisations (Davies & Prince, 2005).

IMP Perspective in Business Relationships

From an IMP perspective (Hankansson, 1982), the industrial business can be understood by taking a network and interaction approach (Grönroos, 1996). The research focus has shifted from understanding to managing business relationships and networks (Ritter et al., 2004). According to the IMP perspective, marketing is more of a management issue than a function, and managing marketing often relies on building relationships rather than transactions to manage key resources. Relationship marketing is 'interaction in networks of relationships' (Gummesson, 2011, p. 5). Further, the author defined a network as 'a set of multi-party relationships, which can grow into enormously complex partners' and interaction as 'the parties enter into active contact with each other' (p. 6).

From a IMP perspective, the fundamental dimensions of relationships are as follows: activity links, resource ties, actor bonds (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995) and

schema couplings (Welch & Wilkinson, 2002). First, activity links relate to administrative, technical, commercial and other activities of an organisation that are connected to those of another organisation during the development of a relationship. This relationship can affect how the organisations perform their activities, which are more complex due to the various activities that need to be performed and coordinated and linked to each other.

Second, resource ties connect different resource elements of organisations and are created from the way that a relationship has developed. For an organisation, resource ties can also serve as a resource. A relationship itself is a resource that ties together different resource elements. Regardless of their source, all resources and activities need to be integrated, which can be developed in a corporate plan based on a notion of relationship building and maintenance (Grönroos, 1999).

Third, actor bonds connect actors and impact the actors' perceptions of each other and their identities. Actor bonds refer to how actors in a relationship perceive and respond to each other in a professional and social manner. Bonds between actors are established in interactions, and bonds can change actors' ways of viewing and interpreting situations. In a business relationship, the bonds influence the organisations' behaviour and identities.

Fourth, schema couplings reflect the way in which the schemas or ideas of two organisations are interrelated and adapted to each other over a period of time in a consistent way with the sustained relationship (Welch & Wilkinson, 2002). Similar to activities, resources and actors, ideas or schemas are developed and shared in interactions. These four dimensions can characterise the nature of a relationship between two organisations.

Relationships are based on collaboration and interdependence between organisations, and the strategy domain 'shifts from that of pursuing a victory over others to somehow making it together with customers and suppliers, distributors and development partners' (Ford et al., 1998, p. 107). The close cooperation between an organisation and its partners enables both parties to develop a better understanding of each other and create opportunities (Bai et al., 2019).

2.2.3 Roles of the Agency and the Client in the RBV and IMP Context

I adopted the business relationship based on the IMP perspective to further explore the RBV framework and better understand the impact of a collaborative agency–client relationship on the allocation of required resources to integrate social media into IMC programs. It is not enough that clients provide the required resources to their advertising agencies without their effective collaboration.

Besides providing the required resources, clients should work collaboratively with their advertising agencies to meet the clients' expectations. However, even if the advertising agency identifies and understands the client's expectations, without the client's collaboration, the advertising agency cannot achieve the client's objectives and meet their expectations. It is difficult for some clients to be open with their advertising agencies; therefore, these clients receive the advertising they deserve (O'Connor, Koslow, Kilgour, & Sasser, 2016).

It seems that a 'tug of war' can occur between the advertising agency and the client, with many influences moving in different directions where the client seems to use the power to pull the relationship into an traditional agency format and, simultaneously, exercise control and monitoring to ensure that the advertising agency

is kept in line (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019). However, they further stated that the agency loses the fight due to the uncertainty of its role and inability to develop a business alliance with the client.

Clients can be a barrier themselves to the effective integration of social media into an IMC program. For example, a possible challenge to managing a partnership is a cultural difference between organisations and margining these cultures (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995). However, in business interactions, people with different relational cultures are more likely to ensure relationship building (Cheng, Huang, & Su, 2018). Another possible challenge is that the client has many organisational levels and employees involved in the campaign development process, as this bureaucracy can stifle the advertising agency's work (Gambetti et al., 2016). Slower and more complicated decision-making can be a challenge to the successful management of a strategic partnership (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995).

Chapter 3: Qualitative Study

The main objective of this research is to investigate how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs, the challenges associated with this integration and approaches to overcome these challenges. Another objective is to investigate the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. This chapter is devoted to the preliminary study of my thesis – namely, the qualitative study. The chapter consists of three main sections. The first section discusses the study method by justifying the use of a qualitative approach and explaining the data collection and analysis. The second section provides the findings of the qualitative study, which are the results of semi-structured interviews. The third section discusses these results and proposed the conceptual model. Next, the research paradigm and geographical context of the thesis are presented.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Research Approach

A qualitative approach is a research method that focuses on words and their meanings. Given the limited knowledge of the research issue, this approach was a useful preliminary step and ensured that the future study would not be conducted with an inadequate understanding of the issue (d'Alessandro et al., 2020). This approach is useful for a preliminary study because the main strength of qualitative research is the ability to investigate a phenomenon that has not been investigated before (Silverman, 2019), and it can significantly contribute to the evolution of a research field (Valtakoski, 2019). As a research strategy, a qualitative approach is considered to be constructionist and interpretivist (Bryman & Bell, 2015), and it allows researchers to

get as close as possible to participants to understand the research issue through their subjective experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In social sciences, the importance of qualitative research has increased (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Qualitative research assisted me in investigating the research issue and provided insights into the collected data, which is particularly valuable with a new phenomenon such as the issue at hand. As social media is a relatively new phenomenon, there is a great need for qualitative research to better investigate social media advertising issues (d'Alessandro et al., 2020).

The research aim was to investigate how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs, the associated challenges with this integration and approaches to overcoming these challenges. In addition, it investigated the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. In a review of the social media advertising literature, Knoll (2016) concluded that most online advertising studies had failed to deliver an in-depth analysis of social media as a marketing tool. The marketing field has been dominated by quantitative research; however, marketers need to conduct interpretive research to provide deeper insight into a new phenomenon (Hanson & Grimmer, 2007). In a similar study, Valos et al. (2016) adopted a qualitative method to investigate the integration of social media into IMC, since social media is a relatively new and rapidly evolving phenomenon. Furthermore, Belk (2017) stated that the Internet and interactive Web 2.0 have changed media and the methods of advertising research substantially. Therefore, marketing scholars and postgraduate researchers have been encouraged to conduct qualitative research owing to their understanding of data collection and analysis techniques (Crick, 2020).

To understand the challenges of incorporating social media into IMC programs from the practitioners' perspective, a qualitative approach is the appropriate method to gain deep insights. In fact, qualitative research has been widely adopted to identify the campaign development process (d'Alessandro et al., 2020). In addition, a qualitative study is an important step to facilitate a subsequent quantitative study by facilitating the hypothesis development and the questionnaire design (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative approach to provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon and identify constructs and concepts specified by participants from advertising agencies without the researcher's bias (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2013).

3.1.2 Data Collection

3.1.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The main aim of the study was to develop a deep understanding of the challenges of incorporating social media into IMC programs and how marketers overcome these challenges from the advertising agencies' perspective. The constant evolution of social media (Voorveld, 2019) underlines the importance of understanding the mechanism and process of integrating social media platforms into IMC programs through a descriptive and informative approach. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method to achieve this understanding. This method can yield rich data and provide a deep understanding of how advertising campaign specialists, in their own words, develop social or traditional media campaigns and integrate them into IMC programs. The semi-structured interview method provided me with

substantial flexibility in collecting and analysing the data, which supported the coding process and category development.

The interview guide (see Appendix C) contained a list of open-ended questions to allow participants to provide insights that have not been studied previously. In other words, conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to discover new insights and concepts that do not exist in the literature (Bryman & Bell, 2015), and this is especially because of the rapidly changing landscape of social media. I began the interview by asking the participant some open-ended questions which allowed them to construct descriptive answers (Myers, 2019). These questions were important for answering the research questions, such as 'What are the challenges of incorporating social media into an IMC program and how do marketers overcome these challenges?' Asking open-ended questions enabled me to explore the individual participants' perspectives and experiences deeply, as they provided several examples (questions 2 and 3 in the interview guide) of real campaigns that they had developed. These responses provided useful and comprehensive descriptive data for understanding the challenges of incorporating social media into an IMC program and how advertising professionals overcome these challenges.

The interview guide consisted of three sections. First, I asked a broad question: 'To start off, can we spend the first 10 minutes with you telling me a couple of examples of social media campaigns you worked on that also used some advertising elements?' I began the interview with this question to make the conversation develop organically (Childers et al., 2019), gain detailed descriptions (Gottlieb, Brown, & Ferrier, 2014) and avoid potential bias (Koslow et al., 2003). This question was easy and interesting

from the participants' perspective because it allowed them to freely provide examples of social media campaigns they had developed.

Second, I adopted the repertory grid technique (Kelly, 1955) to effectively elicit constructs from the advertising practitioners. In qualitative research studies, the researcher's bias can surface while interviewing the participants. However, using the repertory grid technique enabled me to elicit the constructs from participants without my interference or bias (Mak et al., 2013). In fact, the repertory grid technique assisted me in capturing and generating richer data (Bauman, 2015; Sherman & Morley, 2020), which facilitated the data collection. Next, I asked, 'Think of three social media campaigns that you successfully integrated into advertising and three unsuccessful ones that were not integrated. How were the social media and advertising managed, and in what ways was the process of developing these campaigns similar and different?' Then participants began thinking of these campaigns and I provided them six slips of paper to write down the name of these campaigns or a code to ensure their clients' confidentiality.

The third and last section of the interview guide comprised seven questions concerning the challenges of integrating social media into an IMC program and how advertising professionals overcame them. In response, participants discussed various aspects, such as designing social media campaigns, developing marketing communications strategies and the challenges of implementing them on social media when integrating them into the IMC program.

Simultaneously, to enhance the data richness and develop a constructive dialogue with participants, I asked follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. For example, when a participant discussed any issue or point that needed

additional clarification or interpretation, I asked them 'What do you mean?' or 'Tell me more about it' or 'Could you describe that in more detail?' Such follow-up questions, also referred to as probes, are formulated relative to what participants have already discussed to generate a free-ranging conversation about the issue at hand (Roulston & Choi, 2018) and encourage the participants to elaborate on the issue (d'Alessandro et al., 2020). At the end of the interview, the participant provided answers to demographic questions concerning, for example, professional position, years of experience and age.

With qualitative research, it is important to ensure data trustworthiness. First, prior to commencing the data collection, I revised the interview guide with seven social media academics and practitioners to obtain their feedback and comments and check the accuracy of these questions. This action assisted me in adjusting and clarifying some of the questions to avoid ambiguity and leading questions. In addition, I used the same interview guide with all participants to obtain reliability and consistency; however, the follow-up questions were different for each participant due to differences in their answers.

Adopting qualitative research fit the research objectives and helped me answers the research questions. This approach enabled me to conduct a thick description to identify the depth and breadth of the research issue and provide a broad conceptual understanding of the phenomenon (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). Gaining a thick and rich description of the research issue, the challenges of integrating social media into an IMC program, was to ensure the trustworthiness (Stewart, Gapp, & Harwood, 2017) and especially the credibility of the research. In addition, rich

descriptions based on participants' statements contributed to the trustworthiness of the research (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010)

3.1.2.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to ensure that participants provide deep insights, in this case, on the challenges of integrating social media into an IMC program within the advertising context. According to Schreier (2018), 'Purposive sampling refers to a group of sampling strategies typically used in qualitative research. The key idea underlying purposive sampling is to select instances that are information rich with a view to answering the research question' (p. 88). This type of sampling is a non-probability form. For my study, I did not sample the participants randomly but, rather, on the basis of particular characteristics that would assist me in generating deep insights into the phenomenon of interest. In other words, the goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants strategically to ensure their relevance in light of the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The research questions provide guidelines for sampling participants to effectively produce answers with rich and descriptive data. Patton (2014) explained as follows:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisation. (p. 264)

The objective of the sampling was to strategically select participants with professional expertise to explore the research issue from their perspectives.

3.1.2.3 Participants

In total, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with advertising campaign specialists in Australian and UAE advertising agencies who are responsible for developing social media campaigns and integrating them into IMC programs (see Table 3.1). In conducting and analysing these interviews with the advertising campaign specialists, I reached data saturation, as I could no longer obtain new insights or information. Saturation is defined as 'data adequacy' and operationalised to collect data until no new information is obtained from the participants, and there are no guidelines for adequacy that recommend a required sample size (Morse, 1995). According to Bryman and Bell (2015), if the aim of selecting a sample is to achieve saturation, and it is useless to specify the number of participants, as the researcher cannot determine a sample size that will reach the saturation point. However, the sample size of this study achieved saturation and fell within the recommended range (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Kvale, 1996; Morse, 2010).

Table 3.1 Sample Description

Pseudonym	Title/Position	Years of Experience	Country	Gender
Connor	Strategist	9	Australia	Male
Ruby	Social Media Planner	5	Australia	Female
Isabella	Head of Planning	25	Australia	Female
Matthew	Strategist	3	Australia	Male
Shanelle	Strategist	9	Australia	Female
Lara	Social Media Strategist	7	Australia	Male
Lauren	Client Services Director	8	Australia	Female
Diana	Digital Marketing Manager	10	Australia	Female
Henry	Social Media Planner	20	Australia	Male
Bill	Digital Consultant	5	Australia	Male
Peter	Strategy Director	32	UAE	Male
Dylan	Head of Social Media	5	UAE	Male
Aiden	Digital Marketing Consultant	6	UAE	Male
Matilda	Digital Media Planner	5	UAE	Female
Tyler	Founder/Chief Digital	10	UAE	Male
Kevin	Digital Specialist	12	UAE	Male
Cooper	CEO/Founder	20	UAE	Male
Gary	Director	13	Australia	Male
Elizabeth	Digital Consultant	10	Australia	Female
David	Strategist & Brand Planner	14	Australia	Male
Miller	Chief Digital Officer	15	Australia	Male
Maureen	Creative Director	7	UAE	Female
Steven	Social Media Specialist	6	UAE	Male
Ashley	Account Manager	6	UAE	Female
Rachel	Strategist	8	UAE	Female
Paul	Managing Director	9	UAE	Male
Jennifer	Strategist	5	UAE	Female
Jason	CEO	12	UAE	Male
Luke	Strategist	7	UAE	Male
Patrick	Marketing Consultant	9	UAE	Male

In both countries, I conducted a face-to-face interview with each participant. After I finished the interviews in Australia, I travelled to the UAE to complete the interviews there. To conduct a successful in-depth interview, I established a good

communication process with each participant (Seitz, 2016). The objective of following a proper communication process between myself as the interviewer and the participant as the interviewee was to achieve agreement on the conduct of the interview. Therefore, I followed several steps to obtain the interviewee's approval for the interview.

To recruit participants, I contacted several advertising agencies via email according to the contact list mentioned earlier. In the email, I introduced myself as a doctoral student and explained that the study was to fulfil of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing degree from Macquarie University, Australia. Some email recipients requested a copy of the interview guide; accordingly, I replied to their emails with an attachment of the requested document. However, if I did not receive a response, I followed up with a phone call or a visit to their physical address. In total, I contacted 163 advertising agencies. Upon obtaining consent to participate in the study, I discussed the study in greater detail and established a convenient time and location for the interview.

The most important factor for conducting the interviews was that they were all undertaken at a time and location that was comfortable and suitable (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018). Except for one interview, where the participant asked me to meet in the evening, the participants preferred to meet during business hours. Therefore, all interviews but one were conducted between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in locations away from distractions, such as a meeting room, an office or a quiet coffee shop, to avoid noise and interruptions.

Before beginning each interview, I provided the participant with a Participant Information and Consent Form (see Appendix D) that included all the necessary information of the study and their participation. The Participant Information and Consent Form provided brief information about the researcher and the supervision committee and explained the nature of the study, the questions and the time allocated for the interview. It emphasised that participation in the study was voluntary and that the participant could freely withdraw from the study at any time without providing any justification or reason. According to Ennis and Wykes (2016), 'Study information sheets must contain sufficient detail for potential participants to make an informed decision about taking part' (p. 189). After reading the Participant Information and Consent Form and consenting to participate in the study, the participant signed the form.

In addition, the Participant Information and Consent Form explained that the interview would be electronically recorded. Due to the large number of interviews conducted, recording them was an important step in understanding and analysing the collected data. According to King et al. (2018), 'In most qualitative research traditions it is strongly preferable, if not essential, to have a full record of each interview' (p. 74). Further, they clarified that researchers now use digital recorders to capture the interview data to facilitate transferring the data onto computers for transcription and storage.

After I conducted each interview, it was transcribed. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant to protect their anonymity and confidentiality (Heath, Williamson, Williams, & Harcourt, 2018). Only 12 participants preferred to speak in Arabic (the researcher's native language). According to van Nes et al. (2010), 'With participants

and the main researcher speaking the same language, no language differences are present in data gathering, transcription and during the first analyses, because usually the first coding phase stays closely to the data' (p. 314). Therefore, although the transcription and translation took substantial time and effort to complete, being a native Arabic speaker facilitated the process. The interview transcripts were reviewed several times to ensure their accuracy and quality.

When conducting research, it is important to have an effective data storage strategy for storing the data in a safe, secured location to protect them from loss or damage (Corti, Van den Eynden, Bishop, & Woollard, 2019). Thus, electronic copies of the recorded interviews were saved on the researcher's password-protected computer and hard copies of the transcripts were locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office at the University. All data will be stored and retained for at least five years from the most recent publication of the research.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

The first stage of analysing and coding data is open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) or initial coding (Charmaz, 2014). Corbin and Strauss (1990) defined open coding as 'the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data' (p. 61). Thus, in this step, I read the data line-by-line several times to clearly understand what was happening in the participant's world regarding social media integration into IMC programs. As Charmaz (2014) stated, if you take each chunk of data and ask what it means to you, you will then move into the analysis stage.

Axial coding is the second step of data analysis in grounded theory. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), it is 'a set of procedures whereby data are put back

together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories' (p. 96). In this phase, I mainly explored the relationships among categories and understood the relationships and connections among the open codes and related them to each other.

Selective coding is the final phase of coding and it is 'the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development' (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 116). Corbin and Strauss clarified that the core category represents the central phenomenon of the research. During this phase, I used field notes and memos that I had written while collecting the data. The memos helped me materialise ongoing reflections and assisted me during the data analysis by providing richer explanations of the transcripts and notes (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Taking notes was helpful to ensure the validity of the data collection (Gottlieb et al., 2014).

To manage the data, I used NVivo to conduct my qualitative data analysis (QDA) by uploading, organising, analysing and thoroughly understanding the meaning of the data. In addition, it helped me during my coding process to assess and refine developing themes (Childers et al., 2019).

3.2 Findings

This study highlighted seven challenges that advertising agencies face when integrating social media into IMC programs: agency–client collaboration, client expertise, trust, risk acceptance, budget, target audience and brand strategy.

3.2.1 Agency–Client Collaboration

The results show that a collaborative relationship between advertising agencies and clients is essential to successfully integrate social media into IMC programs, and it is the most complicated task that needs to be managed. The agency–client relationship should be well managed and collaborative to deliver the work that clients expect to obtain from their advertising agencies. The results also reveal that most of the participants agreed that clients need to work collaboratively with their advertising agencies if they truly want to achieve the campaign objectives. For example, mutual understanding between advertising agencies and clients positively affects the advertising development process.

Advertising agencies and their clients cannot agree on all dynamic decisions and issues, and that is the nature of a healthy relationship. However, a clear understanding between advertising agencies and clients can foster and strengthen the relationship and prevent both parties from various conflicts that may arise. A healthy agency–client relationship can facilitate various aspects of the campaign or the social media integration into IMC and ultimately deliver a successful campaign.

> So, maintaining a very good relationship with our clients is crucial because it will surely impact the whole work, you know. So, as I said before, a good relationship will always make a constructive discussion between us by sitting down and reviewing the work and talking frankly to set ground rules of the work and make sure, you know, that we clearly understand each other from the beginning. This will help us to integrate digital or social media into advertising campaign and, you know, set the stage for great work.

As Maureen pointed out, the quality of the agency–client relationship will be related to the campaign development and the entire work. She highlighted the importance of 'constructive discussion' that enables the advertising agencies and their clients to regularly review and evaluate the work to ensure that campaigns have been effectively managed and implemented. This discussion can facilitate a collaborative relationship and motivate both parties to freely share their ideas and insights on any of the campaign's issues. It is important that the advertising agencies provide constructive criticism and feedback that will improve the work and encourage the clients to express their opinions and share their ideas freely. Most participants agreed that advertising agencies nurturing this positive atmosphere with clients and treating them respectfully will enhance the work:

> Sometimes, they [the client] will come back and say, 'Hey, you know what? I think it's a good idea, but I think we could probably do these things better… I don't care how little or big the money is because I need to be able to ask you questions and you have to give me honest answers, and then if I think that there are problems, then we have to discuss them openly.' I'm very comfortable criticising my campaign, my clients and their approaches and their decisions even at the cost of losing their business because I'd rather be honest and tell them what I think with fact. I mean, it's not like my opinion only, but this is what the data says.
>
> Kevin, Digital Specialist

However, the data reveal that the major challenge that many advertising agencies face is the struggle to establish and maintain good relationships with their clients. There are several reasons why advertising agencies cannot obtain good relationships with clients, such as inadequate trust from the clients and receiving mostly criticism from the clients. The next extracts explain how two participants express their frustration to clients who do not clearly understand what they need from their advertising agency and how their behaviour has added complexity to the work:

> So, client generally does not necessarily know what they want. They think that they have an idea of what they want to achieve but do not know how to articulate it in a way that helps an advertising or creative agency know how to respond to it… There are many clients that, on the other hand, micro-manage you, do not trust what you are proposing, question everything, are very detailed. It can actually stifle creativity and also, if you keep getting negative feedback, you fall out of love with that brand. You do not want to put in all of your best ideas because they are just going to get tossed aside.

> Elizabeth, Digital Consultant

Elizabeth illustrated how advertising agencies struggle with clients that are not supportive and cooperative in the campaign development process. She expressed her frustration with clients who are too close to many details of the work instead of viewing the situation holistically. She deeply described that many clients treat their advertising agency negatively as a vendor or an executor, not as a partner or supplier. Therefore, this undesirable behaviour from clients discourages advertising agencies from producing more new ideas and delivering the work that these clients expect.

These unhealthy relationships surely will lead to various conflicts and issues between the advertising agencies and their closed-minded clients and negatively affect the integration of social media into IMC or the entire campaign. Consequently, they will not develop a strategic partnership that both desire to build a successful 'win–win' relationship. Unfortunately, these agency–client relationships will eventually fail and end in the firing of the advertising agency and hiring of another one or building an in-house advertising department. Both options are costly for many clients. Generally, establishing an in-house advertising unit can be an effective solution to internally develop campaigns instead of outsourcing them to advertising agencies. However, the firm must have the required resources, abilities and skills for building an in-house advertising department. Indeed, the findings of this study show that most clients endeavour to establish an in-house advertising unit, but they eventually fail to produce the expected work and waste their resources and resume searching for a new advertising agency. As Isabella, Head of Planning, explained, 'I think that it is just a rolling challenge if, like, clients bring agencies internal because they feel like they can do a better job, and they do that for two years and then you can literally see the cycle of when they're going to close that down and take it external.'

The data show that the major reason for building advertising internally is that clients feel their advertising agency does not allocate adequate time and effort to their work:

One important thing to notice, that I noticed, that most of the business owners now are moving to in-house digital marketing in their office because they believe that the digital marketing agency doesn't pay enough attention to them or doing their work because the agencies are also distracted with other clients as well.

Aiden, Digital Marketing Consultant

Of course, the clients expect their advertising agency to be largely focused on their work, but the advertising agency has many clients with the same expectation. As a result, the advertising agency finds itself in a challenge to satisfy all its clients by providing the time to meet their satisfaction.

Most participants believe that if advertising agencies and clients can remain open-minded, this can facilitate resolving various conflicts that may arise between these parties. This desirable behaviour, openness, encourages both sides of the relationship to express their ideas by respecting each other's opinions, preventing overconfidence and listening to everyone's views. As the following extract shows, Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital, highlighted the importance of the client being open-minded and how his client, Mercedes-Benz, has been a good representative of openness:

I think most importantly is being open and making sure you highlight the benefits... Mercedes-Benz, for example, they will come to us with a more open brief, which is rather than them saying 'we have got this platform, we've got this communication platform, we have got this idea; tell us what should we do on social.' They actually come with a more open brief which is, 'we have X amount of budget, we want to target these users, we want to sell these cars; how should we do it?' And then from there, we will go away, we will think about the creative, we will think about what creative messaging we want and then also think about the social media advertising side of it… we have worked with the client as part of the team. We have worked collaboratively and they have listened to our recommendations in terms of what we proposed.

Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital

Thus, Tyler reinforced the need for the client to be tolerant and collaborative with the advertising agency by utilising the benefits of being flexible in their meetings. Instead of guiding or ordering the advertising agencies, clients need to work with their agencies as a team that shares the same objectives and ambition. The data show that it is essential for clients to listen to their advertising agencies to have a productive discussion. In other words, clients who are good listeners are good communicators, and they can significantly increase the effectiveness of their communication and make it healthier. Indeed, most participants expressed the view that the client is the heart of the interaction with the advertising agency, and it is difficult, and often impossible, for a campaign to be successful with a closed-minded client.

Clients can avoid issues or resolve conflicts with their advertising agencies by respecting their viewpoints and paying close attention to their suggestions to be able to see things through the advertising agencies' eyes. Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, shared the same perspective as Tyler that clients need to listen to their advertising agencies because the latter work in the advertising industry with many clients daily and they need to sustain relationships with their clients in the long term:

> Open, there needs to be dialogue and debates and disagreement, okay. A client comes to the table with certain things in their head that they believe will work. It is our job as people that are doing this every day, all day, for 85 clients. We see what works and what does not at every level, from the way we spend, the messages we deliver, the way we need to be brave sometimes on our creative. Client has to be open in listening; we are not going to recommend things that will not work for your brand because you'll never work with us again.

> Cooper, CEO/Founder

Some participants viewed their relationship with clients not only as a professional relationship but as a friendship. Both clients and their advertising agencies should treat each other as an important source of the campaign's success. Advertising agencies that see their clients as friends will improve and foster these relationships and enjoy the ultimate benefits of communications that will facilitate the campaign development process. Bill, Digital Consultant, emphasised that he often deals with his clients as partners or best friends that he will be close to and never leave when they encounter an issue:

If you have got a very collaborative and open relationship, then that would lead to better results. If you can be honest and transparent, if you can share a work in progress and if you say this isn't the final idea, but we wanted to get your thoughts on this, we'd try and be quite open, honest, transparent; if we think something doesn't make sense, we would hope that we've got a good enough relationship with the clients to be able to say, 'I don't think it makes sense,' and we would never just leave them with a problem. We would suggest, 'here's what we think the solution might be' or 'here's how we could improve it.' So, the best clients we have are more like professional friendships, where you can go for a beer or a coffee and, you know, if you've had enough of each other, you just give each other a couple of days of space or just like a friendship, where you can just be more honest and open, I think.

Bill, Digital Consultant

Here, Bill expressed a relationship with clients that is coherent and more transparent. Transparency between the advertising agency and the client shows its positive impact on the work. This kind of relationship allows the advertising agency to be clear and frank with their clients to accept or reject ideas or opinions if they feel that they will not be appropriate and effective for the campaign. Advertising agencies that are transparent and honest with their clients can prevent both parties from wasting their resources in delivering work that is not sure to be successful. Many participants shared that it is better to have honest and frank clients that criticise the work constructively than clients who do not provide feedback or suggestions. Steven, Social Media Specialist, stated, 'I prefer an honest client who would say this is a bad or

terrible thing than a client who would agree with me with everything. Because I've been in many situations where the client saying "yes, I agree for anything", and before releasing the work, the client becomes frustrated and it's too late for fixing.'

However, the majority of participants have faced the challenge of having many closed-minded clients. The data show that many clients do not share their ideas and opinions with advertising agencies. Worse still, some clients are unwilling to accept or even understand their advertising agencies' ideas. They need their advertising agencies to directly implement and execute their ideas without having feedback or criticism. Most participants said they caution clients that the campaign's success is not only about the resources, skills or capabilities that are obtained; rather, it is more about the client's willingness to communicate and accept the advertising agency's recommendations and ideas. The data show that being a closed-minded client can negatively impact each aspect of the campaign development process and add complexity to the work. Therefore, it will create a serious conflict between the client and the advertising agency that will eventually lead to the failure of the campaign and destroy the relationship:

> At the end of the day, I think it's all about how the client is helpful and willing to work with us as a partner. Sometimes, I have had clients who are stubborn, that they only believe in their ideas and thoughts. You know, these kinds of people that they stick with what they think is gonna work. It's very difficult to manage these clients and persuade them to just listen to us, you know. It's useless conversations and meetings, with more of disagreement than agreements, and to be honest, I can't think of any campaign with these clients [that] has been successful.

3.2.2 Client Expertise

Expertise is an important aspect in producing a high level of social media integration into an IMC program. Clients often rely on advertising agencies to deliver their advertising campaigns and believe that these agencies are specialists in developing and designing advertising campaigns that will assist them in achieving their advertising objectives. Being an expert with adequate knowledge of how to develop advertising campaigns enables an advertising agency to improve its reputation in its clients' eyes. However, based on my findings, this is not the reality between advertising agencies and clients. Expertise in the advertising field varies from agency to agency and, accordingly, clients view these agencies differently. For instance, only some clients believe that the advertising agency knows better than them and trust their work. In fact, the data show that agencies struggle with many clients who believe that they have more expertise than the advertising agencies do:

> The big challenge is that clients now, because they're on Facebook, believe they're experts, or Twitter, Instagram… they believe they're experts. My wife watches TV; she doesn't know how to make a TV ad. Now, everyone is on social and everything you do is public.

Cooper, CEO/Founder

Cooper expressed the major challenge he often faces, of clients oversimplifying the process of developing an advertising campaign. The results show that many clients hold a strong belief that they have adequate knowledge and expertise simply because they own an account in the chosen social media platform. Many participants

encourage clients to explore and share their ideas; however, they caution the clients not to underestimate the agency's value as an professional expert in the advertising industry.

While it is critical to have the client's and the agency's thoughts and views in developing the campaign, some participants believe that clients need to be more flexible and only listen to their advertising agency's ideas before they provide their own expectations of the campaign. According to Lauren, Client Services Director, 'I believe that they [clients] should not have any expectations until the agency provides them with some ideas, because that's why they come to us, to help them.' However, some participants disagreed with this comment; they did not believe that advertising agencies should have the priority of expressing their ideas or recommendations when they meet clients. Undoubtedly, the client's flexibility and listening are important throughout the campaign development process; however, there should be two-way communication. Henry, Social Media Planner, was frustrated with many advertising agencies that believe winning a contract affords them full authority over the work and diminish or even ignore the client's role in developing a campaign:

> Most agencies think that they have got some kind of a license on campaign development, and they will think about the campaign, present it to the client, and they will just sign on it right and they are the holders of a campaign. I think that this is more of a partnership, right, and we should really show to the client and the client should have a very important say on what they are, what they think about the campaign, right. As an agency manager or as an agency creative, you don't know as much about the industry and the business that a client knows, right.

Therefore, Henry demonstrated that although the advertising agency understands how to develop an advertising campaign, the client has market knowledge that makes it an important player in developing a campaign. Instead of concentrating on the ideas of one party, the agency or the client, they should see each other as partners. In other words, regardless of the advertising agency's professionalism in designing campaigns, the client still knows the industry much better than the agency does. Henry's perspective is more strategic in emphasising the importance of respecting and considering each party's viewpoints.

Some participants shared that they warn clients about being narcissistic with their advertising agency by thinking they are the experts in developing advertising campaigns. Connor, Strategist, expressed his feeling about these clients:

A lot of the times, they don't think you are experts, and they think that they know better, and that can also be a degree of narcissism. So, someone can be massively ambitious, but they can also be narcissistic and think they know best and that can get in the way or cloud their judgment as to who has the expertise.

Thus, these clients inflate their self-image and exaggerate their skills and abilities in advertising, which will lead to major issues with their advertising agencies. Instead, clients need to be humbler and simpler with their advertising agencies and understand each one's capabilities and skills in developing campaigns.

On the contrary, some participants advise agencies that they need to be more collaborative with their clients and value their opinions and insights. For instance, Matthew, Strategist, commented that 'sometimes, you have to step away from your

own idea, and if the client adds to it or reformats it in some way, remove your ego and let them play with it and build it because this is as much their thing as it is our thing.' From the above two contradictory perspectives on clients' position in sharing opinions and ideas with their advertising agencies, the data show that the majority of agencies blame the clients for a campaign's failure. Most participants emphasised that clients should trust their advertising agency's expertise if they truly hope to achieve their advertising objectives.

One aspect of expertise that clients often lack is consistency in their message. Participants emphasised the importance of consistency in IMC programs, where the marketing channels work together to achieve particular campaign objectives. Consistency across all IMC channels is vital to ensure that the social and traditional media channels do not conflict. Developing consistent marketing channels will deliver a consistent message that can effectively reach the target audience. Connor also pointed out the following:

A really good integrated campaign, a good campaign, should feel like everything's talking to each other – it's all cohesive. It's kind of like putting the cogs into a machine and then seeing the machine run; that's what I think is a really good integrated campaign.

Here, Connor expressed that all channels should be connected to each other and be effectively linked to one idea. However, the data reveal a major conflict between agencies and clients when integrating social media into IMC programs due to inconsistency among the channels.

The majority of the participants expressed their struggles with clients' marketing backgrounds and discussed how the clients' thoughts and perspectives can dramatically impact the IMC development process. In other words, as some participants explained, the clients' degrees of knowledge of IMC and understanding of social and traditional media can play a significant role in the selection of channels. Ruby, Social Media Planner, shared the following:

> The client's understanding of how social media and the other platforms work will make a huge difference. There's a lot of clients who have a traditional marketing background, who don't necessarily understand digital, and now there's a lot of younger clients coming through who understand digital but don't understand traditional media. So, there's always that balance and fight.

As shown above, Ruby explained how the clients' school of thought about social and traditional media can lead to either mutual understanding with their agencies or create conflicts that negatively impact the campaign outcomes. Message consistency among chosen channels cannot be obtained without the selection of appropriate channels for the campaign. In other words, regardless of consistency or the quality of media channels, if clients do not choose the right channels to reach the target audience, the campaign will be more likely fail.

The data also suggest that the age of clients has a strong relationship with the selection of marketing channels in IMC programs. Due to the differences in clients' marketing backgrounds and thoughts, clients prefer certain media channels and pressure agencies to choose those channels. For example, older marketers have a high tendency to adopt traditional media channels, such as print, radio, television or

outdoor advertisements, whereas social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are the favourite choices of younger marketers.

However, advertising agencies face challenges not because of clients' media channel preferences but because the clients have a lack of or limited knowledge and understanding of the channels that they do not prefer to adopt. Therefore, the advertising agencies struggle to educate and persuade their clients to choose the appropriate channels for their advertising campaigns. Matilda, Social Media Planner, explained:

> That was what the client forced us to do, and this is the biggest problem
> that agencies have to go through, where the client is uneducated about
> the power of social media and how it's a perfect marketing tool… So, this
> is the biggest challenge, I think, in our times right now, that social media
> is a super powerful marketing tool, but people are not aware of that, and
> that's why we're there, to create papers and hopefully educate people
> on the power of it. And another thing about it is that social media is in
> constant flux. It's changing all the time, and for you to be able to use it
> as a marketing tool, you should know it and you should know and even
> expect what's about to come.

The result of clients forcing advertising agencies to choose specific channels that the agencies have not recommended is that the clients will not receive the work they expect:

So, I think that the main point is that the ones that are successful, we've made specifically for social. The ones that have been unsuccessful tend to be ones that clients have tried to shoehorn into social for more traditional ideas. So, they tried to just transfer what they've done on more traditional channels straight on social, even with same images and some creative, you know; you see some images creative, though you might see in a print ad or an out-of-home ad. They just tried to put those images on social and expected to perform well, whereas we all know that people on a social media news feed, you've got about a second to communicate your brand's message, you know, so you have to have creative specifically for each channel.

Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital

Tyler clearly illustrated in the above extract the importance of clients differentiating between social and traditional media to deliver a successful advertising campaign. Social media's dynamic nature distinguishes it from traditional media; thus, the message should be adjusted to make it consistent across channels. The ideations process for generating and developing new ideas is different for social versus traditional media. However, the major issue is that clients believe the ideation process, content and execution are the same for all channels.

Ruby, Social Media Planner, stated the following:

Just because something's executed one way in traditional media, it doesn't mean it has to be executed exactly the same way on social media. The messaging, the values have to be the same overall; it has to

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give the same feeling. You should be able to, like, hide the brand and know who it's from.

Thus, Ruby emphasised that when integrating two channels – social and traditional media – it is important to understand that each channel has a different execution, message and content, but all of it must be consistent to enable the consumer to recognise the brand immediately. Eliminating inconsistencies among IMC channels will dramatically ensure that consumers receive and understand the message on different channels without being confused.

3.2.3 Trust

The data also reveal that trust is an important aspect of integrating social media into IMC programs. Based on the results, it is clear that mutual trust between the agency and the client will allow both parties to effectively combine their resources and skills towards achieving the specific advertising objectives. As Patrick, Marketing Consultant, explained, 'the agency can have the best work with clients if they trust each other, and that definitely will be reflected in the work progress. I believe trust is the magic thing that will lead to amazing work.' Patrick underlined the importance of basing the agency–client relationship on trust, as it can lead to better ideas and thoughts that will deliver great work.

The challenge that participants observed is that it is very difficult for them to earn the clients' trust, particularly at the beginning of the relationship. As most participants explained, the reason for this difficulty is that the clients simply do not know the agency. However, participants shared various avenues for improving their

clients' trust. One of the most effective ways is to show the results of their work to the clients:

> I think that relationship is built on trust, and I think it's very important, in order for social to be integrated as part of the wider mix, to build that trust, and I think the way that we do that with clients is proving that it works. It's very easy for me to sit here with a client and say, 'If you spend $10,000, we can get you X, Y and Z and that's a great assignment that sounds awesome,' but until you've actually shown them those reports and at the end of the campaign, where you have driven X, Y and Z, you know, it doesn't make sense. So, I think building that trust through results is very important in terms of getting social media integrated into the wider mix.

> Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital

As evinced in the above quotation, trust can be driven by actual work outcomes. In other words, if the work meets the client's expectations, trust will be built between the client and the advertising agency as a result. Some participants indicated that building trust requires time, effort and capabilities; however, that trust can be destroyed or diminished quickly, and it is difficult to rebuild. Of course, at the end of the day, earning clients' trust is not an easy task for advertising agencies for various reasons, and the agencies struggle to grant it. Connor, Strategist, for example, stated that not all clients trust their advertising agencies equally; it varies from one client to another depending on their own situation and experience. He stated, 'Some clients will trust the agency less than others because they might've been burnt by another agency in the past; they might be sceptical about how the agency is spending their money.'

Most participants emphasised that clients need to trust their advertising agencies to avoid conflicts and increasing tension. David, Strategist and Brand Planner, expressed his frustration with some clients who do not trust their agencies: 'A bad client has no trust… If a client doesn't trust you, then how can you be an expert? Because they [clients] will end up making decisions, and you [agency] will [be], what I like to say, mopping the floor.' Here, David described a 'bad' client as someone who doubts the agency's ability, resources and skills to deliver the work. This type of behaviour dramatically discourages the advertising agency from effectively interacting with such clients. Of course, clients should carefully choose an advertising agency by ensuring that it has the capabilities and competencies to successfully develop a campaign. However, once the agency has been chosen, the client should have some confidence in the agency's knowledge and expertise to do the work.

Interestingly, some participants claimed that it is not only clients that need to trust their advertising agencies but agencies also need to trust their clients. As shown in the following passage, Diana, Digital Media Planner, illustrated that trust can improve the discussion quality and ensure healthy communication:

I need to be able to trust the client the same way that he [client] needs to be able to trust me. So, they [clients] need to trust our expertise when we are saying, 'we really think the campaign would perform better on this,' but we also need to trust them when they are telling us, 'I know that research is telling all of that and we have used that in the past, and these are the reasons why we think we shouldn't go for that…' So, it has to be healthy communication on both ends.

Diana, Digital Media Planner

Trust between clients and agencies enables them to communicate honestly to resolve potential issues and conflicts that might arise. In fact, instead of determining who has more expertise, trust can assist both parties in synergising and leveraging their skills and knowledge to create a positive environment that will improve the decision-making. However, the data show that advertising agencies still face the challenge of winning their clients' trust.

3.2.4 Risk Acceptance

The results also show that risk acceptance is important in developing a high level of social media integration onto an IMC program. Most participants agreed that clients need to take some risks to effectively achieve their advertising objectives. The clients' willingness to accept risks associated with developing a campaign can make a significant difference to the work outcomes. Many agencies encourage their clients to be risk tolerant to improve the agency's ability to better think of and search for new ideas and options. Therefore, clients can significantly assist their agencies by being more tolerant about taking risks to enable the agencies to apply their expertise.

As mentioned earlier, gaining clients' trust is not only important for maintaining a good agency–client relationship but also for undertaking risky work. The data show that the client initially needs to trust the advertising agency's expertise. Accordingly, the client can accept new ideas that require taking risks. As demonstrated in the following extract, Gary, Director, explained the importance of the client's trust in allowing the agency undertake risky work:

When you [client] are in an environment where you constantly need to be doing new things, you constantly need to be innovating and trying out, doing first. There needs to be a lot of hand-holding. There needs a lot of trust… You [client] need to take risks in order to be successful and you [clients] need to have trust in us to ensure that we are not going to make you look foolish.

Such clients are often more rational when they understand the work and its consequences. Once they achieve this level of understanding, they will be more motivated and interested in accepting risky work. Paul, Managing Director, underlined the importance of clients understanding the work holistically, constructively discussing the work and then accepting the risk. He stated, 'There are some clients who would say, "Okay, I know the work and I can see that it can have some risks, but I think it will work and succeed, and I'm happy to do [it]."' Paul illustrated that clients must understand the work and its related risks and have an intuition that this work will be successful. A client's inner feeling of the success of the work is driven by trust in the agency and an understanding of the associated risks.

However, the data also reveal that clients' tendency to be risk-averse presents a challenge for many advertising agencies. In other words, they avoid accepting work that has a level of uncertainty and risk and prefer, instead, to approve work that has little-to-no risk. Jennifer, Strategist, commented as follows:

There are many unsuccessful social media campaigns because they [clients] prefer not thinking outside of the box and not taking risks. They always prefer doing works that they usually do. And the most difficult thing for us is to change that kind of behaviour.

These clients, based on the participants' perspectives, often are obstacles that prevent advertising agencies from delivering successful campaigns. Ashley, Account Manager, commented, 'Their traditional behaviour, that [they] often look at any work as risky, hold us back from being successful.' Clients' limited thinking and fear of failure prevent them from attempting risky work and developing great work. As this type of human behaviour cannot be modified easily, agencies struggle to persuade these clients to tolerate taking risks. However, the obstacles to developing a successful campaign can be overcome by thinking differently and accepting risks.

Similar to clients' traditional thinking, several participants indicated that many clients are afraid to take risks due to budget concerns. Luke, Strategist, stated that 'they do not have enough budget for their campaign, and people are very scared to pull out of those channels and give that budget to social media. They sort of see [it] as really risky and yeah.' Thus, Luke explained that clients find it very risky to allocate more of their budget to social media compared to traditional media. The clients believe traditional media deserves more of their advertising expenditure than social media does due to the limited advertising budget.

While many participants agreed that clients, in general, do not prefer taking risks, other participants stated that there is a relationship between this preference and the client's industry. In other words, clients will either be risk-takers or risk-averse depending on their industry. Bill, Digital Consultant, illustrated this point:

I think it very much depends on the industry. We as an agency have quite

a few financial services companies; they have a very low tolerance to

risk. They would probably have less creative desires and they would be

less open to risk, whereas a fun and lively brand – let's call them GoGet

– in Australia is a very good example. They enable young people to get

out and enjoy life and have fun, and therefore, they as a brand would be

more open to doing risky work.

Therefore, unlike many participants who see that the clients are often risk-

averse, others believe that tolerance of risk is related to the industry in which the client

works.

The findings show a conflict among agencies' perspectives regarding taking

risks and encouraging clients to accept risks. While many advertising agencies are

risk-takers and persuade their clients to take risks, interestingly, some agencies do not

prefer to do so. Miller, Chief Digital Officer, disagreed with most of the other

participants' perspectives:

I wouldn't push something unless I thought it was going to be a success

and, you know, you wouldn't expose your client to any reputational risk

at any time. So, risk isn't really something that I would be using as a lever

to sort of, you know, encourage clients to do something. I think you've

got to be confident in that.

Based on the participants' perspectives, they agreed that advertising agencies

cannot guarantee the success of a campaign, but at the same time, avoiding taking

risks will not deliver extraordinary work. The important point is that clients should have

the confidence that their agency will meet their expectations. In turn, this will lead these clients to accept more risks.

3.2.5 Budget

The advertising budget is an essential part of successfully integrating social media into an IMC program. Clients need to allocate adequate money to successfully integrate social media into their IMC programs. However, interestingly, the data show that the marketing budgets of many organisations have decreased in the last few years. There are several reasons for this reduction that are either within the control or out of the control of these organisations. First, the rise of technology and media has dramatically impacted the marketing budget by enabling marketers to utilise the cost-effective benefits of social media platforms:

> Budgets are getting smaller, and when I'm talking budgets, I'm talking about the entire communications budget. If you look at and read about Procter & Gamble and Unilever in the last three years, that they pretty much halved their global marketing budget, that's because people are buying less product, people are being cautious and suddenly you've got social and digital media that cost less. So, technology has allowed brands to reach the audience for less money quicker, and so, agencies have had to adapt to produce the content quicker and at a lower budget.
>
> Cooper, CEO/Founder

As Cooper explained, budgets have declined as the purchasing power of consumers has decreased and, accordingly, their buying decisions have been affected. Consequently, organisations have reviewed their marketing channels to

reallocate their marketing budget to improve their marketing performance. Consumers have been increasingly using social media platforms as a daily activity, which leads firms to adopt these platforms to reach consumers.

Second, the world economy has influenced every aspect of organisations, including their marketing and advertising activities. In the last few years, the economic crisis has been remarkable and ongoing, and organisations have struggled to maintain or increase their profits. As many participants illustrated, organisations have generally responded to the economic climate by decreasing their marketing budgets:

> Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, advertising and marketing budget is usually the first thing that gets cut. There're two ways of approaching that: you have most people who are saying that the economy is not great, our sales aren't really strong, let's cut advertising marketing budget, and then you have some other and more sensible people that potentially up what they spend because it's in these difficult times when you can advertise your way out of it almost.
>
> Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital

As Tyler's comment above shows, during an economic downturn, most clients believe that sales do not perform well and profit declines; therefore, consumers are hesitant to buy products. In this scenario, organisations often view the marketing budget as an unnecessary expense; thus, it will be scapegoated to reduce costs and maintain or increase profitability. However, advertising agencies do not support this perspective and struggle to persuade clients not to cut their marketing budget. Advertising agencies believe that organisations that advertise more in a challenging

economic climate can find an opportunity to effectively reach their target audience. These organisations can advertise in the midst of less marketing noise with lower marketing costs to retain their existing customers and reach other potential customers.

Participants reported that they face difficulties with their clients in allocating a sufficient budget to effectively develop a campaign. Many advertising agencies struggle to integrate social media into IMC programs because clients underestimate the power and cost of social media compared to traditional media. Consequently, the clients allocate less of their budget to social media than to traditional media channels. For instance, Matilda, Digital Media Planner, stated the following:

> The biggest problem, the biggest challenge, is that they [clients] try to give more budget still to print, to TV, to billboards than to social. So, they think that more people will see and be impressed if they saw the billboard, for example, on Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai than they see it while scrolling.

These clients believe that unlike traditional media, social media channels do not demand effort to develop and integrate them into IMC programs; therefore, they allocate less of their budget to them than to traditional media. As mentioned earlier, while social media can be effective in identifying, understanding and reaching the target audience, it requires substantial effort to capture consumers' attention:

They [clients] often do not give us enough money, especially for social media. I do believe that because, you know, in a very cluttered social media environment is very hard to grab the people's attention and break through the noise, because they always use these media channels for social activities and, yeah, it needs more job and work to be done. So, we need to do something really amazing to stop them scrolling and engage them, or it [the ad] will be ignored.

Lara, Social Media Strategist

As Lara pointed out, in a crowded media marketplace, besides their social activities, consumers are exposed to numerous advertisements, and organisations need effective approaches to target their audience and attract their attention. These approaches will differ depending on many aspects, such as the chosen platform's nature, content, ideas and, most importantly, budget. However, it is difficult for marketers to break through the noise and engage potential consumers. Therefore, they need to create a well-developed social media campaign to ensure that the brand's voice is heard and the message has been received. Of course, developing this campaign to reach the target audience requires more advertising specialists to allocate sufficient funds to cover all related costs.

Another major challenge facing advertising agencies is that clients lack understanding of how to allocate their marketing and advertising budget. The clients' view that developing a social media campaign requires lower costs, or even no cost, increases the tension between them and their advertising agencies. Due to the clients' view of social media costs, they often wish to advertise their campaigns on many social

media platforms but with a limited budget, and this is difficult or impossible to accomplish:

> This is a controversial topic. When you go to a client, he tells you that 'I have this amount budget and I want to do this huge amount of campaign.' One of the challenges that we actually face is that we work with a client in a different industry – real estate, hotels, some different sort of things – we found that the client doesn't have any idea what his budget is.
>
> Aiden, Digital Marketing Consultant

Thus, Aiden illustrated the struggle with clients that expect to develop their campaign on many social media platforms and they do not truly understand the associated total costs. While the cost of social media advertising is less than traditional media advertising, social media still requires a minimum budget to develop the work. Most participants indicated that they spend more time educating and persuading clients about the importance of allocating a sufficient budget to social media. The clients' understanding of social media expenses will encourage them to allocate the required budget. As Isabella explained, 'When you show them the price for that, they're like "Oh, no, we don't want to do that." But what you often find is that clients are willing to spend money immediately if they understand.' Isabella's viewpoint explains the clients' resistance to providing sufficient budget for their advertising agencies because they have limited knowledge of the cost of developing a social media campaign.

3.2.6 Target Audience

The results show that one of the most important aspects when integrating social media into IMC programs is determining the target audience. Participants emphasised the importance of defining and understanding the target audience so that clients can ensure the advertising message will effectively reach them. Neither social nor traditional media advertising campaigns can be successful without clearly identifying and understanding the target audience. Failing to do this will lead the campaign to backfire. As consumers have different needs and wants, a key factor in delivering the message is to identify these differences and effectively satisfy them. The following extract shows the importance of understanding how to use insight mining to resonate with the target audience and successfully deliver the message to them.

> We do insight mining. So, we'll look at the target audience and figure out everything that we can possibly figure out about that audience, and then we'll pick out one insight from all of that mining that we do and think about how we can use that insight to convey some sort of message that solves our problem.

> Connor, Strategist

Among the many examples participants offered, Dylan, Head of Social Media, articulated the important role of carefully targeting the audience in delivering a successful integrated marketing campaign:

One of our most successful campaigns was when we actually integrated social media marketing for one of our Dubai restaurant clients with radio channel. So, we actually went ahead and we had a specific promotion in place for Ramadan month. So, we advertised that through social media and through radio. So, through radio, we reached a very different target audience – you know, some of the older target audience in a wider audience spectrum – whereas through social media, through Facebook and Instagram, we reached younger target audience. So, it was very successful. It was helpful to, you know, kind of have two different media with the same messaging, but, you know, reaching different target audiences.

The above example shows how one campaign can target different people through two different media channels. Participants agreed that the platform itself is just a tool that a marketer adopts to deliver the advertising campaign's message to the target audience. However, the key factor is how marketers craft the message on the platform to effectively communicate with the target audience. Participants recommended that advertisers envision the person that they aim to speak to instead of pushing out information that clients want to tell everyone. Social media platforms dramatically assist marketers in delivering advertising message to the target audience, but unless marketers successfully target their audience, the campaign will not achieve their expectations.

Therefore, although social media provides great opportunities for marketers to increase their customer reach, without identifying and understanding their target audience, they will have difficulty utilising these opportunities. Many participants

expressed anger about dealing with many clients with inadequate knowledge and experience of some media channels – mostly social media – pushing agencies to use their preferred channels:

> So, sometimes, clients need to remember their brand and audience hat on rather than their personal, so I find I have a lot of clients that don't want to do social media and don't know how amazing a social campaign is when they see it because they may be older than the target audience, so in reverse. So, imagine we're a brand that's trying to talk to 17-year-olds, but I've got a 40-year-old client who doesn't use Facebook, who has never used Instagram and haven't got a clue what Snapchat is. So, when you come back with a creative idea, they don't see how good a creative idea it is or a social campaign because they don't understand the platform.

As demonstrated above, Elizabeth expressed her frustration about struggling with many clients who have a limited understanding of marketing channels. Advertising agencies often fail to persuade their clients to use specific media channels that are appropriate for their campaigns simply because the clients do not use them. These clients are unwilling to accept the agency's recommendation of the most effective marketing channels for the campaign. Consequently, conflict erupts between these parties that it is often difficult to resolve, and the client has the final decision on the platforms.

Another reason why agencies fail to persuade clients to adopt specific channels is because the clients focus solely on statistical numbers regarding the channel users without understanding these numbers. For example, the statistical numbers indicate

that Facebook is the largest social networking site; thus, many clients adopt Facebook as a marketing tool. Cooper, CEO/Founder, illustrated this issue as follows:

> It's different by market. In Saudi Arabia, Twitter is very popular, it's real time and it has far more exposure for some nationals than Facebook does. So, imagine we needed to target Asian experts working in Saudi Arabia; I wouldn't be using Facebook. So, we don't just look at absolute numbers; we always start by looking at who's the target audience and then how do we reach them?

Thus, Cooper underlined the importance of communicating with the target audience through effective channels that ensure the message will reach them. A clear understanding of who is the brand's target audience and the channels that they spend the most time on and other important information that assists in defining the target audience will definitely lead the brand to choose the most appropriate channels.

The findings indicate that the challenge facing many marketers is clearly understanding consumer behaviour, because it is a vital part of advertising. Generally, understanding and predicting consumer behaviour is one of the most difficult tasks for marketers, and it requires time, effort and the appropriate budget to understand it. The data show the importance of social media as a marketing tool and how this media can be beneficial and valuable for marketers in their efforts to understand the behaviour of their target audience. Social media can assist marketers in gathering demographic information about the target audience and which platforms they often use. Connor, Strategist, stated the following:

The real challenge is getting to understand the consumer. Like, it's a lot easier these days because, online, we have a lot of different ways to understand the consumer. We can look at their history on social media, we can look at the sites that they've been looking at, we can look at the purchases they've made at Woolworths[1] through loyalty cards.

This extract clearly shows the significant value of social media's ability to gather substantial information about the target audience and profile them on the basis of various aspects, such as their interests, locations and demographics. However, as the findings reveal, the major challenge facing advertising agencies is that most clients do not understand their target consumers and which platforms they often use. Most agencies are under pressure to satisfy these clients by choosing particular channels that might not be appropriate for their campaigns. In such a case, ultimately, the campaign will not meet the client's expectations or achieve the campaign objectives, which will lead both parties to blame each other for the campaign's failure.

3.2.7 Brand Strategy

Lastly, participants emphasised the importance of strategy and its major role in social media integration into an IMC program. That is, organisations need to develop a strong brand strategy to improve and succeed in their IMC programs. It is essential for organisations to build and maintain a brand strategy that will identify a clear route to achieving their marketing objectives. An IMC program that has a well-developed brand strategy will ensure message consistency across all channels to easily achieve

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[1] Woolworths is an Australian chain of supermarkets and grocery stores.

brand recognition among consumers. Many participants concurred that a brand strategy is essential for ensuring message consistency across all marketing communication channels and for harnessing the power of the IMC program and increasing its effectiveness. It is crucial for clients to understand that all marketing communications strategies should be consistent and built on the main brand strategy:

So, parts of a brand strategy are your tone of voice, your colours, the mood board of your brand. So, when you create a social media strategy, it really has to be built on this brand strategy that's already existing. I think the most important part of how to have those two strategies – the brand strategy and the social media strategy – for them to be coherent with each other, would be the tone of voice.

Matilda, Digital Media Planner

However, most participants expressed their struggle with clients who do not link their different marketing communications platforms to one brand strategy. Advertising agencies claim that clients often build their social media strategy in isolation of strategies for other media channels, which is a major barrier to successfully integrating social media into an IMC program. Disconnected strategies among marketing communication channels will not enable consumers to understand the campaign's message and achieve brand awareness:

Some business owners do treat each and every single strategy as a separate business, but a strategy should cover all those strategies together and put them under one umbrella because, actually, you can think of the strategy as the best foundation for your social, digital or traditional campaigns.

Aiden, Digital Marketing Consultant

Aiden illustrated the importance of a brand strategy's alignment and consistency with the strategies for all other platforms to achieve the campaign objectives. Clients should look at the strategies for communications channels holistically to improve IMC effectiveness and avoid confusing customers as to the campaign's message.

However, many participants reported that better than having a complete idea, it is optimal for clients to have a complete, clear strategy that articulates the main aspects of the campaign. If the client provides a clear strategy, this can substantially assist the advertising agency by identifying the campaign's target audience, message, budget and objectives. Lara, Social Media Strategist, explained as follows:

I like clients that have a clear strategy for their campaign more than having a complete idea. Coming with a strong strategy will make the job easier and save time by understanding their problems and issues and who exactly [we] will target and these sorts of things.

The data show that in reality, some clients do not have a brand strategy when they meet their advertising agencies. This creates many challenges for the advertising agencies that puts more pressure on them to spend additional effort to create an

appropriate strategy. Developing a social media strategy that aligns with the existing strategy requires advertising agencies to spend more time with clients to assist them with the strategy development process. In addition, this requires the advertising agencies to assign more specialists, such as strategists and creatives, to develop ideas and determine the target audience and develop a well-informed strategy. Ruby, Social Media Planner, explained:

> I mean, there are campaigns that didn't work. Like, the strategy was off or there was no strategy, to be honest. So, we will take the overarching strategy and we'll turn it into a social strategy. So, how does that big brand strategy live out on social media versus how it lives out in radio or digital?

Understanding the main brand strategy is important to develop a social media strategy that is consistent with the other marketing communications strategies to achieve the campaign's objectives and client's expectations.

Another barrier to integrating social media into IMC programs is that clients often allocate more time to the details of a campaign than to developing a strategy, but the latter is more important than any other aspect of a campaign. Of course, generating ideas, planning the campaign and choosing platforms are important in developing a campaign, but devising a strategy is the main aspect that guides a campaign's success. Tyler, Founder/Chief Digital, stated the following:

I feel like it's one thing that brands often forget. You [client] spend so much time in the details, channels, planning and creative that you forget what we are trying achieve here, what's our one goal or one aim or one strategy that, you know, we're trying to achieve here. So, I think it's incredibly important.

Tyler noted the importance of the client organising and prioritising the campaign's tasks by identifying the strategy development at the beginning. The brand strategy is a central part of a campaign and IMC program that will facilitate any sub-strategies for every channel and ensure the coherence of these strategies and the overall strategy.

3.3 Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the interviews based on the advertising agencies in Australia and UAE. The study answered the research questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges that advertising agencies face when integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ2: How do advertising agencies overcome the challenges of integrating social media into IMC programs?

RQ3: What is the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship?

It also provided insightful perspectives on the role of resources in the agency–client relationship. The results show that there are seven challenging factors that affect social media integration into IMC programs: risk acceptance, budget, client expertise,

trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. These challenges can be faced through social or traditional media.

The geographical areas of this thesis are advertising agencies in Australia and UAE. These countries have been selected because they are distinguished cites in the advertising industry. These countries are viewed as marketing hubs and they are similar to each other in terms of advertising systems, social media campaigns development and the professionalism within advertising agencies. Furthermore, they are leader in adopting and embracing new technologies.

One of the major factors that negatively affects the agency–client relationship is that many clients treat their advertising agency as the executor of their advertising campaign, for which the clients provide the resources. This perspective is a source of substantial discouragement for the advertising agency because it conveys that the client does not appreciate the agency's work. Of course, the agency–client relationship is based on a business agreement and resource allocation, but clients should understand that people generally are more motivated if they feel appreciated.

The findings are in line with a recent study which showed that regardless of it being trendy today to refer to the agency–client relationship as a 'partnership', building trust in the relationship will be beneficial in the long term (Chohan, Watson, & Pitt, 2019). A good relationship requires effort from both parties (agency and client) to collaborate that leads to better integration of social media into the IMC program. IMC are based on consistency and synergy, which requires all parties to be integrated and work together, and clients need to work with agencies in a way that ensures the optimal design of the IMC program (Keller, 2016).

It is true that the digital transformation has changed the way organisations embrace new technology to facilitate novel market behaviours, interactions and experiences (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The growth of social media has changed which party (client or agency) has more power in integrating social media into IMC programs. On one hand, clients believe that they have more power because they control the budget. Again, the budget plays an important role in the integration of social media into IMC programs, and most participants indicated that clients often believe that owning the budget accords them the power in the relationship. This belief poses a major challenge in building a good agency–client relationship.

On the other hand, Sasser et al. (2013) stated that although clients have more power than their advertising agencies do, the agencies influence the clients by choosing what is appropriate for entry into advertising. Furthermore, since advertising agencies have more knowledge than their clients, the advertising agencies enjoy 'knowledge asymmetry' and more power, which is a problem for clients (Wang et al., 2013). Perhaps this power debate is due to each organisation's desire to control the network and relationship to achieve its own goals, which ultimately will impact the relationship negatively (Hakansson & Ford, 2002). In this situation, the client and the advertising agency will have turf battles when integrating social media into the IMC program (Kim et al., 2004). Regardless of which side has the most powerful impact in the relationship, both clients and advertising agencies should be more cooperative and supportive of each other to overcome this conflict.

Another obstacle to integrating social media into IMC programs is the nature of the conversation between clients and advertising agencies. Most clients spend more time on points of disagreement than on those on which they agree, which often

negatively escalates the discussion. As some participants recommended, constructive meetings between clients and advertising agencies enable both parties to share their opinions, critiques and evaluations in a productive way to better integrate social media into the IMC program. Such conversations can foster mutual understanding to create a solid framework for the relationship to minimise potential conflicts. According to Bilby, Reid, and Brennan (2016), shared understanding can enhance relationships.

This qualitative study provided deep insights into how the agency–client relationship can be improved. Trust is a major factor in fostering collaboration in the client–agency relationship. Most participants indicated that clients' lack of trust has been a major challenge to building collaborative relationships with them. While trust has a direct impact on social media integration into IMC programs, it can also influence social media integration indirectly through the agency–client relationship. A possible way to build trust and minimise in-fighting is for clients to identify the roles and responsibilities of both sides (agency and client) at an early stage of the relationship (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019).

Most participants indicated that if clients have had negative experiences with previous advertising agencies, they are more sceptical about new relationships with agencies. In turn, this uncertainty about the advertising agency's performance can be a barrier to building trust. This scepticism may be understood because, as is common among professions, most clients have insufficient knowledge of their advertising agency to determine whether it can act professionally on their behalf (West & Ford, 2001). Another possible interpretation is that some clients are concerned about the agency's opportunism that can cause the loss of their allocated budget. While the client–agency relationship is vulnerable to opportunism (Chohan et al., 2019), the fear

of opportunism is an indicator of a lack of trust, which is viewed as a resource deficiency (Vafeas, Hughes, & Hilton, 2016).

Misunderstanding between the client and agency is another challenge in the two parties' ability to build trust. Two-way communication can be expected to involve disagreements on different issues relating to social media integration into the IMC program. However, the two parties should ensure that they understand each other in the early stages of the relationship to avoid damaging trust. As trust is difficult to achieve, both parties should be transparent and clear from the beginning (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019). One possible way to foster trust between clients and advertising agencies is for the clients to provide better briefing and share their ideas with their advertising agencies (Chu et al., 2019). If each party has a clear understanding of the brief content from the beginning, the possibility of effectively integrating social media into the IMC program will improve.

Based on the qualitative study, one of the most important contributions is the agency-client collaboration and its substantial impact on social media integration into IMC programs. Advertising agencies face a major issue with clients who are not willing to collaborate and provide their agencies the required resources to integrate social media into IMC programs. Therefore, the findings that are related to the collaboration between the agency and client when integrating social media into IMC programs contributes to the literature a valuable knowledge that can benefit further research.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of clients and advertising agencies having mutual trust to better integrate social media into IMC programs. While it is a crucial for clients to trust their advertising agencies, some participants stressed that the advertising agency needs to exchange trust with its clients. The client–agency

relationship should be viewed as a strategic partnership; consequently, the agency can smoothly develop the advertising campaign on the client's behalf (Fam & Waller, 2008). However, if the advertising agency lacks the required skills and has poor interactions with the client, it is likely to lose the client's trust (Levin et al., 2016). Unsurprisingly, the results of the current study indicate that building trust between clients and advertising agencies requires considerable time and effort, whereas destroying trust is always an easy task.

The participants indicated that clients need to be open-minded when exploring and sharing ideas with their advertising agencies to carry out integrative work. Brown, Bhadury, Bansal, and Bloxsome (2020) encouraged both advertising agencies and clients to be motivated to obtain creative ideas during the ideation process. However, the present study highlights that advertising agencies face challenges because many clients are unwilling to share their ideas and/or reject the advertising agencies' ideas. Therefore, social media integration into IMC programs often fails.

In a dynamic environment such as what exists today, advertising agencies also face difficulties with clients with respect to exchanging ideas on how to integrate social media into IMC programs. Clients have different degrees of openness on social media integration, and this influences the ideas that advertising agencies propose (Childers et al., 2018). The findings show that clients become more sceptical and hesitant about sharing their ideas with their advertising agencies due to the competitive market and uncertain times. The unprecedented number of media options makes clients unsure about what to share with advertising agencies; however, if clients share information, this will foster trust in the relationship (Heo & Sutherland, 2015). In fact, in uncertain times or when facing competitive challenges, open-minded clients may even seek to

pursue highly creative campaigns (Sasser et al., 2013). The findings show that if clients relay on their advertising agencies during challenging times, the latter can deliver better social media integration into the IMC program.

Some participants expressed anger about clients that neither share their ideas nor accept the advertising agency's ideas. These clients are closed-minded and may or may not have reasonable justifications for rejecting the advertising agency's ideas, but they prefer resisting to understanding the proposed ideas. Even worse, some clients push their own ideas on the advertising agency. A possible interpretation of clients' unwillingness to collaborate with their advertising agencies to explore ideas is that the clients want to show they have more power, since they ultimately do have the power to say 'no' (West, 1999). By contrast, open-minded clients seek reasons to approve an advertisement rather than finding reasons to reject it, and these clients motivate their advertising agencies to do great work (Koslow, 2015). Therefore, advertising agencies often encourage clients to express and share their ideas for integrating social media into IMC programs. In this sense, effective listening skills can produce mutual understanding and minimise or resolve conflicts between advertising agencies and clients.

Open communication can enable clients and their advertising agencies to overcome possible challenges. The findings of the current study suggest that clients can play an important role in generating great ideas on the integration of social media into IMC programs. Clients are the heart of interactions with their advertising agencies; thus, open-mindedness can enhance their willingness to collaborate with their advertising agencies. The client's mindset has a powerful impact and can influence the delivery of better or worse social media integration into the IMC program. Clients

need to have constructive communication and collaborative interaction with their advertising agencies in relation to exploring ideas on how to better integrate social media into the IMC program. This does not mean that both parties have to agree with each idea; rather, clients need to play an important role in encouraging and supporting their advertising agencies to work collaboratively (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019).

The findings of this study also support previous studies on the role of advertising agencies' expertise in developing clients' advertisements (Gambetti et al., 2016; Howe-Walsh et al., 2019; Lynch & West, 2017; Sasser et al., 2013). Today, to design advertisement campaigns, it is crucial to have knowledge and expertise to achieve the campaign objectives. The results of the present study confirm that advertising agencies offer clients a great opportunity for seeking assistance in developing winning ideas (West, 1999).

However, participants expressed frustration with many clients that have basic knowledge of social media platforms as marketing communication channels and view themselves as experts. For example, many clients underestimate how much work is required to integrate social media into an IMC program. If clients have personal social media accounts, this does not make them experts on the advertising development mechanism and process. Such beliefs will cause major conflicts between the client and the advertising agency, as the agency can be unmotivated and uninterested in sharing its best ideas. Of course, the client has a major role in developing the campaign, but the agency still has more knowledge and skills to seamlessly integrate social media into the IMC program.

Notably, the interview analysis highlighted a major contradiction among advertising agencies in terms of professionalism in developing advertisements for

clients. On one hand, some participants indicated that some clients are 'narcissistic', as they have low knowledge and high ambitions. According to these participants, only advertising agencies can produce ideas and develop campaigns, and this is the reason why clients hire them. Of course, this view does not promote healthy communication that can lead to effective social media integration into an IMC program. In fact, Gambetti et al. (2016) pointed out that clients often blame their advertising agencies for their lack of professionalism. They further indicated that creative directors may desire idea experimentation to pursue awards or fame and satisfy their hyper-narcissistic egos. In general, the main advantage that clients have is that they understand their industry more than advertising agencies do. Therefore, ignoring the clients' contributions and views can be a barrier to integrating social media into an IMC program.

On the other hand, other participants disagreed with this one-way communication perspective. They suggested that advertising agencies need to put their ego away and treat clients as partners. Thus, the findings of this study align with a recent study which underlined that if the agency–client relationship is open and honest, the experiences can be shared and issues can be solved (Hughes et al., 2018).

Participants also indicated that clients face difficulties in competing, or even surviving, in the current dynamic environment because they lack adequate experience in terms of their advertising performance. One possible reason for this lack of expertise is that the global competitive market poses challenges for many organisations in terms of sourcing, developing and maintaining the required skills to be effective competitors (Howe-Walsh et al., 2019). It seems that small organisations struggle more than larger

ones due to the former's limited experience in the advertising industry. This experience shortage, then, negatively influences the development and maintenance of talent among their employees.

In addition, the findings highlight that message consistency is important for integrating social media into an IMC program, and clients lack adequate expertise to deliver a consistent message across all media. Today, social media integration into IMC programs is challenging for organisations because of the increasing 'kaleidoscope' of media options (Kitchen, 2016, p. 441). Social media has restructured how organisations reach their customers through a variety of marketing channels (Rapp et al., 2013); however, the current study shows that clients still face a challenge in determining which media choices are most appropriate for their campaigns due to their lack of expertise. This indicates that there are several obstacles to clients delivering a consistent message across all media channels.

Content has an important role in the success of marketing communications (Dwivedi et al., 2020); however, a major challenge in delivering consistent messages through marketing channels is that clients opt for almost identical content for different media channels. Many clients believe that copying images, for instance, from traditional media channels and pasting them into social media platforms is an effective way to reach their customers. Most participants concurred that clients should be educated about the fact that every channel has different content based on several criteria, such as understanding the target audience and the chosen channels, to effectively interact with customers.

Today, social media offers multiple ways for organisations to reach and engage with their customers (Appel et al., 2020). However, the organisations must find the

touchpoints of their customers and recognise their contexts to deliver customers meaning and value (Finne & Grönroos, 2017). Clients seeking a consistent message in their channels need to know where the customers are and how to create persuasive messages to deliver effective social media integration. In terms of the media choice, the current study shows that age plays an important role. For example, in general, younger people are more supportive of new media and underestimate traditional media, and the reverse is true for older people. However, it is important to understand the target audience's needs and their perceptions of the different media options and messaging (Dwivedi et al., 2020).

One of the most important findings in this qualitative study is developing a well-developed strategy to integrate social media into IMC programs. These findings contribute to the literature by providing valuable guidelines regarding the importance of developing a coherent strategy when integrating social media into IMC programs. Clients should not focus on the tactical functions and details of a campaign that can impede the integrative work. The results reveal the importance of integrating social media into IMC programs in a way that fits with the overarching strategy. This finding is in line with the results of Felix et al.'s (2017) study. Clients seeking to adopt advertising channels and deliver consistent messages to effectively reach their target audience need to develop a strategic IMC program. While the clients want to achieve their advertising objectives, the findings show that they lack a strategic perspective on the integration of social media into their IMC program.

The clients believe they have a strong strategy in their brief, but their advertising agencies claim these strategies are weak or even non-existent. Koslow et al. (2006) found that clients can be surprised about the minimum value of their brief to the

advertising agency planning process. This situation requires more effort and time on the part of the advertising agency to work with the client to develop an overall campaign strategy that covers all different kinds of sub-strategies. The results of the current study show that many clients incorporate social media into the IMC program during late stages of the planning process, as they believe that social media does not require additional planning tasks. However, organisations need to have a more strategic approach to consider social media earlier in the process (Valos et al., 2017).

The current study contradicts the finding of a recent study that advertising agencies 'appear too much focused on the eye of the needle, rather than on the whole woven cloth' (Gambetti et al., 2016, p. 99). On the contrary, the results of the current study reveal that clients focus more on the less important details of campaigns, such as content and ideas, and less on other major aspects, such as strategies. Koslow et al. (2006) stated that the strategies in client briefs have a low impact that must be questioned. In the present study, participants indicated that most clients' briefs do not provide sufficient information. For instance, some clients lack clear objectives for their campaigns, which is one of the major issues of the brief quality.

Thus, clients need to develop better quality briefs to enable their advertising agencies to use them as a base that can be improved later with collaboration between the two parties. One possible way to enhance the brief quality is finding powerful consumer insights (Parker, Koslow, Ang, & Tevi, 2020). Consumer insights should provide a clear understanding of the target audience that can assist clients and advertising agencies in developing their advertising campaigns. However, clients need to avoid challenging their advertising agencies in defining and understanding the audience. Instead, clients and advertising agencies can work together to clearly

understand the target audience, which can be a valuable step towards developing a better an overarching strategy for the IMC program.

Another challenge facing advertising agencies is that most clients have relatively higher knowledge of traditional media compared to social media. Thus, they do not know how to develop an appropriate strategy for social media platforms that can be consistent and included in the overall strategy. In this situation, advertising agencies utilise their expertise to work with clients to develop a suitable social media strategy to fit into the IMC strategy. However, advertising agencies face difficulties with clients who do not agree on the proposed strategies due to the clients' lack of strategic knowledge particularly of social media. While advertising agencies have a significant role in marketing strategy development that must be considered (Keegan, Rowley, & Tonge, 2017), they are anchored by the guidelines of their clients, who are responsible for IMC development decisions (Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2020). Open-minded clients need to foster strategic relationships with their advertising agencies to develop strong strategies for integrating social media into their IMC programs.

The findings of the current study also underline that understanding the target audience has become more important for integrating social media into IMC programs. This is in line with the finding of a previous study that clients need to understand their target audience on each platform (Killian & McManus, 2015). Today, the way organisations communicate and reach consumers has dramatically changed due to the proliferation of new technologies (Lee & Cho, 2020). However, the current study reveals that understanding the target audience presents a major challenge for clients and their advertising agencies.

The findings show that clients often struggle to identify and understand their target audience effectively. This result is in line with a recent study indicating that advertisers face difficulties in segmenting their target audience in a reliable, timely and cost-effective approach (Orazi & Nyilasy, 2019). Although different approaches are required to understand the target audience on social media versus traditional media, the main issue is evidently that clients still treat social media like traditional media. One explanation for this issue may be the clients' lack of knowledge and experience relating to targeting an audience in the social media context. Understanding the target audience and the ease of communicating with them are positively correlated; in other words, the better an organisation knows its audience, the easier it is to interact with them (Waller, 2020).

Participants divulged that some clients, mostly those of an older age, believe traditional media, such as television, is an optimal channel to deliver their message. These clients disregard the potential audience on social media platforms, and this creates a conflict between the client and the advertising agency in determining the media to be used to better reach the target audience. While it is true that traditional media is still important for reaching consumers (Kumar et al., 2016), clients should understand that social media has been increasingly enabling the customer–brand interaction and most of Generation Y's interactions happen on social media (Bento, Martinez, & Martinez, 2018). Therefore, whether clients prefer social media or traditional media, they should initially identify which channels their target audience uses most as a main criterion in choosing their advertising media.

Another issue in relation to understanding the target audience is that clients often choose particular social media platforms solely on the basis of statistical

numbers of the platforms' total users. For example, when clients plan to advertise in a foreigner country, they rely mainly on the social media platforms that have the highest number of users, regardless of whether their target audience uses these platforms. Here, it becomes clear that understanding the target audience in the social media environment is presents a significant challenge (Choi & Bazarova, 2015). The participants in the current study expressed their annoyance with clients that concentrate only on these statistics without conducting adequate consumer research to understand and verify which platforms the majority of their target consumers use. If the platform does not have a sufficient number of the right consumers, this diminishes the campaign reach (Sylvester & Spaeth, 2019).

While advertising agencies use social media as a tool for understanding consumers and obtaining insights (Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr, 2014), the current study reveals that clients do not utilise social media for understanding their consumers. The growth of social media has developed marketing, and understanding consumers has become increasingly important (Luo, Pan, Wang, & Huang, 2019), for example, in determining the choice of social media platforms on which to advertise. Although social media usage behaviour has been developing rapidly (Bolton et al., 2013), a possible way to understand consumers on social media is by collecting and analysing the user information that is shared on public profiles (Waller, 2020). The current study shows that advertising agencies struggle with their clients over exploiting the benefits of social media as an advertising tool to reach the target audience, which negatively impacts the social media integration into IMC programs.

The findings support literature illustrating how advertising budgets have changed due to the growth of social media (Childers et al., 2019; Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014;

Ma & Du, 2018). Today, the dynamic digital market causes clients to seek the assistance of an advertising agency to facilitate budget allocation (Paulson, Luo, & James, 2018). From the participants' perspective, the advertising budget is important for enabling them to meet the client's expectations. For instance, a client should allocate a suitable budget for the media and production processes because they require greater expenditure (Koslow et al., 2006). Joseph and Richardson (2002) clarified that the marketing literature has recognised that many organisations overspend on advertising. However, the current study shows that organisations allocating smaller budgets to advertising, which highlights a major conflict between clients and their advertising agencies in relation to budget allocation.

On one hand, the advertising agencies believe that allocating a larger budget leads to a higher level of social media integration into the IMC program. On the other hand, the clients are unwilling to allocate the budget that their advertising agencies require and, instead, they limit the budget for social media compared that for traditional media. One possible explanation for this contradiction is that since social media is cost effective for organisations to utilise (Henninger et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2016), clients focus on the low-cost advantage and oversimplify the required budget. Therefore, the clients' resistance to meeting their advertising agencies' budgetary requirement for social media can lead to less social media integration into the IMC program.

The findings of the present study reveal that advertising agencies face challenges with clients who require a high level of social media integration in the IMC program but on a low budget. It can be understood that clients have high expectations or ambitions for their campaigns; however, unless the clients provide an adequate budget to develop these campaigns, they may not be satisfied with the outcomes. This

finding is in line with a recent study showing that some clients request award-wining campaigns, but they are unwilling to allocate a budget that can produce their desired work (Roca et al., 2017).

The analysis of the interviews revealed several reasons why clients resist allocating a sufficient budget to integrate social media into the IMC program. First, they do not clearly understand the actual work or process of developing social media campaigns. In other words, as participants expressed, clients' underestimation of social media costs leads these clients to reject allocating the required budget. While it is true that social media does not require a huge budget, the budgetary decision depends on the organisation's characteristics and resources, such as human resources, media choice and target audience preferences, to make the optimal investment decision (Silva, Duarte, & Almeida, 2020). Managers should understand that social media platforms can assist them with their strategic communications plan (Killian & McManus, 2015).

Second, some clients seek out different advertising agencies to handle different platforms. According to Gordon et al. (2020), the typical approach for advertisers is to hire independent agencies for each medium, which requires a larger advertising budget. Instead of contracting multiple advertising agencies to integrate social media into an IMC program, clients can minimise their budget by having one professional advertising agency do the work. This can also ensure the coherent and consistent development of social media integration into the IMC program.

Third, many organisations have been struggling to remain profitable in today's highly dynamic market; therefore, their budgets may decrease. As a result, they become more concerned about how advertising agencies spend their money (Chohan

et al., 2019). The findings of the current study show that when clients face financial difficulties, the advertising budget becomes their scapegoat. Participants communicated their frustration about dealing with many clients that view the advertising budget as an unnecessary expenditure that becomes the first cost savings reduction they make. This finding supports previous research which indicated that in an unstable economic environment, most organisations allocate smaller budgets (Dowling, 1994; Peers et al., 2017) and reallocate their marketing budget (Childers et al., 2018). It seems that in the current economic environment, clients have become more conservative regarding budget allocation. However, increasing the advertising budget during these times can present an opportunity for organisations to achieve their campaign objectives. As some participants stated, in a stable economy with social media growth, it is more difficult to break through the media clutter and noise, which requires a larger budget. Thus, when the economy declines and most organisations are reducing, or even pausing, their advertisements, this is an ideal time to invest in advertising.

Furthermore, the findings show that advertising agencies struggle with clients that do not want to risks when integrating social media into their IMC program. Therefore, the question 'Why are clients "risk averse" as they avoid taking chances when times are good and should "breakthrough" advertising air during good and bad times?' (Sasser et al., 2013, p. 1) has yet to be fully answered.

My findings provide deep insights into the reasons why clients are risk-averse. Advertising agencies continue to complain about the climate of caution in which their clients embedded, accusing them of being risk-averse (Vafeas et al., 2016). Participants in the current study stated that many clients reject risky advertising

campaigns because they know little about their advertising agencies. In other words, when a client is relatively new to an advertising agency, the client is unaware of the agency's ability to develop its campaign and is, therefore, cautious about taking risks. However, if clients have difficulties in verifying advertising agencies' activities and actions, it does not mean the agencies are uncontrollable (West, 2012).

It seems that being careful and hesitant are common behaviours among clients, particularly when the agency–client relationship is in the early stages. The results indicate that clients are not risk tolerant because they often do not trust the advertising agency to deliver a campaign that meets their expectations. According to Lynch and West (2017), at the beginning of the agency–client relationship, clients tend to be more unwilling to take risks. However, the authors further stated that when the relationship is established and the client feels comfortable with the new advertising agency, they are more willing to accept risks. Therefore, it is important for advertising agencies to effectively establish collaborative relationships with their clients to overcome the risk acceptance barrier owing to clients' lack of knowledge of the advertising agency.

Advertising agencies also struggle with risk-averse clients due to the latter's narrow-minded thinking. These clients do not think outside the box; therefore, they are unwilling to accept higher risks associated with integrating social media into the IMC program. It is possible that clients are unwilling to accept new ideas and take risks because they believe that advertising is just sales promotion (Bilby et al., 2016). A closed-minded client is a major obstacle for an advertising agency to explore ideas. Instead of seeking reasons to reject an advertisement, open-minded clients seek reasons to approve a campaign that is challenging to them (Koslow, 2015). In general,

risk is perceived as a bad choice, but it is a path to a breakthrough rather than an obstacle to exploring new ideas (West, 1999).

However, the findings show that once clients understand the proposed advertising ideas, they are willing to accept them even if they are associated with higher risks. Clients seeking an advertising agency to integrate social media into their IMC program want to obtain fresh ideas; however, they need to internally feel that these ideas are unique to take the associated risks. According to Levin et al. (2016), while some clients seek conservative solutions to their issues, others seek innovation and accept risks.

Participants stated that clients also refuse to take more risks when integrating social media into IMC due to the limited advertising budget. Based on the findings, the issue with the advertising budget is that clients do not understand the effective ways of allocating the budget and, therefore, they do not accept risks. Clients often want the advertising agency to facilitate the advertising budget allocation, especially in light of the new media proliferation (Paulson et al., 2018). However, if clients are conservative with their budgets, they often reject risks associated with advertisements. In line with my findings, Roca et al. (2017) stated that advertising agencies complain about clients' reluctance to take risks. They further explained this behaviour as a consequence of the organisation's small budget for marketing. From a business perspective, it is understandable that the budget is central to a business and clients are more risk-averse in a dynamic market; however, the clients' understanding of risks associated with advertisements can lead to a higher ROI.

Sasser et al. (2013) stated that clients that rely more on digital media for advertising are more open to risky campaigns. Therefore, I expected clients that

develop social media campaigns to be more willing to take risks, but surprisingly, the data reveal that these clients have the same risk acceptance perspective as clients that develop traditional media. It seems that regardless of the media selection, clients have a similar view regarding taking risks with their advertisements. Given the social media revolution, most participants agreed that it is important for clients to fully understand the value of taking risks to facilitate the integration of social media into the IMC program. According to Childers et al. (2018), even when clients are open to digital media, there is a constant need to educate them on the digital opportunities and assist them in being more tolerant of risks.

Based on my findings, many clients may accept risks only if their advertising agency assures them that the work will be successful. However, this assurance is impossible to give, especially in a dynamic and competitive market environment, and risk is associated with outcome uncertainty (West, 2012). It is difficult for clients, particularly large organisations, to allow their advertising agency to develop risky ideas unless there is a guarantee (West, 1999). My results reveal that advertising agencies cannot give their clients a full guarantee on the outcomes of the work, and that is why some clients reject risks. However, clients should realise that unwarranted risk takers who disregard their clients' interests can negatively impact their reputation and face difficulties in finding new clients (West & Ford, 2001). Perhaps this outcome is the main reason why advertising agencies do not guarantee the success of their work to clients.

3.3.1 The Proposed Conceptual Model

This thesis investigates how advertising agencies in Australia and UAE integrate social media into IMC programs. It examines the challenges associated with

the integration process and approaches to overcome these challenges. Specifically, it examines the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. Based on the qualitative findings, Figure 3.1 shows that there are seven challenging factors that affect social media integration into IMC programs: risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy.

Figure 3.1: The Proposed Conceptual Model

Chapter 4: Quantitative Study

This research examines how advertising agencies incorporate social media into IMC programs, the challenges of doing so and approaches to overcome these challenges. In addition, it investigates the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. The current chapter discusses the second study of my thesis: the quantitative study. It compromises four main parts. First, it discusses the hypothesis development and the initial conceptual model. Second, the method part discusses the research procedure, sampling technique and questionnaire instrument. Third, it provides the study results including the analysis strategy, sample characteristics, factor analysis, scale reliability, final empirical model and hypothesis test results. The fourth and final section discusses the study findings.

4.1 Hypothesis Development and the Initial Conceptual Model

4.1.1 Hypothesis Development

4.1.1 Client Expertise

Today, the rise of social media has changed IMC programs (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), and integrating social media as a marketing tool remains a challenging task for organisations (Cluley et al., 2020). Social media has created considerable pressure and tension in advertising agencies' role in relation to their clients (von Platen, 2016). Advertising agencies are specialists in advertising and have more skills and expertise than their clients to develop social media marketing and integrate it into an IMC program.

Advertising agencies recognise the digital marketing; therefore, they have developed new approaches to attract more clients (Windels & Stuhlfaut, 2018). It is often that expert clients are in large organisations that have a sophisticated marketing department along with resources to develop their global marketing strategy (Díaz-Méndez & Saren, 2019). So, these clients provide a brief to the advertising agency to offer a limited assistance to their defined strategy. However, most organisation lack of the required knowledge to develop social media campaigns and integrate them into IMC programs.

The results of the qualitative study reveal that clients believe they have more social media expertise than advertising agencies do, and this tendency can be a major barrier to integrating social media into IMC programs. The client expertise, as a resource, should be shared with their advertising agencies in a way that improve the integration. If clients choose to rely on their own expertise over that of advertising agencies, this can negatively influence the social media integration into the IMC program. Thus, I propose the first hypothesis:

H1: *The client's expertise has a negative effect on integrating social media into IMC programs.*

4.1.2 Trust

Many organisations have downsized their marketing departments. Consequently, clients no longer have the time and expertise to observe each decision that their advertising agency makes; instead, they choose an agency they can trust (Davies & Prince, 2005). Today, the dramatic transformation in the marketing landscape caused by the advent of new technology (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019) has

a substantial impact on marketing (Smallwood, 2016). Advertising agencies and their clients recognise the importance and necessity of trust and collaboration (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019). Advertising agencies need to have first-mover advantage with the new technology to earn clients' trust (Chohan et al., 2019). Yet, client trust their advertising agencies when agencies are viewed as experts; therefore, it leads to a better work (Calderwood, Koslow, & Sasser, 2021).

Although trust can affect the resource sharing (Jiang, Jiang, Cai, & Liu, 2015), trust has not been discussed in the literature in relation to the integration of social media into IMC programs in the advertising agency context. The results of the qualitative study show that trust between advertising agencies and clients is a major factor in carrying out integrative work. In this regard, it can be hypothesised that trust has a positive relationship with social media integration into IMC programs. Therefore, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: *Trust between the agency and client has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.*

4.1.3 Target Audience

Although the new media have created more challenges for the existing IMC (Schultz et al., 2013), when developing IMC programs, it is becoming crucial for organisations to define their target audience (Micu et al., 2017). According to Dewhirst and Davis (2005), 'As marketing communications campaigns span more media, a clear definition and understanding of the target consumer becomes a critical integrating force' (p. 86). Social media platforms have become powerful marketing communications channels because of their interactive nature (Park et al., 2018) and

capability of reaching and connecting with customers (Peng, Agarwal, Hosanagar, & Iyengar, 2018). Based on the IMC development within advertising agencies, innovative distribution approaches can lead to integration of new targeting opportunities (Childers et al., 2019).

Sasser (2008) cautioned that assuming the target audience will behave in a similar way is a 'fatal trap and a slippery slope'. While this statement is true, many clients still believe that the target audiences on traditional and social media behave similarly. Many organisations have a limited understanding of IMC, such as the disconnection between reaching the target audience and understanding their actual needs (Henninger et al., 2017). T

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how communications work from the consumers' perspective to develop an IMC program (Batra & Keller, 2016) that includes social media platforms. Also, clients need to provide the required resources to their advertising agencies to better define the target audience. Based on the qualitative study, understanding the target audience by the clients appears to be an important component when integrating social media into an IMC program. Thus, I present the third hypothesis:

H3: *Understanding the target audience by the client has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.*

4.1.4 Risk Acceptance

For many years, studies have shown that taking risks is a common practice in the marketing field (West, Sargeant, & Miciak, 1999). Yet advertising agencies struggle with clients that are risk-averse (Vafeas et al., 2016), especially at the

beginning of the relationship (Lynch & West, 2017). A possible reason for this resistance to taking risks is that clients do not have enough knowledge of the advertising agency, as they have not previously worked together.

It is a common belief that there is a positive correlation between risk and return (El-Murad & West, 2003). Based on the risk–return trade-off principal, when clients accept higher risk, they, in turn, expect potential ROI. It has been shown that taking risks is considered an important element of creating a good work in advertising (El-Murad & West, 2003). If the client provides the required resources and accepts more risks, we argue that it will improve the social media integration into the IMC program.

Based on the qualitative study, risk acceptance is an important element of social media integration into IMC programs. In other words, when clients accept more risks, it can enhance the integration of social media into their IMC programs. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H4: *The client's risk acceptance level has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.*

4.1.5 Budget

Digital marketing expenses surpass some other traditional media expenses (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016). Organisations face considerable challenges in deciding which online platforms are suitable for their campaigns, and they turn to advertising agencies to allocate their advertising budget (Paulson et al., 2018). Organisations do this because they often do not have sufficient knowledge of how to allocate their advertising budget, particularly when they want to use social media platforms.

The current management view regarding the importance of allocating the advertising budget can present a challenge in itself regarding the integration of social media into an IMC program. For example, Peers et al. (2017) stated that most organisations allocate a smaller budget during economic contractions, called 'procyclical spending,' when they should spend more during contractions, called 'countercyclical spending.' Whereas Koslow et al. (2006) found that budgets do not have a substantial impact on creativity, Childers et al. (2018) argued that the budget can limit an advertising agency's ability to produce the expected content for digital platforms. Based on RBV, we assume that if the client provides an adequate budget, as a resource, to their advertising agencies, it leads to a higher social media integration into the IMC program.

However, the literature has not examined the relationship between budget and social media integration into IMC programs. The findings of the qualitative study show that allocating a sufficient budget can improve the social media integration into the IMC program. Thus, it can be hypothesised that the budget can positively impact the integration of social media into an IMC program. I propose the fifth hypothesis:

H5: *Budget has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.*

4.1.2 The Initial Conceptual Model

The initial conceptual model (Figure 4.1) shows the relationships and interactions between the dependent variable and independent variables. All variables have been included in the initial conceptual model except for two variables: agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. The reason for the exclusion of these variables is because they did not load together and they merged with other variables. This factor

analysis issue is mainly because of the small sample size, which is due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts and restrictions. This will be discussed further in the factor analysis section (Section 4.2.3).

Figure 4.1: The Initial Empirical Model
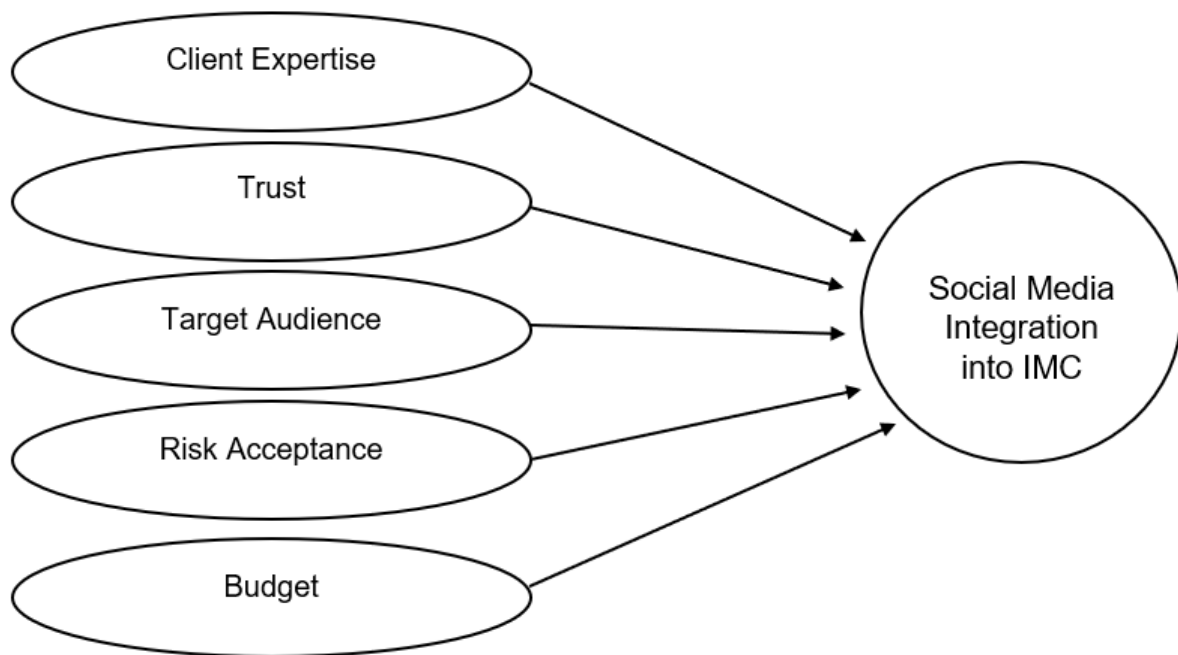
4.2 Method

4.2.1 Research Procedure

The quantitative study was conducted after I finished the qualitative study, as quantitative research should not begin before the researcher clearly defines the research problem (d'Alessandro et al., 2020). In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative research offers a way of explaining specific phenomena by collecting numerical data and analysing these data using mathematical and statistical techniques (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, the research instrument for the quantitative study was a

questionnaire which was distributed to participants in the selected advertising agencies in Australia and the UAE. The objective was to statistically analyse the data that gathered from participants. This study was aimed at understanding the significance of each variable and construct and how they relate to and impact each other. Ultimately, it was intended to test the research hypotheses and answer the research questions.

The designed questionnaire was distributed to 150 advertising campaign specialists in Australian and UAE advertising agencies, and 53 advertising campaign specialists completed the questionnaire due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. From these questionnaires, 159 observations were obtained (53 participants × 3 campaigns) to measure the importance and understanding of relationships between the variables and constructs. More details will be provided in the next sections of this chapter.

4.2.2 Sampling

This study tested the results of the preliminary study by collecting 159 observations from advertising campaign specialists in Australian and UAE advertising agencies. The aim was to provide quantitative evidence of each variable's significance, which relates to and influences the integration of social media into IMC programs. The questionnaire was distributed to advertising campaign specialists who develop social and traditional media campaigns and integrate them into IMC in Australian and UAE advertising agencies. The reasons for selecting these media advertising specialists were described in Chapter 1.

To recruit the participants, I followed a communications procedure for increasing the probability of participation by enabling participants to complete the questionnaire at a time and location of their convenience (King et al., 2018). Searching and exploring professional journals and directories enabled me to compile a list of advertising agencies. On this list, I included adequate information for each advertising agency, such as the participants that met the questionnaire completion requirements, and their contacts details. I initially contacted each advertising agency via email and explained the nature of the study and its objectives and attached the Participant Information and Consent Form (see Appendix E). In this email, I politely requested a meeting or the option of corresponding via their professional email address. If I did not receive a response, I made a phone call to the specialist.

It is important to consider errors in the questions and design of a questionnaire to ensure the quality of the data (Kapousouz, Johnson, & Holbrook, 2020). Although the face-to-face questionnaire method involves higher logistical costs and greater time investment (Williams & Brick, 2017), this method was an appropriate data collection approach for many reasons. For example, due to the length of the questionnaire, it was not practical to deliver it via a link or a phone call. In addition, although the questions were reviewed and revised to ensure their clarity to participants, participants could need clarification to adequately understand the items and provide complete answers.

Moreover, online questionnaires are increasingly being completed on mobile devices instead of computers, and the technical attributes and response context can impact the data (Skeie, Lindhjem, Skjeflo, & Navrud, 2019). As a researcher, handling participation in web questionnaires on mobile devices is a pressing issue, and there

are three choices: disallow it, allow but discourage it or allow it (Peterson, Griffin, LaFrance, & Li, 2017). The questionnaire adopted a 7-point Likert scale from −3 to +3, but it was not practically compatible with mobile devices, as respondents needed to scroll to the right to continue reading items on the screen. While disallowing mobile participation would definitely exclude a substantial portion of participants and result in coverage error, allowing but discouraging it could increase the response rate and coverage (Peterson et al., 2017). Therefore, at the beginning of the questionnaire, I included the following notice: 'Kindly note, it will be more convenient for you to complete the questionnaire on a computer or a tablet.' However, the response rate for online questionnaires is not as effective as the face-to-face method. All the interviews have been done through face-to-face interview.

4.2.3 Questionnaire

4.1.3.1 Scale Development

Due to the lack of existing scales that were suitable for my research objectives (Streiner, Norman, & Cairney, 2015), Professor Scott Koslow and I developed the items of the questionnaire on the basis of concepts that emerged from the interviews with advertising specialists in the qualitative study (see Appendix F). Each of these concepts has been discussed and developed the specific items for each concept. The concepts and their items have been deeply discussed to effectively develop the questionnaire. Also, these items have been reviewed by academics and practitioners specialising in the advertising field as a pre-test to increase reliability and consistency of the questionnaire. Table 4.1 provides more details on all the items that measure each construct:

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Items

Statement / Item	Most recent	Second most recent	Third most recent
Integration:			
The social media campaign was well integrated into the overall campaign.			
The way that social media was integrated with traditional advertising was a good example of integrated marketing communications (IMC).			
The social media campaign was designed to speak with the same "voice" as the other channel(s) used.			
The social media element of the campaign was "seamless" with other advertising channels in how it communicated the brand message.			
The media channels were linked to achieving the campaign objectives.			
Agency-Client Relationship:			
The agency–client relationship facilitated good work.			
The client treated the agency as a vendor or an executor who should just do as the client instructs.			
The agency worked with the client as part of the team.			
The agency and the client shared a good working relationship.			
Trust:			
The client did not trust what the agency was proposing.			
There was mutual trust between the agency and the client.			
The client trusted the agency.			
The client had confidence in the agency's capability.			
Risk:			
The client was willing to accept risky work.			
The client was risk averse.			
The client wanted less risky work.			
We faced difficulties with the client's unwillingness to accept the campaign's risks.			

Openness:			
The client was open-minded.			
The client let us try out new ideas for the campaign.			
The client was supportive of us seeking out the best work.			
Expertise:			
The client believed that they had more expertise in social media than the agency.			
The client lacked social media expertise.			
The client did not understand social media.			
The client's expertise in social media facilitated good work.			
Target audience:			
We identified the target audience.			
We understood how the target market thinks.			
The target audience was unclear.			
We knew the target audience well.			
Budget:			
The agency faced difficulties with the client in allocating enough social media budget compared to traditional media.			
The client understood just how large the social media investment needed to be.			
To do everything needed for the social media campaign, we would have run over budget.			
The client underestimated the advertising costs of social media compared to traditional media.			
Brand Strategy:			
The client developed a strong strategy.			
The client lacked a single strategy that covered all marketing communications channels.			
The client focused more on the campaign details than on developing a strategy.			
The client had a good strategy guiding the execution in all media.			

Consistency			
The client wanted the social media campaign to look like a cut-and-paste job of the traditional media content.			
There was tactical consistency across all media channels, but not necessarily strategic consistency.			
The client wanted to deliver almost identical content across all media channels.			
The client sought an IMC campaign that delivered consistent content across all media.			
The social media campaign was inconsistent with the traditional media campaign.			

4.1.3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire began with a brief description of the study and the purpose of conducting the research: 'Thank you for your help with this study on the role of social media in integrated marketing communications (IMC), to meet the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in marketing in the Department of Marketing, Macquarie Business School, Macquarie University, Australia.' Then the questionnaire consisted of three sections: (1) overall questions about campaigns, (2) constructs and (3) demographic characteristics.

In section one, participants were first asked to list the names or categories of the three most recent campaigns they had worked on that integrated social media into the IMC program. The purpose of this question was to help participants remember what campaign they would be referencing while completing the questionnaire. Although I ensured participants that their answer to this question was confidential and optional, it helped them recall their three listed campaigns while completing the questionnaire. Participants wrote names or categories to represent these campaigns, as I did not need the actual names of these campaigns. The following question asked participants to indicate the social media platform(s) used along with traditional media

for each of these campaigns. Although I provided five social media platforms to choose from, the 'other' option allowed participants to list other platforms that were not mentioned.

I used a Likert scale (Likert, 1932), as this is the most appropriate psychometric tool for collecting responses from participants according to their level of agreement with each question (Kandasamy, Kandasamy, Obbineni, & Smarandache, 2020). For decades, Likert scales have been widely adopted in the social sciences (Matell & Jacoby, 1971), and they are an extremely common tool for marketing researchers to measure attitudes, as they are easy to administer (d'Alessandro et al., 2020). For example, participants were asked about the overall social media integration in each campaign. Based on the integration question, participants were then asked the following: 'In each of these three campaigns, how successfully were the social media elements integrated in the overall campaign?' In each campaign, the responses were based on a 7-point scale (−3 = very unsuccessfully integrated, −2 = unsuccessfully integrated, −1 = somewhat unsuccessfully integrated, 0 = neutral, +1 = somewhat successfully integrated, +2 = successfully integrated, +3 = very successfully integrated).

The last question of section one covered several aspects relating to the advertising agencies and the clients of each of the three listed campaigns. This provided me with brief descriptions of the advertising agency, the client and the campaign itself. For example, participants were asked two binary-response (yes/no) questions to know whether or not the client used each campaign and whether or not the campaign was the agency's first choice for the work.

The second section of the questionnaire was intended mainly to measure the constructs that participants were asked about, and their responses were based on a 7-point scale (−3 = strongly disagree, −2 = disagree, −1 = somewhat disagree, 0 = neither, +1 = somewhat agree, +2 = agree, +3 = strongly agree). To explain the answering process to participants, clear guidelines were provided before they began answering the questions: 'In each of the three campaigns that you listed on the previous page, please use the scale below to express the extent to which you agree with the statement in the two tables (see Table 4.2). Please write the appropriate number in the box to the right of each statement or phrase completing the statement.' Following this note, the scale table was provided:

Table 4.2 Scale Table

If your answer is …	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Please put this number in the box:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3

All items were randomised, and the participant was unable to recognise their dimensionality to avoid order effects (Franklin, Folke, & Ruggeri, 2019) and reduce the possibility of systematic bias (Wilt & Revelle, 2015).

The last section of the questionnaire concerned demographic characteristics. This section was presented last to make the responses easier for participants, as they had already answered many questions in the two main sections. These questions concerned years of experience, position title, department, education level, gender and age.

4.1.3.3 Questionnaire Translation

Since there are two different languages spoken in the chosen countries (English and Arabic), it was important that the translation of the questionnaire matched the original language. Thus, back translation was applied to ensure vocabulary equivalence (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The questionnaire was translated into Arabic by a bilingual academic lecturer. Then an English teacher translated the Arabic version back to English. Based on the back-translation outcomes, seven items in the second part of the questionnaire revealed minor differences in meaning compared to the original English version. Accordingly, I reviewed and revised these items to match the meaning and measure their constructs. Although the official language spoken in the UAE is Arabic, English is widely spoken particularly in the business sector, such as in advertising agencies. Most advertising professionals in the UAE speak English fluently.

4.1.3.4 Pre-test

The questionnaire was reviewed by academics and practitioners specialising in the advertising field. This review is an important task to obtain feedback on the questions before the questionnaire is distributed to the sample. They were seven advertising academics and six practitioners in advertising. This step helped me in different ways, such as by improving the clarity and content validity of the questionnaire (Wallach et al., 2018) and identifying ambiguous questions or questions that may lead to biased responses.

The academics and practitioners provided feedback and comments on several parts of the questionnaire. For example, some of the constructs required more or fewer

items to better measure the construct. Some items required rewording and/or revising to make them clearer and easy for participants to respond to. In addition, the questions needed to be re-ordered to increase consistency among the items to prevent participants from withdrawing before completing the questionnaire.

A scale is valid if it measures what it is intended to measure in the research (Svensson, 2014) and verifies the accuracy of the responses (Louangrath & Sutanapong, 2018). It is assumed that the questionnaire respondents pay adequate attention to each item to make their responses meaningful and provide a valid measurement of the constructs (Kung, Kwok, & Brown, 2018). Therefore, the questionnaire has been revised several times based on the academics and practitioners' feedback to ensure the scale validity. Based on the face-to-face method with the participants to complete the questionnaire, the respondents were responding to each item accurately.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Analysis Strategy

I anticipated conducting several analyses as part of the current research. These analyses would focus on the main constructs of the thesis – the predictors of social media integration – as the main focus of the thesis is what leads to a higher level of social media integration into IMC programs. However, I encountered a challenge during the data collection phase due to the difficulty reaching a remarkably busy business sector under the conditions of COVID-19. My plan is to continue the data collection process, which will be important for journal publications. However, for the thesis, I have elected to model the collected data as of March 2020. Then, once more

data are available, I will update the results for journal publications. My focus will be on predicting the social media integration. In addition, due to data limitations, I have elected not to estimate models of creativity for this thesis. However, I eagerly await additional data to gain a clear understanding of these models. Creativity is not the focus of the thesis, but I plan to collect additional data outside of the thesis boundaries and then analyse creativity in a separate publication.

4.3.2 Sample Characteristics

As mentioned earlier, I had originally planned to use a face-to-face questionnaire as the study approach to gain insights from advertising campaign specialists in Australian and UAE advertising agencies. I gathered 120 observations (40 questionnaires × 3 advertising campaigns) from advertising agencies in the UAE and 39 observations (13 questionnaires × 3 advertising campaigns) from advertising agencies in Australia. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused major interruptions to the data collection, particularly in Australia. Macquarie University paused all face-to-face data collection until further notice. I sent 109 email requests to advertising agencies and attached the questionnaire; however, the majority of recipients did not respond to the email and a few apologised for not participating in the study.

The participant demographics are listed in Table 4.3. The participants were selected for their potential to assist me in addressing the research questions. That is, all participants had developed social media campaigns and integrated them into IMC programs for their clients. The participants' positions ranged from top management to more operationally oriented personnel. This variety in experience enabled me to tackle the research issue from different perspectives based on participants' job responsibilities and titles. Approximately 60% of participants were male and 40% are

female. The majority of participants were 25–44 years old (77%), and they had, on average, 10 years of experience.

Most participants were well educated, with approximately 60% holding an undergraduate degree and 26% a postgraduate degree as their highest level of education. The area of advertising in which each participant was working was an important factor in obtaining different insights and responses. For example, approximately 36% of participants were specialists in marketing communications and 20% social media management. Participants from these departments were very close to the research topic of social media integration into IMC programs.

Table 4.3: Sample Demographics

Demographic Variables	Levels	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	32	60.4
	Female	21	39.6
Age	18–24	2	3.8
	25–34	18	34
	35–44	23	43.3
	45–54	9	17
	55–64	1	1.9
	65+	0	0
Highest level of education	High School	0	0
	TAFE / Diploma	2	13.2
	Undergraduate Degree	32	60.4
	Postgraduate Degree	14	26.4
Rank	CEO	4	7.5
	Director	14	26.4
	Manager	17	32.2
	Specialist	14	26.4
	Strategist	4	7.5
Area of current position	Marketing Communications	19	35.8
	Social Media Management	11	20.7
	Media/Planning Research	6	11.3
	Social Media Strategy	5	9.5
	Social Media Planning	1	1.9
	Creative	7	13.2
	Others	4	7.6
Country	Australia	13	25
	UAE	40	75

4.3.3 Factor Analysis

For this quantitative study, I designed a questionnaire consisting of several new

scales based on the insights yielded in the first qualitative research phase. According

to Foley, Kuhn, and Harris (2017), factor analysis is 'a data-reduction technique that allows a large set of attributes to be reduced into groups or "factors" of items that covary' (p. 12). A factor analysis is simply a way to reproduce the sample correlation matrix as closely as possible, and a large sample size is recommended for new scales (Schreiber, 2020) because the sample affects the precision and replicability of the results (Kyriazos, 2018). Comrey and Lee (2013) stated that the sample size has a great impact on the factor analysis results, and as the number of observations increases, the reliability of the obtained correlations will also increase. While some researchers have recommended 400 observations to ensure reliable factor patterns and precisely estimated factor scores (Goretzko, Pham, & Bühner, 2019), Comrey and Lee (2013) proposed that 200 observations would constitute an adequate sample size. As mentioned earlier, the current study had 53 participants (159 observations), which were inadequate for loading all factors cleanly.

The data of this study were analysed by SPSS software, version 25. Prior to processing the data and testing the hypotheses, all constructs were validated by the factor analysis technique as a data reduction method. The aim of this step was to check if the questionnaire items loaded or hung together to investigate the relationships between items and create a set of constructs.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted with an orthogonal rotation (VARIMAX). Specifically, I used Stepwise regression to identify a useful subset of the predictors among the variables and remove any variables that are not important. Also, it examines the significance of the input parameters (Reza et al., 2021). Stepwise regression is common data-mining tool that uses statistical significance to choose the explanatory variables to include in a regression model

(Smith, 2018). Stepwise assisted me to find which of the independent variables have a significant impact on the dependent variable, social media integration into IMC program. Based on the Stepwise regression method, when running the multiple regression, the weakest correlated variables were removed. A test is made when a new variable is added to see if other variables need to be deleted and repeat the test. After conducted a series of automated steps and running the factor analysis, six constructs yielded factors with clean loadings (see Table 4.4) – namely, integration (dependent variable) and risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust and target audience (independent variables). Two constructs, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy, were removed as they were unanticipated loadings scattered across different factors; therefore, they did not fit in the initial conceptual model.

Although the qualitative interviews revealed rich data and insightful thoughts from the advertising specialists that were useful for designing the questionnaire, it was not possible to load all constructs. Due to the number of observations that did not satisfy the initial plan, tow constructs appeared to have issues with their factor scales that did not work. These constructs were agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. Therefore, these constructs did not load together cleanly because the items were scattered across different factors. The main reason for some variables failing to load together is that an insufficient number of observations were collected from advertising specialists. That is, the observation to parameter ratio was well below the goal of 10 to 1. Thus, I could not deal with these two variables in the empirical model. However, as stated earlier, the data collection will continue after the thesis submission, and I anticipate that they will perform better once additional data can be collected.

Table 4.4: Factor Loadings

Construct	Factor Loadings
Integration	
The social media campaign was well integrated into the overall campaign.	.825
The way that social media was integrated with traditional advertising was a good example of integrated marketing communications (IMC).	.813
The social media element of the campaign was seamless with other advertising channels in how it communicated the brand message.	.812
The media channels were linked to achieving the campaign objectives.	.708
The social media campaign was designed to speak with the same voice as the other channel(s) used.	.627
Risk Acceptance	
The client wanted less risky work.	.894
The client was risk-averse.	.834
The client was willing to accept risky work.	−.788
Client Expertise	
The client lacked social media expertise.	.925
The client did not understand social media.	.805
The client's expertise in social media facilitated good work.	−.801
Trust	
There was mutual trust between the agency and the client.	.857
The client had confidence in the agency's capability.	.798
The client trusted the agency.	.657
The client did not trust what the agency was proposing.	−.744
Budget	
To do everything needed for the social media campaign, we would have run over budget.	.868
The client underestimated the advertising costs of social media compared to traditional media.	.676
The client understood just how large the social media investment needed to be.	−.654
Target Audience	
We identified the target audience.	.887
We knew the target audience well.	.856
We understood how the target market thinks.	.831
The target audience was unclear.	−.714

4.3.4 Scale Reliability

I computed Cronbach's alpha to examine the construct level reliability.

Integration, the dependent variable, was measured using a five-item scale, and the

reliability analysis results show that Cronbach's alpha = .815, indicating the acceptable reliability of the integration scale. Cronbach's alphas of the independent variables trust, budget, target audience, risk and expertise are .898, .829, .899, .862, .788, respectively. Therefore, all variables have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, confirming the reliability of the scales. Table 4.5 provides summaries of the means, variance and standard deviations, along with Cronbach's alpha, for each variable.

Table 4.5: Summaries of Scales Statistics

Construct	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items	Cronbach's α
Integration	6.10	37.964	6.162	5	.815
Client Expertise	−2.4088	35.901	5.99178	4	.788
Trust	4.9119	35.891	5.99090	4	.898
Target Audience	5.5472	36.857	6.07099	4	.899
Risk Acceptance	−.6730	40.804	6.38778	4	.862
Budget	-2.0818	40.924	6.39716	4	.829

4.3.5 The Final Empirical Model

The final empirical model is depicted in Figure 4.2 and shows the relationships and interactions between the dependent variable and independent variables. All possible interactions were examined and two of them were found to be statistically significant due to the low sample size.

Figure 4.2: The Final Empirical Model
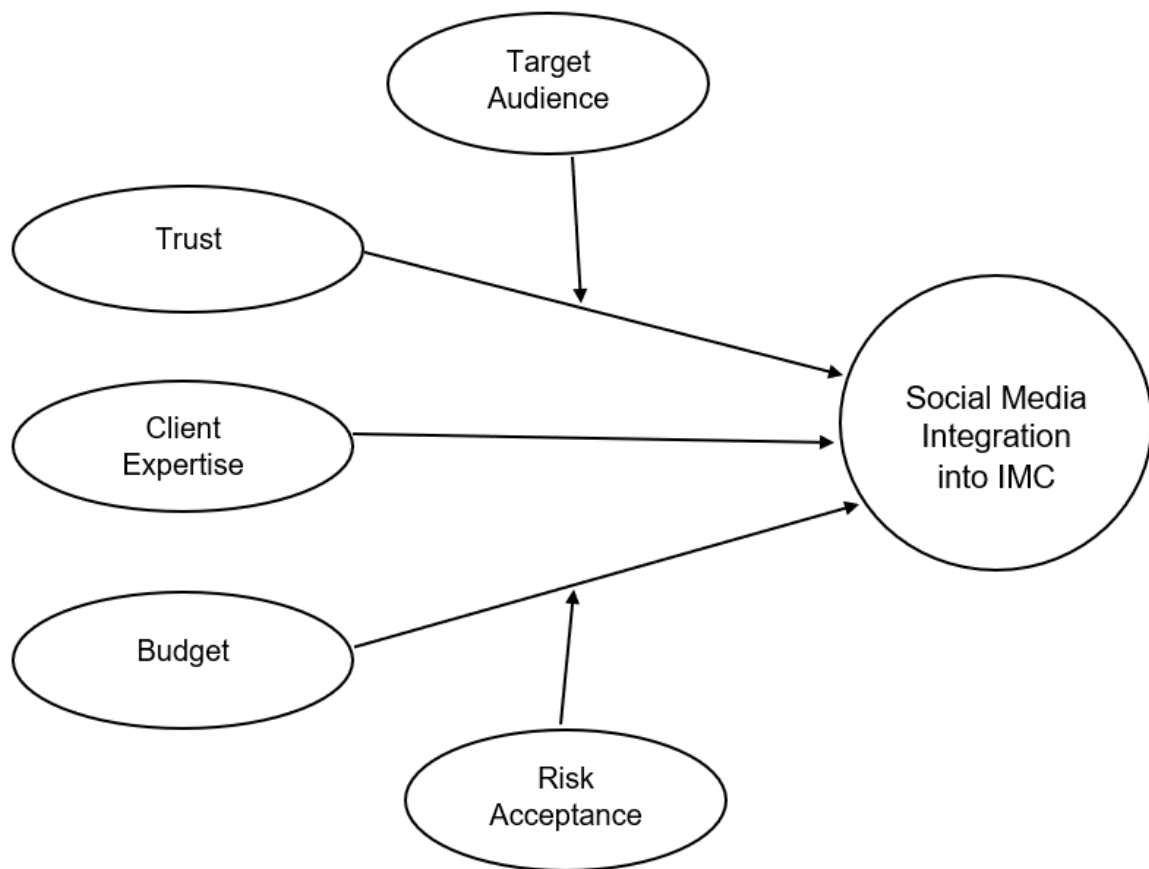
The model summary in Table 4.6 shows that R-Squared (R^2) is .733, indicating that approximately 73% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables, $F (7, 151) = 59.33$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .73$. In other words, the overall regression model is statistically significant, as Table 4.6 shows that $p < .001$.

Table 4.6: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.856[a]	.733	.721	.52835

a. Predictors: (Constant), Client Expertise, Trust, Target Audience, Risk Acceptance, Budget, Trust × Target Audience, Risk Acceptance × Budget.

Table 4.7 ANOVA[a]

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	115.927	7	16.561	59.326	.000[b]
Residual	42.152	151	.279		
Total	158.079	158			

a. Dependent Variable: Integration

b. Predictors: (Constant), Client Expertise, Trust, Target Audience, Risk Acceptance, Budget, Trust × Target Audience, Risk Acceptance × Budget.

4.3.6 Hypotheses Test Results

This section deals with the multiple regression that was conducted to test the research hypotheses. The coefficients table (see Table 4.8) presents the statistical relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. It also shows which relationships in the model are statistically significant and the nature of each of these relationships.

Table 4.8: Coefficients[a]

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.047	.057		.817	.415
Client Expertise	−.235	.058	−.234	−4.070	.000
Trust	.207	.070	.207	2.966	.004
Target Audience	.241	.075	.241	3.217	.002
Risk Acceptance	−.028	.054	−.028	−.525	.601
Budget	−.182	.061	−.182	−2.994	.003
Trust × Target Audience	−.159	.045	−.205	−3.496	.001
Risk Acceptance × Budget	.129	.047	.122	2.755	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Integration

Hypothesis 1 suggests that client expertise has a negative effect on social media integration into IMC programs. As shown in Table 4.8, the relationship between client expertise and social media integration into IMC programs is significant inverse relationship ($b = −.235$, $t = −4.070$, $p < .001$). When clients have more expertise in integrating social media into IMC programs, it will lead to less integrative work. In other words, when clients have less expertise than their advertising agencies, social media integration into IMC programs improves. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 argues that trust between the agency and the client has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs. Table 4.8 shows that there is a positive significant relationship between trust and social media integration into IMC programs ($b = .207$, $t = 2.966$, $p = .004$). When clients have higher trust in their advertising agencies, social media integration into IMC programs is more effective. This outcome is in alignment with the results of the qualitative study and confirms that trust is one of the main influences of integrating social media into an IMC program. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypotheses 3 proposes that understanding the target audience by the clients has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs. The data analysis results indicate that the relationship between understanding the target audience and social media integration into IMC programs is positively significant (b = .241, t = 3.217, p = .002). This means that when the target audience is well understood, this improves social media integration into IMC programs. This result is in line with the qualitative study finding that identifying and understanding the target audience is an important factor in delivering integrative work. Conversely, when the target audience is not understood, this negatively influences social media integration into IMC programs. Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Interestingly, the results show that trust has an interaction with understanding the target audience in relation to social media integration into IMC programs. The two-way interaction between target audience and trust is a statistically significant relationship (b = −.159, t = −3.496, p = .001). Figure 4.3 shows plots of the expected values of integration, given low and high levels of trust and understanding of the target audience set at one standard deviation below and above the mean. The results reveal that trust between clients and advertising agencies has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs if the target audience is not understood. Put differently, if knowledge of the target audience is low, the integration of social media integration into the IMC program will improve if there is trust between the client and the advertising agency. However, if there is high understanding of the target audience, the integration of social media into the IMC program will be high regardless of the level of trust between the client and the advertising agency. In other words, trust has no influence on social media integration into IMC programs when the target audience is well understood.

The worst situation in this interaction occurs when both trust between the client and the advertising agency and understanding of the target audience are low. That is, if the client does not trust the agency and the target audience is not understood, the integration of social media into the IMC program will be at the lowest level.

Figure 4.3: Effect of Trust on Integration at High and Low Levels of Understanding of the Target Audience
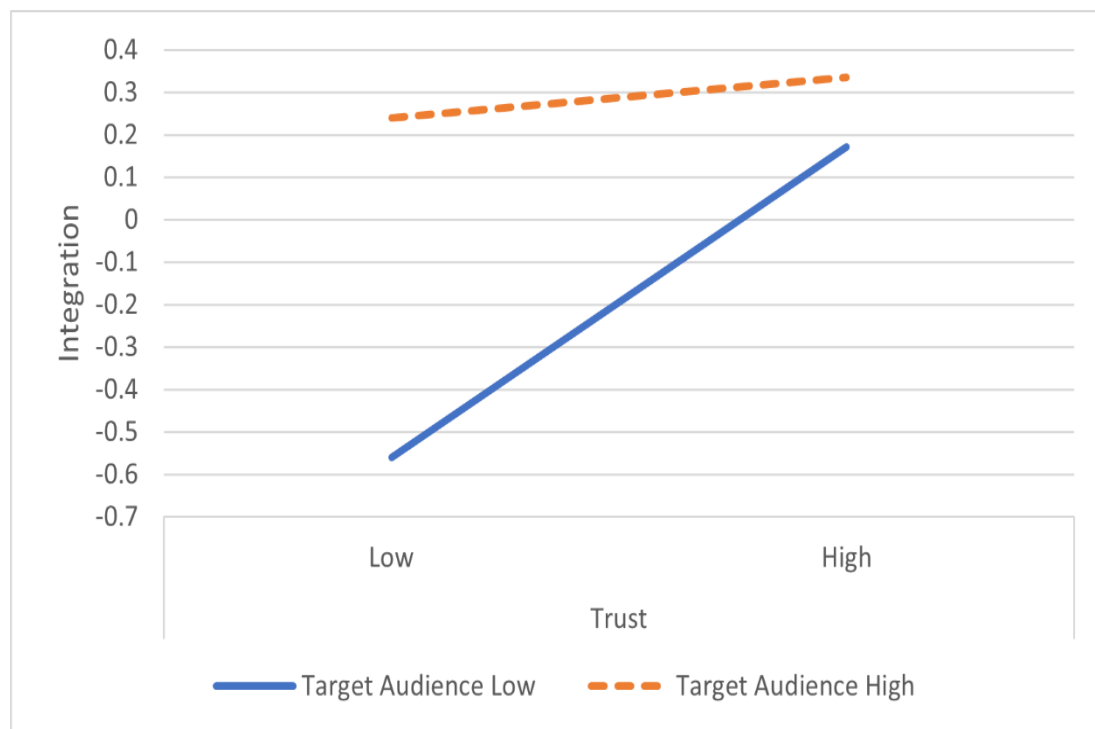
Hypothesis 4 suggests that clients' level of risk acceptance has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs. As seen in Table 4.8, the relationship between clients' risk acceptance level and social media integration into IMC programs is not statistically significant (b = −.028, t = −.525, p = .601, ns). Interestingly, this result means that if the client takes risks or is risk-averse when incorporating social media into their IMC program, this does not influence the integration process overall. Thus, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Hypothesis 5 proposes that budget has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs. However, the results show that there is a negative relationship between budget and social media integration into IMC programs. Table 4.8 exhibits this negative significant relationship (b = −.182, t = −2.994, p = .003). This relationship means that when clients allocate a higher budget, it decreases the level of social media integration into the IMC program. In other words, allocating a lower budget can positively influence social media integration into the IMC program. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Surprisingly, although the relationship between risk acceptance and social media integration into IMC programs is not significant, there is an interaction between client's risk acceptance level and budget allocation in delivering successful social media integration into IMC programs. When clients' risk acceptance interacts with budget, this interaction is statistically significant (b = .129, t = 2.755, p = .007).

To facilitate the interpretation, regression slopes based on the coefficient estimates are plotted in Figure 4.4. The high level of an independent variable is one standard deviation above the mean, and the low level is one standard deviation below the mean.

Based on the analysis results concerning risk acceptance and budget allocation, when the budget is high, more risk acceptance leads to more social media integration into IMC programs. In other words, when the client allocates a high budget for the advertising agency and accepts more risks, it will positively affect the integration of social media into the IMC program.

Figure 4.4: Effect of Risk Acceptance on Integration at High and Low Levels of Budget
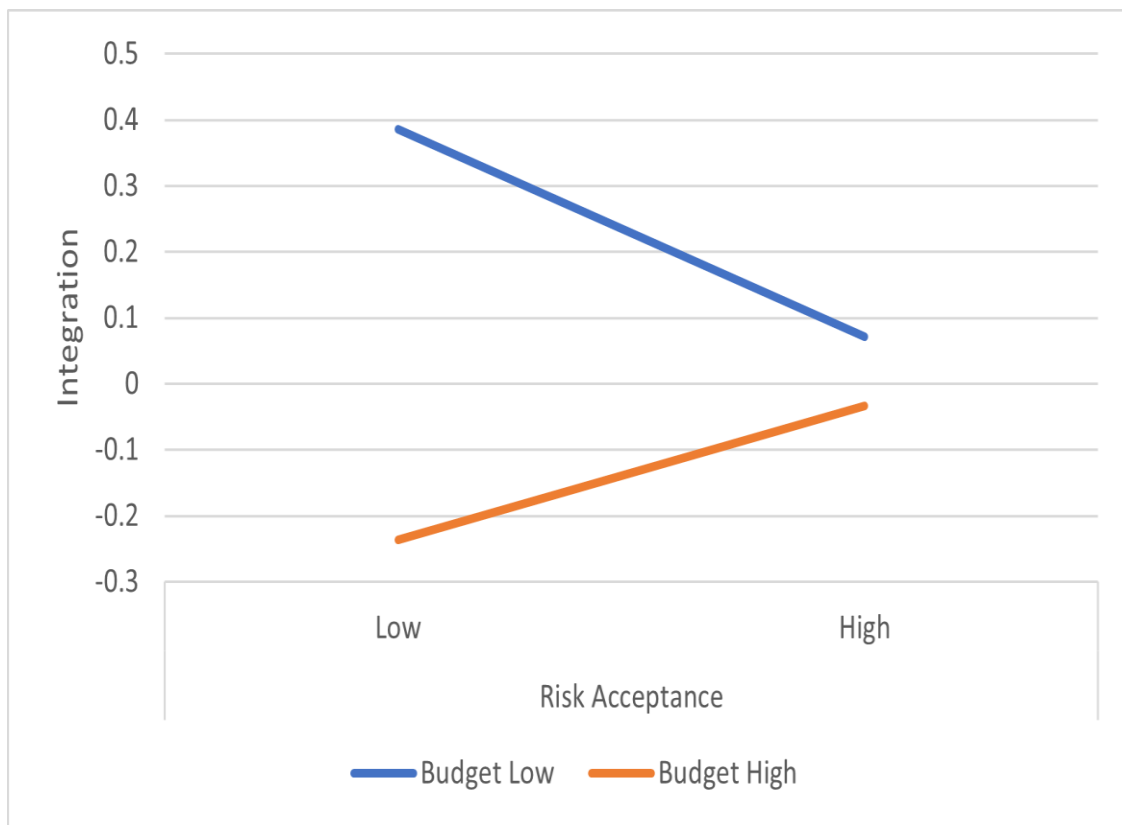
Table 4.9: Hypotheses Test Results Summary

	Hypotheses	Results
H1	Client expertise has a negative effect on social media integration into IMC programs.	Supported
H2	Trust between advertising agencies and clients has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.	Supported
H3	Understanding the target audience by the client has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.	Supported
H4	Clients' risk acceptance level has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.	Not supported
H5	Budget has a positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs.	Not supported

4.4 Discussion

Interestingly, the results of the quantitative study reveal that clients' expertise negatively affects social media integration into IMC programs, as it appears that when clients have social media expertise, it leads to less social media integration into IMC programs.

Further, the results show that many organisations struggle to adapt to the rapid shifts in the current media environment, and they cannot maintain the required resources, such as expertise, to integrate social media into their IMC programs. These organisations recognise their incapability to develop integrative work and, therefore, seek external sources of expertise and advertising service providers for their advertising development (Bachnik, Nowacki, & Szopiński, 2018). Yet the current study shows that clients' expertise can be a barrier to advertising agencies' ability to integrate social media into an IMC program.

In general, clients sharing their expertise with their advertising agencies can make a valuable contribution to the integration process, since the clients have more knowledge of, and experience in, their industry. The participants in the current study echoed Sasser and Koslow (2012a) suggestion that clients should share their knowledge with their advertising agencies rather than relying on the agencies to be the experts.

However, the results also show that advertising agencies face a major challenge owing to a common belief among clients that they have a better understanding than the advertising agency of how to integrate social media into their IMC program. This client behaviour will have a negative effect on the advertising agency because it will limit the agency's ability to produce integrative work. Of course, clients may understand their market better than their advertising agency does, but they should understand that advertising agencies have the advertising expertise that clients may lack. Lynch (2019) found that advertising agencies today must have a variety of skills and expertise to respond to the current transformations in digital media.

This finding is in line with a recent study that identified the shortage of skilled and talented people with experience in the market as a main concern particularly in the UAE (Howe-Walsh et al., 2019). The proliferation of social media has exposed marketers' limited experience with this media (Keegan & Rowley, 2017); thus, advertising agencies are hiring more staff with expertise in social media and new technologies to successfully deliver campaigns (Lynch & West, 2017; Quesenberry, 2020). Instead of clients challenging their advertising agencies by proving they have more social media expertise than the agencies or not admitting to their lack of expertise (Hughes et al., 2018), clients should work collaboratively and share their expertise with their advertising agencies to improve the integration of social media into their IMC programs.

The results of the study also show that clients' trust leads to greater integration of social media into IMC programs. This finding is in line with the qualitative study and bolsters previous studies indicating that trust is an important factor in building the client–agency relationship and facilitating campaign development (Chu et al., 2019; LaBahn & Kohli, 1997; Laurie & Mortimer, 2019; Levin et al., 2016). In general, when this relationship is in its infancy, the client tends to not trust the advertising agency. A possible reason for a client's hesitancy or unwillingness to trust is the fact that the advertising agency's performance is not yet known. In other words, when the client does not have any previous work with the advertising agency to judge, this can cause scepticism about its service quality. Clients often need to see campaign outcomes to begin building trust. Thus, proof of the advertising agency's performance is key to the development of trust between the client and the advertising agency (Levin et al., 2016).

However, the results of the current study show that trust involves with an interaction with the target audience in the process of integrating social media into an IMC program. The study shows that the target audience is an important factor in ensuring social media integration. The target audience can have a crucial impact on the determination of which social media platforms organisations will adopt (Lashgari, Sutton-Brady, Solberg Søilen, & Ulfvengren, 2018). Today, the new media gives brands greater precision in reaching the target audience (Ma & Du, 2018), and social media has transformed the advertising approach to reach consumers (Childers et al., 2019). Therefore, compared to traditional media, the use of social media offers a better ability to understand the target audience. However, unless clients trust their advertising agency to exercise this privilege, low understanding of the target audience can add complexity to social media integration into IMC programs.

As expected, clients' trust in advertising agencies and understanding of the target audience are important dimensions when incorporating social media into IMC programs. The current study reveals that these two factors lead to the most optimal social media integration into IMC programs. This interaction represents a realistic impact on social media integration into IMC programs and is alignment with the qualitative study, which identified that each of these dimensions is important to produce integrative work.

Moreover, the results of the current study show that when understanding of the target audience is high, client trust has a slightly positive effect on social media integration into IMC programs. Although the target audience plays a crucial role in the integration process, it appears that trust is the main key to ensuring proper social media integration into IMC programs, especially in the current dynamic environment.

The study reinforces that, today, clients and their advertising agencies require trust and collaboration at the strategic level (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019).

Surprisingly, when there is low understanding of the target audience, there is a higher level of social media integration into IMC programs only if clients trust their advertising agencies. A possible explanation is that clients often do not differentiate or understand their target audience on different channels or platforms; consequently, they misunderstand the target audience, which has a negative impact on social media integration into IMC programs.

The findings further reveal that when the target audience is not understood and clients do not trust their advertising agencies, social media integration into IMC programs will be at the lowest level. This is the worst situation of the interaction between client trust and understanding of the target audience in social media integration into IMC programs. It is a reasonable result for clients that neither trust their advertising agency nor understand their target audience.

However, the results of this quantitative study do not support the proposed hypothesis that clients' risk acceptance positively affects social media integration into IMC programs. Put differently, social media integration into IMC programs has no influence on whether clients accept more or less risk associated with their campaigns. However, the study shows an interaction between clients' risk acceptance and the campaign budget on social media integration into the IMC program.

While clients' risk acceptance by itself does not have a significant relationship with social media integration into IMC programs, the results show that clients' risk acceptance significantly interacts with clients' budget. Determining an appropriate

advertising budget is an essential component of an IMC program (Swani et al., 2020); however, the client's risk acceptance or risk aversion influences the advertising agency's behaviours (Wang et al., 2013). Thus, whether clients are risk-takers, risk-seekers or risk-averse in their campaigns can determine the possible outcomes of the integration of social media into IMC programs with a high budget.

On one hand, when clients allocate a large budget to their advertising agencies and are willing to accept risks, it leads to a higher level of social media integration into IMC programs. Clients seeking risky work appears to have a positive influence on social media integration into IMC programs with a large budget. This finding is in line with the qualitative study of this thesis: clients' risk acceptance and allocation of a large budget are important to the integration of social media into IMC programs.

On the other hand, if clients allocate a large budget and they are risk-averse, it will negatively affect the integration of social media into IMC programs. One possible explanation is that when clients allocate a large budget, they become risk-averse, which constrains advertising agencies in producing the work. Such clients fear losing their budget by taking on risky work because the advertising agency cannot guarantee the success of the work.

Surprisingly, when clients have a low budget and low risk acceptance, this leads to higher social media integration into IMC programs. One possible interpretation is that small organisations often do not have a large budget and, thus, they are more resistant to pursuing risky work because they are extremely worried about losing their budget. Then, the advertising agency delivers its best performance to ensure a high level of social media integration into the IMC program. This interesting interaction in the present study, I believe, will become clearer with a larger sample.

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The results of the current study show the importance of clients doing risky work to better integrate social media into the IMC program. Allocating a large or small budget has a minimal impact on the integration of social media into the IMC program when the client is willing to accept more risks. The worst situation is for the client to allocate a large budget and refuse to accept risky work, as this will not lead to effective social media integration into the IMC program.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Synthesised Discussion

This thesis holistically examines how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs and investigates the challenges associated with the integration process and approaches to overcome these challenges. Further, it examines the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship. The thesis reveals that there are seven challenging factors that affect social media integration into IMC programs: risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy.

Interestingly, the results of this research show that regardless of the valuable resources that clients may possess, unless these resources are effectively used, they will not contribute to delivering a higher level of social media integration into an IMC program. Moreover, the agency–client relationship is an important factor in the allocation of resources to achieve the campaign goals. Without a collaborative relationship, the integration of social media into an IMC program becomes difficult, thus minimising the likelihood of achieving these goals. Keegan et al. (2017) indicated that the agency–client relationship is considered an important factor in overcoming the challenges of adopting social media and integrating it into IMC programs. As clients have an important impact on the work (Koslow, 2015), their decisions about which work outcomes they seek will have a major influence on what advertising agencies deliver.

Overall, the existence of a collaborative relationship between agencies and clients has the most significant impact on social media integration into IMC programs.

Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that this relationship plays an important role in producing a successful advertising campaign (Lynch & West, 2017). However, the absence of a collaborative agency–client relationship can negatively affect each of the other seven challenging factors. At the same time, establishing and maintaining a collaborative relationship can minimise, or even avoid, many possible challenges between clients and their advertising agencies. For example, trust can be easier to achieve if the client has a strong relationship with its advertising agency.

In general, clients' expertise can be viewed as a valuable contribution that enhances social media integration into IMC programs. Surprisingly, the clients' expertise can be a major challenge to the IMC process and may negatively affect the integration of social media into IMC programs. This unfortunate outcome will occur if the client believes that it possess more skills and knowledge than the advertising agency. Advertising agencies have the talent and skills to develop advertising campaigns via many media options, including new media platforms. For instance, the study shows that has advertising agencies have the required expertise to assist their clients in identifying and understanding the target audience on social media. Therefore, if the clients aim to understand their target audience on different media channels, particularly on social media, they need to trust their advertising agencies.

Taking a holistic view of IMC, consistency is not only important for delivering messages across all channels; clients and advertising agencies need to ensure that they perform consistent work to better integrate social media into their IMC programs. Angeline et al. (2017) stated that marketers treat social media separately from other media categories; however, my study reveals that they treat social media like traditional media. According to Laurie and Mortimer (2019), 'IMC is based on the

premises of consistency, collegiality and synergy. It requires people to work together, across the client organisation and across the various external stakeholders, so that all brand touch points are integrated' (p. 231). One way to achieve consistency is through developing a strong strategy that covers and guides the execution on all marketing communication channels. Marketers are eager to integrate social media into their media strategies (Voorveld, 2019), but the greatest challenge is developing a strategy that supports business objectives (Quesenberry, 2020).

The thesis shows that clients often focus on the details of a campaign rather than adopting a comprehensive and holistic view. Ford (1980) urged organisations to distinguish between 'operational' and 'strategic' management, as the latter effectively determines the resources allocation. A well-developed social media strategy clearly defines the goals of implementing social media, identifies the execution plan that defines the target audience and chosen platforms and structure, and should align with strategic marketing actions (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). However, clients need to remain open by welcoming and appreciating the strategic focus that their advertising agencies provide (O'Connor et al., 2016).

Based on the qualitative results, clients underestimate the value of a well-developed social media strategy when integrating social media into their IMC programs. While they, clients, believe in the importance of developing strategies for their traditional advertising channels, they assume that these strategies are also can be used to their social media advertising channels. Clients need to fully understand the importance of developing an overall strategy that can be 'the umbrella' for all of their advertising channels, traditional media, social media and other media. Today, marketing environment becomes more strategic and dynamic that require

organisations to be more active, and revise and develop their marketing strategies. This revision and development of marketing strategies are important to maintain or improve their market share. Also, developing a strong strategy that includes both traditional media and social media offer a great opportunity for organisations to reach a broader audience. Developing social media strategies that align with traditional media strategies is essential to achieve the organisation's overall marketing objectives.

Furthermore, the results of this research confirm that developing an advertising budget is still complicated (Swani et al., 2020). Thus, clients are concerned about the uncertainty of campaign outcomes, and they become hesitant to accept risky work due to fear that they may lose their budget. However, if clients provide a sufficiently large budget and accept more risks, their advertising agencies can deliver greater social media integration into their IMC programs.

It is understood that budget is a sensitive issue from the clients' side, and they need to be assured that their money will be allocated in a safe investment. Clients often face issues to obtain the required financial resources from their management specially if the management do not value the importance of marketing activities. Clients need to understand that advertising agencies have the ability to deliver a good integration of social media into IMC programs, but the clients need to be more collaborative in allocating enough budget to their advertising agencies. The interaction between budget and risk acceptance merits further research to provide more insights about it. It is an opportunity for researchers to conduct further studies to clarify this interesting interaction.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

The thesis identifies the challenges that advertising agencies face in integrating social media into IMC programs for their clients and provides deep insights into how these challenges can be overcome. The findings of this research offer several theoretical contributions regarding social media integration into IMC programs in the advertising agency context. Some of the findings are novel contributions that can be added to the social media advertising field. This thesis contributes to the social media advertising literature by identifying the major challenges of integrating social media into IMC programs – namely, risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. It also provides insights into how to overcome these challenges. In addition, as a major theoretical contribution, this thesis investigates the role of the RBV in the agency–client relationship in the advertising agency context.

Although the use of social media as a marketing communication tool has been integral component for organisations, the social media literature is focused on isolated issues, such as developing tactics for effective advertising communication (Felix et al., 2017). Perhaps owing to the relative newness of the social media phenomenon, organisations do not understand how to integrate social media into their IMC programs via a strategic approach. The thesis advances the body of knowledge by understanding how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs investigating the challenges they face with the integration process. Thus, the thesis investigates the approaches that advertising agencies adopt to overcome these challenges. It makes a timely contribution to the existing literature by offering useful insights for researchers within advertising domain (Dwivedi et al., 2020) and

particularly in the advertising agency context. Therefore, it provides a comprehensive knowledge for future studies in this field.

The main theoretical contribution of this research is its combination of the RBV and IMP perspectives. Studies on the RBV have been based on a single organisation's resources and have suggested that an organisation should have resources that lead it to obtain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. However, this thesis takes a step further and argues that achieving a high level of social media integration into IMC programs is not only about allocating resources. Clients need to be collaborative with their advertising agencies to effectively utilise these resources.

The thesis suggests both parties, especially clients, that the relationship should be built on a strategic partnership that requires both parties to work together collaboratively, and they must both ensure complementarity to achieve the campaign objectives. If the relationship lacks such collaboration, the advertising agency cannot use the resources to effectively incorporate social media into the IMC program.

Another major theoretical contribution is the finding that while a high budget and more risk acceptance from clients lead to a high level of social media integration into IMC programs, surprisingly, a low budget and less risk acceptance can produce more integrative work. Perhaps the former interaction is more logical with large organisations, which have larger budgets and are more willing to take risks. In terms of the latter interaction, this is more understandable with small organisations that have limited budgets and are more risk-averse. Roca et al. (2017) found that advertising agencies complain about the reluctance of some clients, who have a limited budget and are, therefore, less willing to take risks. However, it can be confirmed that when an organisation reduces its advertising budget, this is not guaranteed to increase its

profits (Kang, 2020). However, social media offers an opportunity for organisations to utilise its low-cost feature to increase sales (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Future studies should investigate this interaction to gain better insights.

The findings on the significant effects of trust and understanding of the target audience on social media integration into IMC programs constitute another contribution of this thesis to the social media advertising literature. The results of the qualitative study show that clients trusting their advertising agencies and understanding their target audience can improve social media integration into IMC programs. The results of the quantitative study confirm that each of these constructs positively affects the integration. However, if one concludes that these constructs represent a one-way effect relationship and disregards their interaction, these results cannot be fully understood. This guidance also applies to the interaction between budget and risk acceptance.

An interesting theoretical contribution is the finding that clients' expertise negatively impacts social media integration into IMC programs. In fact, I expected clients' expertise to be a significant factor that advertising agencies can utilise to deliver better integrative work. However, clients' expertise appears to be a major barrier for advertising agencies' ability to develop integrative campaigns. While clients often have more knowledge of their industry or market than advertising agencies do, they need to understand that their advertising agencies have more advertising development expertise. The current advertising agency environment has art directors with knowledge of which media platforms to choose (Blakeman, Haley, & Taylor, 2020). Thus, synergising the unique advantages of each party is expected to yield better work.

Moreover, to deliver better social media integration into IMC programs, it is crucial for clients to establish and maintain a strong relationship and be more open to their advertising agencies' suggestions. For example, the clients' degree of openness directly influences their advertising agencies' options in terms of digital integration (Childers et al., 2018). However, the main issue is that clients can be a major threat to the development of integrative work by viewing their advertising agency just as an executer and challenging it by continuously rejecting the proposed ideas and opinions.

Furthermore, creating a consistent message can substantially improve the integration of social media into IMC programs. From a theoretical perspective, it is important to fully understand that social and traditional media have different characteristics; consequently, the advertising message must be developed according to the nature of the chosen channels or platforms. Interestingly, clients still believe that identical content can be delivered across all social and traditional media channels.

An important finding is the importance of developing a strong strategy when integrating social media into IMC programs. Social media has radically changed IMC, and yet organisations lack strategic focus and make only tactical choices regarding social media (Vollero, Schultz, & Siano, 2019). Therefore, this thesis concludes that it is crucial to view campaign development strategically, rather than concentrating on less important tasks, to achieve a higher level of social media integration into IMC programs.

5.3 Managerial Implications

This thesis answers the research questions by providing useful practical implications and solutions for advertisers and advertising agencies to avoid potential

challenges and deliver a high level of social media integration into IMC programs. The findings of this research offer several insights that are recommended for marketers to effectively utilise their resources to produce integrative work. While the findings can be useful for many professionals in the advertising industry, clients in particular should take the implications and recommendations into consideration when they approach integrating social media into their IMC programs.

A collaborative relationship is crucial to overcome possible challenges that may arise between advertising agencies and clients, but this relationship remains inadequately understood. Gambetti et al. (2016, p. 92) described this relationship as a 'never-ending war between clients and agencies,' especially owing to the rapid evolution of social media, and advertising agencies struggle with their clients in completing the IMC process (Ots & Nyilasy, 2015). As a result, some organisations build an in-house advertising department to integrate social media into their IMC program because they believe that advertising agencies do not appreciate their brand. However, due to a lack of advertising knowledge, most of these organisations do not have the capability to operate the department and resume searching for an independent advertising agency to integrate their social media into their IMC program. Therefore, clients and advertising agencies should establish their relationship as a collaborative partnership that is based on trust and mutual understanding. One recommendation for improving this relationship is through openness. Clients should be more open to exploring new ideas and facilitating great integrative work with their advertising agencies. Adopting this mindset enables the advertising agencies to be more motivated and productive to think outside of the box and meet the clients' expectations.

Furthermore, clients can better integrate social media into their IMC programs by trusting their advertising agencies. Trust is clearly a crucial factor that can facilitate the integration process. There must be trust in the agency–client relationship for the advertising agency to effectively utilise the resources at hand and produce the work the client expects. Without the client's trust in the advertising agency, numerous challenges can arise in the development of the advertising campaign. Unfortunately, while trust can be built over time through productive interactions, clients still apply the following instruction: 'We will only trust our agency if it delivers results' (LaBahn & Kohli, 1997, p. 504). Instead of clients relying on their agencies' performance to determine their trust level, a recommendation is to foster trust between clients and their agencies faster by understanding and knowing each other and ensuring a higher quality brief in the early stages of the relationship.

Budget appears to be a controversial issue between advertising agencies and clients in social media advertising development. Today, it is crucial for clients to fully understand the advertising expenditures and be realistic when allocating the budget, especially regarding social media costs. One way to achieve this is that clients initially should understand the importance of social media activities in their marketing plan and include them in their overall marketing budget (Silva et al., 2020). Social media platforms are considered a low-cost approach; however, clients often are misguided if they believe that social media does not require them to allocate an adequate budget. While social media requires a relatively smaller budget compared to traditional media, clients should not ignore or underestimate the required budget for social media marketing. For instance, with more noise in the social media environment, advertising agencies face additional barriers to breaking through the clutter to reach the target audience. An important practical message is that allocating a sufficiently large budget

that is based on the actual costs of the chosen channel or platform is the main criterion for developing integrative work rather than relying on general perspectives regarding social and traditional media costs. For example, although social media offers relatively lower costs, clients should be aware that developing content for social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) can require more expenditure than content for traditional media channels (e.g. TV). Therefore, if clients expect their advertising agencies to deliver a high level of social media integration into the IMC program, they should be reasonable and knowledgeable about allocating a sufficient budget.

Another managerial implication is that clients should understand that risks are not only associated with traditional media but also social media campaigns. Clients should not assume that social media advertising campaigns are relatively risk-free. The paradox is that, unlike traditional media, when clients allocate the budget for integrating social media into the IMC program, they are unwilling to accept risky work. The budget should not hold back clients from accepting more risks, particularly with a higher budget. For example, some clients will be relatively more risk-seeking when developing a TV advertising campaign and more risk-averse when developing a Facebook advertising campaign. Regardless of the media category, social or traditional media, the client should understand and evaluate the associated risk when integrating social media into the IMC program.

An important implication for clients is that they need to recognise that understanding their business sector does not mean that they understand their target audience. This is particularly important in terms of achieving the advertising campaign objectives because organisations aim to reach their target audience. If social media is used effectively as a marketing communication tool, it offers organisations ample

opportunities to better understand and reach their target audience. Gordon et al. (2020) stated that organisations today can better advertise to their target audience with customised messages at specific locations and times on different platforms. The findings of the present research indicate that clients should avoid challenging their advertising agency in understanding the target audience, and they should trust the advertising agency's ability to identify and understand the target audience. Otherwise, the client should expect possible challenges and conflicts with the advertising agency, which ultimately can negatively impact the integration of social media into their IMC program.

Today, with the growth of new media, advertising agencies are recruiting more specialists in social media, technology and other areas of digital expertise (Lynch & West, 2017). Thus, advertising agencies have the required expertise to effectively utilise the resources at their disposal to deliver a high level of social media integration into IMC programs. Furthermore, advertisers seek to hire an advertising agency due to their insufficient skills and knowledge, particularly in social media, to integrate social media into their IMC program. Therefore, it is important for clients to acknowledge their skills deficiency, or at least not to act as if they have more expertise than their advertising agency. Based on the findings, the current advertisers' viewpoint about their advertising expertise should reflect the reality and they should accept the fact that advertising agencies are specialised and have more experts on integrating social media into IMC programs. If clients adopt this perspective, they can avoid or over many challenges and effectively combine their knowledge with that of their advertising agency in a collaborative manner.

Moreover, the thesis recommends that ensuring consistency across all media channels and platforms is a crucial step in incorporating social media into an IMC program. Specifically, clients should be aware that each marketing communications channel and platform has its own unique characteristics and, accordingly, the content cannot be identical across each of them. In addition, the research findings suggests that a persuasive message that can reach and be understood by the target audience is important for enhancing the integration of social media into an IMC program. If clients work with their advertising agencies in a collaborative way to create a persuasive message across all media, the integration is more likely to be effective. With numerous media options, organisations must have a persuasive message (Tevi et al., 2019), and reinforcing that message in different ways across advertising channels can produce an effective IMC program (Batra & Keller, 2016).

Overall, this thesis provides valuable implications for advertisers and advertising agencies in relation to the importance of developing a strong strategy. The complexity of the agency–client relationship in the technological era increases the demand from marketers to understand marketing as a practice, and agencies have an important effect on marketing strategy development in terms of recognising 'how marketing happens' (Keegan et al., 2017, p. 1197). Of course, advertising agencies can affect the development of this strategy, but clients should prepare a well-developed strategy in the early stages of the development process. On the clients' side, those clients that initially develop a strategy in their brief are better off than those that lack a strategy (Koslow et al., 2006). Clients need to adopt a strategic perspective in working with their advertising agencies rather than focusing more on the details of their campaigns.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this thesis makes a useful contribution to the social media advertising literature, it has several limitations that offer researchers opportunities for future research directions.

First, although the sample size of the qualitative study was adequate, the quantitative study did not have a sufficiently large sample to gain a thorough understanding of the constructs. The main reason for this relatively small sample size was COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the quantitative data collection process. The pandemic emerged at the beginning of my data collection phase, but its impact was not only on the data collection process but also on my timetable for the research tasks. Macquarie University decided to pause all face-to-face data collection to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and community members that was consistent with government and New South Wales Health advice. As an alternative approach, I distributed the questionnaire online to potential participants in Australia to be completed and submitted. Unfortunately, this online approach did not successes as no participant completed the questionnaire.

Besides COVID-19 affecting the sample size, it is difficult to recruit participants from advertising agencies. According to Taylor (2017), 'it is not an easy task to collect data from busy professionals on either the client or agency side, and it would seem fair to say that the task has become more difficult over the years' (p. 393). Therefore, during my Candidature Progress Review meeting[2], the Higher Degree Research

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[2] This refers to an annual meeting with the HDR committee and the supervisors of my PhD to critically reflect on the progress of the research.

(HDR) committee advised me to end the data collection process and begin the data analysis. Although I was conducting an exploratory study and 159 observations is relatively acceptable, a quantitative study can produce better findings with a larger sample size.

I acknowledge that the small sample size led to challenges with the factor models. All variables have been included in the initial conceptual model except for two variables: agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. These two constructs were unanticipated loadings scattered across different factors. Also, I acknowledge that a larger sample size would confirm or better clarify the budget × risk and trust × target audience interactions. Specifically, the question of how to determine the advertising budget is a decision about which organisations have always been concerned (Bigné, 1995), and this question represents a challenge that organisations still face (Peers et al., 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers conduct further studies with larger sample sizes to gain a better understanding and obtain more generalisable results.

Second, this research investigated social media integration into IMC programs solely from the advertising agencies' perspective and did not examine the clients' perspective. Although the findings presented in this thesis can be beneficial for advertising agencies and clients, both sides' perspectives can provide a richer understanding of the challenges associated with social media integration into IMC programs. Understanding the clients' perspective can provide deeper insights and shed light on other areas that this research did not investigate. The clients' perspective is important is because their significantly affect the work of their advertising agencies. Further research should investigate both parties' perspectives to obtain a more holistic

understanding of the challenges associated with integrating social media into IMC programs.

Finally, due to the newness of the current topic and lack of an existing scale that I could adopt for my research, Professor Koslow and I developed the questionnaire items on the basis of the initial qualitative study. This scale can be useful for further refinement and validation (Tan et al., 2019). It may be beneficial to add additional variables and items or decrease the number of variables. Moreover, the study had two interactions, and the scale refinement could produce more interactions. The different disruptive forces that are currently changing the foundation of the advertising field by making it more digital open new research avenues (Huh & Malthouse, 2020). For example, the COVID-19 crisis could be a variable that requires further research to understand its impact on the allocation of resources and maintenance of a good agency–client relationship.

5.5 Conclusion

This thesis investigates how advertising agencies integrate social media into IMC programs, the associated challenges and approaches to overcome these challenges. It also examines the role of the RBV and IMP perspectives in the advertising agency context. The continuous updates to technologies increase the complexity of organisations and advertising agencies remaining up-to-date. Social media provides numerous benefits for organisations to use in their marketing strategies, yet advertising agencies still face several challenges in integrating social media into IMC programs.

Adopting a mixed methods approach enabled me to deeply understand the phenomenon and answer the research questions (Creswell & Hirose, 2019). My research uncovered seven challenges that affect social media integration into IMC programs: risk acceptance, budget, client expertise, trust, target audience, agency–client collaboration and brand strategy. Most importantly, the results show that clients can substantially assist their advertising agencies in overcoming or even avoiding possible challenges or conflicts because the clients can strongly influence the advertising agencies. Therefore, clients need to work with their advertising agencies in a collaborative way to effectively share and utilise resources to deliver a high level of social media integration into their IMC program.

In modern marketing, the new media options increase the complexity of marketing communications, which are the most difficult but crucially important elements of modern marketing (Keller, 2016). Today, organisations face challenges in developing social media strategies in their marketing plans (Dwivedi et al., 2020) and, therefore, require the ability to effectively confront these challenges. This thesis shows that clients themselves create challenges in integrating social media into IMC programs, which lead to more conflicts with their advertising agencies.

Another possible new challenge is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that this global pandemic has negatively affected business relationships, including the stability and collaboration of relationships between advertising agencies and their clients. The crisis can add more tension in the agency–client relationship, which requires both parties to foster greater collaboration to overcome it. A global crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic often pushes good organisations into the ditch

due to their resistance to change and adaptation, and this crisis is a great 'wake-up call' for organisations (Sheth, 2020).

Today, clients should understand that 'Gone are the days of the boss–worker relationship. We're partners now' (Chohan et al., 2019, p. 1303). To establish and maintain a strong agency–client relationship, clients must work with their advertising agencies as strategic partners. Clients need to be more supportive of their advertising agencies to work collaboratively and productively (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019). IMC is based on consistency and synergy, which requires all parties and resources to be integrated, and a client needs to approach their agency in a way that ensures the optimal design of their IMC program (Keller, 2016).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the major issue is the difficulty of making different organisations with different interests and perspectives work as a team with shared objectives. For example, business organisations are more familiar with competition than with collaboration (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019). The current management style of clients should be improved to foster collaborative work with advertising agencies to better integrate social media into IMC programs. Establishing and maintaining a collaborative agency–client relationship can ensure effective sharing and utilisation of resources and, crucially, facilitate the integration process.

In conclusion, social media integration into IMC programs is essential to achieve marketing objectives. The findings of this research can be useful in raising organisations' awareness of possible challenges in integrating social media into their IMC programs so they can avoid them. While traditional media are still used alongside social media (Garber Jr et al., 2020), the marketing strategies for traditional media cannot be the same as those for social media. Social media advertising has its own

unique characteristics and development process that differ from those of traditional media advertising. An important message to take from this thesis is that if clients understand social media as a marketing communications tool in the IMC context, provide the required resources and work with their advertising agencies as collaborative partners, great integrative work can be achieved.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Confirmation Letter – Qualitative Study

Business and Economics Subcommittee
Macquarie University, North Ryde
NSW 2109, Australia

MACQUARIE
University

23/11/2018

Dear Professor Koslow,

Reference No: 5201831245318
Project ID: 3124
Title: The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications: A Study of Australian and United Arab Emirates Advertising Agencies.

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical review. The Business and Economics Subcommittee has considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Professor Scott Koslow, and other personnel: Dr Yimin Huang, Mr Abdulaziz Alrajhi.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website:
   https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018.

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.

3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.

4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the Human Research Ethics Management System.

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website:
https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Faculty Ethics Officer.

The Business and Economics Subcommittee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nikola Balnave

Chair, Business and Economics Subcommittee

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Confirmation Letter – Quantitative Study

Macquarie Business School Committee
Macquarie University, North Ryde
NSW 2109, Australia

MACQUARIE
University

18/10/2019

Dear Professor Koslow,

Reference No: 52019597010752
Project ID: 5970
Title: The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications: A Quantitative Study

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical review. The Macquarie Business School Committee has considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Professor Scott Koslow, and other personnel: Abdulaziz Alrajhi, Dr Yimin Huang.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website: https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018.

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.

3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.

4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the Human Research Ethics Management System.

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website: https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Faculty Ethics Officer.

The Macquarie Business School Committee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Jana Bowden

Chair, Macquarie Business School Committee

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Department of Marketing and Management
Faculty of Business & Economics
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY   NSW   2109

Phone: +61 2 9850 8459

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Interview Guide

Topic: The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications.

Principle Supervisor: Professor Scott Koslow

Associate Supervisor: Dr. Stephanie Huang

PhD Student: Abdulaziz Alrajhi

#	Questions
Q1	To start off, can we spend the first 10 minutes with you telling me about couple of examples of social media campaigns you worked on that also used some advertising elements?
Q2	Think of three social media campaigns that you successfully integrated into advertising and three unsuccessful ones that were not integrated. How the social media and advertising were managed, how was the process to develop these campaigns similar for two and different from the third?
Q3	This is important, and I really want to get this down, can you be specific about what you think differentiates between better and worse ways of getting social media and advertising to be coordinated or integrated?

Q4	Based on your experiences with these campaigns, what do you think the major challenges of incorporating a social media campaign with advertising?
Q5	So, given these challenges, how do you think you can overcome them?
Q6	If an agency is good at social media advertising, what skills, ability and resources do you think they need?
Q7	Can you tell me about the role of User-Generated Content as a resource and what you do?
Q8	Many academics write about IMC, and they talk about the prominent role of strategy, meaning that if it's good clear strategy, it'll guide the executions in all media to be integrated. Could you tell about how important is the role of brand strategy in integrating social media with advertising?
Q9	Well, is there any advice that you want to give to marketing students who would like to do social media campaigns well.
Demographic Questions: 1. The role / position. 2. Year of experience. 3. Gender.	

Appendix D: Participant Information and Consent Form – Qualitative study

Department of Marketing and Management

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Chief Investigator / Supervisor's: Professor Scott Koslow.

Co-Investigator / Associate supervisor's: Dr. Stephanie Huang.

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study investigating the role of social media in integrated marketing communications (IMC). This study investigates how marketers in Australian advertising agencies successfully integrate social media into IMC program, the challenges that advertising agencies face in this integration and how they overcome them.

The study is being conducted by Abdulaziz Alrajhi (Department of Marketing and Management, Faculty of Business & Economics, Macquarie University, Sydney, ph: 0451936344, abdulaziz.alrajhi@students.mq.edu.au) to meet the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in marketing under supervision of Professor Scott Koslow (Department of Marketing and Management, ph: (02)9850-8459, scott.koslow@mq.edu.au), and Dr. Stephanie Huang (Department of Marketing and Management, ph: (02)9850-8496, stephanie.huang@mq.edu.au)

After you provide consent, you will participate in an interview including questions soliciting your opinions about the integration of social media into IMC and related aspects, such as brand strategy and challenges. To ensure accuracy in the collection and analysis of the

data, the researcher will record the interview using an audio recorder, subsequently transcribe the interview verbatim, and assign you a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The researcher might also take notes to supplement the information from the recorded interview. The interview will occur at a time and location of your convenience, and it will take 60–90 minutes to complete. There are no risks, potential discomfort, or costs associated with participating in this study.

The researchers will only use the information or personal details that you provide in the interview for the purposes of the study. There will be no questions seeking sensitive information, and all information will remain completely confidential, except as required by law. You will not be identified in any publication of the results. The final report of the study and its results will be available at the library of Macquarie University. The researchers will safely store the electronic copy of the provided information on password protected computer systems and the hard copy in the researchers' offices. If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please send a request to the researchers via e-mail.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are not obliged to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____ (Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

Investigator's Name: _____ (Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email

ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S / PARTICIPANT'S COPY)

Appendix E: Participant Information and Consent Form – Quantitative study

MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

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Email: scott.koslow@mq.edu.au

Supervisor / Chief Investigator: Professor Scott Koslow.

Associate supervisor / Co-Investigator: Dr. Stephanie Huang.

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study investigating the role of social media in integrated marketing communications (IMC). This study investigates how marketers in advertising agencies successfully integrate social media into IMC program, the challenges that advertising agencies face in this integration and how they overcome them.

The study is being conducted by Professor Scott Koslow (scott.koslow@mq.edu.au), Dr. Stephanie Huang (stephanie.huang@mq.edu.au), and Abdulaziz Alrajhi (PhD student - abdulaziz.alrajhi@hdr.mq.edu.au) who needs to meet the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in marketing in the Department of Marketing, Macquarie Business School, Macquarie University. If you have a question or concern about your participation, you can contact Mr. Alrebdi (ak.alrebdi@qu.edu.sa).

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. The questions are about the integration of social media into IMC. We will be available at the time

you fill out the questionnaire and can clarify any item on the questionnaire, if needed, and it will occur at a time and location of your convenience. It will take 20-25 minutes to complete questionnaire. There are no risks, potential discomfort, or costs associated with participating in this study.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. There will be no questions seeking sensitive information. You will not be identified in any publication of the results. The final report of the study and its results will be available at the library of Macquarie University. The researchers will safely store the electronic copy of the provided information on password protected computer systems and the hard copy in the researchers' offices. If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please send a request to the researchers via e-mail.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date:

Investigator's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through

the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(Investigator's / Participant's Copy)

Appendix F: Questionnaire

The Role of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communications

Part 1

Thank you for your help with this study on the role of social media in integrated marketing communications (IMC) and creativity, to meet the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in marketing in the Department of Marketing, Macquarie Business School, Macquarie University, Australia. I would like to know about the advertising created for the three most recent campaigns that you worked on that combined traditional and social media. *Below, please write the names or categories of these campaigns; I do not need the actual client name (that's optional and will remain confidential), but just the name to know what account campaign you are referencing.*

Campaigns	Name or category of the campaign
Most recent campaign:	
Second most recent campaign:	
Third most recent campaign:	

Please indicate the social media platform used along with traditional media (please check all that apply).

	Facebook	Twitter	Snapchat	Instagram	YouTube	Other
Most recent campaign:						
Second most recent campaign:						
Third most recent campaign:						

In each of these three campaigns, how successfully were the social media elements *integrated* in the overall campaign? Please choose the appropriate number.

	Very unsuccessfully integrated	Unsuccessfully integrated	Somewhat unsuccessfully integrated	Neutral	Somewhat successfully integrated	Successfully integrated	Very successfully integrated
Most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3
Second most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3

	Very uncreative	Uncreative	Somewhat uncreative	Neutral	Somewhat creative	Creative	Very creative
Third most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3

In each of these three campaigns, how _creative_ were the social media elements in the overall campaign? Pleas choose the appropriate number.

	Very uncreative	Uncreative	Somewhat uncreative	Neutral	Somewhat creative	Creative	Very creative
Most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3
Second most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3
Third most recent campaign:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3

Please write or circle the appropriate answer.	Most recent	Second most recent	Third most recent
The client used the campaign?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
The campaign was the agency's first choice for the work?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
For your agency, was the client large (L), medium (M), or small (S)?			
How long has your agency worked with this client? (Years)			

Part 2

In each of the three campaigns that you listed on the previous page, please use the *scale* below to express the extent to which you agree with the statement in the two tables. *Please write the appropriate number in the box to the right of each statement or phrase completing the statement.*

If your answer is …	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Please, Put this number in the box:	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3

Compared to other social media campaigns with the same media approach, this campaign was …	Most recent	Second most recent	Third most recent
…on strategy			
…original			
…a good fit with the client's strategy			
…novel			
…an appropriate strategy for the client			
…different			
…built on a good strategy			

Statements	Most recent	Second most recent	Third most recent
The social media campaign was well integrated into the overall campaign.			
The client wanted the social media campaign to look like a cut-and-paste job of the traditional media content.			
The agency and the client shared a good working relationship.			
The client was open-minded.			
The client trusted the agency.			
The agency faced difficulties with the client in allocating enough social media budget compared to traditional media.			
We understood how the target market thinks.			

The client was risk averse.			
The agency worked with the client as part of the team.			
The social media campaign was designed to speak with the same "voice" as the other channel(s) used.			
The client focused more on the campaign details than on developing a strategy.			
There was mutual trust between the agency and the client.			
The client wanted to deliver almost identical content across all media channels.			
We knew the target audience well.			
The client was willing to accept more risky work.			
To do everything needed for the social media campaign, we would have run over budget.			
The client lacked social media expertise.			
The client developed a strong strategy.			
The social media element of the campaign was "seamless" with other advertising channels in how it communicated the brand message.			
The client let us try out new ideas for the campaign.			
The client sought an integrated marketing communications (IMC) campaign that delivered consistent content across all media.			
The client believed that they had more expertise in social media than the agency.			
The client wanted less risky work.			
There was tactical consistency across all media channels, but not necessarily strategic consistency.			
We identified the target audience.			
The media channels were linked to achieving the campaign objectives.			
The client understood just how large the social media investment needed to be.			
The client had confidence in the agency's capability.			
The agency–client relationship facilitated good work.			
The client had a good strategy guiding the execution in all media.			

The client did not trust what the agency was proposing.			
The client underestimated the advertising costs of social media compared to traditional media.			
We faced difficulties with the client's unwillingness to accept the campaign's risks.			
The client lacked a single strategy that covered all marketing communication channels.			
The client's expertise in social media facilitated good work.			
The target audience was unclear.			
The way that social media was integrated with traditional advertising was a good example of integrated marketing communications (IMC).			
The client did not understand social media.			
The client treated the agency as a vendor or an executor who should just do as the client instructs.			
The client was supportive of us seeking out the best work.			
The social media campaign was inconsistent with the traditional media campaign.			

Please, see the last part.

Part 3

Now, please tell us about yourself. Your responses will be used for classification purposes only.

Overall, how many years have you been in the advertising business? _____

What is your current job title? _____

Which area of the advertising business best describes your position? (Please check only one)

❍ Social media management.   ❍ Marketing communication.

❍ Social media planning.   ❍ Social media strategy.
❍ Media planning/research.   ❍ Creative.

❍ Other (Please specify): _____

Gender:

○ Male   ○ Female

Your age:

○ 18–24   ○ 25–34   ○ 35–44   ○ 45–54   ○ 55–64   ○ 65+

Your highest level of education:

○ High school   ○ TAFE / Diploma   ○ Undergraduate degree   ○ Postgraduate degree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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