

A Stage Model of Social Media Adoption

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Abstract: There is very little understanding of how organisations manage social media. In particular, there is no established path of activities that guide a company down the path of social readiness, and the management and organisation of social media is under-researched. Consequently, many organisations experience significant problems with their social media business profiles (SMBP). Stage of growth (SoG) models represent a picture of evolution, where the current stage can be understood in terms of history and future, providing an opportunity to identify the stages, paths of evolution, benchmark variables, and dominant problems experienced by organisations at each stage. Following a review of four decades (1974-2014) of SoG model research, and a review of existing social media research and practitioner insight across multiple domains, the authors adopt Gottschalk and Solli-Saether's (2010) [1] five step Stage Modelling Process as a research methodology to develop a stage model of SMBP implementation and management. The paper analyses the findings from Step 1 (Suggested Stage Model) and Step 2 (Conceptual Stage Model) of the Stage Modelling Process, before concluding with the key findings. This research contributes to academia by enhancing the existing four decades of knowledge of SoG models, extending it to the management of social media in an organisational context. This research is also a critical piece of research from a practitioner perspective, as organisations struggle to devise tactics and strategies to manage social media adoption and use.

Keywords: Social Media, IS Management, Stage Modelling Process, Dominant Problems, Benchmark Variables.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media are used by organisations for marketing, advertising, public relations, recruitment, research, product/service testing and review, idea generation, feedback, and occasionally, complaint handling [2, 3]. However, this has 'barely scratched the surface of what is coming and what is possible' [2, p.3]. There is a 'growing importance of social media as a strategic tool among organizations' [4, pp.3], as it can revolutionise how organisations engage with the market and society, creating new enterprise-wide possibilities and challenges from marketing and operations, to finance and human resource management [2].

Parveen [4, pp.2] suggests 'there is lack of understanding in terms of how social media benefits the organization' and 'there is no agreement with respect to how responsibility for social media should be allocated within organizations, how social media activities should be funded and governed, what should be outsourced, and what broader changes with regard to an organization's structures, processes, leadership, training, and culture are needed to harness the potential of this transformative force' [2, pp.4]. More importantly, there is no established 'path of activities' that guide a company down the path of 'social readiness' and there are 'no widely accepted industry-

specific best practices' [2, pp.4]. There is a dearth of peer-reviewed research focusing on social media management [2].

This paper aims to address the lack of research into managing social media in organisations by developing a stage model of social media business profile (SMBP) implementation and management. SoG models are a long established research approach to IS management over the past forty years, and a wealth of knowledge exists regarding the management of IS as they evolve and mature [1, 5]. SoG models represent 'a picture of evolution, where the current stage can be understood in terms of history and future' [1, pp.288], providing an opportunity to identify the number of stages, the paths of evolution, the benchmark variables, and the dominant problems experienced at each stage [1]. Researchers 'have struggled for decades to develop stages-of-growth models that are both theoretically founded and empirically validated' [1, pp.279]. Gottschalk and Solli-Saether [1] developed a five step Stage Modelling Process to analyse SoG models, representing a research procedure to improve theory building and empirical validation. Having reviewed the research, the authors adopt the Stage Modelling Process [1] to develop a stage model of SMBP implementation and management.

The paper continues in Section 2 with a review of extant research of SoG models. In Section 3, efforts to develop SoG models for social media [6, 7] are discussed, while the dominant problems associated

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with social media are also explored. Following extensive reviews of social media research and practitioner insight across multiple domains, the authors adopt Gottschalk and Solli-Saether's [1] five step Stage Modelling Process methodology in Section 4, and describe how this study develops a Suggested Stage Model (Step 1), before empirically testing it to develop a Conceptual Stage Model (Step 2). The paper analyses the findings from Step 1 and 2 in Section 5, reflecting on previous social media studies and eliciting key findings and requirements to progress this longitudinal study through Steps 3 to 5 of the Stage Modelling process. In Section 6, the authors conclude the paper, outlining limitations, before describing future research to extend the stage model through the theoretical (Step 3), empirical (Step 4), and revised (Step 5) stages of the modelling process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

SoG models have been widely used in research studies over the past four decades to explore how IS evolve, and to identify mechanisms for managing these systems at each growth stage. Evidence in the literature indicates that SoG models pre-define maturity for the IS, and establish progressive stages to plot a path toward that objective. However, different stages of growth in the use and development of IS require different approaches to strategy, and different approaches to strategy are chosen by different organisations, with different results [8]. The following sections discuss the use of SoG models over the past forty years concluding with an analysis of the most recent SoG models which focus on social media implementation and management.

2.1. Stages of Growth (SoG) Models

The earliest four stage model was developed by Gibson and Nolan [9] and later revised as six stages by Nolan [10]. The model emphasises the need for management strategy to be consistent with the organisation's stage, with respect to that technology [11]. McFarlan and McKenney [12] proposed a four stage model arguing it is not necessary to work through all elements of all stages, implying it is possible to select which aspects of IS management to move forward on. Similarly Rao *et al.* [13] found empirical evidence to support the validity of McFarlan and McKenney's [12] SoG model but could not support the specific stages. Earl [14] proposed a five stage model arguing that organisations would have different learning curves for different IS. However, the model has been

criticised as it only places an organisation at a certain stage without actually suggesting how the organisation moves to a more mature stage [11]. Galliers and Sutherland [11] propose a model describing the stages through which an organisation evolves with respect to use of IT, and indicates how organisations can move from initial stages to a more advanced maturity. However, this approach is disputed as it is more beneficial to focus on activities rather than outputs, as they are less contextual, and because activities provide decision makers with better indicators of what to do at each stage [15]. Numerous other authors have proposed theoretical stages of IS growth models based on these models, for a variety of purposes including end user computing [16, 17], information centres [18], technology based new ventures [19], IS planning [20] and IT portfolio management [21], and for the most part, empirical testing of the stages proposed in these models has been positive.

The advent of e-Business heralded the development of several new SoG models. McKay *et al.* [22] propose a model of e-Business implementation called the SoG-e which integrates Galliers and Sutherlands [11] SoG model to depict activities based on an organisation's Internet technologies as well as its traditional IS. The SoG-e presumes a progression of levels as the organisation accumulates knowledge, experience, qualifications, and expertise in e-Business. By contrast, Rayport and Jaworski [23] suggest a four-stage model of the evolution of B2B e-Commerce but the model is now considered flawed [24]. Rao *et al.* [13] also propose a SoG model for e-Commerce comprised of four phases. In a similar vein to [12], it has been proposed that organisations do not need to accomplish each stage successfully; organisations can begin in any phase, skipping certain stages; and, an organisation that is increasingly aware of IT and e-Commerce could begin with a later maturity phase [13]. While some researchers [25, 26] support the notion that organisations can select which aspects of the technology to move forward on, it has been argued that 'stages cannot be skipped because the experience learned from the previous stage is necessary for the next stage' [25]. Other studies [5] found that only two growth types, namely, the strategy and objectives, and the focus of the implementation, were consistent when examined empirically across several cases.

SoG models have also been adopted by to explore the evolution of Intranets in organisations [27-30]. Similar to [12], Damsgaard and Scheepers [29] suggest that progression can be made even though not all

elements are strictly in the same phase, and stages can be skipped. Duane and Finnegan [30] found that Intranets develop organically in early stages, evolve rapidly to become critical for day-to-day operations, extend to integrate the external value chain, and similar to the model proposed by [11], finally become institutionalised in the organisation. Watson *et al.* [31] developed a data warehousing SoG model based on [10] asserting that by understanding the stage, management would be better able to plan and would be better positioned to avoid any pitfalls. Gottschalk and Khandelwal [32] developed a four stage knowledge management technology (KMT) model, which was followed a six stage (Level 0-5) Knowledge Management Capability Assessment (KMCA) model [33], and a five level SoG model [34].

SoG models have also emerged in e-Government and IS in healthcare and education: a four stage e-Government SoG model [35] and a five stage SoG model for information architectures in local governmental agencies [36]. Organisations sometimes concatenate stages, and the number of stages may expand as technological advances are made, or discontinuities occur and a new SoG model may be required [35]. Similarly, advances in data warehousing led to revisions of a previous SoG model [31]. e-Government SoG models were later extended in a seven stage model [37] which recommends the adoption of a stage once there is consensus that there is value in moving forward. The model also suggests that stages may be skipped. SoG models were also previously developed to manage the evolution of IS in healthcare [26] and IT service outsourcing in higher education [38]. Arguably, these models build on Adalakun's [39] five stage and Gottschalk and Solli-Sæther's [40] three stage maturity models for IT outsourcing. However, neither model was tested. Other studies [26, pp.200] conclude 'there is still a way to go for having available widespread and detailed maturity models'.

It is suggested that 'the goal of future research must be the creation of improved models that avoid the problems evident in the Nolan model' [41, pp.474]. However, while there are numerous stage of growth models with a multitude of applications, 'there is little documentation on how to develop a maturity model that is theoretically sound, rigorously tested and widely accepted' [33, pp.2]. Few models have explicitly detailed how an organisation actually moves forward or transitions to a new stage [19], creating a gap in the literature that can only be filled with empirical life cycle

research. In this respect, Gottschalk and Solli-Sæther [1, pp.280-282] developed a modelling process to analyse stages of growth models in the context of their development, representing a theoretical and an empirical research procedure 'where the object changes its status from a suggested stage model, via a conceptual and theoretical stage model, to an empirical stage model, and finally to a revised stage model'. The process identified four key topics to analyse/theorise a stages of growth model:

1. Number of Stages: Organisational phenomena undergo transformations in their design characteristics that can be defined in terms of discrete stages of growth.
2. Paths of Evolution: An organisational phenomenon shows a predictable pattern of development from first stage to second stage, and so on, until it reaches the final stage, either directly or via bypassed or revisited stages.
3. Dominant Problems: Dominant problems at each stage of growth will statistically correspond with the conceptual formulations given for that stage.
4. Benchmark Variables: Values of benchmark variables for each stage of growth will statistically correspond with the conceptual formulations given for that stage [1, pp.280-282].

This enables the authors to identify the key characteristics of SoG models, which when integrated with extensive reviews of social media research and practitioner insight across multiple domains, will enable the authors to develop a stage model. The paper continues in Section 2.2 where recent efforts to develop SoG models for social media [6, 7] are discussed.

2.2. Social Media Stages of Growth Models

Social media has become a very important research topic in both personal and corporate contexts [2, 42]. However, very little research has been conducted to date on organisational use and management of social media [4]. This may be because organisational adoption of social media is slow compared to the growth of social media for personal purposes [43]. It has even been suggested [44, pp.2] that adoption of social media by organisations 'has levelled off or fallen'. However, the SoG literature has been extended by the emergence of two new models which pertain to the field of Web 2.0 and social media in particular.

Jacobs and Nakata [7, pp.6] propose a SoG model for social media adoption to 'provide a roadmap for improvement' for the planning and development of social media strategy. Heavily influenced by previous models [45], the six stage model includes a description of the focus at each stage, but it is a simplistic, non-specific approach to modelling. The model does not identify any mechanism by which progress can be measured and its paths of evolution are unclear. The model does not identify the management challenges or problems to be overcome at any of the stages, unlike Rao *et al.* [13] who identified 'Barriers' and 'Facilitators' at each stage. Ideally, all SoG models should identify 'benchmark variables' and 'dominant problems' at each stage [1]. Furthermore, the model is conceptualised on one single SoG model, and does not consider the contributions of any other SoG model. Even Earl [45, pp.37] describes his proposed model as 'highly idealized', and neither [45], nor [7] empirically test their models.

A five stage social media maturity model is proposed by Forrester [6] namely, (i) dormant; (ii) testing; (iii) co-ordinating; (iv) scaling and optimizing; and (v) empowering the workforce. However, while Forrester's SoG model and findings are interesting, the model is also confusing, particularly with respect to the 'Dormant Stage', which in essence is not a stage at all, as no social media activities occur. The final stage, 'Empowering' is also poorly developed which may be a symptom of how few organisations are at this stage, if indeed are any. In some instances, the model reveals a necessity to separate one variable into two or more variables, such as 'measurement'. Thus, while the models provided by [7] and [6] provide a basis from which to explore SoG models for social media, both models have limitations and need improvement before they are of benefit to organisations.

2.3. Dominant Problems Associated with Social Media Implementation

Dominant problems are varied, change from stage to stage, and can shift from a lack of skills, to a lack of resources, to a lack of strategy [1]. It is essential for a SoG model to conceptualise the dominant problems and empirical analysis is required to conceptualise in which stage(s) these problems occur [1]. Social media can have 'powerful' and 'surprising effects' on product use and individual and community outcomes, and that 'our intuitions may not always correctly predict social media's consequences' [2, pp.5-6]. Often the consequences are negative as inappropriate postings

have unimaginable and unintended consequences for the organisation's public persona and bottom line. Organisations struggle to manage negativity [3, 46-48] directed at the organisation through its SMBP. However, evidence from a multitude of sources [3, 7, 44, 47, 49, 50, 51] suggests that organisations have not developed strategies to manage social media. As social media adoption matures organisations must 'integrate social media strategies with their overall strategy' [2, pp.8].

Organisations must also be aware that strategies should focus on participation, sharing, and collaboration, rather than just advertising and selling [48]. Otherwise, goal incongruity and process disconnect occurs as the SMBP fails to match strategic goals, business needs, and audience desires [47, 52]. Uncoordinated efforts also reduce effectiveness and cause confusion [6, 50]. Monologue also occurs if stakeholders are not involved in ideation or co-creation [53]. Ambiguity regarding social media strategy also has a negative impact [48] and failing to manage efforts 'may not portray the image the company would like or worse cause damage to their reputation' [7, pp.3]. 'Embarrassment' and 'damage' to reputation by staff misuse of social media is also a risk [54, pp. 49-50]. Thus, all stakeholders must learn to use social media to meet their respective objectives [2].

Failure to formalise usage policies for internal/external social media use also has unintended consequences [3, 6, 48-50, 55, 56]. Social media has a 'dark side' that leads to 'abuse, addiction and misuse' reducing productivity, and an increasingly 'strained computing and network resource' and 'misrepresentation' due to staff failure to distinguish between personal and business use [49, pp.149]. Training is a possible solution but it is a long-term commitment [55]. Social media also poses significant technological threats [57-59] and brand hijacking, squatter accounts, and lack of control over content are additional issues [7]. Adoption may also be hindered by a lack of management support [6]. Another problem is a perception that the SMBP does not require additional resources [6, 50, 55]. These problems may dissipate as social media matures and organisations overcome the 'newness' factor [55]. Thus, it may be later in the stages of growth before such a formalisation may occur, which may be because management are unaware of the extent of use, the negative consequences of misuse, or because of a decision to allow social media use develop organically at the early stages to establish it as a viable business system. It is

only through empirical analysis of the stages that answers to these questions can emerge.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

As described in Section 2, Gottschalk and Solli-Saether [1, pp.280-282] developed a five step Stage Modelling Process to analyse SoG models in the context of development, and identified four key areas to analyse/theorise a SoG model, namely: Number of Stages; Paths of Evolution; Dominant Problems; and Benchmark Variables. As indicated by the circled area, this paper focuses on the development and empirical analysis of a Suggested Stage Model (Step 1) and a Conceptual Stage Model (Step 2) of SMBP implementation and management, identifying the stages, the paths of evolution, and the dominant problems as shown in Figure 1.

3.1. Step 1: Research Methodology: The Suggested Stage Model

The Suggested Stage Model is ‘the initial stage model’ which integrates ‘ideas from both research and practice’ and is derived from an analysis of the existing research and insights gleaned from practitioners [1, pp.284]. Using this approach, [1] developed a Suggested Stage Model for e-Government Operability. In the context of this study, the authors applied these techniques, and following extensive reviews of four decades (1974-2014) of SoG model research, and a review of existing social media research and practitioner insight across multiple domains, were in a position to develop a Suggested Stage Model of SMBP

implementation and management as discussed in Section 4.1.

3.1. Step 2: Research Methodology: The Conceptual Stage Model

The Conceptual Stage Model is derived from empirical testing and evidence to ensure that the ‘contents of stages are developed in an iterative cycle involving dominant problems that seem different at various stages’ [1, pp.284]. As evidenced by the literature review in Section 2, the majority of SoG models have never been empirically tested. As described in Section 2.2, the Jacobs and Nakata [7, pp.4] model for the ‘evolution of social media’ has also not been empirically tested. Hence, ‘the debate over whether stages exist has suffered from a lack of empirical evidence’ [1, pp.280]. However, once the Suggested Stage Model has been developed from a review of the literature and reflection on practitioner insight, it forms a platform from which the Conceptual Stage Model can be developed and empirically tested [1]. While Gottschalk and Solli-Saether [1, pp.285] only use ‘two cases to test the suggested stage model for e-government interoperability’, in this study the authors decided to refine this approach given past criticisms of establishing the existence of stages in SoG models, and the nature and characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies. Therefore, the authors adopted a mixed-methodology approach consisting of four data collection methods, including:

1. a brief online survey (see Appendix) using Survey Monkey: 103 organisations from 20

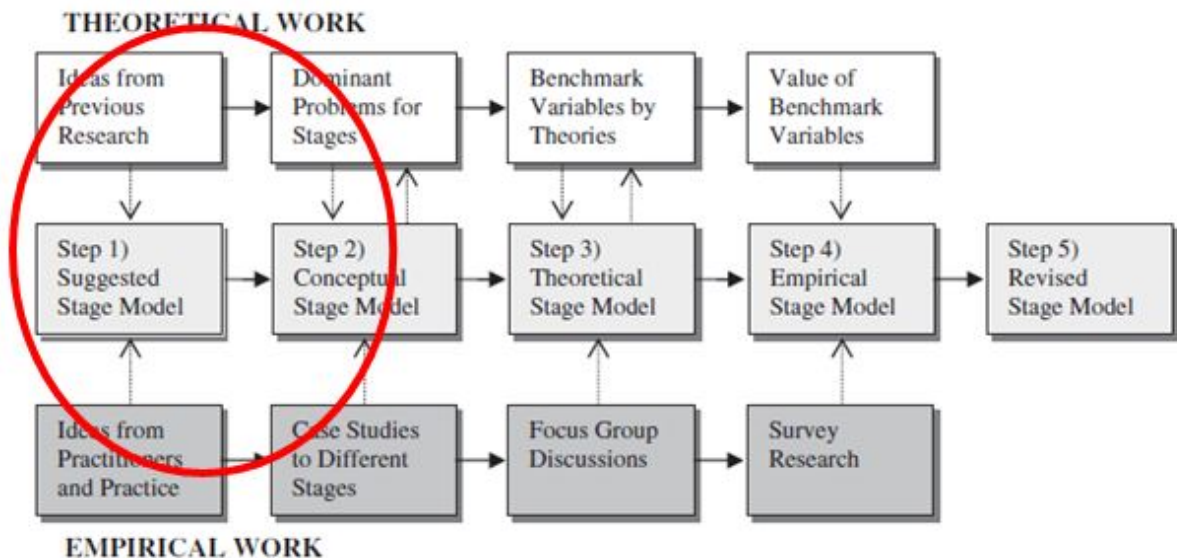


Figure 1: Step 1 & 2 of the stage modelling process [1].

industries responded, out of 150 organisations from 25 industries contacted;

2. an online review by the authors of each organisation's Social Media Business Presence (SMBP) predominantly consisting of Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, but also engagement with YouTube, Slideshare, Prezi, Pinterest, etc. This is similar to previous authors [4] who engaged in website/social media page analysis.
3. follow-up telephone interviews with those who agreed to participate further in the study: 60 organisations (58.25% of survey respondents) agreed to a telephone interview; and,
4. personal interviews with senior management/senior staff in 10 organisations.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Step 1: Findings: The Suggested Stage Model

Having reflected on the SoG model research and a review of existing social media research and

practitioner insight across multiple domains in Section 2, the authors hypothesise that an organisation's SMBP evolves through five distinct stages, namely: (i) Experimentation and Learning; (ii) Rapid Growth; (iii) Formalisation; (iv) Consolidation and Integration; and, (v) Institutional Absorption. Table 1 outlines the key facets of the Suggested Stage Model.

4.1.1. Experimentation and Learning

Social media was only recently adopted and is still evolving, and its diffusion is restricted to external communication and PR [60]. It is reported that 58% of organisations are in the early stages of adopting social media [42] and in most organisations this adoption is a grassroots effort which is often just as effective as a formal pilot programme [61]. Typical activities at this stage involve creating a basic SMBP on one or two social media platforms, announcing the organisation's arrival in the social media space, posting a number of comments, images and videos, and providing some product/service information [6, 61]. The experimentation and learning stage may initially be departmental/function driven, or the work of a single individual in the marketing or PR team [2, 7] or may be outsourced [2].

Table 1: The Suggested Stage Model for SMBP Implementation and Management

Stage	Strategy	Focus	Structure	Management
1. Experimentation and Learning	It is experimental with every department doing their own thing.	Announcing launch of SMBP, posting a number of comments, images and videos, and providing some product/service information.	Individual or departmental drive.	None or very little involvement.
2. Rapid Growth	It is coordinated across all departments by management, and a number of goals and objectives have been established.	Consumer-centric focus. Efforts aimed at increasing internal and external awareness. Customers are encouraged to connect, follow, like, recommend, and comment, on products and its services.	Bottom-up widespread user participation coupled with top-down management.	Support and Encourage.
3. Formalisation	It is formalised and controlled across the company, with a strategy aligned with the business plan. Staff adhere to an established set of rules.	Planning, strategy, governance, and alignment with overall business strategy.	A more centralised corporate driven model to coordinate efforts.	Controlled by management.
4. Consolidation and Integration	It is very well integrated with key business processes across the company, and it is driving a fundamental change in how we do business.	Optimisation of processes and creating scale. Fundamental business change. Pursue alignment with external partners/suppliers. Co-creation / ideation, crowdsourcing emerge.	Extension of corporate model to integrate external partners, suppliers, customers, communities, experts, etc. Micro-outsourcing of activities may also occur.	Shared by management / staff.
5. Institutional Absorption	It is embedded into the core of what we do, and how we do it, from customers to suppliers, from internal partners to external partners.	De-facto application for key business tasks. Enterprise-wide social media technologies for the entire workforce Generate new/reengineer existing business models.	Aimed at customers, suppliers and partners, as business connectivity is transformed to establish wider business relationships.	Shared by management / staff or decentralised.

4.1.2. Rapid Growth

Social media adoption experiences rapid growth and organisations have difficulty adapting to the pace [48]. Organisations may have been induced to use social media by pressures from competitors, trading partners and customers [4]. Use may expand from marketing to enhancing customer relationships, reputation management, value and brand equity, digital advertising, ideation [61] and establishing networks with business partners, while product/service innovation may also emerge [63]. As 'social media provide an efficient and accessible means of encouraging and supporting team members working together on shared objects' [64, pp.1], staff may focus on task-driven processes and implementing early processes to manage them [6]. Internal communication can emerge enabling teams to share tasks, information and knowledge [61]. However, organisations may be wary of using social media to share in-house information [60].

4.1.3. Formalisation

As adoption matures, the need for organisations 'to integrate their social media strategies with their overall strategy' becomes more important [2, pp.8]. However, responsibility is a problem at this stage because of the varying tools, ease of use and creation, duality of workplace and personal use, and lack of a strategic plan [7]. Thus, organisations need to 'develop vibrant, participative and agreeable policies to guide social media participation at work when trying to deal with challenges that arise from such participation so as employees understand implications of their actions concerning the boundary between personal and work boundaries' [49, pp.149]. Developing a social media policy is positively linked to staff attitudes towards social media adoption [60].

4.1.4. Consolidation and Integration

Significant process improvements can be achieved through efficient social networking and organisational connectivity [65]. Thus, organisations are increasingly deploying social media internally to enhance their knowledge management and intra-firm collaboration efforts [64, 66] and transform the relationship and norms of behaviour among organisations, staff, and consumers [2]. This environment represents a shift that requires the development of new strategies and tactics [67]. Social media may also transform how organisations engage with staff, enabling them to create dynamic relationships with remote experts [68],

to crowdsource new ideas [69], or to engage in micro-outsourcing [70, 71].

4.1.5. Institutional Absorption

Organisations can use social media to develop new business models when they reach a higher level of maturity [7] enhancing and transforming virtually every business process and function [72]. Social media affect a systematic approach to improving business processes, which becomes a key priority [6]. As the organisation becomes more experienced, and the technology matures, usage shifts, and social media become the de-facto application of choice for performing certain key business tasks [6]. At this stage, staff integration reaches a point where organisations implement enterprise-wide social media for the entire workforce, empowering staff to regularly use social media [6].

Thus, having adopted Gottschalk and Solli-Saether's [1] five step Stage Modelling Process, and having conducted a thorough review of the literature and reflection on practitioner insight in order to develop a Suggested Stage Model (Step 1) for SMBP implementation and management, the authors are in a position to empirically test this model in order to develop a Conceptual Stage Model (Step 2).

4.2. Step 2: Findings: The Conceptual Stage Model

The Conceptual Stage Model should clearly 'illustrate the content characteristics of each stage, as well as significant differences between stages where preceding and following stages have different kinds of dominant problems' [1, pp.284]. A common method to empirically test the stages is to form a 'description of the stages of growth' and to request management to 'indicate which stage most closely describes the present situation or status in their company' [1, pp.284]. Using this technique, the authors used the stage descriptions from the Suggested Stage Model to test for the existence and characteristics of the stages. To identify the dominant problems associated with stages, the authors adopted the same approach as [1] and [19] whereby survey respondents and interviewees were requested to consider the dominant problems, and identify the stage(s) at which they occur. As shown in Figure 2, 78.64% of the 103 organisations that responded identify with the stages as portrayed in the Suggested Stage Model. 21.36% did not identify with any of the stages. As previously discussed, it is essential for a stage model to conceptualise the dominant problems and empirical analysis is required

It is experimental with every department doing their own thing.	25.24%	26
It is coordinated across all departments by management, and a number of goals and objectives have been established.	26.21%	27
It is formalised and controlled across the company, with a clear social media strategy aligned with the business plan, and everyone adheres to a well-established set of rules and procedures.	16.50%	17
It is very well integrated with key business processes across the company, and it is driving a fundamental change in how we do business.	8.74%	9
It is completely embedded into the core of what we do, and how we do it, from customers to suppliers, from internal partners to external partners.	1.94%	2
None of the above.	21.36%	22

Figure 2: Evidence of stages from empirical testing of the suggested stage model.

to conceptualise in which stage(s) these problems occur [1]. Thus, Figure 3 outlines the top six dominant problems reported by organisations that identified with Stages 1 of 4. Only two organisations indicated they were in Stage 5, thus the authors believe the evidence is insufficient to robustly identify Stage 5 or its dominant problems. The authors believe that as this longitudinal study progresses through Steps 3 to 5 of the Stage Modelling Process [1], an increasing number of organisations may emerge that are consistent with Stage 5, thus enabling future clarification of this stage and its dominant problems. Further exploration of these findings in follow up telephone and personal interviews with senior managers and senior staff members in 60 organisations (58.25% of 103 organisations who agreed to participate further in the study) revealed a number of additional insights into organisational adoption of social media.

4.2.1. Stage 0: Exploration

Of the 22 organisations (21.36%) who did not recognise any of the stages of growth in the Suggested Stage Model, respondents in 14 of these organisations contend that their organisation is in a stage that precedes Stage 1 (Experimentation and Learning). In effect, the respondents contend that there is a Stage 0. Follow up interviews with all of the respondents reveals that many of the organisations first learn of social media from members of staff, or sometimes a senior manager, who uses social media for personal purposes. Some of these respondents even suggested that they had first learned of social media from their children prior to their own personal use. This personal use then evolved over time into considering ways in which it could be used for business purposes. This was then typically followed by online research of the types

of social media being used in a business context, how they are being used by other organisations, and to what effect. Some of the respondents suggested that increased personal use of the Internet, Apps., Web 2.0, and social media over the past decade has blurred the lines between personal use and organisational adoption and learning when it comes to emerging technologies, and that in many cases it is personal use that leads to organisational use, as evidenced by Facebook personal profiles leading to the development of Facebook business pages.

Interestingly, the dominant problems in Stage 0, which are in reality inhibitors to adoption, are very similar to the dominant problems experienced by organisations in Stage 1 as shown in Figure 4 with one exception: the organisation's need to identify clear metrics for ROI prior to adoption. Although Stage 0 organisations cite a lack of time, skills and expertise, budget, understanding, and staff as dominant problems, the lack of clear metrics appears to be a significant inhibitor (3rd ranked dominant problem) to the initial adoption of social media in these organisations. According to one Sales Manager, 'I'm well aware of the possibilities with social media, but this is considered to be an extremely time consuming activity and if we can't show clear metrics for ROI, it won't get approval on a business level'. This is an important finding when one considers that the lack of clear metrics for ROI does not rank very highly in the top 6 dominant problems until Stage 3 (ranked 1st) in organisations that have already adopted social media. Although lack of clear metrics for ROI is also identified as a dominant problem in Stage 2 in organisations that have already adopted social media, it only ranks as the 5th most dominant problem.

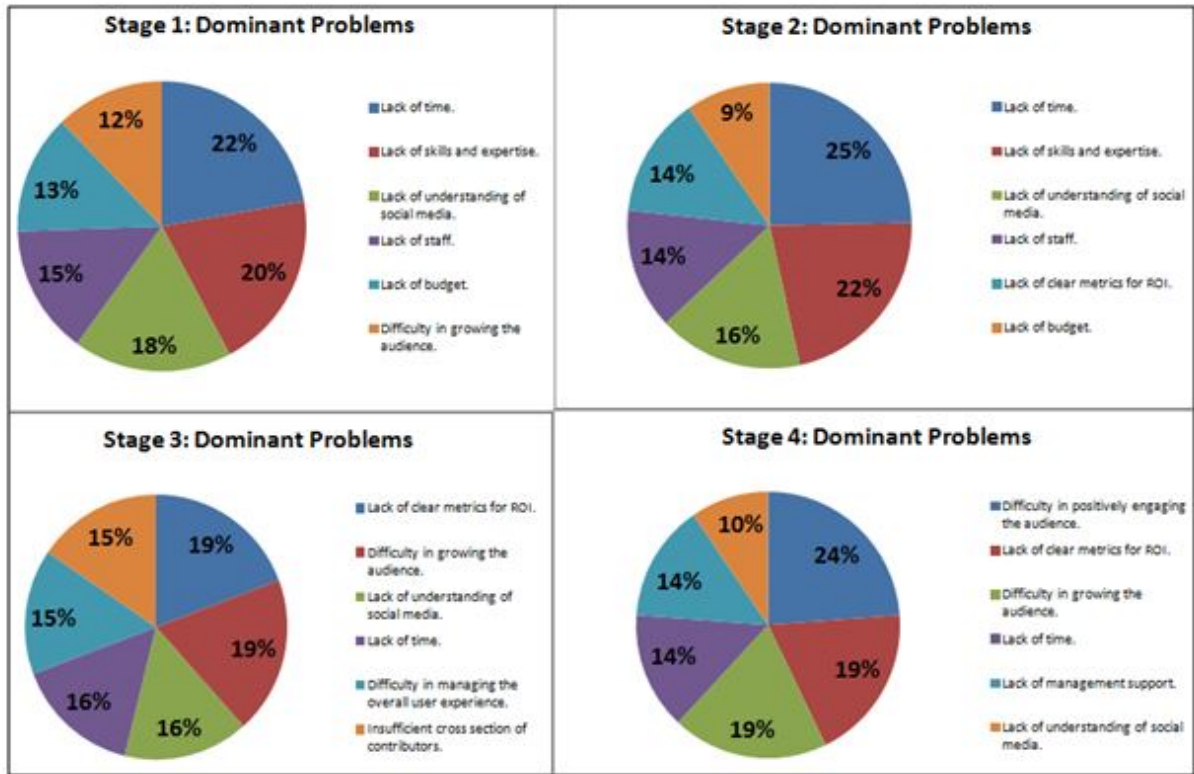


Figure 3: Dominant problems with social media in stages 1-4.

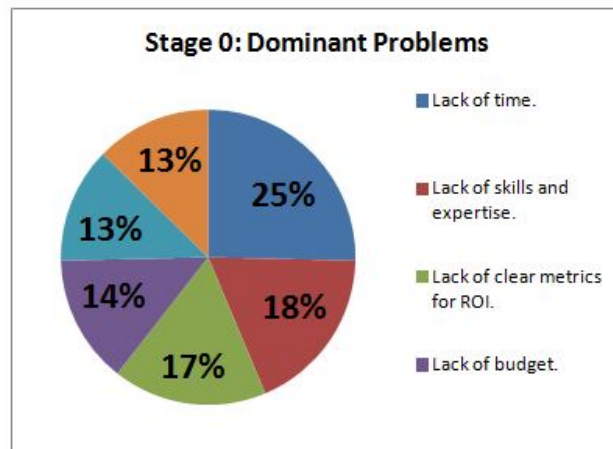


Figure 4: Dominant problems with social media in Stage 0.

Thus, the findings reveal that the stage model for managing an organisation’s SMBP should be revised to include a Stage 0 entitled Exploration which considers personal use as a possible precursor to organisational use. However, the authors conclude that this Stage 0 is not like the ‘Dormant Stage’ proposed by [6, pp.4] which is overtly negative only focusing on ‘resistance to any use of social technologies due to unwillingness to participate or analysis paralysis’. Interestingly, interviewees in a previous study [1, pp.286] suggested the inclusion of a ‘conceptual planning stage’ preceding Stage 1 which was never adopted in their stage model

of e-Government Operability. However, a Stage 0 in SoG models is not entirely unusual as it has been previously noted in SoG models [21, 33].

4.2.2. Stage 1: Experimentation and Learning and Stage 2: Rapid Growth

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of organisations (51.45%) indicate that they are in Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Suggested Stage Model. Further discussion with the respondents reveal that Rapid Growth is not an appropriate descriptor of Stage 2. Instead respondents suggest that Stage 2 is better described as Direction

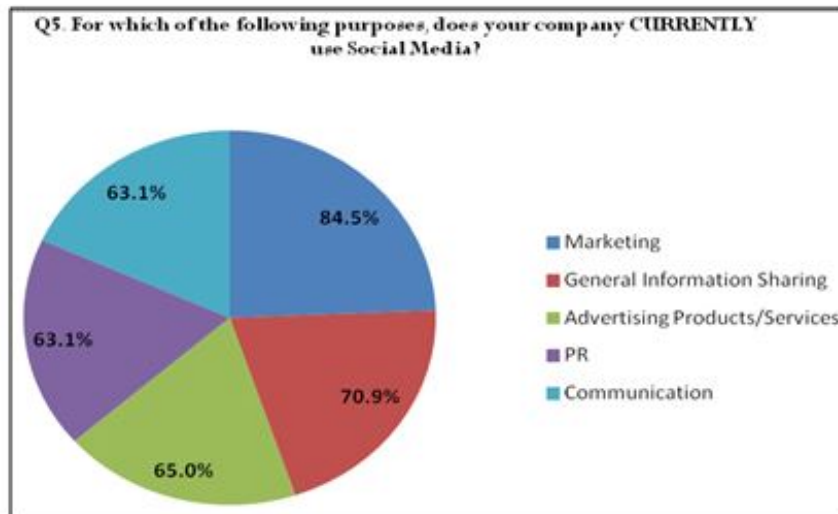


Figure 5: Evidence of SMBP use in Stages 1 and 2.

and Coordination as it is through these types of management activities that rapid growth is enabled. Thus, the authors of this study undertook to revise the stage description in the Conceptual Stage Model.

With respect to Stage 1, the majority of respondents indicate that initial development of the SMBP is driven by the Marketing Department or an individual in the marketing function. It is then unsurprising that the top five uses reported by organisation at Stage 1 and Stage 2 as shown in Figure 5 relate to marketing (87 organisations), information sharing (73 organisations), advertising (67 organisations), PR (65 organisations), and communication (65 organisations). An earlier study also found that marketing related activities drive early adoption of social media [63].

Clarity of the social media strategy and objectives is essential for effective organisational adoption [6]. Thus, the authors engaged in a thematic keyword analysis of each organisation's stated objectives for their SMBP as clarified in Stage 2. This analysis reveals that increasing brand awareness (63 organisations) and driving sales (43 organisations) are the overwhelming stated key objectives. Only 3 organisations identified communication as part of their objective for using social media, and only 1 organisation identified customer feedback. Further analysis reveals that despite widespread use of the SMBP in Stage 1 and Stage 2, only 30 organisations (29.1%) use social media to gather customer feedback. There also appears to be significant shortcoming with respect to analysis of customer feedback as shown in Figure 6, as only 17 organisations (16.5%) do so, which is only 56% of the

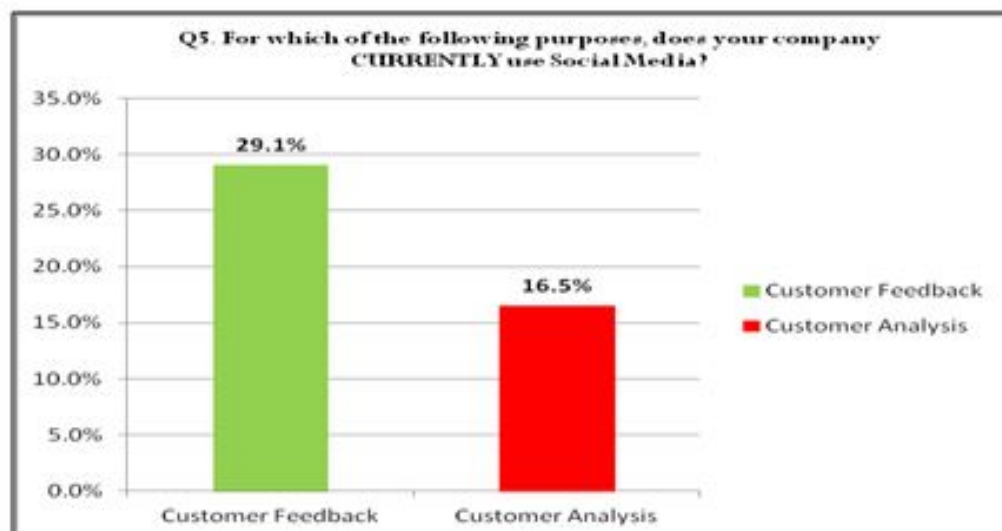


Figure 6: Evidence of customer feedback/analysis in Stages 1 and 2.

30 organisations that actually gather feedback in the first instance. Overall, these results are a concern as they seem to indicate that organisations still do not grasp the enormous potential of using social media to better understand and engage with customers, and the benefits of analysing customer feedback for better product/service design and delivery. This also supports previous suggestions that 'another important and, as yet, under researched area relates to the optimal social media tactics for consumers' [2, pp.7]. Organisations clearly need support to develop consumer focused social media strategies.

As shown previously in Figure 3, lack of time, skills and expertise, and understanding of social media are the top 3 dominant problems in both Stage 1 and Stage 2, accounting for over 60% of the dominant problems in both stages. Interestingly, the lack of time, and lack of skills and expertise increase in significance as dominant problems in Stage 2, while the lack of understanding diminishes, as organisations become more familiar with the technology. This lends credence to the proposition that Stage 1 is about experimentation and learning. Curiously, interviewees also indicate that this lack of knowledge, skills, and expertise was a factor in organisations decision to participate further in this study - 60 organisations (58.25%) agreed to participate further. Responsibility is also an issue at this stage as many of the interviewees who worked on the initial adoption of social media believe it is adversely impacting on their workload, and they no longer want the responsibility for it. This suggests that at this stage, social media requires dedicated knowledge experts to advance its adoption. This is also evident in the survey, as lack of time is the highest ranked dominant problem and a lack of staff is the fourth highest ranked dominant problem in Stage 2. Respondents also suggest this hinders any development of a social media strategy formally or even informally, as staff know there is a lack of budget to implement it. In Stage 2, most organisations appear to overcome the difficulties experienced in growing the audience in Stage 1. However, the lack of clear metrics for ROI begins to become a problem in Stage 2 ranking as the 5th most dominant problem.

Interestingly, a number of organisations that indicate they are at Stage 2 of the Suggested Stage Model reveal they are starting to develop social media strategies. However, many of these organisations are experiencing difficulties in devising strategies. In fact, 21 organisations have empowered just one person to devise the strategy for the entire company. This is not

best practice and a team/group based approach is recommended [49]. This view is also expressed by one interviewee who suggest this approach results in a very one dimensional perspective (i.e. solely based on marketing). According to the interviewee 'it is managed by one person who is establishing a model that will incorporate goals and objectives. At present the objective is limited to establishing our presence amongst our target market through Facebook, LinkedIn and to some extent Twitter. We are overly focused on getting our message out and not really listening to what our customers have to say'. Similarly another interviewee remarks that a lack of resources is a problem at this stage stating 'we have a clear strategy but we lack the ability to give it the full attention it requires due to lack of staff'. Lack of coordination may also be a significant issue at this stage as one interviewee reveals that 'our company only reviews our social media presence one a year and it is largely managed by volunteers rather than being the sole responsibility of any individual or group'. One organisation had already outsourced its social media management, while an interviewee from another organisation suggests that 'we do not have the in-house skills so we are considering outsourcing our social media profile'. Incongruity and lack of coordination appear to be a common theme in organisations that indicated they were in Stage 2 as many interviewees described their SMBP as 'patchy and incoherent', only 'updated sporadically', and 'ad-hoc'. There also appears to be ambiguity and uncertainty over the purpose of the SMBP and one interviewee suggests 'we are finding it difficult to keep coming up with relevant content'. These findings are consistent with the findings for Stage 1 and 2 from the survey as shown in Figure 3.

Evidence from the literature of previous SoG models indicate that use of the technology is often a reliable indicator of the level of maturity [5, 13, 31, 45], and the authors believe that this evidence of use of the SMBP coupled with the associated dominant problems seem consistent with the organisations maturity stages as indicated by the respondents (i.e.) respondents have accurately indicated the stage of maturity for their own organisation with respect to management and dominant problems of the SMBP in Stage 1 and 2.

4.2.3. Stage 3: Formalisation

Of the 103 organisations who responded to the initial survey, only 17 organisations (16.5%) indicate that they have evolved to Stage 3 of the SoG model.

Q3. When did you first start using Social Media in your organisation for business purposes?

Answer Choices	Responses	
0-6 months	5.83%	6
6-12 months	7.77%	8
12-18 months	8.74%	9
18-24 months	10.68%	11
> 2 years	20.39%	21
> 3 years	17.48%	18
> 4 years	12.62%	13
> 5 years	16.50%	17
Total		103

Figure 7: Length of time organisations have been using social media.

This is quite surprising given the length of time that the respondents have been using social media in the organisation for business purposes as shown in Figure 7. In fact, 69 organisations (66.99%) have been using social media for two years or more, and 28.82% have been using it for four or more years, yet only 9 organisations (10.68%) have evolved to Stage 4 and only 2 organisations have evolved to Stage 5. This seems to indicate that SMBP adoption can stagnate or slows considerably at this point in its evolution. This lends credence to assertions made in other studies [44, pp.2] that adoption of social media by organisations 'has levelled off or fallen'.

However, one has to consider the dominant problems to shed some light on the reasons why adoption of the SMBP may stagnate in Stage 3. It is clear from interviews with senior management and senior staff in respondent organisations, that once social media strategies are developed and linked to business strategies, metrics must be identified and measured. Interviews with respondents indicate that a lack of viable and reliable metrics to underpin the social media strategy greatly undermine efforts to secure funding and investment in the SMBP, as management are unwilling to invest until the ROI can be measured. These assertions are underpinned by the results of the survey shown in Figure 3, which reveals that lack of clear metrics for ROI becomes a significant problem in Stage 3, ranking joint highest dominant problem. The other dominant problem in Stage 3 ranked as joint highest, is that organisations report a difficulty in further growing the audience at this stage. It is thus clear that a failure to invest in social media adoption at Stage 3 due to a lack of clear metrics for ROI, has a significant negative impact on the organisations ability to grow its

audience using social media. This indicates that social media adoption can stagnate in Stage 3 without investment.

Discussion with respondents reveals excessive control by management which traditionally is reported to stymie adoption of IS in typical formalisation/control stages [9, 22] is not an issue in social media adoption. In fact, lack of understanding of social media appears to become a problem again at Stage 3, as there appears to be a lack of understanding of how to progress the SMBP adoption. This is described as business process disconnect [6, 7]. This may also be related to the fact that survey respondents report that there is a difficulty in managing the overall user experience, and an insufficient cross section of contributors in Stage 3. This may be considered as monologue and a lack of stakeholder involvement [53]. While lack of time is also a problem in Stage 3, it is not ranked as high as it is in Stage 1 and Stage 2.

4.2.4. Stage 4: Consolidation and Integration and Stage 5: Institutional absorption

Of the 103 organisational respondents, 9 organisations (8.74%) indicate they are in Stage 4. Each of these organisations are engaged in a mix of activities using social media that has surpassed its use as a marketing and PR tool, transforming its use to engage established customers in the co-creation of new products and services. Social media is also used in project management and R&D, while also being used to source partners and suppliers. Interestingly, 3 of the organisations use social media for crowdsourcing while 1 is also engaged in crowdfunding. User generated content (UGC) also features prominently in 5 of the organisations. The HR

Departments in 7 of these organisations also use social media to identify skilled individuals for recruitment purposes. Six of the organisations also overhauled their website to embed social media content. An interviewee from one company, who indicated that they were at Stage 4 of the Suggested Stage Model, suggests that different social media platforms attract different customers when revealing 'our SMBP is broad, focusing on Twitter, Google Ads and Blogging and Facebook. We find that we have attracted different types of consumers on Twitter/FB, so it works well. Our use of social media has also prompted us to develop a new website in order to integrate everything'. However, while integration is clearly evident in these organisations, consolidation also appears to occur. One interviewee cautions about trying to do too much too soon on social media suggesting that they had abandoned some social media platforms suggesting that the organisation had 'learned the hard way that it is best to select only a few platforms once you have finished experimenting with the pros and cons. It is best to do these few well rather than to have too many and have no market penetration at all'.

The most dominant problem at this stage is a difficulty in positively engaging the audience (24%). Although social media is often touted as an ideal interface to engage customers in co-creation and ideation, some of the organisations in Stage 4 of the Suggested Stage Model indicate that they experienced a difficulty in positively engaging the audience. According to one interviewee 'you just can't open up the discussion to all customers on social media as you will just get too much noise and negativity in the feedback. We have learned that the hard way. You have to take an approach whereby you seek out valued opinions - those views on your company, your products, your services from the outside looking in - views that make you sit up and think about the fundamentals of what you do, and how you do it. Social media is a great way to identify the power user, the critical influencer of other consumers of your product. It is these people you want to engage with in ideation and co-creation'. From another perspective, negative consumer feedback on social media can be interpreted positively as one interviewee describes how 'we hosted a preview of a new ad campaign on a secure page on our website. We invited our most active customers on Facebook to go to the site and provide us with feedback. It was fantastically negative - fantastic because we pulled the ad based on the negative feedback. We revised the campaign and the second

set of reviews was far more positive from our customers. After we released it, it became one of our most successful advertising campaigns. We couldn't have done it without social media'.

Lack of clear metrics for ROI (19%) continues to be a significant problem for organisations in Stage 4. It is clear that much remains to be done in organisations and by researchers to develop clear metrics to measure the social media ROI. One interviewee states 'in our business we know we have to do social media but it's a real challenge to quantify precisely why'. Another interviewee alludes to the problem 'stemming for a lack of knowledge and skills in data analysis and social media metrics. This lack of knowledge and understanding of social media metrics is also closely linked to the survey responses which identify a lack of understanding as the 6th highest ranked dominant problem in Stage 4. Lack of management support is also identified for the first time as a dominant problem (ranked 5th highest) in the Suggested Stage Model. Further discussion with organisations reveals that this typically pertains to 'management being a little in the dark with regard to how to further integrate social media into business processes' according to one interviewee.

Only 2 organisations (1.94%) indicate they are in Stage 5. Thus, as previously stated the authors contend that there is insufficient data arising from this study to determine the existence or characteristics of Stage 5 or its dominant problems.

5. CONCLUSIONS

There is no established path of activities that guide a company down the path of social readiness, and the management and organisation of social media is under-researched [2, pp.4]. A Conceptual Stage Model should clearly 'illustrate the content characteristics of each stage, as well as significant differences between stages where preceding and following stages have different kinds of dominant problems' [1, pp.284]. Thus, having analysed the findings from the mixed-methodology research approach, the authors are better positioned to develop the Conceptual Stage Model for managing an organisation's Social Media Business Profile (SMBP) as outlined in Table 2.

Descriptively, the model can be used to evaluate the use, maturity and paths of evolution of the organisation's SMBP. Prescriptively the model can be used to formulate an appropriate strategy to integrate

Table 2: The Conceptual Stage Model for SMBP Implementation and Management

Stages of Growth	Strategy	Dominant Problem	Focus	Structure	Management
Stage 0: Exploration	Individuals in the organisation experiment with social media for personal use and research its possible application for business use. ROI may need to be established before adoption occurs.	a) Lack of time. b) Lack of skills and expertise. c) Lack of clear metrics for ROI. d) Lack of budget. e) Lack of understanding. f) Lack of staff.	Focused on personal use initially, and later on researching use in a business context.	Personal	None
Stage 1: Experimentation and Learning	Social media adoption is experimental with every department doing their own thing. There is little management involvement.	a) Lack of time b) Lack of skills and expertise. c) Lack of understanding d) Lack of staff. e) Lack of budget. f) Difficulty in growing audience.	The top five uses at this stage relate to marketing, information sharing, advertising, PR, and communication.	Individual or marketing department or outsourced	None or very little involvement.
Stage 2: Direction and Coordination	Social media adoption increases as management provide greater direction and coordination of efforts across all departments. A number of goals and objectives are established.	a) Lack of time b) Lack of skills and expertise. c) Lack of understanding d) Lack of staff. e) Lack of clear metrics for ROI. f) Lack of budget.	Increasing brand awareness and driving sales are two primary stated objectives. Use still relates to marketing, information sharing, advertising, PR, and communication but some customer feedback may be collected/analysed.	Coordinated model at department level	Management provide direction and coordinate efforts
Stage 3: Formalisation	Social media becomes more formalised and a clear strategy is developed, but further investment/deployment of resources is based on establishing clear metrics for ROI.	a) Lack of clear metrics for ROI. b) Difficulty in growing audience. c) Lack of understanding d) Lack of time e) Difficulty managing user experience. f) Insufficient contributors.	The importance of customer feedback and analysis comes to the fore as a drive to improve metrics for ROI is prioritised.	Coordinated at business level	Management establish metrics for ROI and allocate resources
Stage 4: Consolidation and Integration	Social media becomes better integrated with key business processes and begins to drive a fundamental change in how business is done.	a) Difficulty in positively engaging the audience. b) Lack of clear metrics for ROI. c) Difficulty in growing the audience. d) Lack of time. e) Lack of management support. f) Lack of understanding	Social media surpasses its use as a marketing and PR tool, transforming to engage established customers in the co-creation of new products and services. Use is also expanded to source partners and suppliers, support project management, and engage in R&D. Crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, and user generated content (UGC) also emerge, while HR use social media to identify skilled individuals. Social media also becomes embedded in the organisations website.	Coordinated at business level	
Stage 5: Institutional Absorption	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

social media with business strategy, and in highlighting the dominant problems, it provides organisations with an opportunity to anticipate and plan for their management. This study and the emergence of the Conceptual Stage Model, partially addresses the

'Management and Organisation' element of the Social Media and Business Transformation Framework for Research [2, pp.4]. However, this research not only contributes to academia by enhancing the existing four decades of knowledge of SoG models, extending it to

APPENDIX

Survey Questions

Number	Question
1	How many employees does your company have? (Please choose only one)
2	Which of the following categories best describes your business sector (Please choose only one)
3	When did you first start using social media in your company for business purposes? (Please choose only one)
4	What are your company's goals / objectives in using Social Media for business?
5	For which of the following purposes, does your company use Social Media? (Please tick all that apply)
6	How frequently does your company use the following Social Media technologies? (Please tick all that apply)
7	Which of the following best describes your company's CURRENT Social Media Business Presence? (Please choose only one)
8	Which of the following problems, if any, has your company experienced when developing your Social Media Business Presence? (Please tick all that apply)
9	Which of the following key performance indicators do you CURRENTLY use, or INTEND to use, to measure the performance of your company's Social Media Business Presence?
10	Would you be willing to participate in further studies to improve the use of Social Media for business?

the management of social media in an organisational context, it is also a critical piece of research from a practitioner perspective, as organisations struggle to devise tactics and strategies to manage social media adoption and use. In addition to the social media stages of growth model, other important findings emerged:

- a) There is strong evidence to support the social media stages of growth model as 78.64% of respondents identify with it. The majority of organisations are in early stages of social media adoption (Stage 1 or Stage 2). Only two organisations indicate they are in Stage 5 and there is insufficient evidence to clarify this stage and its dominant problems.
- b) The lack of gathering/analysing customer feedback means organisations clearly do not grasp the enormous potential of using social media to better understand and engage with customers, and the benefits of analysing customer feedback for better product/service design and delivery.
- c) Overall there is an apparent lack of understanding of what to do with social media and a lack of clear metrics which leads to social media adoption stagnation. Lack of social media knowledge, skills, expertise, and time are significant dominant problems is a significant problem for organisations.

The authors encourage other researchers to reflect upon the issues highlighted in this study, and to consider stage of growth models as a valid approach to

developing management strategies for social media adoption in organisations.

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