Evaluating Online Business-to-Business Demand Generation through LinkedIn

By

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# Contents

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................... 4  
Declaration.......................................................................................................................... 4  
Abstract............................................................................................................................... 5  
Chapter 1 - Introduction...................................................................................................... 6  
Chapter 2 - Literature review.............................................................................................. 10  
  2.1 - Revolution in Sales.................................................................................................... 10  
  2.1.1 - Social Media a New Selling Tool........................................................................ 11  
  2.2 Case of LinkedIn......................................................................................................... 13  
    2.2.1 Characteristics and Importance of LinkedIn......................................................... 14  
    2.2.2 Business Enhancements through LinkedIn......................................................... 14  
  2.3 Organisational Aspects of Social Selling.................................................................... 17  
    2.3.1 - B2B Relationships............................................................................................. 17  
    2.3.2 Salesperson’s Use of Social Media...................................................................... 20  
    2.3.3 - Sales Management Function............................................................................ 22  
  2.4 - Evaluation Metrics for Social Media in B2B environments.................................... 23  
    2.4.1 - Identification of ROI through Social Media..................................................... 25  
    2.4.2 - Measuring Return-on-Investment (ROI)............................................................ 26  
  2.5 - Barriers in B2B Social Selling.................................................................................. 27  
Chapter 3 - Research methodology.................................................................................... 29  
  3.1 - Research Objectives ............................................................................................... 29  
  3.2 - Research Design and Approach.............................................................................. 29  
  3.3 - Research Population............................................................................................... 30  
  3.4 - Sampling Design..................................................................................................... 31  
    3.4.1 - Sampling Methodology..................................................................................... 31  
    3.4.2 - Sample Size ..................................................................................................... 31  
  3.5 - Research Instruments.............................................................................................. 32  
  3.6 - Data Collection........................................................................................................ 32  
  3.7 - Data Analysis.......................................................................................................... 33  
  3.8 - Ethical Considerations............................................................................................. 33  
  3.9 – Methodological Limitations..................................................................................... 34
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Soli Deo Gloria.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of MBA from Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from their work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work

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Abstract

The Business-to-Business (B2B) sales environment is facing unprecedented changes due to an increasing trend of digitisation and of late the changed buying behaviours during COVID-19. This revolution in B2B sales has reconceptualised all aspects of sales ranging from internal control to customer engagement. In such times, LinkedIn serves as an important platform for professional usage to maintain pace with the dynamic technology, increased data reliance, and online networking. Practitioners and academics alike have emphasised on LinkedIn as a noble tool for B2B sales. Since the research in this particular area is disintegrated and lacks common constructs, this study has focused on evaluating online B2B sales through LinkedIn. The three wide concepts researched are the efficacy of LinkedIn in B2B sales, the main application of LinkedIn in the sales process, and the effective performance evaluation metrics. The study further discusses the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool and identifies the factors affecting its performance through a factor analysis technique. We opted for a systematic literature review followed by a questionnaire-based survey among B2B salespeople and executives. Significant theoretical and managerial contributions were made through critical analysis of the extant literature and statistics found by the survey. The findings indicate that there are four major factors that affect the efficacy of LinkedIn in B2B sales. Furthermore, the findings have advanced the current understanding of the role of LinkedIn in achieving sales objectives. This research conceptualises the use of LinkedIn in building networks and enhancing B2B sales performance. The study concludes on recommending future directions and practical implications that can be adopted by researchers and practitioners.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Business-to-Business (B2B) selling environments are facing revolutionary changes in the era of digitisation and the increased changes in consumer behavior, especially amid COVID-19. Researcher and practitioners equally accentuate upon the concept of social selling as an emergent opportunity to cope with the unprecedented challenges at the B2B sales level. There has been a major revolution from traditional to social selling methods in B2B sales (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano, 2017; Siamagka et al., 2015), with the advancement in technology (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015; Rapp and Panagopoulos, 2012). As the sales sector evolved with the use of technology through Web 2.0, it presented social selling as a method that focuses on bilateral communication and collaboration through social media networking sites (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ahearne and Rapp, 2010; Moore, Raymond and Hopkins, 2015).

Different scholars propose varied aspects related to social selling. Agnihotri et al. (2012) presented the concept of social selling as an approach which leverages social media sites for social interactions and networking between the salespeople and potential customers to create content and value. Whereas, practitioners like Minsky and Quesenberry (2016) affirm that it is a technique through which a salesperson uses social media sites, like LinkedIn, as a tool to effectively carry out the sales process. Another prevalent and agreed-upon meaning of social selling is an approach that focuses on building connections and generating sales leads by applying digital marketing principles (Ancillai et al., 2019). B2B social selling is not focused on sales-concentrated communication, but about connecting and engaging pertinent actors with valuable content that links with their goals and problems far off the sale task (Brodie et al., 2019). The advent of social media has contributed to new ways of communicating and collaborating. The study of Rodriguez (2012) on social media influence found that social media usage is positively associated with relationship-sales performance.

Social selling is found to be more effective, compared to traditional selling, for approaching prospects and clients in a more private and non-invasive way (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ogilvie et al., 2018). With the trend of digitisation, B2B organisations have started opting for social selling methods leaving behind the traditional selling approaches based on one-way communication and negligible focus on customer satisfaction. However, these firms are mostly unaware of the actual use, effectiveness, and evaluation metrics of social media in sales. Moreover, some organisations are still resistant to adopt social selling strategies due to
its associated challenges of losing control over information, privacy and the need for responsiveness and accountability (Gáti, Mitev and Bauer, 2018; Siamagka et al., 2015). The extant literature confirms that customers have become more informed of the sales process than ever before (Minsky & Quesenberry, 2016) which has created an information asymmetry in the buyer-seller relationship.

Advancements in technology have brought a rise in B2B and decrease in person-to-person interactions. Hence, the increased need for a professional online platform for B2B sales interaction has meant LinkedIn significantly developed this need in the era of digitised social selling (Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013). LinkedIn’s platform is argued to provide the opportunity to communicate with business professionals focused to create business relationships, making it a reliable tool for B2B firms (Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Another persistent debate in the field of social selling is the effect of organisational competence in the usage of social media networking sites (Guesalaga, 2016). Within organisations, factors like interdepartmental collaboration, B2B relationships and sales executives have a significant impact on the efficacy and usage of any social media networking site for B2B sales and in achieving a wide range of corporate objectives (Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Salo, 2017). Scholars have also emphasised key characteristics of salespeople that have a positive impact on the sales process and gives them a competitive edge over competitors (Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017). Given that, the mere use of social media for social selling cannot result in customer satisfaction and business enhancement as a major sales objective.

Technological advancements have not only created huge opportunities for B2B firms but also posed new challenges for sales executives. With the increased usage of social media in the sales process, the role of sales management has been altered to ensure effective utilisation of the organisational resources available (Lassk et al., 2012). The change in the process has led to salespeople feeling more pressured with increased accountability and supervision (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015) and has added up to the responsibilities of the managers to remain active 24/7 for client service.

As social media usage in B2B sales has become a common practice, there is an urging need for better measurement techniques to evaluate sales performance via online platforms, such as LinkedIn. Specialists acknowledge the need for reimagining the metrics for calculating the results of sales effort in the form of Return on Investment (ROI), as the traditional methods to calculate performance have become redundant with the advent of digitisation (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Failure to incorporate appropriate metrics can result
in B2B firms risking their resources, brand image, and their client relationships which might further lead to reduced opportunities for formulating the future social media strategies and techniques. Hence, the identification of effective metrics and then the measurement of ROI has been a prevalent research challenge for firms opting for B2B social selling (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

The revolution from traditional selling to social selling creates tremendous new sales opportunities and new adaptive strategies (Ancillai et al., 2019), but at the same time, this change has brought tremendous challenges to the sales process (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Studies have identified the major challenges that keep organisations from social selling as lack of staff familiarity, technical skills, expertise, financial resources, security concerns, and privacy invasion (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Kapoor et al., 2017; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Moreover, academic research on the use of social media in B2B selling is fragmented and offers limited insight into the efficacy of social sales. Current research has focused on the general use of social media as a selling tool with no agreements regarding what factors makeup effective social selling via platforms like LinkedIn.

After thorough research of the relevant literature, this study identified several important gaps to extend the research in social media usage, factors affecting its effectiveness and efficacy, and outcomes in the B2B context. The latest literature in this field urges more investigation on social media sites and its effectiveness, risks, consequences, and outcomes for sales (Ancillai et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2018; Rodrigues, Takahashi and Prado, 2020). In particular, Bocconcelli (2017), Gáti (2018), and Guesalaga (2016) suggested that it would be beneficial to analyse the performance of a social networking site from an organisational perspective. Salo (2017) and Wang (2017) provides a future direction to search on what type of social media platform can best serve the sales of a B2B firm. The importance of research on organisational competence, knowledge, and expertise for the success of social selling has been emphasised by Guesalaga (2016). Furthermore, Kapoor (2018) recommended reviewing articles published in IS journals related to the productivity of social selling.

Academics and practitioners alike have emphasised research on social networking sites as competent platforms to handle the emerging challenges and opportunities in a sales environment. The goal of this research is to address research gaps and take recommended future directions by identifying the role of LinkedIn in B2B social selling. This research aims to identify factors affecting the efficacy of LinkedIn as a social media networking site involved in B2B sales. The objective of the study to help understand the utilisation of
LinkedIn, particularly, identification of the commonly agreed and used metrics to effectively measure its sales performance in the B2B context. The study further touches upon the main application of LinkedIn in the sales process. For reviewing the previous literature on the topic, a systematic literature review is undertaken where the literature is critically analysed for relevant coverage of previous studies on B2B social selling via LinkedIn. Secondary research was conducted using the IS Journal articles, whereas, a questionnaire-based survey was used for primary research to address the aforementioned research gaps. The results were evaluated using factor analysis which identified four main factors that affect the efficacy of LinkedIn, the common metrics used to evaluate the ROI and the main applications of LinkedIn in B2B sales. The primary data is thereafter evaluated and compared against the extant literature to formulate a reliable basis for the findings and discussion.
Chapter 2 - Literature review

2.1 - Revolution in Sales

The selling environment has witnessed a major transformation from traditional to social selling methods in due to the ongoing trend of digitisation (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano, 2017; Fetherstonhaugh, 2010; Siamagka et al., 2015) and the advancement in technology (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015; Rapp and Panagopoulos, 2012). The prevailing point of view in this area is that revolution in the sales environment reconceptualised all aspects of sales management and methods of selling (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). Early research in the field of traditional selling tend to emphasises strategies which are product and price focus (Marshall et al., 2012), face-to-face (Ancillai et al., 2019; Fidelman, 2012), cold calling and canvassing (Lacoste, 2016), the customer as a passive player (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), and instant messaging (Niedermeier, Wang and Zhang, 2016). According to conventional wisdom, customers are becoming less reliant on the traditional selling methods and this results in a reduced desire or need to talk face-to-face with a salesperson (Ancillai et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2012; Minsky and Quesenberry, 2016). A recent survey found that callback rates from customers are below 1%, and only 24% of the outbound or traditional sales emails are ever opened by customers (Minsky and Quesenberry, 2016). Findings concern that the balance of power has moved from the sellers to buyers (Rollins, Nickell and Wei, 2014) and sales strategies are struggling to keep pace with these revolutionary changes (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015).

Studies conclude that the sales sector evolved with the use of technology through Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. In the evolution process, many studies presented social media as a relational selling tool that emphasises reciprocal and bilateral communication and collaboration (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ahearne and Rapp, 2010; Moore, Raymond and Hopkins, 2015). There is a common consensus that the traditional “push” / “supply” model of information has been displaced by the new model of “pull” / “demand” due to the advent of social media (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012; Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013; Rapp and Panagopoulos, 2012; Rodrigues, Takahashi and Prado, 2020). One illustration of it would be considering social media sites as a vehicle for soft marketing (Brennan and Croft, 2012). In the present world, information has become pervasive or even a commodity and salespeople who were viewed as remote are now connected 24/7.

Researchers found social media’s effects across the Seven Steps of Traditional
Selling. The traditional steps in selling are, prospecting, preparation, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up (Marshall et al., 2012; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). Respondents of one study (Marshall et al., 2012) acknowledge that in social selling the seven steps have been condensed to three steps of prospecting, negotiate price/closing and follow-up. While at the same time, traditional CRM is evolving into social CRM (Choudhury and Harrigan, 2014; Moore, Raymond and Hopkins, 2015; Trainor et al., 2014; Wang and Kim, 2017). In contrast to the traditional methods, social selling is more effective for approaching prospects and potential leads in a more personal and non-invasive way (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ogilvie et al., 2018; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). While it is true that the change in the business market from traditional selling to social selling created sales opportunities and new adaptive strategies (Ancillai et al., 2019; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015), on the other side, it could be argued that this revolution and the advent of social media possess tremendous challenges to the sales process (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Along similar lines, some scholars came up with the point that there is no “one size fits all” approach (Lacoste, 2016). Studies have suggested that social media might place some organisations at an advantage and some at a disadvantage (Marshall et al., 2012). Revolution in the sales process is still ongoing to find new opportunities and prospects (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010).

2.1.1 - Social Media a New Selling Tool

The technology of Web 2.0 enables a set of internet-based applications called social media to facilitate user-generated content, interaction, and interoperability (Berthon et al., 2012; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Marshall et al., 2012; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015; Wang and Kim, 2017). Sood and Pattinson (2012) bolstered the rise of online life as a stage for essential correspondence and social collaboration. As Internet adoption expanded, firms before long started to supplant instructive, single-page Web destinations with those that could facilitate orders and take payment (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). However, the social media experience includes firms setting up web journals/blogs or opening up remark areas and forums to their clients and people in general (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012). Hence, social media provides a two-way communication where both sellers and buyers can share content (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012). Moreover, a salesperson can make the first interaction effective and efficient by sharing content that is targeted to the profile of prospects on social media (Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Social media opens
door to sales opportunities by benefiting users to gain competitive intelligence (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Lacoste, 2016). From one viewpoint, through social media, a salesperson can agreeably access prospects and build networks (Ogilvie et al., 2018). On the other side, the web-based social networking guideline is to offer open associations with the goal that everybody can perceive what is posted or trending, including relevant data on social media (Lacoste, 2016). Social media transformed the customer from being a passive player in the sales process to an active and controlling participant in creating and sharing valuable information (Trainor et al., 2014; Wang and Kim, 2017).

Professionals see web-based life as a "resurrection" of individual connections (O'Leary, 2011). Thus, clients see internet-based life as it implies for being heard, comprehended, and acknowledged. For sales representatives who tune in to their clients using social media, the instrument is a significant part in developing trust (Andzulis et al., 2012). Scholars further argue that the use of social media was more inclined to personal usage before 2009. However, the usage is now also marked for business interaction and communication (Lacoste, 2016; Sood and Pattinson, 2012). Numerous researchers have recognised the positive effects of social media, but still, organisations stay hesitant to grasp online networking to help deals (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Singaraju et al., (2016) discusses social media as a resource that created value for a business.

Furthermore, Trainor (2012) verifies that social media applications could emphatically impact firm execution. O’Leary (2011) found that social media can work to dispose of and moderate asymmetries of data between seller and buyer. Jarvinen et al. (2012) affirm with an observational examination that the two most significant targets of (B2B) firms utilising social networking sites are making and improving brand mindfulness, or what they call the "delicate side" of showcasing. Brennan and Croft (2012) make a similar inference: "Social media are thought of to be a vehicle for delicate showcasing through relationship and brand advancement, as opposed to a hard-sell vehicle." Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (2011) also positively investigated the role of social media in B2B branding. Rodrigues (2020) researched social media use as a mediator between the stages of the sales process and the benefits generated for the sales organisation. An OgilvyOne global survey of salespeople found that half the buyers agree to the increasing role of social media (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010).
2.2 Case of LinkedIn

Social networking sites (SNSs) are online network-based facilities through which users generate a profile and enlist users to interact with, in a specific system (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). It allows users to form and view the list of their connections and also those made by other users of that system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Concerning the Social Media Report by Nielsen (2012), some of the most valued SNSs include Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn; that are increasingly being used by prospective employers making SNSs an important tool for the corporate sector (Schultz, Jr and Good, 2012; Shih, 2009; Solis, 2010). LinkedIn has become “a living version of a résumé” due to its professional outlook and presentation (Shih, 2009). Moreover, its role has significantly developed as an element of the recruitment proceedings and web-based marketing approach of many companies. LinkedIn plays a vital role in facilitating and augmenting an employer’s success in the modern century (Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013). Scholars argue that it helps employees enhance social capital, and provides detailed information about and to prospects (Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp (2012) point out LinkedIn’s role is asking for referrals and communicating success stories. LinkedIn provides its users with the opportunity to communicate with professionals from their particular areas of interest helping create business relationships, making it a more important tool for B2B firms than other platforms (Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012; Schaffer, 2011). The Social Media Marketing Industry Report (Stelzner, 2010) reported that the significance of social media sites is largely recognised by many companies that acknowledged using such platforms as a part of their marketing strategies i.e. Facebook (91%), Twitter (84%) and LinkedIn (71%) (Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013). The development of such media platforms has resulted in the corporate sector becoming more focused on relationship building rather than solely serving the monetary return (Brennan and Croft, 2012; Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013; Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Stephen and Toubia, 2010)
2.2.1 Characteristics and Importance of LinkedIn

In a survey among 260,000 employers, 97% testified using LinkedIn for online recruitment (Bullhorn, 2014). After 2008, many corporate website owners started focusing on monetizing the communication platforms by capitalising on the information flux between people and designs and not merely running community-oriented platforms (Van Dijck, 2013). LinkedIn became the first professional online platforms to initiate the use of varying strategies to personalise the public presentation of one’s distinctiveness. The users of LinkedIn majorly fall in the category of middle-aged professionals with higher income brackets, mostly men, even though it also caters to a variety of users, but such professional samples usually stand out (Van Dijck, 2013; Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). Many firms use LinkedIn for interactions between members and outsiders, many times making it a mandatory communication tool within the company. Altruistic sharing of information among users allows collaborative problem solving (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). LinkedIn and other SNS’s have played their part in increasing mass self-communication in the twenty-first century. Its interface allows and entices its users to share personal information through both conscious and unconscious thought process (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Since LinkedIn is a professional site, the profiles are inclined towards self-promotion (Van Dijck, 2013) as the users are business-oriented and majorly interested in professional marketing, jobs and potential employers or clients (DeKay, 2008). SNSs like LinkedIn help create value for businesses through interaction with the community and the formation of trustable relationships over time (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Scholars also claim that in B2B markets LinkedIn is more preferred to serve linking mechanisms (Siamagka et al., 2015).

2.2.2 Business Enhancements through LinkedIn

B2B marketers are tapping into LinkedIn and it is considered the most effective social media site for professional usage (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013). The advancements in computer-based networking have potentially brought an upsurge in B2B and individual interactions (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). Networks, regardless of digital involvement, have a substantial impact on business relations (Hanna, Rohm, and Crittenden, 2011), business prospects and new arenas (Möller and Svahn, 2009), creating value and competitive advantage (Freytag & Young, 2014). Concerning such networking, LinkedIn groups provide an opportunity to create an online community related to business, and the additional features provide the group
administration with more marketing muscle (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013; Gáti, Mitev and Bauer, 2018). Hence, LinkedIn groups and such networks are not only seen as tools to create business relationships but also the personal value of such networks is widely acclaimed (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). Membership of such groups helps in enhancement of the member’s professional profile and is considered as an important tool for self-promotion (Möller, 2013). These LinkedIn groups and established professional relationships through its usage provide the members with a sense of identification and help anchor their self-definition (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013).

The global connectivity of the users offers a range of skills and collaboration (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Users strategically interact with people who could influence decisions (Palmatier, 2008) using LinkedIn as a tool for such interactions and establishing connections. The level of connections between the users of LinkedIn includes both the number of interactions and the potency of the connections formed (Palmatier, 2008), hence the LinkedIn users can differentiate between strong and weak connections in their network (Granovetter, 1983). Interaction between higher-level decision-makers helps create an opportunity for newer business prospects. In addition to this, the formation of weak ties among professionals creates wider circles of acquaintances which helps professionals in seeking jobs and other opportunities (Granovetter, 1983).

A repeated theme about the formation of connections and a trustworthy environment due to screening has also made LinkedIn a reliable tool (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Value is gained by the users, both people and businesses, through relational and business interactions (Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013; Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Members of LinkedIn groups portray behavior congruent to the group-based identity and members with a strong sense of identification tend to feel attached and promote the group to others (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013). Using the platform of LinkedIn helps form corporate relationships and ties globally that would not have been possible traditionally. The ever more competitive global market for industries aims to recognize, screen, and cooperate with potential business partners, and to facilitate the process, even more, LinkedIn cuts the time needed to initiate the interactions that would generally help in forming ties (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). Whether in B2B or B2C environments, the easy sharing of data and incorporation of feedback has created reciprocity within the business sector; this conceptualised reciprocity has helped strengthen business relations (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Concerning Moller (2013), integrating relationship marketing and business networking online would not only create value but also enhance business performance.
Social media networking which can be categorised as both emergent such as the referrals on LinkedIn and purposely formulated like the membership of professional groups on LinkedIn contributes highly in value creation for businesses as well as individuals (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Business performance enhancement through LinkedIn is also characterised by the opportunity of collaborative problem solving through assistance provided online, which would in turn help increase the resource efficiency of the businesses. Furthermore, transactional exchanges through LinkedIn are both highly valuable as well as convenient for businesses. Individuals have direct contact and interaction with firms, making LinkedIn a valuable source for both businesses and customers. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the repeated usage of LinkedIn groups by professionals (such as third-party referrals) has established it as a trusted source for business enhancement (Quinton and Wilson, 2016).

A survey by LinkedIn State of Sales Report (2020) shows that both sellers and customers are increasingly reliant on LinkedIn in their everyday jobs. During recent times, as the pandemic has greatly affected the corporate sector, the usage of LinkedIn has increased with many sales professionals spending time on LinkedIn learning to explore new skills. The trends show that the time spent of LinkedIn learning has been tripled since March, In North America. The usage of sales technology for business enhancement has also greatly increased in 2020. A majority of the respondents (74%) in the survey (LinkedIn State of sales Report, 2020) admitted that they used LinkedIn products i.e. LinkedIn.com, LinkedIn Premium or LinkedIn Sales Navigator for business enhancement. In survey carried out for buyers, three quarters of the respondents agreed the need for a detailed LinkedIn profile of the seller, and 60% of the respondents agreed that reaching out through LinkedIn has a positive impact on the buyers. A major finding of the survey defining the role of LinkedIn for salespeople states that 84% of the sales people are active on the site (making LinkedIn the platform where sellers are most active) and the top performers are most likely to use LinkedIn navigator (43%) to enhance their performances. The emerging trends due to increased use of internet and the impact of the pandemic in recent times, has also accelerated the rise of LinkedIn usage in business environment for sustainability and growth.
2.3 Organisational Aspects of Social Selling

The organisational role in developing and communicating policies on social selling is emphasised by renowned scholars (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Ancillai et al., 2019; Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012; Nunan et al., 2018; Ogilvie et al., 2018). Extant research advocates for organisational competence and commitment that will ultimately drive social media tactics to be implemented at the B2B level (Guesalaga, 2016). The study of Jarvinen (2016) advances knowledge concerning organisational processes that eventually expands the creation of relevant, beneficial, and prompt content that is based on the needs and satisfaction of customers. Other studies recommend the management of an organisation (Lacoste, 2016) to take the lead and define social selling for relevant departments, especially sales and marketing departments (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2012; Minsky and Quesenberry, 2016; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015; Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Salo, 2017; Swani, Brown and Milne, 2014). While interdepartmental collaboration is recommended, it is argued that building relationships with customers, other networks and stakeholders via social media in B2B setting can be highly significant for sales (Brennan and Croft, 2012; O’Leary, 2011; Quinton and Wilson, 2016; Rapp et al., 2013; Salo, 2017; Singaraju et al., 2016; Swani, Brown and Milne, 2014). Another prevailing point of view is that salespeople’s efforts are required to be incorporated in organisational settings (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010; Levin, Hansen and Laverie, 2012; Marshall et al., 2012) and in the broader corporate objectives (Ancillai et al., 2019).

2.3.1 - B2B Relationships

The concept of relationships in the B2B social selling context relies on actors creating and sharing relevant content (Swani, Brown and Milne, 2014). The content has significant value for both the creator and the recipient. The creator gets acknowledgment for their content and the recipient benefits from the value of content (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). This idea has been supported by Agnihotri et al. (2012), where they provide a social media framework that leads to value creation. This value can be created in B2B relationships via information sharing and adopting communication technologies (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano, 2017; Marshall, Moncrief, Rudd, & Lee, 2012). The era of digitisation and the emergence of social media networks has provided tremendous opportunities for B2B
relationships (Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano, 2017; Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Social selling has made the process of relationship building much easier than it was in traditional sales (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Social media marketing tools are extensively used by sellers to build relationships with different stakeholders (Brennan and Croft, 2012). The literature available on B2B relationships associates key relationships with a higher level of trust among sellers and buyers (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Shih, 2009; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011; O’Leary, 2011).

Shih (2009) emphasised SNS’s such as LinkedIn and Facebook for communicating with buyers to build relationship and trust. The understanding of “relationship” and “network” through these sites are dependent at ties between organisations, groups, and individuals. Furthermore, Lea et al. (2006) claim that these networks vary in size, the larger heterogeneous networks are found in more diverse groups and social characteristics while smaller networks are homogenous and can be found in workgroups. These networks are beneficial and enhance the organisational economic value in the long run (Stephen and Toubia, 2010). In B2B social selling, relations are categorised as relational or transactional (Rajamma, Zolfagharian and Pelton, 2011; Quinton and Wilson, 2016). The transactional relationship focuses on making sales with less or no attention to customer satisfaction whereas, relational selling is concentrated on building effective long-term relations with customers and firms (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Recent scholars have emphasised the importance of relational exchanges (Brodie et al., 2019; Lacoste, 2016; Nunan et al., 2018) and the perspective of Industry Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) for more effective B2B networks (Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano, 2017; Singaraju et al., 2016). The approach of IMP interaction model argues that businesses generate value through interaction and information exchange among active actors while building relationships (Singaraju et al., 2016). Thus, community building is central to building relations on social media (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Quinton and Wilson, 2016).

Sood and Pattinson (2012) posit that social media has the potential to alter social exchanges occurring through LinkedIn “Likes” and “Shares”. Wang et.al (2016) has researched “Guanxi” connection and found that social media effects buyer-seller relationships and the aim of B2B firms should be establishing networks and relationship to ultimately create value. Singaraju et al. (2016) focused on relationships in the multi-stakeholder system of firms. Quinton and Wilson (2016) presented their research on business relationships within LinkedIn. They evaluated network formation within the wine industry and found tension and ties in their relationships. The study shows how B2B networks are created using LinkedIn
and the purpose of such relationships is to prosper in doing business with value. The study of Bocconcelli, Cioppi and Pagano (2017) discusses the 4R concept where business relationships are identified as an important resource for a business. Findings also show that only a mere use of social media cannot directly contribute to sales performance and customer satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Along similar lines, research by Bill, Feurer and Klarmann (2020) implies that social media should not be hastily embraced. They conclude therefore that maintaining customer relationships should not be the only goal of using social media.

Consumers are spending more time on social media than other online channels. This phenomenon has created information asymmetry where buyers are more informed about a company’s products than the salesperson of the company (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010; Marshall et al., 2012). Fetherstonhaugh (2010) argues that buyers might be more informed in the buyer-seller relationship but not well-informed. Engaging with customers online is more difficult than engaging face-to-face and it depends on group level involvement and organisational factors (Guesalaga, 2016; Nunan et al., 2018). The study of Brodie et al. (2019) and Lacoste (2016) confirm that positive buyer-seller interactions lead to much stronger customer engagement. Extant research verifies that social media platforms contribute in building buyer-seller relationships even in advanced stages of social selling and to the economic wellbeing of the firm (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012; Schultz, Jr and Good, 2012). A consensus has appeared that digital marketing in B2B selling can build networks (Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017). Social media marketing tools are extensively used by sellers to build relationships with different stakeholders (Brennan and Croft, 2012). Some studies have positively investigated the impacts of social media and other technologies like customer relationship management (CRM) on enhancing B2B relationships (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Gáti, Mitev and Bauer, 2018; Nunan et al., 2018; Trainor et al., 2014). The findings of Rapp et al. (2013) highlights that relationships between retailer and supplier reinforce when firms are more reputable, offer service quality, and strive for innovation.
2.3.2 Salesperson’s Use of Social Media

Fetherstonhaugh (2010) states the anatomy of a salesperson who has qualities like communication, empathy, trustworthy, problem solving, and relentless energy. Previous literature acknowledges that the salesperson is in the best position to leverage from social connections, better information exchange, and trust in the buyer-seller cycle to enhance sales and create value (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2012; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017; Lacoste, 2016; Ogilvie et al., 2018). B2B salespeople was evaluated by Moore, Hopkins and Raymond (2013) and it was found that more B2B salespeople are involved in utilising professional networking sites, like LinkedIn, as compared to B2C salespeople. These scholars also verify that B2B salespeople are more involved in relationship-oriented selling than B2C salespeople. Previously, Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (2011) also note the same tendency and importance of relationship marketing in its findings. At the same time, salespeople in B2B firms use social media more often for handling objections, after-sales service, follow-ups, and prospecting (Moore, Hopkins and Raymond, 2013). Building on this logic, Bill, Feurer and Klarmann, (2020) defines salesperson’s social media usage as the scope to which salespeople at B2B level opt for and invest in social media.

Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus (2017) claim that a learning-oriented salesperson is more likely to get value from social media use which can also improve their performance at an organisational level. Furthermore, Lacoste (2016) and Ogilvie et al. (2018) argue that a salesperson must have the capability to develop interactive communication with a lead because a salesperson is a “boundary spanner” and has direct contact with the customer (Hughes, Le Bon and Rapp, 2012). Hence, a salesperson can increase and maintain trust by responding to comments, messages, and eventually drawing clients into the seller’s social networks (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Furthermore, social media strategy by a salesperson has been prioritised for effective B2B sales by using “extensive opportunities” that social media offers for relational exchange and B2B engagement (Bill, Feurer and Klarmann, 2020; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). But at the same time, the salesperson has a great responsibility to identify the correct strategy to establish networks (Lacoste, 2016) and make valuable sales for the organisation. Different characteristics of salespeople have been emphasised by different scholars, especially knowledge about social media or being expert in social media, and the one who has the authority to impact decisions at a high level are the key characteristics recommended by Guesalaga (2016) and Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus (2017). Similar findings also concern that only a mere use of social media cannot directly contribute to sales
performance and customer satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012).

A prevailing opinion is that gathering market information is a key role of a salesperson (Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017; Rapp et al., 2013). In the concept of competitive intelligence and adoptive selling a salesperson gathers relevant information about the environment especially competitors to formulate better selling strategies (Hughes, Le Bon and Rapp, 2012; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017; Rapp and Panagopoulos, 2012). Along similar lines, scholars urge organisations to support salespersons gather information by integrating social media and a CRM tool (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Choudhury and Harrigan 2014; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012; Trainor et al., 2014). However, without the support of their organisations, they are left alone to surf a competitive selling environment. Studies have articulated the adoption of sales’ management tools like training, selection, supervision, deployment, and compensation of the salespeople as an organisational support (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010; Lassk et al., 2012; Levin, Hansen and Laverie, 2012; Moore, Raymond and Hopkins, 2015; Schultz, Jr and Good, 2012).

Social media is considered a natural vehicle for the B2B salesforce. Jarvinen et al. (2012) verify that the customer base can be increased by social media in the sales process. The role of social media (especially LinkedIn) for B2B sellers has also been acknowledged by Marshall, Moncrief, Rudd and Lee (2012). Studies indicate that social media can be an effective tool for initiating contact with leads and create a collaborative community (Lacoste, 2016; Niedermeier, Wang and Zhang, 2016; Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Despite all these positive impacts of social media usage by salesperson, they are reported of being slow to adopt technology as a sales strategy, majorly because of challenges associated with technology (Agnihotri et al., 2012). In a study of B2B firms in the United Kingdom, only 23% of surveyed organisations used social media activity for the sales process (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011).
2.3.3 - Sales Management Function

Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd (2015) conducted extensive research on sales management functions and the impacts of social media on it. According to these scholars, the key sales management functions are selection, training, compensation, supervision, and deployment of the salesforce. The selection process has changed from in-person interviews to virtual interviews. At present, managers are more informed about a candidate using social media, especially LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter (Shih, 2009; Mihalcea and Savulescu, 2013). Many scholars verify the importance of training in sales management. Ogilvie et al. (2018) and Agnihotri et al. (2012) claim that organisational provision of training is significant in influencing salesperson use of social media. Furthermore, they argue that training will enable a salesperson to adopt technical tools and make changes to it when required to increase the efficiency of social media technology use. One persistent debate on training also takes into account the cultural diversity of the workplace and emphasise sales cultural training (Lassk et al., 2012). In pre-social media times, compensation was a traditional mix of salary, bonus and other commissions (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). On the other side, Deterding et al. (2011) argue that in the post-social media era compensation consists of gamification. It also includes advent-grad rewards and continuous payouts.

Technology has created huge opportunities for B2B firms and new challenges for managers and salespeople. With social media, the role of supervision has changed, and on account of more accountability (Lassk et al., 2012) and transparency salespeople feel more pressured (Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). Social networking sites and global business initiatives are affecting salesforce deployment. Salesforce might be geographically divided but they are connected via social media platforms (Marshall et al., 2012). Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd (2015) recommend to apply a two-tier system that includes virtual sales and key accounts managers. This change in the deployment process also puts responsibility more on managers for active conflict resolution.
2.4 - Evaluation Metrics for Social Media in B2B environments

Challenges and the risks associated with social media usage will be regular as with any change to corporate culture, particularly to the extent that it disturbs the very normal silo attitude that exists in businesses (Roy, 2009). Social media, otherwise called 'user-generated correspondence', has changed the networking tools and apparatuses that were previously used, introducing the customer as the controller of the data (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Likewise, with each showcasing apparatus, SNS should be assessed for their viability in accomplishing brand-related targets. In a period described by expanding straightforwardness and responsibility (McDonald and Mouncey, 2009) and diminishing promoting financial plans, the improvement of the correct measurements is fundamental for advertisers, who are feeling the pressure to show results for their spending. Conventional measurements (Ambler, 2003) depended on a linear or one-way form of communication, which is not suitable for the networking of Web 2.0 (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Contingent upon the kinds of online networking that have been embraced, there will be various measurements and apparatuses used to gauge the effect. Recalling that web-based social networking is about commitment and coordinated effort, in any case, most specialists concur that customary measurements should be re-imagined (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Andzulis, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2012) argue that the type of industry, business, and customers may result in success measured in different ways, however, trust, brand value, and altruism remain the intangibles which will keep the customers loyal and prevent them from becoming another business’s possible client. The key is to again comprehend the client and the incentive. Furthermore, they developed questions that are basic for deciding the proper proportions of progress and determining the metrics including: What is the customer’s gain from it? Will the use of social media affect the customer’s opinions positively or negatively and to what extent? Does the client advocate for the brand? Measurements must be modified to yield significant information for use to form decisions regarding the web-based presence of the firm. If the firm fails to customize the metrics, a firm risks harming their brand as well as losing the chance to re-examine future internet-based strategies and techniques that enhance the client-organisation relationship.

The extant literature recommends that the estimation of social media success present noteworthy issues for the marketing managers who have to showcase the impact and outcome of investing in social media efforts (Michaelidou, Siamagka, and Christodoulides, 2011). The existing literature such as that of Borders, Johnston, and Rigdon (2001) highlights the
measurement issue suggesting that "...already present estimation metrics were intended for fixed classifications and categories—a world that is changing step by step... A similar trend will adversely affect the business economy, as systems are becoming more persuasive while staying transitory and casual. Then again, maybe this change will at last force the analysts and researchers to create measurements that are genuinely client-driven, rather than depending on classifications of business associations as a suitable crutch."

The study by Michaelidou, Siamagka, and Christodoulides (2011) suggests that most of the marketers estimating SNS viability were reliant on the number of users joining their groups (73%). The number of comments (regardless of their inclination) likewise won as a significant measurement to assess SNS adequacy (55%). Notably, friend requests were among the least well-known indicators among supervisors of B2B SMEs (46% were utilising friend requests) of interest for SNS in a B2B setting. Moreover, the study outlines that SNS clients neglect to fulfill the requirement for more imaginative measurement tools (Russell, 2009; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). Despite the pressure on managers to show quantified proof, by far most of the business marketers are not assessing the adequacy of social networking sites in supporting their brand objectives. Thus, marketing managers can't give evaluated information to represent the significance of SNS, which may clarify why the experts stay wary about SNS as a compelling advertising tool. However, the expanded impact of social networking (e.g., client reviews and feedback) might result in more customer-focused metrics for assessing the social media sites’ viability (Borders et al., 2001). The number of clients joining the groups made by the B2B SMEs, and the discussions and comments that are posted, comprise the most well-known estimation instruments. This is also relevant to the important and significant role of feedback as a motivation for the increasing usage of SNSs (Walters, 2008).
2.4.1 - Identification of ROI through Social Media

All through the time of the development of web-based marketing, the identification of ROI (return on investment) from social media has been a longstanding research challenge (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Inside the B2B environment, the usage of conventional metrics to calculate the ROI results concentrates on short term and momentary advantages rather than considering the long-term benefits of value creation and brand awareness in the customers (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, and Leino, 2011). Though the prominence of social media sites as a communication channel is not questionable, the capacity of online networking to create an incentive inside business settings has been generally addressed. Issues regarding social media networking incorporate click-data dependency, the issues and risks in interactions between gadgets and plat-structures, and hesitance of media platform suppliers to give singular and standardized measurements legitimately for advertisers. Albeit the adopters of social media marketing in B2B were less focused around gathering information (Michaelidou et al., 2011), given the need to show an incentive for cash in the showcasing spending plan, administrators are feeling the pressure to give proof of profitable interests in online social networking. At the center of the challenge regarding the development and identification of ROI in the business, a relationship is the accessibility of metrics which are practically applicable and relevant to sales outcome. Suppliers of online platforms usually provide metrics that are optimised around their advertising-supported businesses such as third-party data and cookie matching techniques. (Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2014).

In any case, the online platform providers which concentrate on consumer-advertising driven plans have little business incentive in providing response metrics that might be used to calculate the ROI in the B2B context. Subsequently, self-reported survey methods are majorly relied upon for the measurement of social media interactions (Kuru and Pasek, 2015; Schivinski et al., 2016). Aggregated information given through analytical tools can be risky in a B2B environment, where the emphasis is on an individual record as opposed to demographic reports and, in this way, individual-level information is required. Hence, recognising appropriate measurements accessible to advertisers, that help identify ROI, is subsequently testing (Nunan et al., 2018).

Given the fact that sales relationship is greatly impacted by social media, the metrics should be well-suited with marketing ROI. The research challenges include the identification of metrics that are attainable inside the important information assortment on exclusive social media administrations, developing ways to deal with online multi-channel usage (e.g., across
gadgets or distinctive online platforms), and modeling the connections amongst interaction-based measurements of social media sites (e.g., clicks, offers, "likes") and monetary results inside the sale process (Nunan et al., 2018).

2.4.2 - Measuring Return-on-Investment (ROI)

To measure social media effectiveness, the traditional ROI approach should not be used. This suggests that rather than concentrating on the marketing investments and estimating the monetary return it offers, the ROI should be calculated in the context of customer feedback and response. The marketing managers should consider the customers’ incentives to use social media sites and then determine the investments made by the customers through social media engagement with the business (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). The traditional approach focusing on monetary values considers mostly the short-term goals (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Nunan et al., 2018) while the new approach takes into account both short term goals and the long-term impacts of social media investment by the business. A firm measuring ROI should consider the marketing objectives that can be satisfied through social media investment i.e. brand engagement, feedback from clients, and word-of-mouth and linking them to consumer behavior online. An appropriate set to metrics should be used by the managers to estimate the ROI such as linking the metrics to a set of proxy yardsticks, for example, the possibility of upcoming acquisitions.

The study of Hoffman and Fodor (2010) classified metrics according to the marketing objectives and social media applications. The main objectives that can be achieved through social media include brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth, while the applications that are widely used in B2B environments and B2C interactions include blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook (social networking and interactions), Amazon (product reviewing), and YouTube, etc. (videography, etc.). The common metrics for brand awareness consist of the number of views, page visits, number of followers/members and number of bookmarks, and adding the items in wish lists (Amazon), etc. The metrics which can be commonly used for reliable measurement of brand engagement include the number of comments and shares, the number of relevant threads related to the brand, the number of followers and individual posts/comments, number of replies and reviews and the number of clients / users sharing experiences. Word of Mouth can be estimated through retweets/reblogs or sharing of the posts, the number of incoming links, and citations on other posts. Such measures not only make it easier to calculate the ROI but also contribute to understanding the current marketing policy which can be altered to increase response to reach the objectives.
The study of Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggests that the 4Cs (connections, creation, consumption, and control) should be considered while undertaking social media efforts as this will lead to an increase in the consumer motivation resulting in a higher ROI. The social metrics will not only let marketers measure social media impact but also help marketers carefully and strategically plan online networking campaigns to reach particular objectives.

2.5 - Barriers in B2B Social Selling

A new challenge for B2B firms is the adoption of technology and its consequences on the sales environment (Rodriguez, Peterson and Krishnan, 2012). Indeed, the change in the business market from traditional selling to social selling creates sales opportunities and new adaptive strategies (Ancillai et al., 2019; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015), on the other side, it could be argued that this revolution and the advent of social media possess tremendous challenges to the sales process (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Studies have suggested that social media might place some organisations at an advantage and some at a disadvantage (Gáti, Mitev and Bauer, 2018; Marshall et al., 2012). Findings concerning barriers of using social media sites emphasise on lack of staff familiarity, technical skills, and finance (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011), security concerns, and privacy invasion (Kapoor et al., 2017; O’Leary, 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015). The integration of social media into the sales process requires a need for more responsiveness and transparency from a salesperson which has turned information into a commodity (Lassk et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2012). Along similar lines, Andzulis (2012) argues that social media integration requires a change in organisational culture and salesperson personality. Lassk et al. (2012) discuss challenges while social media training of salespeople, emphasizing sensitive areas of cultural diversity and increased accountability.

A survey by OgilvyOne verifies that 68% of salespeople admit that social media has major impacts on sales and at the same time social selling mechanism is changing at a faster pace than the salespeople within the organisation are adapting to it (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010). The digital marketing strategies fail to attain their aims because of this unpredictable and fast changing behavior and trends on social media (Jarvinen et al., 2012). Furthermore, Michaelidou et al. (2011) found that many B2B organisations view social networking sites as irrelevant to the objectives of sales. Another persistent debate is on the difficulty of measuring return on investment (ROI) for using social media (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Jarvinen et al., 2012). In addition to this, a lack of control of the social media environment is
highly considered a risk to use social media (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Jarvinen et al., 2012). Relevant research also shows that a significant barrier to the adoption of technology is the lack of organisational and personal innovativeness and competence (Guesalaga, 2016; Jarvinen et al., 2012; Kapoor et al., 2017; Lacoste, 2016; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011). Hence, a firm’s resources, technical skills, organisational support, and the perception of digital marketing are the main barriers to the utilization of social media as a tool for sales generation. Bill (2020) suggests a sound organisational-wide social media strategy to tackle these challenges. On the other side, Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (2011) recommend B2B firms to capitalise on existing business networks via SNS. It will facilitate firms to achieve word of mouth, competitive intelligence, and better brand awareness.
Chapter 3 - Research methodology

This chapter explains the relation between the gaps identified in the literature review and the selected research methodology. It covers the laid-out research objectives and goes on to explain the research design, research approach and research methods employed in the study along with describing appropriate statistical techniques deployed for the analysis. Included is a discussion of the research tool, data collection and data analysis. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire are investigated along with a description of the ethical consideration and limitations of the study.

3.1 - Research Objectives

As evident from the extensive literature review, the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) for sales, particularly B2B sales, has been increasing. Though given the emerging nature of these platforms for business purposes, there is a deficiency in understanding of the factors which could improve their effectiveness and would make their use beneficial for the sales organisations. Additionally, given the multi-layered functionality of LinkedIn and varied purposes for which the sales executives could use LinkedIn for, it is important to understand the main applications or use cases of LinkedIn in a B2B sales context. Thus, there is a need to understand the same in detail and draw key business insights for effective decision making by the sales organisations.

Thus, the research attempts to achieve the following objectives in its analysis:

1. To identify the major metrics used by sales organisations to measure the efficacy of their sales efforts on LinkedIn and identify the factors affecting that efficacy
2. To identify the main applications of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool in the sales process

3.2 - Research Design and Approach

The research approach adopted and followed in the study is ‘Quantitative Research’. Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion.

Within the quantitative research approach, survey-based research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by directly
interacting with and studying a sample of that population. It includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection—with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population, on the basis of concrete and reliable statistical evidence.

Taking into consideration the Research Objective 1, the study will consist of the following statistical technique:

**Factor analysis;** this is a statistical technique to reduce the number of variables to a manageable number of factors. It is used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors.

In this study, the factor analysis is performed to identify the major factors which affect the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool for an organisation. Similar micro-factors would be clubbed together to create several macro-factors thus enabling business users to draw effective insights for their online B2B sales activities.

Moreover, the responses for the Research Objective Number 2 will be processed and analysed in Google Sheets to draw meaningful insights and represented through graphical and pictorial means.

### 3.3 - Research Population

The population for the study consists of those sales representatives and/or executives who operate in B2B business setup in Ireland. As per the 2017 data of Data Ireland, there are 138,000 companies in Ireland who are involved in B2B solutions. The data reflects the enormous size of the market covered in this study and thus understanding and insights from the online sales behaviour and experience of this segment will be a key input to the strategy of other organisations which operate in the said segment.

Though, a key point to be noted here is that an individual company may have several sales representatives and/or executives, the number of which would vary depending on their product line, revenue size and geographic reach. And thus, given the lack of granular data, it may not be realistically possible to ascertain the total number of sales representatives in these 138,000 companies.

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3.4 - Sampling Design

3.4.1 - Sampling Methodology

Non-Probability Sampling: for the purpose of this study, the non-probability sampling method is used. This method is preferred if a complete suitable sampling frame is not available and if it is not possible to specify the probability that any case will be included in the sample, as is the case with this particular study. A sampling frame is a complete list of all cases in the population from which the sample is built. In this investigation, there is no access to such a sampling frame as well as the probability of each case being selected from the population is not known, which justifies the use of the non-probability sampling method. Through the non-probability sampling technique, samples based on the subjective judgement can be selected.

Further, in Non-Probability Sampling, the sampling technique used to collect responses for the study is ‘Convenient Sampling’. This is a sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. In this study, the respondents were identified on a convenience basis, i.e., personal and professional networks were used by the researcher, though subjects were diversified enough in terms of age, gender, geographical regions, etc.

3.4.2 - Sample Size

Data from 48 respondents form the sample size of the study and is used for examining the research objectives. The sample size was chosen by the researcher considering the practical and financial constraints.
3.5 - Research Instruments

A survey based on a structured online questionnaire is the only research instrument used to collect all the required data from the respondents who participated in the study.

The free tool of Google Forms is utilised to prepare and propagate the questionnaire among the respondents. The questionnaire poses a series of questions to the participants, whose responses are tabulated into percentages or frequency counts or statistical indexes. The online questionnaire comprises of 7 questions that require the respondent to choose from one or more pre-set options. Close ended questions were chosen because they can easily be coded and statistically analysed. The questionnaire is attached under Figure 1 of Appendices.

A pilot study was conducted among a pool of academics and representatives from the research population to pre-test the quality and suitability of the questionnaire for the study. The respondents involved individuals from the close circle of the researcher. The valuable feedbacks from the respondents were incorporated in the questionnaire design and hence helped in improving the quality of the study and its results.

3.6 - Data Collection

The study relies on the primary source for data collection which was performed using online and personal survey questionnaires. Individual questionnaire method is used to collect data in the form of a survey. The format was structured which has the highest reliability, validity and used as the primary data collection instrument. There is a considerable structure to the questions and the questioning is also done on the basis of a prescribed sequence. Questionnaire objectives and guidelines were also formulated depending upon the contours of the survey.

The questionnaire was divided into three broad sections to provide clarity to the respondents. The 1st section included an acknowledgment to become a part of the study along with a criterion check to identify the respondent's suitability with the scope of the study. The rationale behind this section was to filter the suitable respondents for the next section. Moreover, they were provided with an option to receive the final findings of the study. The 2nd section focused on the personally identifiable information about the respondent and were, thus, kept optional and had no bearing on the further structure of the questionnaire. Whereas the 3rd section covered the key questions around the scope of the study. The description and guidance for each question were given along with it to provide convenience to the
Strengths of the online questionnaire method are as follows:

1. They cover wider geographies and audience than possible in physical door-to-door surveys.
2. Appropriate predefined sections can be created depending upon responses of particular questions

Weaknesses of the online questionnaire method are as follows:

1. The respondent may misinterpret the questions and given options which might lead to incorrect responses and flawed analysis
2. Inability to cover that segment of the population which does not understand English (the questionnaire language)

### 3.7 - Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the online-based questionnaire survey is executed using Google Forms, and thereafter the data is cleaned and organised using Google Sheets, which is a default application used to organise responses collected through Google Forms.

Further, PSPP, a free tool by GNU, is used to perform statistical analysis on collected data and draw insights from the same. PSPP is a stable and reliable application, which can perform descriptive statistics, T-tests, anova, linear and logistic regression, measures of association, cluster analysis, reliability and factor analysis, non-parametric tests and more. It is designed to perform its analyses as fast as possible, regardless of the size of the input data. PSPP can be used with its graphical interface or the more traditional syntax commands.

### 3.8 - Ethical Considerations

Giving due recognition and importance to the privacy of the respondents, the responses to the ‘Name’ and ‘Email address’ column of the questionnaire were kept optional and had no bearing on the further structure of the questionnaire. There was no other question or column requesting any personally identifiable information of the respondent.

Furthermore, respondents were presented with an informed statement while propagating the online questionnaire that guaranteed anonymity and clearly stated that
participation was voluntary with the right to withdraw at any time and that the data will be utilised only for academic purposes. Additional disclosures were related to the description and purpose of the study, the nature of the participant’s involvement and the researcher’s contact details.

Access to the completed online questionnaires was secured by password protection known only to the researcher. The collected data was used solely for the purpose of statistical analysis of this academic study, and all statistical analysis was conducted by the researcher himself. No raw data was shared with any third party.

3.9 – Methodological Limitations

Following are the limitations of the research study:

1. The study focuses on identifying the metrics, or proxies thereof, used by the sales organisations to measure the efficacy and impact of their outreach programme on LinkedIn. Though, it does not attempt to ascertain the effective (or actual) Return on Investment (ROI) of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool. This is primarily due to the lack of information on the cost of sales on LinkedIn and difficulty in measuring the long-term returns and benefits of value creation and brand awareness among the customers.

2. The study is assessing the effectiveness of LinkedIn as a whole platform and does not aim to identify the most effective channels or ways within LinkedIn to build B2B relationships. The multiple channels in LinkedIn could include a closed group, company’s LinkedIn page, direct messaging to target clients, etc.

3. The population in the research methodology is designed to include sales executives only and understand their preferences & experiences and does not cover the perspective of the clients or buyer organisation on the use of LinkedIn as a networking tool for business transactions.

4. The study is being performed in the Irish business and cultural scenario. Recommendations for businesses and sales executives in other geographies may vary as per the locally prevalent technologies, client preferences, policies of sales organisations, etc.
This chapter outlines the two research objectives of the study and their respective statistical techniques and hypotheses. It further explains the research design, research approach, and research methodology of this study. Convenience sampling under the non-probability sampling method is deployed in the study and the software tools like Google Forms and GNU PSPP are used for data collection and data analysis, respectively. Research ethics were taken into consideration to protect the rights and privacy of the research participants and the study was reviewed critically to enlist its limitations. The research methodology laid out in this chapter serves as a base to conduct further data collection, analysis and interpretation.
Chapter 4 - Research findings

The study was conducted using an online and personal questionnaire-based survey as per Figure 1 in Appendices section below, which is a primary source for data collection and ensures the collection of first-hand reliable data, which strengthens the study and its results. In total, we received 62 responses, out of which 48 responses were valid to be processed and statistically analysed further. The results of all the analysis are statistically significant, provide intelligent insights into the research and its objectives, and enable us to make informed conclusions and decisions on the basis of the same.

4.1 - Analysis and Presentation of the Results

4.1.1 - Efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B Sales Tool

4.1.1.1 Factor Analysis: Identifying the Factors Affecting the Efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B Sales Tool

The part of the first stated research objective, i.e. to identify the major factors affecting the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool, was carried out using factor analysis. Factor analysis is a statistical technique to reduce the number of variables to a manageable number of factors. A factor is defined as a linear combination of variables.

Prerequisites for Factor Analysis:

Certain conditions must be fulfilled before the factor analysis can be conducted. These requirements are as follows:

1. The number of respondents must be at least 5 times the number of variables in the test. The number of variables affecting the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B (Business-to-Business) sales tool is 9, whereas the number of valid respondents is 48, and thus is meeting the minimum requirement.

2. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin or KMO statistic is another prerequisite for the factor analysis. The KMO statistic compares the magnitude of the observed correlation with that of the partial correlation, taking values between 0 and 1. A small value of KMO implies that the correlation between variables cannot be explained by other variables.
The globally accepted index is 0.6.

3. Bartlett’s test of sphericity is a hypothesis-based test that checks the correlation between the initial set of variables. The variables, if not highly correlated, will render the factor analysis useless. The hypothesis for this test is as follows:

Ho: The correlation matrix is insignificant (i.e. correlation matrix is an identity matrix where all the diagonal elements are 1 and non-diagonal elements are 0)

H1: The correlation matrix is significant

Process of Factor Analysis:

A. Extraction: The extraction of factors is done using the principal component method. This method starts by creating a factor by assembling the variables in a linear equation with weights such that this first factor explains the maximum variance in the data. This factor is called the principal factor. This process is repeated by creating a new factor that explains a majority of the remaining variance. This goes on until there is very little variance left to be explained. All those factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 are then extracted.

B. Factor Loading: The correlation coefficient of the extracted factor score with a variable is called the factor loading. The sum of squares of loadings in a particular factor/component gives that component’s Eigenvalue. This is used to determine the percentage of the total variance accounted by the extracted factors. The sum of squares of loadings of a particular variable across multiple factors gives us the communality. This represents the percentage of the variable’s variations explained by the factors.

C. Rotation: This is the second step that allows for easier interpretation of the factors after extraction. The method of rotation used is that of direct Varimax. These rotated loadings are given in the rotated component matrix.

D. Creating The Factor: From the rotated component matrix, we select variables to be a part of the factors by either setting a cut-off point for each factor or by allocating
variables to factors based on the comparative loading values. The factors are then named appropriately.

To understand the variables which the sales executives consider important in effecting the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool for their respective organisations, the respondents were asked to respond to the following variables on a 5 point scale with Point 1 being least important or not affecting the efficacy at all and Point 5 being the most important factor affecting the efficacy:

1. Client’s trust on your organisation
2. Relevant training to executives
3. Managerial supervision of executives
4. Experience of executives in using LinkedIn
5. Relevance of content for client
6. Regularity in engagement
7. Presence of competitor(s) on LinkedIn
8. Credibility of content
9. Prior relations between your organisation and client

Table 4.1 on the following page shows the correlation of each of the aforementioned variables with another variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Matrix</th>
<th>Client Trust in Organisation</th>
<th>Relevant Training to Executives</th>
<th>Managerial Supervision of Executives</th>
<th>Experience of Executives in Using LinkedIn</th>
<th>Relevance of content for client</th>
<th>Regularity in engagement</th>
<th>Presence of Competitors on LinkedIn</th>
<th>Credibility of content</th>
<th>Prior relation between org and client</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients Trust in Organisation</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.235</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Training to Executives</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Supervision of Executives</td>
<td>-0.235</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of Executives In Using LinkedIn</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>-0.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of content for client</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularity in engagement</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Competitors on LinkedIn</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of content</td>
<td>0.431</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior relations between org and client</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.344</td>
<td>0.409</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1: Correlation among all variables**

Each cell of the correlation matrix in the Table 4.1 shows correlation coefficients between two particular variables. The variables, if not highly correlated, will render the factor analysis useless. Bartlett’s test of sphericity is performed on the matrix with the objective to test its significance for further analysis, the results of which are presented in the subsequent heading.
Prerequisites
The prerequisites of KMO and Bartlett’s test have been met as is evident in Table 4.2. The value of the KMO statistic comes out to be 0.62 and which is more than 0.6, which is a rule of thumb for interpreting the KMO values as it indicates the sampling is adequate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KMO and Bartlett's Test</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Adequacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</td>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: KMO and Bartlett’s test
The null hypothesis of the correlation matrix being insignificant can be rejected as the p-value of Bartlett’s test (0.000) is less than the level of significance of (0.05). Thus, we can proceed with the further steps of performing factor analysis.

Extraction
Through the principal component method, we extracted four (4) major components (factors). Using the coefficient variable scores, the factor scores for every respondent is calculated. These factor scores on being correlated with the various variables reveal the factor loadings as seen in Table 4.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Matrix</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients Trust in</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Training</td>
<td>-.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Executives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>-.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of</td>
<td>-.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives In</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using LinkedIn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content for client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularity in</td>
<td>-.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The components 1, 2, 3 and 4 represent the four extracted factors. The percentage of total variance explained by them individually and cumulatively can be seen in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Total variances explained by extracted factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Variance Explained</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Cumulative variance explained by extracted factor

The percentage of variance explained by the factors post extraction is cumulatively 71.90%. Out of this, 24.70%, 18.90%, 15.10% and 13.20% are attributable to components 1, 2, 3 and
4 respectively. All four components have been extracted as they have an Eigenvalue greater than 1.

**Rotation**

Using Varimax rotation, we get the rotated component matrix which shows us the rotated factor loadings in Table 4.6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotated Component Matrix</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients Trust in Organisation</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Training to Executives</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Supervision of Executives</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of Executives In Using LinkedIn</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of content for client</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularity in engagement</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Competitors on LinkedIn</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of content</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior relations between org and client</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Rotated Component Matrix
Creating Factors

Variables are allocated to factors depending on which factor has the highest loading for that particular variable. Based on the rotated component matrix, the 4 factors will have the variables as listed in Table 4.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor / Component</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relevant Training to Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial Supervision of Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience of Executives in using LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Clients’ trust on organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior relations between organisation and client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relevance of content for client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility of content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Presence of competitors on LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Allocated variables to each factor

*Note*: In the Rotated Component Matrix, the value of 0.60 has been taken as the minimum qualifying criteria to allocate the variables to a particular component/factor, to ensure that only the variables with high coefficients are included, which will better explain the factors that actually affect the efficacy of LinkedIn.
Assessing statistical independence

For the factors to remain statistically relevant, they must be independent. The independence can be checked via the correlation matrix in Table 4.8 that gives us the correlation between any two factors as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Score Covariance Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Component Score Covariance Matrix

Since the correlation between all the pairs made of 4 factors is 0, the factors are statistically independent and the factor analysis holds statistical significance.

Given the distribution of the variables, the factors that affect the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool can be named as follows:

A. Sales Executives’ expertise and know-how of LinkedIn:
The inclusion of variables named relevant training to executives, managerial supervision of executives and experience of executives in using LinkedIn give a clear indication that those sales executives tend to achieve more out of LinkedIn, and thereby increasing its efficacy, who are well-versed with its functioning and have the expertise in using the same.

B. Client’s past experience with the organisation
Client’s past experience encompasses its perception about the organisation, or its employees, from his/her previous interactions with it. With this emphasis, the variables named client’s trust in sales organisation and prior relations between the organisation & client reflect
the significance of the clients’ perception of the organisation from their previous interactions as observed by the sales executives while dealing with the prospective customers.

C. Quality of the content posted on LinkedIn:
As is usual with any digitally-present business, content is king. The content becomes the face and mouth of the organisation whose quality thus becomes the supreme factor in deciding the readers’, in this case - the clients’, perception about the organisation. In this analysis, quality of the content is measured by variables like the **relevance of content for the client** and the **credibility of content**. Consumers tend to get highly engaged with those brands whose content is highly credible and is relevant to their requirements which ultimately enable the organisations to convert them into actual paying customers.

D. Competitive edge in digital presence:
In this fourth factor, only one variable, i.e. **presence of competitor(s) on LinkedIn**, has been included, thereby reflecting the standalone significance of the digital performance of an organisation vis-a-vis its competitors. An organisation can gain this digital competitive edge through several means, including the other three factors considered above. In today’s era, with ease of access to a large information set, customers are often engaged with multiple sellers simultaneously and tend to prefer that organisation which provides a good experience during the sales process.
4.1.1.2 - Metrics to measure efficacy of LinkedIn

In the absence of direct metrics to measure the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool, sales organisations have chosen indirect metrics or proxies to measure the same and quantify the results of their sales efforts on LinkedIn.

To understand the metrics being currently used by sales organisations, the respondents were asked to respond on a question with several options of different possible metrics given. The respondents were provided with the option to choose multiple metrics and also mention the unique metric(s) they use, if any. The options provided were:

1. Number of views on posted content
2. Number of joins in group
3. Number of clicks on posts/links
4. Number of comments on posted content
5. Response time of clients
6. Conversion rate (No. of views on content to No. of sales conversion)
7. Increase in website (or webpage) traffic after posting content
8. No metric used or tracked

The observed data, as presented in the following figure 4.1, shows the key preference towards ‘Number of views on the posted content’ by majority (60.40 %) of the respondents, followed by ‘Number on clicks on the post’ (41.70 %) as their preferred method to measure the efficacy of their sales efforts on LinkedIn.

Responses were also received stating unique metrics like LinkedIn’s SSI (Social Selling Index) Score, Number of leads generated (or inquiries received) and Sharing of content with comment, being tracked by the sales organisations.
4.2 - Main applications of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool

The responses from the respondents in the study signal a distinct characteristic of wide-scale use of LinkedIn for prospecting the clients followed by approaching them on the platform.

As shown in figure 4.2, 3 out of 4 (75 %) respondents acknowledge that they use LinkedIn for client prospecting and almost every 2nd respondent uses it to approach the prospective clients showcasing the wide scale adoption of LinkedIn by the business community.

Figure 4.1: Metrics to measure efficacy of LinkedIn
4.3 - Overview of findings

In terms of the stated research objectives, the analysis concluded that major metrics used by organisations to track the efficacy of their sales efforts on LinkedIn are **Number of views on posted content** and **Number of clicks on the post/links**. Further, **sales executives’ expertise and know-how of LinkedIn, client’s past experience with the organisation, the quality of the content posted on LinkedIn and the competitive edge in digital presence** were found to be the factors that affect the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool. Moreover, the wide-scale use of LinkedIn in context of B2B sales is focused towards client prospecting and approaching them. On the basis of all the results and findings, it can be comfortably claimed that the statistical techniques chosen for the study were suitable to find answers to the research objectives.
Chapter 5 - Discussion

The repercussions of government rules surrounding Covid-19 have impacted the corporate sector globally disrupting business dynamics, with businesses shifting from face-to-face (FTF) to online interaction. In such times, LinkedIn serves as a “living version of a résumé” (Shih, 2009), and an important platform for professional usage is becoming more central as conferences, travel, and FTF meetings are restricted. As sales professionals are experiencing unprecedented change, there is a need to maintain pace with the dynamic technology, increased data reliance, and online networking. This study investigated online demand generation via LinkedIn with a focus on the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool identifying four major factors affecting its efficacy. The four major factors are: “Sales’ executive expertise in using LinkedIn”, “Quality of content posted”, “Clients’ experience with the organisation”, and “Competitive edge in digital presence”. Additionally, the study investigates the major applications of LinkedIn in sales process and how to track its effectiveness via effective and common metrics. In doing so, this study has made the following contributions.

5.1 - Functionality of LinkedIn and its Application to the Sales Process

Sales professionals have tapped into LinkedIn considered as one of the effective and significant SNS for professional usage (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013). With the upsurge in web-based networking, the usage of LinkedIn has also increased, with many salespeople exploring new skills through LinkedIn. Managers usually use LinkedIn for initial screening of profiles by accessing the content posted on profiles of businesses and individuals (Roulin and Levashina, 2018). One of the main factors that affect the efficacy of LinkedIn and help achieve sales objectives is the factor of “quality content”. Brennan and Croft (2012) also argue that content and information has become pervasive or even a commodity for customers and salespeople. The research results also show that LinkedIn profiles, with rich content, are evaluated more positively when the content posted is more persuasive, relatable and credible fulfilling the sales objective of prospecting, lead generation and engagement. There are certain components of LinkedIn that serve this purpose including the sections; About, Profile picture, Achievements, Skills, Education, Experience, Expertise, Number of Connections and Recommendations.

The “About” section (see figure 5.2) in a LinkedIn profile provides space for the user to
describe one's personality and aims. It is the first content-based experience that any profile visitor can have of one's profile. Thus, the quality of the information provided here becomes a vital element in determining the clients’ perception of the organisation running the LinkedIn profile. That is why the quality of content matters significantly in making a long-lasting impact on the potential lead. “Skill Endorsement” is another unique feature (see figure 5.3) that distinguishes digital resume i.e. a LinkedIn profile from the traditional resume. It is a feedback mechanism through which the stated skills are endorsed by the user connections made on LinkedIn limiting the applicant's ability to listing skills they do not acquire (Roulin & Levashina, 2018). Furthermore, Roulin and Levashina (2018) argue that the higher the number of “Skill Endorsements” the higher would be the profile rating leading to value generation. This feature of “Skill Endorsements” is a valuable indicator of experience level leading to higher consumer engagement with a better brand image. Also, the findings have presented “sales executive expertise”, that are mentioned in this section of a profile, as a major factor which effectively augments to the success of the sales process. Furthermore, the completeness of a company profile provides a competitive edge to the operating firm because of their digital presence. This study highlights the importance of the digital performance of an organisation as an important factor that affects the efficacy of LinkedIn as a sales tool.

Figure 5.1: “Profile picture” on LinkedIn profile
Figure 5.2: “About” section on LinkedIn profile

About

Throughout my career as a business development professional, I have worked unceasingly to build relationships, up-skill and adopt best practices to enhance myself, my company and my clients experience.

I'm currently undertaking a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) in the University Of Limerick which has been a most rewarding, challenging and stimulating experience. The program studies 17 modules such as Marketing, Corporate Finance, Sales Management, International Business Management, Macro-economics, Financial Reporting, Data & Statistics, Organisational Behavior, Commercial and Corporate Law by means of individual and group assignments, self-learning and sat examinations. I am at the final stage of the MBA where I am writing a research thesis on the topic of B2B demand generation utilising LinkedIn.

I have had the privilege of working in the Print & Graphic Design, FMCGS, Aviation and SaaS industry’s where I have a worked alongside talented individuals, in both small-to-medium enterprises and multi-national companies.

In summary, my career experience has enabled me to develop a robust sales skill set encompassing B2B Sales negotiations, Presentation delivery, Relationship Building, People Management, Business Planning, Financial Reporting and Target-achievement, to mention a few, through an entrepreneurial, “can-do” mind-set.

Figure 5.3: “Skills & Endorsement” section on LinkedIn profile

Skills & Endorsements

Business Strategy · 22
Pauline Kwasniak and 21 connections have given endorsements for this skill

New Business Development · 12
Pauline Kwasniak and 11 connections have given endorsements for this skill

Management · 8
Pauline Kwasniak and 7 connections have given endorsements for this skill
Another important feature that a LinkedIn profile offers its users is “Recommendations” (see figure 5.5). More precisely, if a salespersons profile is rich in content and offers connections a better experience it will get higher recommendations by LinkedIn members acknowledging the work the salespersons firm provides in the sales process (Roulin and Levashina, 2018). It further boosts the credibility of the business and indicates better B2B relationships and clientele past and current experiences as mentioned in the results. The results found that client experience with an organisation impacts the client perception affecting the rate of recommendations of the profile and the sales objectives. Furthermore, LinkedIn keeps on improving and enhancing the messaging system and the recent real-time conversation style provided by LinkedIn messaging is an ideal way to effectively communicate and engage prospectively with clients and other professionals. This type of digital presence and engaging conversations must have positive implications on clients’ experience with the organisation and its salespeople to fulfil the sales process.
LinkedIn advanced search (see figure 5.6) is a set of filters available at a premium which helps sort through and narrow down results to identify potential leads (Landis, n.d.). One of the main sales injectables is to work efficiently by saving time and other resources which can be effectively achieved through this feature of LinkedIn as it filters out irrelevant content. Advanced search allows profiles to search for 1st, 2nd and 3rd-degree connections providing a wider pool of customers for the process of prospecting. It also offers to save search history to guide future search options. Filters in advanced search make it easier for users to generate sales leads or build B2B relationships. Some of the premium filters include seniority level, geography, industry, keywords such as skills and employment type.

The user base of LinkedIn has steadily grown throughout the years, especially amid Covid-19, and people are using it to build their brands, professional network and the industry
knowledge (LinkedIn State of Sales Report, 2020). This is why virtual communities such as LinkedIn groups have become a vital tool for bringing together aspirant salespeople and B2B companies. Being a part of a group also helps in enhancing business networking with professionals and other B2B businesses outside existing connections (Chiang, Suen and Hsiao, 2013). This forum helps connect the target audience and build authentic relationships with industry personnel’s allowing for quality interactions. The groups become a channel for relevant content sharing with powerful community management features such as weekly activity digests and admin announcement emails, resulting in higher engagement and online reputation. Groups provide a platform for posting industry-specific content leading to more visitors and prospects on the main website. This helps fulfil the sales objective of brand engagement and value creation as the visitors, from such groups, are extremely valuable as potential clients. Engaging with the community helps the organisation build brand image credibility leading to more sales (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018).

According to the LinkedIn State of Sales Report (2020), the usage of LinkedIn services such as LinkedIn Sales Navigator and LinkedIn Premium in the sales process have hiked. The top performers (marketers) have acknowledged the use of Sales Navigator to enhance their performances. Sales Navigator is one of the paid features of the platform to provide sales solutions for nurturing sales. This feature is specifically designed for achieving sales objective of sales enhancement and building customer base, hence it has become a requisite of the sales process. It provides an opportunity to salespeople to steer the buyer's decisions by combining the network data, relevant news, accounts, preferences and building customer relationships (Avilla, n.d.). Hence, this paid feature offers B2B organisations even more capacity to discover leads and manage their customers effectively. Navigator not only helps in nurturing sales but also fulfils the purpose of the sales of finding leads helping cut the time and energy needed. The success of Navigator is widely acclaimed by many B2B sellers, for example, a Philadelphia based Upmarket District Manager, Michael Russ shared his experience with LinkedIn sales solutions. He identified key players through Sales Navigator allowing his company to achieve prospecting effectively. The objective of prospecting is crucial for business enhancement as it develops a database of potential leads and systematically communicates with them to create a larger customer base. Russ created a target company list through Premium Search feature which automatically allowed the navigator to put forward lead recommendations, by evaluating the data, personalised according to the search criteria set earlier by Russ. This premium feature helps save time by filtering out non-relevant data and provide a better way to a higher quality pipeline,
eventually augmenting the sales (Avilla, n.d.). It is the only license from LinkedIn which streamlines and automates the phenomenon of sorting through the assimilated data to proactively identify the prime leads.

The extant literature has identified Seven Steps of Traditional Selling as prospecting, preparation, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up (Marshall et al., 2012; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). Another prevailing point of view is that in social selling the seven steps have been condensed to three steps of prospecting, negotiating price/closing and follow-up (Marshall et al., 2012). The results of this study on the application of LinkedIn as a sales tool shows that LinkedIn is widely used to identify and approach clients enhancing the business. The findings also support the view that client prospecting is the major application of LinkedIn as 75% of the respondents acknowledge the increased usage of LinkedIn for the step of prospecting in the sales process. However, the extant literature failed to focus on the steps of “approach” and “preparation” that are highly acknowledged by the respondents who were asked about their preferences of using LinkedIn. Respondents identified prospecting, preparation, approach, follow-up, and presentation as the five highest-rated activities for which LinkedIn is used. Among these five, the most focused sales steps supported by LinkedIn are “client prospecting” and “approaching”. Furthermore, the application of reciprocity in the system through LinkedIn has incorporated the sales step of “follow-up”. It is a valuable source for building customer relationship as it fosters direct interaction between buyer and seller (Quinton and Wilson, 2016).

LinkedIn helps understand the market challenges and personalize sales engagement. It assists the salespeople in evaluating the data patterns to optimize their approach and select the geolocations to target. According to the LinkedIn Sales Report 2020, the usage of sales intelligence tools has drastically enhanced from 28% to 48% in the past two years. This study also validates the use of LinkedIn for networking, promotion, marketing, information about the business and events. However, these activities make up about 10% of the actual use of the application. In conclusion, LinkedIn and its sales tool such as navigator, provide a holistic understanding of the business prospects and the customers to effectively achieve sales objectives and fulfil the required sales steps.
5.2 - Theoretical Implications

The concept of social selling found in literature lacks commonly agreed constructs and urges to focus on specific social media sites as a sales tool in the B2B context. This study aims to address this gap by offering a detailed factor analysis of the efficacy of LinkedIn as a social media sales tool. The research makes significant contributions and expands on the previous literature concerning the conceptualization of social selling in the B2B context, after the advent of Web 2.0. The extant research emphasised how the market dynamics changed from traditional selling towards the concept of social selling through digitisation in the modern corporate world (Ancillai et al., 2019).

This study complies with the findings of the previous theories that the buyer-seller relationship has become more reliant on social media networking sites, especially LinkedIn. This study focuses on LinkedIn as the leading professional social networking site, facilitating B2B firms in enhancing the sales process. The factor of “Client experience with the organisation” identified by the findings emphasise the extensive communication and professional environment provided by LinkedIn which has made it a reliable tool for adding value to the business interactions (Quinton and Wilson, 2016). Due to the dynamic technological shift, the power has moved from the sellers to the buyers under the umbrella of soft selling. Soft selling enhances sales performance through brand engagement and awareness and prioritises individuals and their self-direction, ultimately providing more power to buyers/customers. Furthermore, scholars emphasised social media serving as a relational selling tool with communication and collaboration as a prerequisite (Moore, Raymond and Hopkins, 2015), which has been underpinned in these findings.

One of the major factors identified in this study is sales executives’ expertise and know-how of LinkedIn which can be majorly achieved through the sales management function of training and supervision. Business firms and academics have equally embraced the role of sales management functions in the online B2B sales process. The prime functions of sales management include selection, training, compensation, supervision of the sales force that can impact the use of any social networking site. Ogilvie et al. (2018) has also found a positive relationship between the sales management functions and the effective use of social media.

As supported by this study’s findings, training enables the salespeople to adopt change management and technological updates that eventually enhances the use of LinkedIn in B2B sales. Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd (2015) claim that social media has changed the
role of supervision due to increased accountability as transparency. The respondents acknowledged this increased role of supervision and its positive impacts on the functionality of LinkedIn as a modern sales tool. Experience of the executives or salespeople in using LinkedIn is another variable that affects the efficacy of LinkedIn in achieving the sale objectives. The more experienced users can benefit more from this application and its features such as LinkedIn Navigator and Premium. Different scholars have also identified different characteristics of successful salespeople, especially knowledge about or being expert in social media (Guesalaga, 2016; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017).

This study explores the metrics widely used ranging from the number of views on posts, the number of people joining the groups, number of likes and clicks on the post to website traffic. The findings reinforce the significance of the commonly used metrics in addition to identifying some unique and effective metrics. These metrics are followed by the LinkedIn users to evaluate their efficiency, such as LinkedIn’s SSI score, number of inquiries received and content sharing with personal comments by the users. The traditional approach for measuring ROI in B2B context focused on monetary values considering only the short-term goals. However, with the shift of market dynamics and B2B relations through digitisation and online networking, the need for more client-driven measurements is a persistent debate. However, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) present a different approach to measure the efficacy of social media sites which is more consumer-oriented and takes into account the consumer feedback and response rather than solely concentrating on the monetary returns. The measurements have to be formed taking into consideration the incentives (sales objectives) and the consumers; hence, the firms have to formulate the metrics that are specific to their sales objectives and consumer behaviour with no set standards to be followed. The literature identified some of the common metrics like the number of comments on posts, followers on social media sites, re-blogs/shares of the posts and the users sharing experiences that are reinforced by the findings.

The results of this study on the application of LinkedIn as a sales tool shows that LinkedIn is widely used to identify and approach clients enhancing the business. Moreover, the statistics of this study also support the view that client prospecting is the major application of LinkedIn as 75% of the respondents acknowledge the increased usage of LinkedIn for the step of prospecting in the sales process. The extant literature has identified Seven Steps of Traditional Selling as prospecting, preparation, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up. Whereas, with digitisation and the emerging concept of social selling the seven steps have been condensed to three steps of prospecting,
negotiating price/closing and follow-up (Marshall et al., 2012; Moncrief, Marshall and Rudd, 2015). However, the extant literature failed to focus on the steps of “approach” and “preparation” that are highly acknowledged by the respondents who were asked about their preferences of using LinkedIn. Respondents identified prospecting, preparation, approach, follow-up, and presentation as the five highest-rated activities for which LinkedIn is used. Among these five, the most focused sales steps supported by LinkedIn are “Client prospecting” and “Approaching”. Furthermore, the application of reciprocity in the system through LinkedIn has incorporated the sales step of “Follow-up”. It is a valuable source for building customer relationship as it fosters direct interaction between buyer and seller (Quinton and Wilson, 2016).

The findings of this study expand on the previous literature regarding the significance of digitisation in B2B sales, the findings talk about the importance of digital presence to achieve competitive edge, reemphasising the unbalanced buyer-seller relationship. The literature has confirmed the need for a detailed LinkedIn profile of salespeople to have a positive impact on the buyer (LinkedIn State of Sales Report, 2020). Also, top B2B firms acknowledge the use of LinkedIn to enhance their sales performance. Finally, this study illustrates that the buyer-seller relationship is another significant factor that affects the efficacy of LinkedIn in the sales process. Since the buyers are now exposed to more information and substitutes in online selling, they tend to prefer organisations which offers a better buying experience. Thereby, one can only achieve a competitive edge in the digital world through better performance on social media. Interestingly, this research calls for more attention to LinkedIn’s role in the digital B2B sales process.
5.3 - Managerial Implications

This study provides insights that further supports the significance of the usage of LinkedIn at both salesperson and organisational level. The results highlight that investment in professional social media sites for B2B sales, i.e. LinkedIn, provides the opportunity to tackle unprecedented challenges and dynamic buying behaviours stimulated by digitisation.

One of the major findings of the study demonstrates the importance of a client’s experience with the organisation as a factor that affects the efficacy of LinkedIn. The client’s perspective of the organisation and the potential future interaction depends upon salesperson effective use of social media. Therefore, this study suggests that salespersons’ knowledge of the prospective customer and B2B relations with relevant influential actors plays a vital role in enhancing sales. Along similar lines, practitioners argue that salesperson is the first link between the client and the organisation hence they are in the best position to make social connections, better information exchange, and trust in the buyer-seller cycle to enhance sales and create value (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017; Lacoste, 2016; Ogilvie et al., 2018). This calls for the salesperson’s use of customer-oriented strategies such as value-based selling to provide the potential and existing customers with a rewarding buying experience.

Another important managerial contribution of this study stems from the factor of quality content posted on LinkedIn. Digitalisation and the availability of information to the customers have resulted in quality content becoming a prime factor for determining the leads engagement. On that account, the content generated by sales executive has to be relevant and credible to engage potential leads. The statistics of this study supports the concept as the respondents have selected “number of views on content” as a common metric to evaluate the impact of sales effort on LinkedIn. Importantly, the results provide a solid basis for benchmarking the client-driven selling activates for the effective usage of LinkedIn in B2B sales.
5.4 - Study Limitations and Future Directions

The study relies on both primary and secondary source for data collection which was performed using literature review and personal survey questionnaires online. As the questionnaire is the main instrument for primary research it is designed to be easily comprehensible, reliable and valid. The guidelines and objectives of the questionnaire were framed according to the standard contours of the survey. The online questionnaire method was effective to identify the factors affecting the efficacy of LinkedIn and to cover a wider geographically spread respondents than the usual in-person interviews or surveys. However, just as in the case of any other research this study design has a few weaknesses and limitations which may be presented as research opportunities for the future.

Firstly, the method of surveying through online questionnaire posed some challenges for the respondents in interpreting the questions. The misinterpretation of questions by the respondents led to some irrelevant and flawed responses on the online google forms which in turn affected the extent of the study. Due to the flawed responses, the total number of relevant responses decreased to 48 in total affecting the scope of the study.

Secondly, the survey was designed to include sales executives only. Hence the research and findings are focused towards the perspectives and opinions of the salespersons and do not consider the preferences and experiences of the buyer organisation/clients. Future studies can focus on client perspectives and opinions regarding the use of LinkedIn as a networking tool in the B2B sales environment.

This study focused on identifying metrics that are used to evaluate the efficiency of LinkedIn as a sales tool. Since there are no set standards or rules followed by practitioners to measure ROI, the study was unable to ascertain an agreed-upon method or standards to select metrics that could best serve to measure the performance of LinkedIn as a sales tool. This is due to the lack of data available about the cost or monetary inputs of sales via LinkedIn. It poses difficulty in measuring the intangible values attached to LinkedIn i.e. long-term benefits and value creation. Different respondents had different perspectives about measuring the efficacy of LinkedIn that was specific to their organisational form and structure. These limitations provide a way forward for future researchers to investigate the effective metrics which measure both monetary and non-monetary values created through social media networking sites like LinkedIn. Furthermore, this would help B2B firms to opt for social selling as the metrics to evaluate performance would help them effectively calculate their profits/returns.
The study has discussed LinkedIn as a whole platform and assessed its efficacy as a professional site aiming to effectively fulfil the sales process of B2B firms, including prospecting, preparations, follow-ups, and closing. However, it lacks in the identification of specific channels and ways through which B2B relationships can be boosted; and an in-depth study of LinkedIn features that can enhance the buyer-seller relationship. The future direction for researchers is to investigate the specific LinkedIn channels and their effectiveness in harnessing from online selling. The multiple channels that can be studied include Closed Groups, Direct messaging to leads, LinkedIn Navigator and other premium features. The comparative study among the LinkedIn channels will help evaluate the suitability and performance of each channel according to the specific sales’ stage.

The study took place in Ireland, so it only covers the cultural scenario of Irish businesses. Hence, the findings of the research are specific to the geographical location of the B2B businesses in Ireland. The research on LinkedIn’s efficacy in B2B sales if conducted in different geographical location may produce varied results depending upon the cultural and technological dynamics, demographical aspects and the organisations’ policies regarding sales.

A final factor affecting the performance of businesses through LinkedIn is the quality of content posted by the organisation. As the research does not specifically aim to study the factors affecting the success of content posted, future research should emphasise on the significance of content. The content strategy should be further studied in depth to achieve sales objectives of attracting prospects and rewarding consumer engagement.
Bibliography


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Use of LinkedIn as a B2B Sales Tool

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my thesis for the Executive MBA at the University of Limerick, I am researching the use of LinkedIn as a demand generation tool for business-to-business (B2B) organisations to understand its underlying success factors and user dynamics, along with assessing the impact of remote sales during the current COVID-19 crisis on use of LinkedIn.

The research has received ethics approval from the University of Limerick which assures all participants of the following:

CONSENT: It is your decision as to whether you take part in the survey or not. Below you will be asked for your consent to partake, however please be aware that you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All personal information will be anonymized in order to ensure confidentiality. Data will be held securely in line with the University of Limerick Ethics guidelines and GDPR legislation. Again, you have the right to withdraw from this research post-survey completion.

The survey will take no more than 5 minutes of your time to complete. Information provided will be used solely for the purpose of my MBA thesis.

If you are willing to take part in the research, please indicate your consent and proceed to the next step.

Many thanks,

Colm Ring

By clicking "Next", you confirm that you are over 18 years and that you consent to complete this questionnaire, aware that your responses will be used for research and publications.

* Required

Do you use, or are involved in the use, of LinkedIn as a demand generation tool for your B2B customer segment? *

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FALtpQLSeCigkYWyM0yJQaqjEKhkytqgEhnixvpaqKvKkFtFyY_xW/viewform

Figure 1 Research Questionnaire via Google Forms (continued below)
Use of LinkedIn as a B2B Sales Tool

All the data will be anonymously used for academic research purposes only.

Name

Your answer

Email

Your answer

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Privacy Policy

Google Forms
Use of LinkedIn as a B2B Sales Tool

* Required

For which of the following activities do you use LinkedIn? *
Select all which are applicable. You may select more than one option.

☐ Client prospecting
☐ Preparation
☐ Approach
☐ Presentation
☐ Handling objections
☐ closing
☐ Follow-up
☐ After-sales service/support
☐ Other: ____________________________________________
Rate the factors affecting the efficacy of LinkedIn as a B2B sales tool for your organisation

Please rate each factor on the scale of 1 to 5, where 1 refers to the particular factor being totally irrelevant and 5 refers to the particular factor being highly relevant in affecting efficacy of LinkedIn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1</th>
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<td>Client’s trust on your organisation</td>
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<td>Relevant training to executives</td>
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<td>Relevance of content for client</td>
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<td>Regularity in engagement</td>
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<td>Presence of competitor(s) on LinkedIn</td>
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<td>Credibility of content</td>
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<td>Prior relations between your organisation and client</td>
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</table>
What are the major metrics used by your organisation to measure the efficacy and impact of its sales efforts on LinkedIn? *
Select all which are applicable. You may select more than one option.

- Number of views on posted content
- Number of joins in group
- Number of clicks on posts/links
- Number of comments on posted content
- Response time of clients
- Conversion rate (No. of views on content to No. of sales conversion)
- Increase in website(or webpage) traffic after posting content
- No metric used or tracked
- Other: ____________________________________________