

# Social Media Marketing in B2B Oriented SMEs

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## **ABSTRACT,**

*This article looks into the concept of effectiveness of social media marketing in B2B oriented SMEs. There is a gap in existing literature, since existing literature focuses mainly on B2C oriented organizations. Besides, this article is one of the first to describe the outcomes of a quantitative research looking into the effectiveness of social media marketing in B2B organizations. To do this, a questionnaire was sent to 500 organizations. 56 useful responses were collected from these 500 organizations. From these responses it became apparent that social media marketing is being used for a variety of goals, such as attracting potential customers and increasing brand awareness and sales. It can be concluded that effectiveness of social media marketing can have various definitions. Since every organization can have another goal for their social media marketing activities, there is not one thing that can be deemed to define the concept of effectiveness of social media marketing. However, it is concluded that organizations have a general idea of what the goal is of their social media marketing activities, but do not set specific goals or targets that should be reached and can be measured. This, together with the fact that it is unclear how organizations measure the effectiveness of social media marketing activities, lead to the conclusion that it is hard to tell whether or not a social media marketing activity is deemed to be effective.*

## **Graduation Committee members:**

## **Keywords**

SMEs, Business-to-Business, Social Media Marketing, Effectiveness.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

B2B organizations are significantly lower users of social media than B2C organizations are (Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2019).

Leefflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014) found that the four biggest challenges in digital marketing are the explosion of data (big data), social media, proliferation of channels, and shifting consumer demographics. According to existing scientific literature, B2B organizations have been slow to adopt new technologies, such as social media marketing (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014). Reasons for this might be lack of money, time and training, negative views about usefulness, and unfamiliarity with the new technology (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011).

Social media is popularly defined in existing literature following the definition from (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), who define social media as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. When organizations make use of social media, they are often operating in a B2C environment. Most literature focuses on the social media marketing activities of organizations operating in such an environment (Michaelidou, et al. (2011); Iankova, et al. (2019)). The marketing activities undertaken by organizations are believed to lead to increased brand awareness, loyalty, engagement, and sales.

Since its emergence, organizations have been increasingly investing in social media in order to create brand fans who tend to have a positive effect on word of mouth and loyalty. Besides this, consumers tend to read a lot of online reviews, hence social media content can create empowered customers who are more led by other customers than by advertisements of organizations. Moreover, social media creates an exquisite opportunity to have a look into customers insights, including how consumers are interacting with each other and the products and service they use (Leefflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014).

The biggest challenge, however, is that B2B organizations see social media as a cute promotional activity, when it can be a strategic marketing activity (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015).

Social media has the potential to enhance brand equity. It allows consumers and buyers to interact with their brands in ways that can create brand identity and brand meaning, as well as encourage brand responses and relationships. Furthermore, increasing the brand's presence and reputation on social media sites can boost sales performance and other financial and brand outcomes. It has thus become critical for marketers to use appropriate communication strategies to motivate their audiences to engage with brand messages (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014).

As holds true for almost everything an organization does, measuring the return on investment is essential for determining whether or not a social media marketing campaign can be assessed as effective. However, because it is hard to dedicate sales or other money-related metrics to social media marketing, or marketing in general, organizations need to find new metrics in order to measure the return on investment. Despite this being paramount for assessing effectiveness, existing literature has not yet been able to set one best practice, and generally focusses on lead generation or number of followers and likes.

This research tries to identify effectiveness of social media marketing in a Business-to-Business setting. Because of this, the research question this article focuses on is: “*What is the effectiveness of social media marketing in a business-to-business oriented small-to-medium sized enterprise?*” In this article, the

main focus is on Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) operating in a business-to-business environment. This group of organizations was chosen, because most of the existing companies are considered to be SMEs and therefore, it is believed that this article will have the most practical value when focused on this segment of organizations. Besides this, existing literature already found that social media marketing appears to be especially beneficial for SMEs, because these organizations tend to be flexible to adapting social networks for both marketing and the development of new products (Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag, 2019). Furthermore, although the amount of existing literature regarding B2B organization's social media marketing efforts is growing, it is mainly focused on large enterprises, which are operating globally. By focusing on SMEs, this article hopes to add findings to the existing literature, which can be used to compare SMEs with larger organizations.

To provide the reader with a clear, understandable answer to the main research question, a few sub-sections have been defined. First, this article will look into the definition of social media marketing and how it is currently being used by organizations, and specifically B2B organizations. Second, the effectiveness of social media marketing will be described. This part will mainly focus on the concept “effectiveness” and how to measure it. The third part describes differences between B2B and B2C social media marketing, so that it becomes clear if there are differences and what those are.

The aim of this article is providing the reader with a clear insight in existing literature about the current use of social media marketing and its effectiveness in a B2B organization's environment. It tries to identify the current status of social media marketing in B2B organizations and how it is being used. It then tries to seek an answer to the question “what is effective social media marketing?” which can be used by B2B organizations to determine its social media marketing effectiveness.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Literature Review

In order to find useful and accurate literature which can be used for this article, the five-stage Grounded Theory method for reviewing literature in a specific area, developed by Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, and Wilderom (2013), has been used. According to Wolfswinkel et al. making use of Grounded Theory enables the researcher to come up with a theory-based or concept-centric yet accurate literature review. This method is based on the widely used guidelines as developed by Webster and Watson (2002). The five-stage process is chosen as a method for finding literature in this article, because it offers workable and clear guidelines to find relevant scientific literature in the fast pool of existing literature.

The first stage is “Define”. In this stage, criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion of an article in the data set are defined. In this article, there has been predominately searched for articles published during the last 5 years. This was done, because of the quick development of social media and the online environment. Besides this, the main field of the search was “Marketing” and more specifically “social media marketing” and “online marketing”.

The second stage is “Search”. In this step, the actual search for existing scientific literature will happen. For this research, three separate databases have been used. The first and second are Web of Science and Scopus. If these databases did not provide with relevant literature, the third database, Google Scholar was used. During the search, the main focus of the search terms was a combination of “B2B” and “Social Media Marketing”, however also synonyms and closely related terms, such as “business-to-

business” and “digital marketing” have been used. See appendix A for a complete overview of the used search terms, number of hits on these search terms and the used database.

The third stage is the “Select” stage. In this stage, the sample of texts are actually being selected. This can only be done after filtering out doubles and putting aside other articles that do not fit set criteria, because of their titles, abstracts, or bits of texts.

After the select stage the fourth stage is reached. This is the “Analyze” stage. In this stage, every in stage three selected paper will be read and all the parts deemed interesting by the researcher are being highlighted. These highlighted parts are called “excerpts”. In this article, open-coding has been used, meaning that after all excerpts are highlighted, they have all been looked through again, so that a number of concepts appear. By doing so, the analyze stage enables the researcher to create an account of what is already written in existing literature, but also leads to explanations for findings and offers insights into what was seen as relevant in other research.

Then, the fifth and final stage, “Present”. After all the relevant parts of existing literature have been collected, the next challenge is to present it in a logical way. To do so, the logbook which was kept during this process provided for a good basis of how to present the relevant literature in this article.

## 2.2 What is Social Media Marketing?

As was mentioned in the introduction, social media is popularly defined in existing literature by following the definition from Kaplan & Haenlein (2010). Karjaluoto, Ulkuniemi, Huotari, Saraniemi, & Mäläskä (2015) elaborated on this, stating that social media are “digital communication platforms and services that allow parties to connect with each another, to share information, engage in dialogue and in which organizations and individuals post content and messages to engage participants and to interact with others by contributing to their discussions”. In 2014, Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt predicted that social media and mobile applications represent the biggest growth areas for companies over the following 2 to 4 years. The term social media marketing refers to the act of using social networks for marketing purposes (Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag, 2019).

There are various social media networks available to everyone. Buratti, Parola, & Satta (2018) found that LinkedIn was the most used platform by B2B organizations, with over 93% of the organizations using it. This was followed by Facebook, with an 80% adoption rate. B2B organizations do not tend to make use of Twitter that often, with an adoption rate of “only” 33.3%.

Social media can be used by B2B organizations to communicate with their customers and suppliers, build relationships and trust, as well as to identify potential partners in the field of B2B selling (Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag, 2019). The majority of organizations using social media platforms do so to attract new customers, cultivate relationships, increase brand awareness, and communicate the brand online (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). It can be used both internally and externally to enhance communication within the organizations and with customers and suppliers, build relationships and trust, deliver sales support, understand customer needs, engage in learning and collaboration, create and cultivate leads, and to drive innovation (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016) and it is most commonly used for communication, marketing, and employer branding and recruitment (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014).

Furthermore, it is a way to create value-added content for customers and to monitor and/or temper negative customer sentiment. It can also be used to connect more strongly with

customers and engage them in the value creation (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014). Also, social media facilitates strategy, cost reduction, information collection, database enhancement, service delivery and greater geographic reach (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015). Social media marketing can be seen as a pull marketing technique by which organizations pull customers to their brand (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) it can be an easily accessible and low-cost option for keeping the pace of sectorial transformations and creating a competitive advantage (Buratti, Parola, & Satta, 2018).

Social media marketing tools can make the exchange process between buyers and sellers more efficient and effective, and may foster effective marketing activities and processes even in small- and medium sized enterprises (Buratti, Parola, & Satta, 2018).

Despite the many benefits argued in existing literature, there can also be some downsides for organizations in the social media environment. Namely, in the social media environment, customers can easily become value destroyers, rather than value creators (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014). When organizations are trying to engage customers in brand building through social media, they are left with a weaker control. This holds especially true for strong brands, where the risk of engagement activities is high and the potential returns are low. Therefore, any of these activities pursued need to be particularly cautiously managed (Verhoef, Beckers, & van Doorn, 2013).

Since its emergence, social media has been rapidly adopted by B2C organizations. However, many B2B organizations’ managers believe that social media are better suited for B2C instead of B2B organizations, as they target individuals. This might be the case, but this does not necessarily mean that it is not useful to B2B organizations. When B2B organizations engage in social media marketing, one of the main drivers to develop such a strategy is to keep up with the competition and protect their brand (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

A key point of B2B marketing is identifying the role of an individual in the buying circle and matching content to a buyer’s position in the customer journey (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Individuals can play different roles in a B2B organization’s social media marketing efforts when communicating through social media, as was found by Lashgari, Sutton-Brady, Sjøilen, & Ulfvengren (2018). These individuals can influence B2B organizations, acting as end-users, influencers, technical engineers, or one of many other roles. Moreover, these individuals may form the B2B organization’s main target group, because these individuals tend to pursue technical feedback on products or services, and might even support the sales process. However, these persons can also act as the value destroyers described by Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014).

Also, B2B organizations can benefit from social media communications when it makes use of forward integration with their distributors. These distributors can use social media channels in order to reach end-users and by doing so can receive comments and feedback which can eventually benefit the B2B organization.

Social media provide an opportunity to consumers to publicize their personal opinions of purchased products and services, which has never been provided before and therefore stimulate word of mouth. For organizations, on the other hand, social media offers opportunities to create trust and to easily reach a large audience against low costs (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014).

In order to effectively use social media marketing, a social media strategy is key. Lashgari, Sutton-Brady, Sjøilen, & Ulfvengren (2018) found that, before engaging in social media marketing

activities, it should be clear what group is being targeted, as well as what the role of the targeted individuals is within their organization. Furthermore, they argue that content depth and diversity are important and that this content is being displayed on a corresponding social media platform. Moreover, it should be clear what the structure of the social media channel is, i.e. just posting the same content on various platforms, or using various approaches to target different groups, and how accessible the information should be.

It can thus be concluded that social media marketing can have a lot of benefits, but that there are also some downsides to it. It further became clear that organization should not simply “start” using social media as a marketing tool, but they should really carefully think about what goals they have and how they want to achieve them before making use of social media marketing.

### **2.3 Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing**

Although, social media took control of the brand reputation of companies, they are struggling to measure its real impact.

Among B2B organizations, it is believed that social media can be an effective communication channel if managed properly (Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2019). It is an easily accessible technique which can be used to communicate with customers at a much lower cost than ever before. Effective content in social media was found to be content that engages with and is interesting to the audience. Moreover, it adds value by enabling the audience to do something better, or by solving a specific problem in their life (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

As was found by Holliman & Rowley (2014), digital marketing techniques are perceived as enabling marketers to interact with customers, as long as you are able to tell a good story. B2B organizations find it very important to set quantifiable goals for their campaigns. This is believed to be so hard, however, that it is mentioned as a reason for not adopting social media marketing at all (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014). Marketing communications should be aligned with the organization’s overall company goals. Despite trying to do so, some organizations do have troubles with aligning marketing communication with the organization’s goals (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

Although it is found hard to set clear and quantifiable goals, there is a high level of management interest in the organization’s social media marketing strategy and most organizations require a report to management on activities and outcomes (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016). It firstly is important to understand the customer journey the marketer is trying to influence, before you can set and apply metrics. However, many B2B organizations made use of the same metrics in social media marketing as they did for other marketing activities. Despite this, also web analytics tool were found to be useful means for measuring social media marketing’s effectiveness. Also, social media is found to be very beneficial for lead generation, which is a significant issue for B2B marketers (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015). Besides lead generation, Cawsey & Rowley (2016) found other objectives of social media marketing, namely enhancing brand image and reputation, increasing brand awareness, facilitating customer engagement, and delivering customer support. Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag (2019), came to similar conclusions, because they argue that social media marketing positively affects the understanding of customers’ views and preferences, increase brand awareness and international business contacts.

Besides lead generation, another way to measure branding is the number of likes or followers on social media. It has always been assumed that more likes or followers are better than a low amount of likes or followers. However, de Vries (2019) found that both

high and low likes-to-followers ratios negatively influence the perceived credibility of an account and thus impact a posts’ effectiveness.

Some organizations are already relatively advanced in their engagement with metrics for social media marketing, but there are also some organizations that struggle with how to measure the effectiveness of their social media marketing activities, because of the absence of clear objectives and/or senior management buy-in. The more advanced organizations argue that KPIs are specific to campaign types and thus are not generalizable among all campaigns (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

Effective use of social media requires coordination between the sales department and the operations and marketing departments, because these complementary departments must be clearly understood in order to avoid duplication. The challenge for B2B marketers in terms of social media is to match the social media platform and content with the decision maker (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015).

### **2.4 Do Social Media Marketing Activities Differ between B2B and B2C Organizations?**

The usage of social media marketing has been studied widely in the field of B2C. However, existing scientific literature in the field of B2B social media marketing is scarce and the existing literature mainly assumes that the use of social media by B2B organizations varies from its use by B2C organizations, and thus requires a different approach. The rapid growth of social media and the investments made in it by organizations has created a need for researchers to explore and define methods for using social media. Without such a guidance, B2B organizations may follow the way of work of B2C organizations and might find it is not equally rewarding. Evidence suggests that the two environments differ enough to justify dedicated investigations and distinct approaches for both types of organizations (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014).

Because of this, differences between social media marketing in B2B organizations and B2C organizations have been found. First, B2B organizations have been found to be more resistant and holding back when it comes to implementing new techniques. This holds true for the usage of social media as well. B2C organizations have been found to quickly adopt social media as a strategic marketing tool, whereas face-to-face selling is still considered to be the dominant form of communication for B2B organizations (Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2019). Iankova, et al. (2019) further found that B2B organizations are significantly lower users of social media than B2C organizations are. Furthermore, they found that B2B organizations assigned a lower level of importance to social media channels than B2C organizations do. Besides this, B2B organizations see social media as a less effective communication channel and also to have less potential as a communication channel.

Also, B2B organizations place a higher value on educational formats, such as blogs and webinars, whereas B2C organizations are more willing to use advanced digital formats like interactive content and online tools (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015).

There are several reasons why B2C organizations are more often making use of social media than B2B organization do. The first one being the number of decision-makers and purchase influences. In B2B organizations it is more common that there is a large number of decision-makers or influencers that B2B marketers should consider, meaning that they must consider different media and messages for each person involved. The second reason is that the decision-making cycle in B2B

organizations often is slower than the one in B2C organizations. The slower decision-making cycle means that customer progress through the purchase funnel must be recorded for each decision-maker in order to optimally match resources with potential purchases. The third reason is the high-value exchange. B2B purchases are usually of greater value than B2C purchases, which creates a situation where consumer risk perceptions are likely to be heightened, when comparing to B2C organizations. The fourth reason being the differing decision criteria between B2C and B2B organizations. B2B organizations customers are likely to be less hedonistic and less pleasure driven than B2C customers. The higher complexity of B2B products or services is the fifth reason. Because of this higher complexity, B2B purchasers tend to rely on more information, which is harder to do by social media. The sixth and final reason is that B2B purchasers are more knowledgeable than B2C purchasers. To some degree this is due to the higher level of risk involved in high-value purchases, but it could also be due to the more complex nature of the product or service (Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan, 2015).

Milne (2014) found that B2B organizations are more likely to use brand names, functional appeals, embedded links and cues, and hashtags. B2C organizations more often used emotional appeals and direct calls to purchase than did B2B organizations.

It can thus be concluded that the usage of social media differs quite a lot between B2B and B2C organizations.

## 2.5 What is Effectiveness in B2B Social Media Marketing?

So, after executing the previous literature review it can be concluded that social media marketing efforts can have a lot of benefits when done properly. The several findings from the discussed literature are summarized in table 1.

As became clear, social media marketing can lead to increased brand awareness, increased loyalty, increased engagement and increased sales. Besides this, it can be used for various reasons. Social media marketing has been found to be an effective way of communicating with customers and suppliers and for building relationships and trust. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to

**Table 1: Summary of Literature Review**

Findings	Authors
“Social media marketing leads to increased brand awareness”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen (2014); Cawsey & Rowley (2016); Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau (2019)
“Social media marketing leads to increased loyalty”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014); Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau (2019)
“Social media marketing leads to increased engagement”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau (2019)
“Social media marketing leads to increased sales”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau (2019)
“Social media marketing can be used for communicating with customers and suppliers”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Holliman & Rowley (2014); Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen (2014); Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014); Cawsey & Rowley (2016); Lashgari, Sutton-Brady, Søylen, & Ulfvengren, (2018)
“Social media marketing can be used for building relationships and trust”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014); Cawsey & Rowley (2016)
“Social media marketing can be used for identifying potential partners”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011)
“Social media marketing can be used for attracting new customers”	Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014); Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan (2015)
“Social media marketing can be used for understanding customer needs”	Holliman & Rowley (2014); Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014); Cawsey & Rowley (2016)

Moreover, in the B2B organization’s environment, the number of customers tend to be lower than in the B2C setting, while the cooperation with customers is generally more direct and intense than in the B2C setting (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014).

Furthermore, there is also a difference in the way social media is being used by B2B and B2C organizations. Swani, Brown, &

organizations to identify potential partners and attract new customers. Furthermore, by making use of social media marketing, an organizations can obtain a better insight in their customer’s needs.

Effectiveness of social media marketing can thus mean a variety of things in the B2B environment. It truly comes down to the intention a marketer and/or an organization has and the objectives they set for themselves whether or not a social media marketing campaign can be deemed effective.



### 3.3 Research Instrument Development

In order to find out whether or not the benefits and goals mentioned in the literature are still valid today, a questionnaire has been developed. This questionnaire has been sent to various individuals working in marketing departments or engaging in any other way in marketing activities, when no marketing department is present within the organization, as was described in paragraph 3.1. In order to create the questionnaire it was first analyzed what goals and benefits had been mentioned in the existing literature. As can be seen in table 2, the most commonly mentioned goal/benefit is “communicating with suppliers and/or customers”. In the questionnaire, the main focus will be on the goals and benefits that are mentioned most often (cited by 3 articles or more).

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions formulated to determine whether or not the respondent fulfilled the set criteria for B2B-oriented SME. Also, the respondents were asked if the organization they are working in is focused on delivering goods, services, or both.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of finding scales in existing social media marketing studies that cover what is being described in this article. Especially the work of Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag (2019) was found to be very useful in this. They developed 45 5-point Likert scale questions to be used for creating a questionnaire focused on social media marketing activities by B2B oriented SMEs. Because 29 of these questions were found to be applicable to this article and sufficiently covering what is described in this article, they were selected to be used in the online questionnaire. The respondents were thus

asked to describe their tendency to agree with the proposed statement. As is the case with a 5 point Likert scale, the respondents had 5 options which could describe their tendency to agree with the proposed statement. A score of 1 means “totally disagree”, a score 2 means “disagree”, a score of 3 means “neither agree nor disagree”, a score of 4 means “agree”, and a score of 5 means “totally agree”.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The main research question of this article was “*What is the effectiveness of social media marketing in a business-to-business oriented small-to-medium sized enterprise?*” To find an answer to this question, the conceptual model in Table 2 has been developed. In this table, the main focus of the questionnaire is depicted, which is finding out what SMEs argue to be of importance for their social media marketing activities.

As was described in section 3, respondents were asked to indicate their tendency to agree or disagree with a proposed statement. These statements were all related to or similar to statements and questions proposed in existing literature.

This has been done in order to be fully able to compare the outcomes of this research with the conclusions drawn in the existing scientific literature and by doing so, finding commonalities and differences between them.

The data gathered was analyzed by using IBM SPSS statistics program. Tables showed in the remainder of this article are created by using SPSS’ function to create frequency tables. These tables are depicted in section 5 and the outcomes of these tables are being compared and discussed in the analysis in section 6.

### 5. FINDINGS

As was previously described, an online questionnaire had been sent out to 500 organizations that were listed on the website of “MKB-bedrijvengids”. After two weeks of gathering responses, a total of 67 completely filled out online questionnaire had been

received. Of these 67 responses, 11 organizations did not fulfill the set criteria. This meant they were either not considered to be a SME, a B2B organization, or actively using social media marketing.

### 5.1 General Findings

First some general findings will be described, so it becomes clear what the characteristics were of the organizations that filled out the questionnaire.

As was already mentioned, a total of 67 responses have been received. Of these 67 responses, 11 responses were excluded from the data analysis, because they did not fulfill the set criteria. Of these 11 responses, 8 companies (N=8) were excluded, because they did not make use of social media marketing, meaning that their answers could not be used in answering the research question. 2 companies (N=2) were excluded, because they considered themselves to be more B2C oriented than B2B oriented. 1 final company (N=1) was excluded, because it did not fulfill the criteria for number of employees (N>250) and for maximal yearly turnover (N>50 million EUR). This meant that the data analysis was done amongst 56 responses.

Of the 56 valid responses, 12 organizations described themselves as operating on the goods market, 35 organizations as operating on the service market, and 9 organizations on the goods market as well as on the service market (see Table 3).

The majority of the respondents is working in an organization with less than 50 employees (N=47). The other 9 organizations employed between 50 and 250 employees (see Table 4). Moreover, all companies had a yearly turnover of less than EUR

**Table 3: Active on Goods or Service Market**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Goods	12	21,4	21,4
Services	35	62,5	83,9
Both	9	16,1	100
Total	56	100	

50 million over calendar year 2019 (see Table 5).

**Table 4: Number of Employees**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
< 50	47	83,9	83,9
50 - 250	9	16,1	100
Total	56	100	

**Table 5: Turnover 2019**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
< €50 mln	56	100	100
Total	56	100	

Finally, as can be seen in table 6, companies differ quiet a lot in their opinion about the perceived usefulness of social media marketing when targeting other companies. 7 companies state that they do not find social media marketing useful at all when targeting other companies. 20 organizations have a neutral opinion, stating that they neither disagree, nor agree with the statement. 22 companies mention that they do find social media marketing useful when targeting other companies, and finally 7 companies state that they find social media marketing very useful

when targeting other companies. So, although the variety in answers, companies are more likely to agree with the statement than to disagree with it.

**Table 6: Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	0	0	12,5
3 neither agree nor disagree	20	35,7	48,2
4 agree	22	39,3	87,5
5 completely agree	7	12,5	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,39		

## 5.2 Findings Communication

As became clear from the existing scientific literature and could be seen in the conceptual model, communicating with suppliers and/or customers is the most often mentioned use of social media marketing activities.

According to the 56 respondents, social media is not very useful for communication with suppliers. Respondents tend to disagree with the statement, as can be seen in Table 7. 27 respondents tend to disagree with the statement, whereas only 11 agreed with it.

**Table 7: Social Media is Useful for Communication with Suppliers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	20	35,7	48,2
3 neither agree nor disagree	18	32,1	80,4
4 agree	7	12,5	92,9
5 completely agree	4	7,1	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	2,66		

On the other hand, social media was perceived to be quite useful when it comes to communicating with customers. Table 8 shows that 29 respondents agreed when asked if social media helps them to better communicate with customers, whereas 15 disagreed with this statement.

**Table 8: Social Media is Useful for Communication with Customers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	8	14,3	26,8
3 neither agree nor disagree	12	21,4	48,2
4 agree	23	41,1	89,3
5 completely agree	6	10,7	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,23		

## 5.3 Findings Brand Awareness

The second most often mentioned goal/benefit of social media marketing is increasing brand awareness. According to the respondents, social media marketing is a good way to ensure

brand awareness. In Table 9, it is visualized that only 5 respondents found social media marketing useless when trying to create brand awareness, whereas 41 respondents think that social media marketing is a good way to increase brand awareness.

**Table 9: Social Media Helps to Increase Brand Awareness**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	5	8,9	8,9
2 disagree	0	0	8,9
3 neither agree nor disagree	10	17,9	26,8
4 agree	29	51,8	78,6
5 completely agree	12	21,4	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,77		

At the same time, it can be seen that 27 companies think that social media marketing helps them to reach more customers than they would have reached when not making use of social media marketing. However, 18 respondents state that they do not believe that social media marketing helps them to reach more customers.

**Table 10: Social Media Helps to Reach More Customers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	3	5,4	5,4
2 disagree	15	26,8	32,2
3 neither agree nor disagree	11	19,6	51,8
4 agree	17	30,4	82,1
5 completely agree	10	17,9	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,29		

## 5.4 Findings Attracting Customers

Another often cited benefit of social media marketing is that it is useful for attracting new customers. Respondents were asked to indicate if they use Social Media in order to reach new customers, which would not have been reached without the use of Social Media. As can be seen in table 11, 16 respondents mentioned that they do not make use of social media to reach potential customers. On the other hand, 28 respondents mentioned that they do in fact make use of social media to identify potential customers.

**Table 11: Social Media is being used to Identify Potential Customers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	3	5,4	5,4
2 disagree	13	23,2	28,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	12	21,4	50
4 agree	16	28,6	78,6
5 completely agree	12	21,4	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,38		



## 5.5 Findings Customer Needs

Understanding customer needs is another benefit often described in literature. It argues that social media marketing is an efficient way to be in contact with your customers. This is being backed up by existing scientific literature, which mentions that social media is a good way to find out what needs your customers have.

When respondents were asked whether or not they make use of social media marketing in order to identify their customers' needs, 23 respondents indicated that they do make use of social media to understand their customers' behavior, whereas 16 respondents indicated that they did not do so.

**Table 12: Social Media Helps in Understanding Customer Needs**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	9	16,1	28,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	17	30,4	58,9
4 agree	20	35,7	94,6
5 completely agree	3	5,4	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,05		

## 5.6 Findings Sales

Every organization around the world needs to have some sort of income in order for it to keep existing. The respondents in this research were asked to indicate their attitude towards statements regarding leads generation and sales.

When asked about if the respondents made use of Social Media in order to generate more leads, the majority (N=29) indicated that they do in fact make use of Social Media in order to generate more leads. On the other hand, only 12 respondents indicated that they do not use Social Media with the purpose of leads generation (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Social Media is being used with the Purpose of Lead Generation**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	3	5,4	5,4
2 disagree	9	16,1	21,5
3 neither agree nor disagree	15	26,8	48,3
4 agree	18	32,1	80,4
5 completely agree	11	19,6	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,45		

At the same time, respondents indicate that Social Media does enhance their number of sales, since 25 respondents tend to agree with this statement, whereas only 12 respondents disagree (see Table 14).

**Table 14: Social Media Enhances the Amount of Sales**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	5	8,9	21,4
3 neither agree nor disagree	19	33,9	55,4
4 agree	19	33,9	89,3
5 completely agree	6	10,7	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,21		

However, it is unclear what percentage of sales can be dedicated to Social Media usage. As can be seen in table 15, a fast majority (N=30) indicates that they do not know how social media activities support the total turnover of the organization.

**Table 15: It is Clear how Social Media Activities Contribute to Total Turnover**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	9	16,1	16,1
2 disagree	21	37,5	53,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	15	26,8	80,4
4 agree	4	7,1	87,5
5 completely agree	7	12,5	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	2,63		

## 5.7 Findings Attracting Suppliers

Besides making use of social media to attract new customers, literature has also depicted it to be a useful tool in order to attract new suppliers.

According to the respondents in this research, most of them do not indicate to use social media marketing as a tool to identify potential new suppliers. As it turns out, only 14 respondents are using social media marketing as a tool to do so.

**Table 16: Social Media is being used to Identify Potential New Suppliers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	10	17,9	17,9
2 disagree	15	26,8	44,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	17	30,4	75
4 agree	14	25	100
5 completely agree	0	0	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	2,63		

Moreover, the majority of the respondents mainly indicate that social media does not enable them to reach more suppliers than they would have done without the usage of social media marketing, as can be seen in table 17.

**Table 17: Social Media Enables Me to Reach More Suppliers**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	5	8,9	8,9
2 disagree	20	35,7	44,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	17	30,4	75
4 agree	14	25	100
5 completely agree	0	0	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	2,71		

## 5.8 Other Findings

Besides looking into the outcomes of what was mentioned in the previous part of Section 5, this research has also tried to obtain some insights about general use and attitude towards Social Media Marketing. The responses to the proposed statements related to the general usage of and attitude towards Social Media Marketing will be described in this paragraph.

First of all, as becomes clear in Table 18, the vast majority of respondents (N=36) indicate that they do understand well what the goal of the organization's social media marketing activities is. Only 2 respondents indicate that the goal of their organization's social media marketing activities is unclear.

**Table 118: It is clear what the Goal of Social Media Marketing Activities is**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	2	3,6	3,6
2 disagree	0	0	3,6
3 neither agree nor disagree	18	32,1	35,7
4 agree	22	39,3	75
5 completely agree	14	25	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,82		

Besides asking if it is clear what the goals of Social Media Marketing exactly are, respondents were also asked if they actually do make use of goal-setting for their Social Media Marketing activities. As can be seen in Table 19, 21 respondents agree, whereas 17 disagree.

**Table 19: Goal-setting is used for Social Media Activities**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	7	12,5	12,5
2 disagree	10	17,9	30,4
3 neither agree nor disagree	18	32,1	62,5
4 agree	17	30,4	92,9
5 completely agree	4	7,1	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	3,02		

Moreover, the respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they make use of tools in order to measure the outcomes and effects of their social media marketing activities. Regarding

this statement, 22 respondents agreed and 22 respondents disagreed.

**Table 20: Usage of Tools to Measure Results of Social Media Marketing Activities**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 completely disagree	11	19,6	19,6
2 disagree	11	19,6	39,3
3 neither agree nor disagree	12	21,4	60,7
4 agree	15	26,8	87,5
5 completely agree	7	12,5	100
Total	56	100	
Mean	2,93		

## 5.9 Between Groups Comparison

Because of the nature of the gathered data, it also has been possible to perform between group comparisons and analyses. These between group comparisons were executed by performing the Mann-Whitney U-test. The first comparisons were made based on the orientation of the organizations, being service-oriented, goods-oriented, or both service- and goods-oriented. Furthermore, comparisons were made based on the size of the SMEs, employing either less than 50 employees, or between 50 and 250 employees.

The Mann-Whitney U-test has been used, because the data set consists of Likert data. This data is considered to be ordinal, and therefore, an independent sample T-test could not be used. All the assumptions for comparing means by using the Mann-Whitney U-test are being fulfilled. This means that this research deals with ordinal data, categorical independent groups, and no dependence of observation, meaning that there is no relationship between the observations in the groups or between the groups themselves.

The outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U-test can be found in Appendix B.

As can be seen in Appendix B, there are several significant outcomes. When comparing SMEs focused on providing goods with SMEs focused on providing services, it can be seen that SMEs focused on supplying goods are significantly more using social media in order to communicate with customers than SMEs focusing on providing services. On the other hand, SMEs providing services are significantly more positive towards making use of social media to reach more suppliers. Furthermore, they service oriented SMEs indicate to know better what the exact goal of social media activities is then goods oriented SMEs do.

When comparing SMEs providing goods to SMEs providing both goods and services the first thing that can be pointed out is the overall high mean of SMEs providing both goods and services. Because of this, 9 significant differences were found. SMEs providing both goods and services are more often using social media activities to communicate with customers and also indicate to reach more customers because of social media activities than SMEs providing only goods do. Moreover, they state that social media increases their brand awareness, lead generation and sales more than SMEs providing goods do. Besides this, they also mention that reaching suppliers is done by using social media. Finally, SMEs providing both goods and services are better aware of the general goal of social media, make more use of goal-setting for their social media marketing activities and do more often use tool to measure the outcomes of

their social media marketing activities than SMEs providing only goods do.

Also SMEs providing only services were compared to SMEs providing both goods and services. From this comparison it became apparent that the outcomes are mostly similar to the outcomes of the comparison between SMEs providing only goods and SMEs providing both goods and services. Again, in general the means of the group of SMEs providing both goods and services were higher than the means of the group of SMEs providing only services. The only two differences between the comparison of SMEs providing goods and SMEs providing both goods and services and the comparison of SMEs providing services and SMEs providing both goods and services is that there is no significant difference in means regarding the use of social media in order to generate leads and to reach more suppliers.

Besides grouping the respondents in groups of main business, they were also grouped in company size. As can be seen in Appendix B there were three significant differences in the means of both groups. As became clear from the data, the SMEs employing between 50 and 250 individuals do more often make use of social media to identify potential customers than do SMEs employing less than 50 individuals. Also, they do state that social media enhances their sales more and also enables them to identify more potential suppliers than do smaller SMEs do.

## 6. ANALYSIS

In this Analysis section the findings of this article will be compared to the findings and conclusions of the existing literature. This will be structured similar to section 5 "Findings".

The most often mentioned benefit/goal of Social Media Marketing in existing literature is that it enables an organization to better communicate with its customers and suppliers. It is argued that Social Media Marketing is an easily accessible technique which can be used to communicate with customers at much lower costs, but only believed to be effective as long as you are able to tell a good story (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

According to this article, social media marketing is believed to be an effective tool when attempting to reach customers, since more than half of the respondents indicated that this is the case, whereas a little over a quarter of the respondents indicated that they did not find social media marketing useful to communicate easily with customers. This is thus in line with the existing literature.

Regarding brand awareness, a lot of existing literature argues that social media marketing is an effective way to increase brand awareness. Therefore it was expected that the respondents in the questionnaire would tend to indicate that social media marketing is indeed helping them to increase brand awareness.

Over 73% of the respondents did indicate that social media marketing is an effective way for them to create brand awareness, whereas 8.9% of the respondents indicated that they do not find it useful. Therefore it can be concluded that the findings in this article are consistent with what is argued in existing literature and thus that social media marketing is indeed perceived to be a useful tool to create and increase brand awareness.

Moreover, almost half of the respondents indicated that they feel that social media marketing is useful to them for attracting more customers. Furthermore, half of the respondents indicate that they use social media marketing for the identification of potential customers.

These findings are in line with what was argued by, for example, Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt (2014), who argued that social media marketing offers organizations the opportunity

to create trust and easily reach a large audience against low costs. This means that attracting more customers and identifying potential ones are indeed perceived to be reached by using social media marketing.

Social media is also perceived to be an effective tool to better understand customer needs (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016). Since customers are able to publicize their own opinions and needs online and organizations are able to interact with the customers more easily than ever before, organizations are better able to align their goods and/or services to the customer's needs. Therefore, it was expected that respondents would indicate that social media marketing is perceived to be an effective tool to understand the customer's needs.

As was found in this article, it turns out that a slight majority (41.1%) indeed state that social media marketing is an effective way to better understand the customer's needs. However, 28.6% indicated that they do not perceive social media marketing as an effective tool to identify their customer's needs. It will thus be concluded that the findings in this research are in line with the findings in existing literature. However, the respondents are quite divided regarding their opinions to this topic.

What would arguably be one of the most important benefits/goals of social media marketing for organizations is the increasing of sales. As was argued in the existing literature, social media marketing can be an effective way to increase sales (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides (2011); Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau (2019)).

As was found in this research, almost half of the respondents indicate that social media marketing enhances their number of sales, whereas only 12 respondents indicated that this is not the case.

Besides this, 51.8% of the respondents indicated that they make use of social media marketing in order to create lead generation. These leads can of course lead to more sales as well. It is also in line with findings of Habibi, Hamilton, Valos, & Callaghan (2015), who found that social media is very beneficial for lead generation, which is a significant issue for B2B marketers.

What is noticeable however is that, although respondents indicate that social media marketing enhances their sales and leads, they do also indicate that they do not know what effect their social media marketing has on their organization's total yearly turnover. Only 11 respondents (19.6%) said that they know how social media marketing activities contribute to the organization's total turnover, whereas 53.6% indicates that they do not know this.

Therefore, we can conclude that respondents feel that their social media marketing activities do contribute to their sales and also lead to more leads, which is in line with existing literature, but that they are not able to prove this. This is argued, because most of them do not know to what extent the social media marketing activities do contribute to the total turnover reached by the organization.

Besides attracting potential customers and interacting with them, social media marketing can also be used to do so with suppliers (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). In this research however, it becomes apparent that social media is rarely used to identify or attract potential suppliers. A mere 25% said that they would use social media for this purposes, while 44.6% indicated that they would definitely not make use of social media for this purposes. Moreover, social media does not enable organizations to reach more suppliers than that would have been reached without social media. Therefore, this article shows that social media is not as much used to communicate with or attract new suppliers as is discussed in the existing scientific literature.

Finally, this article also looked into other topics discussed in the existing literature, such as goal-setting and measurement tools. As was discussed by Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen (2014), B2B organizations find it very important to set quantifiable goals, however, sometimes find it so hard to do so that they opt to not even use social media marketing at all. In this article however, the usage of social media marketing is one of the selection criteria for respondents to be included in this research. Therefore, it is assumed that the participants in this research do set general goals for social media. This turns out to be true, because 64.3% of the respondents indicated that they understand what the goal of their social media campaign exactly is whereas only 3.6% indicated that they do not know this. However, when asked about if the organization makes use of goal-setting for their social media marketing campaigns, only 37.5% of the participants indicated that they in fact do so, whereas 30.4% indicated that they do not do this. Therefore, it is concluded that the general goal of the organization's social media marketing campaigns is clear, however, specific goal-setting for social media marketing campaigns is far less so. This is thus in line with what is argued by Jusilla et al.

Besides this, it turns out that 39.3% does not make use of tools to measure the results of the social media marketing activities. On the other hand, also 39.3% does make use of tools to measure these results. Existing literature argues that it is still very hard to measure the exact impact of social media marketing and that there is no one good practice to measure it. The outcomes of this research support the literature, because while almost half of the respondents make use of specific tools to assess the effectiveness of their social media marketing activities, also almost half of the respondents indicate that they do not do so. If there would be one, or a couple of best practices to measure the effectiveness of social media marketing, it can be argued that a lot more respondents would indicate that they make use of specific tools to measure the effectiveness of their social media marketing activities.

In table 21 a summary of the conclusions is depicted. In this table, the conclusion is mentioned as well as if this conclusion is in line with what is described in existing literature.

**Table 21: Conclusions in Line with Literature**

Goal	Conclusion	In line with literature?
<b>Communicating with customers</b>	Effective to reach more customers	In line
<b>Brand awareness</b>	Effective to create/increase brand awareness	In line
<b>Attracting customers</b>	Effective to attract more customers	In line
<b>Identifying potential customers</b>	Effective to identify potential customers	In line
<b>Understanding customer needs</b>	Effective to better understand customer needs	In line, <i>although only a slight majority</i>
<b>Sales</b>	Effective to increase sales and generate leads	In line
<b>Identifying or attracting potential suppliers</b>	Not effective to identify or attract potential suppliers	<i>Not in Line</i>

After clarifying all the conclusions, the central research question can be answered. The central research question in this article is "What is the effectiveness of social media marketing in a business-to-business oriented small-to-medium sized enterprise?" As became clear in this article, there is not one single answer to this question, because a wide variety of things are considered to be effective when talking about the effectiveness of social media marketing. As can be seen in table 22, communicating with customers and attracting new ones can be effective social media marketing, but also increasing sales or creating and increasing brand awareness can be considered to be effective social media marketing. Eventually, it all comes down to what the exact goal of the social media marketing activities are. Since it became apparent that a general goal of social media marketing activities is almost always clear, it is expected that organizations do have a relatively good understanding of when a social media marketing activity can be considered to be effective. However, since specific targets are not so often being used, it cannot be concluded that organization do indeed measure the outcomes of social media marketing activities. Therefore, it is expected that whether or not social media marketing is perceived to be effective mainly comes down to the feeling of the people involved and how they perceive the success of the social media marketing activity, rather than that the effectiveness is being measured by some sort of metric.

## 7. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 7.1 Conclusion

Social media has increased in popularity immensely during the last decade. This proposes a great opportunity to organization to undertake social media marketing activities.

The phenomenon of social media marketing has already been investigated in existing scientific literature, however, the main focus in the literature lies on B2C oriented organizations.

The literature that did look into the social media marketing activities of B2B oriented organizations found that B2B organizations are significantly lower users of social media than B2C organizations are. However, the marketing activities undertaken by organizations are believed to lead to increased brand awareness, loyalty, engagement, and sales. Moreover, social media creates an exquisite opportunity to have a look into customers' insights, including how customers are interacting with each other and how they interact and think about the products and service they use.

In this article, the discussed benefits and goals of social media marketing in existing literature are tested. This was done by contacting 500 SMEs and asking them to fill out a questionnaire. Eventually, a total of 56 responses was deemed valid, compared to the set standards.

The findings in this article are generally in line with what is argued in the existing scientific literature. In this article, it was concluded that social media marketing activities do in fact contribute to better communication with suppliers and customers, increases brand awareness and it also help organization to reach more customers. Besides this, it helps identifying potential customers and attracting them. Furthermore, social media marketing also helps organizations to better understand the customer's needs. Moreover, social media marketing is used a lot for the generation of leads, which then leads to more sales. However, it is not clear how social media marketing does exactly contribute to the total turnover.

The findings regarding identifying and reaching suppliers are not in line with what is argued in the literature. This article shows that the majority of the organizations do not use social media marketing activities to identify new suppliers or reach more of them. The final topic that was looked into was goal-setting and following up on those goals. It turns out that it is clear what the general goal of social media marketing activities are, but that these targets are far less often used in social media marketing activities.

Also a between groups comparison was performed by using the Mann-Whitney U-test. The outcomes of this test showed that there were significant differences in means between the tested groups. What was especially notable was that the group consisting of SMEs focusing on providing both goods and services had significantly higher means on over half of the statements. This was not necessarily expected, because no other article has yet made the segmentation between SMEs providing goods, services, or both and therefore no statements were made about these segments in existing literature. The group of SMEs providing both goods and services was the smallest (N=9) and it might be that this sample is simply not large enough to provide accurate data about this group. However, it might also be the case that SMEs providing both goods and services benefit more from social media marketing, because they are likely to target a wider range of companies than their competitors do and therefore perceive social media marketing as more beneficial in several aspects.

What is also notable is that SMEs providing goods use social media significantly more for communicating with suppliers than SMEs providing services do, but that SMEs providing services state that they reach significantly more suppliers than SMEs providing goods do. It can thus be expected that SMEs providing goods make use of social media to communicate with customers, whereas SMEs providing services make use of social media to identify and reach suppliers.

Another between group comparison was made based on company size. It was concluded that larger SMEs (between 50 and 250 employees) are making significantly more use of social media to identify potential customers and new suppliers. This might be the case, because they generally have more resources to be active on social media than smaller SMEs do. When an organization is able to spend more time on their social media marketing activities it is expected that they also will use it for more than “just” putting their brand out there and generating leads. Therefore, it could have been expected that larger organizations make use of social media to identify potential customers and suppliers more often than smaller SMEs.

So to answer the research question, effectiveness of social media marketing in a B2B-oriented SME can mean a lot of things. This can vary from lead generation, to attracting customers, to increasing brand awareness. Eventually, it all comes down to what the exact goal of the social media marketing activities are. Since it became apparent that a general goal of social media marketing activities is almost always clear, it is expected that organizations do have a relatively good understanding of when a social media marketing activity can be considered to be effective. However, since specific targets are not so often being used, it cannot be concluded that organizations do indeed measure the outcomes of social media marketing activities. So, it will also not be concluded that organizations do indeed know for sure that a social media marketing campaign was successful.

B2B and B2C oriented organization differ mainly because of their targeted clientele. With customers of B2C organizations, the emotional dimension is considered an essential element, whereas customers in the B2B context are often considered to be

more rational. Where brand awareness is considered to be very important in the B2C context, because high awareness levels imply to a buyer that the organization has been in business for a long time and products are bought by many others (Eid, Abdelmoety, & Agag, 2019), in the scientific literature about B2B organizations, relationships are considered to be of higher value.

In this article however, it was found that brand awareness is deemed very important by the respondents. Next to that, communicating with customers and identifying new customers is a main priority of the SMEs in this article. This is thus partially in line with existing literature, because B2B SMEs are believed to be focused on relationship management, rather than brand awareness. However, this might indicate that B2B and B2C SMEs are beginning to be more alike and start to focus more on the same benefits.

## 7.2 Further Research

This research focused mainly on SMEs located in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is unclear if the conclusions of this article are generalizable to other countries. For further research, it is suggested that the findings discussed in this article are also being tested in other countries to form a complete view and also to find more differences in case there are any. Whilst it is believed that this study does make a useful contribution to the field of social media marketing in B2B-oriented organizations, its scope is always limited. For further research, it would be interesting to see whether the findings of this research also hold true in other countries. Besides, since the findings of this article regarding identifying and reaching suppliers are not in line with existing literature, it would be good to perform more research in this area. Also the findings regarding customer needs are not completely conclusive, although in line with existing literature. Furthermore, the contribution of social media marketing to the total sales are still hard to measure. Therefore, it would be interesting to see a qualitative study into this topic, focusing on if and how organizations measure the contribution of social media marketing to their total turnover. Also, after performing the between group comparisons, it became apparent that in general SMEs focused on providing both goods and services are more positive towards social media than SMEs focusing solely on providing goods or services are. It would thus also be interesting to see whether or not this holds true for a larger sample size in this category. Finally, as was discussed in this article, organizations can define effectiveness of social media marketing in a variety of ways. Therefore, it would be good to perform a quantitative research in what organizations believe to be effectiveness and how they measure it.

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## 9. APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix A

Appendix A consists of an overview of used search terms, number of hits and used database in order to find relevant literature.

Search term	# of Results	Database
B2B AND "electronic marketing"	2	Web of Science
B2B AND "electronic marketing"	6	Scopus
B2B AND "Facebook Marketing"	0	Web of Science
B2B AND "Facebook Marketing"	1	Scopus
B2B AND "social media marketing"	21	Web of Science
B2B AND "social media marketing"	29	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND "Digital Marketing"	5	Web of Science
B2B AND B2C AND "Digital Marketing"	7	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND "electronic marketing"	1	Web of Science
B2B AND B2C AND "electronic marketing"	2	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND "Facebook Marketing"	0	Web of Science
B2B AND B2C AND "Facebook Marketing"	1	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND "social media marketing"	6	Web of Science
B2B AND B2C AND "social media marketing"	8	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND e-marketing	5	Scopus
B2B AND B2C AND e-marketing	9	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND "Digital Marketing"	12	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND "Digital Marketing"	19	Scopus
Business-to-business AND "electronic marketing"	4	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND "electronic marketing"	6	Scopus
Business-to-business AND "Facebook Marketing"	0	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND "Facebook Marketing"	1	Scopus
Business-to-business AND "social media marketing"	17	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND "social media marketing"	25	Scopus
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "Digital Marketing"	2	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "Digital Marketing"	5	Scopus
Business-to-business AND business-to-consumer AND "electronic marketing"	1	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND business-to-consumer AND "electronic marketing"	1	Scopus
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "Facebook Marketing"	0	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "Facebook Marketing"	1	Scopus
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "social media marketing"	6	Scopus
Business-to-business AND Business-to-consumer AND "social media marketing"	7	Web of Science
Business-to-business AND business-to-consumer AND e-marketing	2	Scopus
Business-to-business AND business-to-consumer AND e-marketing	5	Web of Science
Effectiveness AND "B2B-Marketing"	4	Web of Science
Effectiveness AND "B2B-Marketing"	8	Scopus
Effectiveness AND "Business-to-business Marketing"	22	Web of Science
Effectiveness AND "electronic marketing"	15	Web of Science
Effectiveness AND "electronic marketing"	28	Scopus

## 9.2 Outcomes Mann-Whitney U-tests between Groups

In table 23, the outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U-test comparing goods and services providing SMEs are being visualized. For goods providing SMEs N=12 holds true. For service providing SMEs N=35 holds true. In the second column, the significance scores are mentioned, where significant outcomes are underlined ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

Table 23: Outcomes Mann-Whitney U-test Goods and Services

	Goods / Services	$\mu$ Goods	$\mu$ Services
Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing	.705	3,67	3,31
Social Media is Useful for Communication with suppliers	.645	2,67	2,49
Social Media is Useful for Communication with Customers	<u>.022</u>	3,67	2,77
Social Media Helps to Increase Brand Awareness	.557	3,67	3,60
Social Media Helps to Reach More Customers	.128	2,67	3,23
Social Media is being used to Identify Potential Customers	.214	2,92	3,43
Social Media Helps in Understanding Customer Needs	.820	3,00	3,06
Social Media is being used with the Purpose of Lead Generation	.257	3,00	3,40
Social Media Enhances the Amount of Sales	.107	3,50	2,86
It is Clear how Social Media Activities Contribute to Total Turnover	.070	2,08	2,91
Social Media is being used to Identify Potential New Suppliers	.350	2,92	2,60
Social Media Enables Me to Reach More Suppliers	<u>.028</u>	2,17	2,89
It is clear what the Goal of Social Media Marketing Activities is	<u>.025</u>	3,08	3,89
Goal-setting is used for Social Media Activities	.631	2,75	2,86
Usage of Tools to Measure Results of Social Media Marketing Activities	.061	2,08	2,94

In table 24, the outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U-test comparing SMEs providing goods and SMEs providing both goods and services are being visualized. For goods providing SMEs N=12 holds true. For both providing SMEs N=9 holds true. In the second column, the significance scores are mentioned, where significant outcomes are underlined ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

Table 24: Outcomes Mann-Whitney U-test Goods and Both

	Goods / Both	$\mu$ Goods	$\mu$ Both
Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing	.881	3,67	3,33
Social Media is Useful for Communication with suppliers	.183	2,67	3,33
Social Media is Useful for Communication with Customers	<u>.005</u>	3,67	4,44
Social Media Helps to Increase Brand Awareness	<u>.002</u>	3,67	4,56
Social Media Helps to Reach More Customers	<u>.002</u>	2,67	4,33
Social Media is being used to Identify Potential Customers	.055	2,92	3,78
Social Media Helps in Understanding Customer Needs	.676	3,00	3,11
Social Media is being used with the Purpose of Lead Generation	<u>.011</u>	3,00	4,22
Social Media Enhances the Amount of Sales	<u>.039</u>	3,50	4,22
It is Clear how Social Media Activities Contribute to Total Turnover	.616	2,08	2,22
Social Media is being used to Identify Potential New Suppliers	.377	2,92	2,33
Social Media Enables Me to Reach More Suppliers	<u>.006</u>	2,17	2,78
It is clear what the Goal of Social Media Marketing Activities is	<u>.004</u>	3,08	4,56
Goal-setting is used for Social Media Activities	<u>.003</u>	2,75	4,00
Usage of Tools to Measure Results of Social Media Marketing Activities	<u>&lt;.001</u>	2,08	4,00



In table 25, the outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U-test comparing SMEs providing services and SMEs providing both goods and services are being visualized. For service providing SMEs N=35 holds true. For both providing SMEs N=9 holds true. In the second column, the significance scores are mentioned, where significant outcomes are underlined ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

**Table 25: Outcomes Mann-Whitney U-test Services and Both**

	Services / Both	$\mu$ Services	$\mu$ Both
<b>Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing</b>	.756	3,31	3,33
<b>Social Media is Useful for Communication with suppliers</b>	.076	2,49	3,33
<b>Social Media is Useful for Communication with Customers</b>	<u>&lt;.001</u>	2,77	4,44
<b>Social Media Helps to Increase Brand Awareness</b>	<u>.015</u>	3,60	4,56
<b>Social Media Helps to Reach More Customers</b>	<u>.014</u>	3,23	4,33
<b>Social Media is being used to Identify Potential Customers</b>	.587	3,43	3,78
<b>Social Media Helps in Understanding Customer Needs</b>	.682	3,06	3,11
<b>Social Media is being used with the Purpose of Lead Generation</b>	.060	3,40	4,22
<b>Social Media Enhances the Amount of Sales</b>	<u>.003</u>	2,86	4,22
<b>It is Clear how Social Media Activities Contribute to Total Turnover</b>	.218	2,91	2,22
<b>Social Media is being used to Identify Potential New Suppliers</b>	.568	2,60	2,33
<b>Social Media Enables Me to Reach More Suppliers</b>	.533	2,89	2,78
<b>It is clear what the Goal of Social Media Marketing Activities is</b>	<u>.022</u>	3,89	4,56
<b>Goal-setting is used for Social Media Activities</b>	<u>.010</u>	2,86	4,00
<b>Usage of Tools to Measure Results of Social Media Marketing Activities</b>	<u>.046</u>	2,94	4,00

In table 26, the outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U-test comparing SMEs employing less than 50 individuals and SMEs employing between 50 and 250 individuals are being visualized. For SMEs with less than 50 employees N=47 holds true. For SMEs with between 50 and 250 employees N=9 holds true. In the second column, the significance scores are mentioned, where significant outcomes are underlined ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

**Table 26: Outcomes Mann-Whitney U-test <50 employees and 50 - 250 employees**

	< 50 / 50-250	$\mu$ < 50	$\mu$ 50-250
<b>Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing</b>	.313	3,43	3,29
<b>Social Media is Useful for Communication with suppliers</b>	.433	2,57	2,86
<b>Social Media is Useful for Communication with Customers</b>	.278	3,13	3,71
<b>Social Media Helps to Increase Brand Awareness</b>	.770	3,72	4,00
<b>Social Media Helps to Reach More Customers</b>	.078	3,15	4,00
<b>Social Media is being used to Identify Potential Customers</b>	<u>.016</u>	3,23	4,43
<b>Social Media Helps in Understanding Customer Needs</b>	.100	3,04	3,71
<b>Social Media is being used with the Purpose of Lead Generation</b>	.093	3,30	4,00
<b>Social Media Enhances the Amount of Sales</b>	<u>.011</u>	3,02	4,00
<b>It is Clear how Social Media Activities Contribute to Total Turnover</b>	.882	2,70	2,57
<b>Social Media is being used to Identify Potential New Suppliers</b>	<u>.002</u>	2,40	3,71
<b>Social Media Enables Me to Reach More Suppliers</b>	.269	2,68	3,14
<b>It is clear what the Goal of Social Media Marketing Activities is</b>	.443	3,74	4,00
<b>Goal-setting is used for Social Media Activities</b>	.453	2,89	3,29
<b>Usage of Tools to Measure Results of Social Media Marketing Activities</b>	.350	2,96	2,43