Master of Science in Marketing

An Explorative Study of the Impact Peer Influence on Social Media has on Donation Behaviour, specifically towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations.

A Dissertation Presented
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ABSTRACT

An Explorative Study of the Impact Peer Influence on Social Media has on Donation Behaviour, specifically towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations.

Peer Influence has been a prominent social concept for many years, the introduction of social media in more recent years was not where the concept of peer influence was formed but it has certainly brought it into a new light. Peer Influence on social media is inevitable, as those who have active social media account participate in it and are susceptible to it at times consciously and more likely unknowingly. Social Media has been designed to target and influence users, brands take advantage of this and unknowingly so, so do everyday individuals.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact peer influence has exclusively on donation behaviour, specifically in regard to social movement non-profit organisations. Primarily, the researcher set out to investigate social media user's likeliness of being influenced to engage in donation behaviour, as well as this the researcher aimed to investigate consumer awareness and perceptions of social movement non-profit organisations.

This investigation was achieved through the implementation of qualitative research within this study, by conducting six in-depth interviews with males aged between 20 to 40. This study exclusively focused on the assessment of males in order to refine the population sample in hopes of producing a conclusive answer to the research question. This study was underpinned by an interpretivist-based epistemology approach to the research methodology, therefore relied heavily relies on the life experiences, feeling and opinions of the participants.

After taking the collected and analysed data into consideration, this research has produced key findings and recommendations for marketers studying the specific area in future.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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1.1 Background to The Research

1.1.1 Peer Influence on Social Media

Peer Influence has been a prominent factor in society long before the introduction of social media, examples of peer influence can be found in fashion, lifestyles, etc. Now, in recent years since the introduction of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, individuals have more access than ever to their peer's lives (The Social Media Guru, 2016). Social Media allows platform users to avail of accessible views of other users' lifestyles, interests, behavioural patterns etc., this allows for individuals to form emotional connections which is an ideal environment for influence to occur (Moslehpour, 2020).

The Digital Age has introduced society to platforms that feed off influential behaviour, this can be recognised through social media in the form of trending activities such as viral videos. Virality can contribute heavily to the impact that peer influence has on those on the receiving end as it boosts the reach to the target audience, Berger (2012) suggests that content promoted/carried by vital content has strong potential to reach the favoured audience and bring about influence.

Social Media goes hand in hand with peer influence in the current era with platform users susceptible to influenced decision making as a result of interest-driven sociodigital participation. This ultimately refers to the advancement of peer influence via individuals heightened accessibility to their peers and interests etc. (Lie et al, 2020) The author will develop this point further in 2.4.3.

1.1.2 Donation Intentions as a Result of Social Media Exposure

Social Media has made a huge contribution and given a helping hand to marketing managers in the donation nation, from producing endless metrics to providing a platform whereby target audiences can be easily exposed to tailored campaigns. Campaigns which are filled with emotional content, social media platforms allow for charitable organisations to deliver these campaigns in various forms of content such as pictures, videos, audios, etc. which creates visual and auditory stimuli within consumers (Hoyer et al, 2013). Baberini et al (2015) suggests that brands have ability to enhance engagement with campaigns (e.g., social media content), by incorporating emotion as an identifiable feature. Emotional messages hold the power to form valuable consumer connections through sympathy for the cause which generates motivation and likeability to donate and help.

Saxton & Wang (2013) suggest that social media platforms have become a prime destination for non-profit organisations to launch campaigns and target potential donors, as there is a prominent increase in factors such as impulse donating, crowdfunding and "slacktivism".

Impulse donation much like impulse buying, is directly corelated with ease of access, Lee (2018) implies that the efficiency of navigation and user design on mobile sites facilitates an environment whereby customers can't help but indulge because they can. Crowdfunding has become increasingly popular via social media with leading organisations such as GoFundMe being extremely easily accessible to mobile device users in which they can make a donation in seconds and share this with their peers. Meer (2011) suggests that the users have the potential to pressure their peers into availing of crowdfunding on social media with options to share the link and 'ask friends to join', this links back to the aforementioned topic of peer influence on social media. The author will detail further aspects of crowdfunding in section 2.5.4.

1.1.3 Increasing Awareness of Social Movements

Over recent years, society has been subject to multiple social movements, whereby a segment of the population voice their opinions and fight for their rights as well as others, fight for what is just and fair and in mass amounts. The awareness of social movements is ever increasing with the accessibility to the world via a mobile device, Hong et al (2018) expresses the importance of social media in tackling social issues, a platform is provided to those who voice their concerns to the world through apps such as Instagram, Twitter and most recently TikTok. There are influential factors embedded in social media, these platforms encourage users to share and engage, they hold significant roles in the success of tackling social issues (Hong et al, 2018)

An example of a social movement that has gained credible social influence and exposure through social media is that of Black Lives Matter whereby millions of people engaged in collective action to ensure the world was aware of the unjust treatment of black and brown skinned individuals around the world (Wilkins, 2019). Users of the social media platforms of Twitter for example, were participating in information sharing to enhance awareness as well as to raise funds for those were underprivileged than thou. Platforms like Twitter gave those affected a voice to speak out and be heard, changing the way social movements were strategised for the foreseeable future (Wilkins et al, 2019).

1.2 Gaps in the Literature

In the study of secondary data for the purpose of this study there has been a number of notable gaps in literature, in this section the author will entail the most critical areas where the gap was prominent. As a result of this, an underlining aim of research has been developed in attempt to fill in the gaps.

An identifiable gap in the literature is that of consumer response to the impact peer influence has on donation behaviour or intentions. Evidently, the concept of peer influence has an academically researched background, that is not deniable. The Social Media Guru states clear belief that peer influence specifically via social media

is practiced and understood well and truly (2016). The researcher found the specific area whereby peer influence has an impact on donation behaviour to be lacking in literature and academic research extensively. Consumers are susceptible to peer pressure in environments of high emotion, a point Hoyer et al (2013) raised in terms of individuals likelihood to engage as a result of a shared emotional connection. An environment that hosts high levels of emotion as well as shared interest would be that of a charitable one, individuals participate on crowdfunding for example, with those who have a similar interest to the cause as well as an involvement and connection (Simpson et al, 2021).

Crowdfunding is led by the individuals involved, their actions of information sharing results in direct exposure of the cause or campaign at hand and increases the probability of generating an extensive level of funds (Hong et al, 2018). The question remains as to whether these individuals who participate in information sharing via social media have a positive impact on their peer's intention to donate.

As well as the specific application of peer influence to donation behaviour and intentions, another relevant gap in the literature that the author has identified is that of the lack of academic research in social movement non-profit organisations. This may be a result of the barrier of time as the promotion of social movement non-profit organisations is an extremely specific topic which has only become popular in recent years.

1.3 Academic Justification

As previously mentioned, there are notable gaps in the literature of this study, for numerous reasons such as restricted time limitations as well as narrowed specificity of topics. In addition to having a general interest in the potential impact peer influence can have on social media, is it relevant to note that there is justification for this topic as peer influence is evidently present on social media platforms.

Although peer influence has been widely studied and there is extensive research behind the broad topic especially where similar interests are present (Lie et al, 2020), and has clear attention from researchers within the field of marketing and beyond, the author did not find that they had a lot of choice when resourcing academia relating to peer influence on social media in a charitable environment.

An area where there is limited overlap between peer influence and charitable giving, via social media would be through the research of crowdfunding. There is somewhat of a connection here as crowdfunding is a form of charitable giving and relies on individuals to participate in information sharing to generate exposure to the respective campaigns. Simpson et al, (2021) expresses that the process in which individuals share their charitable actions on social media is inclined to influence peers with similar interests and thus creating exposure and fellow donors.

As well as the aforementioned gap relating to peer pressure and donation intentions and behaviours, the researcher felt it to be imperative to gauge a fully comprehensive understanding of the consumer perceptions and attitudes towards

social movement non-profit organisations. As the organisations are refined subsidiaries of general non-profit organisations, there was not enough literature to make a conclusive judgement on consumer perceptions of these organisations.

Even though there is clear evidence of available literature on peer influence and charitable respectively on their own, the lack of focus on the specified area of peer influence within charitable environments on social media has highlighted the need for further primary investigation. As well as this the researcher has identified the justification for research of social movement non-profit organisations further, specifically the perceptions of such.

1.4 Research Aim and Questions

1.4.1 Aim of Research

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the measurable impact that peer influence has on donation behaviour towards social movement non-profit organisations in males aged 20-40, specifically via social media platforms. In simpler terms, the aim is to determine whether Males aged 20-40 (a selected population of which) are positively or negatively influenced by their peers on social media and to study their donation behaviour towards Social Movement Non-Profit organisations on social media.

1.4.2 Underlying Research Questions

Q1. How do consumers respond to Peer Influence on Social Media?

Q2. Does Peer Influence have a positive impact on Donation Intentions?

Q3. What are consumers perceptions and beliefs of Social Movements?

Q4. What attitudes do consumers hold towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisation?

Q5. Do consumer's perceptions of Non-Profit Organisations affect Donation Behaviour overall?

The above research questions have been restructured as objectives for the purpose of this study in Table 3.2.

1.5 Scope of Methodology

This study proposes to examine the factors of peer influence within the environment of social media, and whether it has a direct positive impact on donation behaviour towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations or not. The choice of Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations arises from the growing pattern of social movement awareness on social media over the past 2 years, mass amounts of people partake in sharing and endorsing social movements online. The idea behind this study is to find whether this mass behaviour has any positive impact on gaining more participation through peer influence. The aim is to determine whether or not the selected population are easily influenced by mass amounts of peers on social media amongst a social movement, can personal pre-formed opinions be swayed by peers or not.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

This Thesis has been divided into six sections,

Chapter 1 contains a summary of the position of the current research available, the gaps in literature will be discussed leading into the academic justifications. This brings the reader to the research aims and questions and finally to the methodology scope and structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: entails an explorative literature review whereby the author undertakes the extensive task of comparing the most relevant literature to gather for secondary data.

Chapter 3: follows with an exploration of the methodology whereby the research aims, and objectives are presented, the researcher outlines their choice of methodology approach and strategy while explained why they rejected other options. The author will also present their choice of data collection and analytics.

Chapter 4: brings the reader to the findings and discussion where the author presented their analysed data in themes related to their respective research objectives.

Chapter 5: the final chapter showcases the authors final arguments and presents recommendation for future use in an academic and professional setting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will undertake a wide-ranging secondary research data collection of various topics relating to the respective research question. This has been broken down extensively in an effort to fully recognise and understand the research that has been conducted by various scholars. This will promote an educated mindset within the researcher as they approach the methodology with an informed perspective of the research question. This literature review has been broken down into five sections with respective subsections. In nominal order the researcher began with a focus on Donation Behaviour, Donation Intentions and how they can be measured, a review of Social Media and how it can be used to a marketer's advantage and lastly, a comprehensive breakdown of Social Movements and Non-Profit Organisations.

2.1 Introduction to Donation Behaviour

Donation Behaviour is a term that can be described as a branch of 'Prosocial Behaviour', this is defined by Kowalski et al (2021) as behavioural characteristics of individuals who participate in acts of kindness out of selfless benefits i.e., to benefit someone other than yourself for the greater society. Those who demonstrate prosocial behaviour through donation behaviour would do so by making donations to non-profit organisations or fundraisers such as Concern. Organisations like Concern and Enable Ireland are exclusively dependent on individuals who embody characteristics of prosocial individuals as their generosity is most likely to fund their organisation. Jami (2021) implies that it is generosity lies at the heart of prosocial behaviour, kind and generous actions that are performed selflessly and to specifically benefit an entity separate to one's self-gain are examples of this.

An example of an individual who showcases donation behavioural characteristics/traits would be someone who participates in charitable giving directed towards those in need , whether that be a non-profit organisation, an underprivileged person or cause, the intention is to contribute to society's greater good. (Kowalski et al, 2021). Kashif (2015) implies that those who participate and encourage charitable giving in its various methods, require motivation and intention.

2.1.1 Prosocial Behaviour (Altruism)

As aforementioned Prosocial Behaviour or *Prosociality* is the participation in selfless acts of kindness that serve the greater society or someone other than yourself (Kowalski et al, 2021). Although not the primary reasoning behind conducting these acts, prosociality is also known to enhance personal social benefits (Hong et al, 2018). Xue and Bramesfeld (2020) further suggest that this can be stemmed from altruistic motives, altruism can be broken down and defined as a selfless concern and consideration for the good health and fortune of others.

Altruism lives at the core of Prosocial Behaviour as a huge driver for such actions, an individual that presents characteristics of altruistic practice is perceived as likeable and morally good as they put the needs for others before themselves (Xue & Bramesfeld, 2020). This can be contrasted with the views that individuals participate in an altruistic manner to create perceptions that they value such issues so that they can promote social gain. To repeat the aforementioned further point, people who present these characteristics are in fact more likeable, therefore individuals who are perceived as altruistic may be so for show (Xue & Bramesfeld, 2020).The involvement of morality plays a critical role in the formation of altruistic mannerisms and furthermore within prosocial and donation behaviour which the researcher will be exploring in further detail in 2.2.3.

2.1.2 Motivations and Intentions behind Charitable Giving

Intent to donate, in other words donation intentions can be seen in the build-up to creating donation behaviour as the consumer considers their options. Lee & Park (2019) state that although donation intentions have positive planning and motive behind them, they cannot be considered a guarantee that a consumer is going to complete their intentions by converting them into behavioural actions.

When participating in acts of kindness by means of charitable giving (e.g., donating), an individual may present various motivations for this behaviour as well as intentions that led to it. Bock et al (2018) suggests that these motivations can be broken down into two sub-categories, self-serving and self-sacrificing. Self-serving motivations would be alike that of the aforementioned point whereby some individuals seek social gain through charitable behaviour, this presents as egotistical and selfish. Whereas a self-sacrificing individual would relate more with the true values of an altruistic person with moral intentions.

As well as this there are also grey areas to the motivations behind charitable giving whereby an individual may be participating in charitable giving with prosocial and altruistic intentions but the act of doing so contributes positively to their personal gain in terms of self-worth and/or self-appreciation. This can be found in individuals who experience a helper's high when participating on prosocial behaviour (Kwak et al, 2018).

2.1.2.1 Emotional Uplift (Helper High)

Emotional Uplift is the process by which an individual experiences positive emotional gain as a direct result of a specific action (Dzerviniks, 2011). In the case of charitable giving and participating in donation behaviour, an individual may experience an emotional lift by means of validation as they are helping someone other than themselves, this can be found in the form of a helper's high (Kottler, 1994).

Kottler (1994) describes the helper's high as a direct result of altruistic behaviour whereby an individual experiences spikes in 'hormonal and neurological changes' in the brain. This suggests that when participating in charitable giving in this case, there is a hormonal release and/or neurological trigger that promotes an emotional high.

2.1.3 Moral Identity

As mentioned previously, the moral compass a person holds contributes heavily towards donation behaviour, Winterich (2013) proposes that individuals with a high moral identity internalisation experience more prominent characteristics of altruistic behaviour as their moral compass guides them in that direction. These individuals are altruistic by nature and do not seek the recognition for their natural behaviour that those who would have a low moral identity would experience.

The moral identity of a person contributes directly to their altruistic/prosocial behaviour as it encourages on to perform actions of positive behaviour that reflects morally upon oneself (Bock et al, 2018).

2.2 Introduction to Purchase Intentions within Donation

Donation Intentions are a subsidiary of purchase intentions whereby they fall under the umbrella of purchase intentions in their own defined category, where a customer generates intent to participate in the act of charitable giving. Models that have been applied to the study of understanding purchase intentions and the reasoning behind them are that of *The Theory of Planned Behaviour* (Ajzen, 1991), which is a refined extension of *The Theory of Reasoned Action* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

While the above models can be applied to the research of donation intentions and donation behaviour within individuals, researchers have attempted to understand donation behaviour alone in individuals with a separate model altogether. In order to tackle from a new perspective, Bekkers (2006) believed that donation behaviour can be determined in individuals by assessing their personality. This was completed by comparing 'The Big Five' personality traits/types which is also academically referred to as the 'Five Factor Model' (FFM) proposed first in 2006 by Bekkers himself. This model presents the researcher with five separate types of personalities that inhibit various traits, there is as follows: extraversion, openness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.

2.2.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour applied to Purchase Intentions

As previously stated, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) (Fig. 1) is an advancement of The Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) (Fig 2), for the purpose of this research, there will be an emphasis on the latest adaption between the two. The Theory of Planned Behaviour can be described as a model that investigates the behaviour of individuals, specifically the decision making process. This model relies on the assumption that consumers adapt their behaviour and intentions to participate/decisions to align with what is within their basis of knowledge (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used to determine Donation/Purchase Intentions by applying the model (Fig.1) to individuals during the decision making

process when they are making a purchase or offering a donation. It examines an individual's intent, their behaviour as well as their attitudes and perceptions towards the proposed organisation (Hiranrat, 2021). The application of this theory can range from the analysis of the impact of preconceived consumer perceptions of a brand to a consumer's online engagement behavioural patterns.

For example, this theory can be applied to users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. in terms of how a brand can effectively communicate with their target audience. Specifically, the Theory of Planned Behaviour may be applied to consumer engagement online, as a behavioural response. Brands can use the tools and data Facebook provide to analyse consumer intentions (Sanne & Wiese, 2018).
This connects closely with the use of Social Media in forming consumer connections which I will be reviewing further and in a deeper manner in the next sub-chapter.

Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Theory of planned behaviour

Attitude

Subjective Norm

Intention

Behavior

Perceived Behavioral Control
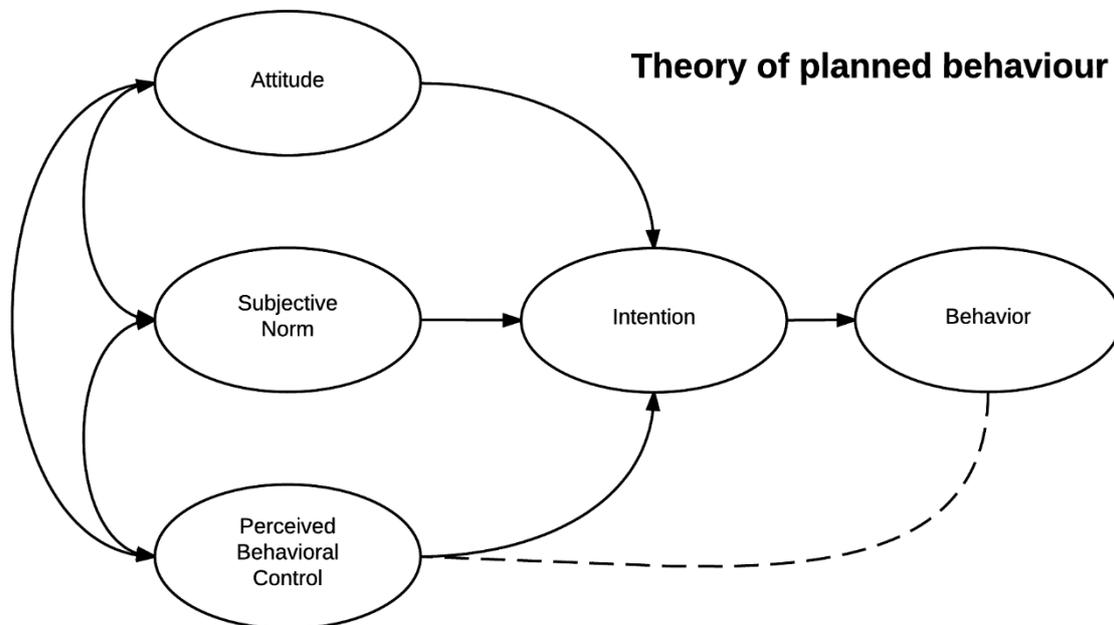
Figure 2: Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)
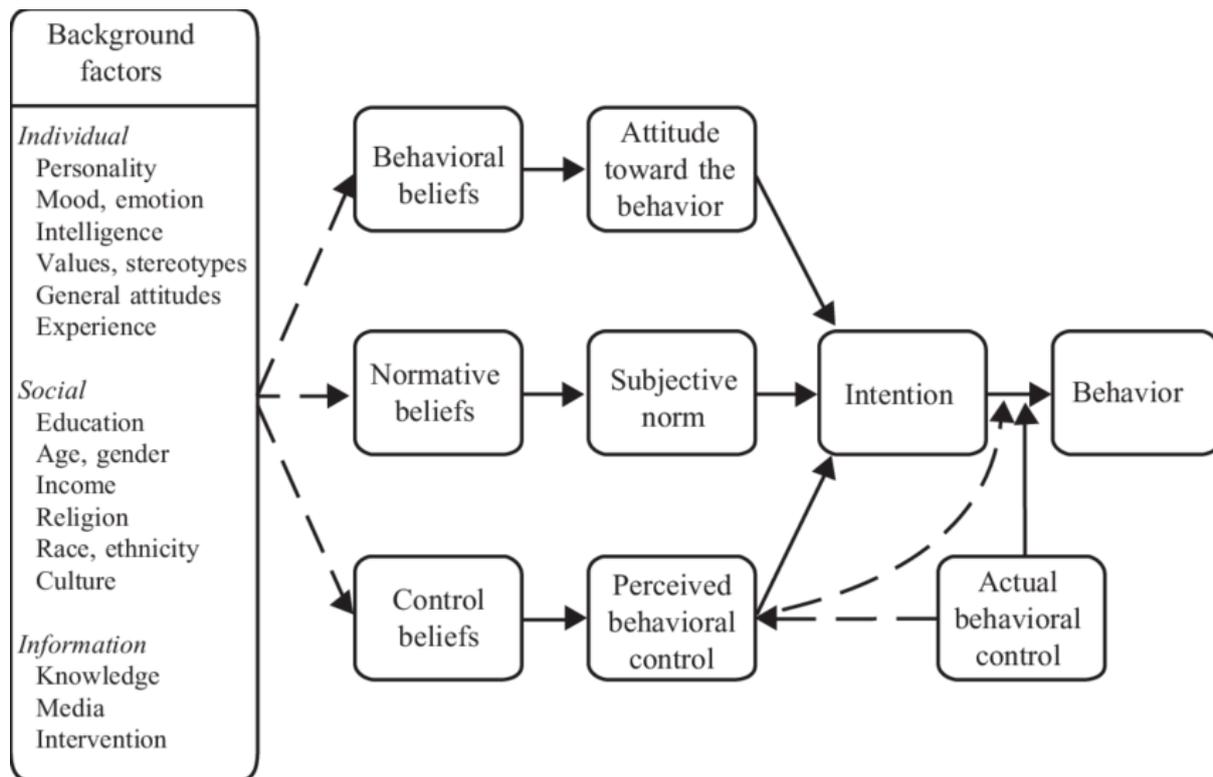
2.2.3 Prediction of Donation Intentions via Five Factor Model (FFM)

The Five Factor Model, also known as '*The Big Five*' is a personality based model that was first proposed by McCrae & John (1992), this model suggests that there are five main personality traits/types within individuals. These include agreeableness, openness to experience, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Each personality trait has various behavioural patterns, for example an individual with traits of the agreeableness type would be social and friendly whereas the neuroticism type would present an individual who is prone to negative behavioural patterns such as experiencing anxiety and depression.

Bekkers (2006) investigates the importance of knowing your customer in terms of personality traits when appealing to an audience seeking donations. It is suggested that a brand can highly benefit from determining the type of personality they want to target as a further filter when establishing their target market. For example, a brand that is creating a campaign for a charitable event could benefit from targeting individuals with personality traits of agreeableness as this personality type is generous and willing to help.

This can link back to the analysis of prosocial behaviour within consumers, individuals who are identified as a particular personality type under the Five Factor Model e.g., agreeableness would have a greater tendency to participate in prosocial behaviour than that of an individual with traits of neuroticism (Kowalski, 2021).

Figure 3: The Five Factor Model (McCrae & John, 1992)
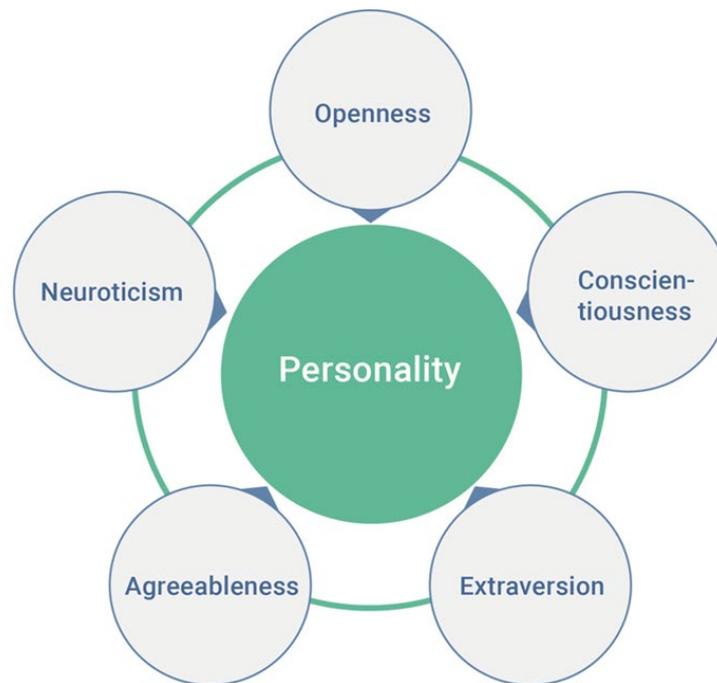
2.3 Use of Social Media (SM) in forming Consumer Connections (CC)

Social Media Marketing is a relatively new branch of marketing that the industry as a whole is still learning about as it develops. Social Media Marketeers are responsible for effectively communicating with and reaching the brands targeted population, this is completed by creating content, engaging with consumers, pushing brand advertisements etc. via social media platforms. An increasingly valuable factor of the social media marketer's responsibility is the creation of content, content can be found in the form of podcasts, video clips, photographs, etc. As aforementioned visual stimuli generate emotional connections with consumers when they engage with relative media, this would be considered emotional marketing (Hoyer et al, 2013).

When implemented effectively by marketing managers, emotional appeals have an extremely high quality potential for positive response from consumers. In order to create an emotional connection with the audience, a brand must know their customer, Vences et al (2020) suggested that it is vitally important for brands to take advantage of emotional appeals to form lasting consumer relationships which create positive brand perceptions and attitudes. This can be achieved through the use of strategically created content that is promoted directly at the target audience.

Nikolinakou and King (2018) further add to the point in that they value they importance of content creation and the process of its creation. It has been recommended that in order to create potentially successful content, a brand must

factor in emotional aspects to ensure there is a connection made with the consumers upon initial reach.

2.3.1 Emotional Appeals via Content Creation on SM Platforms

An example whereby the use of an emotional appeal in a campaign via Social Media reflected positively upon a brand would be that of Starbucks *#WhatsYourName* campaign. This campaign followed a transgender individual James who felt a sense of belonging and solidarity when given the option to state his chosen name in the popular café chain (Starbucks, 2020). Starbucks appealed to consumers on a deeply emotional level, especially those that are a part of or are allies of the LGBTQIA+ community with this inclusive marketing message. It gave individuals like James a platform for acceptance of change both literally and metaphorically which resonated extremely well on Social Media via YouTube and Twitter, etc. (Ashton, 2020)

Emotional Appeals are an extremely powerful tool in all modes of marketing, with focus on Social Media, it allows for deeper and more meaningful engagement and allows for connections to be formed online where it is most feasible for marketers to engage with their audience. Lee and Hong (2016) further compliment this point by suggesting that emotional appeals allow for consumers to better resonate with the messages a brand is portraying as they feel emotionally attracted or affected by them.

2.3.2 Concept of Virality online

As briefly aforementioned, virality holds high potential to increase peer influence on social media, Berger (2012) has examined the characteristics that lie behind viral content trending on social media. These characteristics have been identified as five factors that make up the anagram '*STEPP*' which Berger suggests is imperative for the creation of content on social media. When broken down, STEPP stands for "Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Practicality, and Public Stories", each with an underlying component of emotion which in turn generates triggers that consumers connect with. The importance lies within the emotional triggers produce in the content when using one of the five characteristics, if applied correctly a brand has the potential for their content to reach viral status due to the emotional appeal applied.

2.4 Examination of Peer Influence on Social Media

Firstly, it is imperative to understand the potential that peers have in terms of influential behaviour in their fellow peers, especially on social media. The Social Media Guru (2016) suggests that consumers enjoy finding common ground with their friends, they seek approval on social media through likes, shares, comments, etc. therefore, they mimic their peer's actions to 'fit in'. This is highlighted further by Moslehpour (2020) whereby it is implied that when a brand produces content, social

media users want to engage and share with their peers, as they are looking to form connections.

Peers have a strong connection with one another online and hold a significant influence, this can be found in trends and virality of topics, people join in because everyone else is doing it. Berger (2012) suggests that people engage in virality because there is emotion attached, this can reflect on the user's tendency to follow the crowd as they do

2.4.1 Application of Peer Influence on Social Media

This can be used to the advantage of non-profit organisations and in terms of donation behaviour through the influence of peers on social media if executed correctly. In recent years on social media, especially this past year, society has seen nations of people come together to advocate for what they believe is right and wrong in society. Social media has acted as a platform for advocacy for those not fortunate enough to be as privileged as some, the movement of Black Lives Matter and Free Palestine has received global outcry. Social media users reflect on what their peers have liked and shared and have continued to share information to educate and inform others of links to donate, links to educate, etc. This promoted behaviour that came purely form a place of wanting to help, which can be classified as prosocial behaviour (Kowalski et al, 2021).

Individuals have showcased actions of following in their peer's footsteps as social media users' feeds were painted with the movement therefore users had no choice but to learn of the injustice, as a result of the connection and influence of peers, millions of dollars have been raised in aid of charitable organisations. This can be seen as a direct effect on donation behaviour as people were influenced to act generous and in favour of those in need, this behaviour was to aid society as a whole and may not have been possible without social media Kashif (2015).

2.4.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory was first proposed by Albert Bandura in 1986, the theory is an extended advancement of the Social Learning Theory which suggests that human behaviour is adapted and is learned through the act of imitation and observing others. The Social Cognitive Theory advances from this and branches further into the study of changing behaviour through the study and observation of others, humans learn of the effects of actions through observation and adapt their behaviour according to their reaction to this (Bandura, 1989). This theory can be applied to the process of Peer Influence as it involves the observation and imitation of humans online, whether the actions taken by those consumers observe affects them or not will impact heavily on their behaviour/ change in behaviour.

The Social Cognitive Theory can be applied within marketing practice to aid market researchers in determining the behaviour of their consumer and how they can change it to benefit them. A marketeer can use advertising communications to change a belief within a consumer, there has been extensive research conducted regarding the impact a consumers belief system has on their intentions (Kuo et al, 2020). An example of this would be where an advertising campaign was launched to

raise awareness about the current troubles that families in Zimbabwe are facing in terms of hunger and sickness. This campaign could alter the belief of a consumer by educating them on the poverty families are faced with and the help they can provide them with, encouraging them to donate.

Figure 4: Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)
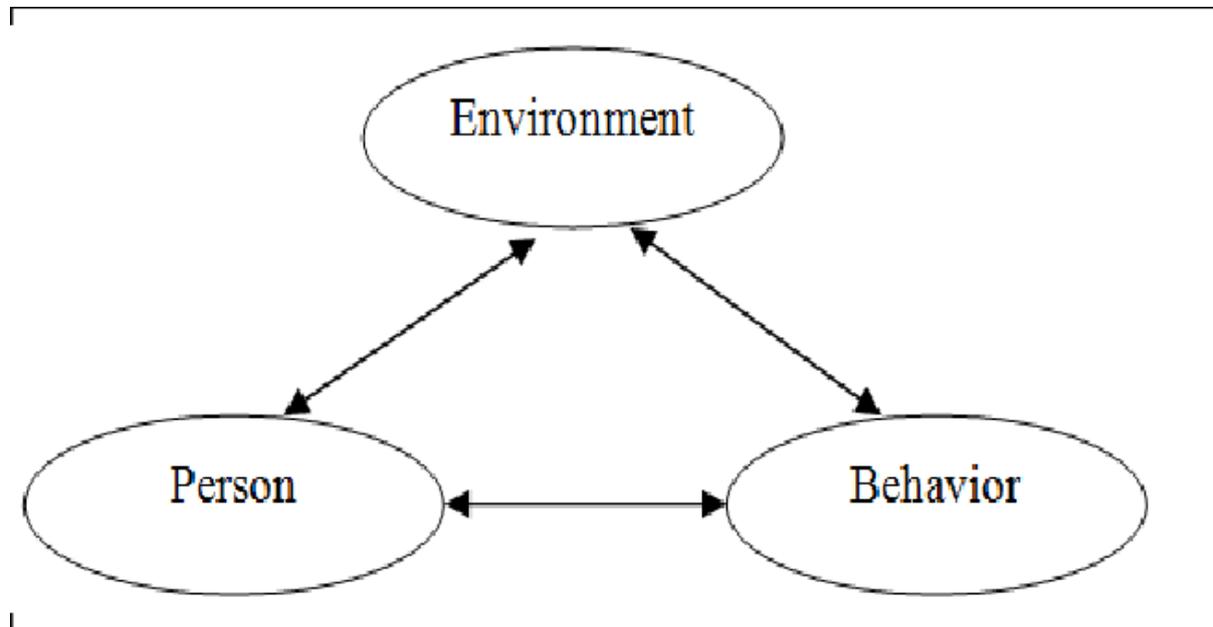
2.4.3 Interest-driven SocioDigital Participation (ISDP)

Interest-driven SocioDigital Participation (ISDP) is a term that Li et al (2020) suggests has a direct impact on the success of modern peer influence. ISDP refers to the high involvement of digital technologies within our daily lives and how this impacts our decision making etc. Specifically, the use of socio-digital technology and networks such as social media whereby consumers are constantly exposed to influential material as they interact with their peers on a daily basis. This could be material posted by influential figures (influencers) or content that their friends are sharing on their personal platforms.

Interest-driven SocioDigital Participation can also be closely linked with the motivation factors behind a consumer's behaviour, the interactions on and ease of access to social networks allows for consumers to be targeted based on their interests more than ever. This meaning that while being exposed to their peer's material, they are available to be marketed to on these platforms. The theory surrounding ISDP would suggest that consumers interests would peak when using socio-digital technologies as such (Hietajärvi, 2014).

2.5 Marketing and Social Movement Non-Profits

2.5.1 Intro to Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations

Social Movements can be described as a common effort made by a large group of people, at times referred to as activists, in hopes of reaching their shared goal, Diani (1992) defines them as "*networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities*". The popularity of social movements has only increased since their formation, since individuals stood for what they believe in, this can be seen in various points in histories during wars of independence, fights for the right to equality, etc. These social movements require individuals to perform acts of activism, to make the effort and be tactical most of all in order to achieve optimal results (Yarmel, 2021).

In order to make change with a social movement, at times support alone is not enough therefore *Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations* or community-benefit organisations are composed. These organisations request funding from the public to help fund their cause, these funds facilitate campaigns to raise awareness, allowance to the underprivileged e.g., homeless individuals and families affected by the social issue at hand (Gottlieb, 2015).

2.5.2 Consumer Perceptions of Non-Profit Organisations

Consumer Perceptions can be defined as a concept within marketing practice that compromises of a consumer's awareness, impressions and recognition of a brand or their products (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumer perceptions can be directly affected by the public relations of a brand, personal experiences with the brand, advertising methods, social media, etc.

Brands have potential to instil positive perceptions in consumers by complying with proper protocol, steering clear of negative publicity e.g., participating in illegal activity. To ensure that they receive positive feedback as well as maintain customer satisfaction, brands must lend focus to the creation of positive consumer perceptions. Bell et al, (2021) suggests that negative consumer perceptions towards the charity sector because of scandalous activity and bad publicity as a result of this has serious implications on consumer perception.

In recent years the perception of non-profit organisations has shown to change as a new perspective has come to light, in terms of some non-profit organisations being found guilty of controversial acts. For example, articles published by The Irish Times *"Give me a crash course in... charities' controversy"* and The Independent *"Charity scandal cycle must end': Tánaiste"* (McQuinn, 2016) outline several events whereby numerous charities in Ireland are guilty of scandalous activity. This has caused negative perceptions upon the industry and has seen the downfall of leading organisations due to lack of trust.

2.5.2.1 Trust

Trust is essential to any brand or industry, but when exclusively applied to the charity sector Hart & Johnson (1999) suggest that for a non-profit organisation to succeed through truthfulness they must remain transparent, ethical, and fair. Trust can be defined as "perceived credibility and benevolence" (Doney & Cannon, 1997), meaning that non-profit organisations must embody the expected behaviour in order to gain positive brand attitudes and perceptions.

Where there is lack of public trust and confidence in the charity sector, consumers are less likely to participate in donation behaviour, consumers have a lack of knowledge as to where their money is going due to various organisations failure to be transparent (Hyndman, 2017).

2.5.3 Cause Related Marketing

Adkins (1999) defines cause-related marketing as form of a company's involvement in corporate social responsibility and investment, by generating exposure for a brand through involvement in a particular cause or issue. Examples of this can be found where brands attach themselves to social movements such as Black Lives Matter and voice their concerns for equal rights. Siebert (2015) outlines the success of brands partnering with non-profit organisations to raise awareness for the cause at hand and generate funds.

Consumers who relate to the cause or share an involvement with the cause are essential to these campaigns as they are the prime segment of the market for donation behaviours i.e., they are most likely to become donors. Chéron et al (2018) believes that when a consumer has a personal connection with the cause at hand, customer involvement is higher than if they were presented with a general non-profit organisation. This suggests that consumers who share personal and emotional connections with specific causes are more likely to donate where they find them. This can be linked back to previous points related to higher success rates amongst consumer when a brand successfully communicates emotional appeals (Lee & Hong, 2016).

2.5.4 Crowdfunding on Social Media

As previously touched on in Background to Research, the concept of crowdfunding has become increasingly popular, exclusively on social media with the use of quick links to donate. Crowdfunding can be defined as the efforts of large groups of people collectively participate in making donations to finance a common goal (Simpson et al, 2021), accessibility to crowdfunding resources has become extremely prominent on social media due to ease of access and navigation etc.

As well as heightened accessibility to crowdfunding, consumers are seeing more of their peers participate too while they are exposed to promotion of crowdfunding projects on their social media feed. Hong et al (2018) suggest that the participation of social media users in information sharing on the respective platforms has a direct

impact on exposure to the cause, whereby users are sharing their crowdfunding activity etc.

The collective participation of information sharing via social media platforms can promote virality of the cause, resulting in mass reach and engagement on social media. This alone can cause peer pressure to set in as Hong et (2019) suggest that the increased exposure to crowdfunding activities via social media positively associates with contributions to the crowdfunding platforms.

2.5.4.1 Virality of Social Movements

While information sharing is seen to increase exposure of crowdfunding campaigns, it has been seen in recent years when in line with social media is responsible for mass virality of social movements i.e., 21st century activism (Rich & Alexis, 2020). For example, society has seen massive social movements gain extensive social media coverage and generate virality in recent years such as *Black Lives Matter* and *#MeToo* (Nicholson et al, 2021)

2.6 Conclusion of Literature Review

Through extensive secondary research, the author established a deeper understanding of the broader topic as well as refined concepts at hand. With broader focus on Peer Influence, Donation Behaviour/Intentions, Social Media, Non-Profit Organisations and Social Movements, the author can now conduct primary research based off their finding or lack their if in the literature review.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Keeping in mind the gaps in literature identified in Chapter 1 and the further literature discussed in Chapter 2 whereby there was a focus on secondary research, the author is now moving onto the development of and focus on primary research. An influential method used to develop a research strategy and approach is that of the method of Saunders Research Onion developed by Saunders et al (2015). This method was chosen to facilitate the research methodology as it provided a clear and academical approach. As proposed in Chapter 1, the Research Questions have been converted to objectives in attempt to implement the methodology best. The researcher will further detail the chosen philosophy, strategy, and selected method of data collection within this chapter. While choosing each of the respective elements of the methodology, the researcher critically reviewed each layer presented by the Research Onion with the aim of eliminating and narrowing the choice of approach as they gained detailed understanding of each. This chapter will lastly, discuss the potential limitations of the methodology as well as any ethical considerations taken into mind.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

Saunders et al (2019) describe *Research Aims* as brief breakdowns of why the author is undertaking this study and what they hope to achieve from it, each aim is connected to an objective and outlines the purpose for research. The overall aim of this study is to investigate the measurable impact that peer influence has on donation behaviour towards social movement non-profit organisations in males aged 20-40, specifically via social media platforms. In simpler terms, the aim is to determine whether males aged 20-40 (a selected population of which) are positively or negatively influenced by their peers on social media and to study their donation behaviour towards Social Movement Non-Profit organisations on social media.

Table 3.2 Research Objectives

Research Objective 1	To investigate Behavioural Patterns as a result of Peer Influence via Social Media
Research Objective 2	To investigate the impact Peer Influence has on Donation (Purchase) Intentions.
Research Objective 3	To investigate the role of Subjective Normative Beliefs when exposed to Social Movements e.g., Black Lives Matter, Asian Lives Matter, Free Palestine, All Lives Matter, Anti-Lockdown, etc.
Research Objective 4	To investigate Attitudes towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations.
Research Objective 5	To investigate the role of Perceived Behavioural Control towards donating to Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations.

These objectives have been formed through the conversion of the proposed Research Questions in section 1.4.2.

3.3 Proposed Research Methodology

In order to conduct efficient, qualitative research, the author systematically adopted the framework known as *Saunders Research Onion (fig.1)* to underpin this study's research methodology. This paradigm was introduced by Saunders et al (2009) and has since been further developed in notable later editions throughout following years. The purpose of implementing this paradigm is to allow for the author to conduct data collection in a structured manner. This structure promotes a smooth flow within the underpinning methodology allowing for the author to produce efficient data (Saunders et al, 2019).

*Figure 5: Saunders Research Onion (*Saunders et al, 2009)
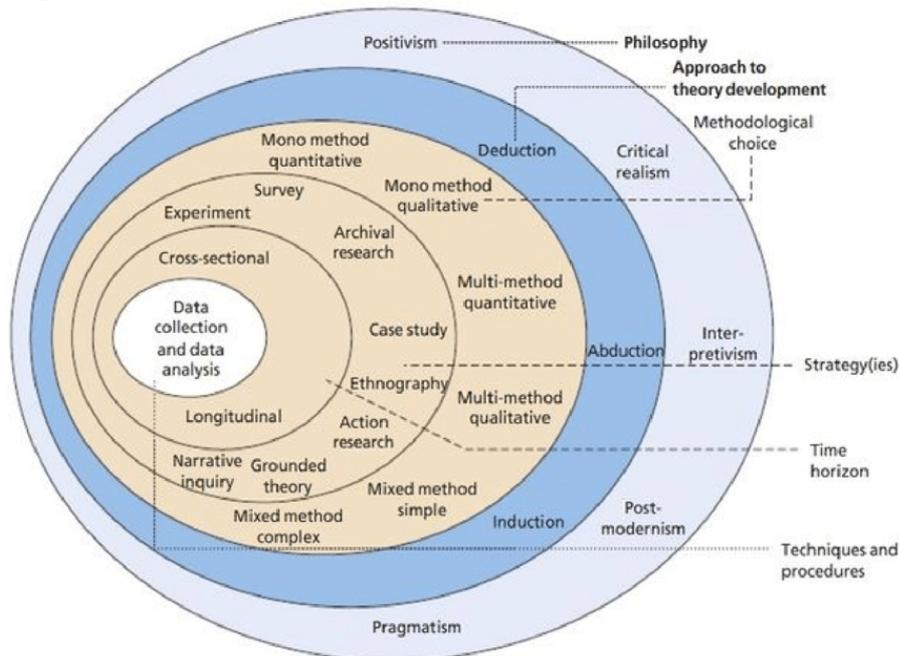
As seen in the above figure, the most outer layer of the *Research Onion* presents Philosophies available to the author, these have been defined by Saunders et al (2019) as "systems of belief". The inner next layer refers to the Approach to Theory Development, this focuses on the authors development of knowledge and how they achieve this (Saunders et al, 2009). The paradigm then moves towards the central layers whereby the author begins to focus on the methodological approach, this determines whether they will undertake a mono method (single) or multi method (mixed) approach and what type it will be in terms of quantitative vs qualitative (Saunders, et al 2019). As the framework edges closer to the centre, the author must begin to think about their strategic approach to their research which will define the findings of their data, which brings the author to their desired outcome of refined data collection and analysis (Saunders et al, 2019).

3.4 Research Philosophy

As briefly aforementioned in the above sub-section Proposed Research Methodology, Research Philosophy has been broken down by Saunders et al (2019) as a "system of beliefs" in which the author can use to initially approach their research. Saunders et al (2019) encourages the reader to adapt philosophies that align best with the nature of the research and the desired outcome as well as keeping the authors personal beliefs in mind. Choosing the strategy best suited to the proposed research will allow for the author to develop a progressive justification for their methodological choice (Johnson and Clark, 2006, cited within Saunders et al, 2019 p. 131).

3.4.1 Ontology vs Axiology vs Epistemology

Saunders Research Onion breaks the philosophical approach to the methodology down to three possible main concepts, these would include axiology, ontology, and epistemology (Johnson and Clark, 2006).

Varpio and MacLeod (2020) suggest that the three concepts can be broken down as such:

<u>Ontology:</u> This can be defined as understanding the 'nature of reality'.
<u>Epistemology:</u> This focuses on the identifying the 'nature of knowledge'.
<u>Axiology:</u> Lastly, this concentrates on the values at the core of author throughout this study.

In attempt to strategically select the correct philosophy for this study, the author has eliminated Axiology as it aligns least with the interests of the outcome of this research. By eliminating one of the possible three concepts, the author can now review Ontology and Epistemology in further detail in efforts to determine the correct philosophical approach.

Quinlan et al (2019) defines Epistemology as the concept of "what constitutes knowledge and to the processes through which knowledge is created". Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that focuses on the creation and acquisition of knowledge via research, it concentrated on the development of this knowledge and how to efficiently unveil the most truthful conclusion. It can be broken down into the subsections of Positivism and Interpretivism.

Ontology on the other hand can be described as "assumptions about the nature of reality embedded in the theoretical perspective and consequently in the methodology" (Quinlan et al, 2019). This suggest that the concept of Ontology exclusively refers to the nature of what exists, what is real, etc. It focuses highly on what is presented in reality, it allows for the researcher to pose the questions of a matter existing/being.

3.4.2 Interpretivism vs Positivism

In efforts to shape this study best, the researcher has rejected the philosophy of Ontology and has adapted an epistemological based approach, epistemology allows for the researcher to develop the most truthful conclusion with the access to knowledge of the area via acquiring it primarily and secondarily.

This philosophy can now be refined further by defining the approach by eliminating either an interpretivist-based epistemology or positivistic-based approach.

Firstly, the author evaluated the interpretivist-based approach to epistemology, Denzin & Lincoln (2013) suggests that the research has the underlying perception that reality is a social constructions, furthermore that knowledge is created through social experiences suggesting that this approach is not exclusively measurable from the perspective of a quantitative approach therefore is better suited to a qualitative approach.

It has been suggested that when taking an interpretivist-based approach, the researcher allows for the possibility that there may not be an exclusively correct answer to the research questions posed in their study. This opens the study up in various ways as it allows for in depth qualitative research which produces unique and individual answers from each of the participants (Collis et al, 2014). This approach counts for the fact that each participant may have a unique sense of reality based on their personal life experiences.

In opposition to an interpretivist-based approach, the research also considers a positivistic-based philosophy, in contrast to an interpretivist focus, positivism does not allow for such an open-ended conclusion as it relies on factually accurate knowledge that has been created or acquired through a singular reality. This opposed interpretivism in which it follows more of a quantitatively accurate approach which is not affected by multiple realities (Bryman, 2015). Saunders et al (2019) suggest that an interpretivist-based approach that individuals play a part as 'social actors' and can be responsible for the existence of multiple realities in research.

As a result of comparing the two epistemologically based philosophical approaches, the author has determined that an interpretivism-based epistemology method of research would be best suited to this study. This conclusion was formed with the intention of viewing individuals as social beings when conducting research, this will aid the aim of understanding the impact others have on an individual's actions (Saunders et al, 2019).

3.5 Research Strategy

3.5.1 Qualitative vs Quantitative Research

In order to implement an effective research strategy, the researcher must ensure the correct strategy is chosen in order to achieve the desired outcome, it is important to

ensure the strategy aligns with the chosen research philosophy. As well as this, the chosen strategy must be able to deliver the proposed objectives of the study and research question at hand (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). To approach the decision of research strategy, the researcher evaluated the available options, research methodology has been famously split into two subsections, Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research. Bryman & Bell (2015) have described Quantitative Research as a method that has the highest potential to produce efficiently calculated unbiased results, this is completed by means of enforcing structure. Quantitative Research comes in hand with statistically based results, typically in a numerical from e.g., numbers and graphs. Sykes & Warren (1991) recommend the use of testing a larger population in order to potentially produce valid conclusions through accurate information provided. Quantitative Research has found to be successful through the means of surveys and questionnaires etc. (Quinlan, 2011).

On the other hand, the researcher is presented with Qualitative Research, this has been described as the "conduction of experiences and phenomena", this strategic approach installs a lighter structural theme within the research (Saunders et al, 2012). An imperative factor of qualitative research to take into consideration is the focus the strategy has on the beliefs, experiences and feelings of participants involved, data is collected in the form of insights created with methods such as thematic analysis and grounded theory analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Sykes & Warren (1991) have described the strategic approach of Qualitative Research as an approach that is "flexible and absent of rigid experimental control". Most common qualitative methods available to the researcher was in-depth interviews, ethnography, and focus groups which are based solely reliant on participant opinions and experiences, etc. (Cresswell, 2009).

Once each of these strategic approaches has been evaluated and measured up against the desired goal of the research as well as the predefined philosophy, etc. the researcher has confirmed that the use of qualitative research would be best suited to this study. The arrival to this conclusion has been decided by factors such as the objective of using participant life experiences to approach the research question. As (Quinlan, 2011) has suggested, qualitative research arrives at conclusion with the aid of data that cannot be placed in a graph, emotions and feelings are imperative to this study. This aligns properly with the research philosophy in undertaking an interpretivist-based epistemology approach whereby the participants experiences and social roles account towards the research heavily.

3.6 Research Approach

To begin the approach to research, the author took into consideration the various theories that can underpin the methodology, a theory that the researcher felt aligned well with the objectives, aims as well as the philosophy and strategy, is that of *empiricism*. This theory poses the suggestion that individuals can source their knowledge through human experience (Bryman, 2015). Bryman (2015) suggests that

there are two approaches that associate best with research and theory, these being Inductive and Deductive.

3.6.1 Inductive vs Deductive

These two approaches to research can be found on Saunders Research Onion on the second most outer layer which was earlier described as the authors development of knowledge and how it is achieved (Saunders et al, 2016).

An *inductive* approach is mainly connected to an interpretive strategy of research whereby the goal is understanding a participant's feelings and behavioural patterns through qualitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Saunders et al (2016) suggests that the process of an inductive approach produces data as a means of developing a theory.

A *deductive* approach on the other hand is derived on the grounds of what is already knowledgeable to the researcher (and the industry) about a specific topic, the preformed theory must be taken into consideration and as a result, a hypothesis is formed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Deductive methods rely on the confirmation or rejection of theory based on the results of the hypothesis.

After consideration of the two approaches, while keeping in mind the chosen research philosophies and strategies to apply to this study, the research approach decided upon is inductive research. The researcher applied an inductive approach through the conduction of secondary research by rigorous review of academic reports and research papers accompanied by gathering primary data through in-depth interviews. This aligns well with the strategic choice of qualitative research as the two allow the researcher to explore methods of data collection from a tailored perspective of the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe, 2002).

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Primary Data Collection

In effort to successfully collect valuable primary data that can produce conclusive information, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews as the mono-method of data collection. The options available for methodological choice can be found on the inner third layer of Saunders Research Onion, upon choosing qualitative research the options were refined and narrowed down resulting in the choice of mono-method qualitative research. This choice coordinates with the implemented choice of philosophy (interpretivism) whereby the research aims are to target participants on a deeper level to produce data from individual experiences, opinions, and feelings (Saunders et al, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the preferred mono-method as opposed to structured interviews or focus groups and ethnography as they allow the researcher to probe the participants without being harsh. This promotes a comfortable environment for the participant to speak freely while the researcher guides the conversation in order to optimise valid data collection. This results in data being uncovered naturally while allowing the potential to bring about

unconsidered perspectives of the study based on the unique experiences and feelings of the individuals (Easterby-Smith, et al. 2012)

3.7.2 Secondary Data Collection

Cooper & Schindler (2014) refers to secondary data collection as the study and gathering of material originally composed by others for their specified objectives, researchers can use this data to form further understanding of a topic. This is a vital step in the research process as it allows the researcher to create knowledge of a specific area before conducting primary data collection. This method of data collection is resourceful to the research by saving both time and money as the data has been collected and analysed already, providing easily accessible knowledge about the topic. As well as this Ghauri & Gronhaug (2010) imply that the access the researcher has to secondary data, aids that of their primary data where they can compare findings to aid a conclusive result.

The researcher undertook the task of secondary data collection by extensively studying previous literature which can be found in the literature review of this study.

3.7.3 Population

Blumberg (2008) implied *population* to be an accumulated collection of eligible elements that make up the selected sample of which a researcher requires in order to comprise primary data. A target population/ population sample can be refined to share similar characteristic in order to create relevant conclusions based on specific areas of study (Saunders et al, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has identified the target population as Males aged 20-40 with a sample size of 6 males ranging between the targeted age. Each individual has been selected for this study via convenience sampling, this is exclusively a result of the limitations imposed on the researcher such as availability and accessibility (Cameron & Price, 2009).

Information on each participant can be seen in Table 3.7, IV = Interviewee.

Table 3.7: Participant Information

IV 1: Male, Aged 20	IV 4: Male, Aged 27
IV 2: Male, Aged 31	IV 5: Male, Aged 35
IV 3: Male, Aged 24	IV 6: Male, Aged 40

3.7.4 Analysing Qualitative Data

As aforementioned, the researcher chose to approach this study with the use of qualitative research, therefore when analysing this data, the researcher done so in a qualitative manner producing findings that are not of a numerical nature (Glaser, 1992). To correctly administer the data and create valid findings, the researcher followed the approach of Wilson (2010) by adopting the process of:

Recording each interview and transcribing the material to allow for optimised evaluation of the collected data, this was completed with the use of *Otter Ai,* an app that provides immediate transcription while recording interviews to alleviate any unnecessary effort. In efforts to gauge full review of the interview, the researcher felt important to listen back to each interview while reading the transcription to ensure the information was completely accurate. This allowed for the researcher to take further notes and consider themes as they gained further understanding of the individuals' perspectives as they reviewed each interview (Holloway, 1997).

Once completed, the researcher completed a process of coding each interview in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the findings. This allowed the researcher to associate information gathered to themes of findings which aided the creation and outcome of theoretical concepts (Straus, 1987). These themes were then attached to objectives of the study are outlined within the research findings and discussion in chapter four.

3.8 Limitations to Research

Overall, the data collected presented various similarities in the findings gathered through each of the in-depth interviews, it should be noted and considered that this collected data may not produce an exclusively conclusive answer due to the methodological nature of qualitative research. As well as this, the primary data collected was that of the findings from a limited 6 in-depth interviews as the constraint of time and resources limited accessibility to further research. With this in mind, it is necessary to repeat that limited data may result in exclusively inconclusive findings. Another notable constraint on the research would be that of limited facilities to conduct interviews due to being unable to be face-to-face with participants as a result of interruption by the COVID-19 Pandemic. If given the opportunity to participate in person, this would've opened the doors to studying various body language presented as well as possibly engaging in a deeper emotional connection with the participants allowing for further raw material.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher took ethical concerns when approaching various element of this study, notably when conducting interviews and managing personal information regarding participants. Additionally, the researcher gave ethical consideration to participating in specific activities or refraining from that which is not necessary when carrying out research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

When approaching and conducting a research project as such, the researcher must acknowledge *The Code of Ethical Conduct,* this is a guide of principals for conducting primary data collection and is a critical inclusion of a research project (Yin, 2016). This conduct further outlines the importance of awareness towards participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In assurance that this conduct was taken under clear evaluation and appreciation, the researcher executed and submitted a complete ethical review which was submitted to The National College of Ireland prior to this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author will present the data collected from the in-depth interviews conducted as part of primary research. As previously stated in chapter 4, the research conducted and analysed this data and created themes within their findings. The following themes have been derived from the Research Objectives stated within the methodology in Table 3.2. The researcher broke down each objective and questioned the participants in accordance with each and derived three themes from each objective. Below, the findings have been presented.

4.2.1 Objective 1: "To investigate Behavioural Patterns as a result of Peer Influence via Social Media."

4.2.1.1 Trust in Social Media Content

When questioned about the level of trust each interviewee held in general content they encounter on Social Media, the sample population unanimously shared a common opinion in that they do not hold a high level of trust in content they are presented with on social media platforms. 100% of the participants voiced their concerns about the validity and reputability of the information that is shared on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, with one interviewee claiming, "*if I saw something on Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat, I would take it with a pinch of salt… because it's coming from a biased point of view… it's always going to be manipulated*"(IV 3).

The interviewee presented the point that they do not find information sourced from social media to be accurate due to the fact that behind each fragment of information lies a bias, one-sided point of view therefore deeming information unreliable. When questioned further regarding information that a peer has shared as opposed to general content found on social media, 83% of participants (5/6 interviewees) confirmed that a peer posting information has no relevance to their previous opinion and it remains unchanged. They would still not trust information relayed to them via a social media platform regardless of if their peers shared this information or not with one participant sharing '*I don't really take into account what anyone writes on social media… I would form my own opinion before I would trust somebody else*" (IV 5).

This became a pattern amongst the interviewees whereby the same 5 interviewees who felt that they would not hold trust in any content shared on social media by peers or not, hold the mindset of wanting to use reputable sources outside of social media to form their own opinions as they "*would be sceptical of all information shared online" (IV4).*

4.2.1.2 Peer Engagement via Social Media

In this section, the researcher probed the interviewees with questions regarding their engagement patterns with peers on social media platforms, whether they as individuals liked/disliked engaging with their peers on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

A pattern amongst 66% of participants (4/6 interviewees) admitted to being likely to engage with content their peers post/share online but only in the case that the peer was someone close to them and it was in relation to a topic that their peer was passionate about "*if one of my friends or family members was sharing something that was clearly important to them then yes, I would take part" (IV 6).* This aligns with aforementioned literature whereby Moslehpour (2020) stated that 'social media users want to engage and share with their peers'.
That being said, this literature does contrast with the opinion of the remaining two interviewees who would remain silent and would not engage as it is not an activity that they partake in.

4.2.1.3 Impact of Mass Peer Behaviour

Lastly, in attempt to investigate behavioural patterns on social media, the researcher prompted the interviewees with questions relating to peer influence in mass amounts. An instance whereby an individual is exposed to mass peer influence would be in which a numerous number of peers are sharing content, information, opinions, etc. on social media in a fixed period of time. An example of this would be social media users sharing their opinions/information regarding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this question is to investigate whether participants could be influence by mass amounts of peers as opposed to a single peer. In this case, each of the participants remain to be careless by the idea of mass amounts of peers broadcasting their opinions as they recognise their information as just that; opinions with one participant stating that "*you should really educate yourself on it first and then be able to decipher what's accurate and what isn't" (IV 3).* This contrasts with aforementioned literature whereby Berger (2012) suggested that social media users are likely to engage in virality online due to an emotional connection. Participants of this study seem to allow for logical reasoning first before they attach emotions to participating in viral opinions.

4.2.2 Objective 2: 2To investigate the impact Peer Influence has on Donation (Purchase) Intentions."

4.2.2.1 Donation Behaviour within Social Media

Within this section, the researcher aims to determine the participants current donation patterns and behaviours exclusively through social media platforms. The researcher began by questioning participants about their likability to donate to organisations solely via links presented to them on social media (e.g., Link in Bio/Story Swipe-Ups, etc.). The aim of this question is to determine whether the participant held trust in links found social media when donating money.

Each participant expressed that they have donated to organisations via one-click/swipe links presented to them on social media platforms before in order to help out a friend or a cause that they are passionate about. Topics as such would include emotional triggers such as mental health, physical health conditions, down fall in a community, etc. whereby the participants seek to help someone other than themselves. 100% of participants shared a common belief where they "*don't see a problem if it's on social media… as it all depends on the cause and the person" (IV 2)*. This can be backed up by previous literature whereby these participants show characteristics and traits of Prosocial individuals by donating to causes out of selfless acts of kindness (Kowalski et al, 2021).

4.2.2.2 Impact of Peer Influence on Donation Intentions

This section is dedicated to investigating the direct impact that peer influence has a participant's likelihood to donate. The researcher began by asking each participant if they could be influenced to donate based on what they saw their peers posting on social media.

The feedback for this question was mixed whereby 50% of participant expressed that they would engage in donating to a cause their peer shared in the context that they share an emotional connection with their peer, and they would donate if it were an issue that their peer is emotionally connected to within reason. A participant explained *"I would find myself donating because I know them, and I want them to do well" (IV 5)*. This again relates back to Kowalski et al (2021) and the theory of Prosocialism within individuals.

The latter 50% felt that they would not donate solely based on the fact that their peers shared it as they would prefer to donate to causes that they are passionate about as individuals. They still remain under the characteristics of a prosocial individual but for slightly different reasons.

4.2.2.3 Participation in Peer Influence within Donation Nation

Lastly, in this section the researcher set out to examine each individual's personal participation in peer influence, in the context whereby they have just donated to a cause/organisation. The researcher questioned each participant to determine

whether or not they are the type of person who shares their donation on social media in order to influence others to participate as well.

There was a unanimous response to this as 100% of participants expressed that they would not participate in sharing their donation on a social media platform as they view this as a self-serving act with one participating expressing that participating in sharing your donation *"sounds like you're bragging… it just seems like you done it for a pat on the back… ruining the purpose of why you're donating in the first place" (IV 1)*. This relates back to aforementioned literature whereby Bock et al (2018) suggested that a motive for donating would be to solely seek social gain through charitable behaviour.

4.2.3 Objective 3: "To investigate the role of Subjective Normative Beliefs when exposed to Social Movements e.g., Black Lives Matter, Repeal The 8th, Free Palestine, All Lives Matter, Anti-Lockdown, etc."

4.2.3.1 Knowledge of Social Movements

The aim of this section is to gain an understanding of the participant knowledge of Social Movements and where they source this knowledge from. Although each participant had different views of various Social Movements the objective was to determine where they source information about social movements that they are individually passionate about.

Much like in section 4.2.1.1, each of the participants expressed they're dislike for using social media to source information especially in regards to social and some political movements as they are subjected to widely bias opinions. With 100% of participants declaring that they use unbiased sources such as news outlets with unbiased natures. Two participants in particular conveyed their interest in specific sources that are alike in reputability such as *"the likes of The Independent, The Guardian, The Express, sometimes the Journal" (IV 4)* and *"The New York Times and The Washington Post" (IV 5).*

4.2.3.2 Attitudes towards Social Movements in Society

This section outlines the participants personal attitudes towards social movements and their relevance within society and what is acceptable when supporting a social movement.

66% of participants expressed positive personal attitudes towards social movements whereby they believe that they are fundamental to invoke change and would happily participate in *"practice of free speech, protesting but peacefully" (IV 6),* as they have causes, they hold a strong connection to.

The remaining two participants that held a different preconceived attitude towards social movements felt that they were important but do not feel as though they need to participate, one participant conveyed their concerns as they would *"be wary of participating as everything is traceable these days" (IV 2).*

4.2.3.3 Perceptions of the Impact of Social Movements in Society

Lastly, this section sets out to explore each of the participants perception of the impact that social movements have on past and present day society, the researcher questioned each individual about their personal opinion.

Although not all participants expressed their likelihood to participate in 4.2.3.2, 100% of participants declared they find that social movements have had and still have a huge impact on society. A participant who shared that they do not participate gave clear examples of why they are important in society when saying *"they have a demonstrated history of making a difference in society" (IV 5)* referring to the equal rights referendum in Northern Ireland in the 1960s-70s.

4.2.4 Objective 4: "To investigate Attitudes towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations."

4.2.4.1 Trust in Non-Profit Organisations

The researcher set out to examine the trust that each participant held in non-profit organisations in general amongst the controversial actions of some that has been made clear in the media in recent years. There was a divide amongst participants in this section regarding perceptions of non-profit organisations and the trust each individual held.

3 out of 6 of the participants felt that they would donate to non-profit organisations in general despite any controversy they may have encountered in the media whereas the remaining 3 participants had a separate view altogether with on participant stating that *"they're very sneaky in that way and they'll try to manipulate you… it's all down to trust for me, I definitely don't trust concern… I feel like they take our money and pay their staff off" (IV 3).* This links back to the first point in section 4.2.1.1 whereby there is a need for trust when participating in certain actions.

4.2.4.2 Perceptions of Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations

This next section aims to examine the participants perception of Social Movement non-profit organisations, in simpler terms participants were questioned about their opinion on groups within social movements requesting funding from the public for various issues e.g., campaigning.

When questioning the participants there was a conclusive agreement amongst each of the individuals whereby they didn't see an issue with it and did not have a negative perception of this but they wouldn't be completely motivated to donate to

non-profits within social movements as they wouldn't see themselves donating to help a movement campaign, with one participant declaring that *"personally I don't see the point, if I'm going to donate my money to something, I want it going somewhere that's going to help someone" (IV 6).*

4.2.4.3 Impact of Peer Influence on Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations

Lastly, in this section the researcher set out to examine the participants susceptibility to supporting a social movement or a non-profit organisation related to it solely based on the fact that their peers were passionate about it and supporting it. The response to this was mixed and had similar underlying tones to that of section 4.2.2.2 whereby a selection of participants would not be swayed from their preconceived personal opinions by a peer as they have quite a strong head.

33% of participants suggested that there would be potential for them to be convinced as they care about what their peers care about as well as wanting to keep their opinions open to moral indifferences. Morality plays a huge part here as Winterich (2013) suggests that the moral compass within each individual has potential to guide them.

Therefore, if presented with a moral high ground, these two participants could be influenced to support a social movement that they did not previously. One of which stated that *"if I was given enough reason to support them like if the other side is just completely in the wrong then I would of course" (IV 1)*

4.2.5 Objective 5: "To investigate the role of Perceived Behavioural Control towards donating to Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations."

4.2.5.1 Individual Importance within Social Movements

As the researcher moved onto the final section of the in-depth interviews, the questions became slightly more refined in order to determine a deeper sense of the topic of Social Movements and Donation Behaviour.

This section evaluates the participants perception of their self-importance or a single individual's general importance within social movements, each participant was question on whether they think a single person can make a difference in the face of a social movement. Jami (2021) outlines the impact that acts of generosity and kindness can have on society, and this was mirrored in each of the interviewee's responses. As a whole, the participants shred the view that a single person can be of huge importance when participating in a social movement.

One particular participant stated that *"It takes one person to start a revolution and one more to follow them and so on… a movement has to start somewhere and only grows with every person that joins" (IV 1).*

4.2.5.2 Self-Satisfaction in Donation Behaviour

The next section is controlled by the aim of determining each of the participants satisfaction within themselves when donating to an organisation. Each participant was probed in relation to whether they are happy within themselves when they can only donate so much. In simpler terms, do they still feel satisfied donating even if it's only a small amount.

This was a conclusive answer amongst the participants whereby each interviewee declared that they feel somewhat of a sense of accomplishment when they donate no matter how high or low the amount with one participant stating that *"it doesn't matter what you give, if I give one euro or fifty euro, I'm happy cause it all adds up"* (IV 3).

In terms of the participants remaining happy when they've donated, no matter the amount, this can be academically backed up as it relates back to an aforementioned term *Helpers High.* Kotler (1994) describes this experience as an emotional uplift whereby the individual feels a sense of validation as a result of helping others.

4.2.5.3 Limitations against Donation Patterns

Lastly, to wrap the interviews up the researcher aimed to determine if there were any further limitations towards donation patters when it came down to the individuals' motivations.

A pattern of lack of trust arose again as well as dissociation from the cause, with lack of emotional investment in a cause whether that be a primary connection or a secondary one through a peer, each of the participants seem to lack interest in donating where there was an absence of emotion. This can be seen in literature whereby Nikolinakou and King (2018) suggest that the use of emotion is the ultimate driver.

4.3 Limitation in Findings

When conducting the review and analysing of data, the researcher established a scarce number of limitations that had a direct impact on the end result and/or conclusions. Firstly, a notable limitation was that of limited accessibility to participants in terms of being able to see them, if the researcher had have had the opportunity to conduct the interviews in person as opposed to over the phone, they could have gained further insights through body language and facial expressions and responses. As well as this, the data was limited to only six participants therefore there was a limitation to accuracy of the data, ideally the researcher would have interviewed a larger sample to gauge a deeper understanding.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.0 Overview

The author critically analysed the current literature available as well as determined the gaps whereby literature regarding peer influence in an environment of donation intentions and behaviour exist on social media is lacking. The primary objective of this research was to determine whether individuals could be influenced by their peers on social media to donate to social movement non-profit organisations and investigate the aforementioned gaps from Chapter 1.

Conclusively, the primary data collected through in-depth interviews showcased minor influential impact on the participants of this study reflecting on the possibility for lack of research in this area.

In addition, the determined gap in literature outline in Chapter 1 has been supported by the literature review in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, concluding that there is potential for further study and academic research in this area.

The researcher has identified 3 conclusive points that they feel are the most relevant to this study: 1. Emotional Connection Between Peers, 2. Trust in Social Media Platforms and 3. Qualitative Limitations

5.1 Emotional Connection Between Peers

A conclusive deduction from this research that can be determined through this study is the impact that the emotional connection peers share can have on each other, the emotional connection that the participants held with their respective peers encourage them to partake in altruistic behaviour. As previously defined, this is the participation in selfless kind acts of service that benefit people other than yourself and greater society as a whole (Xue and Bramesfeld, 2020). As well as inhibiting characteristics of Altruism, a motivation for altruistic behaviour has been determined to be an emotional connection with someone or something. An emotional connection can be anything from a friendship/relationship to a personal attachment to a specific cause or issue such as mental health. Participant *(IV 3)* stated that *"A friend of mines friend committed suicide and they were promoting a non-profit in honour of him and I donated to that"*. This shows clear influence to donate by means of an emotional connection with a peer and a cause that the participant felt was worthy of donating to.

This could potentially fall in line with moral identity as previously mentioned whereby the participant feels obligated to donate because it is a cause he relates to and it was a friend of his who was affected, triggering the emotional connection (Bock et al, 2018).

5.2 Trust in Social Media Platforms

A second notable take away from this study is that of the lack of trust that social media users have in their various social media platforms, *Facebook, Instagram,* for example. This lack of trust stems from the lack of reputability these platforms hold even with elements of 'fact-check' software installed which is not exclusively accurate. A main concern of the interview candidates for this study is the constant exposure to biased information on social media platforms, this was explicitly expressed by each of the six individual who took place. The ability for social media users to promote their biased opinions online is nothing new to the online social construct but is certainly hindering users from receiving accurate, factual information or so much to the point that this is the user's conclusion.

From a marketing perspective, it presents to be vital to tackle the barrier of trust on social media platforms as, if users do not trust what their peers are sharing online, their close friends, etc. how will a brand be able to make a relevant connection with a consumer via social media if they do not hold trust in the platforms they're using.

5.3 Qualitative Limitations

Lastly, after processing and analysing all of the primary data collected throughout this study, the researcher has deducted that the answer to the originally posed research question of determining the impact peer influence has on donation behaviour via social media is inconclusive. Firstly, the nature of the method of research strategy being qualitative has contributed to this conclusion as qualitative research mixed with the construct of an interpretive-based epistemology approach allows for various realities to exist within this study. The population sample was made up of males aged between the ages of 20-40, all at various different stages of their lives, some being fathers, some being students, etc. The researcher has deducted that if the population samples was smaller even still this would present various different realities.

Although this research has been deemed inconclusive, this is primarily in terms of there not being one singular answer therefore there are still notable elements of the data collected to take away from this study.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

In conducting further research in the future, the researcher would make recommendations based on gaps in the literature. As the author has clearly identified where there is missing literature and the findings were somewhat inconclusive, it would be recommended that there is a heavy focus on and evaluation of peer influence in a donation focused environment. This recommendation would promote a

refined scope of the research to ensure that the primary focus is a selective topic. As emphasised within the literature review, peer influence is heavily present on social media therefore it is recommended that any future research keep the potential for mass peer influence on social media in mind.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT SHEET

I hereby confirm that I give full consent for my responses to in-depth interview questions to be anonymously used and quoted in this student dissertation at the National College of Ireland.

Interviewer

Name _____   Year _____

Programme _____

Interviewee

Print Name _____   Signature _____

Date Signed_____

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Objective 1: To investigate Behavioural Patterns as a result of Peer Influence via Social Media.

- 1.1 Do you trust information your peers post on Social Media, explain your reasons?
- 1.2 When a friend promotes something on their social media page, how do you react?
- 1.3 How do you respond when several of your peers promote certain information? For example, creating or reposting content about an issue.

Objective 2: 2To investigate the impact Peer Influence has on Donation (Purchase) Intentions."

- 2.1 How do you feel about donating to Non-Profit Organisations via Social Media?
- 2.2 If several of your friends were donating to an organisation and promoting their actions online, would you feel the need to join in, please explain your reasons for this?
- 2.3 Do you share the fact that you have made a donation to an organisation on social media, if so/not why?

Objective 3: "To investigate the role of Subjective Normative Beliefs when exposed to Social Movements e.g., Black Lives Matter, Repeal the 8th, Free Palestine, All Lives Matter, Anti-Lockdown, etc."

- 3.1 Where do you source information about Social Movements that you are aware of?
- 3.2 What actions do you deem acceptable when supporting a social movement? E.g., protesting, donating, etc.
- 3.3 Do you believe that Social Movements can make a difference in society? Why?

Objective 4: "To investigate Attitudes towards Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations."

- 4.1 Do you hold trust in non-profit organisations? Please elaborate?
- 4.2 How do you feel about Social Movements requesting funding from the public?
- 4.3 What if your several of your peers were supporting a Social Movement Non-Profit Organisation, would this persuade you to donate as opposed to if none of your friends were in support of it?

Objective 5: "To investigate the role of Perceived Behavioural Control towards donating to Social Movement Non-Profit Organisations."

- 5.1 Do you believe that you as a single individual can be of help and make a difference when facing Social Movements?
- 5.2 What if you could only donate a small amount to an organisation, would you continue with the donation, please explain your reasons?
- 5.3 What would stop you from donating to a Social Movement Non-Profit organisation that you support?