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Chapter 4
An Absorptive Capacity Perspective of Organizational Learning Through Social Media:
Evidence From the Ghanaian Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

The Absorptive Capacity Theory was used as the theoretical lens for this study to help analyze how organizations absorb new knowledge using social media tools and applications. A survey of fashion designers and employees numbering 196 was carried out in 55 fashion firms whereas two fashion firms were used in a case study. Data analysis was performed using the Structural Equation Modelling. The findings from the study suggest that Ghanaian fashion designers do not intensively use social media to assimilate knowledge but rather to acquire, transform and exploit knowledge. The popular social media applications include; Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Facebook, for instance, is used on a daily basis by most Ghanaian

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fashion designers. Fashion designers use social media to acquire, transform and exploit knowledge through research, interaction, communication, and marketing with suppliers, customers, and other fashion designers. Future research can extend this work by looking at organizational learning and social media use in a different industry.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational learning is necessary for the successful operation of organizations. Businesses thrive on information and this information accumulates forming a knowledge base. Such knowledge can be acquired both internally and externally and must be managed properly to achieve organizational set goals and objectives (Karkoulian, Messarra & McCarthy, 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that communities that have mechanisms that create and connect relationships between individuals to work collectively for common goals is an organization (Boateng et al., 2009). According to Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (1998), critical among these mechanisms are those that result in sharing information and make the cognitive map of individuals, as employees, accessible for the greater good; thus, creating collective knowledge. Organizations learn and create knowledge through dynamic interactions between employees. Organizations have long recognized knowledge management (KM) as an important business strategy (Hull, Coombs & Peltu, 2000). A 2001 United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicated that a substantial portion of the federal workforce would become eligible to retire or will retire over the next five to 10 years, and hence workforce planning is critical to ensure that agencies have sufficient and appropriate staff to account for these retirements. Usually, when people leave an organization, they take a wealth of knowledge about their jobs with them. Consequently, Lien, Hung, Yang and Li (2006) posits that firms have to pay particular attention to the enhancement of their learning patterns. One of the ways through which organizations can learn is through the use of social media tools or applications to acquire and also disseminate information both internally and externally (O'Reilly, 2005).

Quite a number of organizations have been asking what they can use social media for. Current literature demonstrates a dominance on social media and marketing (Hanna, 2011). On the other hand, in IS literature, social media has been studied from the perspectives of social media and text mining; social media and crisis management; and social media and organizational learning.

One very important area of study regarding social media is social media and text mining. He et al. (2013) carried out an in-depth case study, which applies text mining to analyse unstructured text content on Facebook and Twitter sites of the

three largest pizza chains: Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and Papa John's Pizza. Results from the text mining and social media competitive analysis show that these pizza chains actively engaged their customers in social media. They suggested future research focus on finding innovative ways to turn businesses' social media fans from "like" to "buy". For example, pizzerias will have to provide consumers easy ways to purchase pizzas using social media from "selecting pizza, adding their selections to shopping carts, and completing purchases through payment with credit cards and points". Rickman and Cosenza (2007) have also examined the theoretical/conceptual development and application of weblog-text mining to fashion forecasting in general and street fashion trending in particular. They postulate that future research should look at semantic and image mining of the web as the next frontiers of data mining and trend spotting. According to Kaiser and Bodendorf (2012), combining text mining and social network analysis enables the study of opinion formation and yields encouraging results. They analysed opinion formation based on consumer dialogs in online forum.

Another area, which has also been studied is social media and organizational learning. A study by Bochenek and Blili (2013) looked at four companies of different sizes, different scopes of operation, and different industries. They found that all the companies learn socially and use social media to strengthen the organization and build business benefits through using social media as a marketing tool and having a strategic framework that makes the company active on social media. Their learning patterns (the learning process and the learning aggregation in social media) are, however, different. It shows that social media is beyond being a tool. They propose that future research should study a larger sample of companies in order to see the learning patterns and profiles of strategic management of social media at the statistically important level. A collaborative setting based on social media principles enables the sharing of different insights on current topic, and therefore adds value to an outcome by enriching information (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Chua and Banerjee (2013) analysed the extent to which the use of social media can support customer knowledge management (CKM) in organizations relying on a traditional bricks-and-mortar business model. From their findings, social media is not a tool exclusive to online businesses. It can be a potential game-changer in supporting CKM efforts even for traditional businesses.

Most of these research works on learning processes of organizations were carried out in developed countries (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012; Chua & Banerjee, 2013), little has been carried out in developing countries (Grabski, 2009), specifically Ghana. Moreover, there have been arguably no studies on organizational learning through social media using the Absorptive Capacity Theory as its theoretical lens, ascertaining the need for this study. Also, the most apparent gap in the use of methods was the

lack of studies using the mixed-method approach. The qualitative studies tend to dominate this area of study.

Diverse studies have been carried out relating to social media as discussed above. However, this research would do an analysis of how organizations using social media and to understand the knowledge absorption process using the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT), which will serve as the theoretical lens for this research. To achieve the research purpose, the following objectives are outlined:

1. To describe the forms of learning for firms in the fashion industry;
2. To describe the sources of learning for firms in the fashion industry; and
3. To explain how social media supports learning in the fashion industry.

The first section is therefore the introduction to this paper. The second section also presents a review of literature pertaining to organizational learning and social media including the research framework that was adopted for this study. The constructs and variables of the framework are explained followed by how they were measured. The third section presents the study setting by providing a brief overview of the Ghanaian fashion industry studying specifically Vlisco and Nallem Clothing. The fifth section describes the research methodology adopted, which includes research design, data collection procedure and development of data collection instruments. The sixth section discusses the data collected from the field and is analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and qualitative analysis. The last section presents a summary of the key findings, and contributions made to the study of organizational learning through social media in the Ghanaian fashion industry. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are also mentioned in this section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section comprises of a brief overview of absorption or learning, the social media and learning as well as the research framework for the study which is Absorptive Capacity Theory.

Learning Through Web 2.0

Through knowledge sharing and interaction with people there may be an emerging opportunity for organizations to adapt Web 2.0 for learning. The need to learn and the learning process in organizations are addressed by this opportunity. Web 2.0 can be considered as a learning enabler that allows people to access their knowledge and share with others. Individuals who use Web 2.0 applications are able to create knowledge

more efficiently than the conventional methods because of their collaboration properties. It is through this collaboration that knowledge can be shared at the two levels; individual and collective. At the organizational level, knowledge assets must be made accessible by the tools that enable learning (Dixon, 1994; 2000); Web 2.0 facilitates this. The idea is to make internal knowledge visible and to access external sources of new knowledge through 'boundary spanning' (Pawlosky et al., 2001).

For the purpose of this study, social media will include Instant Messaging tools (WhatsApp), Content Management tools (YouTube, Blogger), and social media tools (Facebook, Twitter). Some of these tools are under Web 2.0 technologies.

Absorption/Learning and Social Media

The process of acquiring knowledge is termed learning (Cook & Yanow, 1993). Learning can occur at two levels; the individual and the organizational levels. Employees within an organization can acquire knowledge to facilitate their specific business roles; however, to achieve organizational goals such knowledge must be diffused to other parts of the organization (Hong, 1999). Organizational learning implies knowledge acquisition by members across the organization and the diffusion of lessons learnt by individuals to other parts of the organization to enhance collective understanding, adaptation and easy response to change (Dodgson, 1993).

Arguably, not all learning leads to adaptation. Similarly, not all learning at the individual level generates into learning at the organizational level. Learning occurs in a more limited form and in a less significant way in some organizations. Such learning does not lead to a reassessment of values and adaptation.

There are different types and methods of learning. Argyris and Schön (1978) postulate three types of learning that happen within an organization, namely: single loop-learning; double-loop learning; and deutro-learning. Single-loop learning happens when an organization identifies an error and undertakes corrective measures without questioning or transforming its current policy. Double-loop learning also occurs when the error detected which has to be corrected requires alteration of the organization's underlying policies, norms and objectives. Basic assumptions are re-tested in the quest to understand the problem faced. With deutro-learning, members develop new strategies after they have learnt about previous context of learning and have understood the reasons behind the ability and inability to learn in previous context. According to Dodgson (1993), Organisational learning starts with double-loop learning. Very few organizations are effective with double-loop and deutro-learning; however, most of them tend to do well with single-loop learning.

Social media tends to enhance collaboration within an organization. Social media is certainly in the public eye at the moment. For instance, 2013 statistics from Alexa.com depicts that social media is ranked the 2nd top website out of the

top 500 websites worldwide. Today, Facebook is the largest social network in the world with more than 5000 active users of whom 50% log in on a daily basis. It is not surprising therefore, that marketers are devising ways to use Facebook to reach their target audience. In our working lives, an aspect where collaboration plays an important role is the aspect of learning. A greater proportion of what individuals in an organization learn comes through mutual problem-solving and the sharing of experiences. However, Shepherd (2011) is of the view that some people do not benefit from working within the same four walls hence making face-to-face interactions difficult to come by and limiting the opportunities for collaboration in the past. Social media has the potential to maximize collaborative learning, not just now and then but on a continuous basis, and not just when and where it suits others, but at a time and place of your own choice.

There are diverse ways in which social media (Shepherd, 2011) can be used to facilitate workplace learning. Firstly, in order to enrich longer formal programmes, such as professional and postgraduate qualifications and management development programmes, social media can be used as a vehicle for group collaboration that is on-going. Many firms are already reaping benefits from using forums to share ideas and discuss issues, blogs as learning journals, and wikis as a focus for group collaborative projects, not to mention use of podcasts and videos as a means for sharing research. Another example is the use of online communities of practice to share new ideas and debate issues. Those in more of a hurry might now use micro-blogging services such as Twitter and Yammer to quickly update peers on new developments (Pawlosky, 2001). Learning largely takes place on-demand, at the point when it is needed most. Organizations can do their best to satisfy the needs of employees for on-demand information but they will scarcely be able to exhaust it all on a top-down basis. Members of an organization can use social networks to find sources of expertise or offer their own expertise to others; they can also diffuse their own home-made learning content, using whatever medium is best suited to the job and their talents.

Learning at work is as much about ''learning from'' as it is ''learning to''. We learn through our own experiences and the experiences of those around us, but only if we make a deliberate attempt to reflect. Here is where blogging can play a valuable role. This discipline will not be for everybody, but for those that really engage with the medium the opportunities for learning exceed all others. Writing a blog post to capture an idea or review an experience forces you to reflect and clarify your thoughts. It greatly amplifies the possibility that the experience will be a lasting one – in other words, you will have learnt something (Pham, 2011).

Learning and Social Media Models

According to Cook and Yanow (1993) the process of acquiring knowledge is termed as learning. Boateng et al. (2009) used the SECI model to study Web 2.0 and organizational learning. The SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) looks at knowledge conversion in four modes: socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. The emphasis of this model is knowledge conversion. This study will not lay emphasis on knowledge conversion but the absorptive capacity of firms.

Linke and Zerfass (2012) used the Social Media Governance framework to study online communication management. The emphasis of this framework is social media governance, which involves the formal or informal frameworks, which regulate the actions of the members of an organization within the social web. The framework looks at the following: regulatory frameworks for social media; skills for social media: strategies for social media PR; and activities in social media PR. This is not what this study seeks to do.

Finally, the Theory of Performance Feedback was used by Schwab (2007) to study performance feedback with the goal of identifying principles that will promote a more integrated understanding of learning during the execution of innovative practices and contribute to the development of more fine-grained multilevel models of organizational learning.

Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT)

Absorptive Capacity Theory inspects the degree to which a firm can perceive the estimation of new outside data, acclimatize it, and apply it toward attaining to organizational objectives (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; 1990). The theory expects that retaining new learning can help a firm get to be more inventive and adaptable and accomplish larger amounts of execution than it would without engrossing new information. The theory additionally expects that organizations that have higher capacities for retaining new learning will have a game changer over firms with lower capacities. The theory expects that firms oblige an information base to have the capacity to assimilate and utilize new learning. Keeping in mind the end goal to perceive, acclimatize, and utilize new information, firms must have a learning base that is moderately like the new learning that is being transformed. Most hierarchical developments originate from acquiring thoughts from other individuals, as opposed to through imagining them (March & Simon, 1958). There are two components that will influence an association's impetuses to obtain new information: (1) the amount of learning accessible to retain and endeavour; and (2) the trouble and expenses

included in engrossing that new learning. An organization's capacity to discover and utilize new information relies on the absorptive limit of its workers. In any case, an association's absorptive limit is not simply the total of its individuals' absorptive limits. Associations rely upon proficient people to survey and assess the potential positives and negatives of new learning. These individuals can serve as "guards" who can avoid or encourage the ingestion of new learning

Zahra and George (2002) re-conceptualized part of the theory. They took the steps of recognizing the value of new knowledge and assimilating and applying it, and created four capabilities or dimensions: (1) acquisition; (2) assimilation; (3) transformation; and (4) exploitation. (They refer to acquisition and assimilation as "potential" absorptive capacity; transformation and exploitation as "realized" absorptive capacity.) Murovec and Prodan (2009) showed that there can be two sorts of absorptive limit: demand-pull and science-push. Demand-pull alludes to new learning obtained from business sources (for instance, clients, rivalry, and suppliers). Science-push alludes to new learning obtained from exploration and exploratory sources (such as books, diaries, meetings, exchange shows, and other scholastic sources).

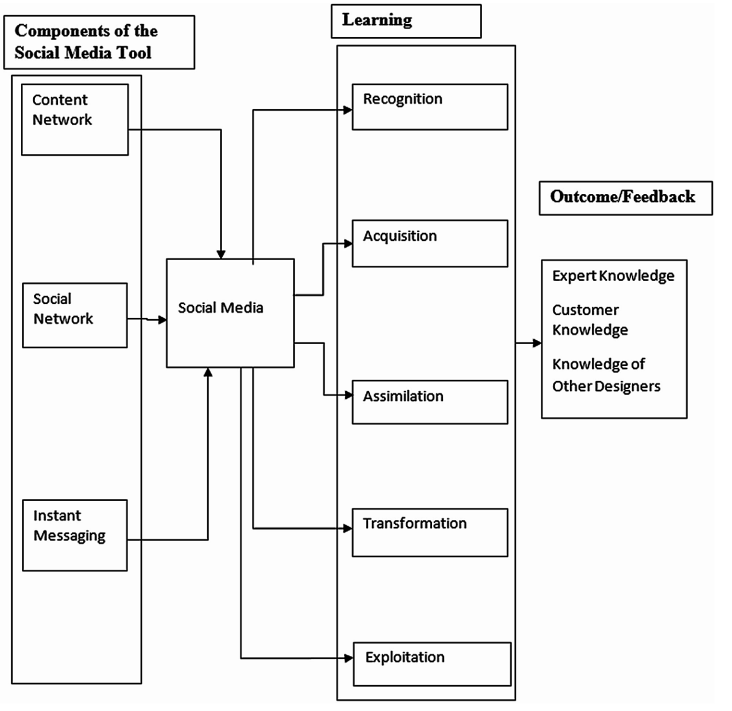
Justifying the Use of Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT)

Primarily most of the studies on organizational learning and social media used theoretical frameworks in their studies. For instance, Roblek et al. (2013) used the Social Media Value Added Model to study the role of social media in enhancing organizational change and value creation in knowledge-based industries. However, this research study will use the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT) as its theoretical lens.

In addition, the literature reviewed on organizational learning and social media uses several research frameworks, arguably, none of these studies have used the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT) as its theoretical lens. Chua and Banerjee (2013) used a Customer Knowledge Management Framework in their study. Vuori (2012) used the Resource-based View (RBV) to study Web 2.0 and social media use. Similarly, Bartlett-Bragg (2009) used the Social Learning Network Approach in studying social learning networks. None of these studies stated used the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT). This reinforces the need to use ACT as the theoretical lens to study organizational learning and social media from a different theoretical view.

Lastly, the absorptive capacity theory emphasizes a firm's recognition of new external information, assimilating that information, and applying that information with the aim of attaining organizational goals (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; 1990). Social media is external to an organization hence using this theory is suitable for this study. Wagner et al. (2014) in their study used the SECI model to study knowledge creation, which can be both internal and external as well as across different sources.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework
Adapted from Zahra and George (2002).



This study however is using social media as its sole external source of knowledge to the industry under study to measure the impact of social media use on organizational learning.

This framework as shown in Figure 1 will help to answer the research question of "what are the sources of knowledge for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry". According to ACT, the sources of knowledge for an organization are four, which can be categorized into internal and external sources. The internal sources consist of the following;

1. The firm conducts its own research and development (R&D).
2. The firm derives new knowledge from its own current manufacturing operations.
3. The firm borrows new knowledge from other organizations or other sources.
4. The firm purchases new knowledge, such as through buying new equipment, hiring new knowledgeable people, or paying a consultant to train individuals in the use of a new method.

In addition, the framework will help to answer the question: "what are the forms of knowledge for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry"? According to Murovec and Prodan (2009), there are two kinds of absorptive capacity:

1. Demand-pull; and
2. Science-push.

Demand-pull alludes to new knowledge acquired from market or business sources (for example, customers, competition i.e. from other fashion designers, experts and suppliers). Science-push alludes to new learning derived from exploration and scientific sources (such as books, journals, conferences, trade shows, and other scholarly sources).

Furthermore, the conceptual framework will help to answer the question: "How do social media support organizational learning in fashion firms in Ghana?" And the sub-questions:

1. What are the types of social media often used by firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
2. Which of the two types of social media (social network or content network) better enhances PACAP (Potential Absorptive Capacity); and which of the two better enhances RACAP (Realized Absorptive Capacity)?

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Social Media and Absorptive Capacity

The relationship between network structure and absorptive capacity has been addressed by previous studies (Tsai, 2001; Van Gilsing et al., 2008), but without reference to the organization of networking behaviour. In a study by Peltola (2014), social network literature was used to hypothesize on the organization of networking behaviour and its relation with absorption of external knowledge. In a study about networking behaviour of hospitals, Goes and Park (1997) established that the type and degree of ties affect the ability of the firm to integrate and assimilate external knowledge. Frequency of contact, as one of the indicators of strong ties (Granovetter 1982; Krackhardt 1992), is considered an important relational trait, which enables transfer of especially complex knowledge and information entailed in innovation (Krackhardt 1992; Uzzi 1997; Hansen 1999; Reagans & McEvily 2003; Van Gilsing & Nooteboom 2005; Nooteboom et al., 2007). At the same time, a wide network range (Reagans & McEvily 2003) is important to gain new external knowledge.

An individual with a widespread network of connections across multiple pools of knowledge and expertise bridges holes between people and is exposed to more diverse knowledge (Reagans & McEvily, 2003).

Boateng et al. (2009) is of the view that the Internet has introduced the next level of collaboration to the doorsteps of organizations, and it is termed 'Web 2.0' (which includes social media). According to them, arguably little academic research has so far been conducted on the implications of this new approach for the domain of organizational learning.

Social media is a very effective networking structure. For fashion designers, interaction with different types of actors (customers, fashion bloggers, other fashion designers, suppliers etc.) may be important for accumulation of relevant information and knowledge to realize different types of goals and profitability. This is being made possible through the social media. Frequent contact with customers and other actors through social media, for instance Facebook, will enable the dissemination of complex knowledge and information (Nooteboom et al., 2007). Social media tools, applications and web applications are key to enhancing the use of social media to learn.

Reagans and McEvily (2003) conclude that an individual surrounded by a diverse network could transfer knowledge across a structural hole, even when the connection is weak. Apparently, transferring knowledge and maintaining a diverse network are related, as experience with one of the two helps to achieve the other. Debatably, fashion designers engaged in more frequent networking with a wider range of knowledge sources are more likely to experience a rich exchange of knowledge and in this way, are more skilled in recognizing and approaching specific actors for the acquisition of the knowledge that they need. Frequency of interaction and information exchange increases the amount of information the fashion designers accumulate, which contributes to a better ability to identify and understand the pieces of knowledge that are relevant for their own firms and profitability. As the higher level of inter-action increases the likelihood of (tacit and explicit) knowledge recognition, transfer and assimilation (Dhanaraj et al. 2004), it is expected that:

H1: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with the recognition capacity of knowledge by these fashion designers.

H2: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with the acquisition capacity of knowledge by these fashion designers.

H3: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with the assimilation capacity of knowledge by these fashion designers.

Recognition and Acquisition Capacity

The acquisition capacity of fashion designers can be demonstrated in the ability of fashion designers to identify knowledge and the need of that knowledge through frequency of contact with the prevailing social media tools, applications or web applications. According to Zahra and George (2002), the recognition capacity of knowledge implies "recognizing the need for new knowledge". Recognizing the need for new knowledge results in the collection of that knowledge.

H4: The recognition capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their acquisition capacity.

Acquisition and Assimilation Capacity

Acquisition capacity of the fashion designers can be reflected by more skills in collecting knowledge about developments in the sector through discussions with business partners, fashion bloggers and customers through social media: for instance, getting feedback from customers on preferred styles (helping to know fashion trends) and also acquiring information on market competition and using that knowledge to meet customer specifications, make changes to their business (styles, designs and marketing strategies), and detect new possibilities so as to attain the organizational goal of profitability.

Consequently, fashion designers' acquisition capacity is expected to have a positive relationship with their assimilation capacity.

H5: The recognition capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their acquisition capacity.

Assimilation and Transformation Capacity

Fashion designers who are more skilled in the recognition of changes in technical possibilities and who are always among the first to detect changes in fashion trends and changes in market competition are said to have a better ability to analyse, process, interpret and understand external knowledge and information (assimilation capacity). Fashion designers with higher assimilation capacity are also expected to be more skilful in assessing the relevancy of new information and knowledge for their own firms. Greater ability to understand new possibilities and opportunities is expected to result in more skill in recognizing the usefulness of new and external knowledge for profitability of their own firms and a greater capacity to translate new information and knowledge into changes and adaptations. Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

H6: The assimilation capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their transformation capacity.

Transformation and Exploitation Capacity

It is expected that the capacity to transform and apply knowledge to one's own firm has a positive relationship related to exploitation capacity. Skill in assessing the relevancy and usability of new information for profitability on one's own firm, plus the capacity and ability to translate market trends into adaptations in the firm, is expected to result in the ability to make an additional step. The latter is related to exploitation of knowledge. Firms with high transformation capacity are expected to be more skilful in transposing the information into profitable changes and adaptations on the firm. Fashion designers who translate new knowledge into actual adaptations usually also have an idea about how the adaptation will contribute to increased profit. Therefore, it is expected that:

H7: The transformation capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their exploitation capacity.

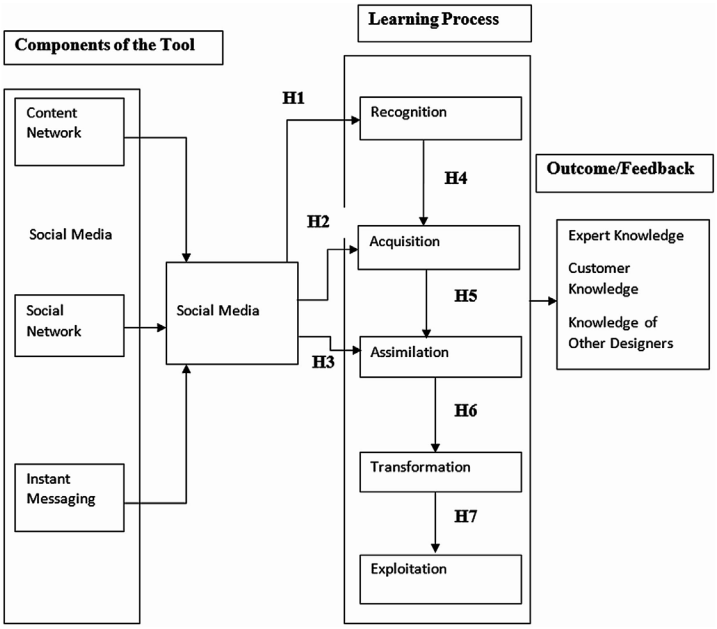
The hypotheses discussed are captured in the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 2.

METHODOLOGY

This section highlights the methodology adopted for the study. It consists of research paradigm, research design, research approach, sample size, data collection method, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, research limitations and challenges.

This study was undertaken from the perspective of realism. The realism paradigm provides the information systems researcher with both elements of positivism and constructivism (Healy & Perry, 2000). While positivism concerns a single, concrete reality and constructivism multiple realities, realism enables the IS researcher to acquire multiple perceptions about a single, mind-independent reality (Bisman, 2002). This study in extending the use of realism in IS research, gains the opportunity of obtaining detailed answers to the question of the impact social media has on organizational learning – thus analysing from the perspective of the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT). Realism recognizes that perceptions have certain plasticity (Churchland, 1979) and that there are differences between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Bisman, 2002), rather than being supposedly value-free, as in positive research, or value-laden as in interpretive research (Lincoln & Guba,

Figure 2. The conceptual framework and hypothesis
Adapted from Zahra and George (2002).



1985). The researcher therefore adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods for this research.

The type of mixed method approach used was the sequential explanatory strategy. The quantitative method was used before the qualitative method. In this approach, quantitative data are collected and analysed first and the results used to inform the subsequent qualitative phase. This explains why this strategy is considered explanatory.

Conducting the Survey

According to Castillo (2009), samples are drawn because it will be impractical to investigate all members of a target population. Sampling is a process of selecting research participants (Creswell, 2009). To arrive at the sample or target population for this study, data collection was therefore scheduled in two stages consisting of a pilot study, which took place from 1st May, 2014 to 5th May, 2014; and a main study which took place from 6th May 2014 to 12th May, 2014. In the pilot study, data (questionnaires) were collected across five different Ghanaian fashion firms. The firms selected were obtained from the internet. The criteria for selection were related to the researcher's theoretical concepts, namely:

- Learning organizations
- Fashion firms which learn though the social media

After the pilot survey, fifty (50) organizations were added to the sample size to continue with the actual data collection.

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaires for the survey were designed to meet the purpose of the research and to answer the research questions. The researcher administered the questionnaires among the 55 fashion firms used for the study. The Table 1 shows how the researcher designed the survey questionnaires.

Data Collection

Data was collected among the 55 fashion houses in Ghana on a purposive as well as snowballing basis. The questionnaires were left with the organizations to complete after which they called the researcher to fetch them. In all, 196 completed questionnaires were returned.

Table 1. Questionnaire development

Hypothesis	Factors	No. of Questions
H1: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with their recognition capacity **H4:** The recognition capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their acquisition capacity	Recognition Capacity	2
H2: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with their acquisition capacity. **H5:** The acquisition capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their assimilation capacity	Acquisition Capacity	3
H3: The use of social media by fashion designers has a positive relationship with their assimilation capacity.	Assimilation Capacity	3
H6: The assimilation capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their transformation capacity	Transformation Capacity	3
H7: The transformation capacity of fashion designers has a positive relationship with their exploitation capacity	Exploitation Capacity	3

Source: Author's Construct.

Selecting Case Organization

At the end of the survey data collection, only two organizations; Aya Morrison and Inka Accessories gave access to the researchers for a case study and had sufficient experience to enable such a detailed analysis of Organisational Learning through social media. The selected companies had been in operation for over 5 years and were actively involved in using social media for Organisational Learning. Evidence of their use of social media for Organisational Learning was authenticated through documents and interviews with CEOs and the responses of employees to the questionnaires administered to them. The firm also assured its commitment to the case study.

Questions Used and Data Collection

The primary data collection method employed was semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed the fashion designers and Chief Executive officers (CEO) of the case firms with regard to the issue being discussed. For Aya Morrison Fashion firm, the CEO was the person the researcher interviewed for the case study. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree. For Inka Accessories, the CEO who holds a Bachelor of Science degree was interviewed. The interview for Aya Morrison Fashion firm was conducted on 12th June, 2014 at the office of the CEO with the aim of determining the impact of social media on the organization's learning ability and the profitability of the organization. The interview for Inka Accessories was carried out on 14th June, 2014 via telephone. The CEOs were interviewed to obtain a wider view of the ideal situation of learning in a typical Ghanaian fashion firm and they were indeed able to account largely for the impact of social media on their learning potential as a business. The interviews were taped and transcribed, with copies of transcribed interviews returned to the interviewees to check and resolve any discrepancies.

Realism encourages the use of multiple data collection methods to enhance triangulation of perspectives and know the single reality and people's perception of the reality. The researcher further observed the CEOs, brand managers and other employees of these firms to find out their perception on the use of social media in organizational learning. Secondary data sources included documentary materials of the organization's history, industry reports and verified online information.

Mode of Analysis

The survey questionnaires were coded and entered into the IBM SPSS Amos software (version 22) in order to run the analysis. The data set was screened and cleaned. This was done to rectify mistakes that occurred during data entering.

Three techniques were used, namely: Confirmatory Factor Analysis to analyse the factors of the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT) to understand how social media supports organizational learning; Excel was used to analyse the forms and sources of knowledge and to analyse the tools and applications to verify those which are frequently used by fashion designers, and to discover those applications which have an effect on the Potential Absorptive Capacity (PACAP); and crosstabs were used to test the hypothesis whereas the Structural Equation Modelling was used to confirm the factors of the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT) and to as well test the fitness of the model using Pclose.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study and is organized into two main sections: background of the sample and examination of the hypotheses. To examine the hypotheses, descriptive statistics of cross tabulations were used to test the hypothesized model of social media facilitating organizational learning and identify important relations between the variables (Recognition, Acquisition, Assimilation, Transformation and Exploitation) of interest. PACAP means Potential Absorptive Capacity which encapsulates Recognition, Assimilation and Acquisition of knowledge whereas RACAP implies Realized Absorptive Capacity which captures Transformation and Exploitation Capacity. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm the factors in the hypothesized model. Descriptive statistics were used to explain the forms and sources of knowledge and the tools and applications predominantly used in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Background of the Study

One hundred and ninety-six (196) respondents participated in this study. The participants' backgrounds, i.e., age, level of completed education and the number of workers in the organization, the number of years the company has been in existence and the company's turnover are shown in Table 2.

Frequency Distribution

The frequency analysis shown below answer the following research questions:

1. What are the forms of learning for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
2. What are the sources of learning for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

Table 2. Frequency table of demographic variables

Category	Variables	*f*	Percent
Age	Less than 18	4	2.0
	18-25	90	45.9
	26-30	88	44.9
	31-35	14	7.1
	Total	196	100
Education	Senior High	67	34.2
	Diploma	16	8.2
	Bachelor's Degree	96	49.0
	Master's Degree	14	7.1
	Professional Certificate	3	1.5
	Total	196	100
Years of company's existence	1-5	81	41.3
	6-10	32	16.3
	11-15	55	28.1
	Over 20 years	28	14.3
	Total	196	100
Turnover	Less than 3,000	20	10.2
	3000- 10,000	114	58.2
	100,000 or more	62	31.6
	Total	196	100

Source: Field survey, 2014.

3. How does social media support organizational learning in fashion firms in Ghana?

Forms of Learning for Firms in the Fashion Industry

Demand-Pull Form of Learning

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they communicate and interact with others (customers, fashion bloggers, other fashion designers) to acquire knowledge through social media. The results of the analysis showed that 11.2% (n= 22) of respondents indicated they have a neutral stance on the usage of social media for communication and interaction with others. Whereas, 32.7% (n= 64) of respondents indicated that they intensively use social media to communicate and

interact with others through social media to acquire knowledge. Acquiring knowledge through others demonstrates the form of knowledge termed demand-pull postulated from the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT). This answers an aspect of a research question raised for this study: "what are the forms of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 1: Most fashion firms use social media to communicate with others (who could be customers, suppliers, fashion bloggers, fashion enthusiasts etc.) very intensively to acquire knowledge

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they make use of social media knowledge and information for marketing (communication). The data analysis also showed that, 48.5% (n= 95) of respondents intensively use the social media, knowledge and information for marketing; 32.1% (n=63) of respondents semi-intensively use the social media, knowledge and information for marketing; whereas 19.4% (n=38) of respondents use the knowledge and information for marketing. Knowledge acquired from market sources such as marketing can be classified under the demand-pull form of knowledge. Further answering the research question: "what are the forms of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 2: Most fashion designers in Ghana intensively use social media to acquire knowledge from market sources through marketing.

Respondents also indicated the extent to which they used of social media knowledge and information for designing (generative purposes). From the analysis, 52.6% (n= 103) of the respondents intensively use social media knowledge and information for designing; 35.2% (n=69) of respondents semi-intensively use social media knowledge and information for designing; whereas 12.2% (n=24) of respondents use the knowledge and information very intensively for designing. Knowledge acquired from market sources such as competition and suppliers as well as customers can be used for designing which falls under the demand-pull form of knowledge, also answering the research question: "what are the forms of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 3: Most fashion designers in Ghana intensively use knowledge from social media for designing

Science-Push Form of Learning

The respondents indicated the extent to which they prevented all employees voluntarily transmitting useful scientific and technological knowledge acquired to others. The data analysis showed that most fashion firms in Ghana do not prevent their employees from disseminating useful scientific information to other employees or even to customers. This knowledge falls into the category of science-push knowledge as defined by ACT, also answering the research question: "what are the forms of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 4: Most fashion designers in Ghana do not prevent their employees from transmitting useful scientific and technological knowledge.

Sources of Learning (Knowledge) for Firms in the Fashion Industry

Internal Source of Knowledge

The extent at which the respondents coordinated and integrated all phases of the Research and Development process with its interrelations with the functional tasks of production, marketing and translated external information into adaptations were also analysed. Deductions from the analysis indicated that most fashion firms in Ghana use social media to carry out research intensively and the knowledge (new styles, new designs and new fashion trends) is adapted by these fashion houses into new designs. Knowledge of this form is acquired internally through R&D; answering the research question: "what are the sources of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 5: Most fashion firms in Ghana use social media to carry out research intensively and the knowledge (new styles, new designs and new fashion trends) is adapted by these fashion houses into new design.

External Source of Knowledge

The analysis of data indicated that 7, 54.6% (n= 107) of respondents "strongly agree" that they translate external information into new business applications; 41.8% (n=82) of respondents "agree" that they translate external information into new business applications; whereas 3.6% (n=7) of respondents have a neutral stance on translating external information into new business applications. External information according to ACT could either be borrowed knowledge or purchased knowledge.

Hence, fashion designers either borrow or purchase external knowledge and translate them into new business applications (new marketing strategies, new designs etc.); also, answering the research question: "what are the sources of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 6: Fashion designers either borrow or purchase external knowledge and translate them into new business applications (new marketing strategies, new designs etc.).

Both External and Internal Source of Knowledge

Respondents indicated how they make use of social media knowledge and information for interaction. According to ACT, knowledge could be obtained both internally and externally and the analysis showed that fashion firms in Ghana obtain knowledge or disseminate knowledge through interaction with customers or suppliers through social media (for instance; Facebook, Blogger); further answering the research question: "what are the sources of knowledge which aid learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 7: Fashion firms in Ghana obtain knowledge or disseminate knowledge through interaction with customers or suppliers through social media (for instance; Facebook, Blogger).

Social Media as Tools and in Usage

Application of Social Media

Respondents indicated the extent to which they normally use social media applications to identify knowledge and the data analysis showed that communicative, interactive and generative social media applications are mostly used by fashion firms in Ghana to recognize new knowledge, and the tools and web applications under these applications can be classified as social networks. Hence, social networks are mostly used for acquiring new knowledge. Recognition capacity forms a part of PACAP, hence it can be concluded that the type of social media that supports PACAP the most are social networks, thus, answering the research question: "How do social media support organizational learning in fashion firms in Ghana?" and the sub-questions:

1. What are the types of social media often used by firms in the fashion industry?
2. Which of the two types of social media (social network and content network) greatly enhance PACAP (Potential Absorptive Capacity) and which of the two greatly enhance RACAP (Realized Absorptive Capacity)?

Finding 8: Social networks are mostly used for acquiring new knowledge. Recognition capacity forms a part of PACAP, hence it can be concluded that the type of social media that supports PACAP the most are social networks.

Social Media as Tools for Assimilation

The analysis of data shows that Facebook, YouTube, Myspace, Twitter, Podcasts and Flickr are the social media tools very intensively used by fashion firms to acquire knowledge. These web applications can be classified under social network type of social media web application. And these web applications are those mostly used to acquire knowledge. Hence, it can be concluded that social networks support PACAP since acquisition capacity is an aspect of PACAP. This further answers the research question: "How do social media support organizational learning in fashion firms in Ghana?"

Finding 9: Social networks support PACAP since acquisition capacity is an aspect of PACAP.

Confirmation of Factors

Discussion of Factors of Absorptive Capacity

This section is in two parts: the measurement model will be completely assessed to find out the factors which are significant from the conceptual model and which fit the measurement model; as well as a summary of the hypotheses which were accepted and rejected respectively.

The factors of ACT according to Zahra and George's (2002) re-conceptualizing of part of the ACT theory, thus including the step of recognizing the value of new knowledge are these four capabilities or dimensions: (1) acquisition; (2) assimilation; (3) transformation; and (4) exploitation. However, based on the critique of Turodan and Dorova (2007), the step of recognizing the value of new knowledge is included in this study. The following are therefore the constructs that measure ACT for the purpose of this study:

1. Recognition Capacity
2. Acquisition Capacity
3. Assimilation Capacity
4. Transformation Capacity
5. Exploitation Capacity

The Figure 3 has factor loadings, which measure the four capabilities of the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT). From the measurement, some first order latent variables have factor loading below the recommended threshold of 0.70. Consequently, those variables were dropped resulting in a final measurement model, which shows the factors which truly measure the absorptive capacity of fashion designers in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Assessment of the Overall Measurement Model

Some first order latent variables that had factor loading below the recommended threshold of 0.70 were deleted at the validation stage of the measurement model. The variables which were dropped include; AC2 (from the Acquisition Capacity Factor), AS1, AS2, AS3 (from the Assimilation Capacity Factor), TR2 (from the Transformation Capacity Factor), and EC2 (from the Exploitation Capacity Factor). The Assimilation Capacity Factor was dropped completely. After the problematic factors were deleted from the initial constructs, there was a regeneration of the measurement model with just eight first order latent variables; and there was much improvement in the results as compared to the initial measurement model. Standardized factor loadings above the threshold were recorded for all the eight first order latent variables. Then, the model was fitted as was done earlier with the first model using the goodness of fit indices of absolute, incremental and parsimonious fit measures. The final measurement model is depicted in Figure 4 with the respective

Figure 3. Initial measurement model
Source: Field Data.

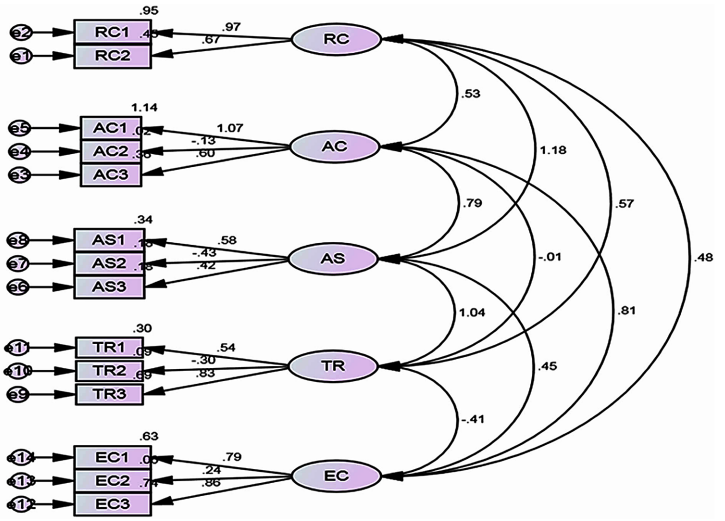
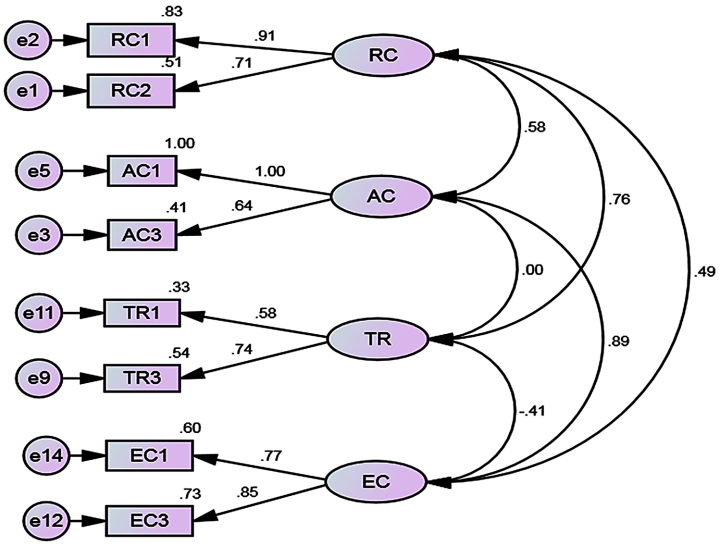


Figure 4. Final measurement model
Source: Field Data.



factor loadings while Tables 3 and 4 shows the goodness of fit indices and average variable estimation.

The p-value of the final measurement was not significant therefore showing that there is no statistical difference between the factors of the measurement model, implying that the model best fits this study. In terms of the RMSEA, the final model had a value of 0.076, which is less than 0.08 as recommended, therefore, the model fits the dataset. The incremental fit indices obtained in the final measurement model were greater than 0.90 ranging from 0.97 to 0.99 which shows the model fits the data set. Whereas the parsimonious fit indices also recorded values of 0.315 and 0.318 less than the recommended value of greater than 0.50.

The Figure 3 has factor loadings, which measure the four capabilities of the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT). From the measurement, some first order latent variables have factor loading below the recommended threshold of 0.70. Consequently, those variables were dropped resulting in a final measurement model, which shows the factors which truly measure the absorptive capacity of fashion designers in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Assessment of the Overall Measurement Model

Some first order latent variables that had factor loading below the recommended threshold of 0.70 were deleted at the validation stage of the measurement model.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit indices for final measurement model

Goodness-of-Fit Indices	Benchmark	Final Model
Absolute Goodness of Fit Measure		
Chi-square (CMIN) (χ2)	P ≥ 0.05	19.011
Chi-square /degree of freedom	≤ 2	2.112
Absolute Badness of Fit Measure		
Root mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.08	0.076
Incremental Fit Measure		
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.90	0.989
Incremental fit index (IFI)	≥ 0.90	0.989
Turker-Lewis Index (TLI)	≥ 0.90	0.965
Parsimony Fit Measure		
Parsimony Comparative of Fit index (PCFI)	≥ 0.50	0.318
Parsimony Normed of Fit index (PNFI)	≥ 0.50	0.315

Source: Field Data.

Table 4. Shared variance

Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	EC	RC	AC	TR
EC	0.796	0.661	0.797	0.380	0.813			
RC	0.875	0.791	0.726	0.407	0.469	0.890		
AC	0.816	0.698	0.797	0.358	0.893	0.524	0.835	
TR	0.669	0.530	0.726	0.283	-0.348	0.852	0.052	0.728

Source: Analysis output.

The variables which were dropped include; AC2 (from the Acquisition Capacity Factor), AS1, AS2, AS3 (from the Assimilation Capacity Factor), TR2 (from the Transformation Capacity Factor), and EC2 (from the Exploitation Capacity Factor). The Assimilation Capacity Factor was dropped completely. After the problematic factors were deleted from the initial constructs, there was a regeneration of the measurement model with just eight first order latent variables; and there was much improvement in the results as compared to the initial measurement model. Standardized factor loadings above the threshold were recorded for all the eight first order latent variables. Then, the model was fitted as was done earlier with the first model using the goodness of fit indices of absolute, incremental and parsimonious fit measures. The final measurement model is depicted in Figure 4 with the respective factor loadings while Tables 3 and 4 shows the goodness of fit indices and average variable estimation.

The p-value of the final measurement was not significant therefore showing that there is no statistical difference between the factors of the measurement model, implying that the model best fits this study. In terms of the RMSEA, the final model had a value of 0.076, which is less than 0.08 as recommended, therefore, the model fits the dataset. The incremental fit indices obtained in the final measurement model were greater than 0.90 ranging from 0.97 to 0.99 which shows the model fits the data set. Whereas the parsimonious fit indices also recorded values of 0.315 and 0.318 less than the recommended value of greater than 0.50.

To sum it all, eight latent variables fitted the final measurement model instead of the proposed fourteen in the conceptual model. The factors which critically measure the absorptive capacity of knowledge through social media in the Ghanaian fashion industry are Recognition Capacity, Acquisition Capacity, Transformation Capacity and Exploitation Capacity.

Regarding the test of discriminate validity, the Average Variable Estimate (AVE) recorded by the second order latent variables ranges from 0.53 to 0.79, above the validity threshold of 0.50, which shows an acceptable convergent validity of the measuring scales (Hair et al., 2006). The square of the correlation between a construct and any other factor is higher than the AVE for each latent variable, which indicates adequate discriminant validity between the constructs (Chin, 1998). Table 5 also shows an assessment of the normality test for the study.

Summary of Hypotheses Confirmation

The Table 6 shows the confirmation of the hypothesis.

Table 5. Assessment of normality

Variable	Min	Max	Skew	c.r.	Kurtosis	c.r.
Q26	3.000	5.000	-.628	-3.591	-.622	-1.777
Q28	3.000	5.000	-.563	-3.216	-.657	-1.879
Q23	3.000	5.000	-.588	-3.358	-.770	-2.199
Q25	3.000	5.000	-.391	-2.233	-.691	-1.976
Q15	3.000	5.000	-.855	-4.886	-.486	-1.389
Q17	1.000	5.000	-1.580	-9.029	4.729	13.513
Q12	4.000	5.000	-1.063	-6.077	-.870	-2.485
Q13	4.000	5.000	-2.166	-12.380	2.691	7.691
Multivariate					17.105	9.466

Source: Analysis Output .

Table 6. Hypothesis confirmation of cross tabulation

Hypothesis	p-Value	Support for Model
Social Media & Recognition Capacity	0.612	H1: Rejected
Social Media & Acquisition Capacity	0.000	H2: Supported
Social Media & Assimilation Capacity	0.787	H3: Rejected
Social Media & PACAP	0.030	H4: Supported
Recognition Capacity & Acquisition Capacity	0.000	H5: Supported
Acquisition Capacity & Assimilation Capacity	0.000	H6: Supported
Assimilation Capacity & Transformation Capacity	0.000	H7: Supported
Transformation Capacity& Exploitation Capacity	0.000	H8: Supported

Source: Analysis Output.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Social media is an asset for firms who use it in absorbing knowledge. From the findings, most fashion designers use the documentative Applications to recognize knowledge and those who use the communicative Applications to assimilate knowledge are in the majority. YouTube, for instance, is mostly used by fashion designers to acquire knowledge.

From literature, research has concentrated on communicative applications of Web 2.0 technologies not concentrating on other applications such as the documentative which this study has been able to cover (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012; Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Statistics from Alexa.com depicts that traffic on social media sites especially Facebook is on the rise. Other findings from this study confirm this assertion that social media usage is on the rise. According to the findings of this study, most fashion firms in Ghana use social media intensively on a daily basis to acquire knowledge.

From the analysis of findings, it can be argued that fashion designers do not intensively use social media to assimilate knowledge as proposed by Zahra and George (2007). Thus, assimilation of knowledge when absorbing new knowledge does not play an inevitable role in the fashion firms absorption new external knowledge.

Most fashion firms use social media to communicate with their customers, suppliers, fashion bloggers, and fashion enthusiasts. This they do very intensively to acquire knowledge. The knowledge they acquire through these means may include but not limited to fashion trends, consumer taste and preferences, existing prices, orders from customers, supplier lists, comments and suggestions among others.

There is also a positive relationship between the Transformation Capacity and the Exploitation Capacity of fashion firms in Ghana. Thus, knowledge acquired when transformed is mostly used by these fashion firms to develop new ideas and designs.

The findings further suggest that most Fashion designers in Ghana use social media to research and acquire knowledge which informs future designs. However, they do not prevent their employees from using social media to transmit scientific and technological knowledge.

In addition, the findings suggest that, these fashion designers acquire knowledge from both internal (among employees), for instance through WhatsApp and external sources (from suppliers, customers, fashion enthusiasts and other fashion designers), through for instance, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp among others. From the case studies, it can also be deduced that ideas for designs can be derived from social media. Another source of ideas for designs could be the designer's own mind as well as inspiration from nature.

Hong et al. (2013) studied blogs as a tool for learning which seems to be unpopular among fashion designers in Ghana. However, some Ghanaian fashion designers use blogs to communicate internally (with employees) as well as externally (with customers and suppliers). Trending ideas are communicated by designers through this social media platform.

Findings from this study also depicts that WhatsApp technology which falls under the instant messaging category of the social media tool is also used mostly by fashion designers for internal communication and sharing of design patents but not through other social media platforms like Facebook to avoid theft of designs. However, social media applications such as Facebook is an ideal application for marketing.

Some popular social media web applications include Facebook and YouTube, which has also been studied by most researchers (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012; He et al., 2013; Bochenek & Blili, 2013; Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Twitter is also popular among Fashion designers. Facebook is popular for marketing and publicity.

From the findings of the study, WhatsApp is the emerging Web 2.0 technology that is gaining popularity and dominance among fashion designers in Ghana today. The assertion is that it is convenient and easily accessible.

Arguably, the findings of the study also suggest that Facebook is popular among Ghanaian fashion designers for the reasons of its wider network coverage, accessibility and convenience of use. This finding is corroborated by Vuori and Okkonen (2012) who carried out a study on social media and discovered Facebook as one of the popular social media applications.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the use of social media for organizational learning in the Ghanaian fashion industry. To this end, these research questions were formulated:

1. What are the forms of learning for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
2. What are the sources of learning for firms in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
3. How does social media support organizational learning in fashion firms in Ghana?

Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT) therefore appropriately helped answer these research questions. The constructs of the ACT were ideal for gathering the needed information on fashion designers and their usage of social media to absorb knowledge. Knowledge on recognition, acquisition, assimilation, transformation and exploitation of new external knowledge among Ghanaian fashion designers is thereby attained.

Summary of the Research Findings

The findings of the study are in three divisions: first, the findings on the forms of knowledge that aid learning in the Ghanaian fashion industry; second, the sources of knowledge that aid learning in the Ghanaian fashion industry; and third, how social media supports organizational learning in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Nature of Absorptive Capacity

It was discovered that most fashion firms in Ghana use social media to communicate with others (who could be customers, suppliers, fashion bloggers, fashion enthusiasts etc.) very intensively to acquire knowledge. They also use social media to market designs as well as to acquire knowledge to create new designs. Acquiring knowledge through others or through market sources demonstrates the form of knowledge termed demand-pull postulated from the Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT).

Interestingly, most fashion designers in Ghana do not prevent their employees from transmitting useful scientific and technological knowledge, which falls under a form of knowledge termed as science-push. The forms of knowledge for fashion firms in Ghana can therefore be classified as demand-pull and science-push as postulated by ACT.

Another finding was that the sources of knowledge predominantly used by fashion designers were both internal sources and external sources. The internal source predominantly being through research since most fashion firms in Ghana use social media to carry out research intensively and the knowledge (new styles, new designs, and new fashion trends) is adapted by these fashion houses into new designs. The external sources of knowledge on the other hand were customarily borrowed or purchased knowledge. Fashion designers either borrow or purchase external knowledge and translate them into new business applications (new marketing strategies, new designs etc.). This knowledge is disseminated to others (customers, suppliers) both internally and externally by means of social media.

Moreover, it was revealed that social networks are mostly used for acquiring new knowledge. Recognition capacity forms a part of PACAP; hence, it can be concluded that the type of social media that supports PACAP the most are social networks. Facebook, YouTube, Myspace, Twitter, Podcasts and Flickr are social media tools that are used very intensively by fashion firms to acquire knowledge. These web applications can be classified under social network type of social media web applications and these web applications are mostly used to acquire knowledge. Hence, it can be concluded that social networks support PACAP since acquisition capacity is an aspect of PACAP.

From the findings of the study, it can be stated that Ghanaian fashion designers also use social media to recognize, acquire, transform and exploit knowledge intensively. They poorly use social media to assimilate knowledge.

Critical Constructs of Absorptive Capacity Theory (ACT)

In order to see the fitness of the conceptual model derived from ACT, with the objective of determining the factors critical to the absorption of knowledge, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis technique under Structural Equation Modelling was used; and cross tabulation was used to test the stipulated hypothesis.

The first conceptual model was built from ACT with 5 factors and 14 variables. The results of the measurement model validation under CFA indicated that Recognition Capacity (RC1), Acquisition Capacity (AC1, AC3), Transformation Capacity (TR1, TR2) and Exploitation Capacity (EC1, EC2) were the factors critical to the absorption of knowledge through social media in the fashion industry of Ghana. Other variables like AS1, AS2 AS3 (Assimilation Capacity factor), TR3 and EC3 were insignificant to the model; hence, were deleted from the final model.

Cross tabulations were used to test and validate the hypotheses proposed regarding the 5 factors of ACT (14 variables) and two (2) of the hypotheses were rejected whereas the rest (7) were accepted. The seven hypotheses supported were H2, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8 and H9 and two rejected were H1 and H3 with a p-value greater than the threshold of 0.05. Overall, the critical factors for measuring absorption of knowledge through social media in the Ghanaian fashion industry are Recognition, Acquisition, Transformation and Exploitation.

Implications of Research

In terms of research, this study will add up to existing studies on fashion designing, social media as well as adding to studies which use the Absorptive Capacity Theory as its theoretical Lens.

In relation to practice, the findings of this study will inform the decision of other firms or fashion designers who are not currently using social media in absorbing knowledge to decide to do so for the purposes of research and ease of communication, effective marketing and publicity both internally and externally and also reap the benefit of cutting down cost.

Regarding policy, policy makers in the fashion industry of Ghana can embrace the idea of social media adoption and usage by Ghanaian fashion houses, by explicitly stating and communicating its benefits to practice and research.

Limitations and Future Research

The study focused on fashion houses within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana; consequently, not covering fashion firms in other parts of Ghana. Thus, future studies should cover other areas of the country to provide a holistic understanding of the use of social media in organizational learning.

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