
**MBA- INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

# A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE MARKETING IN IMPROVING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

## A CASE STUDY OF THOMAS COOK GROUP LONDON/ UK

**by**

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**Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at University of Wales**

**LONDON, MARCH 2012**

TITLE PAGE

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SEVILAY AKGUN

London, March 2012

# ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the importance of online marketing in modern days.

This thesis focuses on online marketing's effectiveness for international companies. The primary objective of this thesis is to analyse online marketing in terms of its concept, dynamics and new trends.

In order to provide valuable analysis the impact and effect of online marketing on international company "Thomas Cook Group" was also examined. Information regarding the online marketing tenchniques implemented in the company was collected and analysed by using primary and secondary sources. In that case, sample investigation population has been chosen and the results studied and provided in this thesis.

Major findins in the research were that the company has been using online marketing tools and methods for years and it is very beneficial for the company. Online marketing has been extensively used and this method has captured a lot of customers. In the end of the study, recommendations regarding the implementation of the other online marketing tools are also provided due to increase the reliability and validity of the thesis.

***Keywords**: international companies, online marketing, organisational performance, Thomas Cook Group*.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In the present day, there are myriad drivers and opportunities to support international businesses' growth.

In order to bolster businesses, organisations might consolidate their marketing strategies particularly with online activities. Today, millions of organisations have been utilising from online marketing to expand their market reach and improve their organisational performance.

By using online marketing tools, many of them have already maximised the value of their goods & services and reached a wide range of customer profiles. By doing so, many more organisations might have the ability to expand their businesses to the new growth areas in the emerging markets. Pursuing this further in this chapter the author will present Research Background firstly to build the study basis which is followed by the Aim and Objectives of the study.

Correspondingly, the Rationale of the Study is presented detailly. Likewise, Limitations faced during the research and writing processes are provided in this chapter. The author has tried to feature a Conceptual Framework of the entire research in great details in this chapter, as well. Finally, the Company Background of the case study organisation is provided to draw an understandable information basis. And by presenting the Chapter Summary this chapter is concluded.

## 1.2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This research about the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance for international companies has been a joy to write for the author.

Undoubtedly, online marketing is one of the most dynamic, flexible and fast moving areas in the international businesses. Considering the modern business world environment is extremely changeable, it makes the research subject more interesting.

As the internet has been increasingly becoming an undeniable part of our lives, one should keep in mind that wherever internet is available there are always online marketing activities. Since last decade online marketing is increasingly becoming salient in our daily routines and even though it could be stated that this is only the beginning of online marketing era. What also has been observed by the author is that online marketing's

concept and feature are evolving rapidly in order to remain up to date with technological advancements.

In this respect, the author has already pre-printed a proposal on the topic of online marketing's effectiveness in improving organisational turnover. However, one has realised the fact that the shareholders' and stakeholders' profiles have also been evolving as fast as online marketing due to the adaptation to the media and many new advancements regarding the technology in our daily lives. Therefore the author has adapted the former proposal research to the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance. By adapting the title, the author has the chance to evaluate online marketing by giving humanistic insights about the subject from primary sources.

According to this concept, the main aim and objectives of the study will be stated in the following part.

## 1.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives are interpreted as two important guides of the research at the hand that they will be helpful to make accurate and clear judgments.

**The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance**.

Here are the objectives of this study:

**1**. Providing valuable information about online marketing by reviewing the literature.

**2**. To determine critical evaluation points in the online marketing within the frame of a suitable research methodology due to effective examining.

**3**. Evaluation of the online marketing implementation at Thomas Cook Group in London/ UK in the light of the determined significant aspects.

**4**. Providing recommendation and conclusion regarding the online marketing at Thomas Cook Group.

## 1.4. RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH

Initially, considering the research aim and objectives this research will concentrate on the marketing.

By building the basis from marketing to the online marketing, the author will evaluate the current online marketing concept, trends and future approaches. Similarly, the

effectiveness of online marketing will be the focus point for the author in both main headings and subheadings.

To convert the theoretical basis made in the **Chapter 2** and **3** into practical analysis, the research has a case study company as Thomas Cook Group Plc London/UK. Practical implementation of the gained knowledge by reviewing past researches regarding online marketing will be presented in the **Chapter 4**. Without distracting the readers' attention from the key research point, the author will give insights in the chapters in order to create efficient analysis conclusion and recommendations in the **Chapter 5**.

For instance, here are several key points to evaluate online marketing's effectiveness; contact strategies, content strategies, social media strategies and so on.

## 1.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

There are academically defined guidelines for researchers in order them to provide reliable and valid researches.

The first important limitation of this research comes from this guideline as the author found writing process problematic especially within a predetermined word count for a research. Generally speaking, the research was complex and integrated that without aim and objective specifications the author might have followed the wrong ways for analyses.

In that point, to provide an up-to-date investigation the author has done hard work by reviewing the literature comprehensively, collecting data primarily and secondarily. According to this concept, another limitation has arisen from the limited amount of time. In regards to this, the author has prepared a writing process plan (**Please see Appendix 1**).

Although researcher has fallen back in the programme sometimes, one has managed to complete the investigation without missing any important discussion. In this research there are interview and questionnaire plans (**See Appendix 1 and 2**) used to provide key insights from employees' perspective to the research subject. Additionally, final limitation could be stated as the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires. Erroneous and inadequate responses given by the participants were analysed limitedly.

In spite of these, the author has handled the research with the collected sufficient amount of data from both literature and interview & questionnaire participants.

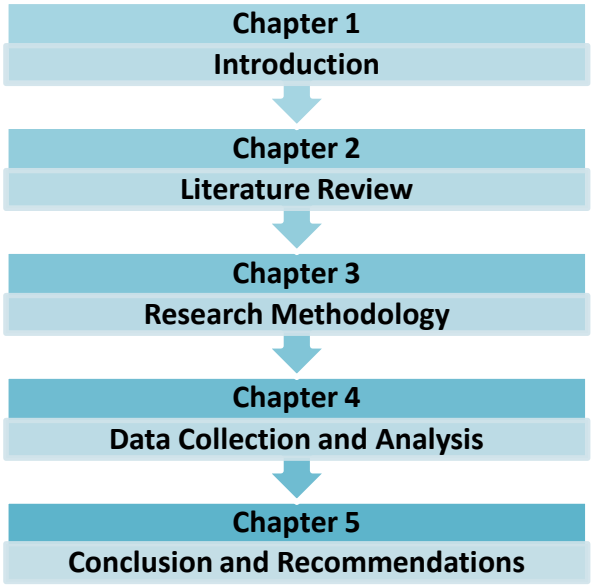
## 1.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The research concept consists of the literature review presentation regarding online marketing & its effectiveness, research methods used in the research, collected data from primary & secondary sources and finally analysis related to these presentations.

In this concept, research is presented with suitable figures and tables with the specific elucidations. Referencing is used comprehensively to prove objectives validation in the research and also cross-referencing is made between and within the chapters.

In final consideration, convenient arguments and judgments are provided with the data basis of what have been observed by the author through the research process to master in the research subject. In this respect, the research is embodied from six chapters, Chapter 1 that frames the research area, the problem investigated, limitations and selected case organisation. In the **Chapter 2**, there are key points presented to investigate by reviewing the literature. In the following **Chapter 3**, research methodology is discussed, data collection methods are compared and justifications of the methods used in the research are provided. **Chapter 4** consists of the data collection, analysis and findings which are performed by gathering information from primary and secondary data sources. Results of the **Chapter 2**, **3** and **4** are concluded with the final judgments in the last part of the research in the **Chapter 5** and recommendations to the key issues of the research subject are also provided. **Figure 1.1** shows the research flow chapter by chapter.

Figure 1.1.: **Research Framework**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

## 1.7. COMPANY'S BACKGROUND

Case study Company, Thomas Cook Group Plc, is a travel-related services organisation which provides a wide range of products and services from accommodations to travel insurances.

Organisation has been expanding itself by organisational improvements and collaborations, claimed by Page & Connell (2009). Addition to this, obviously organisation

has expanded its products and services online with travel money products such as foreign exchange (Web1).

Page & Connell (2009) states that organisation has important events in its history such as acquisitions. Specifically in 2008, organisation has acquired five different companies from hotels to travel companies (Web1). The significant point being is that organisation has also acquired online services companies which helped the organisation to improve performance within the organisation by observing the knowledge of the acquired companies.

In its history, organisation has been one of the leading companies in the travel industry identified by Page & Connell (2009). The reason being is that organisation was one of the initial companies which established online marketing tools in the late 1990s. Thence the organisation has been selected by the author to evaluate its online marketing tools' effectiveness in improving organisational performance. According to this concept, online marketing's effectiveness will be evaluated whether it makes the most of the brand for the organisation and its distribution capabilities online to pursue organisation's sustainable growth strategies.

## 1.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Every day, there are more online marketing advancements coming up for organisations to consider and to renovate their strategies.

In these dynamic conditions of the international businesses, organisations and managers need to be aware of the potential future threats to the competitiveness. Similarly online marketing could be an opportunity or a threat to the organisations.

If it is thought in terms of customers, environment & rivals, the complexity of the competitiveness is increasing more. The reason being is that catching up with today's advancements is not even enough for organisational performance improvements that organisations should take their futuristic viewpoint to the online marketing activities. With a flexible and well-planned online marketing strategy organisations might have the ability to thrive the business competition. In following part of the research, the author will provide the literature review of online marketing and its effectiveness in order to build strong evaluation basis that whatever scale organisations are there are always opportunities to grab in the global businesses with the effective use of online marketing techniques.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The literature review aims to provide a fairly defined theoretical basis from the researches that have been published earlier.

The study ought to be based on a writer's research. According to this concept, author will be able to compare, evaluate and observe the subject detailly by reviewing the past researches.

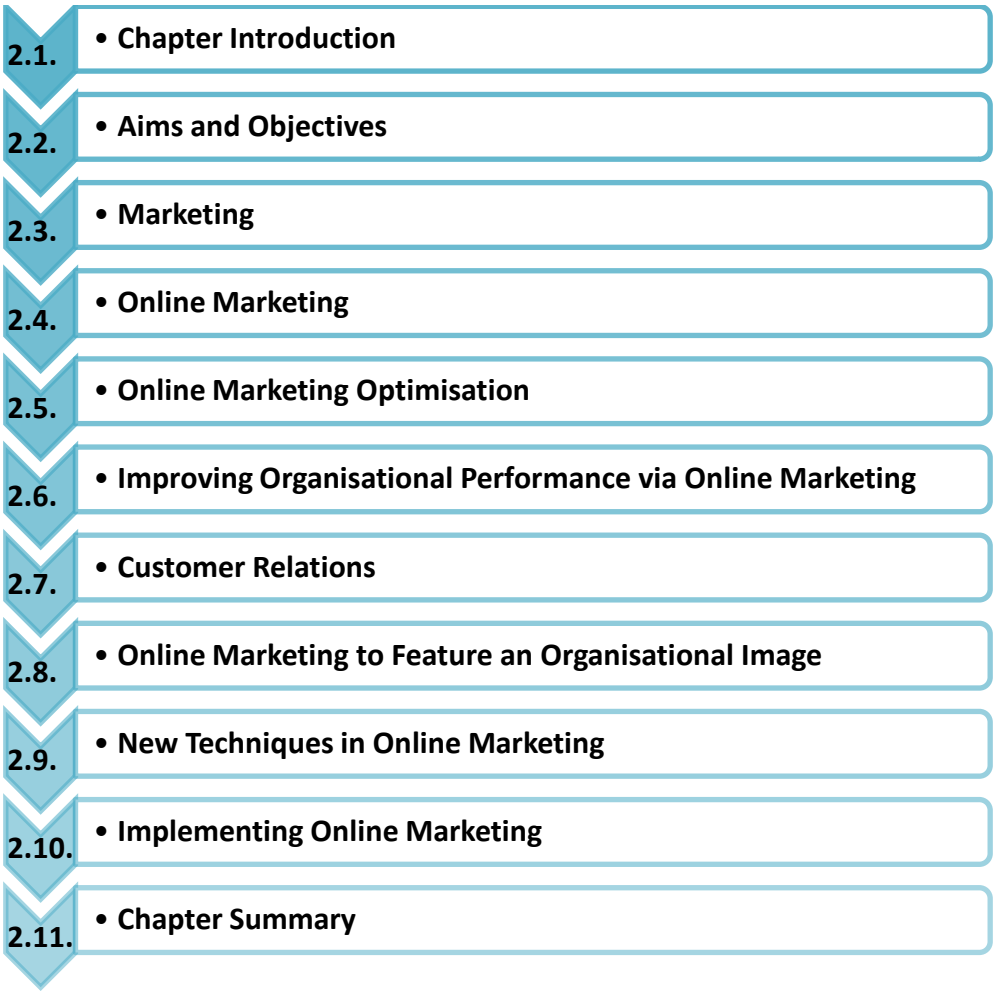
In the same way, this chapter will contribute a compendious literature review of the circumstantial aspects involved in the research. While reviewing the literature, appropriate referencing will be represented within the text. In that case, referencing will be done in a reasonable way without distracting the reader's attention from the centre problem in the circumscribed area.

The literature review is a combination of the related clue and issues about the subject and the comparison of them within the structure of a beginning, a main body, and an epilogue. The main aim of the literature review is to present an understandable perspective about online marketing. Initially, this chapter will begin with the definition of marketing and kinds of marketing. In the main part of this chapter; online marketing will be examined by reviewing its background, dynamics, concepts, trends, and new content strategies.

Addition to these; effective online marketing optimisation, improving organisational performance via online marketing, and customer relations will be explained. In the epilogue part of this chapter, featuring an organisational image via online marketing, new techniques in online marketing and implementing online marketing will be mentioned and the chapter will be completed.

The flow chart of **Chapter 2** is shown as **Figure 2. 1**.

Figure 2.1.: **Flow Chart of the Chapter 2**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

## 2.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives are interpreted as two significant guides of the research at the hand that they will be helpful to make accurate and clear judgments.

**The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing to improve organisational performance**. To create a strong evaluation basis literature review will be written under main headings (**See Figure 2.1 above**) and subheadings such as **2. 4. 2 Dynamics of Online Marketing**, **2.5.4 Privacy Problems** etc.

In that point, as a reminder, here are the objectives of this study:

**1**. Providing valuable information about online marketing by reviewing the literature.

**2**. To determine critical evaluation points in the online marketing within the frame of a suitable research methodology due to effective examining.

**3**. Evaluation of the online marketing implementation at Thomas Cook Group in London/ UK in the light of the determined significant aspects.

**4**. Providing recommendation and conclusion regarding the online marketing at Thomas Cook Group.

## 2.3. MARKETING

In the modern days, there are various definitions of marketing even though scholars have not reached a consensus on one definition yet.

Marketing is summarised by Blythe (2009) as a process of determining the products or services which will attract people to consume or purchase, and a time period of progressing a strategy to improve business potential by creating customers and sale of the goods and services. According to Blythe (2009), marketing's definition should also consist of the concept of a value, shareholders, and stakeholders.

This process is related to the improvements in distribution, promotions, research, and sales which create an integrated process that companies should build value for their clients and for themselves. On the other hand Boone and Kurtz (2011) examine marketing contemporarily even that there is an irrefutable fact about "traditional marketing". Similarly they suggest that the effectiveness of marketing really depends on the choice of marketing type.

The main features of marketing have been identified as a combination of managerial tasks and "choices intended at meeting or exceeding the potential opportunities and threats in a flexible organisational structure for dynamic market nature in an appropriate way that its market features will satisfy customers" needs and wants thus the organisational goals will be achieved in the most suitable way, by Cant et al (2009). In this definition Cant et al (2009) have put forward the keywords such as strategic decisions, dynamic circumstances, marketable features, opportunities, satisfying the needs, and threats which consist of the concept as it is aforementioned by Blythe (2009) value, shareholders and stakeholders.

Furthermore, these instruments are also known as "marketing mix" which used to be 4 components and nowadays they are 7 components as: "Product, Place, Promotion, & Price" and added components as "People, Physical Evidence & Process". Following this further it could be stated that effective and ineffective marketing is a result of the marketing styles as there are different variations of marketing about using these instruments for different organisations. In the following subheading there will be brief definitions of different kinds of marketing.

### 2.3.1. TYPES OF MARKETING

There are various types of marketing which might be chosen to pursue by companies in a combination of techniques or individually.

As a matter of the fact that traditional marketing style is still used in the modern days, but with the improvements in the technology people come out with more creative approaches for marketing of goods and services. The more you think about all different types of marketing, the more you realise that there are so many ways to market something.

This research will cast further light on the types of marketing whether the diverse explanations made by scholars. Cole & Kelly (2011) assert that there are many different kinds and types of marketing. From their viewpoint, to classify marketing types fairly Direct & Indirect Marketing types are the very first.

Direct Marketing aims to send organisational marketing messages to clients without having to use any other channels between itself and its clients (Cole & Kelly, 2011). On the other hand, Indirect Marketing requires third party outlets between organisations and its clients that the relationship will be improved by these third party outlets (Cole & Kelly, 2011). Examples of both types will be mentioned under the alternative names of marketing in the following definitions. In spite of this, Egan (2011) has a different perspective about marketing as Inbound & Outbound Marketing.

Inbound Marketing is focused on getting your organisation found by clients, in other words clients start out with the need/want to purchase goods and services which is followed by going out and finding these goods and services (Egan, 2011). Outbound Marketing is originally called as “Traditional” that requires marketing efforts are taken to create awareness for a good or service and eventually create a desire for action of purchasing this good or service by someone who is not essentially looking for it (Egan, 2011). It could be stated that in some points even these definitions are not enough to differentiate one type from another as all of them are integrated. For example, inbound marketing has direct methods for reaching its audience such as search engines which is also called as a direct marketing tool. Addition to the traditional classifications about marketing types such as Direct & Indirect (Cole & Kelly, 2011), Inbound & Outbound (Egan, 2011); it might be appropriate to write out more current definitions individually to feature a clear base for the following parts of this research (**Chapter 2.4 & 2.9**).

Camarinha-Matos et al (2009) highlight “Affiliate Marketing” which involves different parties that associate for marketing improvements about their businesses with collaborative effort. Another kind of marketing is identified by Boone & Kurtz (2011) as “Article Marketing” which is also supported by Lister et al (2009) analyses. In the modern days, companies need to write articles about their businesses & industries that they are up-to-date and these are the writings that will help the company to create credibility and inform people about its business. Indeed, as affiliate marketing companies will be collaborating

with other expert companies in this field of specialisation. Needle (2010) widely describes two marketing types as “B2B and B2C”. B2B marketing stands for businesses; governments, individuals, organisations, or any other institutions which market goods and services to other businesses.

On the other hand, B2C stands for businesses which market goods and services to reach a categorised type of people. B2C marketing style needs to be broader than B2B as in modern days it uses internet to reach out more people. Hughes (2012) is a literature representative of “Database Marketing” and he identifies it as focusing on the analyses of clients’ information database for the purpose of easing and facilitating the marketing efforts. Similarly, Miller (2011) examines database marketing which organisations should not neglect for an effective marketing process. Furthermore there is a great deal of definitions about marketing types. However this research’s limitations will not be enough to define every single one of them. In epitome, their names could be given as “Direct Mail, Drip, Guerrilla, Mobile, Newsletter, Niche, Offline, Personalized, Promotional, Referral, Reverse, Search, Social Media, Tele, Viral, and Trade Show Marketing”. (Please see; Blythe, 2009; Collier & Evans, 2009; Goldblatt, 2011; Rapp, 2010; Thompson & Martin, 2010)

So far explained marketing types should give a clear idea of different approaches for organisations may market their goods and services. However there are still more types of marketing out there. No doubt that depending on the industries and the organisations’ styles, there will definitely be different choices about marketing which will expectably produce the best results. In regards to these traditional and alternative marketing types, it could be stated that there will be two more necessary definitions about marketing types which are Online and Offline Marketing. Offline marketing basically stands for any marketing activity which does not depend on online ways to reach its audience (Rapp, 2010). The reason being for these definitions is that contemporarily new generation marketing requires being interactive for organisations. In that point, online marketing comes to the stage that helps them to improve interactivity with the shareholders and stakeholders substantially. In parallel with this, in the next part **2.4 Online Marketing** will be elucidated individually from its background to its future potentials and trends.

## 2.4. ONLINE MARKETING

At the outset, it could be said that there are numerous names and definitions for online marketing.

Theoretically and practically, Dann & Dann (2011) have examined online marketing as “E-Marketing” in their book. From their point of view; online marketing includes any kind of marketing activity that takes place on the internet, in a broader sense “online”.

What online marketing encompasses is that various forms of new marketing tools such as blogs, social media, searching engines, and even e-mail. On the other perspective, Sheehan (2010) draws a different picture of online marketing which takes place under digital marketing. As it is mentioned before in **Chapter 2.3.1**, marketing types have an integrated structure and with this structure online marketing requires a well-planned approach about designs and developments.

In this respect, to examine online marketing more comprehensively there will be a need for detailed investigation about its background, dynamics, concepts, trends, and special content strategies. Hence this investigation is in the following part.

## 2.4.1. BACKGROUND OF ONLINE MARKETING

There is a long and elaborated history for online marketing which has evolved into a crucial-function for any organisation.

As reported by Dann & Dann (2011) online marketing had an evolution process of including the Internet from being "a Cold War weapon system" to "a worldwide communication platform" and yet practically they call it as a framework which creates a chance of connecting each continent to each other. Furthermore Newlands (2011) adds that in this worldwide structure of online marketing, organisations need to plan a total strategy to succeed.

Generally speaking, online marketing has reached its predominant peak with the efficient marketing results on the search engines such as Google (Blythe, 2009). Thus, today it is alternatively called as "search engine optimisation- SEO" which will be briefly examined in the **Chapter 2. 5. 3** (Bailey, 2011). According to the article written by Lee & Bradlow (2011), the most important thing to be learned from online marketing's history is that change is mostly rapid, complicated to denote from other marketing styles and it is extremely hard to keep up with its evolution.

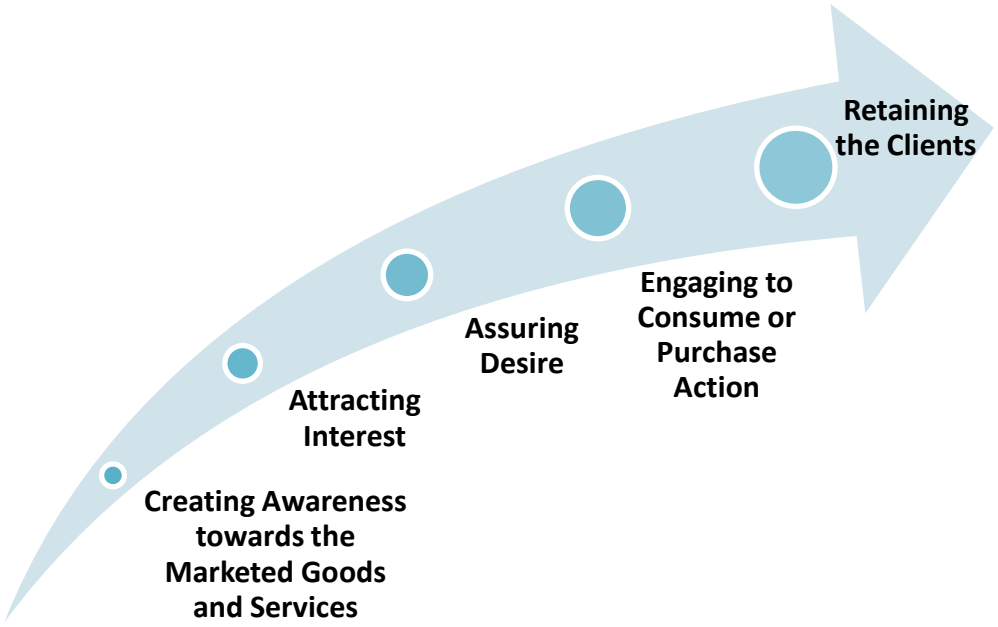
In this evolution, it is safe to say that comparatively online marketing has the features of direct marketing rather than traditional marketing such as providing opportunities for organisations to connect their audience directly as it is mentioned before. To deduce online marketing's evolution we must continue by looking into what it really constitutes, and its dynamics.

## 2.4.2. DYNAMICS OF ONLINE MARKETING

Unquestionably, today online marketing has become one of the fastest growing types of marketing.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010), who have written one of the most original marketing books, for many organisations online marketing is more than just a supplement to their marketing activities. For these organisations online marketing is a complete model of doing businesses which deepens its influence scope by its dynamics as exemplified in the following **Figure 2.2**.

Figure 2.2: **Dynamics of Online Marketing**




**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Kotler and Armstrong (2010).

Even though these dynamics are also belonged to the marketing's nature, Fox (2010) suggests that online marketing has rendered possible to keep on increasing their efficiency stealthily. Basically, the reason being is that the opportunity of reaching out to clients irrespectively to their geographical locations. It could be argued that shortly after the explosion of the internet other types of marketing have been sidelined.

Now, a good deal of marketing's subcategories could be positioned under online marketing. In this respect, it could be stated that online marketing is effective almost in every single business from industrial businesses to service sectors. Exemplarily, what Bing et al (July 2011) have argued from the viewpoint of tourism's online marketing is that the dynamics of online marketing have been evolving and these alterations have been compelling organisations to develop better online marketing practices. Similarly, the research by Moe & Trusov (June 2011) has shown that "online marketing has changed both

the customers' experience and the influence of other people's opinions on online good & service rating platforms"

In this regard, it could be pointed out that any changes about online marketing will alter its feature and its dynamics as it is exampled in the above paragraphs. Therefore, significantly organisations will need to alter their strategies to improve organisational performance.

### 2.4.3. ONLINE MARKETING CONCEPT

Online marketing is not a new concept by any meaning, though as it is explained before there is no consensus between scholars about its finalising techniques which must and must not be seen as online marketing.

Online marketing concept and its literature, those are available today, are arisen from various types of clarifications and different characterisations. Despite this, there are considerable similarities for using applications and clarifications. (Dann & Dann, 2011; Rapp, 2010)

According to clarifications of online marketing, in the near future organisations' marketing strategies will definitely require online approaches, which have been "musts" in today's businesses, to increase organisational reputation and their performance. In the same line Homburg et al (2009) have reported that online marketing is related with the idea of improving new approaches and strategies by managing customer portfolio online. New approaches regarding online marketing concept are combining direct marketing tactics with online opportunities.

Consequently, the reason of globalisation, which is internet and so online marketing, has been chosen by organisations as the easiest and the most efficient way to connect with customers worldwide. And specifically, the decreasing dependence on the desktop/stable devices for connection enhances the online marketing's concept and its scope to the mobile devices. Therefore, new trends in online marketing will be explained in the following part.

### 2.4.4. TRENDS IN ONLINE MARKETING

In the literature, key compelling insights into current and future trends in online marketing are evaluated as its merits and demerits.

Current trends which are already made use of to improve organisational performance. Future trends are the upcoming challenges that organisations will face and need to manage to prosper in the business competition.

In the one hand, a number of researches have outlined the advantages of online marketing trends such as applications, bigger ads, mobile opportunities, non-standard ads, online public relations, and particularly social media. (Anon, August 2011; He et al, 2012; and Juon et al 2012) To capitalize on these new trends depends upon continuous developments and strategies. For example, the article is written by He et al (2012) consists a combination of trend identifying methods (Bibliometrics & Text-mining) about marketing research which might potentially help organisations to determine and utilise from these trends.

On the other hand, researches written by Bandyopadhyay (June 2010), Cugelman et al (2009) and Mckee (May 2011) investigate the possible demerits of these new trends on online marketing. Mckee (May 2011) and Cugelman et al (2009) put forward that there might be misleading and deceptive online marketing tactics which might develop mistrust among customers and suggests that businesses should be aware while using these new trends to accelerating customer relations. From another point of view about trust and credibility of new trends examined by Bandyopadhyay (June 2010) is gray marketing via internet which is a still arguable case of marketing. A resolution for these disadvantages might be stated as an adequately advanced content strategy on online marketing.

### 2.4.5. CONTENT STRATEGY

Nowadays, content strategy has a complex structure which ought to deal with the conflicts of interests between organisational departments and help sustaining online marketing dynamics while improving a comprehensive content.

Increasingly, content is getting more important for organisations to gain competitive advantage that exemplarily a clean and concise content will engage customers to take actions in favour of what organisations have planned. (Halvorson, 2010) That is why in the last few years content strategy has been also called as “Content Marketing” which is obviously focused on the content of businesses’ marketing approaches online.

To most thoroughly investigate the utilisation from online marketing, a few of the new trends will be examined in the following part **2.5 Online Marketing Optimisation**.

## 2.5. ONLINE MARKETING OPTIMISATION

Most appropriate start about online marketing optimisation could be a brief explanation on search engine optimisation.

What search engines made possible in 1990s is that businesses realised ideally internet users could be clients of the organisations via using search engines, examined by

Sheehan (2010). In the case of effective availability, before organisation can attract the potential audience with its online activities, search engines come to the stage.

To increase online marketing optimisation sustainably, as it is explained in the last parts, organisations need to have a strong content strategy considering the dynamics and trends of online marketing. Additionally, they should also take the advantage of online social media activities which is a following improvement behind search engines. There are various analysing tools as free and paid which are particularly improved to control these new optimisation methods.

Due to the limitations of this research, it will not be enough to elucidate every tool that helps online marketing optimisation thoroughly. For this reason, there will be five main important points to make and explain briefly as it is tabulated below **Figure 2. 3**.;

Figure 2.3: **Online Marketing Optimisation**


**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

## 2.5.1. CONTACT STRATEGY

Improving relationship perpetually between organisations and clients depends upon communication strategies that usually clients have various types of getting in contact with the media.

Contemporarily, most of the people are switching from offline contact options to online ones. However, it cannot be neglected that people's decisions are fickle and they change their decisions from offline to online back and forth.

Organisations, those aims long lasting connection with their clients, have already been aware of regular keep-in-touch activities and got special strategies due to the importance of keeping-in-touch. According to Chaffey et al (2009), in online marketing the communication difficulty occurs in the engaging level of customers which was modelled in the **Figure 2. 2**. In this subject Chaffey et al (2009) also suggests few of the significant points such as a contact strategy ought to be improved to manage and control communication activities with an appropriate way.

Basically in this contact strategy organisations will need to take into account of information types, which arise from activities such as purchasing activities (goods or services, frequencies, monetary values, recency) (Chaffey, 2009). Eventually organisations will make use of any information regarding customers' activities towards organisations' advantage or disadvantage that will help pointing customers' demands and needs more successfully and finally retaining customers.

### 2.5.2. SOCIAL MEDIA

Media has been one of the most important tools of marketing until the advent of social media.

Nowadays, organisations still use media channels for marketing, but social media is more efficient in many respects. Since people started to connect each other via social sites, social-sites became vital for organisations to appraise due to marketing activities (Egan, 2011).

In essence, online conversation is the centre point for social media which is also called "buzz". As the social media creates a virtual socialising world, organisations strategically create communication opportunities to attract potential customers via a message or a banner on social media sites. Newlands (2011) has pointed out that in the 21st century from organisations' viewpoint customer relationship management has become considerably significant, especially as a result of the social media.

Since buzzing online influence one's opinions, delivering right content to the audience has become more critical as social media is too broad to be bounded for marketing activities. In this respect Dann & Dann (2011) adds the fact that organisations ought to consider the current position and relations in social media. From the beginning they will need to support strategic social media campaigns, contact with potential customers, and engage them as clients (Dann & Dann, 2011). As it is aforementioned, to manage a sustainable social media strategy organisations should develop an integrated content and contact strategy.

### 2.5.3. THE GOOGLE TREND

Unquestionably today Google is one of the most crucial online marketing optimisation tools and it also has its individually developed approaches such as "Google Marketing Strategies", "Search Engine Optimisation".

Google has been used quite extensively from its launch and increasingly getting more popular. Google is among to the search engine technologies. Hence it has several distinctive characteristics those help organisations to gain advantages in online marketing.

Recently it is discussed by Farhad (November 2011) in author's article that addition to the fast-growing structure of Google; it has been integrating the social media activities via "Google+ & YouTube" services and digital marketing activities via improvements in its "Android" smart-phone channel. All these improvements result in a more complicated Google structure which should be dealt with by organisations. By managing Google trend in favour of online marketing optimisation, organisations will attract the audience to their very own websites most certainly (Fox, 2010).

According to Fox (2010), millions of people use search engines every day especially Google and these people are in fact organisations' potential target audience. Even though their potentiality for organisations, this audience could be stated as still fickle about their needs and wants which could be captured by investigations on how, why and what for they really search. Following this further, trends like Google help organisations to complete the missing picture of what people are really looking for online and direct these actions to organisations' benefit in a suitable way.

### 2.5.4. PRIVACY PROBLEMS

From marketers' viewpoint, they have been increasingly utilising from the opportunity to target right information to specific audience based on the data collected online.

A different perspective on this point could be pointed out as what possibly might happen to the privacy of these ones whose information collected online by organisations. The first reason of these privacy problems rises from the use of cookies.

Lister et al (2009) highlight the fact that these cookies help organisations to track their target audience and redefine the profile of this audience on what they follow and what they do not. On the other hand, Sipior et al (January- March 2011) reminds that some organisations are ever persisting and this kind of situations sometimes result in overstepping the privacy boundaries to one's disadvantage who just want to surf on the internet. In that point Sipior et al (January- March 2011) also add that capabilities of online marketing on the individuals' privacy is too broad, for example it is related to second and even third party organisations' abilities such as transmission and sharing of the personal information collected by cookies.

Most of the time, online privacy problems are users' concern which organisations need to advance their technologies on online marketing to protect their clients. Furthermore, Sipior et al (January- March 2011) justify that data collection via online channels provides real value information for organisations. They suggest that professionally these conflicts should be solved within administrative, industrial and governmental regulations to protect both organisations' and users' privacy online.

### 2.5.5. IMPLICATIONS

In the online era of the world, incredible growth pattern of online marketing and so its implications have been continuing.

In this regard, online marketing is an attractive research area and it is likely to be in the future as well that it has been utilised by any scale-sized organisations as the primary source of marketing. It is claimed by Ayub et al (December 2009) that the online marketing is responsible for changing the form of businesses' activities with the cost efficient and easing approaches, as a strong medium which is today an absolute necessity for businesses.

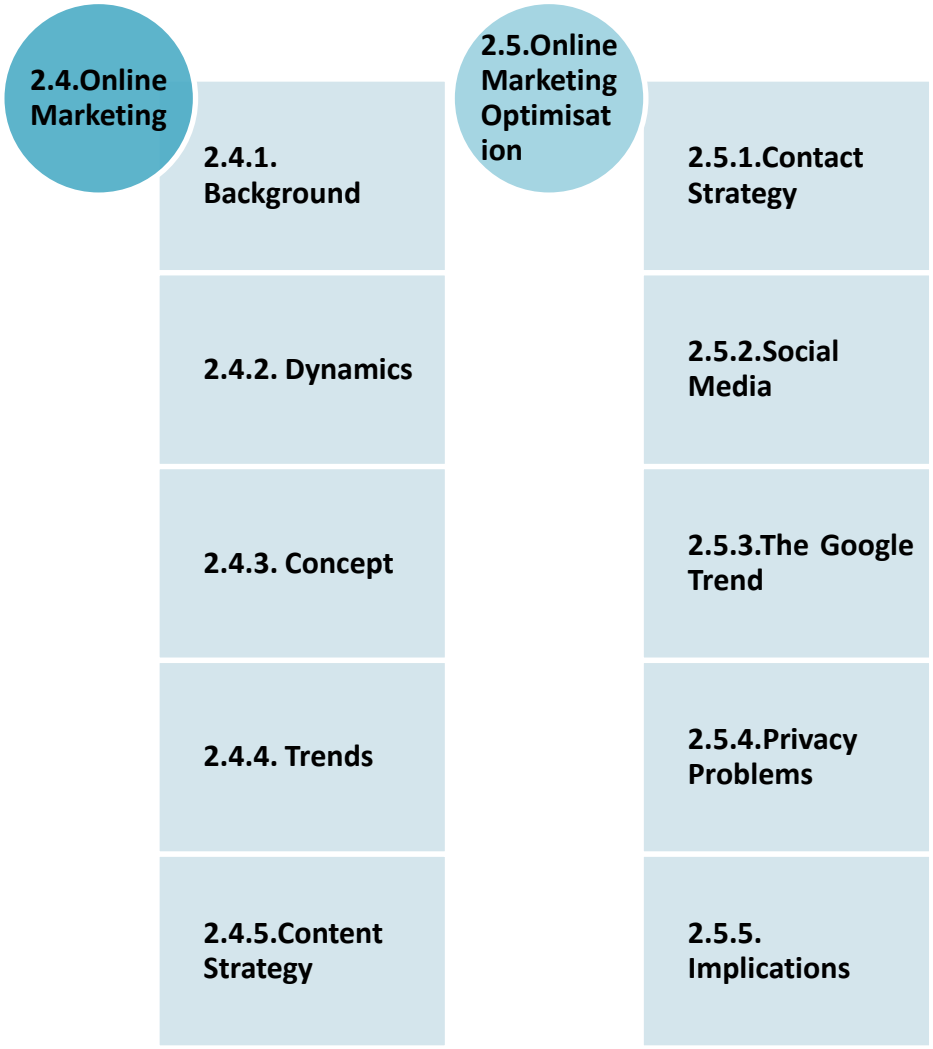
Addition to this research; written by Ayub et al (December 2009) on online marketing's implications considering the business ethics, legislations and social aspects; Jie & Daugherty (Fall 2009) have examined the direct implications of social media on online marketing. In 2011, these researches are supported by Miller's explanations that these implication ranges are determined from goods' & services' designs to their marketing research and even their promotions either online or offline. To recognise the potential implications such as authenticity, confidentiality, integrity and non-repudiation, organisations ought to develop strong and diversified department focusing on online marketing (Please see Ayub et al, December 2009; Jie & Daugherty, Fall 2009; and Miller, 2011).

## 2.6. IMPROVING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE VIA ONLINE MARKETING

Contemporarily business competition has been crucial for organisations to pursue.

Irrespectively to their organisations' size -small, medium or large- organisations might have the competitive advantage over the competitors via online marketing (Please see Camarinha-Matos et al, 2009; Goldblatt, 2011; and Lee & Bradlow, October 2011.). If we were to summarise and cross reference within the research for clear understanding on organisational performance, so far the literature revised about online marketing could be figured as below **Figure 2.4**:

Figure 2.4 **Previously Revised Online Marketing Literature**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

Blythe (2009) asserts that if any organisation targets to improve its organisational performance and revenue cumulatively, it has to achieve good levels of business. Likewise, in 2011 it is suggested by Cole & Kelly that ensuring the successful levels of business requires outrunning many other competitor organisations and their goods & services. In that point, a recent article (ANON, August 2011) identifies that organisations' communication tactics are pivotal how competitive advantage might be obtained in the online era.

In the same way, Egan (2011) highlights that organisational performance is not only a surviving process through the competition, in fact it is a providing process of sustainable and transposable competitive edge to the future generation workers of the organisations. To simplify these definitions, it could be outlined that at the strategic level organisational performance basically relies on the employee performance which brings out the importance of customer relations to investigate in this research.

## 2.7. CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Managing customer relations is significantly important for any organisations.

At the outset, managing customer relations stands for every activity which is to meet one's needs and wants. According to Needle (2010), business environment naturally require the management of customer relations for goods and services from the beginning -creation of attractiveness- level to retaining customer level.

Hughes (2012) indicates the key points for customer relations from database marketing viewpoint that in every level customer relations should improve by adding value conjointly. This is the result of the rapidly evolving feature of the need to create new customers and retain the existing ones. In spite of this, managing customer relations is sometimes called as an individual sub-marketing style due to it is trying to gain competitive advantage ahead the competitors by focusing on customers specifically (Lee & Bradlow, 2011).

To start a well-rounded customer relations approach, organisations ought to analyse the current conditions of their marketing improvements. No doubt analysing only the organisation itself will not be enough that competitors' strengths and weaknesses should be analysed in an objective way, discussed by Miller (2011). On the contrary of Miller's (2011) macro approach on customer relations from organisations viewpoint, recently published article by Amersdorfer (December 2011) argues that online marketing is only a step for managing customer relations. And the author continues that humanistic approaches are still irreplaceable subjects of the marketing processes.

Considering the human interaction organisations should formulate a balanced, wide-reaching and reasonable customer relations management policy. Following this further this study will pursue with the three main levels of customer relations under the subheadings as Attaining New Customers, Building Relationship with Customers and Retaining the Customers.

### 2.7.1. ATTAINING NEW CUSTOMERS

Obtaining new clients is the main ambition of any organisation irrespectively to its organisation size (small, medium or large) or state (profit or non- profit).

By using online marketing organisations need to target what exactly they are trying to achieve. It is claimed by Lister et al (2009) that most of the time organisations' ambitions for offline marketing are similar for online ones.

Eventually, every organisation aims to improve its organisational performance simply by recruiting new talent and by improving customer relations. In some points, creating a strong strategy and achieving overall business goals might not be enough for organisations to attain more customers. Thompson & Martin (2010) discuss that in the virtual world organisations should improve a wide-ranging plan which will meet the online visitors' needs and convert them into customers.

This means, online marketing tools such as online ads, banners, and blogs might only direct people to organisations' websites. In that point, an academic article written by Porter et al (Summer 2011) put forward a three level plan for organisations which is based on marketing research: online visitors' motivations, needs, and participation reasons in the organisation network. Similarly in February 2012, in their article Kirby & Wallace suggest that organisations should develop a specific wide service plan. They also add that this kind of plan is statistically proven that mature service plans provide stronger organisational performance.

This being said, stronger online service plan provides more customer engagement. If we were to summarise all these statements made by scholars, it could be stated that they stand for "getting personal", "providing a broader advice", "understanding needs and wants" and "engaging customers for the right good or service". Having these steps achieved, organisations need to make sure that they have certain communication tools with their new customers which will create new business traffic.

### 2.7.2. BUILDING RELATIONSHIP WITH CUSTOMERS

In the long term, organisations need to convert newly attained customers to regular customers which meaning they should build a special relationship that represent the organisation and at the same time personalised for customer.

Obviously, in the modern days it is not possible to design an individual relationship procedure for every customer (Goldblatt, 2011). In this stage, organisations and customers need to get to know each other.

In the case of online marketing, organisations should attract their attained customers back to their websites to give more information about the offerings. Yang & Lai (March 2012) examine that the significant effect of dyadic trust on building relations between organisations and customers. Their findings are that environmental, functional, and interactive approaches have positive effects on online customer relationship building.

In spite of this, another article focuses on outsourcing about customer relations written by Kalaignanam & Varadarajan (March 2012). Beneficial side of outsourcing customer relationship management could be stated as the specialised organisations on customer relations which have analytic systems for every step about online marketing an

organisation will possibly need. Exemplary, these organisations might provide high speed, low cost, and worldwide communication resources while outsourcer organisation sustain its usual activities within. Addition to this Kalaignanam & Varadarajan (March 2012) add that the analytics might help the organisations to figure out which tools work for online marketing on building relationship and which do not.

After highlighting some points about how to build a relationship with customers, there is one more point left to be mentioned. As it is in the any level of online marketing, organisations will need a realistic & reasonable budget, professional advisors or consultants such as psychologists, image advisors, for building long-lasting relationship with customers.

### 2.7.3. RETAINING CUSTOMERS

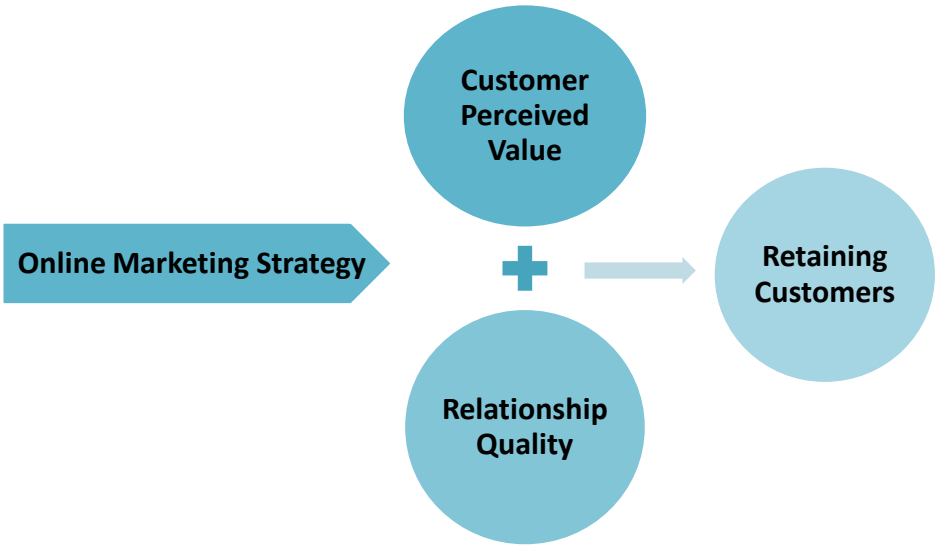
Creating customer loyalty is one of the most important online marketing ambitions in the business world due to it is comparatively hard to achieve in the virtual world.

The main feature of retaining customers has been identified that it is a major factor for an organisation's online marketing success by Rapp (2010). According to this feature retained (loyal) customers are less sensitive to the changes in the price level.

Moreover, these retained customers are more likely to purchase goods or services more frequently and create potential for word-of-mouth marketing. Both early and recent literature on this subject tends to show that retaining customers is influenced by several aspects, including online marketing strategies, customer relations quality. Still retained customers help organisations to ensure a level of consistent revenue base and reduced expenses. (Please see: Dann & Dann, 2011 and Mei-Lien et al, 2012)

Long-lasting customer relations help organisations to do marketing researches about the quality, brand awareness, and even newly developed goods or services. It is exemplified by Sheehan (2010) that today organisations gain the advantages of online marketing such as e-mail. Using e-mails, organisations might present promotional offerings, discounts, vouchers for customers which will make the first connection. If this first connection succeeds, in the favour of future offerings customers will be willing to exchange information.

Figure 2.5.: **Retaining Customers Concept**




**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Mei-Lien et al (2012).

**Figure 2.5** above depicts the concept of retaining customers. It is suggested by Mei-Lien et al (2012) that online marketing strategy should contribute customer relations' quality that will reduce customers' uncertainty, increase customers' brand perception and strengthen the relationship between customers and the organisation.

## 2.8. ONLINE MARKETING TO FEATURE AN ORGANISATIONAL IMAGE

Creating an organisational image is a long-term process that any organisation needs to feature for their share and stakeholders.

A successfully planned organisational image helps organisations to hold their organisational position at a certain pitch, assessed by Needle (2010). Needle (2010) also claims that featuring organisational image cannot be stated only for "customers" which means it is broader than that.

Indeed, it has been widely claimed by the scholars that organisational image definitely helps retaining customers and also reaching out more customers (Chaffey et al 2009; Collier Evans, 2009; and Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Organisational image could also be related to customer loyalty that is identified by Aaker (Winter 2012). In the article written by Aaker (Winter 2012), the author discusses that perceived brand value gives competitive advantage to any organisation which can be created by online marketing.

This being said firstly organisations need to survive brand competition, which is significantly increasing in online platforms, and secondly create boundaries between competitors. Eventually, organisations should ensure that customers internalise the organisational image with organisational dependability, reliability and loyalty. Following this further Papista & Dimitriadis (2012) point out that the only way to achieve organisational online marketing ambitions is to develop original offerings that these developments will make competitors irrelevant for customers' needs. More specifically, online marketing should make organisations go beyond fundamental benefits of customers, find common interests among them and finally create an organisational image online which is integrated and sustainable with the organisations' origins and activities.

## 2.9. NEW TECHNIQUES IN ONLINE MARKETING

Online marketing undoubtedly has been expanding itself considerably more inclusive than any other types of marketing.

It is more sophisticated and increasingly getting more complex than it was in the earlier stages. Every new development gives a rise to the newer ways of online marketing to focus for organisations.

As it is mentioned in the **2.4 Online Marketing** part, it involves content marketing, e-mail, referral marketing, search engines, social media and many more elucidated by Scott (2011). In this era, Scott (2011) especially emphasises that available new techniques of online marketing cannot be negligible and organisations should keep its futuristic approaches as every passing day brings new developments about online marketing. The key aspect is to spot those techniques that are most likely to help business and improve organisational performance by reaching out to target market in a suitable manner.

It is easy to see that online marketing has already changed many business sectors which have already invested in online marketing and have been utilizing its advantages. Fox (2010) explores that these new techniques should be selected according to an integrated and synchronised complete online marketing plan. On the other hand, Juon et al (2012) highlights that the ability of online marketing to differentiate marketing activities according to target market. More clearly this being said, an integrated online marketing plan should definitely be improved which will allow organisation to differentiate marketing activities for different target market with its tools.

This research will continue with the further light on the chosen new online marketing techniques as Banners, Blogging, and Conversational Marketing.

### 2.9.1. BANNERS

The creative idea of banners basically comes from lead-in clickable buttons which were in different sizes and shapes in the beginning stage.

Literally explained by Scott (2011) that, banners are eye catching bands and are used for online marketing intentions which appear on the top of the web sites. These kinds of lane advertisements tend to provide promotional offerings that will direct web site visitors to banners' origin website due to convey the aimed message and achieve marketing goals.

Banners are also defined as a quick and effective way to reach a great audience by Chaffey et al (2009). In many examples of banners, it could be seen that usually they are made from moving images or videos which is a glittery way to attract the attention of the visitors to visit the particular web-sites.

### 2.9.2. BLOGGING

Blogging is a great opportunity for organisations to create meet-up centres and maintain valuable customer relations.

The claim made by Halvorson (2010) points out that blogging is becoming a very popular online marketing tool for organisations. The author pursues the claim that blogging used to be popular among users and bloggers. However, soon after organisations realised the potential that they could control and direct the online trends instead of relinquishing it to only bloggers and users.

This has opened new paths for online marketing. As much as users, organisations could have their own personalised blogs and update their e-diaries every day. It is widely examined by Yoon et al (February 2012) that by using blogs organisations might be able to pull the customers rather than pushing them for organisational marketing aims.

This is why a blog should be seen as a part of online marketing strategy that organisation will have control on the blogging content and use it as a customer magnet which is more preferable by modern days' customer profile. The potential customer profile which is gained by blogging defined by Lester et al (2012) as more conscious about using online tools and this creates more realistic value evaluations about organisations' online marketing activities.

### 2.9.3. CONVERSATIONAL MARKETING

Theoretically conversational marketing gives the opportunity of creating both assistive ways of push and pull factors online marketing to organisations.

As it was in the blogging technique, it is evaluated by Dann & Dann (2011) that conversational marketing leads organisations to promote its own goods and services by

generating content their own rather than letting it off to the online users. This is an efficient technique keeping in touch with online users and letting them interact with the community that is under-controlled by the organisations' themselves.

In that point, the claim made by Rapp (2010) supports the idea of engaging customers via conversational marketing, comprehending and observing the online community as it is. The claim, indeed, still has the base of planning for the organisational marketing aims and improving organisational performance. In the light of these new techniques and dynamics of online marketing there will a brief explanation on the subject of implementing online marketing.

## 2.10. IMPLEMENTING ONLINE MARKETING

From the very beginning of the first developments about online marketing, organisations have always wondered for new growth opportunities and competitive advantages to yield better and sustainable results.

Scott (2011) argues that implementing online marketing will not be enough for any organisation without planning how to collect proper feedback, how to measure the efficiency, and how to make appropriate arrangements to achieve the optimum results. Likewise, it could be stated that online marketing implementation requires an iterative process which means once online marketing is implemented there will be a length of time for maturation of the online activities.

The article written by Amrouche & Yan (March 2012) put forward the points about the competition in online marketing. The dilemma being is that there are a lot of opportunities to grasp in online marketing and yet there are also strong eliminative aspects in the competition. Hence the organisation improved its online marketing strategy, it is suggested by Chaffey et al (2009) that before implementing the strategy organisation should analyse the facts about their competitors that online marketing could be optimised.

In the fact that, while implementing online marketing there will be definite changes in the market and in the competitors' online strategies. This is the reason, Halvorson (2010) suggests during the process of managing the online content for marketing, organisations ought to select one of the leading organisations in its business sector that benchmarking could be achieved for supporting the implementation with recent business environment alterations. Furthermore, this is consistent with the views of Juon et al (2012) that by investing in the new online marketing techniques especially blogging, contact, content and conversational strategies organisations might increase the brand and customer equity in the long term for sustainable ambitions of the organisation.

## 2.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 Literature Review of this research is presented.

In this chapter, it has been tried to provide that information on online marketing, its background, dynamics, concept, trends, and content strategy briefly. It has been studied to draw data from earlier literature about online marketing optimisation via contact strategy, social media, the Google trend, and online marketing's privacy problems with the implications.

It has taken a period of time to conclude literature review from mid-January to mid-February 2012 with the last changes in March which is also presented in the Appendix 1 Dissertation Writing Process Plan. Improving organisational performance via online marketing is identified from the various viewpoints of the scholars. Addition to this, customer relations is also evaluated as attaining new customers, building relationship with customers, and retaining customers.

Several different ideas are presented to provide a broader sense of understanding for online marketing to feature an organisational image. A different perspective on the subject of new techniques in online marketing is presented specifically under the subheadings of banners, blogging and conversational marketing which are also pointed out by varied definitions from scholars. When it comes to the implementing online marketing stage, the author has combined own ideas with the literature as it is the main evaluation subject of this research. As it is explained in this chapter what could be inferred that the competition for online marketing has been dramatically increasing in the last years.

From the claims made, it could be deduced that the quality of the online marketing strategies is not completely under the control of organisations that online influencers are significantly affecting the feature of future marketing activities. This work is an attempt to analyse the key issues and challenges in online marketing that organisations have been facing and trying to convert them into competitive advantages. For optimal recommendation making on the research subject, the author pursue this study with the Research Methodology practice in the **Chapter 3**.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

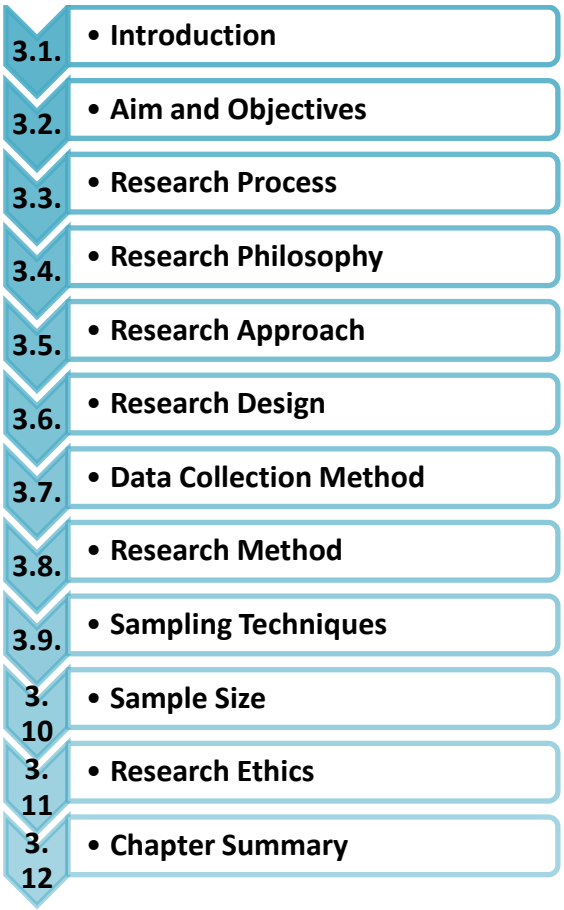
## 3.1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In order to provide a comprehensive and a valid study, the research will continue with the justification of various methods those have been chosen to evaluate the collected data.

Chosen methods are taken into account due to their relevance and applicability on the research subject. This research methodology fundamentally consists of the research process, philosophy justification, research approach, design justification, data collection method, and research method justification, sampling techniques and sampling size.

Essentially Research Ethics has been added as subheading **Chapter 3.11**. This chapter significantly aims to implement and to lead a widely investigated research on the base of what is evaluated and specified in the **Chapter 2** Literature Review. In order to provide broad perspective of the author, appropriate referencing will be implemented within the text and the chapter will be concluded.

Figure 3.1.: **Flow Chart of the Chapter 3**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

## 3.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives are interpreted as two important guides of the research at the hand that they will be helpful to make accurate and clear judgments.

**The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance**.

Here are the objectives of this study:

**1**. Providing valuable information about online marketing by reviewing the literature.

**2**. To determine critical evaluation points in the online marketing within the frame of a suitable research methodology due to effective examining.

**3**. Evaluation of the online marketing implementation at Thomas Cook Group in London/ UK in the light of the determined significant aspects.

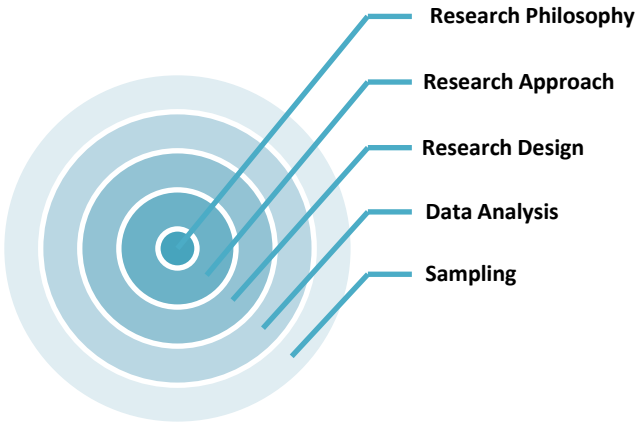
**4**. Providing recommendation and conclusion regarding the online marketing at Thomas Cook Group.

## 3.3. RESEARCH PROCESS

Research process has been a burdensome and a challenging period of time due to manage by the author.

Despite the troublesome moments, research process is achieved as it is planned and the dissertation process programme is enclosed as **Appendix 1**. Having dealt with problematic daily and writing issues, the author has managed to achieve the right timing and has pursued the rest of the writing stages successfully.

Figure 3.2.: **Research Process**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

## 3.4. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy is typically regarding the author's understanding and one's knowledge development within the epistemological philosophy techniques.

According to this concept, there will be definitions of different research philosophies and author's assumptions about them in order to ensure a wide-reaching perspective on the research subject. Especially, significant characteristics of the philosophies will be put forward to provide effective justification.

### 3.4.1. INTERPRETIVISM

Interpretivism philosophy is mainly related to the positivist theory which scholars believe that in the techniques used to determine the results of a research and a process, a researcher should be able to give insights to the investigation, summarised by Marczyk et al (2010).

In that point, it could be stated that it is an approach which allows one to discuss a theory as a combination of the one's interpretations on the subject. On the other hand Bradley (2010) highlights that scholars do not reject the fact that scientific approaches are still part of the analysis, but they are only differed in some ways that all social disciplines cannot be defined under the same field of discipline.

In respect to this, one might be able to provide own observations to get original insights to the research.

### 3.4.2. POSITIVISM

Positivism as a doctrine stands for the idea of only reliable knowledge is scientific knowledge and it is the only one which provides quantifiable and statistical analyses.

Churchill & Iacobucci (2010) identify positivist philosophy as the philosophy in which any discipline can be analysed by the positive affirmations of theory through strict scientific techniques even for social laws that concerns society.

### 3.4.3. REALISM

It is the philosophy that assumes only reality is the universe; universals exist and are distinct from the specifications.

It is claimed by Jackson (2011) that realism is a combination of both interpretivism and positivism epistemological philosophy techniques which leads it to analyse the facts without idealisation. Jackson (2011) also states that as there are differences between social and natural sciences, there are mid-points as well which one might integrate the scientific techniques into the social disciplines due to evaluate more widely.

### 3.4.4. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY JUSTIFICATION

In the modern days, there are many facts about social and scientific disciplines to discover.

The only matter is the methods are used for discovery. In the case of this research, to provide a suitable theory the author has tried to put forth similarities between the techniques briefly.

In this respect, Interpretivism and Realism philosophies have been chosen to pursue a more realistic approach by using case study, interview and survey tools which will give data basis to generate a viable approach from international management perspective.

## 3.5. RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach is inferred as a manner of solving a problem and it is the policy made or ways followed during the solution.

There are two types of research approaches for business investigations asserted by Kumar (2010); deductive and inductive approach. To see the most suitable approach for this research they will be explained individually in the following subheadings.

### 3.5.1. DEDUCTIVE APPROACH

It is a reasoning method that is related to draw conclusions rationally from other facts which are already known.

Summarised by Maier et al (2010) as it is the use of information and knowledge owned by a researcher due to understand or draw an opinion about the related subject. According to this concept one should build general hypothesis or theories first and then continue the approach with giving examples about drawn ideas for more specification.

### 3.5.2. INDUCTIVE APPROACH

The method that allows a researcher to collect data about a specific case, derive meanings for a general direction, formulate the theory based on the literature and analysis made, is called inductive approach.

Theoretically Saunders et al (2009) identifies this approach that it has the opposite direction of deductive approach has and is also called as bottom-up technique.

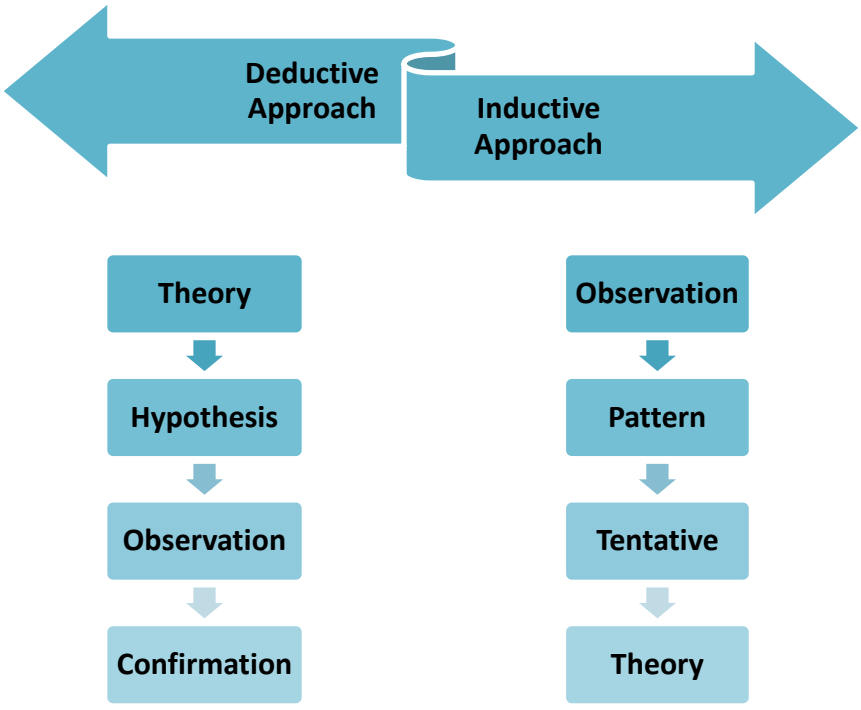
### 3.5.3. RESEARCH APPROACH JUSTIFICATION

Inductive Approach has been selected in order to move from the information that is collected about the specific study case to the theory.

The advantage of using this approach is that it is adaptable and applicable to the dynamic international business facts. Therefore the study starts with the general information and while the study goes on this information will be tested due to narrow down for more specific results.

As the following **Figure 3.3** shows the difference between two approaches more clearly, it could be stated that Deductive Approach is far beyond the knowledge of the author to propose a theory initially.

Figure 3.3.: **Deductive Versus Inductive Approach**




**Source**: Figure adapted by the author (2012) from Saunders et al (2009).

## 3.6. RESEARCH DESIGN

Design is highlighted as the pattern of writing a research by Fisher (2010) and there are several types of tools to design a research as descriptive, explanatory and exploratory.

In other words, design also depends on the research approach and philosophy. Thus, after explaining each probable design, most suitable one will be chosen according to this study's Interpretivism & Realism philosophy and Inductive approach.

### 3.6.1. DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH

Basically, descriptive research is a process of categorising, classifying and defining the gathered data on the interested area.

Hair et al (2011) state that descriptive pattern is advantageous because it provides significant information about an average member of a group. Especially, by gathering data regarding the research from a group of people one may be able to clarify an average person's characteristics or performance in that group.

### 3.6.2. EXPLANATORY RESEARCH

Terminologically, explanatory research describes that ideas or opinions are meant to make readers understand the text by giving reasons and examples.

The claims made by Hair et al (2011) points out those explanatory statements make comprehensible assertions which are accompanied by several cause and effect notes in order to make it understandable.

### 3.6.3. EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

Explorative investigations are chosen in order to discover or to learn the unknown, in other words especially when there is a lack of information regarding the research topic.

This technique might be done to learn the truth about something, argued by Fisher (2010). It is most widely used in the modern researches, because naturally it gets alternative opinions regarding the study.

### 3.6.4. RESEARCH DESIGN JUSTIFICATION

Structurally, having chosen Interpretivism & Realism philosophies and Inductive approach for this research, it is thought that the most suitable design will be Explanatory.

In actuality, when investigating a topic in explanative way it makes the research easier to observe for the researcher and readers. In that case, it could be said that explanatory research design will give the motive causes and the effect relations by applying statistical methods to analyse the data.

From this perspective, explanatory research will allow the author to provide gathered data, question the variables comparing to the literature and apply the statistical results on the case study to feature flexible aspects of the international business and online marketing in order to complete the research with accurate and valid findings.

## 3.7. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

To bring the limitations of this research to mind, there are certain challenges to be dealt with.

It could be stated that data collection process is one of the most challenging point of this research at the hand. Fundamentally, there are two main paths of data collection to compare for the effectiveness of the research, examined by Saunders et al (2009).

These are Primary Data and Secondary Data which are explained and tabulated individually in the following subtitles.

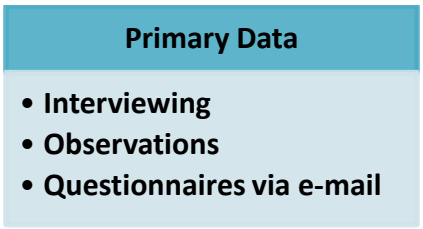
### 3.7.1. PRIMARY DATA

In the case of data collection, primary data involves the collection of original data which answers or solves a problem.

It aims to obtain social indicators which might help determine ideas that belong to a group. Maier et al (2010) state that primary research depends on investigations regarding attitudes or norms and it is conducted with a sample size of the target community.

Primary data collection requires the author's experimentation or observation on the primary sources for a specific need regarding the investigation topic such as interviewing or surveying, tabulated as below **Figure 3. 4**.

Figure 3.4.: **Primary Data Tools**




**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Maier et al (2010).

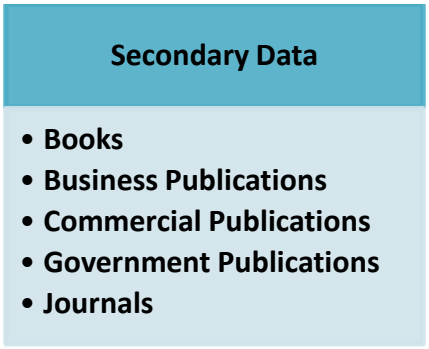
### 3.7.2. SECONDARY DATA

Secondary research is performed through available literature and existing data.

It includes collation, summarizing, or synthesis of the available information on the subject of the research. Kumar (2011) claims that by gathering data and giving appropriate referencing from scholars on the research topic researcher might be able to meet specific purposes of the research such as increasing reliability and validity.

Secondary data collection methods are shown as below **Figure 3.5**.

Figure 3.5.: **Secondary Data Tools**




**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Kumar (2011).

### 3.7.3. DATA COLLECTION METHOD JUSTIFICATION

To create a unique research study both data collection methods are chosen due to gain the advantages of both.

Specifically choosing one of the methods might seem reasonable for the integrity of the research in the beginning. However as the research goes on, one might realise that choosing one them will cause restriction and limitation about multi directional perspective on the subject, which today international business researches need.

Hence, in order to provide an information source for long term the author has applied Interviews and Questionnaires from Primary Data; and has gathered information from Books, Business Publications, and Journals from Secondary Data. **Chapter 2** Literature Review has already represented the Secondary Data collection aspects of this research. Further specific details of the Primary Data, Interviews and Questionnaires will be given in the **Chapter 3.10**. Sample Size and **Chapter 4**.

## 3.8. RESEARCH METHOD

Depending on the research approach, data collection, design and philosophy, research methods of the investigations are varied from qualitatively achieved ones to quantitatively achieved ones.

It has been widely claimed by Jackson (2011) that due to the nature of the investigations data may be available in the form of general ideas, opinions or in the form of figures, tabulates. To reach the optimum results every method will be explained individually and afterwards likeliest method will be chosen.

### 3.8.1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Churchill & Iacobucci (2010), variation in the data collection methods affect the research methods, exemplarily primary data interviews, observations and questionnaires are subject to qualitative analyses.

On the other hand Bradley (2010) defines qualitative research a form of analysis which yields a characteristic of compounds. More basically it stands for the descriptions or distinctions based on the respondents' opinions and its results are based on some quality rather than quantity.

In that case it could be stated that qualitative research is affected from respondents' life experiences. This is why qualitative research is more detailed and it obtains more complex issues or subjective influences of the respondents. In parallel with this, research structure and results provide a deeper understanding for the researcher to observe research subject and make it accurate in terms of dynamic business environment.

### 3.8.2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research is a form of research method which allows one to analyse the subject with some quantities or specific numeric values.

Marczyk et al (2010) identify the significant characteristics of quantitative research as the method which refers to a measured quantitative value as how fast, how many, how much etc rather than qualitative.

### 3.8.3. RESEARCH METHOD JUSTIFICATION

Ultimately, the author has preferred using both methods in order to maintain comprehensive perspective on the analysis.

In this respect, information available in the forms of opinions will be analysed qualitatively while statistical facts will be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. So, both methods will give the chance to the author being flexible about the research scope and if necessary to change some points in order to balance the author's objective and subjective viewpoints about the analysis and findings.

## 3.9. SAMPLING TECNIQUES

There have been various elements that compose a research method.

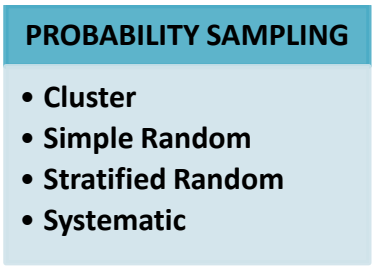
The purpose of the sampling techniques is to provide one of the most important components in the research which is to investigate a sub-set of the sample population due to researchers might not be able to study the entire community in the case of interest, elucidated by Marczyk et al (2010). In this manner it is stated by Marczyk et al (2010) that there are two types of sampling techniques.

### 3.9.1. PROBABILITY SAMPLING

Bradley (2010) claims that probability sampling is a kind of measuring technique which helps researchers to investigate how likely it is for an event to occur.

In this way, the probability of an event is numbered between 0% and 100% which should be already acknowledged by the sample population that they are in a sampling process. Most of the time probability sampling is associated with experimental and surveying study strategies. Here are the probability sampling tools in **Figure 3.6**.

Figure 3.6.: **Probability Sampling Tools**



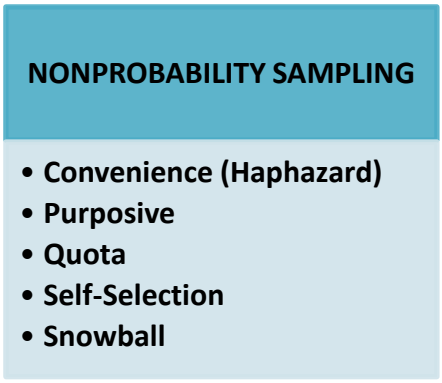

**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Bradley (2010).

### 3.9.2. NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

In non-probability sampling, sample population do not have the information of sampling process or they have unequally.

Churchill & Iacobucci (2010) identify that researcher might be able to generalise non-probability samples like probability, but not in the case of statistical results. Non-probability sampling tools are as below Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7.: **Nonprobability Sampling Tools**




**Source**: Adapted by the author (2012) from Churchill & Iacobucci (2010).

### 3.9.3. SAMPLING TECHNIQUES JUSTIFICATION

Whichever sampling technique is used to assign probabilities to the research one has to satisfy the axioms of probability.

By this way, it could be highlighted that this research's nature leads a sampling process which cannot be achieved without the acknowledgment of the sample group. Thence firstly sample size is chosen and secondly chosen population is informed about the research by the author.

Finally, Probability sampling, more specifically Simple Random technique, is found more convenient for this research that it allows one to generalise results and convert them into statistical analysis.

## 3.10. SAMPLE SIZE

As it is cross referenced in the **Chapter 3.7.3**, for the purpose of analysing the collected data, randomly selected one director in online marketing department and two branch managers are interviewed who are currently working at Thomas Cook Group London/UK. Also, several other employees of different travel organisations are subjected to the similar questions to check the trends in the market regarding online marketing. It is seemed to be an effective way to obtain accurate information on the research subject which gives a wider opinion on the online marketing whether it is helpful for the international travel organisations.

To create the appropriate representative sample size for the research from the employees' perspective, targeted sample size to survey is randomly selected approximately 150 numbers of employees. Questionnaire helped to the author to collect the responses from around 10 different branches, which will not be specifically indicated due to ethical concerns, from Thomas Cook Group in London by using e-mail. Using e-mail for questionnaires was effective in the case of time management and wide-reaching to the different branches. However some of the questionnaires are resulted with a few vague answers which are lack of specific ideas of the employees on the research subject. Both responded questionnaires, incomplete and precise, are considered for efficient evaluation so that the findings of the study can provide reliable and valid information.

## 3.11. RESEARCH ETHICS

In any discipline, there are problems such as misconducts and morality issues.

In the case of academic research and writing, there are several regulations that provide ethical guidelines which control these misconducts and morality issues. In order to achieve an ethical research process, a researcher ought to follow these guidelines during the research and writing process.

Thus and so, in this study at the hand the researcher has complied with the ethical guidelines and regulations rightfully due to ethical issues. The author has studied about reality, combined qualitative and quantitative approach and has elaborated own research in one design for a readable and justifiable output. From this perspective, writing language for the research, interview questions and questionnaires was not inconvenient, offensive nor unsubstantial.

Contributions and inputs made by respondents for this study were depended to their willingness that they were given an option to participate in or not. The justifications or specifications did not pinpoint any organisation or their strategies with exceptional case study organisation as Thomas Cook Group. Inappropriate subjects or plagiarised work were avoided by the researcher in this study. Despite being used such materials books, journals and websites, the researcher has observed the core of the materials regarding research subject and has not copied any material directly or without an appropriate referencing.

The case study company Thomas Cook Group will be informed about the research and a permission letter will be required from the company for the ethical research approval. Thusly this research is carried out by considering ethical guidelines that the findings of the research are objective, original and viable.

## 3.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Online marketing is indeed an effective mediator in improving organisational performance for international businesses.

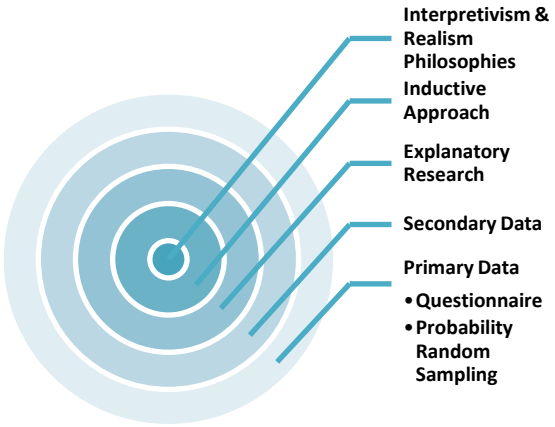
There are various methods and techniques used in this research. Due to the limitations of the research there are brief comparisons presented in the research philosophies, approaches, designs, data collection methods, sampling techniques and research methods.

According to the applied Interpretivism & Realism philosophy, Inductive approach, Explanatory design, Primary & Secondary data collection method, Qualitative & Quantitative research method and Probability Random Sampling online marketing is an efficient way in improving organisational performance. Online marketing is significantly important in modern days' competitive international business environment if an organisation aims to thrive in the market. The organisations which have already observed the importance of online marketing will be successfully improving their organisational reputation and competing with other brands.

In spite of this, any organisation which fails to appreciate the benefits of online marketing will be doomed to extinction. In this respect, this chapter has drawn the blue print of the whole research and the viewpoint of the researcher which is to improve accuracy and reliability of the research. It has been tried to provide that a comprehensive plan of each stage for this research. In that point, in the following **Chapter 4** there will be evaluation of data collection and data analysis stages regarding Thomas Cook Group's current online marketing practices.

In this regard, case study as Thomas Cook Group's online marketing research findings will be integrated in this study in order to implement learnings from the reviewed online marketing literature.

Figure 3.8.: **Research Onion**




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

# CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

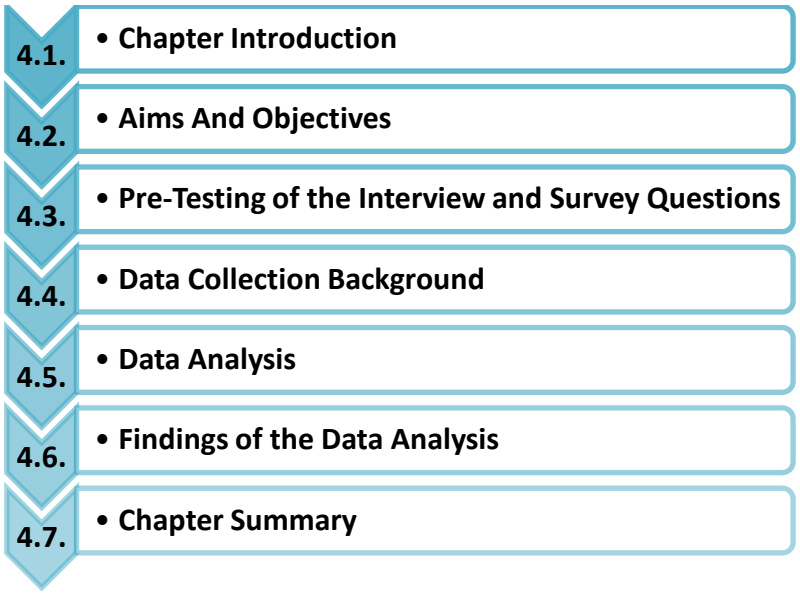
## 4.1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The results of this study are based on both qualitative and quantitative investigation of the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance.

This chapter contains primary data sources and their analysis that being said purposes of the research can be verified. Basically results are dependable on the opinions of the respondents; in the case of this study employees are who currently work at Thomas Cook Group London/ UK branches.

This chapter is significantly important, because the author will have practical insights as much as theoretical knowledge in the international business market conditions contemporarily. In this regard, study is concerning online marketing strategies and the use of these strategies in improving business. As it is mentioned in **Chapter 3**, the sample size in the study was limited to the 150 employees and 3 directors of Thomas Cook Group, employed at London/ UK branches.

Figure 4.1.: **Flow Chart of the Chapter 4**.




**Source**: Figure created by the author (2012).

Thomas Cook Group, as a case study organisation, was selected because of its strong reputational position in the international travel business. The organisation's online marketing strategy has been developed for better, and yet it is undoubtedly a fact that there is always significant room for more improvement in the international businesses. Therefore, study is aimed at finding out which online marketing strategies are used by Thomas Cook Group and if they are efficient in improving organisational performance. So it

is to investigate whether other strategies could be used to pursue competitive advantage beyond competitor organisations.

In the light of this information, as it is aforementioned the objective of this study is to show the key online marketing determinants in improving organisational performance. The secondary data has already collected, observed and provided summarily in the Chapter 2 Literature Review. In this respect, observed literature knowledge and collected data will be combined and presented comprehensively in this chapter due to effective discussion of the research subject.

## 4.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives are interpreted as two important guides of the research at the hand that they will be helpful to make accurate and clear judgments.

**The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing to improve organisational performance**.

This chapter is interrelated with the data findings and analysis of the study at the hand. It will present the insights of online marketing implementations for the international businesses. According to these insights and literature basis, the objectives of this research in the below will be verified.

**1**. Providing valuable information about online marketing by reviewing the literature.

**2**. To determine critical evaluation points in the online marketing within the frame of a suitable research methodology due to effective examining.

**3**. Evaluation of the online marketing implementation at Thomas Cook Group in London/ UK in the light of the determined significant aspects.

**4**. Providing recommendation and conclusion regarding the online marketing at Thomas Cook Group.

## 4.3. PRE-TESTING OF THE INTERVIEW AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

Having a pre-test of interview and survey questions is necessary due to the comprehensibility of the specific questions in analysing online marketing's current state in the case study company Thomas Cook Group.

Accordingly a pre-testing was practiced before the actual implementation of questions due to avoid from vague word use and to understand the efficacy of questions.

Therefore pre-test was applied with a different travel company and the assessment was that the questions were understandable and were flowing easily.

## 4.4. DATA COLLECTION BACKGROUND

The interview and survey questions are created and examined by the author.

The author has reached to the case study company with actual face to face meetings and with virtual tool e-mail. The questions for interviews and survey were classified under main headings to ease the analysing process.

### 4.4.1. INTERVIEWS

According to this, randomly selected interview participants were 3 employees who currently work at Thomas Cook Group London/ UK, one of them from online marketing department in the directing position and the rest of them as different branch managers. The questions for interviewing could be divided into 2 main parts (**Please see Appendix 2**). First part consists of the actual research questions which are 10 and they are classified under 3 main headings as Company History & Online Marketing Activities, Implementation of Online Marketing and Lessons & Obstacles. Second part is related to the demographic background about interviewees and there are 5 questions as Age Group, Education, Gender, Marital Status and Tenure.

### 4.4.2. COLLECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Survey questions are more complicated than interview questions and are performed for more number of respondents as randomly selected 150 employees in the 10 different Thomas Cook Group London/ UK branches. The author has tried to follow Likert Scale guideline (Saunders et al, 2009) in terms of the survey structure as 3 parts. According to this concept, there are three different parts as General Questions, Research Questions and Respondent's Background information. Following this further, it has been tried to understand current situation of the online marketing implementations from respondents'-employees' viewpoint.

In the survey there are 15 different questions pointed out in the form of closed and open ended questions and the scale of 5 that participants had the chance to answer from five different options (**Please see Appendix 3**). In this respect, in the first part it is tried to attract employees' interest for participating in the survey with General Questions as five answer options. In the second part, Research Questions and 5 answer options are presented with tabulates due to effective time management. Finally in the third part, there are 5 different questions related to the Respondent's Background.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the knowledge of the author to use "Statistical Package for Sciences (SPSS)" which is not used in this research. Due to effective evaluation the author could only use Microsoft Excel System for definable statistical results and tabulates. Consequently, the author has expected to collect a total of 140 out of 150 questionnaires and has collected 138 questionnaires. The classification of responses for questionnaires is tabulated as the **Table 4.1** below;

Table 4.1.: **Classification of the Questionnaire Responses**

| Survey Statistics | Employees |
|---|---|
| **Number Of Questions** | 15 |
| **Total Questionnaires Sent** | 150 |
| **Expected Responses** | 140 |
| **Total Responses** | 138 |
| **Expected Response Rate** | 93.33% |
| **Actual Response Rate** | 92% |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

## 4.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The outputs of the interviews and questionnaires are presented individually in this part in order to analyse the results in great details.

To provide a comprehensive investigation, these outcomes are supported with the detailed charts that are featured with distribution pattern of the responses. In this concept, the main parts of the interview and survey questions are the evaluation centres for online marketing's effectiveness in improving organisational performance.

### 4.5.1. RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

In order to build an effective analysis structure, the author will follow the main parts of the interview questions.

Therefore, Second Part of the questions (11-15) in the name of Demographic Background of the interviewees will be evaluated due to draw basic reasons behind the interviewees' responses to the First Part of the actual research questions (1-10).

#### *4.5.1.1. DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF THE INTERVIEWEES*

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are significantly important to reveal which gives key insights in determining whether the collected secondary data reliable and applicable in the actual business world.

In the case of this study, primary data is collected for the first time to represent and evaluate the key objectives of the study at the hand. The author basically is aware of the current issues in online marketing and one said it is the best way to integrate the author's knowledge with practical business facts.

As it is mentioned in the **Chapter 4.4.1**, randomly selected 3 employees who are currently working at Thomas Cook Group London/ UK interviewed. One director is from online marketing department and two of them are branch managers. They were asked the same interview questions (**See Appendix 2**) to generate interpretive and realistic viewpoint of the author.

This is applied to gain the perspective of the strategic management approaches and how the organisation advances in its online marketing implementations. On the other hand, the reason behind interviewing other organisations' employees is to see how other organisations deal with their online marketing processes. Unquestionably, this has given a more sophisticated perspective to the author and has given the chance to collect a great detailed data for valid analysis. In this respect, the demographic background of the interviewees is shown in the **Table 4.2** below (Interview Questions 11-15).

Table 4.2.: **Demographic Background Distribution of the Interviewees**

| Questions | Respondent 1 | Respondent 2 | Respondent 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age Group** | 35-45 years | 26-35 years | 46-55 years |
| **Education** | Masters | Bachelor's | High School |
| **Gender** | Male | Female | Female |
| **Marital Status** | Married | Single | Married |
| **Tenure** | 3<5 years | <1 years | 1<3 years |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

#### *4.5.1.2. OPINIONS REGARDING ONLINE MARKETING*

Granted, people have views on the facts based on their demographic, psychological and social backgrounds.

Due to limitations of this study, it is not possible to investigate every aspect of the online marketing processes. In that case, the author has considered collecting opinions from employees who belong to different demographical backgrounds to provide an optimum representative sample size structure.

It is easy to see that First Part of the interview questions is related to the actual research subject. In favour of providing a complete response analysis without distracting the study flow from centre issues, opinions of the respondents will be evaluated under three main headings as it was in the interview question plan (**See Appendix 3**).

- **Company History & Online Marketing Activities**: Most similar responses were given to the initial 2 questions (1-2) which are related to organisation history and basic online marketing activities.

In these questions, participants indicated that organisation's online marketing strategy is focused on strengthening its core business. It is the investment strategy in potential areas which are up and coming for the future growth, especially independent travel business and financial services regarding travel business and other chances such as acquisitions, mergers and partnerships.

It is specifically identified one of the participants that at the moment there are several web-sites belong to the organisation and more coming especially for financial activities online. Most critically, it is stated by two participants that organisation has built its online marketing strategy around organisation's primary vision of sustainability which is significant to gain advantage for customers relations in the modern days. As the online business is growing better, for many long-term customers of the organisation having relationship face-to-face is really important, supported by three participants.

- **Implementation of Online Marketing**: It has been over a decade organisation has been utilising from online marketing, stated by three interviewees (Questions 3-6, Appendix 2).

At the same time they have been pursuing on the offline marketing activities, and yet the fact pointed out by three participants online marketing has been growing fast like nothing else. In the implementation of online marketing, one of the respondents highlighted the fact that organisation purposes delivering an outstanding long-term value to their share and stake holders.

The respondent continued, originally this strategy was formulated 5 years ago when the organisation was restructured with the merger of MyTravel Group plc in 2007. It is also stated by three respondents that offline marketing culture was implemented to the online marketing culture.

- **Lessons & Obstacles**: Last four questions (7-10) are related to the key issues faced, utilisation from online marketing and future plans.

Three respondents claimed that there have been conflicts of interests between departments and even branches, because in some points online marketing effects offline marketing negatively as in the case of decreased business potential in the branches. However it is claimed by two respondents that organisation has been trying to work together and balance the differences to achieve tenets of the organisational vision.

Even though there are obstacles resulted by online marketing implementations, organisation still has its strong reputation and a portfolio of leading travel brands.

## 4.5.2. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The method of structuring used for the questionnaire results is the same as Interviewing Results.

So, the author will follow main sections of the survey questions. According to this concept, there are three main parts as Section 1: General Questions (1-5), Section 2: Research Questions (6-10) and Section 3: Background Information (11-15).

In favour of building an effective analysis structure, Section 3: Background Information of respondents will be evaluated initially followed by Section 1 and Section 2 in order.

### *4.5.2.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION*

As it is explained in **Chapter 4.5.1.1** demographic background of the respondents are significant to provide key insights in determination of the research subject and presented particular questions.

In **Chapter 4.2.2** it is briefly summarised that survey questions are more integrated and are subjected to opt-in or opt-out of the respondents. In that case, randomly selected sample population of 150 employees in the 10 different Thomas Cook Group London/ UK branches 138 employees have participated in the survey and responded questions in great details.

In fact Background Information questions are in the Section 3 of survey. The reason being behind presenting Background Information results firstly is that characteristics of respondents affect their responds to the questions. On the other hand, why these questions are put in the Section 3 is to approach respondents with easy and general questions initially due to collect sufficient responds for whole questionnaire. In this respect, 138

questionnaires out of 150 will be evaluated in order to feature online marketing effectiveness from employees' perspective.

-**Age Group** (Question 11): In this part, the age distribution of the respondents is presented. According to responses, age groups of the respondents are shown in **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3.: **Age Groups of the Respondents**

| Question 11: Age Group | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **18-25 years old** | 24 | 17.39% | 17.39% |
| **26-35 years old** | 28 | 20.28% | 37.67% |
| **36-45 years old** | 57 | 41.30% | 78.97% |
| **46-55 years old** | 15 | 10.86% | 89.83% |
| **55+ years old** | 14 | 10.17% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

Above Table 4.3 explains that the largest majority out of 138 employees are belonging to the age range of 36-45 with 41.30%. Second majority group is the age range of 26-35 with 20.28%. And there are 17.39% of the sample population belonging to the age range of 18-25 years. The age range of 45-55 has 10.86% of the population. Finally, 14 out of 138 respondents are in the age range of 55 and plus with the lowest percentage 10.17%.

- **Education** (Question 12): Educational levels of the respondents are tabulated as below Table 4.4:

Table 4.4.: **Distribution of the Respondents' Educational Levels**

| Question 12: Education Level | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Primary School** | 1 | 0.72% | 0.72% |
| **High School** | 39 | 28.26% | 28.98% |
| **Bachelor's Degree** | 58 | 42.02% | 71% |
| **Masters Degree** | 23 | 16.66% | 87.66% |
| **Doctorate Degree** | 15 | 10.86% | 98.52% |
| **Other** | 2 | 1.48% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

As the **Table 4.4** shows that the greatest majority of the respondents have Bachelor's Degree with the percentage of 42.02% out of 138 respondents. The next largest group is belonging to the High School Degree with the rate of 28.26%. Respondents with the Masters Degree are 23 respondents out of 138 and they have the percentage as 16.66%. 10.86% percentage of the population is belonging to the educational level of Doctorate Degree. And there are two respondents with Other educational level, which could be stated as professional level or certificate level, with 1.48%. Finally, there is 0.72% of the population with Primary School educational level.

- **Gender** (Question 13): Table 4.5 below shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

According to the table more than half of the population is Male with 85 participants out of 138 respondents.

Table 4.5.: **Gender Distribution**

| Question 13: Gender | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 53 | 38.41% | 38.41% |
| **Male** | 85 | 61.59% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

Female population is 53 respondents with the percentage of 38.41% as it is shown in the above table.

- **Marital Status** (Question 14): Variables like marital status of the respondents are particularly influential on their opinions.

In the case of Marital Status responses, there are 34 single participants out of 138 with the highest rate of 24.63%. **Table 4.6** presents marital status of the all participants in six different answer options.

Table 4.6: **Distribution of the Respondents' Marital Status**

| Question 14: Marital Status | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Single** | 34 | 24.63% | 24.63% |
| **Married** | 14 | 10.14% | 34.77% |
| **Separated** | 23 | 16.66% | 51.43% |
| **Divorced** | 15 | 10.86% | 62.29% |
| **Widowed** | 24 | 17.39% | 79.68% |
| **Other** | 28 | 20.32% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

According to the table the second largest group belongs to the Other answer option which could be stated as participants with partners etc. Next largest group has 17.39% percentage for Widowed participants. In the fourth position there are Separated participants with the percentage of 16.66%. Divorced participants belong to the 10.86% of the population. And finally Married participants are with the lowest rate of 10.14%.

- **Tenure** (Question 15): Work experience of the participants with the Thomas Cook Group is asked as Tenure to the employees.

As the **Table 4.7** shows below most of the participants have been working with the organisation between 1-3 years with the frequency of 47 respondents and 34.05% of rate.

Table 4.7.: **Tenure of the Respondents**

| Question 15: Tenure (Years) | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **<1 Year** | 29 | 21.01% | 21.01% |
| **1<3 Years** | 47 | 34.05% | 55.06% |
| **3<5 Years** | 34 | 24.63% | 79.69% |
| **5<10 Years** | 21 | 15.21% | 94.9% |
| **10< Years** | 7 | 5.1% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

On the other hand, second largest group has tenure between 3-5 years with the rate of 24.63%. Third largest group is belonging to the lowest tenure range as less than one year with the range of 21.01%. Fourth group has tenure between 5-10 years with the rate of

15.21%. And the final group has been working with the organisation more than 10 year with the rate of 5.10% out of 138 participants.

#### *4.5.2.2. GENERAL QUESTIONS*

Having shown the Background Information Results of 138 respondents with charts and tables, now there will be presentation of General Questions' Results.

The same presentation guide will be applied to the General Questions' Results which meaning with charts and tables results will be summarised.

- **Work Force** (Question 1): As it is shown in the **Table 4.8** below, most of the population (34.05%) has been working in a branch with between 25-50 employees which is opted in by 47 out of the 138 respondents.

Second largest group (24.63%) is in a branch with between 50-100 employees which is opted in by 34 out of the 138 respondents. Third group (20.28%) is in a branch with between 10-25 employees that is opted in by 28 respondents. Fourth group (14.82%) is in a branch with more than 100 employees that is opted in by 20 respondents. And last group (6.52%) is in a branch with 10 and less employees which is opted in by 9 respondents.

Table 4.8.: **Work Force**

| **Question 1: Work Force (Employees)** | **Frequency (Respondents)** | **Percent (%)** | **Cumulative Percent (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **<10** | 9 | 6.52% | 6.52% |
| **10<25** | 28 | 20.28% | 26.8% |
| **25<50** | 47 | 34.05% | 60.85% |
| **50<100** | 34 | 24.63% | 85.48% |
| **100<** | 20 | 14.82% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

- **Years Online Marketing Have Been Utilising From** (Question 2): Exceptionally, only for this question all respondents (138) have opted in the same answer option as their branches (10) have been utilising from online marketing more than a decade.

- **Ethnic Origin** (Question 3): **Table 4.9** represents the ethnic origins of the respondents.

According to this table, most of the respondents (47) have opted in Other option in this question with the rate of 34.08% which is thought by the author these respondents' origins might be British. The second largest ethnic group belongs to European with the rate of 26.08% which is chosen by 36 respondents.

The third ethnic group is Asian with the percentage of 15.94% that is chosen by 22 respondents. The fourth largest ethnic population belongs to Oriental origin with the rate of 9.42% which is chosen by 13 respondents. South American population of the respondents is in the fifth line with the percentage of 5.79% that is chosen by 8 respondents. African American population of the respondents is in the sixth line with the percentage of 5.07% which is chosen by 7 respondents. The last ethnic group is African which has the rate of 3.62% and has been chosen by 5 respondents.

Table 4.9.: **Ethnic Origin of the Respondents**

| **Question 3: Ethnic Origin** | **Frequency (Respondents)** | **Percent (%)** | **Cumulative Percent (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **African** | 5 | 3.62% | 3.62% |
| **African American** | 7 | 5.07% | 8.69% |
| **Asian** | 22 | 15.94% | 24.63% |
| **European** | 36 | 26.08% | 50.71% |
| **Oriental** | 13 | 9.42% | 60.13% |
| **South American** | 8 | 5.79% | 65.92% |
| **Other** | 47 | 34.08% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

- **Annual Income** (Question 4): Corresponding to Annual Income levels, respondents are distributed as in the **Table 4.10** below:

Table 4.10: **Annual Income of the Respondents**

| Question 4: Annual Income | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **<£5000** | - | - | - |
| **£5000<£15000** | 38 | 27.53% | 27.53% |
| **£15000<£25000** | 46 | 33.33% | 60.86% |
| **£25000<£35000** | 29 | 21.01% | 81.87% |
| **£35000<£45000** | 25 | 18.13% | 100% |
| **£45000<** | - | - | - |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

According to the table above, respondents the highest rate of 33.33% have annual incomes between £15000 and £25000 stated by 46 out of 138 respondents. Second largest group has annual income between £5000 and £15000 and the percentage of 27.53% which is stated by 38 respondents.

Third group belongs to the annual income range of £25000-£35000 which stands for 21.01% of the population, opted in by 29 respondents. The last group has the highest annual income as the range of £35000-£45000 and they are the smallest group of the population with 25 respondents and with the rate of 18.13%. Obviously, these specifications are depended on the branches and departments which are randomly selected. As it is also seen in this table that any respondent has chosen two options of the annual income range which less than £5000 and more than £45000.

- **Living Area** (Question 5): According to the living area of the respondents, it is noticed that a bit more than half of the respondents are British and living in London.

So, 72 respondents have pointed that they are British and permanently living in London with the rate of 52.17%. 60 out of 138 respondents have pointed that they are Non-British and living in London with the percentage of 43.47%

Only 6 respondents have pointed that they are Non-British and temporarily living in London.

Table 4.11.: **Living Area of the Respondents**

| Question 5: Living Area | Frequency (Respondents) | Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **British, Permanently Living in London** | 72 | 52.17% | 52.17% |
| **Non-British Permanently Living in London** | 60 | 43.47% | 95.64% |
| **Non-British Temporarily Living in London** | 6 | 4.36% | 100% |
| **TOTAL** | 138 | 100% | |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

#### *4.5.2.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS*

Having given the results of Background and General Questions, in this part there will be the results of the primary online marketing questions.

Consequently in the Chapter 4.6.2 there will be the evaluation of the questionnaire results and it will be more related to results which come from this part. In that, the results of the Background and General Questions have provided a good understanding to the author why participants have chosen different responses due to their backgrounds.

- **Online Services Provided** (Question 6): As it is shown in the **Table 4.12** below there is good and service differentiation between branches and departments.

Table 4.12.: **Online Services Provided**

| Question 6: Online Services | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Usually | Always | TOTAL (Respondents) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Information Services** | - | - | 5 | 62 | 71 | 138 |
| **Package Holidays** | - | - | 16 | 39 | 83 | 138 |
| **Last Minute Reservations** | 1 | 16 | 35 | 41 | 45 | 138 |
| **Special Offers** | 9 | 18 | 29 | 34 | 48 | 138 |
| **Accommodation Options** | - | 7 | 21 | 24 | 86 | 138 |
| **Flight Options** | - | 12 | 18 | 36 | 72 | 138 |
| **Accommodation & Flight Options** | - | - | 11 | 62 | 65 | 138 |
| **Cruise Services** | - | - | 22 | 53 | 63 | 138 |
| **Travel Insurance** | - | 2 | 15 | 38 | 83 | 138 |
| **Travel Car Hire** | - | 8 | 19 | 47 | 64 | 138 |
| **Airport Parking** | - | 9 | 12 | 51 | 66 | 138 |
| **Airport Lounges** | | 6 | 23 | 37 | 72 | 138 |
| **Store Locator** | - | 3 | 13 | 42 | 80 | 138 |
| **Online Vouchers** | - | - | 17 | 69 | 52 | 138 |
| **Brand Differentiation** | - | - | - | 15 | 125 | 138 |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

From the author's viewpoint, provided online services question is one of the most troublesome questions to evaluate. Due to the products and services differentiation strategy of the organisation, there are significant differences between branches and departments.

According to this table, specifically Last Minute Reservations are not available stated by 1 respondent. Special Offers are not available stated by 9 respondents. On the other hand, the most significant service is Brand Differentiation in the case of comparable variables (price etc.) about products and services and it is always available stated by 125 respondents.

- **Outsourced Services Regarding Online Marketing** (Question 7): In this question there were two sequences.

In the first sequence, respondents were asked if the organisation has outsourced any significant matter regarding online marketing implementation. If the first sequence's answer

were given as "Yes", respondents were asked for more information about significant services.

In spite of 91 out of 138 given responses as "Yes", there was not enough information about the significant services outsourced in the second sequence. In that point, the author have used the information collected by Interviewing in the **Chapter 4.6.2** due to effective evaluation and have researched online (Web 1).

- **Perceived Online Marketing** Issues in the Organisation by the Respondents (Question 8): In this question, respondents were asked if there are any online marketing issues in the organisation that they perceived and they were given a Likert Scale of 5 from the least important as "1" to the most important to "5".

Table 4.13.: **Perceived Online Marketing Issues in the Organisation by the Respondents**

| **Question 8: Problems** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **TOTAL (Respondents)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lack of Utilising from Online Marketing Tools** | - | 15 | 42 | 81 | - | 138 |
| **Weak Economic Developments** | 7 | 14 | 49 | 68 | - | 138 |
| **Weak Profitability** | 9 | 11 | 32 | 61 | 25 | 138 |
| **Lack of Qualified Work Force** | - | - | 35 | 29 | 74 | 138 |
| **Lack of Investment on Technology** | 8 | 12 | 51 | 44 | 23 | 138 |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

From employees' perspective the most important problems are Lack of Utilising from Online Marketing Tools (81 out of 138 respondents) and Lack of Qualified Work Force (74 out of 138 respondents) as in the Table 4.13 above.

- **Suggested Solutions by the Author to the Problems in the Question 8** (Question 9): There are 5 different options suggested as solutions to the problems in the Question 8.

The solutions are featured in the Table 4.14 below with the responses to the each of the five answer options. According to the responses, the table shows that the most strongly agreed solution options to the problems are Information Systems (39 out of 138 respondents) and Outsourcing (23 out of 138 respondents).

Table 4.14.: **Suggested Solutions by the Author to the Problems**

| Question 9: Solutions | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree In Part | Agree | Strongly Agree | TOTAL (Respondents) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outsourcing Activities Must Increase** | 6 | 13 | 69 | 27 | 23 | 138 |
| **Information Systems Must Be Used** | - | - | 52 | 47 | 39 | 138 |
| **Acquisitions** | - | 16 | 48 | 74 | - | 138 |
| **Mergers** | 5 | 19 | 71 | 22 | 21 | 138 |
| **Partnerships** | - | - | 64 | 56 | 18 | 138 |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

- **How Organisational Performance Could Be Improved Via Online Marketing** (Question 10): Only open-ended question of this questionnaire is about improving organisational performance which allows them to draw additional remarks in the main research area of this study.

Although there were not so many additional remarks to this question from respondents in order to evaluate widely, there were several significant ones that at least gives some insights to the research area from employees' viewpoint. Exemplarily, less than 10 respondents have drawn the importance of trainings about online marketing.

## 4.6. FINDINGS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

To evaluate the findings more effectively, it is reasonable to remember main research question which is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance.

A case study organisation is chosen as Thomas Cook Group London/U. Both the literature is reviewed and the results of the interviews & questionnaires are presented a very good indication of the answer to the research question.

According to the primary and secondary data, main determinants of improving organisational performance via online marketing could be summarised as in the following parts.

### 4.6.1. FINDINGS OF INTERVIEWS

According to the results collected by interviewing, employees have pointed out that organisation has been utilising from online marketing more than ten years.

To remain the organisational improvements within the vision, primarily company has been providing accommodations, charter packages, flights, transfers, and representative services via online marketing, stated by three interviewees. One of the managers highlighted that organisation has been pursuing these activities through more than 22 websites which is a great deal of websites for travel industry.

The most popular service of the organisation is identified by two of the interviewees as charter holiday packages that are provided with the competitive prices through online. On the other hand, organisational online marketing strategy is indicated by three participants as maximising the value of the services for both shareholders and stakeholders. Addition to the interviewees' opinions the author has also observed some specific points about online marketing strategies in the organisation via its website (Web 1).

In respect to this, as it is mentioned by the three interviewees organisation has been collaborating with several companies for their online contact & content strategies, customer relations and privacy issues in order to provide first-class experience to their customers online.

### 4.6.2. FINDINGS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

From the results of the questionnaires, there are several significant points to evaluate.

First of them could be stated as the Education Level distribution of the respondents (Question 12: Table 4.4). The highest level of education among the employees is Doctorate Degree which has 15 employees out of 138 with the third lowest rate of 10.86%. The second highest level of education is Masters Degree which has 23 employees out of 138 with the rate of 16.66% among the employees. Bachelor's Degree has the largest population of employees with 58 out of 138 in the rate of 42.04%. Approximately, half of the sample population has Bachelor's Degree which is favourable. On the other hand, if we were to consider online issues pointed out in Question 8 (Table 4.13), it would be appropriate for organisation to encourage employees to take further their educational level.

Secondly Tenure Distribution of the employees is found important by the author as the largest population is in the year's range of 1-3 years (Question 15: Table 4.7). The reason being is that online marketing is instantly changing and the experience transmission about online marketing is getting more important.

The next important finding could be stated as the Provided Services Online (Questions 6: Table 4.12). Due to the products and services differentiation strategies in the online marketing there are significant differences which are observed by the author as a way of balancing potential business between branches.

As it is aforementioned, Question 9 (Table 4.14) consists of the suggested solutions to the problems presented in the Question 8 (Table 4.13). According to the "Agree" answers from the respondents the most significant solution is "Acquisitions" which has been achieved by the organisation over years by acquiring online travel companies like Travel W3 and many more. This result shows us the viewpoint of the organisation is that strategically they have been acquiring organisations to observe the specialisation areas within the company and they have been expanding the company's global market range via online marketing.

## 4.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the modern days' business environment online marketing is evolving every day and it is a fundamental advancement for any business in the world.

For this reason the author has aimed at analysing the online marketing's effectiveness in improving organisational performance. In respect to this, in this chapter of the research the author has presented three interviews and a questionnaire which are conducted by the author for the purpose of the study.

Initially, the author contacted to the interviewees and these interviews led to the opportunity of surveying employees via e-mail. Secondly, the survey questions are pre-tested and shortly after that actual questionnaires are sent to the case organisations' 150 employees in 10 different branches. Out of 150 employees 138 were responded to the questionnaires.

Afterwards interview and questionnaire results were analysed in accordance with the aim and objectives of the investigation. Additionally, basic statistical analyses were provided almost for all questions and they were also analysed by the author. Having particularly given the insights of employees' viewpoint about online marketing, analysed results will be used in the Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations to increase the reliability and validity of the research at the hand.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of findings from both primary and secondary researches based on the **Chapter 2** and **4** which are combined with the research's aims and objectives validation in order to provide final discussions for the unity of the research.

Before starting the significant analysis to conclude this research, it is reasonable to remember what have been done in the earlier chapters briefly. In the **Chapter 1**, the author has presented the research background, aim & objectives, rationale of the research, limitations of the research, conceptual framework of the research and case study Company's background.

Most of the illuminating theoretical information in this study is presented in the **Chapter 2** Literature Review. The main discussion points are started with Marketing and Types of Marketing. Following this further; online marketing and its background, dynamics, concept, new trends, content strategy and many more points are discussed to build the basis for effective evaluation.

In the **Chapter 3**, the outline of the research is drawn by specifying research philosophy, approach, design, data collection methods, methodology, sampling technique and sample size. In the last chapter, the author has performed the specified research techniques to gather primary data in order to analyse the research subject with the practical insights from actual business world. In the light of this information, this research will be concluded by giving recommendations to the key problems and by giving subjective insights for the future prospects of the research subject in this **Chapter 5.2.4**.

## 5.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES VALIDATION

In every chapter, iteratively mentioned aim and objectives of this research are perceived as the one of the most important guides by the author on this research.

For this reason, the author has found reasonable concluding the research with the aim and objectives validation. By doing so, the author can observe the research subject in great details with the repetitive information structure to master the skills for academic researches.

The aim of this research is stated as "to critically evaluate the effectiveness of online marketing in improving organisational performance". In order to achieve research's aim, the author has focused on providing an accurate, clear and comprehensive evaluation on the

subject. In this respect, for the very last time research objectives will be mentioned as subheadings to analyse the final results of the investigation.

### 5.2.1. PROVIDING VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT ONLINE MARKETING BY REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

In the **Chapter 2**, information about online marketing has been widely presented.

The author has tried to provide information from online marketing's background to its new trends comprehensively. If we were to prove the validity of the research objectives, it would be appropriate to remind what have been explained in the **Chapter 2**.

Basically Marketing is summarised as a process of determining the products or services which will attract people to consume or purchase, and a time period of progressing a strategy to improve business potential by creating customers and sale of the goods and services (**Chapter 2.3**). Types of marketing have been identified as in the various forms of definitions such as Direct Marketing, Indirect Marketing, Inbound Marketing, Outbound Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Article Marketing, B2B & B2C Marketing, Database Marketing, Direct Mail, Drip, Guerrilla, Mobile, Newsletter, Niche, Offline, Personalized, Promotional, Referral, Reverse, Search, Social Media, Tele, Viral, and Trade Show Marketing in the **Chapter 2.3.1**. And finally Offline and Online Marketing have been identified by the author.

In **Chapter 2.4** Online Marketing theoretically is identified as any kind of marketing activity that takes place on the internet, in a broader sense "online". In **Chapter 2.4.1** Online Marketing's Background is pointed out and it is regarding to the evolution of Online Marketing from internet. Dynamics of Online Marketing have been explained and figured in the **Chapter 2.4.2** followed by Online Marketing Concept in the **Chapter 2.4.3**. Trends in Online Marketing are evaluated in the **Chapter 2.4.4** and in the **Chapter 2.4.5** Content Strategy of online marketing is evaluated.

Online Marketing Optimisation is widely elucidated with the subheadings of Contact Strategy, Social Media, The Google Trend, Privacy Problems and Implications of online marketing in the **Chapter 2.5**. The major literature for the research basis is evaluated in the **Chapter 2.6** as Improving Organisational Performance via Online Marketing. To be able to investigate the research subject from different viewpoints the author has also investigated for the title of Customer Relations in the **Chapter 2.7** with the subtitles of customer relations stages as Attaining Customers, Building Relationship with Customers and Retaining Customers. In the **Chapter 2.8** online marketing's effectiveness has been evaluated in featuring organisational image topic. New Techniques in Online Marketing, which is one the most important evaluation points in the research, is evaluated in the **Chapter 2.9** with the subheadings Banners, Blogging and Conversational Marketing.

Finally, by evaluating online marketing implementation subject in the **Chapter 2.10** the author has provided the proof for valuable information basis about online marketing via reviewing literature comprehensively.

## 5.2.2. TO DETERMINE CRITICAL EVALUATION POINTS IN THE ONLINE MARKETING WITHIN THE FRAME OF A SUITABLE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DUE TO EFFECTIVE EXAMINING

In the **Chapter 3**, research methodology of the research has been presented.

According to this, research philosophy is selected as both Interpretivism and Realism, research approach is selected as Inductive, research design is selected as Explanatory, data collection method is selected as Primary and Secondary sources, research methodology is selected for both Qualitative and Quantitative evaluation and finally sampling technique is selected as Random Probability. Correspondingly, critical evaluation points are pointed out in the **Chapter 2**.

Basically, the critical evaluation points could be stated as background of online marketing (**Chapter 2.4.1**) within the organisation, approaches to the dynamics of online marketing. Dynamics are being as in the order of creating awareness towards the goods and services marketed, attracting interest of customers, assuring desire, engaging to consume pr purchase action and final one as retaining the clients (**Chapter 2.4.2**). Next evaluation point is selected as Online Marketing Concept (**Chapter 2.4.3**) followed by Trends in Online Marketing (**Chapter 2.4.4**) and Content Strategy (**Chapter 2.4.5**).

Another important evaluation point is selected as Online Marketing Optimisation (**Chapter 2.5**) with the subheadings of Contact Strategy, Social Media, The Google Trend, Privacy Problems and Implications of online marketing. Customer Relations topic in the **Chapter 2.6** is also found important by the author, and yet the limitations has led not to evaluate this topic in case study company widely. **Chapter 2.8** Online Marketing's Effectiveness in Featuring Organisational Image topic is also selected as it is directly related to the effectiveness of online marketing. Lastly New Techniques in Online Marketing, which is one the most important evaluation points in the research (**Chapter 2.9**) with the subheadings Banners, Blogging and Conversational Marketing is also defined to evaluate the case study company.

## 5.2.3. EVALUATION OF THE ONLINE MARKETING IMPLEMENTATION AT THOMAS COOK GROUP IN LONDON/UK IN THE LIGHT OF THE DETERMINED SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS

By combining the research results with literature what has been found is that specifically organisation has been utilising from online marketing.

In the case of online marketing's background, it could be stated that Thomas Cook Group has been one of the leading travel organisations in the international business which managed to keep up with technological improvements by implementing online marketing in the late 1990s, stated by interviewees (**Chapter 4.5.1.2** and **Chapter 4.6.1**) and checked by the author online (Web1). Within the online marketing concept, organisation has improved its website interfaces, acquired specialised online travel companies and collaborated with various companies such as Black Sun which provides online reporting and corporate services to its clients for online content strategies (**Chapter 4.5.2.3**, **Chapter 4.6.2**, Web1).

This being said organisation has been utilising from new trends of online marketing. For the purpose of improving the effectiveness of online marketing, the organisation has aimed at improving customer relations as the most important dynamics of the marketing processes. In the matter of online marketing optimisation, which concerns contact strategies, social media and the google trend, organisation has partnerships for the purpose of organisational contact strategy (**Chapter 4.5.1.2, Chapter 4.6.1**, **Chapter 4.5.2.3**, **Chapter 4.6.2**, & Web1).

On the other hand, organisation has social media strategy with over hundreds of profiles in the social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, claimed by the interviewees and observed by the author online (**Chapter 4.5.1.2**, **Chapter 4.6.1**, Web1). Regarding the privacy problems organisation has been working with a law office, stated by interviewees and observed by the author online (**Chapter 4.5.1.2**, **Chapter 4.6.1**, Web1). Constituently improving organisational performance via online marketing is related to the organisation's brand differentiation policy which is also pointed out as the sustainability strategy of the company for future decades, claimed by respondents and observed by the author online (**Chapter 4.5.1.2, Chapter 4.6.1, Chapter 4.5.2.3, Chapter 4.6.2**, Web1). From another viewpoint, organisation has online services for customers such as getting personal and providing valuable advice.

Due to achieve these points, organisation's website has various live interfaces and flipcharts such as live feedback and live advisors, highlighted by respondents and observed by the author online (**Chapter 4.5.1.2, Chapter 4.6.1, Chapter 4.5.2.3, Chapter 4.6.2**, Web1). The flexible structure of the case study company allows it to adapt quickly to the new techniques in online marketing. In this point, from the evaluated new techniques (Chapter 2.9) in online marketing as Banners, Blogging and Conversational Marketing organisation

has been using Conversational Marketing in the implementation of online marketing stated by interviewees and observed by the author online (**Chapter 4.5.1.2, Chapter 4.6.1**, Web1).

## 5.2.4. PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION REGARDING THE ONLINE MARKETING AT THOMAS COOK GROUP

Online marketing is undoubtedly an effective way in improving organisational performance for international businesses.

In regards to the aim and objectives of this research what the author has fundamentally learned throughout the research is that online marketing is embedded to our daily lives. In one day, whatever we do basically we are subjected to the millions of online marketing activities in every step.

In parallel with this the author has tried to provide appropriate justifications for the online marketing's effectiveness in improving organisational performance. By doing so, the author has internalised the basic knowledge of how she is going to relate this research with her academic and professional life. In that case, summarily to master in the key concepts and methods of online marketing there is one more significant stage to apply which is providing recommendation to the key issues proved by the literature and data analysis findings.

### *5.2.4.1. RECOMMENDATION 1*

From the evaluated New Techniques of online marketing (**Chapter 2.9**) as Banners, Blogging and Conversational Marketing, the organisation has been utilising from Conversational Marketing.

The initial recommendation comes to mind is that the author has observed it online that Thomas Cook Group has not been utilising from Banners and Blogging. It is widely explained in the **Chapter 2.9.1** that these banners are more eye-catching than usual online ads.

Despite this, organisation has been using online ads which are not attractive and favourable anymore. Especially, if we consider the winter season for people who spend more time online, Banners would be definitely useful for the organisation to reach more customers due to the forthcoming busiest business season for the international travel industry. On the other hand, Blogging is rapidly getting more important as any e-mail user is getting at least one blogging site in their name.

This means people are reaching out to each other more than the organisations do. Therefore Thomas Cook Group should definitely consider getting a blogging site that the

organisation might be able to check and follow the trends closely to their potential customers.

#### *5.2.4.2. RECOMMENDATION 2*

During the research process, the author has also observed the trends among the customers which are not evaluated in this research.

In spite of this, it could be appropriate to argue that among these trends specifically two of them were observed by the author. The author has discussed this point one of the interviewees.

What the interviewee agreed in some point with the author is that in the website (Web1) of the organisation and even any other sub-brands' websites of the organisation has mentioned "Ethical Approaches" within the organisation and the society. The relation between Ethical Approaches and online marketing is that many other organisations have been campaigning about their ethical improvements to attract the ethic-conscious population of the online users. Increasingly more online users are getting aware of ethical issues by sharing any unfair events online. If we were to define online marketing as the future business platform, one should bear in mind that wherever business is there should be ethical improvements to prevent organisations, shareholders and stakeholders from forgery.

In that point, from personal point of view the author has recommended improvements about ethical approaches within the organisation.

#### *5.2.4.3. RECOMMENDATION 3*

The last recommendation will be a combination of detailed recommendations.

Another missing point determined by the author in the organisation's website is that there is not any information about "Corporate Social Responsibility" achievements. This is one of the up-coming approaches for the international businesses and of course for online businesses.

The author had insights to the key operational characteristics of online marketing activities in the organisation by literature reviewing and primarily contacting with the organisation employees. As the organisation utilises from online ads, by using these ads they might present promotional discounts, offerings or vouchers for customers who directly click online and make the first connection with the organisation. By doing so, the first successful connection with the customers might lead to continuous relationships.

Specifically with its long-lasting position in the travel business, the organisation needs to remind its brand and organisational image to the customers online. To create online word of mouth campaigns is one the most effective ways of online marketing. There are many well-known companies in the business world now which have used word-of-mouth campaigns and then become well-known. Determining the power points of the organisation online another significant improvement which can be implemented by Thomas Cook Group.

As it is evaluated and tabulated (**Table 4.4**) in the **Chapter 4.6.2** the organisation needs to increase its work force Education Level Distribution. According to the results, employees with Doctorate degree are 10.86% of the population 138 respondents. Masters degreed employees are with the rate of 16.66%. As a result of this only a quarter of the population has post-graduate diploma in the organisation.

## 5. 3. RESEARCH CONCLUSION

Online marketing is relatively a new phenomenon in the dynamic international business world and most of the researches in this field are focused on the effectiveness of it.

In these dynamic conditions, organisations should bear in mind that as every improvement in the business online marketing can also be an opportunity or a threat to the businesses. The purpose of this study was the investigation of the key online marketing's aspects in improving organisational performance.

In that point, it has been trying to provide by the author is that building a problem question, providing key objectives of the research objectives, & following these objectives to evaluate literature and the selected case study organisation's current conditions in the Chapter 1. Upon investigating the stated aim and objectives, the author specifically focused on the British travel-related company's online marketing strategies and its effectiveness in improving organisational performance. In the **Chapter 2** it has been tried to provide that information on online marketing, its background, dynamics, concept, trends, and content strategy briefly.

The research has found an immediate relationship between online marketing's efficiency and organisational performance. According to this concept, appropriate primary and secondary data is provided. Due to the limitations of the research there are brief comparisons presented in the research philosophies, approaches, designs, data collection methods, sampling techniques and research methods in **Chapter 3**. Besides, the results of the both data source are evaluated in an integrated combination of analysis and are displayed with figures and tables in **Chapter 4**.

Afterwards interview and questionnaire results were analysed in accordance with the aim and objectives of the investigation. Additionally, basic statistical analyses were

provided and they were also analysed by the author. Having particularly given the insights of employees' viewpoint about online marketing, analysed results are used in this Chapter to increase accuracy, reliability and validity of the research at the hand. By giving recommendations to the problematic areas, the author has presented her gained skills on the research area with this academic investigation.

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## FIGURE REFERENCES

**Figure 1.1.**: Research Framework; Source:Figure created by the author (2012)

**Figure 2.1.**: Flow Chart of the Chapter 2; Source: Figure created by the author (2012).

**Figure 2.2.**: Dynamics of Online Marketing; Source: Adapted by the author (2012) from Kotler and Armstrong (2010).

**Figure 2.3.**: Online Marketing Optimisation; Source: Figure created by the author (2012).

**Figure 2.4.**: Previously Revised Online Marketing Literature; Source: Figure created by the author (2012).

**Figure 2.5.**: Retaining Customers Concept; Source: Adapted by the author (2012) from Mei-Lien et al (2012).

**Figure 3.1.**: Flow Chart of the Chapter 3; Source: Figure created by the author (2012).

**Figure 3.2.**: Research Process: Source; Figure created by the author (2012).

# TABLE REFERENCES

# APPENDIXES

## Appendix 1: Research Process: Dissertation Time Table

| WEEKS =><br><br>TASKS =v | WEEK 1 (09.01.12 - 15.01.12) | WEEK 2 (16.01.12 - 22.01.12) | WEEK 3 (23.01.12 - 29.01.12) | WEEK 4 (30.01.12 - 05.02.12) | WEEK 5 (06.02.12 - 12.02.12) | WEEK 6 (13-19. 02.12 ) | WEEK 7 (20-26. 02.12 ) | WEEK 8 (27.02 - 04.03. 2012) | WEEK 9 (05-11. 03. 2012) | WEEK 10 (12-18. 03.2012 ) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TITLE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES | X | X | | | | | | | | |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | | X | X | X | | | | | | |
| METHODOLOGY | | | X | X | X | | | | | |
| QUALITATIVE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH | | | X | X | X | | | | | |
| SAMPLE SIZE | | | | X | X | X | | | | |
| LIMITATIONS | | | | | X | X | X | X | | |
| ETHICS OF THE RESEARCH | | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| FINDINGS | | | | | | | | X | X | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION | | | | | | | | | X | X |
| BINDING AND SUBMISSION OF THE DISSERTATION | | | | | | | | | | X |

**Source**: Table created by the author (2012).

# Appendix 2: Dissertation Interview Plan for Managers at Thomas Cook Group London/UK

Interviewer :

Date : Time : from _____to_____

Client :

Participants Name : Designation:

| Questions | Prompts |
|---|---|
| **Company & Online Marketing activities**:<br><br>1. Can you provide a brief overview on the company's online marketing background? | Company Background,<br><br>History & Beginning,<br><br>Performance over the Years. |
| 2. Can you describe the inception and progress of online marketing initiatives in your company? | Initial stage of when the initiatives where introduced,<br><br>Major mile stones and achievements,<br><br>Progress over the years. |
| **Implementation of Online Marketing**<br><br>3. What are the major factors which were considered while implementing online marketing in your company? | External factors;<br><br>- Customers,<br><br>- Society,<br><br>- Shareholders and stakeholders.<br><br>Internal factors such as;<br><br>- Corporate strategy,<br><br>- Employees,<br><br>- Management. |
| 4. What are the major steps in which the organisational performance improving initiatives are carried out in your company by using online marketing? | Process and procedures adopted,<br><br>Steps taken to check and avoid deviations from standards,<br><br>Various steps followed. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 5. Among the various factors elaborated could you elaborate on the most critical factor which has to be focused to make implementation of online marketing initiatives with respect to organisational performance? | Contact Strategies,<br><br>Content Strategies,<br><br>Social Media Marketing,<br><br>The Google Trend,<br><br>New Techniques; Banners, Blogging, Conversational Marketing. |
| 6. In what way has the implementation of online marketing initiatives added value to your organisation in achieving competitive advantage? | Improving customer relations,<br><br>Positive impacts have had on goods, services and operations,<br><br>Ways in which it has added value to the corporate image. |
| **Lessons & Obstacles**<br><br>7. What were the obstacles faced while implementing the various initiatives on organisational performance of online marketing? | Conflicts of interests between departments,<br><br>Costs versus benefits analysis,<br><br>Obstacles from management,<br><br>Shareholders,<br><br>Staff. |
| 8. To what extent is the online marketing's perspective embedded in the corporate strategy? | Customer relations,<br><br>Marketing and selling of goods and services,<br><br>Operations. |
| 9. How much percentage of profits annually is utilised to ensure the implementation of online marketing initiatives and how is this been justified to stakeholders? | Increased or decrease in contributions per annum,<br><br>Percentage figures. |
| 10. What is the future of online marketing for organisational performance improving initiatives of the company? | Future plan of action, how it will be achieved,<br><br>Target or goals willing to accomplish,<br><br>The support from management, employees & regulatory authority. |

I need to finish this questionnaire by collecting some background information about you.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11) Age Group : | [ ] | 18-25 | [ ] | 26-35 | [ ] | 36-45 |
| | [ ] | 46-55 | [ ] | 55+ | | |
| 12) Education : | [ ] | High School | [ ] | Bachelor's | [ ] | Masters Degree |
| | [ ] | Doctorate | [ ] | Professional | [ ] | Other…… |
| 13) Gender : | [ ] | Female | [ ] | Male | | |
| 14) Marital St: | [ ] | Single | [ ] | Married | [ ] | Separated |
| | [ ] | Divorced | [ ] | Widowed | [ ] | Other…… |
| 15) Tenure : | [ ] | <1Year | [ ] | 1-<3Years | [ ] | 3-<5Years |
| | [ ] | 5-<10Years | [ ] | 10Years< | | |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Please be assured that your responses will be treated as strictly confidential and used by the researcher for academic purpose only.

Yours Faithfully,

Sevilay AKGUN

University of Wales

# Appendix 3: Questionnaire to Feature Online Marketing's Effectiveness in Improving Organisational Performance from Employees' Perspective in Thomas Cook Group in London/UK


Online Marketing Implementation Questionnaire

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am an International Management- Masters of Business Administration (MBA) student at the University of Wales and writing my dissertation. The following is a survey form I have prepared for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of online marketing by determining the problems and bringing solution suggestions by considering the perspectives of international travel companies operating in the sector.

The questionnaire is the part of my fulfilment for the MBA dissertation and it aims to investigate employees' opinions about online marketing and its effectiveness at Thomas Cook in London/ UK. The information collected will be used only for the academic purpose and kept confidential. The results will be used only in the abstract format in my thesis statement for academic purposes. At no time your organisation will be identified and yet your responses will be combined with several other participants.

Thank you for your participation!

Faithfully yours,

Sevilay AKGUN

## Section 1: General Questions

Different scales are attached to the questions.

Please read the instructions with regards to each scale carefully, before answering a question.

1) Approximately how many employees are there in your department?

- Less than 10
- Between 10 and 25
- Between 25 and 50
- Between 50 and 100
- More than 100

2) How long have you been utilising from online marketing?

- Between 1 and 2 years
- Between 2 and 5 years
- Between 5 and 7 years
- Between 7 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

3) What is your ethnic origin?

[ ] Asian..... [ ] Oriental..... [ ] African.....

[ ] South American..... [ ] African American..... [ ] European.....

[ ] Other (Please state).....

4) What is your annual income?

[ ] Less than £5 000 [ ] £5 000 - £15 000 [ ] £15 000 - £25 000

[ ] £25 000 - £35 000 [ ] £35 000 - £45 000 [ ] > £45 000

5) Are you currently living permanently in London?

[ ] British, living permanently in London

[ ] Non-British, living permanently in London

[ ] Non-British, temporarily living in London

## Section 2: Research Questions

6) Which of the following services that you offer to your customers in online services?

Please give frequencies using the scale.

| Online Services | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information Services | | | | | |
| Package Holidays | | | | | |
| Last Minute Reservations | | | | | |
| Special Offers | | | | | |
| Accommodation Options | | | | | |
| Flight Options | | | | | |
| Accommodation & Flight Options | | | | | |
| Cruise Services | | | | | |
| Travel Insurance | | | | | |
| Travel Car Hire | | | | | |
| Airport Parking | | | | | |
| Airport Lounges | | | | | |
| Store Locator | | | | | |
| Online Vouchers | | | | | |
| Brand Differentiation | | | | | |

7) Have you ever outsourced in any significant matter regarding online marketing implementation?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please mark the most similar matter that you outsourced

- To apply new online marketing trends
- To avoid privacy issues legally
- To gain the advantages of social media
- To improve content strategy
- To improve customer relations

Please state if there is any others:

_____

8) Please evaluate if the following are the problems of online marketing in the organisation.

Please give the frequencies using the scale from "1" the least important to "5" the most important.

| Problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of Benefiting from Online Marketing Tools | | | | | |
| Weak Economic Developments | | | | | |
| Weak Profitability | | | | | |
| Lack of Qualified Work Force | | | | | |
| Lack of Investment on Technology | | | | | |

9) Please evaluate if the following are the solutions in order to solve the problems.

Please give the frequencies using the scale.

| Solutions | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree In Part | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outsourcing Activities Must Increase | | | | | |
| Information Systems Must Be Used | | | | | |
| Acquisitions | | | | | |
| Mergers | | | | | |
| Partnerships | | | | | |

10) How could we improve our organisational performance via online marketing?

_____
_____

Feel free to make additional remarks

_____
_____
_____

## Section 3: Background Information

I need to finish this questionnaire by collecting some background information about you.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11) Age Group : | [ ] | 18-25 | [ ] | 26-35 | [ ] | 36-45 | |
| | [ ] | 46-55 | [ ] | 55+ | | | |
| 12) Education : | [ ] | Primary School | [ ] | High School | [ ] | Bachelor's | |
| | [ ] | Masters Degree | [ ] | Doctorate | [ ] | Other……. | |
| 13) Gender : | [ ] | Female | [ ] | Male | | | |
| 14) Marital St: | [ ] | Single | [ ] | Married | [ ] | Separated | |
| | [ ] | Divorced | [ ] | Widowed | [ ] | Other…… | |
| 15) Tenure : | [ ] | <1Year | [ ] | 1-<3Years | [ ] | 3-<5Years | |
| | [ ] | 5-<10Years | [ ] | 10Years< | | | |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please be assured that your responses will be treated as strictly confidential and used by the researcher for academic purpose only.

Yours Faithfully,

Sevilay AKGUN

University of Wales

# LIST OF FIGURES



# LIST OF TABLES