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*With a focus on Ethical and Sustainable Business*

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**Lesley Pocock**  
Chief Editor  
Publisher and Managing Director  
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The greatest problem facing humanity and the entire planet at the end of year 2017 is greed and corruption.

It has manifest itself as corrupt governments, corrupt organisations and corrupt big business, and the corrupt, and often big time criminal profligates support each other in their greed by exercising the power that comes with obscene wealth. They who “have everything” don’t even pay their way; they avoid paying taxes, and the working and the poor pay for everything. They don’t give back to the planet either; they seem happy to see the planet and ecosystems destroyed in the name of even more wealth in their own lifetime – wealth that they have no reason or need for.

Is it that wealth and power corrupts and absolute wealth and power corrupts absolutely?

I think that is already their path. Those who are rich and powerful are the sort of people who when they see their fellow humans in distress or need, use their money and power to monopolise and gain from that situation. Those who are poor and good are destined to remain poor as in the same situation they will share their food and their wealth and their shelter with their fellows

in need. It has always been like this and certainly civilisation has always been on a downward moral path throughout history because of these profligates in our midst. It is 2018 and we are still killing each other and taking each other's countries. Why? Why are so called leaders murdering and torturing their own country men who do not take kindly to their dictatorships. Why - because some evil man is making money out of the situation.

It would seem, only those with nothing at all should be politicians and leaders. That way we get the best of people in power. Not all men seem capable of higher motivations.

It has brought the planet and global society to its knees and still people everywhere live in fear of the very end of planetary viability and humankind. Some may say we deserve it for our irresponsibility and shocking behaviour over the millennia. But the shocking behaviour is of those who desperately seek power. It is due to their rampant corruption and greed. Their very existence is repugnant to all those who try so hard to create a fair and decent world for all creatures that dwell on it.

Is the destruction of the planet itself also their fault? – well in many ways, yes it is. They have not only deemed the vast resources we once had on this planet (be they minerals or oceanic fish stocks) as their own to keep or exploit for money, they have used men, women's and children's bodies and lives without permission to create their wealth and to cater to their salaciousness. They are responsible for most misery, most death, and most environmental degradation. They have taken the food out of other people's mouths.

An estimated 100 million people were homeless worldwide in 2017. Nearly 1/2 of the world's population, more than 3 billion people, live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty, less than \$1.25 a day. 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty.

And if all this seems a little extreme and comments of the 'bleeding hearts' i.e. committed people of the planet, let us look at the Panama papers and the Paradise papers – the latter leaked toward the end of 2017 (November 2017).

The Paradise papers exposed the tax havens of the rich and powerful so they can avoid paying tax - like nearly everyone else, has to. The wealthy and corrupt still drive on the roads that the tax payers have built and use the amenities paid for by the working poor. The greedy and corrupt rich not only don't pay their share – too often they pay nothing at all.

### Paradise papers

The Paradise Papers are a set of 13.4 million confidential electronic documents relating to offshore investments that were leaked to the German reporters Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer from the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The newspaper shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, and a network of more than 380 journalists. Some of the details were made public on 5 November 2017.

The documents originate from offshore magic circle member Appleby, the corporate services providers Eterra and Asiaciti Trust, and business registries in 19 tax jurisdictions. They contain the names of more than 120,000 people and companies. Among those whose financial affairs are mentioned are, separately, AIG, Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth II, President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. This leak of confidential data is second only to the Panama Papers in 2016 as the biggest expose in history.

In 20 October 2017, an anonymous Reddit user hinted at the existence of the Paradise Papers. Later that month, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) approached the offshore law firm Appleby with allegations of wrongdoing. Appleby said that some of its data had been stolen in a cyber attack the previous year, and denied the ICIJ's allegations. After media outlets started reporting on the documents, the company said that there was "no evidence of wrongdoing", that they "are a law firm which advises clients on legitimate and lawful ways to conduct their business", and that they "do not tolerate illegal behaviour". Appleby stated that the firm "was not the subject of a leak but of a serious criminal act" and that "this was an illegal computer hack".

The documents were acquired by the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which had also obtained the Panama Papers in 2016. According to the BBC, the name "Paradise Papers" reflects "the idyllic profiles of many of the offshore jurisdictions whose workings are unveiled", so-called tax havens, or "tax paradises". The BBC also notes that the name is similar to the French term for a tax haven—*paradis fiscal*. The data comprises some 13.4 million documents from two offshore service providers, Appleby and Asiaciti Trust, and from the company registers of 19 tax havens. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* journalists contacted the ICIJ, which had been investigating the documents with 100 media partners. The consortium made the data available to the media partners using Neo4j, a graph-database platform made for connected data, and Linkurious, graph-visualization software. This allowed journalists across the globe to undertake collaborative investigative work.

The documents were released by the consortium on 5 November 2017.

According to the papers, Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Disney, Uber, Nike, Walmart, Allianz, Siemens, McDonald's, Allergen and Yahoo! are among the corporations that own offshore companies. According to *The Express Tribune*, "Apple, Nike, and Facebook avoided billions of dollars in tax using offshore companies."

Among the Indian companies listed in the papers are Apollo Tyres, the Essel Group, D S Construction, Emaar MGF, GMR Group, Irgaells, Hinduja Group, the Hiranandani Group, Jindal Steel, the Sun Group and Videocon.

### The Panama papers

Earlier and prior to that, the Panama papers were published in 2015. They constituted 11.5 million leaked documents that detail financial and attorney-client information for more than 214,488 offshore entities. The documents, some dating back to the 1970s, were created by, and taken from, Panamanian law firm and corporate service provider Mossack Fonseca, and were leaked in 2015 by an anonymous source.

The documents contain personal financial information about wealthy individuals and public officials that had previously been kept private. While offshore business entities are legal, reporters found that some of the Mossack Fonseca shell corporations were used for illegal purposes, including fraud, tax evasion, and evading international sanctions.

The 'whistleblower' who leaked the documents to German journalist Bastian Obermayer from the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), remains anonymous, even to the journalists who worked on the investigation. In a May 6 statement, he or she cited income inequality as the reason for his action, and said he leaked the documents "simply because I understood enough about their contents to realise the scale of the injustices they described. He or she added that they had never worked for any government or intelligence agency and expressed willingness to help prosecutors if granted immunity from prosecution. After it was verified that the statement did in fact come from the source for the Panama Papers, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) posted the full document on its website.

### So what is the outcome for ordinary people, small business and decent large businesses and humanity generally?

It is not a 'philosophical saying' that "if you take more than you give in your lifetime you have depleted the planet". It is a simple and obvious truth.

There are of course the NGOs, those groups of decent people, such as the United Nations, AVAAZ, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, and others in large groups, or by individual efforts fighting this, what many see as the 'final battle', and they are not just having to fight the corrupt and their law suits and their threats and their physical violence, they are having to fight (so called) democratically elected governments that are too readily corrupted. Too often these days it seems politics is a career path to obscene wealth and corruption - if we are to observe the current world closely. Political leaders are too often dictators robbing their own countries – and the bigger the country, the more corrupt their leader seems to be. It is a simple mathematical equation.

Those 6 profligates, the "men" that "own" "half the world's wealth" (Oxfam and many other sources) certainly deserve nothing at all but life prison sentences. Those 200 that own 90% of the World's wealth deserve the same..



It must be pointed out that it is not 'business' that is bad innately. Business provides all of our earthly needs; it just also provides a conduit for evil people to be unconscionably greedy and corrupt.

Is this all new? History tells us it is not. There is just more of us now and more at stake. Destruction is an ongoing process and we are close to the end. It is almost unbelievable a handful of misanthropes can destroy an entire planet and the lives of all other creatures on it – but such are the current days of planet earth. Ancient universal wisdom has said the same, as humans have always been exploited and robbed by such misanthropes. Early history warned of the "7 deadly sins" (pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony). These sins are often thought to be abuses or excessive versions of one's natural faculties or passions (for example, gluttony abuses one's desire to eat). No doubt greed and slovenliness/sloth – two of the ancient "7 deadly sins" have been with us for time in memoriam. In those days however there really still were "plenty of fish in the sea" and lands to discover, and treasures to be dug up and exploited.

So fast forward on to the modern day where there is hardly a square inch of soil or cubic meter of sea that has not been robbed of value or fouled with dumped waste – our combined inheritance is about to disappear – forever. 80,000 scientists came out in November 2017 and rightly, honestly and undisputedly say we are heading for catastrophe due to total ignorance of all the signs, and common sense and straightforward observation, (i.e. seeing things with our own eyes, seeing that temperatures on thermometers are showing much higher, that glaciers and ice sheets are melting/much smaller, that crops are failing, that sea levels are rising, that cyclones and tornados have stronger and more destructive wind forces).

Those disputing these facts have a personal interest in grabbing a bit more for themselves while they can and they manage to fool the ignorant and uneducated that it is all about looking after them, not themselves.

South Pacific island nations are literally disappearing as sea levels rise.

In the Marshall islands a huge dump of plutonium, from US nuclear tests, (plutonium takes billions of years to become harmless) is just about to be washed into the Pacific ocean – yes, you guessed it, global warming. So it is not just the single events caused by stupid, short-sighted, slovenly and greedy acts – they are starting to happen together and the problem compounds and multiplies and becomes more complex.

Now political prisoners are being robbed of their very organs; and the poor are selling their organs (another form of robbery) all to keep the rich alive so they can get a few more years of self indulgence.

The Bible and the Quran discuss greed.

### What does the Bible say about money and greed?

Proverbs 1:19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain. ... Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 1 Corinthians 6:10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. Sep 10, 2017

### Quran and Hadiths on Greed

#1. On the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying, "If a son of Adam had a valley full of gold, he would desire to have

two. Nothing can fill his mouth except the dust (of his grave). [al-Bukhari (6437) and Muslim (1049)]

#2. "By Allah I do not fear poverty and starvation overtaking you, but I fear that you will have abundant wealth at your disposal as it had been at the disposal of the nations before you. You will then become extremely greedy in accumulating this wealth just as the previous nations had done. This (greed) will be the cause of your ruin and destruction just as it destroyed the people before you." [al-Bukhari (3158) and Muslim (2961)]

#4. Ibn 'Abbas told Ibn az-Zubayr, "I heard the Prophet (SAW), say, 'A man is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbour is hungry.'" [Al-Adab al-Mufrad Al-Bukhari, #112]

### Defining Greed

The English word "greed" usually is defined as attempting to possess more than one needs or deserves, especially at the expense of others. We're taught from childhood that we shouldn't be greedy.

From a Buddhist perspective, however, the distinction between greed and desire is artificial: To want passionately is a hindrance and a poison, whether one "deserves" the thing wanted or not.

The 'Doomsday clock' that scientists use to predict disasters warns we're scarily close to catastrophe. In 2017 more than 15,000 of the world's leading climate scientists have issued a stark warning — time is running out to prevent a global environmental collapse.

It's believed to be the largest number of scientists to ever put their names to a study which predicts catastrophic problems that could come from climate change.

It predicts temperature rises and unpredictable weather patterns will cause widespread misery. But it says it's not too late for governments to do something about the problem.

Gratefully we had all countries (but one – one of the three greatest polluters of our planet) for a while honouring the Paris Climate agreement until the greatest capitalist society, with a government that currently worships greed, pulled out – giving the rest a chance or opportunity to do the same.

It may be business and technology that comes to save us once we clear the decks of the cancer on humanity. A pristine planet fuelled by high technology is the answer and we all have the capacity generally to create that. It is an aspect of 'human nature' that is the great problem, not our tools, devices, and machines. It is the psychopathy of human nature. Even now some are working cleverly and intelligently to make better things happen. Cannot the future be put into their hands and immediately taken from the hands that hold it?

We need to drop greed, vanity, envy, anger, slovenliness, gluttony, pride, sloth, - they are the tools of the rich and corrupt – who have fed us their foods packed with sugar and trans fats to make us inept gluttons, they have used their technological devices (the apps of mental illness and ineptitude) to make us slothful, and proud, and envious and vain, and they stir up anger to fire their wars where others are sent to die so they can gain money from sales of arms.

We need to find and follow our seven, or more, great attributes: integrity, valour, commitment, courage, defiance, intelligence, resistance, honesty, respect and decency.

Let us make 2018 the year we turned it all around. Wishing you all a safe, happy, peaceful and prosperous 2018.

# Web based Entrepreneurship via Social Networking Sites: Bangladesh Perspective

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## Abstract

The utilization of social networking sites (SNS) by business visionaries is developing more quickly than at no other time throughout the world. Bangladesh is not a special case. Hence the components that assume the most contributing parts for online business visionaries who utilize a social networking site should have been found. The aim of this paper is to decide the relationship between social networking sites and business enterprise. Close to that, the study has attempted to discover the SNS's important components that influence these business visionaries. A comprehensive survey was conducted to gather information from the business visionaries who lead their business by utilizing social networking sites. The business people were haphazardly chosen from all over Bangladesh. The results demonstrated that the significant factors which influence entrepreneurship are "easy access to the internet," "effectiveness as a promotional tool" and "purchasing behavior" but another factor that does not affect enterprise significantly is the "cost factor." On the contrary for the betterment and the prosperity of the economy of the country, it needs young, self-motivated, creative entrepreneurs. This paper provides the fundamental principles for them with the goal that they can make sense of the noteworthy components to consider and disregard the unimportant in the field of SNSs and online business enterprise.

Key words: Social networking sites, entrepreneurship, Bangladesh

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## 1. Introduction

By utilizing social networking sites people and gatherings associate and impart information all through the world. In the decade of data framework, social networking sites have assumed a fundamental part in changing business and correspondence (Haque et al., 2013). A portion of the sites are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Whatsapp, and so forth. One of the speediest approaches to growing a business' substance is through social networking sites (Livingstone and Brake, 2009). Some social networking sites have emerged to ease interaction between and among the people who have a common interest in and want to share education, music, and movies and so on (Valkenburg et al., 2006). All these radical changes in the social environment likewise influence the method for business people to direct their business and advertisements and other special exercises.

Bangladesh is very nearly achieving the digital age. The vision of "Digital Bangladesh" of the legislature has improved the appropriation of the web and online networking. Thus, new doors have been opened to investigate new parts of working together. In the previous couple of years (2013-2015) business through the informal organization has turned out to be to a great degree well known among the young entrepreneurs (Sultana & Momen, 2017). Simplicity of beginning any new business is by all accounts not the only reason, yet interpersonal interaction destinations are quickly getting acknowledgment as limited time devices in the nation and is another significant explanation behind the specific utilization of these sites by business visionaries (Begum, 2003). Regardless of its engaging quality, a few people wind up ineffective because of their lack of data about the buying conduct of purchasers. Another huge test is the unscrupulous specialists who are taking focal points of this field by abusing the online purchasers and who are similarly hurtful to online purchasers. To give noteworthy data to the concerned gatherings including government, this study has attempted to decide the contributing components to further the prosperity of this sector and to outline activities that will support business through online social networking.

## Literature Review

### Effectiveness of Social Networking Sites as Promotional Tools

Social media is now known as consumer-generated media. Because of this media, the tools and strategies for communication have been changed significantly with the emergence of these social networking sites. To create, initiate and circulate information about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues these social networking sites are enormously used (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004, p. 2).

Now consumers ignore the traditional sources of promotional tools like advertisements of radio, television, magazines, and newspapers. Consumers now demand more control over their media consumption. They want immediate access to information with convenience (Rashtchy et al., 2007). Consumers are frequently using several social networking sites to conduct their information searches and to make their purchase decisions. Social media has become a more trustworthy source of information towards the consumers regarding any product and service than any sponsored communications through traditional promotional tools (Foux, 2006). Entrepreneurs must adopt social media to make their marketing efforts fruitful. Social media can accelerate the marketing strategies and also the outcomes of the companies greatly. And it is also possible for the small entrepreneurs without hiring expensive highly qualified staff.

### Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh

Bangladeshi Entrepreneurs have some characteristics which are quite similar to the characteristics of entrepreneurs of other countries. Mostly Bangladeshi entrepreneurs are hard workers, honest, religious, simple living, honest, sincere, good leaders; task oriented and have the capacity to influence others. Bachelor's degree is the highest degree they have achieved. Mostly they start their business after the age of 35. All of them came from non-business family backgrounds. They have previous job experience, and from that experience, they get help to make decisions and perform other managerial activities (Sultana & Momen, 2017). Mostly they are moderate risk takers, and they diversify their businesses (Rahman, 1989). Mostly the entrepreneurs come from three groups (Farouk, 1983), first, those families who have been in business or industry by tradition and their children are now in business. Second, retired government officers or politicians or their families and third, people who began small business but achieved considerable success through their personal efforts.

Because of risk and uncertainty entrepreneurs of Bangladesh feel discouraged to start any new venture even though the investments can be highly profitable and socially desirable. The reason behind the underdevelopment of entrepreneurship is the shortage of experienced entrepreneurs. On the contrary religion of the people of the country, is Islam mostly and that motivates them to conduct business (Sadeq, 1989). The present situation in the country is quite favorable for the young entrepreneurs who use social networking sites to conduct their businesses as they need to invest little and at the same time the risk factor is very low. Bangladeshi entrepreneurs are small risk takers, and the social media use has boomed recently. Al

these bring a perfect scenario for growing technology-oriented entrepreneurs to start, conduct and flourish their businesses by using social media (Sultana & Momen, 2017).

### Easy Access to the Internet

At present, there are around 30 social networking sites, and each one has more than one million registered users. In 2006, MySpace.com had 42 million unique visitors per month which was just after FaceBook.com that had 13 million visitors per month, and Xanga.com had 7.4 million unique visitors (Haque et al., 2013). All these were possible only because of the easy access to the internet. There were several reasons for which online business is growing like never before. Easy access to the web through multiple mediums is one of the major causes of this boom (Arbaugh, et. al, 2009).

### Low Cost of Using Internet

In this era, internet use is not only a daily phenomena rather it has become each minute's activity where people feel they are lost if they are not connected online even for a moment. All these have become possible because of easy access and low cost of using the internet (Sultana & Momen, 2017). These two significant advantages enforce business entrepreneurs to use more and more internet in every business activity including from procurement to marketing (Lancioni et al., 2003).

### Change in Purchasing Behavior

Demographic variables may contribute to influence consumer behavior on the web and this may diverge case to case (Kor-gaonkar and Wolin, 1999). If shopping expeditions are measured then, online shoppers are more demanding, utilitarian and sturdy than offline customers. Consequently, the overall loyalty of consumers on the web is low (Morrisette et al., 1999). In reality, offline customer loyalty depends on the availability of goods and charming relevant factors (Rice 1997, Eighmey, 1997). The focal point of power is shifting from the companies to consumers (Raman 1997). In recent times consumers do not favor traditional online advertising and other promotional activities (Maignan and Lukas, 1997). Online consumers are concerned with the risks inherent in buying on the Web, like credit card fraudulence and uncertainty in receiving the right products. Consumer purchasing behavior is changing based on two factors like the ease of using the internet and another is the perceived risk of deception (Heijden et al., 2001).

## Hypothesis development

From the literature review portion, several hypotheses can be developed. They are the followings:

**H1:** "Easy Access to the internet" influences the growth of Entrepreneurship

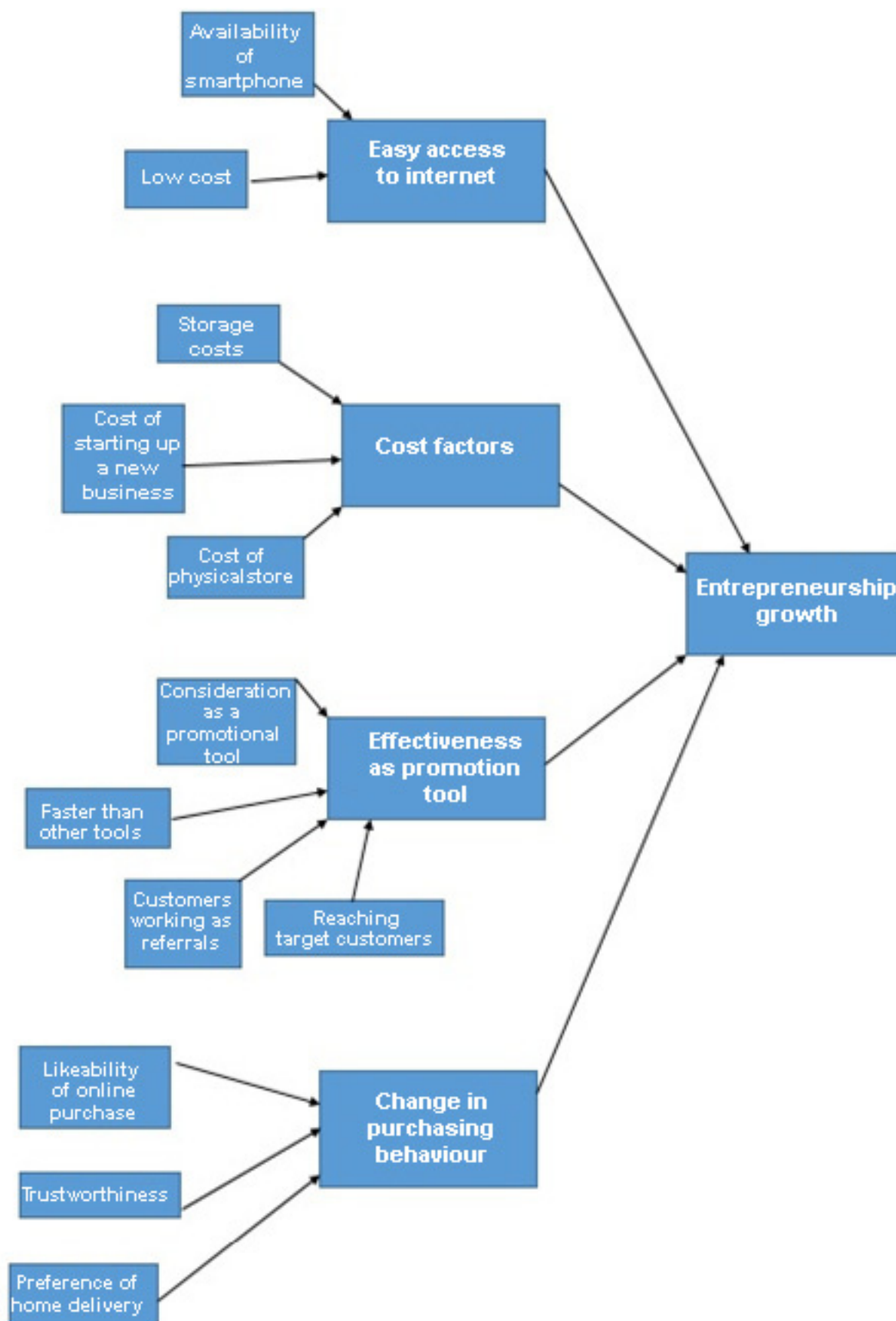
**H2:** "Cost factor of using internet" influences the growth of Entrepreneurship.

**H3:** "Effectiveness as a promotional tool" influences the growth of Entrepreneurship.

**H4:** "Change in purchasing behavior" influence the growth of Entrepreneurship

## Conceptual model

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study





## Methodology

The research is quantitative in nature. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 100 entrepreneurs of Bangladesh who are conducting their business with the help of social

networking sites. Five point Likert scales are used to measure the data. Sample adequacy test, factor analysis, and regression analysis have been done. By the use of several types of a statistical tool, it has become possible to identify which hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1:

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.739
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	465.560
	df	66
	Sig.	.000

From Table 1 or KMO and Bartlett's Test table, it is shown that the relevance of this study is 73.9% and the significance level is 0.000. Therefore the sample is quite adequate.

Table 2

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.571	29.754	29.754	3.571	29.754	29.754	2.122	17.681	17.681
2	1.448	12.068	41.822	1.448	12.068	41.822	2.100	17.496	35.177
3	1.314	10.950	52.772	1.314	10.950	52.772	1.592	13.266	48.443
4	1.043	8.692	61.465	1.043	8.692	61.465	1.563	13.021	61.465
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

From Table 2, it is clear that the cumulative percentage of the study is 61.465. Therefore the study is valid, and it can be further proceeded.

From Table 3 it can be figured out that the components EA1 (Low cost of Internet), EA2 (Availability of smartphones), CF2 (Storage cost), CF3 (cost of physical store), PT1 (consideration as a promotional tool), PT2 (Faster than other instruments), PT3 (Easy to reach target customer), PT4 (Customers work as referral), PB1 (Like to purchase through SNS), PB2 (Trustworthy) and PB5 (Home delivery) have significant impact on the dependent variable (Growth of Entrepreneurship).

The independent variables can explain 39.5% variation in the dependent variable. The independent variables (Easy Access to Internet, Cost Factor, Promotional Tool and Purchase Behavior) are enough to account for the variation in the dependent variable (Growth of Entrepreneurship) (Table 4).

From Table 5, it is found that the significance level of this study is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 which means the study is valid.



Table 3:

Rotated Component Matrix				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
EA1				.617
EA2				.737
CF1				
CF2			.747	
CF3			.825	
PT1	.684			
PT2	.527			
PT3	.815			
PT4	.689			
PB1		.808		
PB2		.764		
PB5		.733		
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

Table 4

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.629 <sup>a</sup>	.395	.380	.42862	.395	26.949	4	165	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Purchasing behavior, Easy access, Promotional tool, Cost factor									

Table 5:

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.804	4	4.951	26.949	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	30.314	165	.184		
	Total	50.118	169			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Purchasing behavior, Easy access, Promotional tool, Cost factor						
b. Dependent Variable: Ent_growth						

Table 6::

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.064	.294		3.621	.000
	Easy access	.123	.048	.166	2.567	.011
	Cost factor	.089	.055	.115	1.621	.107
	Promotional tool	.352	.069	.343	5.079	.000
	Purchasing behavior	.199	.051	.261	3.881	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Ent_growth						

The significance of "easy access to the internet" is 0.011, so the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So there's a relationship between easy access to the internet and the growth of entrepreneurship. Here, the Beta value for this variable is 0.166 which is the third most relatively important variable to the dependent variable.

The significance of "cost factor" is 0.107, so the null hypothesis is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. So there's no relationship between cost factors and the growth of entrepreneurship. Here, the Beta value for this variable is 0.115 which has no impact on the dependent variable.

The significance of "effectiveness as a promotional tool" is 0.000, so the null hypothesis for this variable is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So there's a relationship between effectiveness as a promotional tool and the growth of entrepreneurship. Here, the Beta value for this variable is 0.343 which is the first most relatively important variable to the dependent variable.

The significance of "Purchasing behavior" is 0.000, so the null hypothesis for this variable is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So there's a relationship between effectiveness as a purchasing behavior and the growth of entrepreneurship. Here, the Beta value for this variable is 0.261 which is second most relatively important variable to the dependent variable.

### Conclusion

Raising development of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and so forth are opening new prospects for a differing gathering of the masses. Alongside the expanding interest of SNS, there is likewise a developing chance which allows youthful business visionaries to begin their very own endeavours. Through social networking sites, youthful business visionaries can have simple access to their clients, can spread their offerings among customers rapidly and limited time movement should be possible also. Every one of these elements diminishes the cost and in addition decreases hindrances from the method for becoming a fruitful business person. This paper can be useful to a few youthful, spurred techno master business people by giving them the basic in-

formation on what they ought to do, which components they have to work out, and which of those is most significance. As these components are shown in this exploratory paper, consequently future business pioneers of the nation can be shaped, and they can work immediately because of low venture rates and low rate of support required in this area of business.

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# Information and communication technology workforce employability, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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## Abstract

The purpose of the study is to know information and communication technology workforce employability in Pakistan, to spot the causes that persuade the development of skill gaps in the information and communication technology workforce, and to find out ways to reduce these gaps. The methodology of the study comprises project reports and a literature review. The findings show that not only Pakistan but also China and Sri Lanka are facing the challenges of demand-supply gap as regards a quality information and communication technology-connected workforce. The study also shows that these countries do have similar obstacles and issues of satisfactorily qualified and practiced information and communication technology graduates. This study suggests that in light of the skills demanded by industries and organizations, information and communication technology workers could be trained through an updated course curriculum in line with the needs of industry. The employability of the workforce in general has been discussed in many papers. This paper specifically discusses employability issues of the information and communication technology workforce, and provides standards to information and communication technology educators and employers, as well as to possible information and communication technology graduates.

**Key words:** Information technology, Educational institutions, Training, Curriculum, Skills, Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka, Labor specialty.

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## Introduction

Information and telecommunication technology has developed into a key enabler in business success, and an important element in the base of today's forceful business environments (Bailey & Mitchell, (2006). As information and telecommunication technology offers more opportunities and tactical value to organizations, the demand for quality information and telecommunication technology professionals is growing every day. Although institutions create information technology graduates, there is a scarcity of quality information and telecommunication technology graduates (workforce) produced by institutions to meet unmet demand (Birrell et al., 2003). As a result, the issue of the non-employability of the information and telecommunication technology workforce has risen. The accepting of employability should be clear in this facet and can be defined as the degree to which employees have skills that the marketplace and employers regard as desired features (Scholarios et al., 2004).

The reasons for the back focusing on information and telecommunication technology workforce employability are:

- The sufficient supply of a skilled information and telecommunication technology workforce.
- The operation of information and telecommunication technology skills to a greater degree, since they help to drive economic growth in every country (Scholarios et al., 2004).

From the overall viewpoint, the information and telecommunication technology workforce has established itself to be a vital resource as a business and information technology strategy are professed to be probably allied to each other.

The skills gap among the information and telecommunication technology workforce creates differences in earnings. Over the past 30 years the earnings inconsistency between high and low skilled workers has increased in the USA and to a lesser degree in Europe (Mahony et al., 2008). This factor has led to the increased demand for skilled employees and the demand for an information workforce has increased greater than the supply of a skilled workforce. Although many

developing and developed countries are supplying information and telecommunication sectors workforce at a high rate to meet demand, the gap between demand and supply is still widening owing to information and telecommunication sectors graduates (soft and technical skills). The situation of information and telecommunication sectors workforce employability in the framework of Pakistan is quite similar to China and Sri Lanka. The demand for information workforce in Pakistan has increased in the recent years, but supply has not. Those graduates who are unemployed are those who do not meet industry necessities.

### **Information and telecommunication sectors workforce**

Before comparing and communicating the similarities along with Sri Lanka, China and Pakistan on the issue of information and telecommunication workforce employability, it is necessary to provide a brief and simple definition of an information and telecommunication workforce. An information and telecommunication workforce is composed of organizational employees undertaking designing, building, testing, maintaining and operating organizational applications and infrastructure. People who perform similar tasks to those mentioned above but who are positioned in a functional area within the organization, such as marketing, are also information technology workers. However the definition sometimes is unclear, as more workers in all fields increasingly attempt to shift their roles toward information processing (Pfeffer, 1998). Central to the concept of the information technology workforce are employees who are assigned to manage information systems (IS) or data processing departments for developing new applications, integrating diverse vendor products and maintaining an information infrastructure at firms whose main products may not be information and computer oriented (Niederman and Crosetto, 1999). Hence, the definition and nature of the information and telecommunication workforce for this study will refer to those workers who are honestly concerned with the creation of new information technology and the preservation of accessible processes. However, this boundary of understanding of the information and telecommunication workforce may vary from organization to organization depending on the type of organization and roles of its employees.

### **Information and telecommunication sectors workforce employability**

Following we outline the conclusion concerning the demand and supply of information and telecommunication workforce mutually with the skills gap, bridging this gap, and government initiatives in the context of China, Sri Lanka and Khyber, Pakistan.

### **Information and telecommunication workforce demand in China, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.**

The information and telecommunication field is flourishing by almost any standard worldwide. The scenario in China is not different from that growth. "The number of workers in the computer and software industries has almost tripled in the past decade" (Freeman and Aspray, 1999), and according to the projections by the Bureau of Labour Statistics for the period 2000-2010 (Noll and Wilkins, 2002), computer-related vacancies occupied eight of the top ten positions among the fastest growing occupations. Those computer-related occu-

pations included software applications engineers, support specialists, systems software engineers, network and systems administrators, network systems and data communications analysts, desktop publishers, database administrators, and systems analysts (Noll and Wilkins, 2002). From the projection by the department of Labor Statistics above, it is clear that the demand for information and telecommunication workforce will be elevated in China in the coming years. The situation in Sri Lanka is not much different from the China perspective. Although the number of information and telecommunication graduates has enlarged quickly in the past decade, it is still a very small number compared to the overall number of graduates emerging in various fields in Sri Lanka. On average each year, more than 2.5 million university graduates are produced in India, out of whom 20 per cent (0.50 million) are from technical majors. According to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM; only 25 per cent of those technical graduates (125,000 out of 0.50 million) are from engineering majors, and approximately 15 per cent of the rest of the two million graduates (300,000) are considered employable by fast-growing IT companies. However, the remaining 75 per cent of technical graduates (375,000 out of 0.50 million) are unemployable. Therefore, the demand for a skilled information and telecommunication workforce remains high in China due to information and telecommunication graduates' deficient soft and technical skills. From the Pakistani perspective, information and telecommunication or computer-related work opportunities have increased rapidly, even though there was a worldwide economic downturn in 2009.

### **Information and telecommunication workforce supply in China, Sri Lanka and Khyber Pakistan.**

Knowing the demand, it is then necessary to know the supply side of the information and telecommunication workforce. From the China perspective, the current demand for skilled telecommunication workers is greatly exceeding predictions, whereas the supply of skilled information and telecommunication graduates is not that high. One of the main causes is that the capacity of China's training institutions is not sufficient to meet demand. This helps us understand the clear evidence of both the increased number of job vacancies that evidences the high demand, and on the other side, recruitment problems in the computing field due to a lack of a supply of skilled workers. As a result of that evidence, alarm bells have been ringing in both industry and government sectors in China. The situation is that if China cannot produce the required number of information and telecommunication professionals, then its capacity to be a competitive global player in knowledge industries may be under threat (Birrell et al., 2009). The supply of the information workforce in Sri Lanka seems to be the same as China. There was a shortage of supply in previous years. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) predicted that India's IT sector was expected to face a shortfall of half a million professionals by 2010, while it was suggested by an International Data Corporation (IDC) report (Cisco, N.D.) that Sri Lanka was expected to experience a shortage of 118,000 skilled IT networking professionals in the year 2008 alone. The situation for the years 2009 and 2010 is still unknown, but perhaps through forecasting of the information and telecommunication workforce in Sri Lanka, it may have been that current demand was met. The scenario in

Pakistan is surprising too, as Pakistan has addressed the shortage of a skilled information and telecommunication workforce.

### **Skill gap among the information and telecommunication graduates**

A skill gap is defined as a shortage of skills in any graduate needed by industry, at the time of appointment as an information and telecommunication worker. There is a huge shortage of skilled information and telecommunication workforce in China, although universities are producing quite a large number of graduates; however, the skills gap among these information and telecommunication or computer related graduates is wider. A similar scenario is also found in Sri Lanka. There is a wide skills gap among the information workforce in Sri Lanka. One of the main causes for the skills gap lies in the quality of talents being produced (Cisco, N.D.). It is not surprising that Pakistan too has a huge skills gap in the information and communication technology workforces. Government and industry have addressed the information and telecommunication skills shortage, and Pakistan Higher Education commission (HEC) has signed an agreement with networking solutions firm Cisco to help address the country's growing information and communication technology skills shortage (Kumar, 2010). Thus, it is clear that in all three countries (i.e. China, Sri Lanka and Pakistan) there is a shortage of skilled information and telecommunication graduates among the overall workforce.

### **Bridging the skills gap and government initiatives**

In China, in response to the shortage of skilled information and telecommunication workforce, the government has announced a series of initiatives and approaches related to information and telecommunications. First of all, these initiatives included more research on the skills needed and a survey to understand student demand for computing courses in universities, as many qualified students cannot secure a place in particular courses. Secondly, there was expected to be better information flow between industry and the higher education institutions to encourage more appropriate training programs for the students of computing on a regular basis. The third initiative was to improve communications between industry and educational institutions, such as industry-funded internship programs for undergraduates and graduate students and perhaps industry-university partnership in teaching and learning. Finally, the Chinese government launched an initiative from an immigration point of view to understand the opportunity of overseas students to go to Australia to study in computing-related fields that would allow those students to apply for permanent residence under the skilled Chinese linked and independent categories directly upon completing their courses. In all these ways, the Chinese government initiated essential steps to reduce the gap in the information and telecommunication skilled workforce (Birrell et al., 2001).

In the context of Sri Lanka, a good initiative has been undertaken to engage industry and academia to develop an updated curriculum focusing on industry demands for students in information and telecommunication-related fields. The current state of the information and telecommunication workforce in Sri Lanka shows a compelling case for public-private partnership through industry-academia alliances to enhance capacity development amongst university students. As well as the in-

dustry-academia memorandum, NASSCOM's IT Workforce Development (ITWD) program is specifically designed to address the issues and concerns of the industry as well as the challenges and opportunities of the higher learning institutions. Many IT companies have partnerships with engineering colleges, and about 20 universities have established expanded engagement between industry and the academic world to create universally accepted benchmarks such as some certifications and policy-driven changes in academic curriculum (Cisco, 2003). Therefore, educational institutions can now update their syllabus for certain specialized academic courses in order to make them more relevant to meet industry needs, with regular revisions and updates from high-profile corporate professionals who have a deep understanding of current business developments and various technical standards around the world.

### **Discussion on findings**

China has a lack of IT training institutions as well as low enrolment opportunities for talented students in universities for information-related programs. Sri Lanka has a very low percentage of students entering higher education. However, Pakistan has a small number of skilled information and telecommunication professionals. Graduates are coming out of each higher learning institution, but the question is whether they have the quality skills that are required by employers, or whether there is a skills gap between what skills are currently in demand and the skills that university graduates possess. The answer is yes, there is a huge gap between demand and supply in the information and telecommunication workforce in Pakistan. In most cases top IT companies prefer graduates from certain universities due to the perceived good quality of their graduates. This scenario may not have happened if there had been a strong understanding and good relationships among universities and industry in Malaysia. India could be a good example here. In India links are maintained among the engineering colleges and industry, together with 20 universities collaborating in order to exchange ideas, information and knowledge to try to reduce the skills gap of the information and telecommunication workforce.

There is also a need to ensure that Pakistan's young people and graduates are sufficiently skilled and well trained to meet the demands of the job market. Information and telecommunication graduates should not only have the relevant paper qualifications but should be suitably skilled in the practical and commercial aspects of business. Therefore, the potential information and telecommunication graduates need to have a proper mindset based on the current and potential market demands. Some higher learning institutions have established training institutions or departments such as a Centre for IT Advancement to a Centre for IT Excellence in order to offer professional and practical IT courses, and vocational training courses, but they still are very few compared to the number needed to meet the demands of the market. Thus, creating and maintaining industry-academia ties is very important in this regard.

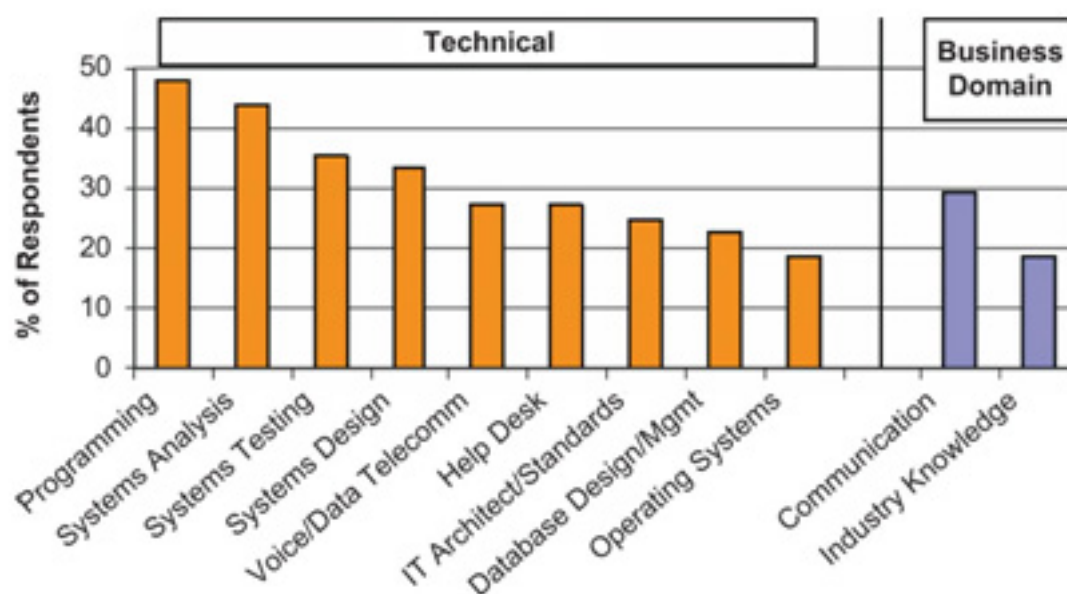
Table 1 presents a summary of these discussions.



Table 1: Comparison based on the specific criteria found in the study

No.	Criteria	Pakistan	China	Sri Lanka
1	Low enrolment in IS program	✓	✓	✓
2	Public-private partnership: memorandum between			
3	Industry and academia	X	X	✓
3	Demand for skilled ICT workforce	✓	✓	✓

Figure 1: Top entry-level skills desired by the employers



### Implications for higher education

According to the study conducted by Abraham et al. (2006), the top entry-level skills desired by employers are programming, system analysis, system testing, system design, voice/data telecommunication, help desk, IT architect, database design and management and operating systems in the technical domain; and communication and industry knowledge in the business domain (see Figure 1).

After determining which skills are very important for fresh information and communication technology graduates to obtain, we now aim to understand how the most desired entry-level skills provide useful insight into the value of IS or IT programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Initially, the basic technical skills are those required of entry-level employees; these are the most likely to be outsourced in larger organizations. Thus, we can conclude that there will be little opportunity for technical graduates at larger firms. This may vary depending on the curriculum of the IS program. The more significant message is that

in most cases IT senior management want to hire information and communication technology or information system (IS) graduates with a foundation in technical skills, but also with knowledge of the business domain and project management skills, and in addition, the capability to work closely in a team in non-technical departments.

From the context of higher learning institutions, having IS programs in business schools is the right approach to preparing tomorrow's information and communication technology workforce by teaching technical skills together with business fundamentals, analysis and design, and the capabilities to communicate and work on projects effectively through learning project management skills. In many universities, the information systems programs offered in the business schools are designed to emphasize a combination of skills and capabilities for students. The aim of IS programs is to produce graduates with adequate technical knowledge to manage IT and understand its critical role in the organizations.

Understanding the alignment of information systems to business is vital in IS programs. This orientation equips IS graduates with a diverse and more relevant set of skills and capabilities as compared to those acquired by a graduate with a computer science degree, which teaches technology without having a solid grounding in the areas of management and business. Thus, it is suggested that each business school has an IS program that is developed with an influence of both technical and soft skills that will suit IS graduates in any business organization.

## Conclusion

Information and communication technology workforce employability is not only an issue for Pakistan, but also for China and Sri Lanka. The employment market for information and communication technology graduates in Pakistan is competitive, as are other sectors. It is important to realize that the demand for skilled information and communication technology graduates and IT professionals is very high, even though universities are producing quite large numbers of information and communication technology graduates per year. However, in terms of quality, most of those graduates do not meet the skill requirements desired by IT employers. The dilemma is that what industry expects from potential graduates in most cases is unknown to the universities, and what universities are producing seems not to be welcomed by IT employers in many companies. This scenario may not be true in all cases, but is in the majority. This study has pointed out why the demand-supply gap is getting wider, and how Pakistan especially could overcome this situation. While key players in the country, such as the government, universities and industry, are aware of and inclined to bridge the skill gap of information and communication technology graduates, there is no satisfactory strategy in the first place that would allow universities and industry to play their roles effectively. Therefore, this study provides some implications for higher education, and proposes recommendations for IS curriculum reform based on the business context in Pakistan.

In a triangulated approach, government, universities and industry need to sort out the shortage of a skilled workforce in the future. A collaborative link and an agreement to produce graduates with the required skills to meet the future demands and contribute to the economic growth of Pakistan is needed.

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# Overcoming SMEs' resistance to learning through a metaphor/storyline approach: A qualitative assessment of a novel marketing intervention

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## Abstract

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have a high failure rate when compared with larger firms, even when controlling for the age of the business. This is a problem because SMEs are important for job creation and economic growth. Instructor-led intervention strongly predicts SME survival. Marketing is one area in which intervention can improve performance. However, to date, few interventions exist to improve marketing skills and strategy among SMEs, and none have been subjected to rigorous examination. Additionally, interventions often face the problem of resistance to learning among SME managers and employees. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to assess a short-term marketing intervention with a metaphor/storyline approach, to answer the following research question: What is the meaning of the intervention program for participants, and how does the intervention change SMEs' organizational culture? Pre- and post-intervention interviews, along with a researcher's log, provided qualitative data for coding analysis. Results revealed five categories pertaining to the changes effected by the intervention: (a) perceptions of marketing, (b) organizational structure, (c) organizational culture, (d) marketing activities and sales, and (e) brand awareness. It was concluded that the intervention overcame resistance to learning and resulted in some operational changes at participating SMEs, but lasting structural and cultural change were minimal after the intervention.

**Key words:** SME marketing, small business marketing, business intervention, marketing intervention, metaphor, storyline approach, training, adult education

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## Introduction and Background

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have a high failure rate when compared with larger firms (Alawa & Quisenberry, 2015; Delmar & Shane, 2003; Storey, Keasey, Watson, & Wynarczyk, 2016). Firm size and probability of failure are strongly inversely correlated, even when controlling for the age of the business (Haswell & Holmes, 1989; Purves, Niblock, & Sloan, 2016). Such high SME failure rates are a problem because SMEs are important to job creation and economic growth (Gilmore et al., 2001; Jones & Rowley, 2011; O'Dwyer et al., 2009), and they thereby contribute to the stability of national economies (Maron & Lussier, 2014).

Instructor-led intervention strongly predicts SME survival (Lussier & Corman, 1995; Maron & Lussier, 2014). Therefore, it is important to design interventions that can help improve SME business success and reduce the SME failure rate. Marketing is one area in which intervention can improve performance. In Israel, where the present study takes place, 24% of managers of failed SMEs claim that their failure was due to their inability to market strategically (Friedman, 2005). This was the top-cited failure reason, with finance (20%) being the second most common. Several studies around the world have identified good marketing as a key to SME business success (Bates, 1990; Moutray, 2007; Shane & Delmar, 2004), because it helps SMEs remain competitive against larger firms (Van Scheers, 2011). Without marketing knowledge, SMEs may experience difficulty remaining solvent, and bad marketing may make existing problems worse (Jovanov & Stojanovski, 2012; Moutray, 2007).

Tock and Baharub (2010) indicated a need for a facilitator-led intervention that teaches SME managers and employees to effectively implement marketing to be competitive. However, few such interventions have been developed, and, to my knowledge, none have been subjected to rigorous empirical examination. This lack of research on marketing interventions targeting SMEs is one of the problems addressed in this study.

Another key problem is that, in SME contexts, there is often strong resistance to learning on the part of managers and employees (Furst & Cable, 2008; Frese et al., 2003; Legge et al., 2007; Spangler et al., 2004). There is a need for research



examining interventions with the potential to overcome resistance to learning in SME contexts. In my opinion, a different paradigm is needed to address the SME resistance to learning among SME managers and employees and thus improve their marketing knowledge, based on existing literature related to SME training needs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine short-term, facilitator-led intervention designed to improve SMEs' marketing skills and strategies while avoiding resistance to learning. This study was originally part of a larger, mixed-method study, the quantitative results of which have been published elsewhere (Cohen, 2017).

### Training Methods in SME Contexts

Research suggests that there are unique requirements for successful training programs in SME contexts (e.g., Wenger, 2000). Legge et al. (2007) explored SME managers' study method preferences and found that managers tend to expect quick, practical, and no-embellishments training. According to Kuster and Vila (2006), case analyses and lectures, which are common training methods in business, are not effective because they lack connection to learners' practical contexts. Similarly, Kerin et al. (1987) recommended using practical training for managers' and employees' marketing education. Raelin (1990) found that training programs in the field (as opposed to in the educational system) should be tactical, focused, practical, and effective. They should also focus on implementing the material in real life. Finally, Fraser et al. (2007) claimed that, when conducting a training program, collaborative, interactional techniques are better than lectures given to groups of workers.

Despite these findings suggesting that the traditional lecture method is not effective in the case of SME managers and employees, Kuster and Vila (2006) indicated that there is a tendency among developers of employee and manager marketing education to rely on traditional methods of teaching. Instead of traditional, instructor-led strategies, organizational learning programs should focus on active learning. This establishes the need for a new marketing training approach targeting SMEs using active learning approaches.

Felder and Brent (2009) defined active learning as "anything course-related that all students in a class session are called upon to do other than simply watching, listening and taking notes" (p. 2). Active learning is an important programmatic approach for encouraging and enhancing entrepreneurial learning (Jones et al., 2014). This is especially true in family-run SMEs (Lionzo & Rossignoli, 2011) and for marketing educators (Ramocki, 2007).

### Theoretical Background

The practical, active training intervention used in this study was developed following a hierarchical, four-tier theoretical framework. This framework has its foundations in existing theoretical and research literature related to organizational behavior and SME marketing. Each tier contains an important theoretical concept that represents a specification of the previous tier: organizational culture, organizational learning, continued professional development (CPD), and metaphor/storyline training. Figure 1 presents a schematic of the theoretical framework, and the following paragraphs describe the tiers and their hierarchical structure in greater detail.

**Organizational culture.** The persistent lack of marketing knowledge among SMEs can be identified as a problem of organizational culture. Schein (2011) defined organizational culture as:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learns as they solve problems and situations of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked effectively validating its use and thus is suitable to be taught to new members as the correct way by which they should perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 241)

Organizations that do not regularly implement marketing concepts and strategies to solve problems and that do not share marketing knowledge openly among members suffer from organizational cultures that are not supportive of marketing. For this reason, organizational culture is taken as the foundation of the theoretical framework for the intervention examined in this study.

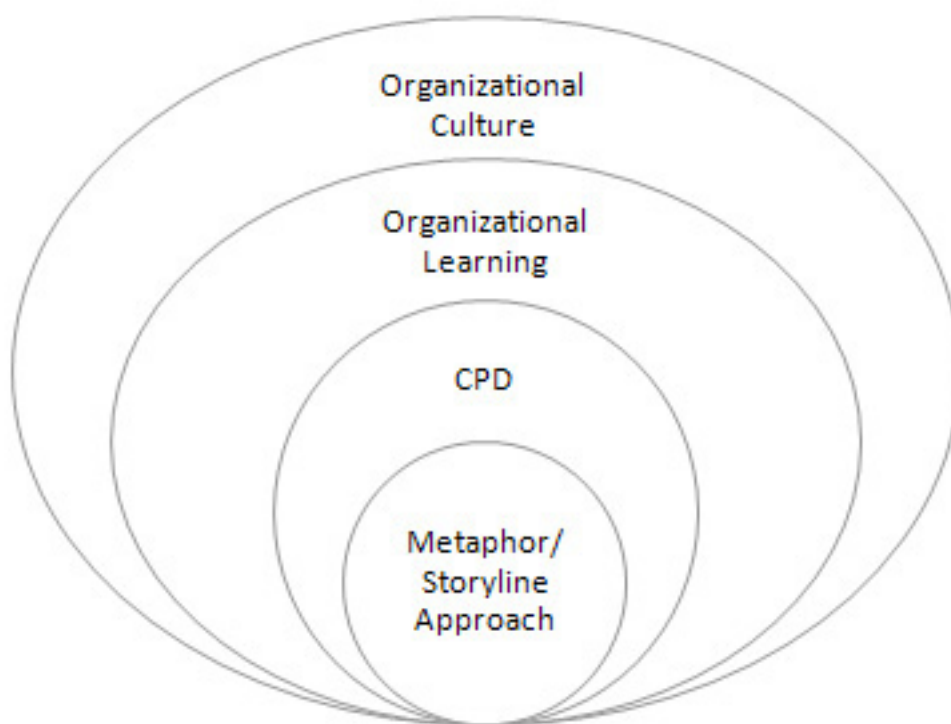
Cultural factors play a key role in determining organizational outcomes. Organizational culture affects the way employees behave in a company (Moreland et al., 2013). Managers use organizational culture to focus their employees' attention on the company's priorities and to define how they want employees to behave (Berson et al., 2007). Therefore, organizational culture contributes to a business's success (Prajogo & McDermott, 2011).

Organizational culture is closely related to the extent of knowledge sharing within the organization (Fox, 2004). Knowledge sharing helps employees find important information easily and quickly (Ismail Al-Alawi et al., 2007). A culture that is not supportive of knowledge sharing leads employees to retain the knowledge they have, so latent knowledge does not become active within the organization, even if that knowledge would better the organization (Saint-Onge & Armstrong, 2012). It is therefore necessary for the organization to set in place measures that favor the sharing of knowledge (Roberson et al., 2012), including marketing knowledge, by establishing an appropriate culture.

In many organizations, environments of uncertainty, dynamism, and independence, as well as a strong need for better utilization of information and knowledge systems, hinder performance (Bowling, 2007). The development of an organizational culture that embraces knowledge sharing remains instrumental in influencing employee growth (Shafritz et al., 2015). The intervention investigated in this study emphasizes change from closed cultures of independence to open cultures of knowledge sharing.

**Organizational learning.** One way for an organization to enact culture change and acquire knowledge resources is via the organizational learning process. Thus, the next tier of the theoretical framework consists of organizational learning. This process is critical for the organization, since it enables the organization to adapt to its surroundings and to maintain and even increase its competitiveness. Thus, organizational learning contributes to the survival or development of the organization (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2010; Cheng et al., 2016; High & Pelling, 2003; Simsek & Heavey 2011; Trong Tuan, 2013). Organizational learning is a relatively new concept; in the past, there was a less dynamic economy and a relatively slow adjustment

Figure 1.:Theoretical Framework



was required, so there was no need for a concrete theory of and approach to organizational learning (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2010; Dencker et al., 2009; Tyre & Von Hippel, 1997).

According to Law and Chuah (2015), there are two main definitions of organizational learning. The first is a knowledge-level definition, which holds that organizational learning occurs when “individuals acquire new knowledge and incorporate it into the workplace so that the collective set can reach its shared visions” (Law & Chuah, 2015, p. 10). The second is a learning-level definition, which focuses on different levels of the organization at which learning can occur. Although individuals are the organization’s learning agents, learning can occur at team and organizational levels. In this view, the knowledge acquired by individuals does not directly influence the organization, but rather shared knowledge and meanings constitute changes that manifest at higher levels.

Organizational learning involves integration of new and existing knowledge in the daily conduct of the organization, with the aim of improving employee performance, outcomes, self-efficacy, and openness to change (Bates & Khasawneh, 2005; Castro & Neira, 2005). Existing employees may bring knowledge with them, or knowledge may be acquired through, for example, training interventions. Each piece of knowledge is acquired in a certain context, which can be either active or latent (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2010). Latent knowledge has an effect on the active context by means of which the learning takes place. For instance, a psychological environment in which employees feel comfortable with each other (latent context) affects the learning capacity of the organization (active context). Furthermore, the accumulated knowledge is embedded in the organizational context and therefore alters the contexts through which learning takes place (Coen & Maritan, 2011).

Organizational learning is often beset by resistance to change on the part of employees and managers (Legge et al., 2007). The organization is a cooperative system that depends on the willingness of its members to support it. The participation of the employees is particularly important during periods of change, when the organization is attempting to create new types of situations that differ from existing ones (Furst & Cable, 2008). Uniquely, SME managers, who are often entrepreneurs who founded the business, can also resist change, thinking that they know everything there is to know about their business (Frese et al., 2003; Spangler et al., 2004). Compounding this problem is the fact that SMEs often do not have the resources to hire highly knowledgeable employees, so existing organizational knowledge maybe be limited. Successful interventions aiming at organizational learning must therefore impart new knowledge while addressing resistance to change.

The intervention explored in this study utilizes the principles of organizational learning to provide the organization with adaptive tools that will allow it to better interact with the business environment and, thus, better exploit opportunities in the environment, enhancing survival probabilities of the organization. The intervention takes the everyday experience of the participants as a resource for discussion of marketing issues; then, the intervention changes the active knowledge of the participants by introducing new knowledge about the experiences discussed. In addition, participants are encouraged to try out their new knowledge when confronted with actual encounters with clients in their daily business activities, and these experiences are later discussed in the group to foster more active content learning.

**Continued professional development.** Continued professional development (CPD) is one path to sustained organizational learning, and this concept forms the third theoretical tier of the intervention in this study. CPD is defined as a

process of lifelong learning for professionals, with the following advantages: personal development; assurance that professionals are up-to-date, given the rapid pace of technological advancement; assurance for employers that their employees are competent and adaptable; and development of skills and knowledge (Fraser et al., 2007).

Lydon and King (2009) found that successful implementation of CPD programs is explained by factors related to organizational learning, such as classroom environment, contents of the program, and teaching method. The relevance and coherence of the CPD program were also found to contribute to CPD program's impact (Penuel et al., 2007). Successful CPD enhances the ability of a firm to adapt to its business environment. This is true because CPD involves learning and knowing more about the market, market forces, competition, and technologies. The result is that a CPD program increases firm performance and survival rates, as well as its ability to innovate and lead the market (Lenburg, 2005).

This traditional view of CPD emphasizes the flow of knowledge from instructor to student. More recently, a less one-sided view of CPD has grown in popularity. Fraser et al. (2007) recommended interactive CPD programs that allow the student to be an active and equal partner in the learning process. Such methods are believed to increase student involvement in the learning process, thus enhancing understanding, memorization, and implementation of new knowledge (Fraser et al., 2007).

The intervention examined in this study adapts this strategy to the SME marketing environment. CPD programs are effective even when short in time and number of sessions (Lydon & King, 2009). Studies have shown that most participants in short CPD programs changed their professional behavior after attending the programs, to a moderate to significant extent. Short CPD programs are necessary, as professionals are not willing to take part in long programs (Lydon & King, 2009).

**Metaphor/storyline approach.** The most specific level of the present intervention's theoretical framework is the metaphor and storyline approach; the CPD program uses this approach to enhance participant learning. This section describes how the metaphoric storyline approach helps participants make sense of marketing by expanding the options for learning and understanding, providing real world experience, and overcoming resistance to learning.

A metaphor is figurative language that links one specific object to another by alternating various descriptions of the objects. Figurative language expresses something that, in everyday life, denotes a connection to one area while transferring that denotation to another area, which is analogous to the first (Bremer & Lee, 2007). A metaphor has two parts: the topic and the information that spurs the metaphor (the vehicle). The topic identifies what the metaphor is about, and the vehicle is an analogy that creates a link between the topic and other global contexts. For example, in the advertising sentence "Budweiser, the King of Beers," Budweiser is the topic and the rest of the sentence constitutes the vehicle (Bremer & Lee, 2007).

Metaphors are used as part of marketing and management educational programs because they expand the options for learning and understanding by encouraging participants to

expand their areas of thinking. Metaphors enable participants to consider broad ideas, rather than specific, defined questions. In addition, this way of thinking is suited to how humans commonly think, which makes studying via metaphors more natural to many students (Fillis & Rentschler, 2008).

Another advantage of using metaphors is that they are relevant for the practical world, not just for academic thinking, which makes the educational program more accessible for participants. This is an especially important condition of success in business training (Kuster & Vila, 2006). Finally, the use of metaphors helps bridge the gap between the concepts and academic theories in the practical world of management, increases the cooperation and exchange of views between the two worlds, and narrows the cultural gap between them (Fillis & Rentschler, 2008).

Metaphors can be used in CPD programs as a means of explaining complex concepts and of breaking up these concepts into simple ideas, which can be related to on a practical level. Metaphor is particularly appropriate to marketing, since the use of metaphors is extensive in everyday marketing, ranging from the use of metaphors in publishing to promote brands to strategic marketing thinking, which includes concepts that are all metaphorical, such as the term 'brand personality' (Cornelissen, 2003; Durgee & Chen, 2006).

Mills (2008) showed that teaching marketing ideas using metaphors can be very effective. Mills found that using metaphors from jazz, a type of music, in the marketing world could have a profound impact on the behavior of participants in educational programs. Mills (2008) claimed that using such metaphors can teach participants knowledge of marketing issues, giving them the ability to creatively use that knowledge in their everyday professional lives and promoting leadership and confidence (Mills, 2008).

In his definitive study, Mills (2008) attempted to teach students strategic thinking using metaphors from jazz, whereby the instruments, skills, timing, and rhythm were all analogous to marketing situations. The students learned marketing methods when they applied the jazz metaphors to the field of marketing. The study showed that students perceived the lessons as very interesting, and they saw how their skills in strategic marketing thinking improved. The author noted that the jazz metaphor facilitated students' understanding of marketing concepts and marketing problems. In addition, it activated creative thinking with regard to possible solutions to marketing problems. Mills (2008) found that using metaphors not only enhanced students' ability to act on their marketing knowledge, but it also promoted creative listening and increased collaboration among organization members.

Storyline is a strategy of active learning developed in Scotland (Solstad, 2009). Solstad (2009) showed the success of the strategy with teachers and students. The storyline approach was designed and tested for classrooms, not SME settings. To date, no other research addresses the use of storyline approach as a strategy for learning in SMEs. Therefore, the present study will be, to our knowledge, the first to test the storyline approach in a small business setting.



## Research Question and Objectives

This study was guided by the following research question: What is the meaning of the intervention program for participants, and how does the intervention change SMEs' organizational culture?

The objective of this study was to understand participants' subjective perceptions of the intervention in order to describe the organizational change process resulting from the intervention and determine whether this novel form of intervention holds promise for improving SMEs' marketing abilities. I accomplished this by (a) conducting pre- and postintervention semistructured interviews to explore participants' perceptions of the intervention and generate rich descriptions of the organizational change process, and (b) taking researcher notes during the process of the intervention to understand the process of change on a day-to-day basis.

Because this is a qualitative research question, there are no formal hypotheses. However, I supposed that the intervention would change participants' perceptions of marketing, particularly with regard to marketing processes. I also supposed that the intervention would increase the extent to which participants engaged in collaborative efforts related to marketing, including the development of new marketing strategies and tactics. Finally, I supposed that the intervention would lead to personal empowerment, new energy for marketing, and a renewed belief in the SME organizations' potential to advance in their respective markets.

## Materials and methods

To address the need for a novel approach to marketing education and development among SMEs, we conducted a qualitative, phenomenological investigation of a facilitator-led marketing intervention designed to enhance marketing knowledge, skills, and strategy among SME participants. This section contains a description of the intervention program, of the setting and sample, and of the methods of the study itself.

### Intervention Program

The intervention program explored in this study consists of four facilitator-led sessions held onsite at SME locations. Each session lasts 90 minutes and is attended by all members of the organization, including managers and employees. During each session, the facilitator presents part of a story based on a metaphor. The storyline connecting all four sessions involves a castle in a large kingdom, with three knights who must work together using their strengths to attract villagers to the castle and defend the castle from attacks by neighboring castles. Each session includes several developments in the story arc, each of which connects to a concrete marketing concept with an expected learning outcome. After hearing each story, group members complete an individual assignment reflecting on the content of the story. The group is then asked to discuss the story and reach a consensus decision, with the help of the facilitator's mediation, about how the story should progress. Next, the facilitator shares the metaphoric connection between the story and SME marketing concepts, skills, or strategies. During this stage, the facilitator emphasizes how the

group's decisions could be applied to marketing in the SME's real-world context. The group's decisions are connected to the following session's stories for continuity.

The intervention program avoids using traditional methods of teaching. Instead, it is based on play-like interaction, using metaphors, between the moderator of the intervention and the participants, and does not relate to marketing issues and concepts directly in an academic tone, but rather compiles a storyline with the participants that relates to their everyday working experience and imaginary themes, such as mediaeval villages, knights, and kings. This approach should allow the participants to become involved in the process of learning, retain interest in the contents of the meeting, and practice an effective learning process.

The issue of resistance to change is addressed by relating to marketing issues and ideas in a tangible rather than threatening or boring way, thus making the experience of learning fun and empowering. The use of metaphors in the intervention, which are used to mask marketing theories learned behind a fun metaphor simulation, is designed to assuage fear of change and of confronting academic knowledge. Furthermore, since participants are an integral part of an active learning process, managers and staff need not be threatened by the program and experience changes they themselves make.

## Setting and sample

The setting for this study consisted of SMEs in Israel. Inclusion criteria included:

1. The SME was active in Israel.
2. A minimum of four employees worked directly for the SME.
3. A minimum monthly turnover was NIS 30,000, VAT included.
4. The SME was not a non-profit organization.
5. The SME had been in operation for less than 10 years.

After placing an advertisement and contacting potential participants, 10 SMEs approached the researcher in a period of one month. Three did not qualify, and two stated that they were too busy. Five qualified and were interested in participating in the study.

If potential participants expressed interest and were qualified, the researcher conducted interviews with the managers to further describe the study and to establish their willingness to cooperate. I informed them that, as part of their participation in the study, they would be administered an intervention designed to improve their marketing ability and business outcomes. If, after this interview, the SME owners were still interested in participating, they provided consent in writing. The SME owners were able to withdraw from the study at any time. All businesses participated in the study of their own free will and received no compensation for their participation other than the intervention. Table 1 (next page) details the characteristics of the five SMEs included in the study.

Printing, five employees were excluded because they did not have tenure and did machinery-related work only. At Telepele, one of the two investors was not involved in the daily operations of the business and was thus excluded. The same was true



Table 1: Characteristics of research participants

Field	No. of Employees	No. of participants	Pseudonym	SME Age	Notes
Print	10	5	ABC printing	4	Highly competitive market
Communication	7	6	Telepele	2	Expensive service for business
Food services	5	4	Food for Thought	2	Home based operation
Internet	4	3	Interneto	2	Highly competitive market
Hi-tech	6	4	Future Chair	1	Product development. dependent on investors' funding

of two investors at Future Chair. Interneto had one technical employee who just supported the data with no involvement in the daily operations and worked from home; this employee was thus excluded. Food for Thought had one employee who was only 15 years old and was thus excluded. This yielded a final sample size of 22 participants. The following paragraphs describe each SME setting in more detail.

**Participant 1: ABC Printing.** ABC Printing had a staff of 10 employees in a highly competitive market. The owners and staff had no prior knowledge in marketing and believed that only the price will attract clients. The existing marketing message was confused (see Ries & Ries, 2009). Relations with suppliers were positive, but there was little ongoing contact with a client base. Clients were for the most part walk-ins, because of the location of the business. Employees appeared to be in low spirits and expressed concern that the situation in the organization might result in closure. Participation in the intervention was prompted by the fear that they were about to go under. Communication between the two owners, Suzan and Mark, was far from ideal. They did not share common core values or goals and aspirations for the organization, nor any articulated marketing strategy.

**Participant 2: Telepele.** Telepele was a highly organized company. The hierarchy and the distribution of tasks were clear, regular meetings were held with the staff and management, and advertising and other marketing operations were performed. However, the unique voice of the SME was not manifested in its marketing efforts, nor was there a clear understanding of the competitive advantages of the company. The organization's main competitor was a large major leader in the market, and the company tended to copy aspects of the competitor's advertising campaigns. Telemarketing operations were at the core of sales generation. Management was disappointed with the telemarketing department and complained about results.

**Participant 3: Food for Thought.** The owner of this organization had no formal education in marketing or business and operated based on intuition. Allocation of resources was sporadic; no clear marketing scheme was employed; there was no website, no strategic marketing look of the business, and

client development was poor. Core values were vague, as was the corresponding marketing and graphic language. Internal communication at Food For Thought was good; all those involved wanted the business to succeed. Competition by similar and larger companies was strong.

**Participant 4: Interneto.** Interneto's financial state was poor, and the CEO had a hard time envisioning a brighter future for the company in the competitive Israeli market. There was disagreement between the two managers (who are a father and son) about running the business. The son had an education in business and marketing, but found it difficult to influence his father's views regarding management of the company. Disagreements between the two resulted in the absence of a clearly articulated strategy for the company, a common vision, or core values. Employees worked from home. There was no organizational identity, the website was not updated regularly, and there was no means of developing a strong client base. The main stream of clients was generated by advertisements, occasional mass e-mail distributions, and word of mouth. The general feeling of the staff was negative.

**Participant 5: Future Chair.** The organization was in the final stages of developing its product. A sample was available online and sales had begun. However, money was fast running out. Communication between the owner and staff and between the CEO and investors was good; all wanted the business to work better. Nonetheless, the business strategy was not clear and this often resulted in disagreements. The CEO had a formal education in marketing; however, she found it hard to influence investors' views on how to manage the SME and move towards better marketing operations. During the first year of this business, no real business connections were made; prospective clients showed little interest in the product, and the existing investors were losing interest in the company. The investors took on a private business consultant prior to the intervention. The CEO was confused and unsure of the future of the SME, mainly in terms of growth, allocation of funds, and investments. The website was not updated regularly, and the sales person had no training, no clear sales goals and methods, nor a defined budget.

## Research Instrument

The research instruments consisted of a semi-structured interview guide and a researcher log.

**Interview guide.** I developed a pre- and post-intervention semi-structured interview guide with prepared questions followed by probes, allowing participants to express themselves at length on focused topics (see Ardley, 2005). Questions for the interview guide were informed by existing literature and by the aims of this research. The interview guide was also designed to create a relaxed, trusting atmosphere (see Shkedi, 2003). Before and after the intervention, interviews consisted of the same set of 21 questions:

1. Please explain what marketing means for you.
2. At present, in your opinion, are the organization's marketing activities managed professionally? Please explain.
3. At present, please spell out the main marketing concept that represents or unites the organization. Do you think that the rest of the organization's workers would agree with you?
4. How do you think your competitors, suppliers, customers, colleagues, family, perceive you (think about you)? Please explain.
5. Please state your position in the organization. In your opinion, is your current position connected to the marketing system? Please explain.
6. At present, do you have a sense of confidence in the organization's marketing system? Please explain.
7. Do you feel that you can initiate new elements and add to the organization's marketing system? Please explain with regard to your own position as well.
8. Please elucidate your organization's uniqueness versus the competition in your field of activity.
9. At present, do you think that the marketing messages are conveyed sufficiently and efficiently?
10. In your opinion, will new and returning customers come and buy from the organization?
11. Please detail the following dimensions with regard to most of the services/products sold by the organization: functionality, emotional value, and image value.
12. Please state a few sentences that recur among the organization's staff when encountering the organization's customers.
13. Please state your organization's unique colours and their significance (or: why did you choose those colours specifically).
14. Please state the organization's slogan and its meaning (or: why did you choose this slogan).
15. Please list the regular criteria through which your organization is managed from an operative perspective.
16. Do you feel that the staff meetings at the organization are exhaustive and efficient from your perspective? Please state the frequency of the meetings.

17. Do you feel that focused efforts are made to create positive rumours for different audiences that come into contact with the organization? Please explain.

18. Do you feel that the advertising spread of the organization is guided by strategic thinking? Please explain.

19. In your opinion, is there enough input for following different trends in the target market, competitors, legal changes etc.? Please explain.

20. In the case of developing new services/products, in your opinion is there planning aimed at development guided by dimensions such as perceptions of the organization, image values, overall strategy and trends? Please explain.

21. Please explain whether, in your opinion, there is sufficient activity in the field of marketing for the organization.

**Researcher log.** In addition to the semistructured interviews, I also kept a researcher log to shed additional light on the effects of the intervention. For each research log entry, I recorded the day and time, the content of the entry (my observations of the training session), an associative reflection, and an inductive conclusion. This structure helped me create a well-organized, repeatable log (see Sabar, 2002) that will help readers get a detailed and better understanding of the research process (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and will lead to greater reliability (see Shkedi, 2003).

Use of a research log acknowledges that the researcher is not an outsider, but rather is part of the happenings, taking part in as well as interpreting the phenomena for the reader, so he can make sense of what took place in the field (Sabar, 2002). This was especially important in the present study, since the researcher was also the consultant delivering the intervention to participants.

Drawbacks of researcher logs include that the log may be biased and not reliable (Fan et al., 2006), the researcher may lack introspection abilities, the researcher's understanding may not reflect the situation, and participants may perform better when they know they are being observed (McCarney et al., 2007). I overcame these obstacles by recording the log discreetly and taking into account differences in my observations and participants' feedback to identify potential bias. In the current study, this research tool was used to express the researcher's thoughts and reflections on the intervention process.

## Methods

Data for this qualitative, phenomenological study were collected in four phases. The first phase consisted of instrument development and focus group review of the research instruments. The second phase consisted of pre-intervention semi-structured interviews to evaluate participants' perceptions of the marketing skills and abilities at their organizations. The third phase consisted of the delivery of the intervention and data collection via the researcher log. The fourth phase consisted of a post-intervention semi-structured interview.

**Data collection.** Semi-structured pre-intervention interviews took place at the SME's business place, face-to-face, in a closed room with just the participant and the researcher. Interviews were held just before the start of the first intervention session. I asked for the participants' permission to record the interviews

and transcribed them later, allowing for accuracy, transparency, and flexibility during the interview process. Participants were made to feel comfortable and able to respond honestly and fully with guaranteed confidentiality in comfortable, private settings. The interviews took 15 minutes on average.

Post-intervention interviews were conducted three months after the last intervention session. This three-month latency period gave time for the SMEs to work and assimilate the intervention's teachings. Interviews were held either face-to-face or via e-mail. The same interview questions were used in both interviews. The rationale for this procedure was to compare participants' responses to both qualitative and quantitative questionnaires before and after the intervention.

**Data analysis.** I used a multistage, open coding approach to analyze qualitative data for emergent themes (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). To ensure validity of qualitative data, I analyzed all qualitative data as they came in, rather than waiting until the end of the study, to ensure that the right data were being collected and that the research question could be answered. In addition, early analysis of data is very helpful in identifying patterns, or major themes in the data (Sabar, 2002). I also validated qualitative data by performing member checking, whereby I showed the researcher's log and interview transcripts to participants to check whether or not they agreed with the interpretations of their observed behaviors (see Huberman & Miles, 2002).

**External validation,** which is a separate phase of the validation process in qualitative research, occurs when the data matches the theoretical sources or other research data (Sabar, 2002). This type of triangulation indicates the robustness of the findings and allows for generalization of findings. To create naturalistic generalizability, I went back and forth between deduction, induction, and reflection during the research process. This process was documented in the researcher log. Connections between findings and existing theory are detailed in the Results and Conclusions sections.

Qualitative data were divided into primary and secondary datasets for analysis. Primary data were directly derived from informants, and secondary data came from the researcher's log and the SMEs' marketing materials. For both primary and secondary data, content analysis was used to create themes that described the main issues discussed by research participants. Content analysis is a process of arranging and structuring the data gathered for interpretation and grasping its meaning. I used a code system to create categories, by which a number represented each meaning category. Further, I highlighted categories using a color-coding scheme for easier analysis and mistake avoidance.

There are two categories of content analysis: structural analysis and subject analysis (Shkedi, 2003). Structural analysis highlights the relationships between processes in the field, while subject analysis emphasizes the descriptors of the processes being studied, including the participant's feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. In the current research, the content analysis process combines both methods (Coen & Maritan, 2011). It is worth mentioning that this analysis is culturally dependent (Shkedi, 2003), and therefore some of the meaning of the content might be lost in the translation of the qualitative data from Hebrew (the language in which the original data was collected) into English (the language of this report).

In the Results section, I demonstrate the themes by quoting participants directly. Quotations were chosen for their ability to clarify the theme in the participants' words. When choosing a quote, I followed the guidelines that the quotes support the main idea of the paragraph, be punchy and direct, and come from a participant source.

## Results

Figure 2 shows the five categories that emerged from the data, as well as the first-round codes that were reduced into these final five. In the following subsections, each category is described in detail, with illustrative excerpts from the interviews. Participant names have been changed for anonymity.

### Category 1: Perceptions of Marketing

Before the intervention, participant organizations lacked an understanding of the essence of marketing, the difference between sales and marketing, and the need for a marketing plan for the business. Therefore, they made use of tactical solutions for immediate problems instead of constructing a strategic business plan to guide their way in managing the business' survival and growth. The following quotations illustrate this tendency:

*Reliability and quality. What we produce in this company, many companies do. Besides reliability and quality, I do not have anything to offer them. And that is the problem here, that all printing presses do the same thing...* (Suzan, ABC Printing)

*Marketing is all about advertising.* (Dan, Food for Thought)

Because success was attributed to advertising campaigns rather than a marketing approach, the majority of participants demonstrated little knowledge of the factors contributing to success in the companies they operated.

The following responses illustrate participants' responses to the interview question, "In your opinion, are your marketing activities in the organization run in a professional way?"

*In my opinion, [activities] are not conducted in a professional manner, because we do not have any knowledge about it. We do everything only according to the knowledge we have. Like me, for example, I market in an aggressive way; I simply go to companies and offer them what I have to sell.* (Joe, ABC Printing)

*In my opinion, no, because there is no marketing system. I do not know if this is common in SMEs. We have a marketing person, but he does not only do marketing. He also works on a commission basis. He is not enough, that's for sure.* (Avivit, Future Chair)

After participating in the intervention, organization members knew more marketing terms than before, were more aware of marketing and its role in conducting a business and of marketing issues in managing a business, as well as of how this new knowledge can help them do better work in the everyday conduct of the business. With respect to marketing awareness, participants were much more focused and were able to give concrete and relevant examples from their companies, contrary to their preintervention responses. A change in personal and operative marketing approaches towards a more professional way of using marketing tools was observed.

*Before [the intervention] we had no direction whatsoever. There was no coordination, as if we were just shooting in all directions,*



Figure 2: Data Categories and Themes

Category	• <i>First-round coding themes</i>
<b>1: Perceptions of Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the firm's marketing activities</li> <li>• Existing knowledge of marketing</li> <li>• Understanding the firm's marketing capabilities</li> <li>• Understanding strategic and tactical processes</li> </ul>
<b>2: Organizational Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard operating procedures</li> <li>• Organizational Hierarchy</li> </ul>
<b>3: Organizational Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication across organizational functions</li> <li>• Creating a common vision and common goals</li> </ul>
<b>4: Marketing Activities and Sales</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of media and sales channels</li> <li>• Marketing communications</li> <li>• Graphics, colors, logos</li> </ul>
<b>5: Brand Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of brand awareness</li> <li>• Prioritization of brand awareness</li> <li>• Reactions from customers and vendors</li> </ul>

with no rules or order. After the process, we were much more focused and we chose customers who were more suitable. That helped us create markets for our product. (Don, Future Chair)

Marketing is an integral part of the organization, a way of life, in your head all the time. It dictates the way you work, it determines the marketing language you use, and it is a dominant factor in the life of the business. You can definitely say that we are always talking about knights. (Dan, Food for Thought)

The marketing system works well because it is also part of the job, and it's not just marketing per se. For example, when our CEO talks to customers, she also markets. The marketing is 'slipped in' to the job. (Mark, ABC Printing)

### Category 2: Organizational Structure

Although there appeared to be a general understanding of the division of roles in the organization, it was also the case that, as relatively new SMEs, workers tended to have more than one role in the organization. As one respondent put it, "My role in the organization is 'pach zevel' (trash can—or catch all)" (Sara, Food for Thought). The same holds for definitions of functions and operating procedures. In response to the interview question, "Could you specify criteria according to which the organization operates?" two referred to being on time as most important. A few participants had further remarks:

Actually, since the business is mine and I am the CEO, all the marketing falls to me. I am the one who decides how to route, where to advertise, and how much to invest in marketing, and then it's repeated all over again. (Joe, ABC Printing)

You do it in the best way you can, there's no such thing as roles, you work when you need to, and do everything you can. I think that the division of roles that we have built up is still not clear. (Dor, Interneto)

During the intervention, the researcher log indicated a change in thinking, in which the division of roles in the organization is connected to the marketing dimension of the organizational roles. It seemed that all members of the group were involved in marketing, came up with ideas, and seemed to be more marketing oriented, even if their job was not directly linked to marketing (Researcher log entry). Additionally, participants' comments, as noted in the researcher log, demonstrated a process of increased understanding:

Dura: I can understand better how to organize the marketing function of the organization (Researcher log entry)

After the intervention, interviews revealed a sharpening of the functional definition of the employees in the organization, particularly those responsible for marketing:

The organizational structure is more organized, and my staff and I have each been allotted our roles. This means that everyone has his role defined, which was not the case before. Before this I felt that I had to do everything and carry everything on my shoulders. Today I spread it around a bit more. (Sara, Food for Thought)

Yet, most of the organizations did not implement significant structural changes:

Change in the structure of the organization has still not been implemented. There is no change in the structure. (Bob, ABC Printing)

I sensed no significant changes in the level of the organizational structure. Not something that I could put my finger on. But I hope that it will come. (Dean, Telepele)

It appears that the intervention did not move the organization to make any significant longitudinal structural changes. At the same time, the conceptual internalization helped the



organizations reformulate their goals and marketing objectives, and consequently redefine the responsibilities and authority of the various functions. These changes helped increase employees' sense of security and facilitated the delegation of responsibilities, thus reducing the pressure on the managers.

### Category 3: Organizational Culture

Prior to the intervention, there was reportedly little notion of the organizational vision or goals, no common language, and minimal communication between different levels or functions within the organization. Meetings were held sporadically and with no clear agenda or procedure.

*There is no common marketing strategy...we are all shooting small arrows in all directions.* (Dura, Future Chair)

After the intervention, respondents reported a change in the situation, towards a common language among organization members, based on the "knights" metaphor used in the intervention. For example:

*The concept of the 'knights' is a very strong thing for us, and constantly arises when thinking about advertising. We highlight it constantly.* (Dan, Food for Thought)

*Before the process, the marketing idea was not as clear to the staff as it is today. In meetings that we had, everyone saw things differently, and we had no consensus, nor a clear knowledge of our main goals. Today we are more geared towards speaking a common language than we were before.* (Dean, Telepele)

*The intervention created a dialogue here, a conversation, a discussion...about where we've come from and where we're going, what is important to us and what isn't, what we have to do, and how we see things. Discussion was created here that wasn't there before. The words were translated into actions, so actions came into being.* (Riki, Telepele)

The researcher log concludes that the intervention seems to have created a real cultural change among the organizations in this study. For example:

The entire organization seems to be able to communicate much easier: people use the same terminology, are willing to discuss difficult issues, and are much more open with each other. (Researcher log)

The conceptual internalization helped the organizations communicate more effectively, focus more on objectives, and understand the unique operational track of the organization.

### Category 4: Marketing Activities and Sales

Before the intervention, organizations were not satisfied with their marketing efforts:

*Communication with our customers is not good enough. Advertising and public relations are not good enough.* (Gal, Interneto)

*I am a little stuck, as I do not know how to advertise our good products.* (Doron, Interneto)

*Advertising is not sufficient as I do not know where to advertise.* (Dudu, Food for Thought)

After the intervention, there was evidence of increased marketing activities, in both frontal and non-frontal (online) areas, as well as increased sales:

*I feel that there is a lot more activity going on because of the proper marketing procedures we learned. There is movement, deals are being closed, and I definitely think that when I am facing a customer I know what to talk about and how to talk.* (Sara, Food for Thought)

*Our statistics on the website (which was enhanced due to the process) show that we have more entries, more people staying on the site for longer, and I think there was also an improvement in the sales due to this process, and, of course, the innovations... I see that we sell more, the sales graph has risen, there was a 30% growth in the first month after the intervention, and in the next month it could go up another 30%.* (Dor, Interneto)

From a visual standpoint, participants had adopted the usual standards of the industry in their graphic presence, so that, in practice, instead of differentiation and innovation, they demonstrated conformism and colourlessness. For example, the company that offers catering services chose a black uniform typical of many organizations involved in food service, and their slogan was "Catering and Event Production." The representatives of the company were not aware that this message does not indicate the uniqueness of the organization versus competition in the industry. During and after the intervention, there was evidence of operative changes in various organizations, towards better branding of the firms:

The owners are happy to make big changes in the company's marketing scheme. The logo will be changed, and the website will be changed. (Researcher log).

The CMO has started a process to change the graphic design of the company. This will include the website, brochures, business cards etc. (Researcher log).

*I would like to say that I am truly in a different place today, my advertising looks different, my ads are more dignified, more professional, more appealing. Now when I look back on my old ads, they were really amateurish and unprofessional. I really enjoyed all the meetings, I personally had a lot of fun there, and I really wanted to keep on going, keep on being supported...* (Sara, Food for Thought)

Due to ethical considerations, it is not possible to present full documentation of the physical changes carried out. However, Table 6 illustrates that changes occurred in the companies' presentation, in a way that protects the identity of research participants.

Post-intervention, there is some evidence that the marketing changes were effective from a sales standpoint:

*I have already seen that the intervention shaped our thinking and the message we convey. A few customers have already joined us because of the change. The marketing mode is a lot more professional, whereas before it consisted mainly of just giving the price and that was it.* (Bob, ABC Printing)

The researcher log concluded that marketing changes had been implemented in all the organizations without exception. In addition, the order and organization that resulted from the intervention allowed the SMEs to understand the meaning, visibility, and marketing concept of the organization on an applied level.

Table 2: Marketing activities that changed following the intervention

SME	Change
Future Chair	Changes made to matching of appearance in the company's various marketing materials, including the leading colour identifier, marketing text, its slogan, business cards, website and promotional signposting, general office appearance, a new advertising campaign was launched.
Telepele	Changes made in the leading colour of the SME, new logo design, new website design, new slogan, renewed textual content and pictures. The change was implemented on the website, various advertisements with new media and business cards.
Interneto	Changes made in the leading colours, the changes were implemented in the company's marketing communications, which included advertisements, website, general office appearance, business cards, letterhead.
Food for Thought	Changes made in the leading colours, a new logo and a new slogan were created, a new website was built. A new advertising campaign was launched, as well as new business cards, t-shirts which matched the new look, workbags, a new slogan, new pictures, and different text descriptions for the SME's products.
ABC printing	Changes were made in the leading colours, a new logo and a new slogan, and a new website built. New advertising was implemented, as well as new business cards, t-shirts that matched the new look, workbags, a new slogan, new pictures, and different text descriptions for the firm's products.

### Category 5: Brand Awareness

This category refers to how outsiders view the company. Before the intervention, the majority of respondents believed that their company and they themselves were viewed in a positive light by trade partners. However, there was also a consensus about the fact that no positive efforts were being made to present the company in a way that would improve their reputations. Participants' comments were generic:

*I think that, on the whole, most of them appreciate us, and we have a relatively good reputation.* (Gal, Interneto)

*I think that, all in all, the reviews are good, professional, but there's still a lot more to be done.* (Avivit, Future Chair)

Postintervention, participants made comments that were more practical:

*I think the firm is a lot more noticeable in terms of the customers. There is a lot more interaction with them. We improved communication with the suppliers too, but it is more in our interest to have better communication with potential customers, less with the suppliers. Our new way of communication is mostly demonstrated in the language we use, in what we offer, in how we focus our core capabilities, and how we want to bring it to the fore, to the customer.* (Suzan, ABC Printing)

*Competitors, suppliers and customers now think that we are a lot bigger than we really are, and that we have a reputation of being experts on the subject.* (Dor, Interneto)

However, the researcher log stated that there appeared to be a discrepancy between the improved awareness of the subject and how little it was implemented.

### Discussion and Conclusions

This study was designed to answer the research question: What is the meaning of a metaphor/storyline-based intervention program for participants, and how does the intervention change SMEs' organizational culture? The results indicated that the intervention program had five effects, as evidenced by the five qualitative main categories that arose from the coding process. Specifically, the intervention affected participants' (1) perceptions of marketing, (2) organizational structure, (3) organizational culture, (4) marketing activities and sales, and (5) brand awareness. This strongly supports existing research showing that organizational learning can lead to performance improvements and competitive advantage (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2010; Castro & Neira, 2005; Xenikou & Simosi, 2006). Moreover, theory suggests that marketing that uniquely positions the organization in the field will enable increase in sales in the long term (Ries & Ries, 2009).

Despite these positive results, the effects of the intervention on organizational structure and organizational culture were not pronounced. Several participants stated that they did not perceive any changes in these areas. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intervention may not have a significant effect on SMEs' organizational culture. This study revealed a weakness of the intervention, which is the inability to initiate a change of

organizational culture. This topic requires further examination of short interventions based on metaphor/storyline approaches. Despite this weakness, the intervention yielded practical, operational changes, indicating its potential for improving business outcomes through SME marketing training.

Although results showed a noticeable change in participant organizations soon after the intervention, literature suggests that no lasting change can be made if the organizational culture is not altered, and that only organizational culture can make short-term achievements, such as those gained from interventions, into permanent changes (Dvir & Oreg, 2007; Zhang, 2008). Schein (1990) proposed that an organizational culture is composed of three layers, and the results of this study provide support for the three-layer model. The intervention appeared to initiate change in this first layer, as indicated by participants like Dan, who stated that the concept of knights was used frequently in his organization after the intervention and enabled change to visible aspects of the SME. Additionally, results showed that participant organizations held meetings more frequently and discussed marketing issues more regularly. However, it was less clear that these changes penetrated to the second and third layers of organizational culture. These results support Schein's (1990) three-layer model of organizational culture, since the divisions between external, surface-level changes and deeper changes to values and assumptions were clearly visible. This interesting finding suggests a need for interventions that include long-term components designed to take a systematic approach to embedding external changes at deeper levels, in accordance with the recommendations of Dvir and Oreg (2007).

One of the key problems addressed in this study was resistance to learning on the part of SME managers and employees (Fox, 2004; Copley, 2008; Devins & Johnson, 2002; Kyriakidou & Maroudas, 2010). Learners may be impatient or unwilling to take part in traditional learning, expecting the learning process to be short and yield immediate results (Lydon & King, 2009; Zemke & Zemke, 1984). The intervention tested here appears useful for overcoming this barrier. The intervention was short and limited in time, and did not use the traditional mode of lecture teaching. Participants indicated that they felt the intervention was fun, which is another key to organizational learning success (Mills, 2008). Additionally, the intervention bridges the gap between marketing theories and the real world, and it generates solutions suited to the real world, as recommended by Fillis and Rentschler (2008). These findings suggest that the characteristics of the intervention may have overcome barriers to organizational learning, and other interventions using these characteristics could be similarly effective.

Zwan et al. (2009), asserted that organizations need CPD in order to survive. Results of this study support that conclusion. Prior to participating in the intervention, participants indicated in interviews that their survival was threatened by low earnings. Postintervention, participants noted an increase in sales and more positive response from customers. The researcher's log confirmed this, observing that participant organizations had more sales leads than prior to the intervention. This supports the notion that CPD can lead to better business results and that organizational learning that improves SMEs' organizational performance is feasible (Zwan et al., 2009).

The intervention program uses a narrative storyline approach to convey marketing concepts to the participants. This approach is based on theoretical and empirical foundation, indicating that metaphoric language can be useful in teaching new concepts to adults (Bremer & Lee, 2007; Cornelissen, 2003; Durgee & Chen, 2006; Fillis & Rentschler, 2008; Mills, 2008). The results show that this approach was indeed effective, as indicated in the participants' in-depth interviews.

### Future research

The current study contributes to filling a gap in the knowledge relating to metaphor/storyline intervention for improving marketing at SME businesses. More studies are needed that focus specifically on practical marketing for SMEs. Further research will also be required to better understand how short organizational learning interventions can translate to lasting organizational culture change. Finally, this study has only measured the outcome of the intervention on the short term. More research is needed to investigate the long-term impact of the intervention on marketing activities and business outcomes.

### Limitations

The research discussed here has a number of limitations. First, as an exploratory study, it was based on a convenience sample. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the sample is biased in the sense that it included organizations that a priori were seeking change. This sampling method reduces the generalizability of the findings. The small number of individual participants also limits generalizability. It is worth noting, however, that such a sampling method is very common in exploratory studies and in qualitative research, and the validity of qualitative data is judged by its comprehensiveness and the depth of the findings, rather than by its manner of sampling.

A further limitation of the research stems from the fact that the design of the intervention program and its evaluation were both carried out by the same individual. Therefore, once again, there is the possibility of evaluating bias in the data and in reported findings, caused by the emotional and professional involvement of the researcher with the research topic. Relatedly, the small sample of participants working directly with the researcher during the intervention may have led to social desirability bias in participants' responses (Weisberg, 2005). Therefore, the results should be interpreted with care and confirmed in future studies.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the innovative approach and methods of the intervention appear to have been effective for those who participated in the study. It united participants around common marketing goals, visions, and operative plans for the organization. Although changes at the organizational level appear to have been more limited, it is also the case that individual change is a catalyst for organizational change and growth (Prajogo & McDermott, 2011). Therefore, it can be concluded that metaphor/storyline-based intervention can be effective for improving SME business success through improving marketing skills and strategies.



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# Accounting is Broken. Here's how to fix it: A radical manifesto

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## Background

The progression of globalization is one of the largest social developments humanity has ever tackled. That's why its influence on the global economy is enormous and therefore the accounting sector is critical. The author stresses that accounting and corporate governance are in an immense dilemma but not due to a few companies that have overlooked the regulations. The crisis is that the accounting rules are old and wrong, and corporate governance is enduring the consequences. Accounting is not yet close to measuring economic reality. In an effort to serve many masters, it is not helping any well and is deserting its most critical community — the intelligent, professional shareholder.

There are large points of criticism of conventional accounting. The criticism started soon after accounting began to rise in eminence and stature in the early part of this century: this was especially the case in the USA and the UK. The problems of conventional accounting can be summarized as follows:

- The aims of conventional accounting are centered on decision usefulness therefore it seeks to concentrate and accumulate wealth for certain sections of society.
- Neither the conjectures of perfect liberal economic democracy nor the developed exchange economy with a developed stock market are valid for many societies.
- The accounting principles on which conventional accounting reports are prepared may be inappropriate for the direct and indirect equitable distribution of wealth.
- The negative economic and social consequences of conventional accounting on the environment, society and individuals are unacceptable.

One of the central theme of this paper is to show that conventional accounting does not provide accurate information. The author stresses that the conventional method ignores changes in the purchasing power of the dollar. For example, a piece of property is purchased for X dollars and, some years later, when the purchasing power of the dollar has declined to half its prior value, the property is sold for 2X dollars. Conventional accounting says that is a 100% gain in the amount of capital

that has occurred, but common sense tells us that it is the measuring unit that has changed, not the amount of capital.

The author spearheads the idea that EVA is one of the most popular measures of performance and has widespread application across industries and continents. It is critical to remember that the nature and number of accounting adjustments done for calculation of EVA is tailored to suit the needs of the company that is implementing it. No two companies calculate EVA in the same manner. EVA as a tool for value enhancement does motivate managers to perform better and take decisions that are consistent with the shareholder value maximization goal of corporations.

EVA offers a more full measure of profitability than traditional measures because it indicates how well a firm has performed in relation to the amount of capital employed. It is based on the notion that a thriving firm should earn at least its cost of capital. Firms that earn higher returns than financing costs help shareholders and account for increased shareholder value.

In its simplest form, EVA can be expressed as the following equation:

$$\text{EVA} = \text{Operating Profit After Tax (NOPAT)} - \text{Cost of Capital}$$

EVA, on the other hand, through its adjustment efforts, aims to reduce the effect of accounting alterations while healing the influence of financing costs more comprehensively in its capital cost charge. Hence, a truer measure of economic profit is provided by EVA than that provided by the use of traditional GAAP-based measures. This may be important since some companies spend heavily on R&D and the accounting treatment for this and certain intangibles is not included on GAAP-based balance sheets. EVA provides a way to compare performance among firms impacted by these accounting weaknesses.

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The victory of the EVA framework and its constant growth necessitates that CPAs appreciate not only its basic characteristics, but also the complex underpinnings of its derivation. As more companies go on to adopt EVA, the role of accountants as consultants and independent auditors of EVA is likely to increase. In addition, as more investors and other external users come to rely on EVA as a performance measure, companies will be more inclined to disclose their EVA and components of its calculation.

A series of international accounting standards will allow the original prospect for development owing to the fact that comparative examination of the rates of returns recognized based on the balance sheets and profit and loss account between the companies being in competition, become relevant. The author suggests that accounting rules need to be modified on a continuous basis rather than following a conventional approach of reviewing after long periods which usually continue for years.

### The Capitalist manifesto

Shared capitalism intends to stimulate employees by offering them a bigger financial stake in their companies. There are diverse forms of employee ownership, by which workers are rewarded for firm performance. Together, these ample sets of ownership and compensation models have been named by researchers as "shared capitalism."

- Employee stock ownership program (ESOP): A firm-sponsored trust that works as a tax-qualified, defined-contribution retirement plan for worker-owners.
- Stock options: In heart this is an offer of ownership. It gives a worker the prospect or opportunity, to buy or sell company stock by a specified date and at a specified (and usually advantageous) price matched up to fair market value.
- Employee stock purchase plan (ESPP): Analogous to stock options, an ESPP allows workers to buy company stock at a predetermined and discounted price from fair market value. Whereas stock options require no action or investment until they're exercised, ESPPs are a direct and immediate purchase of company stock, but at a discounted price.
- Profit sharing: A compensation agreement where an employer distributes some of its profits to employees. Normally made in cash, this compensation can also come in stocks or bonds. It can be dispersed directly or deferred until retirement. Gain sharing is an alternative of this form and is based on departmental or plant contributions to company performance.

In the extreme competitive marketplace of the global economy, policymakers and managers carry on to fight with alternatives to encourage and reward employees that endorse competitiveness and worker well-being. One approach championed by some clouds the traditional lines between capital and labour. It augment workers' financial stakes in their companies through pay-for-performance and stock ownership plans and increases employee decision-making. This has been called "shared capitalism" (1,2).

At the EU level, employee financial participation has been the focus of two PEPPER (Promotion of Employee Participation in Profit and Enterprise Results) reports (1991 and 1996), a Com-

mission Communication ("On a framework for the promotion of employee financial participation"), and additional activities by the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament.

"Worker capitalism" sounded promising when Congress approved the ESOP program in 1974. Any company could transfer some or all of its stock to a trust, which then allocated the shares to workers. Employees would feel they had a stake in the firm's success and build up savings with their own stock. Since 1975 about 3,000 firms, most of them small, have begun ESOP programs by turning over some stock to employees.

Studies are inconclusive as to whether workers are more productive as shareholders rather than ordinary time-clock punchers. A University of Michigan project indicated that employee-owned companies can be 1.5 times as profitable as competing firms because there is less waste and absenteeism and greater productivity. But when worker ownership is spread out among hundreds of employees, and outside managers run the firm's operations, there is little benefit. Concludes James O'Toole, an associate professor of management at the University of Southern California: "Few companies have found a measurable effect on worker motivation, performance or productivity resulting directly from stock ownership. Little increase is visible in job satisfaction, morale or company loyalty."

Broad-based employee share ownership (ESO) is a significant economic phenomenon. The two most common types of plans which encourage ESO are Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) and 401-K plans with employer stocks. Earlier studies have revealed that worker productivity increases following adoption of ESO plans (3,4). The finance literature reveals positive stock price reactions to the declaration of ESOP adoptions that are not implemented under takeover pressure (5; 6). On the other hand there is little data on how ESO plans affect employee compensation.

There are usually four non-mutually exclusive motives to establish ESOPs:

- (1) an attempt to improve incentives and team efforts to enhance worker productivity,
- (2) management-worker alliance to thwart hostile takeover threats,
- (3) cash conservation by poorly performing firms by substituting stocks for cash wages, and
- (4) tax benefits.

### A. Productivity gains

The most over and over again mentioned goal of ESO is to augment firm value by improving employee incentives. Shareholders normally do not supervise non-managerial employees; instead, they entrust the monitoring to management. As a supplement to delegated monitoring and to better align employee incentives with shareholder values, firms may encourage ESO as an incentive device.

### B. Employee compensation

How are these productivity gains shared between employees and shareholders? When ESOPs give marked control rights to employees, as in large ESOPs, workers may use their improved



negotiating power to extract higher compensation and benefits.

ESOPs may lead to employees embracing less diversified portfolios and have liquidity fears. ESOP shares cannot be sold until employees leave the company, with the exception of diversification requirements triggered at 55 and 60 years of age. Usually this will lead to augmenting employee compensation.

### C. Cash conservation

Core and Guay (7) pointed out that stock option plans for non-executive employees are usually employed at firms which look cash-constrained. Likewise, issuing stocks through ESOPs may be the result of cash constrained firms substituting stocks for cash wages. Since sales is the primary sources of cash inflows, we define an ESOP restructuring if it is adopted by a firm suffering sales decline in the year of the plan initiation. Such ESOPs are likely to lower cash wages without changing total employee compensation. While the decision to substitute equity for cash wages may be optimal for firms facing cash shortage, it is doubtful that such plans will have the same strong uplifting effect on employee morale, team effects, and collective behavior as non-restructuring ESOPs will. Therefore, we expect no marked productivity gains from having restructuring ESOPs and, hence, no compensation increases or shareholder value gains.

### D. Tax effects

ESOPs are usually established through a trust which borrows money to buy company stock. Over time, the company repays the loan taken by the trust which, in turn, distributes its shares to employee accounts. These loan payments (interest and principle) are treated as wages and, thus, are tax deductible, within certain payroll limits. Tax benefits unique to leveraged ESOPs arise when dividends paid to stocks, held by the trust, are used to pay down debt. These dividends are effectively deducted twice from the firm's taxable income, once as wages and then again as interest payments.(7) If this tax benefit has an important impact on shareholder value, leveraged ESOPs will have more favorable impact on firm valuation than non-leveraged ESOPs.

## Conclusion

In this paper the author discussed whether adopting broad-based employee stock ownership enhances firm performance by improving employee incentives and team effects. That is, does employee capitalism work? If so, how are gains divided between shareholders and employees? Our results suggest ESOPs increase productivity, which, by a process of elimination, we attribute to incentive and team effects.

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# A concise study on the history of Bioethics: some reflections

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## Abstract

The history of bioethics and its principles are analyzed in a concise way in this commentary. The origin of the term bioethics was coined in 1927 and was improved, in 1970, from four fronts, namely, experimentation on human beings, new technologies, ecological ethics and religion. Early founders of bioethics have also defined the four principles of bioethics, namely, non-maleficence, justice, beneficence and autonomy. The highest goal of Bioethics is to promote a global revolution in human consciousness that leads to an holistic worldview.

**Key words:** History of bioethics; Bioethics principles; Branches of bioethics

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## Introduction

The origin of the term bioethics (from Greek bios or life; ethos or behaviour) was coined in 1927 by Fritz Jahr in an article about a "bioethical imperative" regarding the use of animals and plants in scientific research [1]. Later, bioethics was improved from four fronts, namely, experimentation on human beings, new technologies, ecological ethics and religion. In this Era of bioethics [2], we have, first of all, to consider the ethical aspects of medical practice [3]. The term bioethics has spread so quickly throughout the world that today it is a vital reference for the practice of scientific research [4]. The field of bioethics has addressed a broad swathe of human inquiry, ranging from debates over the boundaries of life (e.g. euthanasia), the allocation of scarce health care resources (e.g. organ donation), genetic manipulation (e.g. reproductive technology) and to the right to refuse medical care for religious or cultural reasons. Bioethicists often disagree among themselves over the precise limits of their discipline, debating whether the field should concern itself with the ethical evaluation of all questions involving biology and medicine, or only a subset of these questions. In this respect, van Rensselaer Potter insisted on Global Bioethics concept [5] which is a discipline centered on the link between biology, ecology, medicine and human values. However, while science is universal, we need to take into consideration the regional cultures in the application of the principles of bioethics, that is, the same scientific applications may have diverse ethical valuation in different countries. Regardless of country, bioethics is the struggle for genuine progress of science, of man and society, or if we want to, such as the Oriental definition that Darryl Macer gave of Bioethics: "Bioethics is Love of Life" [6].

### A concise study on the history of bioethics

The first front of bioethics was related to human experimentation. Following World War II, it came to knowledge that the Nazi physicians had submitted human beings of the concentration camps to genetic experiments. In this respect, the Nuremberg Tribunal, drafted in 1947, a code (named "The Nuremberg Code") that prescribes that no experiment might be performed on humans, without their informed consent [7]. Then, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of the United Nations, enshrined the same principle. Meanwhile, there have been reports about abuse in human beings [8]. So, in 1953, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the United States stipulated that any investigation in human beings held in their clinics in Bethesda (Maryland) should have to be approved by Ethical Committees. In 1964, these standards were approved through the famous "Declaration of Helsinki" which was a milestone in the construction of bioethics [9]. This declaration was reviewed and amended at the Medical Assembly, in Tokyo, in 1975. The main idea is that the goals of science cannot overlap with those of humans. In 1978, it was issued in the publication of the "Belmont Report" which proposes four fundamental ethical principles, namely non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice [10]. In 1981, federal standards of the United States claims that an Ethical Committee (named the "Clinical Research Ethical Committee") should be created in order to ensure the quality and dignity of the research carried out in human beings.

A second front of bioethics came from new technologies. In 1960, Belding Scribner invented hemodialysis and created a Medical Center for treating patients with indications for kidney therapy. He created a Committee to decide on the hierarchy of priorities that would enable the fair selection of patients. However, this project has not had any success. In 1967, the biologist Marshall Nirenberg predicted that 25 years later, it would be possible to genetically manipulate human cells, although it could result from this procedure, ethically reproducible consequences. Thus, he argued that this practice should only be used for the benefit of humankind. Moreover, in 1968, the medical school of Harvard University published a study about the ethical and legal conditions to switch off the ventilator for patients in brain death [11]. In 1969, Daniel Callahan and Willard Gayling began to promote meetings with scientists, philosophers and professionals of other areas that look for the advances in biomedical sciences. These meetings resulted in the creation of Institute of Society, Ethics and Life Sciences at Hastings-on-the-Hudson (New York), now known as The Hastings Center [12]. Around the same time, in 1970 and 1971, appeared the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Hennepin County Medical Center (Minneapolis) with innovative technologies for the treatment of terminal patients that would not allow the ethically reproducible scientific practices.

A third front of bioethics was related with ecological ethics. The oncological physician van Rensselaer Potter proposed the term "Bioethics" and has written the article titled "Bioethics, the Science of Survival" [13], followed by a book entitled *Bioethics, Bridge to the Future* [14], related with ecological ethics. Potter was particularly concerned with the responsibility of genetic engineering to improve the quality of human life, but also, with the ecological preservation of an ecosystem that makes

the Earth sustainable for humankind living [15]. Moreover, the physician André Hellegers was also very interested in birth regulation, taking into account the finite resources that humankind has at their disposal.

The fourth front of bioethics is related to religion. In 1972, André Hellegers promoted a fraternal dialogue between the great ethical-religious currents in Western society that led to the creation of The Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics (currently called Kennedy Institute of Ethics). This Bioethics Institute served as a reference for the creation of others, such as, the Institute Borja of Bioethics of sant Cugat, Barcelona, created by Francesc Abel, the Bioethics Institute of Brussels created by Jean Malherbe, and the Institute of Bioethics of Maastricht created by Louis Stuyt and Maurice de Wachter. On the other hand, Paul Ramsey wrote two works of reference in the field of bioethics and religion, in particular *The Patient as Person*, in 1970, [16] and *Ethics at the Edges of Life*, in 1978 [17]. Moreover, Joseph Fletcher had also written the work *Morals and Medicine* [18] in which the central figure of ethics was not the physician but the patient. Around 1980, catholic theologians promoted an important series of talks that led to the creation, in 1983, of the International Study Group of Bioethics which sought to bring together theological knowledge with scientific progress in order to update theologians on scientific matters.

### A concise study of the four principles of bioethics

Early founders of bioethics, particularly Tom Beauchamp and James Childress [19], have defined the four principles of bioethics.

The first principle is non-maleficence and claims that one should avoid causing harm. The healthcare professional should not harm the patient. All treatment involves some harm, even if minimal, but the harm should not be disproportionate to the benefits of treatment. This principle is a version of the Latin term *primum non nocere* ("First of all, do not harm the patient") which is used as a moral requirement of the medical practice. In fact, the higher the risk of causing harm, greater must be the care of the medical procedure so that it can be considered an ethical procedure [20].

The second principle is justice and defends that benefits and resources should be fairly distributed. Justice is a moral principle and holds that all people should have access to decent health care and be treated in a similar manner, whatever the religion, race, sex, economic condition, social position. An example of this principle is the case of two patients in a Hospital of National Health Service, in which the first to be cured, is the most sick (Manchester Triage) [21].

The third principle is beneficence and says that one should take positive steps to help others. The healthcare professional should act in a way that benefits the patient. For example, to prevent and remove the disease or disability, promoting the physical, emotional and mental health of the patient.

However, we need to consider the balancing of benefits of treatment against the risks and costs. For example, when a researcher submits a project to be financed, he/she needs to justify whether the benefits to the patient outweigh the expenses of the procedure in order to be considered useful and appropriate [22].



The fourth principle is autonomy and refers that one should respect the right of individuals to make reasoned informed choices. Many bioethicists, especially medical scholars, accord the highest priority to autonomy. They believe that the patient should always have the freedom to choose their own treatment. This principle is supported by the thought of Immanuel Kant and John Mill. Kant claims that people only preserve dignity when they have freedom of choice. John Stuart Mill also argues that the individual should act according to personal convictions, as long as they do not harm the freedom of others [23].

These four principles have been some of the most widely discussed issues in Biomedical Ethics with arguments for and against them. For example, the relationship of physician-patient is based primarily on the principle of beneficence and autonomy, although when they are in conflict, for example by scarcity of resources, the principle of justice is also taken into account in order to compensate the social inequality of patients.

## Conclusions

Bioethics intends to be, for the individual and for society, a genuine and sustainable guide to human self-realization [24]. To do so, human beings need to become aware of the limits to impose on themselves in order to live in a harmonious way with others and with their own environment. This means that bioethics requires a transdisciplinary approach, through an intersection of a variety of disciplines, both in the areas of science, such as biology and medicine, and the areas of the humanities, such as philosophy, psychology and law in order to obtain the most appropriate solutions for the preservation of human dignity [25]. Bioethics has several branches, namely, conceptual, clinic, normative, social and cultural. However, bioethics has been condemned for its lack of diversity in thought, particularly with regards to race, for example, the notion of white normativity, which establishes the dominance of white hegemonic structures in bioethical academia [26] and tends to reinforce existing biases. Moreover, throughout the world the most vulnerable (children, women, aged) still continue to be neglected and punished (exploitation and corruption, pedophilia and prostitution). In other words, a new paradigm reflecting new way of thinking, feeling and acting needs to be implemented on Earth so that the Divine Light, Love and Grace might manifest through humanity itself. This is the highest goal of Bioethics: help to promote a global revolution in human consciousness that leads to an holistic worldview.

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