ECONSTOR
Make Your Publications Visible.

A Service of
ZBW
Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft
Leibniz Information Centre for Economics

Sejati Ananda, Artha; Hernández-García, Ángel; Lamberti, Lucio

Article

N-REL: A comprehensive framework of social media marketing strategic actions for marketing organizations

Journal of Innovation & Knowledge (JIK)

Provided in Cooperation with:
Elsevier

Suggested Citation: Sejati Ananda, Artha; Hernández-García, Ángel; Lamberti, Lucio (2016) : N-REL: A comprehensive framework of social media marketing strategic actions for marketing organizations, Journal of Innovation & Knowledge (JIK), ISSN 2444-569X, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Vol. 1, Iss. 3, pp. 170-180,
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.01.003

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/190705

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

WWW.ECONSTOR.EU

Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Journal of Innovation & Knowledge 1 (2016) 170–180

Journal of Innovation & Knowledge

www.elsevier.es/jik

Conceptual paper

N-REL: A comprehensive framework of social media marketing strategic actions for marketing organizations

Artha Sejati Ananda[a,b], *Ángel Hernández-García*[a,*], *Lucio Lamberti*[b]

[a] *Departamento de Ingeniería de Organización, Administración de Empresas y Estadística, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Madrid, Spain*

[b] *Dipartimento di Ingegneria Gestionale, Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 29 December 2015
Accepted 22 January 2016
Available online 11 March 2016

JEL classification:
M100
M150
M190

Keywords:
Social media
Social media marketing
Marketing strategy
Marketing organization
Marketing organization theory
N-REL
Social media marketing actions

ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing and ubiquitous use of social media for business activities, scholar research on social media marketing strategy is scant and companies deploy their social media marketing strategies guided by intuition or trial and error. This study proposes a comprehensive framework that identifies and classifies social media marketing strategic actions. The conceptual framework covers actions that support both transactional and relationship marketing. This research also positions social media marketing strategy and strategic actions in the context of the marketing organization theory, and discusses the impact of the incorporation of social media on the concept of marketing organization. The study offers valuable theoretical insight on social media marketing actions and the deployment of social media marketing strategies in companies. The investigation also provides hints about how to maximize the benefits from social media marketing for customer-oriented, market-driven organizations.

© 2016 Journal of Innovation & Knowledge. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

N-REL: un marco conceptual de acciones estratégicas de marketing de medios sociales para organizaciones de marketing

Códigos JEL:
M100
M150
M190

RESUMEN

A pesar de la ubicuidad y aumento del uso de los medios de redes sociales (medios sociales, o *social media*) en actividades empresariales, la investigación académica sobre las estrategias de marketing en medios sociales aún es limitada, y en la mayoría de las ocasiones las empresas implementan sus estrategias de medios sociales guiadas por la intuición o a través de ensayo y error. Este estudio propone un marco amplio y completo para la identificación

* *Corresponding author*.
E-mail address: angel.hernandez@upm.es (Á. Hernández-García).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.01.003

2444-569X/© 2016 Journal of Innovation & Knowledge. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Palabras clave:
Medios sociales
Redes sociales
Marketing de medios sociales
Estrategia de marketing
Organización de marketing
Teoría de la organización de marketing
N-REL
Acciones de marketing en medios sociales

y clasificación de acciones estratégicas de marketing de medios sociales. El marco conceptual cubre acciones que dan soporte tanto a marketing transaccional como relacional. La presente investigación sitúa la estrategia de marketing de medios sociales y las acciones estratégicas de marketing usadas en redes sociales en el contexto de la teoría de la organización de marketing, y analiza el impacto de la incorporación de los medios socales en el concepto de organización de marketing. El estudio ofrece una valiosa perspectiva teórica acerca de las acciones de marketing en medios sociales y la implementación de estrategias de marketing de medios sociales en empresas. El análisis también ofrece indicaciones sobre cómo maximizar los beneficios asociados al marketing de medios sociales en organizaciones orientadas al mercado y al consumidor.

© 2016 Journal of Innovation & Knowledge. Publicado por Elsevier España, S.L.U. Este es un artículo Open Access bajo la licencia CC BY-NC-ND (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Introduction

The emergence of second-generation Internet-based applications, also known as Web 2.0, has an important role in the development of social media. The term Web 2.0, generally attributed to O'Reilly (2005), refers to a platform of technological infrastructure where users add or modify content and applications in a participatory and collaborative way. Social networking sites, also known as social media, focus on content, with end-users taking an active role in the creation of that content. Social media are Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user generated contents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Because Internet contents were a sort of one-way communication prior to the emergence of social media, the rise of social media provokes a shift of online contents to a two-way – or many-to-many – means of communication. Social media growth and popularity have driven companies into social media use (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Nevertheless, companies still question the return of their investment in social media (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

In parallel, businesses are aware of the need to foster the creation of relationships among their industry value chains. Consequently, the development of marketing theory and practices is also undergoing a paradigm shift from a transactional to a relationship orientation (Hollensen, 2010). Businesses and industries have increasingly noticed the importance of social media to support market-driven, consumer-oriented organizations, due its intrinsic characteristics, such as interactivity and focus on user-generated contents. Nevertheless, many companies have yet to integrate social media into their branding and marketing strategies, in order to adopt a customer-oriented approach on social media (Niessing, 2014). It is therefore evident that companies need to manage social media applications more effectively to integrate them into their marketing strategies.

Social media marketing studies are in an emerging stage. Despite the existence of scholarly works, reports of best practices or anecdotal views, few of them offer a strategic view on how companies can better implement and take advantage of social media as marketing tools.

Considering the current state of the art in social media marketing, this study proposes a conceptual framework on how companies develop their social media marketing (SMM) strategic decision process, and how they translate and deploy their SMM strategy (SMMS) into strategic actions. The framework proposal includes a classification of SMMS actions. The study also assesses the fit of SMMS with marketing organization theory, and the benefits deriving from its application to relationship and transactional marketing approaches.

The structure of the study is as follows. The next section presents the literature review and theoretical foundations of the research. The investigation builds on a systematic literature review of current research on social media and SMMS. Then, this study lays out the proposal of the SMMS framework for companies, followed by a discussion of the fit of the framework within the marketing organization theory. The last section draws the conclusions and the practical and academic contributions of this study to the field of social media marketing.

Theoretical foundations of the research

Prior research on social media marketing

Social media is a recent phenomenon, and marketers and companies already use social media as part of their marketing strategy. However, the use of social media in marketing has only recently grasped attention from the world of academia.

Academic research on SMM is in its early stages. Therefore, in order to build the theoretical foundations of this research, the study of SMM requires a comprehensive literature review. In this study, a systematic approach to literature review helps to identify the gaps or inconsistencies in the existing body of knowledge.

The literature review aims to collect and analyze as many relevant sources as possible by means of a structured search. Considering the close relation between *marketing* and *business*, the main keywords for the baseline search were *social media (and) marketing*, and *social media (and) business*. In addition, the literature review includes the term "adoption" to capture knowledge streams about the way businesses implement and use social media as marketing tools. The baseline search included different academic databases such as ISI Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The baseline search returned 147 articles, covering different industries, and

both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) social media implementations. The selection of scholar articles only covered peer-reviewed articles and conference papers in English.

In order to understand different scholarly approaches to the study of SMM, and taking into account that marketing studies may greatly differ depending on the focus and perspective of the analysis – e.g. consumer-focused perspective, organizational-focused perspective, etc. – a first classification of research studies uses the unit of analysis as selection criterion. According to this, there are three main categories of studies on social media in business activities and marketing:

1. Consumer attitudes and behavior toward SMM (e.g. Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012; Cha, 2009; Heinonen, 2011; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013; Kim & Ko, 2012; Pöyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013).
2. Adoption and use of SMM by companies (e.g. Braojos-Gomez, Benitez-Amado, & Llorens-Montes, 2015; He, Zha, & Li, 2013; Hsu, 2012; Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011; Rodriguez, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012; Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Valvi, 2015; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). This group of studies pivots around managerial, executive or decision-making perspectives, as well as perceptions of firms' about the use of SMM in their organizations. This category includes studies about the drivers or motivations of firms to implement SMM. Two prominent examples of this kind of studies are Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides, and Alarcón-del-Amo (2013) and Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014). Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2013) explain that the main reason to use social media for most small retailers is the perceived usefulness of social media for customer service and networking, while for medium retailers the main reason is to provide customer service and brand-building, and large companies aim for brand-building. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) reveal that the most frequent motivations that lead brands to get involved in social media are the growth, popularity and viral nature of social media, presence of competitors in social media, and pressure to reduce costs.
3. Impact of SMM on sales and financial performance (e.g. Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, & Shah, 2013).

A second possible criterion for classification to categorize social media studies relates to the concept of social media mix. Social media mix refers to the set of social media tools deriving from the company's choice of social media applications and features, content strategies, and goals of social media implementation (e.g. Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Using this criterion for classification, the analysis identifies three different topics:

1. *Social media platform*. The studies in this cluster focus on the use of social media platforms and applications, and their features. A salient theme in these studies is how online brand community, enabled by social media applications, may influence consumers' behavior or firms' marketing outcomes. Articles in this cluster include Brogi et al. (2013), Dholakia and Durham (2010), Laroche, Habibi, Richard, and Sankaranarayanan (2012), Kang, Tang, and Fiore (2014), and Wirtz et al. (2013). Other studies, such as Zaglia (2013), investigate how brand communities evolve within social networks. Hsu (2012) studies one social networking site, Facebook, and the use of its features as part of the marketing strategy of the firm. Finally, Podobnik (2013) defines key performance indicators based on the number of fans of the Facebook brand's page and fan engagement with the brand.
2. *Social media content experience*. This group comprises studies that focus on how brand-generated contents for marketing communication influence consumer behavior. For example, Chu, Kamal, and Kim (2013) examine social media users' beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses toward social media advertising of luxury brands, and Hautz, Füller, Hutter, and Thürridl (2014) compare agency-generated videos and user-generated videos, and their impact on consumer behavior.
3. *Social influence* from users' interaction in social media. These studies focus on the effect of network relationships, and the influence exerted on users by social media. From this perspective, Wang, Yu, and Wei (2012) assess the effect of social media peer communication, while Heinonen (2011) studies users' information processing and social connection activities, and Khong, Onyemeh, and Chong (2013) focus on network effect and customer orientation empowerment. Other stream of studies in this cluster relates to the identification and impact of online social media key influencers, market mavens, and opinion leaders (Booth & Matic, 2011; Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011; Li and Du, 2014).

The literature review provides hints of further development on many research streams. First, there is still need for formalization and classification of business and industrial SMM strategies; in particular, it is interesting to explore how companies develop their SMM strategy, and the implications of SMM strategy on the firm's marketing activities. Second, research on specific SMM activities or the impact of strategic actions on marketing performance is still scant. Furthermore, more specific areas of marketing – e.g. relationship marketing – still offer many opportunities for research; for example, the question of how social media can contribute to the marketing performance of the organization remains unanswered. Lastly, there is also scarcity on research in terms of organizational behavior and SMM relations – i.e., how SMM can contribute to business strategic decisions.

Social media and marketing strategy

After the literature review on general social media marketing studies, the construction of a framework for SMM strategy requires a second refinement of results, incorporating additional inclusion and exclusion criteria. The analysis then includes additional keywords to further expand, filter and classify the results. Since the main purpose of the study is the conceptualization of SMM strategy and its actions, these keywords involve the following terms: "strategy", "action",

"activity", and "tactic". A pre-assumption for the choice of these words is that they are interchangeable or have very close meanings. The interchangeable use of the term "tactic", along with "strategy" or "action", is common in the marketing literature. In relation to "marketing tactics", Varadarajan (2010) states that there are contradictory points of view in the literature regarding the conceptual distinction between "marketing strategy" and "marketing tactics". These contradictions refer to the conceptualization of the elements of marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) in the realm of marketing strategy or marketing tactics. As such, a broad distinction exists in traditional strategic management literature, where the term "strategy" has a long-term temporal horizon and involves a substantial amount of resources and commitment, while "tactics" generally refer to short-term activities designed to fine tune strategy, and they involve a smaller commitment of resources (Hillman & Hitt, 1999). The final list of results after inclusion of the additional keywords consists of 43 peer-reviewed articles.

The limited number of studies on SMM makes it necessary to adapt theories and concepts from other related fields prior to the conceptualization of SMM strategy. Therefore, the underpinnings of this conceptual framework stem from literature on marketing management and generic corporate business strategy.

Slater and Olson (2001) develop a taxonomy of marketing strategy typologies by identifying firms' marketing activities through their market segmentation, targeting, positioning, and marketing mix. Slater and Olson (2001) see *marketing strategy* as a set of integrated decisions and actions by which a company expects to achieve its marketing objectives and meet the value requirements of its customers.

From the prior conceptualization of generic business and marketing strategy, in this study *social media marketing strategy* (*SMMS*) refers to the integrated means and set of actions by which a company or organization expects to achieve its marketing objectives and meet the requirements of its target market through the use of social media tools. Consequently, global strategic decisions of the firm drive their SMMS.

Each of the social media platforms – or social media channels – has distinctive characteristics, functionalities and features. Hence, companies should consider these differences when they define their SMM activities within the social media sphere. For example, some social media platforms may be more adequate for a particular type of content compared to others – e.g., Instagram or Pinterest for graphic contents – and some platforms may be more appropriate for a particular type of audience within the network (Falkow, 2011).

From the literature review, two works are particularly relevant to set the basis for a comprehensive conceptual framework: Mergel (2013) and Constantinides (2014). Mergel (2013) proposes a classification to explain social media adoption tactics by institutions from their social media activities in different social media platforms. Mergel's work originally focuses on the study of the deployment of social media tactics by public service agencies among the US Federal Government, and describes three main types of social media activities/tactics:

1. Representation, a tactic related with the representation of the agency on the social media channels. Representation resembles a more traditional approach of "push" strategies.
2. Engagement, a tactic that aims at the interaction between the audiences and the agency, reflecting "pull" strategies.
3. Networking and "mingling", tactics that aim at keeping a measured voice and listening to the citizens (passive strategy).

Although Mergel's work provides a good starting point to understand the institutional behavior in social media, it falls short in explaining the strategic actions taken by companies, especially in relation with their marketing activities.

From a different view, Constantinides (2009, 2014) classifies corporate SMM activities based on the types of social media applications, and the correspondence between SMM activities and marketing objectives. Constantinides states that companies have two main approaches to their social media activities as part of the marketing strategy: passive and active. The passive approach, *listening-in*, implies the use of social media applications as a source of customer voice and market information. The active approach, on the other hand, relates to the use of social media applications for the following marketing purposes:

1. Public relations and direct marketing tools.
2. Engaging personalities as a means to influence customers and as product/brand advocates.
3. Personalizing customer's online experience and allowing product customization
4. Engaging the customer in the co-creation and innovation process, as well as in product reviews or advertising concepts.

Despite the insights of Constantinides' work, it still fails to provide an analysis of the different SMM activities or actions subsumed in the marketing and integrated strategies of the firms.

Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) further investigate this issue. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis propose a decision making process for firms to define their social media strategy. Their proposal roots on their study on the companies' motivation to create brand community through social media, the analysis of how they use social media, of social media activities, and of the perceived benefits of social media use for customers. Nevertheless, and despite their contribution, it still lacks an in-depth analysis of social media strategies and activities that help understanding how SMMS translate to actions. Ananda, Hernández-García, and Lamberti (2014) make a first approach to this type of analysis. Ananda et al. (2014) develop a framework on SMMS following Constantinides (2009) and Mergel (2013), but this framework still has some limitations because it does not cover B2B marketing and it does not elaborate the tactical operationalization of strategic decisions in social media, only describing the actions instead.

The proposal of the framework also has to take into consideration the paradigm shift to relationship marketing around the early 90s (Grönroos, 1991, 1994). Grönroos suggests that marketing strategies are located along a continuum between two extremes: transaction marketing and relationship

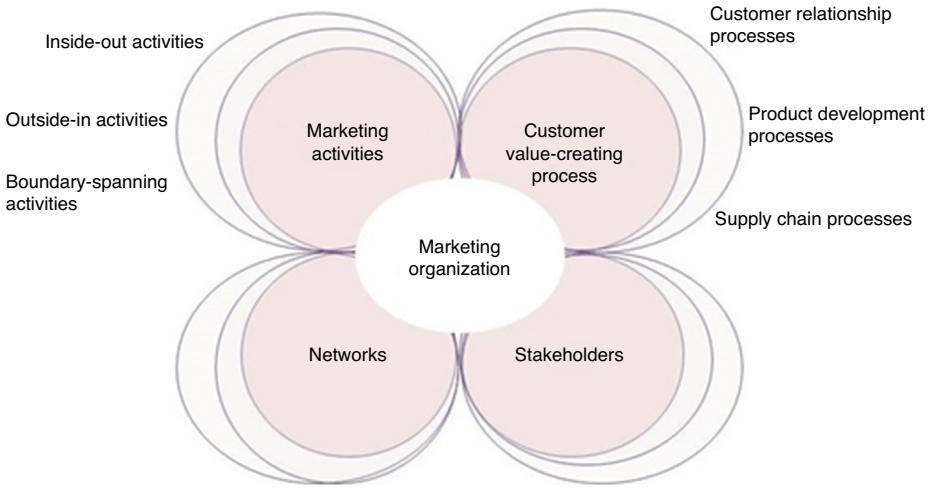

Fig. 1 – Elements of the marketing organization (Hult, 2011).

marketing. Grönroos (1994) states that relationship marketing relies on interactive marketing supported by marketing mix activities, as compared to the dominant function of marketing mix in transactional marketing. Coviello and Brodie (1998) further add that frameworks should attempt to integrate both approaches, recognizing that firm and market characteristics can influence marketing practices. Later on, Coviello, Brodie, Danaher, and Johnston (2002) postulate the hybrid transactional/relational marketing approach – by which some firms seek a balance between the transactional and relational approaches – and Lamberti and Noci (2010) view that there are three types of companies regarding their marketing practices:

1. Transactional marketing companies. Their marketing activities mainly aim at attracting customers with minimal or standardized customer interactions or retention practices.
2. Relational marketing companies, characterized by a relationship-oriented approach to customer interactions, with a strong orientation toward long-term relationships and cooperation with customers and the supply-chain.
3. Transactional/relational (hybrid) marketing companies, characterized by a coexistence or relationship-oriented and transaction-oriented approaches.

Advances in technology have resulted in increasing opportunities for interactions between firms and customers, between customers, and between firms (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). Ramani and Kumar (2008) suggest that customer empowerment reflects the extent to which a firm provides its customers means to (1) connect with the firm and actively shape the nature of transactions; and (2) connect and collaborate with each other by sharing information, praise, criticism, suggestions and ideas about company products, services, and policies. This idea goes in line with the concept of social media, in the sense that the use of social media as a marketing tool can foster customer relationships. In this sense, Pentina and Koh (2012) show that business perceives SMM as a means to enable customer participation, improve customer support, and obtain customer feedback. Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, and Zhang's (2013) concept of "social-CRM house" suggests that the level of engagement of customers through social media affects – and is affected by – the company's approach to the traditional components of CRM: acquisition, maintenance, and termination.

Following the idea of relationship marketing and the interactions of the company inside and beyond the boundaries of the organization, Hult (2011) elaborates the concept of marketing organization in the context of Marketing Organization (MOR) theory. A marketing organization encompasses marketing activities that cross a firm's internal and external boundaries, in an integrated way, creating business processes and networks to satisfy the needs and wants of relevant stakeholders (Fig. 1).

The fundamental premise of MOR theory lies on the notion that marketing activities represent the central feature of contemporary marketing, rather than a focus on the marketing department or marketing function. Overall, as shown in Fig. 1, it encompasses an integrated foundation of (1) marketing activities (inside-out, outside-in, and boundary-spanning activities); (2) customer value-creating processes (product development management, PDM; customer relationship management, CRM; and supply-chain management, SCM); (3) networks (internal, vertical, intermarket, and opportunistic); and (4) stakeholders (primary and secondary).

The key idea on Hult's (2011) framework is the notion that implementation of marketing activities is a direct function of an organization's superior and distinctive capabilities (Day, 1994). Day (1994) identifies three distinctive capabilities within a market-driven organization: *inside-out* (internal), *outside-in* (external), and *spanning*. Inside-out processes encompass the internal resources and capabilities of the organization; for example, technology development, manufacturing/transformation processes, financial management and integrated logistics. Outside-in activities connect the processes that define the organizational capabilities to the external environment and enable business to compete by anticipating market requirements ahead of competitors and creating durable relationships with customers, channel members, and suppliers. Outside-in activities encompass two

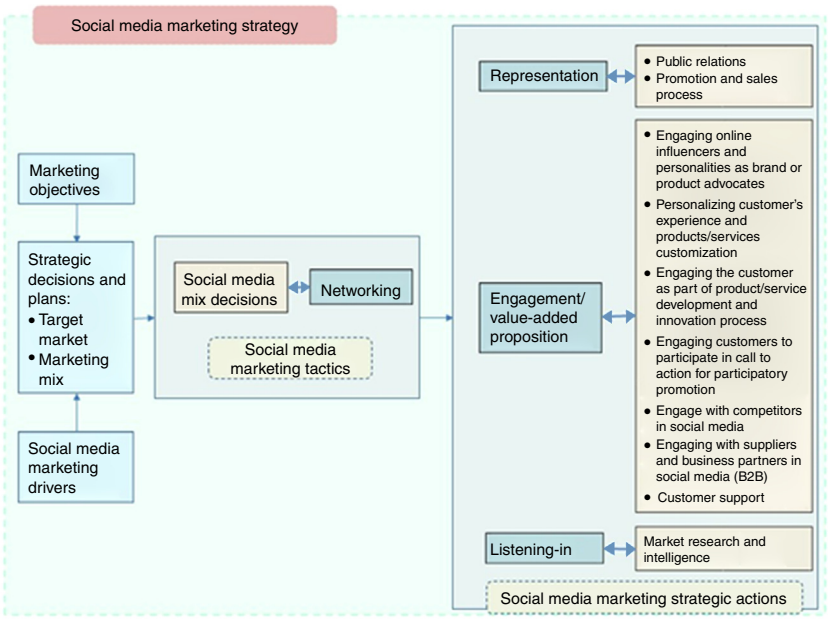

Fig. 2 – N-REL (Networking, Representation, Engagement, Listening-in) framework for SMM.

main processes: market sensing and customer linking, as well as channel bonding. Boundary-spanning capabilities integrate the inside-out and outside-in activities. Critical activities in the spanning process are, among others, strategy development, purchasing process, customer service development, customer service delivery and new product/service development.

N-REL: a framework for SMMS

The literature review on SMM activities from the perspective of the social media mix suggests three different pillars that a firm should consider to build and develop its SMM strategy. First, the social media mix decisions that define which platform a company should use to conduct its marketing activities. Second, the impact and relevance of users' social media content experiences in their attitudes and behaviors. Third, social influence contagions in social media that may as well affect users' attitudes and behaviors, and therefore their decision-making process. This social influence implies that marketers can capitalize on the use of the online influencers within the social (media) network, engaging them in order to increase impact of the marketing actions on consumers.

This study conceptualizes SMM strategy and activities following the prior suggested notions from the review on SMM-related sources and from business strategy literature. From Slater and Olson (2001), SMM strategies and activities refer to decisions on the following three areas:

1. Market segmentation, targeting and positioning.
2. Positioning based on marketing mix.
3. Social media mix.

Following the discussion from the previous section on social media and marketing strategy, Fig. 2 depicts the conceptual framework for SMMS and the categorization of the corresponding strategic actions. There are three main implicit allotments of strategy here. First is the firms' strategic decisions and planning; second, the tactical plans, or operationalization of strategy within the social media mix; third, the implementation of strategic decisions by firms into actions in the form of content creation in different social media platforms.

Driven by either internal or external motivations, decision makers in a marketing organization decide to deploy and implement their SMMS to achieve a certain marketing objective. Firms define their SMM tactics following those decisions and plans on the target market, marketing mix, and the marketing objectives. In this context, SMM tactics are activities related to *networking* goals of the social media mix context – e.g. activities that facilitate conversations about brands or companies, and connect firms with their audience. Thus, SMM tactics include the choice of social media applications or tools. Then, upon planning and decisions, firms can perform their strategic actions in the social media they choose. There are three main categories of SMM actions: *representation*, *engagement*, and *listening-in*.

1. **Representation** covers social media activities focusing on the delivery of marketing communications related to the company profile and information about products.
2. **Engagement**, or value-added proposition, covers the marketing activities that focus on interaction with customers, add value for them and generate benefits for the company: customer-relationship management, one-to-one marketing, customer empowerment, customer support, personalization of information, product customization, or customer loyalty programs (Müller-Lankenau, Wehmeyer, and Klein, 2006). In the case of B2B, the firms' engagement includes relations along the whole supply-chain – supplier,

retailers, and business partners (Jussila et al., 2014; Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, and Hughes, 2013).

3. **Listening-in** activities enable a passive way of social media engagement that aims at market research and intelligence, such as analytics of social media contents and conversations – share of voice, sentiment, gaps, trends, opportunities, etc. – as well as the identification of relevant actors and influencers.

These three categories of actions can be further refined into ten subtypes of actions:

1. Representation
   1.1 Public relations: marketing communications aiming to earn public understanding and acceptance (Hollensen, 2010).
   1.2 Promotion and sales, including advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing for marketing communication and commercial sales purposes.
2. Engagement/value-added proposition
   2.1 Engaging online opinion leaders, key influencers, and personalities to influence customers. For example, brand engagement with social media personalities or brand advocates (Constantinides, 2009, 2014).
   2.2 Personalizing customer/user experience and allowing for product/service customization. These actions aim at strengthening ties between customers and companies by offering users the possibility to personalize their online experiences or customize their products (Constantinides, 2009, 2014).
   2.3 Engaging customers as part of product/service development and innovation processes. These actions aim at engaging customers as source of feedback, creativity and innovation for product or service development. Another way to incorporate customer knowledge and creativity is to engage them in product customization. The difference with the previous category is that these actions not only enable customers to customize the product they buy, but companies can also make the customized products available to other customers.
   2.4 Engaging customers in calls to action for participatory promotion. Actions in this category focus on engaging customers in the promotion process by participating in competitions, quizzes or contests. One example of this type of actions is the provision of incentives for customers to share contents about their experiences with the product or service (Parent, Plangger, & Bal, 2011).
   2.5 Engaging with competitors in social media. This type of engagement refers to how brands and companies intentionally connect with their competitors in social media with the main goal of, although not limited to, competitive analysis (e.g. Bianchi & Andrews, 2015).
   2.6 Customer support. In the social media context, actions within this category aim to proactively engage customers to post their feedback and concerns in social media applications related with the pre- or post-sales process (e.g. Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012; Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2013).
   2.7 Engaging with suppliers and business partners, in B2B contexts (e.g. Michaelidou et al., 2011; Rapp et al., 2013).
3. Listening-in
   3.1 Market intelligence. Market intelligence comprises listening-in actions, which aim at monitoring the voices of customer or audiences. Marketing research is crucial to the selection of target markets and to the development of a value proposition (Slater & Olson, 2001).

This framework opens the way for the study of the effect of firm/brand-generated content from marketing actions on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the marketing impact on consumer behavior induces a feedback loop back into firm's marketing strategic decision process. In this regard, market intelligence actions through social media help gather feedback and make necessary adjustments to the strategic decisions. As stated earlier, the strategic decisions of the company, their market segmentation, marketing and positioning, and marketing mix orientations must drive the various SMM actions of the company in order to achieve an effective SMMS that fulfills the marketing goals of the company.

N-REL framework and marketing organization

Following the N-REL framework for SMMS, this section discusses how the framework fits in marketing organization theory, using Hult's (2011) proposal as a starting point. Hult (2011) suggests the notion of a marketing organization from a cross-functional activity-based perspective rather than conceptualizing a marketing organization as a distinct functional entity.

The N-REL framework suggests that SMM activities encompass and interact with the different components of a marketing organization (Fig. 3). In this case, SMM activities cover a firm's internal and external customer-value business processes. SMM activities also contribute to the creation of networks whose goal is to fulfill the needs and wants of stakeholders. SMM activities transform the dimensions of these elements to a bigger or lesser degree as defined by the structure and dimension – i.e., configuration – of its (social) networks and stakeholders' roles.

From the comparison of Figs. 1 and 3, it is evident that the inclusion of social media in the marketing organization induces a significant change, facilitating and strengthening inter-relations among the different elements of the marketing organization. Thus, in the first place, decision makers of the organization shall setup their strategic decisions on SMM implementation, and a correspondence must exist between the decisions and the company's target market and marketing mix. The different decisions have an effect on the possible network configurations, the role of customers as stakeholders and the definition of the customer-value creation processes.

Furthermore, prior to the deployment of SMM actions, the organization must conduct tactical decisions concerning the social media mix variables, such as which type of social media platforms to use. In addition, organizations must consider whether there are special types of applications or features (e.g. video, music, commercial applications, etc.) available within

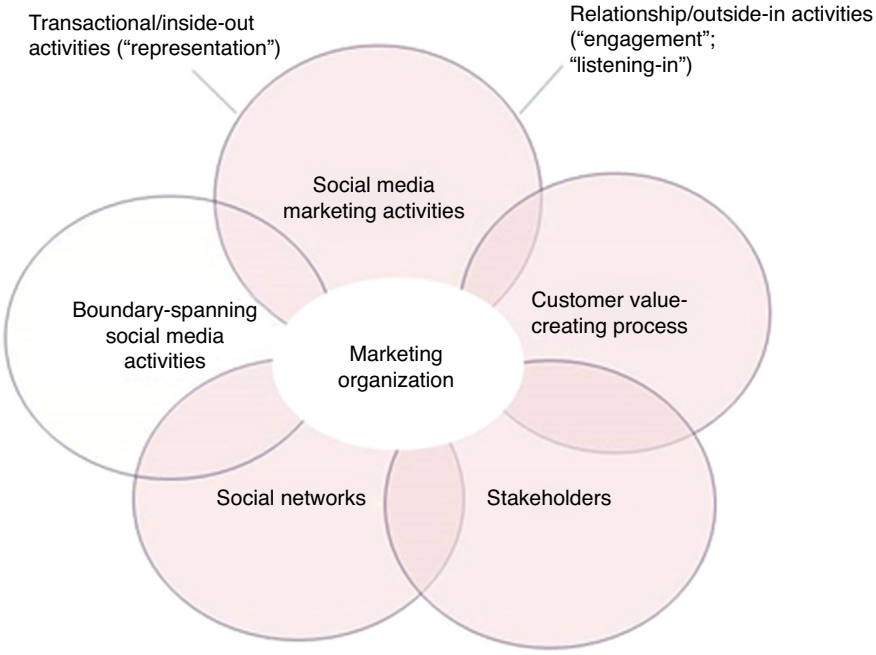

Fig. 3 – Impact of social media in the marketing organization.

each medium or social media channel that match their needs. These tactical social media decisions shall guide the company into defining the key actors within their social networks.

The resulting configuration of the social networks strongly influence the communication flows between network actors. Social media is egalitarian in nature (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013), in contrast to traditional or other online media. Thus, a brand is essentially a network node, just like any other actor within the network. A brand is no longer a single authority in a hierarchical structure that can control one-way exposure to commercial communications or messages. Brown, Broderick, and Lee (2007) suggest that, in online social networks, each individual contributes to and receives information from an online community. The configuration and structure of the social networks therefore define the roles and relative influence of each stakeholder. Peters et al. (2013) suggest that the following network dimensions describe the network structure of a social medium:

1. Size (e.g. the total number of actors or the degree of locality).
2. Connections (e.g. homophily, multiplexity, mutuality, network closure).
3. Distributions (e.g. centrality, density, distance, tie strength).
4. Segmentation (e.g. clustering coefficient, betweenness).

Marketing activities are the defining key of the marketing organization. Representation actions in the N-REL framework (e.g. public relations, and promotion and sales process) are close to the concept of inside-out marketing activities, because the goal of these marketing actions is to communicate the internal capabilities of the organization to its target market. Mostly, representation activities reflect transactional marketing approaches. Some examples of representation actions include sharing success stories in social media (Andzulis et al., 2012), customer appreciation contents (He et al., 2013) or social media ads (Curran, Graham, & Temple, 2011).

On the other hand, engagement-oriented SMM actions connect the internal processes of the organizations with its external environment. Hence, they resemble the outside-in capabilities of companies or firms. They aim at establishing long-term relations with customers, end-consumers, channel members, and the whole value chain, with actions such as engaging online influencers (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012), engaging customers in sharing brand experiences (Phan et al., 2011), or communicating, collaborating, and sharing best practices with business partners (Jussila et al., 2014).

Listening-in actions are compatible with the outside-in market sensing process. This is consistent with the notion that market orientation emphasizes the distinctive capability of market sensing. The firm uses market sensing to learn about customers, competitors, or channel members to continuously detect and act on events and trends in present and prospective markets (Day, 1994). A firm can gather, analyze and use market information collected from the conversations available in social media, systematically, in order to be ahead of competitors. From the above, engagement and listening-in actions strongly relate to relationship marketing practices.

Both transactional and relationship marketing can take advantage of the characteristics of SMM. Naturally, this also applies to marketing organizations aiming to implement hybrid marketing strategies. Organizations adopting a transactional marketing approach will most likely focus on representation actions. Conversely, a relationship marketing-oriented, market-driven, or customer-oriented organization shall put more emphasis on engagement SMM actions to make

the most of the interactive marketing capabilities and opportunities that social media brings.

Fig. 3 shows that the actions in the N-REL framework do not cover boundary-spanning activities. In line with Day's (1994) view of the organization scanning capabilities, spanning processes must satisfy the anticipated needs of customers identified through the outside-in capabilities, and meet the commitments that have been made to enhance relationships. Within the SMM context, the boundary-spanning capabilities of social media activities depend on the brand or company-generated/induced SMM activities (representation, engagement, and listening-in activities).

Brand-generated SMM actions, coupled with the social influence as the result of the social media marketing actions, foster the so-called "social activities". Social activities are collective actions that relate to the technological nature of social media, allowing the formation of social networks – with different possible structures and configurations. Social networks, in turn, lead to electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) communication between network actors (Brown et al., 2007; Chu & Kim, 2011). Finally, eWoM communication fosters social influence within the social networks. A clear example of social media boundary-spanning activity is social shopping or social commerce, which refers to shopping activities in social media (e.g. Cha, 2009; Stephen & Toubia, 2010). In a broad sense, social shopping or social commerce involves the use of Internet-based media to allow the participation of users in the marketing, selling, comparing, curating, buying, and sharing of products or services, in online and offline marketplaces and communities (Zhou, Zhang, & Zimmermann, 2013). Social shopping as a spanning activity integrates the purchasing process of the company and social media marketing activities.

Discussion

This study proposes the N-REL framework, a comprehensive framework that explains how companies develop their social media marketing strategic decision process, and how they translate and deploy their SMM strategy into strategic actions. The framework extends prior literature on SMM strategy, offers a general perspective, irrespective of industry or sector of application, and covers both B2C and B2B marketing.

As marketers increasingly realize about the importance of relationship marketing, they turn to maximize the potential of social media use for their marketing strategy. Within the paradigm shift toward relationship marketing, social media marketing is also consistent with transactional marketing, although SMM activities can particularly boost relationship marketing approaches.

In addition, the proposal of the framework is in accordance with the marketing organization theory. Nevertheless, the study shows how the incorporation of social media may transform the components of a marketing organization and their interdependence relations: the components interact and intersect one another, leading to interconnected dimensions. Consequently, this transformation leads to not only less defined, but also more flexible and dynamic functional groups or elements of the marketing organization.

The N-REL framework, however, also has some limitations. For instance, it covers only SMM strategic actions initiated by the company, and the classification of SMM actions does not cover social media boundary-spanning activities that involve other actors in the social network. Hence, companies should anticipate the impact of these boundary-spanning activities in their marketing goals.

The framework suggests that companies may capitalize on the potential benefits of social media and their distinctive capabilities to enhance relationship with customers, supply-chain, or business partners. Nevertheless, since social media marketing activities influence, and are influenced by, the social activities resulting from the interactions with social network actors or users, there is always the possibility to fail to react properly to consumer or user responses. This may lead to negative eWoM in social media, an example being Nestlé's handling of a negative campaign about their product (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). Conversely, and including a careful design of strategic actions, firms may benefit from boundary-spanning social media activities – e.g., activities contributing to commercial or purchasing processes. Companies could also integrate other social media activities into customer-value processes – such as CRM, SCM, or product innovation – via collaboration with the online brand community.

From a resource-based view of the firm, the strategic marketing resources of the company only have potential value, and companies may only realize that value via organizational actions and behaviors (Hult, 2011). With the increasing importance of social media as marketing tools, and by observing the N-REL framework, firms can decide which kind of social media marketing actions are more adequate to gain competitive advantage and increase their marketing performance.

This study and the proposal of the N-REL framework are a significant contribution to the field of social media marketing, in particular regarding advances in the use of social media for strategic business decisions. Furthermore, N-REL serves as a guide for companies to assess their marketing strategies by identifying and leveraging their distinctive capabilities. Knowledge about the requirements for successful social media marketing strategy implementation is of great interest for both academic and practitioners. The deployment of social media for marketing purposes is currently a decision that relies more on intuition and trial and error than on strategic thinking. The N-REL framework may facilitate effective deployment of SMM by helping to understand how companies implement SMMS into activities or actions.

There are still broad avenues of research deriving from this work. First, further empirical validation is required. Ongoing research should focus on testing this framework, especially considering sector-specific characteristics because different market orientations may result in different SMM activities. We also suggest further investigation of the link between companies' overall marketing strategy and the deployment of social media marketing campaigns as part of that strategy. Another area of interest for researchers is the study of how to leverage organizational resources and distinctive capabilities to increase marketing and business performance by maximizing the opportunities offered by social media, through either a transactional or a relationship marketing strategic approach.

Finally, the framework does not cover all the marketing organization components and dimensions. Future research should address how SMM actions affect activities and processes of the different components of the marketing organization and, ultimately, to assess their contribution to the firms' marketing and organizational performance.

Acknowledgements

This research is conducted within the framework of the European Doctorate in Industrial Management (EDIM), funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission under Erasmus Mundus Action 1 program.

REFERENCES

Ananda, A. S., Hernández-García, Á., & Lamberti, L. (2014). RENL: A framework for social media marketing strategy. In *Research Challenges in Contemporary Management Engineering. Paper presented at the 1st Annual EDIM PhD Conference*. Politecnico di Milano, pp. 19.

Andzulis, J. M., Panagopoulos, N. G., & Rapp, A. (2012). A review of social media and implications for the sales process. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *32*(3), 305–316.

Berthon, P. R., Pitt, L. F., Plangger, K., & Shapiro, D. (2012). Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy. *Business Horizons*, *55*(3), 261–271.

Bianchi, C., & Andrews, L. (2015). Investigating marketing managers' perspectives on social media in Chile. *Journal of Business Research*, *68*(12), 2552–2559.

Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *16*(3), 184–191.

Braojos-Gomez, J., Benitez-Amado, J., & Llorens-Montes, F. J. (2015). How do small firms learn to develop a social media competence? *International Journal of Information Management*, *35*(4), 443–458.

Brogi, S., Calabrese, A., Campisi, D., Capece, G., Costa, R., & Di Pillo, F. (2013). Effects of online brand communities on brand equity in luxury fashion industry. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, *5*(1), 1–9.

Brown, J., Broderick, A. J., & Lee, N. (2007). Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *21*(3), 2–20.

Bruhn, M., Schoenmueller, V., & Schäfer, D. B. (2012). Are Social Media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation? *Management Research Review*, *35*(9), 770–790.

Cha, J. (2009). Shopping on social networking Web sites: Attitudes toward real versus virtual items. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *10*(1), 77–93.

Chu, S. C., & Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, *30*(1), 47–75.

Chu, S. C., Kamal, S., & Kim, Y. (2013). Understanding consumers' responses toward social media advertising and purchase intention toward luxury products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *4*(3), 158–174.

Constantinides, E. (2009). Social Media/Web 2.0 as marketing parameter: An introduction. In *Proceedings of the 8th International Congress Marketing Trends*.

Constantinides, E. (2014). Foundations of social media marketing. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *148*, 40–57.

Coviello, N. E., & Brodie, R. J. (1998). From transaction to relationship marketing: An investigation of managerial perceptions and practices. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *6*(3), 171–186.

Coviello, N. E., Brodie, R. J., Danaher, P. J., & Johnston, W. J. (2002). How firms relate to their markets: An empirical examination of contemporary marketing practices. *Journal of Marketing*, *66*(3), 33–46.

Curran, K., Graham, S., & Temple, C. (2011). Advertising on Facebook. *International Journal of e-Business Development*, *1*(1), 26–33.

Day, G. S. (1994). The capabilities of market-driven organizations. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(4), 37–52.

Dholakia, U. M., & Durham, E. (2010). One café chain's Facebook experiment. *Harvard Business Review*, *88*(3), 26.

Falkow, S. (2011). *Social media strategy – A white paper on social media strategy*. Retrieved from http://falkowinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Social-Media-Strategy-Module-Whitepaper.pdf

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 90–92.

Grönroos, C. (1991). The marketing strategy continuum: Towards a marketing concept for the 1990s. *Management Decision*, *29*(1).

Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*, *32*(2), 4–20.

Hautz, J., Füller, J., Hutter, K., & Thürridl, C. (2014). Let users generate your video ads? The impact of video source and quality on consumers' perceptions and intended behaviors. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *28*(1), 1–15.

He, W., Zha, S., & Li, L. (2013). Social media competitive analysis and text mining: A case study in the pizza industry. *International Journal of Information Management*, *33*(3), 464–472.

Heinonen, K. (2011). Consumer activity in social media: Managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *10*(6), 356–364.

Hillman, A. J., & Hitt, M. A. (1999). Corporate political strategy formulation: A model of approach, participation, and strategy decisions. *Academy of Management Review*, *24*(4), 825–842.

Hoffman, D. L., & Fodor, M. (2010). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing? *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *52*(1), 41–49.

Hollensen, S. (2010). *Marketing management: A relationship approach* (2nd ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Hsu, Y. L. (2012). Facebook as international eMarketing strategy of Taiwan hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *31*(3), 972–980.

Hult, G. T. M. (2011). Toward a theory of the boundary-spanning marketing organization and insights from 31 organization theories. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *39*(4), 509–536.

Hutter, K., Hautz, J., Dennhardt, S., & Füller, J. (2013). The impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention: The case of MINI on Facebook. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *22*(5/6), 342–351.

Jussila, J. J., Kärkkäinen, H., & Aramo-Immonen, H. (2014). Social media utilization in business-to-business relationships of technology industry firms. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *30*, 606–613.

Kang, J., Tang, L., & Fiore, A. M. (2014). Enhancing consumer–brand relationships on restaurant Facebook fan pages: Maximizing consumer benefits and increasing active

participation. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *36*, 145–155.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, *53*(1), 59–68.

Khong, K. W., Onyemeh, N. C., & Chong, A. Y. L. (2013). BSEM estimation of network effect and customer orientation empowerment on trust in social media and network environment. *Expert Systems with Applications*, *40*(12), 4858–4870.

Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, *65*(10), 1480–1486.

Kumar, V., Bhaskaran, V., Mirchandani, R., & Shah, M. (2013). Practice prize winner – Creating a measurable social media marketing strategy: Increasing the value and ROI of intangibles and tangibles for Hokey Pokey. *Marketing Science*, *32*(2), 194–212.

Lamberti, L., & Noci, G. (2010). Marketing strategy and marketing performance measurement system: Exploring the relationship. *European Management Journal*, *28*(2), 139–152.

Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., Richard, M. O., & Sankaranarayanan, R. (2012). The effects of social media based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, brand trust and brand loyalty. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*(5), 1755–1767.

Li, F., & Du, T. C. (2014). Listen to me—Evaluating the influence of micro-blogs. *Decision Support Systems*, *62*, 119–130.

Lorenzo-Romero, C., Constantinides, E., & Alarcón-del-Amo, M. (2013). Social media as marketing strategy: An explorative study on adoption and use by retailers. In M. R. Olivas-Luján, & T. Bondarouk (Eds.), *Advanced series in management* (Vol. 11) *Social media in strategic management* (pp. 197–215). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Malthouse, E. C., Haenlein, M., Skiera, B., Wege, E., & Zhang, M. (2013). Managing customer relationships in the social media era: Introducing the social CRM house. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 270–280.

Mergel, I. (2013). Social media adoption and resulting tactics in the U.S. federal government. *Government Information Quarterly*, *30*(2), 123–130.

Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N. T., & Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, barriers and measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(7), 1153–1159.

Müller-Lankenau, C., Wehmeyer, K., & Klein, S. (2006). Multi-channel strategies: Capturing and exploring diversity in the European retail grocery industry. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *10*(2), 85–122.

Niessing, J. (2014). *The danger of siloed social media*.. Retrieved from http://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/the-danger-of-siloed-social-media-3363

O'Reilly, T. (2005). *What is Web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software*. Retrieved from http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html

Parent, M., Plangger, K., & Bal, A. (2011). The new WTP: Willingness to participate. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 219–229.

Pentina, I., & Koh, A. C. (2012). Exploring social media marketing strategies in SMEs. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, *7*(4), 292–310.

Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A. M., Ognibeni, B., & Pauwels, K. (2013). Social media metrics—A framework and guidelines for managing social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 281–298.

Phan, M., Thomas, R., & Heine, K. (2011). Social media and luxury brand management: The case of Burberry. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *2*(4), 213–222.

Podobnik, V. (2013). An analysis of Facebook social media marketing key performance indicators: The case of premier league brands. In *Telecommunications (ConTEL), 2013 12th International Conference* (pp. 131–138). IEEE.

Pöyry, E., Parvinen, P., & Malmivaara, T. (2013). Can we get from liking to buying? Behavioral differences in hedonic and utilitarian Facebook usage. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, *12*(4), 224–235.

Ramani, G., & Kumar, V. (2008). Interaction orientation and firm performance. *Journal of Marketing*, *72*(1), 27–45.

Rapp, A., Beitelspacher, L. S., Grewal, D., & Hughes, D. E. (2013). Understanding social media effects across seller, retailer, and consumer interactions. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(5), 547–566.

Rodriguez, M., Peterson, R. M., & Krishnan, V. (2012). Social media's influence on business-to-business sales performance. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *32*(3), 365–378.

Saravanakumar, M., & SuganthaLakshmi, T. (2012). Social media marketing. *Life Science Journal*, *9*(4), 4444–4451.

Siamagka, N.-T., Christodoulides, G., Michaelidou, N., & Valvi, A. (2015). Determinants of social media adoption by B2B organizations. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *51*, 89–99.

Slater, S. F., & Olson, E. M. (2001). Marketing's contribution to the implementation of business strategy: An empirical analysis. *Strategic Management Journal*, *22*(11), 1055–1067.

Stephen, A. T., & Toubia, O. (2010). Deriving value from social commerce networks. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *47*(2), 215–228.

Tsimonis, G., & Dimitriadis, S. (2014). Brand strategies in social media. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *32*(3), 328–344.

Varadarajan, R. (2010). Strategic marketing and marketing strategy: Domain, definition, fundamental issues and foundational premises. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*(2), 119–140.

Wang, X., Yu, C., & Wei, Y. (2012). Social media peer communication and impacts on purchase intentions: A consumer socialization framework. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *26*(4), 198–208.

Weinberg, B. D., & Pehlivan, E. (2011). Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 275–282.

Wirtz, J., den Ambtman, A., Bloemer, J., Horváth, C., Ramaseshan, B., van de Klundert, J., et al. (2013). Managing brands and customer engagement in online brand communities. *Journal of Service Management*, *24*(3), 223–244.

Zaglia, M. E. (2013). Brand communities embedded in social networks. *Journal of Business Research*, *66*(2), 216–223.

Zhou, L., Zhang, P., & Zimmermann, H.-D. (2013). Social commerce research: An integrated view. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, *12*(2), 61–68.