
Editorial

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Social media (SM) is defined as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” [Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010), p.61]. SM are increasingly used globally, and the number of users is expected to surpass 4.4 billion people in 2025 (Statista.com, 2021). Facebook has the highest number of users globally, around 2.7 billion monthly active users whereas Instagram comes second with 1 billion monthly active accounts (Statista.com, 2021).

Therefore, it becomes evident that it is critical for businesses to use SM strategically and integrate its use in marketing strategy. Various studies emphasise that firms can have significant benefits from using SM in their marketing strategy (e.g., Dwivedi et al., 2015; Felix et al., 2017). SM is in fact used by companies all over the world in many industries and for different marketing purposes (Holt, 2016). This trend is increasing because the use of SM in marketing is shown to be valuable for businesses. SM can be used for well-targeted campaigns, increasing perceived quality and brand loyalty, enhancing brand awareness, getting more and better customer feedback, and developing more successful new products and services that are adopted faster and enhancing customer relationships (e.g., Lal et al., 2020; Shanahan et al., 2019).

Although the use of SM can provide such benefits to firms, researchers do not agree on a framework for strategic social media marketing (SMM) and relevant research remains limited (Felix et al., 2017). There is still a need for more research on how SM can be used strategically, even in the B2C context (Ngai et al., 2015; Keegan and Rowley, 2017). Thus, this special issue aims to expand on this important issue and show how SM can be used as a marketing tool in different parts of marketing strategy. The papers included in this issue touch upon different issues on how firms can use SM in marketing strategy.

Antoniadis, Assimakopoulos and Paltsoglou investigate the factors that increase the engagement of brands' posts in social networking sites (SNSs) by examining the most popular 83 Greek brand pages on Facebook and a total of 8,727 posts. Specifically, the study analyses the effect of vividness, positive/negative reactions, informativeness, and posting time on the engagement level of a post. Findings show that vivid content (images, videos), the amount of information contained in a post and positive reactions increase customer engagement and the popularity of posts. On the other hand, posting time does not seem to affect customer engagement significantly. The contribution of this study lies in a better understanding of the way people interact with brand posts on Facebook. This can help businesses to use brand posts more effectively for engaging customers.

Voutsas, Tsihla, Hatzithomas and Margariti examine the value of gender identity as a moderator in the relationship between consumers' experienced and self-reported joy towards a YouTube video advertisement. By using an experiment researchers show that in a warm advertising emotional appeal, high masculine individuals who experienced joy tend to mask their emotions and under-report their level of joy. A similar reaction was recorded for low masculine individuals exposed to an aggressive advertising emotional appeal. Also, self-reported joy acts as a mediator of the impact of experienced joy on consumers' attitudes towards the ad and the brand and purchase intentions in the case of warm ads. The study highlights that both businesses and researchers should use a combination of autonomic and self-report measures in marketing and advertising research. Also, findings support the notion that ad agencies could appeal to wider target audiences through warm advertisements.

Rizomyliotis, Zafeiriadis, Konstantoulaki and Giovanis investigate the most effective mix of key design elements (colour, font size and layout) in Instagram ads in relation to consumer purchase intentions and brand image. Using an experiment with a sample of millennials, they conclude that colour vividness and font size have a significant effect on both purchase intentions and brand image whereas layout does not have a significant effect. These findings are important for marketers who target young consumers and aim to affect their purchase intentions and improve brand image.

Guftométros and Guerreiro investigate the effect of cultural differences on SMM using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. They study data from 6,750 posts from 225 Facebook brand pages and 15 different countries. Metrics analysed include likes, shares, and comments and the various types of likes such as love, wow and funny. Results show that countries low in individualism and/or high in power distance share posts more than comments. Also, the use of the funny and wow emoticon responses are related to countries high in individualism. The study shows that managers can use posts differently in different countries based on country culture. For example, in countries high in individualism and low in uncertainty avoidance, humorous posts may be more aligned with what consumers expect, but posts that elicit astonishment might better function in countries high in individualism.

do Rosário and Loureiro compare the effectiveness of e-WOM, as provided by digital influencers on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, on smartphone purchase intentions. Through an online survey in all three SM, they investigate the role of information quality, information credibility, information needs, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption and positive and negative information on buying intentions. YouTube is considered the best SM platform for information quality and credibility, followed by Instagram. Instagram satisfies better the respondents for Information needs and attitude towards information and YouTube is the best platform for information usefulness and adoption. Furthermore, the effect of positive or negative information on buying intentions is greater for YouTube and Instagram than Facebook. The study shows that different SM should be used for different marketing purposes within the communication strategy of firms.

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