

Chapter 7

Social Media as a Communication Channel

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ABSTRACT

In digital world, people spend most of their time on social media. Social media has gone beyond being just an online communication platform. It has become a channel that users prefer to other online platforms, such as websites, blogs, forums to get information about various businesses, events, and individuals. With Industry 4.0, all devices are connected to online platform, smart devices get more place in daily life. Instead of accessing information through individual applications, consumers prefer to obtain information from the company's social media pages and/or the company's internal and external customers' shared content. The purpose of the chapter is to indicate the importance of social media use, for organizations to interact effectively with all stakeholders, and to explain the benefits of social media usage of organizations in terms of different functions with examples from best cases and results of empirical researches.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the use of social media for organizations is no longer an option. With Industry 4.0, companies are trying to take advantage of information technologies to maximize profitability and productivity. Besides this, use of social media has increased in recent years and that made companies to show their presence on social media platforms. Social media is becoming a major source of excessive information for companies (Yilmaz et al.,2017).

Social media is also an effective tool of communication to establish social interaction within the organization and to maintain relations with outside parties. Communicating through both internal and external social media platforms has many benefits such as competitive advantage, corporate reputation and positive job attitudes.

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The mobile devices and social media are part of Industry 4.0 since the manufacturing environment is leading to real-time transparency, which will make production control, and management processes more flexible (Bauer et al., 2015). Although this “digital transformation” might seem challenging for the companies, many companies have already started their change process since they developed interactive websites, improved customer service.(Berman, 2012). However, big companies use mobile analytics and social media to change customer loyalty, internal communication and even their business models (Westerman and McAfee, 2012).

In this chapter the concepts of social media, social media marketing and enterprise social media are defined, the benefits and importance of social media usage for organization are indicated and, the role of social media as a communication channel for 21st century organizations are explained via cases and findings of empirical researches.

BACKGROUND

In the basic sense, social media is defined as any web site including user-generated content. Such as social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace), creative works sharing sites (Youtube, Instagram, Soundcloud), business networking sites (Linkedin), collaborative websites (Wikipedia), e-commerce communities (Ebay, Amazon), podcasts and open source software communities (Linux, R), social media can take many forms. In all these forms of social media, individuals can share their own content and make comments on other individuals’ contents. Establishment of social networking sites such as Myspace and Facebook has changed the concept of “Social media” and made a contribution to importance it has today (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

There are many reasons of using social media sites. Smith and Kidder indicated most cited two reasons of social media usage as: a sense of community and a sense of identity. According to Social Capital Theory people can benefit from strong and weak connections with others. Creating and extending a user’s community, a network of relationships, provide common shared values and norms. In terms of business world such networks could help individuals to meet influential people and to find job connections (Smith & Kidder, 2010: 492). According to Social Identity Theory, at the growing stages people need to explore and expose their social identity. Also a positive sense of identity is important for self-esteem. It provides a feeling of belonging to a larger group. Especially for young people social media makes it possible to introduce an identity by posting photos, blogging, listing hobbies, sharing common interest with the community they want to belong (Smith & Kidder, 2010: 492). According to Zhao et al (2008) Facebook users check their profile to see their hoped-for possible selves. According to Liu (2007) there are two types of identities: the differentiation profiles and the self-enhancing profiles. The differentiation profiles represent people who want to be unique and different from others. On the other side the self-enhancing profiles, which are majority, represent people who want to be popular and similar to others.

The development of social media completely changed the way companies communicate with their employees and customers. There is a clear transition from traditional media channels to social media. Comparing these two media types, social media has two-way conversation, open system, brand and user generated contents. Also in social media, the most important actors are users and influencers, the language is informal and every user can involve actively. But in traditional media, one-way conversa-

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