

Investigating B-to-B Social Media Implementation: E-Marketing Orientation and Media Richness Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social media usage keeps exploding all over the world which makes it an incrementally important resource to be more competitive in both business-to-customer and business-to-business marketing. However, even though social media has been widely used in B-to-B, previous researches still claim that B-to-B marketers are far behind B-to-C marketers either in the level of use or in the sophistication for social media. Building on the electronic marketing orientation (EMO) proposition and media richness theory, this research conducted a series of in-depth interview to understand inter-relationships between research constructs in a B-to-B context. Using a survey approach, the study shows that organizational cultural and cross-department coordination have significant influence on the implementations, adoption and business performance of B-to-B social media. These results of 103 respondents can prove the important references for academicians to conduct further empirical validations, and helpful for professionals to identify their marketing strategies to facilitate B-to-B business.

KEYWORDS

Business-to-Business, E-Marketing Orientation (EMO), Media Richness Theory, Social Media Marketing

INTRODUCTION

In this information age, most of the social media are mainly well implemented in B-to-C markets and B-to-C companies already have sophisticated knowledge in managing social media (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Hsiao et al, 2019; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Even though B-to-B marketers use social media in many occasions, previous researches still claimed that B-to-B marketers are far behind B-to-C marketers either in the level of using and or the level of sophistication for social media (Itani, Agnihotri & Dingu, 2017; Salo, 2017). However, many evidences have indicated that incorporating with social media into B-to-B sales are very effective. For instance, Molex Inc., a manufacturer of electronic connectors, utilized Twitter, YouTube, and Blogs to extend its sales opportunities abroad; or IBM successfully explored IT buyers' accurate language to search

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for software topics so that they can accordingly customized instructional videos which lead to sales leads (Heller, Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

In general, organizations differ the way in doing business when they have different orientation. Kohli and Jaworsk (1990) argued that market orientation is generating, dissemination organization-wide information and responding appropriately to present and future customer demands and preference. However, market orientation is designed for traditional marketing activities without considering B-to-B issues. This study thus adopts Electronic Marketing Orientation (EMO) to the phenomenon of B-to-B. Electronic Marketing Orientation (EMO) not only contains a philosophical component about Marketing Orientation, but also moves along with electronic and digital marketing which is more proper for the implementation of B-to-B social media marketing (Habibi et al., 2015). Developed in the B-to-B context, EMO brings a further benefit which enables it to appraise e-marketing (Anche, Hozouri & Mehdizadeh, 2014). Other studies, such as Jussila, Kärkkäinen and Aramo-Immonen (2014) and Shaltoni and West (2010) also suggested a strong case for firms to develop EMO in the context of B-to-B. Hence, social media marketing had begun to be associated with organization orientation, and further regarded EMO as a basic framework to discuss B-to-B social media marketing. This study intends to fill the research gap and integrate relevant variable of EMO to explain the practices of B-to-B social media marketing.

First of all, previous research has demonstrated the relationship between EMO on B-to-B social media implementation (Habibi et al., 2015), however, the variables underlying each EMO components are still quite conceptual with no empirical validation. The ambiguity may result in unclearly and ineffectively implement of social media marketing, this study aims to acquire practical variables underlying EMO model through the interview with B-to-B experienced marketers. Secondly, the inter-relationship between components of EMO in different level has not been completely explored (Shaltoni & West, 2010). Moreover, the link between EMO and business performance is also not well developed (Habibi et al., 2015). It is suggested that the integration between the inter-relationship of EMO components and successful business performance deserves more evaluation. Thirdly, some measurement items in B-to-B social media are still quite new which have not been studied from literature review. This study creates the measurement items such as brand exposure, inquiry, call volume, fan number, click rate and brand identity.

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) stated that media differs in the degree of richness they possess, that is the amount of information they can transmit and enable users to communicate and exchange understanding. Consequently, receivers' understanding will differently affected as the capacity of the media to transmit information varies (Alamäki, Pesonen, & Dirin, 2019). By combing e-marketing orientation model and media richness theory, this paper aims at investigating what and how social media activities based on EMO can enhance B-to-B business performance efficiently and effectively. The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the practical variables underlying EMO model of four components (Philosophical, Initiation, Implementation and Adoption) and successful business performance in B-to-B social media; and (2) to study the influence of four components (Philosophical, Initiation, Implementation and Adoption) on successful business performance in B-to-B social media.

This paper is proceeded as follows: first, it introduces the theoretical background of Electronic Marketing Orientation and Media Richness Theory in relation to B-to-B social media; 5 qualitative in-depth interviews are then used to develop our research model and hypothesizing relationships. The model is then tested using the respondent of confirmatory factor analysis and partial least squares (smart PLS) are adopted; and, finally, the results are presented and the conclusion, implication, contributions, limitations, and future research directions are highlighted.

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