

Chapter 1

Social Media for Business Purposes: Objectives Pursued and Satisfaction in the Results

Aitziber Nunez-Zabaleta

UPV EHU, Leioa, Spain

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the specific work tasks that 302 professional workers from the Basque region in Spain perform on social media (SM) for attaining their objectives, together with the work satisfaction they gain. The target population consisted of 23,000 professional workers in the Spanish Basque Country region, both employees and self-employed, with a particular interest in the use of new technologies. A sample of 302 professional workers were surveyed. The author found that professional workers are using SM applications to accomplish a wide range of objectives. Employees themselves are using SM for business purposes with their own strategy and on behalf of the company they work for. In addition to the SM strategy of the employees being integrated within the overall business strategy, managers should encourage them to use SM as this all contributes to the better performance of the company.

1. INTRODUCTION

Networking has always played a key role in business success, and the advent first of general social networking sites (SNS) and subsequently of professional ones has constituted a sea change for professional relationships, reinforcing the advantages of having an online network of contacts. This professional or business practice involves an approach that consists in establishing a professional network of contacts for publicising the firm and its business, listening to and learning from others, and locating possible collaborators, partners and investors (NetCity, 2013). This practice is used to expand a business, increase its visibility and improve its network of commercial contacts, and thereby generate business within it (Aral et al., 2013). The activities encompassed by networking pursue different goals depending on the

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position a person holds within the firm: reinforce the relationship with current customers; have a better understanding of these same customers within a more relaxed atmosphere; elucidate upon the firm or business idea, promote oneself personally for professional development, disclose the firm's new products and services, identify business opportunities, get to know business partners or customers, and re-establish contact with prior acquaintances.

Most of the studies on the use of Social Media (SM) applications and their penetration focus on the strategies of companies themselves, which are used as the unit of analysis. However, there are few studies that deal with employees, even though there are a large number of them using SM on a personal basis, albeit for work purposes and on behalf of the company. Companies pursue strategies on SM that are designed to publicise new products, launch promotions and offers, provide customer services, recruit staff, increase traffic to the corporate website, and improve brand image. There are activities that are normally undertaken by the marketing department, and therefore adopt a communication approach. Yet what use is made accordingly by the company's employees?

This article seeks to shed light on the specific tasks these employees undertake on SM, and whether or not they are satisfied with the results they are achieving. At the same time, this study aims to find out whether there is a relationship between their satisfaction with these outcomes and six variables (age, gender, type of worker, size of company, type of consumer that the company sells to and the economic sector).

The table below shows some studies focused on workers activity on SM.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

SM penetration in all areas is now reaching maturity. Almost eight out of every 10 internet users aged between 18 and 55 use SM on a general basis; that is, for as many types of purposes as the options that each network provides (IAB, 2016). On a professional level, SNS in general and professional networks in particular, have meant a new paradigm when establishing and upholding relationships and new ways of doing business.

There are a number of firms that analyze the use of SM for several purposes, sometimes through longitudinal studies, which enable comparisons to be made with prior years and introduce new topics according to trends. One such trend is the use for work purposes, where they are gaining ever-greater importance. Furthermore, there are a series of consultancy firms that conduct studies in the workplace by surveying managers in different areas. According to IAB (2016), 31% of people surveyed say they use them for work purposes (in 2013 just 8% of respondents said they used social tools for work purposes). Another similar study conducted by The Cocktail analysis (2015) found that one out of every five users considers the SNS useful for professional development.

SM activities of the workers may improve business performance, it is an alternative commercial tool, it is used to strengthen the link with customers, fund and recruit staff, identify new business opportunities, monitor the competition, assess a possible internationalization, find information to solve problems and make contacts of professional interest.

Employees can bring many benefits to the companies they work for by using SM on their work tasks. Some of these benefits are shown in Table 2.

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