


Chapter 51

Approach to Social Media Marketing Strategies in Different World Regions: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study, using a sample of university organizations from different world regions, aims to provide an overview of social media marketing strategies used in different geographical locations. For this purpose, the authors conducted a descriptive study of the communication patterns implemented by university institutions in four regions: Africa and the Middle East, North America, Latin America, and Europe. The study, which adopts a comparative format, contrasts the findings obtained in each of the aforementioned regions, highlighting the existence of both similarities and differences in the social media marketing strategies of the organizations observed. In line with previous research, the authors took Twitter as the social media platform to be monitored.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), in general, and the emergence of the Internet, in particular, has caused numerous social changes in the past decades (Cabero Almenara et al., 2007; Feng et al., 2019; García-Jiménez et al., 2013; García-Ruiz et al., 2015; García Galera et al., 2017; Gómez-García et al., 2020; Richter et al., 2011).

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Access to the Internet among the citizenry has resulted in an increase in the use of social network services. By 2020, the number of Internet users worldwide reached 4.54 billion, being the average penetration of social media users 49% (Kemp, 2020). This average penetration in global terms obviously varies between countries. Thus, for example, the percentage in Ghana is 20%, in Egypt 41%, in Germany 45%, in Colombia 69%, in the US 70% and in South Korea 87% (Kemp, 2020).

The impact of these platforms over time is undeniable, and their integration into our daily life is a consummate reality (Piscitelli, 2010). The success of social media is caused by different factors, but among them stand out aspects such as the dynamism of the content, its collaborative utility, its intuitive use, its easy access and its interactive nature (Castaño et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, what is a social network service? Castañeda Quintero (2010) generically defines these platforms as those telematics tools organized around user profiles, personal or professional, that pursue the objective of connecting people with common interests.

The literature review by Almansa, Fonseca and Castillo (2013) differentiates three major topics of research in this field: (a) user representation and generation of links between users (Junco, 2012; McAndrew and Jeong, 2012); (b) structuring of the network around interests and motivations (Backstrom et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2006); and (c) privacy and risks of the media (Calvete et al., 2010; McBride, 2011).

The information stored on these platforms provides a vast record of thoughts and behaviors of individuals of all types and social conditions. In recent years, users' messages in social network services have been used around the world to explore social, economic, and cultural realities of various kinds. Examples of this are the analysis of the ideological polarization of political parties (Urman, 2020), the prediction of economic fluctuations in stock exchange markets (Li et al., 2016), the dissemination of hate messages after terrorist attacks (Bruns and Hanusch, 2017), the identification of environmental problems in certain areas (Chen et al., 2015) and the momentum of social activism movements (Matsilele and Ruhanya, 2020).

The widespread nature of the social media phenomena has transformed the way we communicate and interact with our environment to the point of making it necessary to create a descriptive term for the typical user of these platforms.

The academic community has recovered the term "prosumer", a term created during the 1970s (McLuhan & Nevitt, 1972; Toffler, 1980) to define the typical user of this media. Born from the union of the ideas of producer and consumer, "prosumer" serves to describe those individuals capable of consuming what they themselves produce. More recently, other authors have created from this concept the term "media prosumer" to refer to the user accustomed to the social media setting.

Sandoval Romero and Aguaded Gómez (2012), for example, describe the "media prosumer" as the subject able to take a leading role in the media, producing and consuming information to generate a culture of participation and interactivity. Sánchez Carrero and Contreras Pulido (2012), for instance, define the "media prosumer" as the user who actively assumes the role of the communication channel, becoming a recommender and opinion generator on a variety of topics.

However, the particularities and motivations of this "media prosumer" require an in-depth analysis. For this purpose, one of the approaches commonly employed by researchers is the so-called Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G). Even though this approach has been applied in numerous studies on the use of social media in recent years (Chen, 2011; García-Ruiz et al., 2018; Matosas López, 2018; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Smock et al., 2011), U&G theory had been used previously to describe how audiences interact with other mass media such as radio, press or television (Katz et al., 1973, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000).

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