

Chapter 14

An Integrated View on Social Media Marketing Actions and Their Expected Impacts on Consumer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to combine the contributions scattered in the literature by analyzing the different types of social media marketing actions and their expected outcomes. A systematic literature review was conducted and complemented with interviews with practitioners (n=8) in order to validate the findings. The analysis confirmed that the literature is particularly fragmented, although it approaches a very diversified list of social media marketing actions (n=29). Four types of actions were identified: actions that evoke emotions, actions that foster interaction and involvement, actions of information sharing, and commercial actions. Practitioners involved in the validation process confirmed the adequacy and usefulness of the classification. Social media marketing actions are organized into four blocks according to their objectives and impacts on consumer behavior, hence providing a tool that was recognized by a sample of practitioners as useful to guide their efforts and budgets.

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INTRODUCTION

The company's social media presence is one aspect of the digital component that the managers of physical points of sale must pay attention to. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have millions of active users worldwide, leading companies to use them to communicate with customers and develop prospects. There are two important facts to keep in mind: Internet users aged 16 to 64 spend on average two hours and 27 minutes daily using social media, and two of the main reasons for using social media are to find inspiration for things to do and to buy (27.7%) and finding products to purchase (26,3%) (We are Social & Hootsuite, 2022). This highlights the importance of companies having a social media presence and taking advantage of social media opportunities.

Social media are Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow user-generated content creation and exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media marketing, the main focus of this study, can be defined as a multidisciplinary and multifunctional concept that uses social media (often joint with other communication channels) to create value for stakeholders and achieve companies' goals (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). A company's social media presence should reflect a company's social media marketing strategy, which can be divided into four different strategies. A social commerce strategy's primary goal is promoting and selling the company's products. The social content strategy is defined by the motivation of connecting and collaborating with users. A social monitoring strategy is characterized by a two-way communication process in which the company listens and learns from customers. And the last one, the social CRM strategy, is defined as a form of collaborative interaction intended to engage and empower customers to build mutually beneficial relationships with the firm and lead to superior performance (Li et al., 2021).

It is possible to list several factors that boost brands' use of social media, the most common ones being its popularity, growth, and viral nature. Indeed, social media offers interesting opportunities to increase brand reach, foster word-of-mouth communication, watch competitors, and reduce costs since these platforms offer cheaper solutions to promote brands (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Despite accepting that the ultimate objective of social media marketing can be to increase sales, either by the acquisition of new customers, the increase in consumption, and upselling or cross-selling (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014), extant literature highlights the importance of creating and strengthening relationships with consumers and increasing brand loyalty. Indeed, social media marketing goals include improving brand perceptions and brand image, generating traffic to online platforms, reducing marketing costs, encouraging interactivity among users by stimulating them to post and share content (Felix et al., 2017), spreading positive word of mouth (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014), and improving corporate reputation (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). Additionally, social media play an essential role in the acquisition of information about consumers, namely their demographic and psychographic characteristics, needs, desires, preferences, buying motives, opinions, and perceptions about the brand (Bashir et al., 2017), vital information that managers can use to successfully target them on different channels (online and offline). Overall, this long set of attainable business goals gives a clear idea of the complex role that social media marketing can play in business strategies due to the multifaceted potential impacts it can provide.

Being a relatively new topic, the contributions in the literature comprise several gaps and are often scarce and dispersed. This is the case of social media actions and their impact on purchase behavior. Despite the relevance of this topic for companies, extant literature often approaches particular social media marketing actions, and a global systematization focusing on their expected impacts still needs to be improved. Based on the gap identified in the literature, this chapter aims to combine the contributions

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