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WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Nowadays, social media are undoubtedly becoming vital part of international marketing strategy. The 21st century is characterized by huge boom of social media and has delivered both challenges and opportunities in this international, boundaryless world. The main purpose of the study is to identify and furtherly describe main perspectives that comes into play when using social media for international marketing strategies. Used methods are represented by content analysis of existing literature, whereas main perspectives are identified. Synchronously, over fifty articles focusing on social media were observed. Article also serves as a starting point for authors' dissertation. As a result, author identifies four key perspectives that play important role in usage of social media: international advertising, role of culture, role of technology and traditional vs. social media perspective. These perspectives are furtherly discussed and possible areas for future development, together with its limitations are identified. All these perspectives show the importance of social media topic and why it should not be overlooked. Practical implications might be seen mainly by managers who deal with social media. Managers might get inspired by these perspectives, use its opportunities and be aware of its limitations in order to create successful international online marketing campaigns. Moreover, since this topic is really broad and there is often the requirement to high degree of cumulation in research area, limitations are captured mainly by the fact that there is also more time needed to develop useful theories that can be furtherly presented in literature.

Keywords: international marketing, international advertising, internet, marketing strategy, social media

1 INTRODUCTION

Social media represents vital part of todays' international marketing strategies. However, to date, there is no unified framework, nor linked perspectives that should be used when dealing with social media. Nevertheless, nowadays it is quite clear social media have become important part of advertising agenda and they possess strong potential for several companies to use them cross-nationally. Furthermore, there is still lack of clear theoretical perspectives in this field, from which clear research hypotheses may be formulated and tested by an empirical study. Since theoretical development in a research area often requires high degree of cumulation, development of useful theories need more time in order for them to be articulated in the literature (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, existing articles usually focus only on one specific perspective and how it influence international marketing strategies through social media. Therefore, this paper focuses on finding more perspectives through extensive content analysis, in order to identify interconnections in specific perspectives and how these could be combined and used to boost international marketing strategies. The originality of the paper is captured mainly in the identification of four main perspectives that are repeatedly mentioned in articles but never with certain connections or with the focus on its opportunities and limitations, all in one. Paper follows other studies in this field by trying to find main perspectives that influence international marketing strategies through usage of social media, and furtherly, identifying opportunities and weaknesses of each perspective.

2 MAKING SENSE OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

Social media represent significant part of international marketing strategy nowadays. Marketing managers and experts have to face chances and threats regarding social media highly connected with interconnected global environment. With huge boom of internet, social media are part of people everyday life. Therefore, it is logical that companies, in attempt to reach out and address potential customers worldwide, use social media as a part of their international marketing strategy. For the purpose of this paper, international marketing strategy is perceived in connection with companies' endeavor to broader their reach in order to enter foreign countries through social media as a powerful marketing tool. It may include posts and tweets on social media. Likewise, firms elevate their mobile capabilities in foreign markets, including knowledge and reputation, via content in online social networks that is typically user-generated (Paniagua, Korzynski & Mas-Tur, 2017). Through digital technology, marketers were able to facilitate passive bystanders on-board and make them an active hunters, supported by Internet-based campaigns (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a collection of Internet-based applications that permit to create and exchange user-generated content (Abrahams, 2012). In the same wein, Kietzmann et al. (2011) describes social media as mobile and web technologies via which individuals and communities are able to share, cocreate, discuss, and even modify user-generated content (Maltby, 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Several networks can be covered under this definition, including communities of practice using forums and blogs in order to discuss common interests or professional practices. It is possible to find these communities tightly connected within larger social networks, for example circles within Google+ (Maltby, 2012). Another examples are social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter representing microblogging services, content communities like YouTube, and collaborative projects like Wikipedia (Abrahams, 2012).

As shown above, many social media networks exist. For the purpose of this paper, the focus is put on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter as representants of social media used for the purposes of marketing and business strategies creation. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter were chosen due to the fact that these social media were used the most and were the most repetitive ones in examined fifty articles. It is possible to frame a firm’s activities towards social medias as resources that enhance headquarter knowledge capabilities tight to marketing, financial services or foreign location planning. While doing business internationally, social media can provide significant help (Paniagua, Korzynski & Mas-Tur, 2017).

Social media represent significant part in daily life of Internet users (Knoll, 2016). As an increasing popular and promising advertising venue, social media are more and more used in marketing activities of companies. Synchronously, marketing research shows that exposure to promotional content via members of one’s social network are tightly connected with increased intention to purchase, in comparison to Internet ad exposure alone. Suitable example can be Facebook notifications referring that a friend has “liked” a specific page of specific product (Abrahams, 2012). Firms have responded to this fast and promising development of social media through allocation of greater proportions of their media budgets to social media. In other words, they pay more attention to online social media in their advetising campaigns (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Saxena & Khanna, 2013). Social media also seem to create its own environment in which advertising, as part of marketing strategy, takes place. More and more scholars focusing on marketing start to pay more attention to social media and dedicate their works to advertising in social media. However, only small

number of papers adressing this topic exist (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Therefore, existing reviews focusing on online advertising (Cho & Khang, 2006; Ha, 2008; Kim & McMillan, 2008) are not able to provide an in-depth analysis of advertising in social media. On the other side, few exceptions exist, naming two exceptions that are the reviews conducted by Li & Zhan (2011) and Khang, Ki & Ye (2012), which consider new ways of advertising made possible through social media (Knoll, 2016).

Generally, studies define social media as a convenient tool in order to elevate firms' capabilities, mainly those that have straight associating with international business, such as headquarter services. Social media surface as a key factor that helps to understand concepts related to headquarter services, e.g. business performance (Enders et al., 2008; Paniagua & Sapena, 2014), customer relationship management (Trainor et al., 2014), human resources (Korzynski, 2013), marketing (DesAutels, 2011; Leeflang et al., 2014; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011), brand management (Sabate et al., 2014), finance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and sports business (Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016). Firms start to understand significant strategic role of social media and its effect on international marketing results. Nevertheless, their implications for international business persist largely unknown (Paniagua, Korzynski & Mas-Tur, 2017).

Potential customers need to become aware of the product or service before they are offered and subsequently sold on the international market. Traditional marketing techniques are very expensive, especially if they want to address multiple countries at once. On the contrary, social networks enable companies to communicate their reports to mass audiences at a fraction of the cost. Segmentation of audiences is also easier with the use of social media. While traditional media, such as newspapers or TV stations, are mostly focused on topics at national level, social networks also allow other transnational criteria such as interest only on specific topics, interests, and websites that customers are members of. As a result, all campaigns can become more effective by targeting customers who can really be interesting for their business. Paco Viudes, CEO of Gentyo.com and a digital marketing expert, believes that the ability to segment and hit potential customers, focusing on their interests, increases product awareness with very low costs, which is also a major benefit of using social media. The size of the company is therefore not important if the company develops a good strategy and can reach potential customers with content related to their product. Social media not only enhances B2C communication but also C2C communication between customers, which can increase awareness faster and reach the wider public. Another important reason for the use of social media in international marketing strategies is their usefulness for valuable market research. Every communication on social media is a valuable source of information for brands that perfectly match the preferences and expectations of their potential customers (Nicolas, 2017). The role of social media in the international marketing strategies varies depending on the specific case of each firm. For instance, a company like IKEA have used social media to enter a specific market while the Dollar Shave Club used social media to bring its own company and services to the entire online community, saving a great deal of money compared to conventional marketing tools. Kiosked & Moodyo have built platforms based on existing social networks and used the global media intervention to quickly gain access to international markets (European Commission, 2017).

Happy Legs' international marketing strategy also uses Facebook's advertising tools, allowing for excellent international segmentation, as well as publishing content that helps companies focus on a particular segment. They also support the "Buy" button that directs users to the online store and their sites on electronic markets such as Amazon United Kingdom. During the survey phase, and thus often before the product is available in a given country, they have also managed to get people and potential customers to show interest in this product. Society improves understanding of public sensitivity and creates expectations. Another great

example is Mariscal & Sarroca, who has created a Beetailer online store on Facebook, along with an international community manager in Spanish and English. Real business opportunities come through the social network. Munich Sport is another success story. This Barcelona-based sneakers company and factory in Spain sells more than 850,000 pairs of shoes per year. In recent years, the company has built an enviable position in the fashion industry, both domestically and internationally, with sales in both Europe and Asia. The company owns more than 300 outlets throughout Spain. The company uses social networks, primarily Twitter, with 17,000 followers, using innovative techniques such as crowdsourcing to attract thousands of designers for their sneakers, all in-brand, putting the work team in direct contact with the consumer involved in the project. This approach also supports different forms of engagement and encourages discussion among the target public (Nicolas, 2017).

3 METHODS

A content analysis of scientific articles was used to create this paper. Keywords as international marketing, social media, marketing strategy, internet and such have been used. In the end, author managed to observe over fifty articles from academic databases based on chosen keywords. The number of articles is limited due to the lack of existing empirical overview regarding this topic. It was quite complicated to find relevant articles that could be used for further identification of main perspectives influencing international marketing strategies with the usage of social media.

Content analysis of over fifty articles had been used, whereas four key perspectives were identified. When finding reasons to choose specific perspectives, questions such as "What is the important factor that comes into play when dealing with international marketing strategies with the use of social media"? The answer was quite clear: advertising, culture, technology and relationship between social and traditional media. Even between these perspectives can be find linkages and interconnections. Furthermore, these perspectives were also chosen because some of them include obsolete data that need further examination, while others were chosen for their controversial nature in terms of sometimes contradictory opinions of the authors observing certain perspective. As a result, this paper will be used as a base for author´s dissertation focusing on "Business and marketing strategies of SMEs in terms of internationalization".

4 WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES: MAIN PERSPECTIVES

4.1 The role of international advertising

To date, in the field of international advertisting, social media have not received enough attention, which consequently resulted in a very limited number of cross-cultural and cross-national studies. This frailty is caused by several reasons. First of all, researchers might perceive the field of research regarding internationalization of social media as premature considering the very recent evolution of social media as an important advertising tool. Only quite recently Facebook and Youtube have started to be used in advertising, and only in last couple of years a substantial number of studies focusing on social media and its connections with advertising have begun to appear in the context of only one single country, focusing on single country studies (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

4.2 The role of culture

Similarly, adoption of international marketing strategies is also tightly connected with question of culture. For several years researchers claimed that cultural convergence leads to consumers that become more alike in many aspects (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche (2010) also focused on the role of cultural values while invetigated online consumer behavior. They developer a model focused on online consumer behavior that was based on Zajonc's (1980) Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework. Model included emotions, such as pleasure, dominance or excitement, as well as site atmospherics (informativeness, effectiveness, and entertainment). Then, model was compared between Canadian and Chinese respondents pursuant Hofstede's (1991) model of cultural values. As a result, the model was supported and number of non-invariant paths between groups were identified (Laroche, 2011).

Another related issue when discussing the role of culture is the degree to which cultural factors manage to influence consumer responsiveness regarding social media advertising and promotion. This issue is again tightly connected to cultural dimensions including individualism vs collectivism, monochronic vs polychronic time orientation, communal vs agentic tendencies in friendships. These dimensions, again, need to be examined in order to find out to which extent and how they influence consumer response to social media advertising internationally, within various cultures (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

4.3 The role of technology

Technology is considered to be a driving force when it comes down to economic development. Technology consequently has accelerated changes in marketing behavior. Furthermore, methods of collecting information have been created thanks to technology. Since technology has revolutionized the way companies and individuals communicate, it should thus be take into consideration as a vital instrument regarding any marketing stragegy (Doole & Lowe, 2012). Hasan (2011) claims that increase of Internet users caused decline in the usage of traditional media including television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Synchronously, internet is responsible for openess of new possibilites in the Marketplace and represents increasingly important platform for international business transactions and marketing operations (Liang, Lin & Chen, 2004). In the same vein, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that digitalization represents a vital part of the daily routine, while at the same time developing and changing the way in which businesses and consumers interact with each other. Furthermore, utilization of social media have become a significant role for any business in order to express their presence (Gilmore et al., 2007). Synchronously, such utilization have encouraged new marketing tools that can be used not only in huge companies but also in smaller organizations, due to its usability and affordability (Sigala, 2002; Laurenius & Wikstrom, 2016).

4.4 Social vs. traditional media point of view

Another view that should not be omitted when discussing relevance of social media in business and marketing strategies of companies operating internationally are possible synergies between social media and traditional media. More attention should be paid to this topic as more and more traditionally transported advertising campaigns (e.g., billboards, television, or magazine ads) make direct reference to Facebook sites or YouTube channels through display of a link or a quick response (QR) code (Sago 2011). Okazaki and Hirose (2012) claim that social media users have been a key driver of this growth and they act as early adopters. In case that consumer is interested in an advertisement, he or she usually just type the link or scan the code with their smartphone to get direct access to the site (Knoll, 2016).

5 RESULTS

As international marketing strategies are really broad, main perspectives were adopted while examining current research in order to identify opportunities and limitations of social media usage for marketing purposes of firms, these are captured in Table 1.

Table 1 Opportunities and challenges regarding different perspectives on international marketing strategies. Source: own, based on the content analysis of articles used in the paper

View	International advertising	The role of culture	The role of technology	Traditional vs. social media
Authors	Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012; Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz & Feldhaus, 2015; Nelson-Field, Riebe & Sharp, 2012; Swani et al., 2017; Knoll, 2016; Pashkevich et al., 2013; Villiard & Moreno, 2012; Smit, Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2009; Ha, 2008	Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche, 2010; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Laroche, 2011; Steenkamp, 2001; Merz et al., 2008; Okazaki et al., 2010	Doole & Lowe, 2012; Hasan, 2011; Liang, Lin & Chen, 2004; Gilmore et al., 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sigala, 2002; Laurenius & Wikstrom, 2016; Berthon et. al., 2012	Hasan, 2011; Nicolas, 2017; Ha, 2008; Sago, 2011; Okazaki & Hirose, 2012; Knoll, 2016; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011
Opportunities	1) development of useful theories 2) integral part of international marketing strategy, 3) influence of brand outcomes 4) influence decisions regarding purchases	1) cultural convergence 2) global consumer culture 3) supports standardized international marketing strategy 4) role of emotions	1) driving force in economic development 2) openess of new possibilities in the marketplace 3) platform for international marketing operations	1) shift of Internet from a platform for information to a platform for influence 2) consideration of both traditional and social media as a part of an ecosystem 3) more effective marketing campaigns

				through usage of social media
Limitations	1) limited number of cross-cultural studies 2) side effects of advertising 3) gap in general empirical overview 4) industry's view is missing	1) cultural dimensions affecting consumer responsiveness 2) role of emotions	1) employees restricted to use social media while at work 2) "digital divide" - lack of basic technological tools	1) number of obsolete studies 2) embedement of social media as a separate elements of a marketing plan 3) expensiveness of traditional marketing

5.1 The role of international advertising

First perspective aims at international advertising that is tightly connected to international marketing strategy. Undoubtedly, researchers agree on the fact that social media is becoming an integral part of international marketing and consequently international business strategy and has transformed the way that businesses interact with their customers. In other words, correct international advertising as a part of marketing strategy enables marketers to influence brand outcomes and decisions regarding purchases by fan promotion and popularization of brand content (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012; Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz & Feldhaus, 2015; Nelson-Field, Riebe & Sharp, 2012; Swani et al., 2017). Further research is needed in order to examine specific steps leading to the adoption of social media in order to popularize brand content. However, understanding the importance of the topic and making relevance through several articles that have been already published, it is a very promissing start (Knoll, 2016).

5.2 Possible synergies between traditional and social media

While some studies focusing at synergies between offline and online advertising already exist, many of them are obsolete and work with information that accessing online content that come across in offline media is very complicated process (Ha, 2008; Knoll, 2016). That is the reason why another perspective is focused on traditional vs. social media. As social media platforms have started to revolutionize the state of marketing, advertising, and promotions, social media naturally transformed the Internet from a platform for information, to a platform for influence. Nowadays, companies of all sizes operating in different industries now see social media marketing as a mandatory element of their marketing strategy. To support the importance social media, Nicolas (2017) claims that traditional marketing techniques are very expensive, mainly in case when they try to focus on more than just one country at the same time. In contrast, social media offer firms possibility to communicate their reports to huge audiences only for a small part of the cost. Furthermore, social media also allow companies to focus on specific topics and interests, and not only on topics at national level as with traditional media (Nicolas, 2017). Therefore, it is no longer enough to only embed a social media as separate elements of a marketing plan.

5.3 The role of culture

Another perspective used in this paper is related to culture, as international strategy is held in not only one country and culture factors that might occur are more than usual. Number of studies show that cultural convergence might lead to the fact that consumers become more alike in several aspects. This represents great opportunity for social media to capitalize on networking capability in order to bring people together and build the strong brand with larger audiences than it was possible ever before. Such phenomenon is obvious mainly in emerging global cultures while putting emphasis on modernity, technology, freedom, and individual choice (Steenkamp, 2001). People and groups of people who belong to a global consumer culture are more likely to associate similar meanings with particular places, people, and things (Merz et al., 2008). In the same vein, Okazaki et al. (2010) claims that such a global consumer culture is characterized by shared feelings towards sets of symbols. In other words, marketers should focus on strategy that supports standardized marketing and advertising strategy (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Furthermore, the degree to which cultural factors affect consumer responsiveness to social media advertising and promotion as part of international marketing strategy represents one of the main issues that deserve more attention. Several cultural dimensions, including indvidualism vs collectivism, monochronic vs polychronic time orientation and such, need to be furtherly examined in order to find out how they affect consumer response when it comes down to social media advertising in various cultures. Moreover, it is beneficial and crucial to focus on the brand building potential through social media across cultures in comparison to traditional media. This area is also connected to possible synergies between social and traditional media discussed above (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

5.4 The role of technology

Last perspective considered in paper is focused on the role of technology while using social media for international marketing purposes. In order to successfully implement social media plans, technology is a must. Paradoxically, several organizations nowadays still face the situation where they tend to engage stakeholders by means of social media, while synchronously restrict their own employees from using social networking tools while at work. Large number of reported instances indicates that employees are not authorized the social media networks they are told to use (Berthon et al., 2012).

Furhermore, large number of organizations still suffer with what is called the „digital divide“, representing a situation where many parts of the population – developer countries included – do not possess access to basic technological tools, including desktops and access to the Internet. Consequently, such population do not logically have access to more sophisticated social media tools either (Berthon et al., 2012).

6 DISCUSSION

There is an existing gap in general empirical overview of possibilities for firms and organizations to advertise in social media. Side effects or unintended effects of advertising in social media have been neglected. Although Pashkevich & colleagues (2013) address existing study focused on negative impacts of advertising on website satisfaction of users, together with Villiard & Moreno (2012) conducting the study that addresses the issue that targeted advertising might enforce unhealthy nutrition because vulnerable groups might be targeted intentionally or unintentionally. There need to be brought more evidence in future how side effects of advertising in social media might occur, taking into account the different sectors in which firms can operate (Knoll, 2016). Moreover, the industry’s view on social media

advertising is definitely an area that needs to be furtherly investigated and deserves extensive research. Even though there are several articles powered by practitioners that discuss users views and attitudes regarding social media advertising, the industry's perspective is still missing. Systematic and empirically collected overview addressing this issue is missing. In most cases, studies in other advertising areas show that the industry's view is very distant from homogenous one, whereas advertisers, marketing managers, media salespeople, and website owners might largely differ in their opinions (Smit, Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2009). Additionally, it might be interesting to see to which extent the practitioners' perspective matches the industry view (Ha, 2008; Knoll, 2016).

Synchronously, it is important to keep in mind customers' point of view. From the perspective of the customer, there may also be a problem in accepting international social media campaigns. Censorship by national governments can also prevent certain groups of customers from using specific types of social media. The biggest trigger in the process of increasing customer interest in social media is above all their increasing willingness to be informed, to discuss offers of companies with friends, or to even directly participate in and influence the product created by the company (European Commission, 2017). Consumers no longer want to be just passive recipients in the marketing process. They want to be involved in the process of creating the product itself, and being active throughout the marketing process (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Furthermore, Berthon et al. (2012) indicates that the usage of most prominent social media (such as Facebook or Youtube) is strongly dependent on technology and culture. In other words, the infrastructure that enables social media, and the shared values that comes from culture and cultural heritage. One big paradox is captured in todays' firm environment where they try to engage and approach stakeholders through social media, however, at the same time, companies own employees are truly restricted from the usage of social networking tools in working hours. This paradox should be eliminated in order for employees to be authorized to use the social media networks they are told to use (Berthon et al., 2012). Firms also need to consider both social and traditional media to be part of an ecosystem whereas all elements work together to reach a common objective, and it does not really matter whether the objective is to launch and promote a new product or service; to communicate a new company initiative; or to just further engage customers in a rich, meaningful, and interactive dialogue (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011).

7 CONCLUSION

This paper discusses main perspectives observed through literature review analysis focused on how social media can be used in international marketing strategies of companies. Paper also serves as a basis for authors' dissertation. Nowadays, there are many authors that focus on the problematics of usage of social media within international marketing strategies, while adopting different frameworks and perspectives. As this topic is really broad and authors' perspectives are often in conflict, it is still quite complicated to identify one unified way how usage of social media can boost international marketing strategies. The environment of social media where firms operate has initiated several changes, including the ways in which firms act, hire staff, and mainly plan marketing and business strategies worldwide. Consequently, casual evidence suggests that social media represent significant tool in making international strategies (Paniagua, Korzynski & Mas-Tur, 2017). However, there are still some limitations that need further examination in order to bring sufficient results that will be able to accurately describe the impact of social media on marketing strategies in international environment, especially scope of the paper and the lack of empirical evidence. Moreover, there is often the requirement on high degree of cumulation in a research area. As a result, more time is needed in order to develop sufficient theories that can be articulated in the literature (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Nevertheless, most authors and their existing scientific papers agree that social networks are important and should receive appropriate attention. Therefore, when designing their international marketing strategies, firms should take into account factors and perspectives identified and discussed above: advertising, culture, role of technology or possible synergies between traditional and social media. The author has found out that each perspective used in the paper deals with certain limitations that must be taken into account, while at the same time brings several opportunities. Thus, managers dealing with social media might get inspired by these perspectives and be aware of its limitations, and if used correctly in the company, they can create successful international online marketing campaigns. As a result, four main perspectives were developed, whereas these perspectives have been analysed more in detail, defining opportunities and limitations regarding international marketing strategies with focus on social media. Although social media are experiencing boom nowadays and more and more authors focus on this issue in their articles, it is still possible to find many gaps that should be filled in order to create a sufficient framework for firms when creating international marketing strategies, with the help of social media.

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