

## **Marketers and social media marketing**

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### **Abstract**

The marketing strategy has been influenced by social media and its tools during the last years. Because social media is driven by consumers and in this area is currently experiencing growth, the activities of marketer in different enterprises are more exposed to the market.

This paper aims to present the relation of social media marketing strategy in the performance and creativeness of marketers. How much they used social media for their marketing strategy, how this type of marketing has affected and improved their business, and in what form it is expected to affect in the future? The paper presents the relationship between conceptual framework and empirical analysis, based on the statistics from different reports for the period of 2010 to 2015, regarding the relation of marketers to social media marketing field and its channels (e-mail, social networks, blogs, etc.). This study concludes that there was an important link between social media and the marketer, in relation to the services offered by this platform for different marketing strategies. Today, in 2015 marketers see social media as one of the main tools to expose their brand, to identify potential customers and to create loyal ones. Although, there are some challenges that marketers must consider, especially regarding social media ROI and customer interactivity strategy.

*Key words: Marketing, Social Media, Marketers.*

*Jel Qualification: M31, M39.*

### ***Introduction & Literature Review***

Nowadays social media is considered as a key factor to our daily life, including personal related activities and business related activities. The platform includes different tools and tactics that are considered compatible to every member terms of use. The platform it's a phenomenon that has become more sophisticated and is growing differently in a global level. Social media marketing can be considered as "An interaction with a set of on-line Social Media conversation from marketing perspective based on converged media (since conversation can span from both technologies of the media" (Jaokar, Jacobs, & Moore, 2009). According to (Kemp, 2015) based on a study done from We are Social 2015 from 7.3 billion people in the world, 3.1 billion have access to the internet, while 2.2 billion are active users of social media platform for various reasons. Moreover, key web-sites of this platform based on the number of users of by ranking are: Facebook with 1.490 B users, Twitter with 316 B active users, Google + with 300 B users, Instagram 300 B users, etc.

According to (Safko, 2012) all the mayor players in social media are organized in the following categories and tactics as seen in the table below:

Social media categories	Description
Social Networking	Many platforms that we use to connect, share, educate, interact, and built trust.
Publish	Forums, email, web pages, blogs and comments, text messaging, photo and video sharing, etc.
Photo Sharing	Sharing photos in Picasa, Flickr, PhotoSwarm, etc.
Audio	A medium that evoke mental images that video doesn't allow.
Video	Youtube, Hulu, Zannel, Broadcaster, etc.
Microblogging	Text messaging on stroids (Tumblr, Twitter , Plurk, Google Buzz, etc.
Livecasting	Broadcasting video live ( uStream).
Virtual Worlds	SecondLife.
Gaming	Games on different internet sites
Productivity Applications	Tools that include event management, VoIP telecommunications, peer to peer downloads, alert, etc.
Aggregators	It allows to see all the new blogs, web pages, news, audio, photo, etc. All in one convenient web page location.
RSS <sup>47</sup>	Allows the user to sign up and automatically get notified whenever there is an update to the site.

Table 1.Social media categories and tactics (Source: Safko, 2012)

The marketing strategy in the last couple of years has been influenced from social media platform and marketers have achieved great results by using the above social media tactics and tools. Social media marketing compared to traditional marketing, represents a new level of challenge for marketers (Barker, Barker, Bormann, & Neher, 2012).

As seen in the fig1. (below) (Cruz & Mendelsohn, 2010) marketers in different companies should be aware that what is being said about the brand it depends on customer point of view, since there are various of marketing channels that are uncontrolled by the company but controlled by the customer communication and interaction. Social media is considered one of those channels.

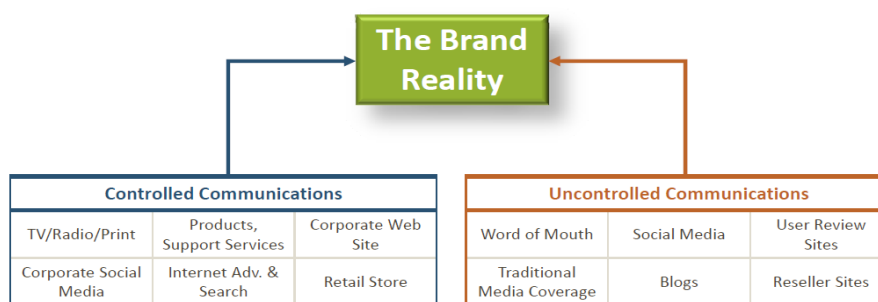


Fig.1.The channels of communication between a company and a customer.

Source: (Cruz & Mendelsohn, 2010)

Hence, there should be a strategic approach on using social media because many businesses “start with an end in mind instead of creating a strategy and objectives” (Barker, Barker,

<sup>47</sup> RSS- Really Simple Syndication

Bormann, & Neher, 2012). Most importantly, they need to identify social media characteristics and strategy in order to target their specific market (Pradiptarini, 2011).

Social Media Marketing has different characteristics, which according to (Garnyte & de Ávila Pérez, 2009) are classified as:

- a. **Establishment of communication with potential and current consumers** - Based on social media platform, companies can use different tools and techniques to create, identify potential consumers and keep the loyal ones.
- b. **The user generated technique and classification** - Based on social media platform, users nowadays can classify themselves in different group of interest.
- c. **The interactivity between consumers** - Based on social media platform, consumers can communicate with each other and exchange different opinions about different products or services provides by all sort of organizations.
- d. **The opportunity for consumers to take control of the content of information, communication or other related activities about a brand** - Based on social media platform, consumers compared to organizations, are the main ones who are now taking control about what's being said about different products or services in their social networking accounts, blogs and other online tools.
- e. **The “world of mouth” communication strategies** - which according to (Trusov, 2009) “combine the prospect of overcoming consumer resistance with significantly lower costs and fast delivery—especially through technology, such as the Internet”.

### **The main reasons why marketers engage in social media marketing**

The main reason why marketers engage in social media marketing is because it helps them to build their brand and also to build a stronger relation and interactive communication with their customers (Csordás, 2014). Even though, there are some challenges to involve social media in organization or company, because it requires the organization to perform a new strategy planning, that it doesn't involve one-way communication and also it requires a specific marketing strategy regarding the brand creation and entering a new product in the market (Markos-Kujbus & Gati, 2012).

Nowadays, is worth to consider social media as a part for any organization marketing strategy or activity because it is a platform that offers a variety of opportunities. Hereafter, “the lesson is: don't waste your social media opportunities. Done badly, it can work against you. But done well – and it isn't difficult – it could expand your range of engagement assets” (White). According to (Evans, Bratton, & McKee, 2010) one of the advantage for marketers in applying social media marketing for their business activities, is the perception that they perceive about their brand, their services and their products based on peoples sharing's or comments.

But, one of the disadvantage is the fact that the key stakeholders of the company have in their possession the ability to help or break a brand. That's why the marketers should find a way to interact more with the consumers, and trim the control that they have to the messages of the consumer (Çalicioğlu, 2014).

The best way to do it, is to create a monitoring strategy about what other organizations are doing and then to adapt it to their conditions (Chikandiwa, 2013). Therefore, many marketers started to use/implement and are using/implementing social media platform without actually having a deep understanding about the strategies, constraints and different criteria's, which we can refer to as the new rules of marketing (IAAPA) (Scott, 2009).

Meanwhile, there are three different advantages for marketers on using social media marketing. First of all, it helps marketers to listen to customer preferences instead of just presenting offers to them. Second, it helps marketers to identify their loyal groups and through them invest in growing the brand. Third, all those mentioned social media activities for marketers are free of charge (zero cost) (Neti, 2011).

These activities are classified as sort of analytics that are related to their work and they can use them as a general inside source to understand their consumer's perception and to use it as a clear approach for all the departments and the organization itself. A great way to start is by listening (Aberdeen, 2012). When it comes to measuring social media activities, different companies can use applications to analyze social media data tools such as in social networks, blogs, microblogs. The applications are beneficial in order to understand the reaction of customers and stakeholders to their products and also to have a general view of user data (e.g. age, place, gender, etc.) (McKinsey, 2011). The marketer benefits from the user based in reverse method: the user buys the product, uses it, forms an opinion about it and then talks with other users. Based on that process, the marketer takes in account the last step (the communication between users) to raise awareness about how consumers perceive their products or services and based on that, they decide what to take in consideration in order to improve their product or service (Evans, Bratton, & McKee, 2010).

### **Social media and marketers: A comparative analyses during 2010-2015**

This section of the paper is based on a comparative methodology to present the relationship between conceptual framework and empirical analysis regarding the relation of marketers to social media marketing field and its channels (e-mail, social networks, blogs, etc), based on the statistics from different reports especially from Social Media Examiner (Stelzner,2015;2014;2013;2012;2011;2010) for the period of 2010 to 2015.

According to a survey conducted (SocialMediaManagement, 2011) marketers were mainly in the initial stages on applying social media marketing and they expressed a tendency of the awareness about the impact of social media in marketing. 81% of them reported that will continue to increase the use of social networks (especially Facebook and Twitter) and blogs.

Meanwhile, there is a bad news for marketers this year (2015) since consumers are actively avoiding advertising. Consumers in United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, China are constantly avoiding advertising.” Consumers are now aware of how much their attention is worth to marketers, and they expect to be rewarded for it. They look to be compensated with loyalty programs, free content or useful tools that solve problems” (RAZORFISH, 2015).As analyzed in the table below (tab.2) more than 90 % of marketers from 2010 –2015 use social media for their marketing efforts. Social media in 2010 was still a new subject for most of the businesses, but it started to play a more important role to marketers through its tools and techniques in 2011, mainly with the enterprises (90%) and also for individual businesses (67%). The comparison during the stated years shows that marketers are more and more aware of the importance of social media activities for their business purposes.

A comparison of key indicators that show a general view of social media use by marketers from year 2010 to 2015	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
The use of social media by marketers	96%	94%	97%	94%	93%	91%
The importance of social media for business purposes	92%	92%	86%	83 % by enterprises 54 % by individual businesses	90 % enterprises 67 % individual businesses	/
The amount of time that marketers spent in social media during a weekly period	64 % spent 6 h 19% spent more than 20 h	64 % spent 6 h 19% spent more than 20 h	62 % spent 6 h 17% spent more than 20 h	59 % spent 6 h 15% spent more than 20 h	58 % spent 6 h 15% spent more than 20 h	76 % spent 6 h 12.5 % spent more than 20 h
The average age of marketers who use social media	20-29 years	20-29 years	20-29 years	20-29 years	20-29 years	20-29 years
The main benefits from using social media marketing	1.Business exposure (90 %) 2. Traffic increase (77%) 3. Gain loyal fans (69%)	1.Business exposure (92 %) 2.Traffic increase (86%) 3. Gain loyal fans (72%)	1.Business exposure (89 %) 2.Traffic increase (75%) 3. Market place insight (69%)	1.Business exposure (85 %) 2.Traffic increase (69%) 3. Market place insight (65%)	1.Business exposure (88 %) 2.Traffic increase (72%) 3.Search rankings improvement (62%)	1.Business exposure (85 %) 2. Traffic increase (63%) 3. Search rankings improvement (56%)
The most used social media tools by marketers	1.Facebook (93%) 2. Twitter (79%) 3. LinkedIn (71 %) The last one: Snapchat	1. Facebook (94%) 2. Twitter (83%) 3. LinkedIn (71 %) The last one: Snapchat	1. Facebook (92%) 2. Twitter (80%) 3. LinkedIn (70 %) The last one: Q&A sites	1. Facebook (92%) 2. Twitter (82%) 3. LinkedIn (73 %) The last one: Dailydeals	1. Facebook (92%) 2. Twitter (84%) 3. LinkedIn (71 %) The last one: Myspace	1. Twitter (88%) 2. Facebook (87%) 3. LinkedIn (76 %) The last one: Myspace
The future steps how marketers plan to change their social media activities	1. Twitter 2. Youtube 3. LinkedIn	1. Blogs 2. Youtube 3. Twitter	1. Youtube 2. Facebook 3. Blogs	1. Youtube 2. Facebook 3. Twitter	1. Youtube 2. Facebook 3. Blogs	1. Blogs 2. Facebook 3. Youtube
The most important social media tool used by marketers	Facebook (52%) 1.B2B – LinkedIn(41%) 2.B2C-Facebook (65%)	Facebook(54%) 1.B2B – LinkedIn(33%) 2.B2C-Facebook (68%)	Facebook (49%) 1.B2B – LinkedIn(29%) 2.B2C-Facebook (68%)	/	/	/
The awareness of marketers on measuring social media ROI	(35 %) are uncertain	(35 %) are uncertain	(36 %) are uncertain	(40 %) want to learn how to measure ROI of their SM activities	1/3 of all want to learn how to measure ROI of their SM activities	/

Table.2.Social Media Marketing usage by Marketers during 2010-2015.(Source: Social Media Examiner. Reports from 2010 to 2015)

The amount of time that marketers dedicate to their social media activities vary year to year, because in 2010 most of them (76%) spent more than 6 hours per week in social media and 12.5% spent more than 20 h per week. The situation changes until 2015, because each year their “more than 20 h per week” raised compared to their “more than 6 h per week” engagement in social media. During this 5 year period of time, there is a link between the age and the time spent in social media by marketers, the average age of marketers who use social media the most is between 20-29 years old .As stated in the report “The younger the marketer, the more time he or she spends on social Media” (Stelzner M. A., 2015).

Social media marketing helped marketers to expose more their business or brand to the wide audience, making their responsibilities higher. Hence, the two main benefits identified on using social media marketing by marketers are considered to be: Business exposure and Traffic increase. One thing that changed during the years was the fact that most marketers became more aware that social media platform is helping the business to gain and maintain loyal fans. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are considered to be the most used social media tools by marketers during 2010-2015. Eventhough, each year they planned to change their social media activities mostly in Blogs and Video (especially in Youtube). That’s a main their main goal also for 2015.

The most important social media tool used by marketers during 2013-2015 is considered to be Facebook. LinkedIn dominates to B2B and Facebook in B2C category.

One key concept that is still a bit of a mystery for marketers is the fact that if they are able to understand the process how to measure their social media activities. Measuring ROI <sup>48</sup> is still an important chapter for marketers to have in consideration for their future social media marketing steps. Since social media was still the new thing for them, from 2011 to 2012 marketers weren’t aware how to measure ROI of Social Media Marketing. During 2013, 2014 and until now (2015) a great amount of them are uncertain how to do it.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides important information about the relation of social media in marketing strategy based on the marketer perspective. The current state shows that there is an important link between social media use from the perspective of marketers, in relation to the services offered by this platform for different marketing strategies. In 2010 social media marketing was still a new subject for the marketers and they expressed a tendency of the awareness about the impact of social media in marketing. Today, in 2015 marketers see social media as one of the main tools to expose their brand, to identify potential customers and to create loyal ones. Mainly they consider that this possibility can be applied especially by using different social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Their engagement in social media activities from 2010 to 2015 raised 6.5% and the most important and the main social media tool used by marketers is considered Facebook. Eventhough, B2C businesses prefer more LinkedIn. Businesses of any kind, including individual ones, should consider social media as a part of their marketing strategy because of many advantages (mentioned during this paper) that the platform provides. There are some challenges that marketers must consider during their social media marketing strategy: First, procedures how to measure their social media activities and to determine social media ROI. Second, how to manage their relation and interactivity with their potential and loyal customers.

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<sup>48</sup>Return on Investment

As stated during this paper, in 2015 customers are playing a diplomatic part related to social media marketing, especially advertising since they are very aware about their impact through sharing, commenting, in general interacting about a brand and they see their engagement as an activity that should be recompensed. According to (RAZORFISH, 2015) “consumers are exposed to over 5,000 brand messages a day and don’t have the time or energy to care about most of them”. Therefore, marketers in their future social media activities should consider different strategies and programs that the platform provides, in order to gain customers trust and attention to engage themselves on advertising a product or a service that they prefer.

After all, ‘*Customers are usually very good at identifying their problems, not so much the solutions.*’ (Shah, 2014) so for the marketers ‘*The future of content marketing is in your hands*’ (Hahn, 2014).

### **Brief biography of the author**

Gonxhe Beqiri has finished the undergraduate and graduate studies in the Faculty of Economics at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo. She has continued her PhD studies in the field of Management at the European University of Tirana in Albania. Currently, she is a lecturer at Dukagjini College in Peja (Kosovo), where she also holds the position of coordinator in the office of research projects and internationalization.

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