

Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework

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Abstract

- Social media marketing is an integral element of 21st-century business.
- Explores four generic dimensions of strategic social media marketing.
- By providing a comprehensive conceptualization and definition of strategic social media marketing, this research proposes an integrative framework that expands beyond extant marketing theory.



Introduction

- Most existing studies focus on particular issues, such as purchase behavior, customer relationship management, brand management, innovation management and employee recruitment.
- Strategic social media marketing remains an untested user interaction paradigm with little published academic research.



Introduction

Answers two questions:

- How is strategic social media marketing defined and conceptualized?
- What factors demand consideration when constructing an organization's social media marketing strategy?



Theoretical Framework

→ *Social media marketing objectives and outcomes:*

- stimulating sales
 - increasing brand awareness
 - improving brand image
 - generating traffic to online platforms
 - reducing marketing costs
 - creating user interactivity on platforms by stimulating users to post or share content
- can use social media marketing in a more reactive way, for example, firms can monitor and analyze conversations in social media to understand how consumers view a firm or its actions.



Theoretical Framework

→ *Boundary conditions of effective social media marketing:*

- identify seven functional building blocks common to all forms of social media(identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups)
- discrepancy may reflect a heterogeneous consumer base, in which one group of consumers is comfortable with proactive and engaged firms while another rejects the corporate invasion of social media space
- ❖ Required, therefore, is a social media marketing framework that goes beyond firm or market-specific characteristics to show the general dimensions on which managers make firm or situation-specific social media marketing decisions.



Theoretical Framework

→ *The need for a holistic social media marketing approach:*

- Holistic, as used in this study, refers to the notion that the components of the overall construct cannot be divorced from the whole
- the “linear, relational, exchange-based partnership” that firms have been using to explain their relationships with consumers is no longer valid.
- “[t]ools and strategies that were cutting-edge just a few years ago are fast becoming obsolete, and new approaches are appearing every day”
- “[m]arketing has become too important to be left just to the marketers.”



Methodology

- previous knowledge pertaining to strategic social media marketing is sparse and fragmented
- Rather than focusing on statistical generalizability, the current approach is based on whether the findings from the study could be meaningfully transferred to other contexts



Methodology

→ *Samples and Data Collection :*

- a two-stage research design
 - Stage 1 :
 - interviews with seven European social media marketing experts
 - Seeking depth rather than breadth
 - Audiotape the interviews (between 25 and 60 min), which resulted in 117 pages of double-spaced, verbatim transcripts.
 - Stage 2 :
 - qualitative survey of social media marketing experts
 - The final sample consisted of 43 respondents (age: $m = 37$; $SD = 9$ years, 74% male; 88% European) with various backgrounds in their position and/or industry

Table 1

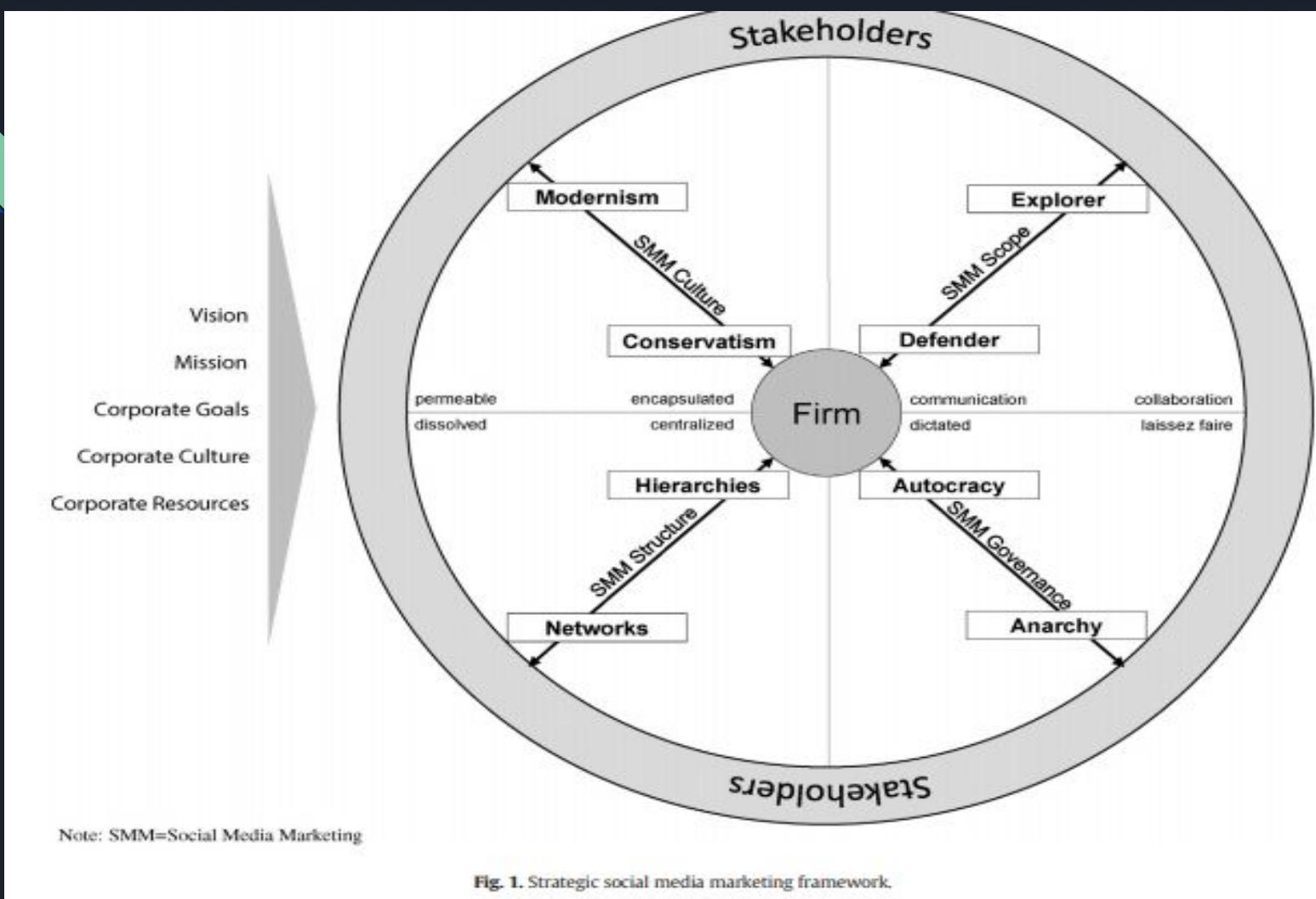
Summary of stage 2 informants.

Company size (employees)	
<50	14 (32.6%)
50–99	5 (11.6%)
100–499	3 (7.0%)
500–999	8 (18.6%)
1000–4999	6 (14.0%)
5000–10,000	3 (7.0%)
>10,000	4 (9.3%)
Social media marketing experience (in years)	
Average:	6.4 years
1–2	5 (11.6%)
3–5	19 (44.2%)
6–8	12 (27.9%)
9 and more	7 (16.3%)
Percentage of working time associated with social media	
Average:	52.8%
<20%	7 (16.3%)
20–39	10 (23.3%)
40–59	6 (14.0%)
60–79	3 (7%)
80–100	15 (34.9%)
n/a	2 (4.7%)
Age (in years)	
Average:	37
<30	9 (20.9%)
30–39	19 (44.2%)
40–49	10 (23.3%)
50–59	5 (11.6%)



Findings: Four Central Dimensions.

- **SMM scope**: whether companies use SMM predominantly for communication with one or a few stakeholders or comprehensively as a genuine tool for collaboration.
- **SMM culture**: differentiates between the conservatism and the modernism approach to SMM.
- **SMM structure**: addresses the organization and departmentalization of the social media marketing assignment in the firm.
- **SMM governance**: refers to how the company establishes rules and guidelines and how social media marketing responsibilities are controlled in the company.





SMM Scope

- **Defender Approach**
 - focuses on one or a few stakeholder groups
 - As one interviewee explained, with the defender approach, consumers may try to communicate with the company through social media but receive standardized answers or even no reply at all
 - defenders focus only on the client/customer side of social media marketing. However, their more comprehensive approach enables explorers to see the potential for social media marketing
- **Explorer Approach**
 - centers on taking advantage of the integrative, interactive, and collaborative potential of social media technology



SMM Scope

- Explorer Approach
 - companies that use social media marketing to create and maintain reciprocal relationships with stakeholders.
 - Acquiring and using the feedback provided through social media platforms from each of these disparate stakeholders is central to this approach and includes defining how different stakeholders can contribute to the firm's value creation process.
 - facilitates integrated, two-way communication and collaboration that is completely open, rather than simply broadcasting information.



Social Media Marketing Culture: conservatism to modernism

- Conservatism Approach
 - reflects an encapsulated, internally focused, and risk-averse view of social media marketing.
- Modern Approach
 - a modern social media marketing culture, supported by top management, may force companies to reassess how initiatives are executed in the organization.



Social Media Marketing Structure: Hierarchies to Networks

- **Hierarchies**
 - representing a centralized and concentrated social media marketing structure
 - represent firms with a high need for control and a quasi-military organization.
- **Networks**
 - in which control of social media marketing is fragmented, decentralized, dissolved, and cross-functional
 - social media activities are a common responsibility for all employees regardless of the department to which they are assigned.
 - “social media works best as a cross-departmental structure”



Social Media Marketing Governance: Autocracy to Anarchy

- Autocracy
 - A single department centralizes and administers control of social media communication.
- Anarchy
 - a laissez-faire mentality in which no such rules exist and departments/employees are free to communicate at will on social media platforms.



Discussion

- research addresses the absence of a holistic framework for strategic social media marketing
- extant research related to social media marketing investigates social media mostly through the lens of a particular marketing problem or with a focus on customers and communication
- this study reveal four general social media marketing dimensions that firms should address when conceptualizing or managing their strategic social media marketing approach
- dimensions are interdependent, and companies should strive to position themselves on the four dimensions in an integrated way



Limitations

- First, the qualitative approach reveals four dimensions of strategic social media marketing and identifies the extreme points of each dimension. However, future research could use quantitative approaches to identify the impact of different positions on each of these dimensions.
- Future research should also investigate how other characteristics, such as culture, the type of firm (e.g., B2B vs. B2C), the industry, company size, or available resources, influence a firm's "ideal position" on each of the dimensions of strategic social media marketing.



Conclusion

- Social media marketing, in practice, is too complex to be managed and executed exclusively by a single individual or even department.
- Cross-functional collaborations along the four dimensions of social media marketing are necessary to successfully navigate in this dynamic arena.

Thank you!

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