Preface

Since the late 2000s, social media has paved new ways of accessing customers for businesses and conducting business activities. Social media represents a variety of dynamic and community-based Web applications that place value on the power of distributed knowledge and provide users with rich interactive experiences. Social networking services such as Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Twitter have created massive online communities of people who are willing to communicate and collaborate with each other. Social networking services have already had great impacts on the ways that people interact and businesses operate. For example, Amazon created social networks around book readership as a new initiative to attract potential book buyers. In addition to the social networking services, companies have recently shown significant interest in other social media applications such as context-based advertising, distributed file sharing, media sharing, and social bookmarking.

New organizations taking advantage of social media are also being developed, creating new markets. For example, Blade.org is a collaborative community-based organization initiated by IBM around its blade server technology. Social commerce intermediaries such as Groupon and LivingSocial provide discount information on the products/services to consumers. Various merchant reputation sites such as Yelp, Angie’s List, and TripAdvisor create value to consumers based on user-generated content. With the widespread adoption of social media by customers, it became imperative for businesses to leverage social media technologies to stay competitive in the global economy.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive framework for the use of social media applications, companies are eager to use them. Managers are already active users of the various social media technologies, such as social networks and blogs. Managers are realizing that social media affects a wide spectrum of business activities from building product or brand awareness to after-sales services. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to analyze their social media applications, develop a plan to continually monitor their advancements, and quickly respond to the social media needs of customers.

Although a large volume of literature is already available on social media, many new ideas and social media applications are constantly emerging and provide potential opportunities and challenges for further research. In this light, it is imperative for researchers to take stock of the new knowledge on social media and stimulate further interest in this area. Integrating Social Media into Business Practice, Applications, Management, and Models provides a reference source for researchers and industry practitioners to develop their research ideas, theories, and practical experiences, and discuss challenges and opportunities in the social media area. This book is composed of 14 chapters in a wide variety of topics such as social media marketing, social CRM, social media case studies, and user behavior in social media. A brief introduction of each chapter follows:
Chapter 1, “User Involvement, Open Service Innovations, and Social Media: Lessons from a Case Study,” by Ada Scupola and Hanne Westh Nicolajsen, investigates the use of social media to collect ideas from the users in the service innovation process. After a theoretical discussion of user involvement and more specifically user involvement using social media and blogs, the chapter reports the results from a field experiment at a university library. In the experiment, a blog was established to collect ideas for service innovations from the library users. The experiment shows that blogs may generate a modest but useful amount of ideas. The experiment furthermore reveals that blogs might be useful to provide the institution with an image of openness and willingness to listen to customer input.

Chapter 2, “Impact of General Social Media Experience on Usefulness for Business in the Workplace,” by Donald L. Amoroso, Tsuneki Mukahi, and Mikako Ogawa, looks at the adoption of general social media applications on usefulness for business, comparing the factors that influence adoption at work between Japan and the United States. In Japan, ease of use and usefulness for collective knowledge in general social media are predictors of usefulness for business social media, and in the United States, only the usefulness for collective knowledge is a strong predictor of usefulness for business. The authors did not find behavioral intention to use social media in the workplace to be an important factor in predicting the usefulness of social media for business. The value of this research is its ability to understand the use of social media in the workplace.

Chapter 3, “Influence of Corporate Social Media in Strategic Decision Processes,” by S. Venkataraman and Ranjan Das, discusses conceptually with some anecdotal evidence how social media engagement by business firms can influence their strategic decision making. It suggests a model of influence and proposes a knowledge integration mechanism through which such influence materializes. Social media engagement by business firms has been steadily on the rise, with its application extending to a range of corporate functions beyond marketing and customer engagement, many of which can be construed as strategic. However, the potential influence of social media on strategy process or strategic decision making has not been fully explored. In addressing this gap, this chapter conceptually explores the likely influence of social media on the issue of strategic decision making and the mechanism of such influence. Embellished by some illustrative anecdotes from practice, this chapter suggests a plausible model whereby corporate social media engagement influences the strategy process in firms through the three key dimensions—environmental factors, strategic characteristics, and decision issue characteristics.

Chapter 4, “Using the Power of Social Media Marketing to Build Consumer-Based Brand Equity,” by Kelley O’Reilly and Karen M. Lancendorfer, highlights how companies might use social media marketing to build brand credibility and, ultimately, consumer-based brand equity. By building brand credibility and equity through SMM, companies can connect with distinctly different consumer groups. Because consumers are adept integrators of marketing communication channels within and across media, companies with strong virtual communities may reap even greater results from the theoretical perspective of customer-based brand equity discussed within the chapter. Marketing scholars and practitioners alike may find this chapter of interest due to the growing desire by companies to develop strong bonds with consumers and their interest in effectively using social media as a marketing tool.

Chapter 5, “Viral Advertising and the Implications of Social Media,” by Maria Petrescu, reviews the key theoretical and practical aspects related to viral advertising. This chapter discusses the key characteristics of viral advertising, including the most-used viral advertising appeals—humor and sexuality—and includes a section regarding the importance of the message source on consumers’ reactions.
towards an advertisement. This chapter also provides a discussion about consumer-generated advertising, a modern online advertising feature that leads to increased interaction and involvement from consumers. The last part of this chapter focuses on the monitoring and evaluating viral ads outcomes by using both traditional and social media-specific advertising measures. A few ideas related to future research directions are presented.

Chapter 6, “Social Media: The Issues, Benefits, and Strategies for Brands,” by Jenny Rowley, Catherine Ashworth, and Jeff McCarthy, explores attitudes and approaches to the use of social media in relationship and community building. Two contrasting study contexts are addressed: the UK football sector and UK pure-play Small/Medium-Sized (SME) fashion retailers. After an introduction, the chapter summarises discussion and research on brands and their management in social media. This is followed by an outline of the two contexts for study. From this, the aims, objectives, and research methodology are drawn. The findings are then presented, and the ensuing discussion proposes a summary of the approaches to social media strategy adopted in the two case contexts. Four important foci are established, namely strategic marketing, marketing communication, brand and community, plus monitoring and evaluation. This results in a useful strategic framework empirically drawn from the in-depth data.

Chapter 7, “Greek Politicians and the Use of Online Technologies for Citizen Engagement,” by Savvas Papagiannidis, Teta Stamati, and Hartmut Behr, examines how politicians utilise Internet technologies to create an online presence, the motivating and hindering factors for doing so, and the perceived significance such a presence can have. The authors present empirical data collected via in-depth interviews with Greek politicians taking part in the general elections of 2012. The findings suggest that although politicians are increasingly interested in engaging with citizens using online technologies, their efforts are not always focused on achieving measurable and tangible results. Consequently, they do not make full use of the potential online technologies offer. Instead, the authors conclude, online strategies need to be organised around predefined objectives and based on clear communication and engagement plans.

Chapter 8, “Using Social Media in the Workplace: How ‘Lenovo Central’ brings Employees Together,” by Karen Mishra, Khaner Walker, and Aneil Mishra, examines the internal communication practices of Lenovo, a $34 billion Fortune Global 500 technology company, and the world’s second-largest PC vendor. In particular, this study examines how this company uses social media as a method of internal communications in fostering employee engagement. Internal communications is generally led by marketing or PR professionals with expertise in human resources, public relations, marketing, social media, and/or employee engagement. One new way that companies are extending internal communication is by developing the use of their company intranets. Intranets can support an organization by sharing accurate company information on a timely basis. This chapter describes how Lenovo has developed and uses its Lenovo Central intranet to engage employees in its mission and vision.

Chapter 9, “How Generation Y Perceives Social Networking Applications in Corporate Environments,” by Imed Boughzala, presents and analyzes results from a qualitative exploratory study conducted recently with a group of 24 graduate management students from a French business school. It contributes to a better understanding of how generation Y perceives the use of Social Networking (SN) applications inside businesses by drawing up a list of dos and don’ts. This study provides an ordered list of important adoption issues to consider when implementing and using CSN applications in businesses. It provides expectations and precautions for stakeholders to take into account. Further exploration in other settings and cultural contexts will be required to investigate more deeply the validity and generalization of these results.
Chapter 10, “Social Media Opportunities for Market-Driven Firms,” by Elisa Arrigo, attempts to give a better understanding of social media in the strategic management field; no study to date has examined the role of social media in market-driven firms. In particular, a novel conceptual framework is proposed to show how the integrated management of social media provides several opportunities to market-driven firms. First of all, social media enables market-driven firms to acquire data and information that is useful for monitoring the competitive environment. In addition, social media allows one to develop greater customer knowledge and to improve customer relationships by attracting new customers and by engaging old ones.

Chapter 11, “Web 2.0 and Social Media in Today’s Business World,” by Edward T. Chen, studies Web 2.0 tools and social media in today’s business world and provides guidelines of adopting social media for organizations. When social media technology is used effectively it can be a powerful tool for businesses to market themselves and obtain important data on their customers and competitors. Given the importance and public nature of today’s consumer opinions, it is vital for companies to present themselves effectively on social media. Some companies and their employees are not familiar with this form of technology and do not realize the massive amount of data social media sites can generate. This chapter emphasizes that companies need to develop a social media policy and educate their employees on how to analyze and respond to the data produced from social media.

Chapter 12, “Re-Conceptualizing Relational Integrated Marketing Communications from the Perspective of Social CRM,” by Kanghyun Yoon and Jeanetta Sims, proposes conceptual guidelines for the design of effective relational integrated marketing communications strategies, including message and media strategies, with particular focus on the promotion of opinion leaders’ voluntary efforts with others in a typical social network setting. As a new emerging trend, social Customer Relationship Management (social CRM) can be defined as the business practice of promoting voluntary customer engagement activities driven by social media into the value creation process in order to build long-term co-beneficial relationships with target customers as the ultimate end-goal of customer relationship management. Following the spirit of social CRM, this chapter is intended to propose conceptual guidelines for the design of effective relational integrated marketing communications strategies, including message and media strategies, with particular focus on the promotion of opinion leaders’ voluntary engaged efforts with others in a typical social network setting. By implanting the power of social media in relational integrated marketing communications strategies, marketers are able to put the “relationship” back into CRM in order to restore its true meaning – building better long-term relationships with customers.

Chapter 13, “The Role of Social Media in the Knowledge-Based Organizations,” by Kijpokin Kasemsap, introduces the role of Social Media (SM) in Knowledge-Based Organizations (KBOs), thus explaining the concept of KBOs, the difference between KBOs and non-KBOs, the concept of Knowledge Management (KM), the concept of SM, the importance of SM to KBOs, the application of SM in the KBOs, and the challenges of SM in the KBOs. This chapter explains the significance of SM for organizational development and adaptation to the business architecture in order to create knowledge integration environment in the KBOs. SM enables the creation of knowledge value chain to customize information and delivery for a technological business growth. Firms need to be connected to their technological business environment through SM because interacting with external sources of knowledge can effectively improve their capabilities about industry benchmark and competitive advantage. Understanding the role of SM in the KBOs will significantly enhance the organizational performance and achieve business goals in the global business environments.
Chapter 14, “Social Media for Business Model Improvement,” by In Lee, reviews some of the major business applications of social media and discusses how social media applications are used to support business model improvement. Social media offers business organizations an array of innovative ways to interact with their employees, customers, partners, and other stakeholders. Consumers have easy ways of interacting with companies and their employees in real time with various social media embedded devices. Managers are realizing that social media affects a wide spectrum of business activities from building product or brand awareness to after-sales services. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to analyze their social media applications, develop a plan to continually monitor their advancements, and quickly respond to the social media needs of customers. For practitioners, this chapter provides managerial guidelines for social media applications for business model improvement.

*Integrating Social Media into Business Practice, Applications, Management, and Models* is an excellent collection of the latest research and practices associated with theories, user behaviors, and practices in social media. While social media is an important subject of study for academic researchers, there is still a lack of comprehensive reference sources that provide the most up-to-date research findings and future directions for contemporary enterprises. This book fills this void by covering a wide range of topics, such as management issues, innovative ideas, state-of-the-art business applications, and evaluation of social media applications. As leading experts in the social media area, the contributors did an outstanding job of providing our readers with extensive coverage of the most important research topics—new concepts, management strategies, online user behavior, social media usage, and trends. The projected audience includes researchers, instructors, social media managers, and undergraduate/graduate students in various academic programs. I expect this book to give new insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners to better understand the important issues of social media research and technologies.

*In Lee*

*Western Illinois University, USA*