Preface

Recent developments have shown how the internet can provide opportunities for people searching for products and services by offering tools to consumers to search online to access information and learn about the experiences of other consumers. Within the last decade, social media has become one of the most valuable forms of marketing. Facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies, consumers now use social media to share their experiences and knowledge about products and services on the internet before making a purchase. Social interaction and digital content generated by individuals convey economic value for the commercial sector. For consumers, information created by other customers is the fundamental source of purchase decision-making in an online context. The development of this supportive social climate, with regular interconnectivities amongst people via social media, has granted consumers with the process of co-creation of value. Co-creation of value with consumers, as opposed to co-creation of value for consumers, is an emerging concept in marketing that has emerged through social media. Co-creation of value has become a new frame of reference for achieving the fundamental business goal of value creation. It is defined as a set of activities undertaken by both consumers and businesses where collaboration results in benefits for both parties. In this environment, the company’s vision of production and of what constitutes customer value is no longer privileged. Value is now jointly created by customers who express their requirements, share their knowledge, and actively participate in this newfound spirit of collaboration. These privileged consumers have access to information provided through social interaction by social media to support them in their purchasing decisions. This in turn creates online social support. This supportive environment has seen the rise of online social support via social platforms such as forums, communities, ratings, reviews and recommendations. Online social support, with a scientific background of social support theory taken from social psychology, has introduced a new theoretical base into marketing. Together, online social support and co-creation of value promote the argument that firms have more opportunities to become more involved with their customers, which in turn helps to develop strategic marketing by the business sector. Universally, the emerging social interaction of individuals is mainly due to the popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) where new connections are being formed.

SNSs are the area of largest growth on the internet. In this intense technological revolution, consumers now explore the internet for what they want and need. As a by-product, individuals generate a positive or negative effect on brand via social media and build better awareness of brands. Consistent and reputable information gives brands credibility on all current and future profiles. In addition, social interaction of consumers significantly influences a user’s intention to buy. The mission of SNSs is to create online communities where members can share and seek common interests. SNSs give the seller
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the opportunity to become more aware of the marketplace; the information about products shared in such sites is also more valuable as it is gleaned from the real experiences of other customers. The popularity of SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are evidence of the importance of social media and its impact on both consumers and business.

Social media channels have grown exponentially in a relatively short time resulting in the development of e-commerce into a vibrant and lucrative social commerce. Social commerce is a new stream of e-commerce which enables consumers to generate content. Social commerce involves the use of social media offered by Web 2.0 to create online support to enable individuals to interact. The popularity of social media sites has been the main driving force for development in this area. Social media technologies have become social tools and online platforms are now places where users share information, opinions and experiences. Statistics from social commerce show that this is a growing phenomenon. Therefore, the study of social commerce is an important and interesting research area and this book will investigate the impact of this development on both consumers and businesses.

As will be demonstrated, the study of social media for strategic marketing of firms is an essential research topic in contemporary marketing. In the current challenging environment, a business can gain benefits from social media to create sustainable competitive advantages over their rivals. Firms need to develop their social media strategies to gain a strong position in the global market. This book therefore gathers together relevant studies of contemporary marketing to provide strategic tools that will allow firms to compete successfully in today’s market place.

Topics including co-creation of value with customers, co-branding with customers, online sport brands communities, social commerce, sports marketing with social media, the use of social media for employer branding, intellectual property rights and social media, new product development using online communities, distributed leadership in social media and finally, social media and e-learning. This text book, as a research handbook, can support future research in this field as well as further develop current literature in social media. In addition, a number of chapters in this book introduce a new dimension to topics related to social media for the first time. These topics can provide a solid bedrock for future work by researchers.

The target audience of this book is both academia and industry. In academia, researchers can access new ideas for research. These are relevant to a PhD student working on a thesis as well as to postgraduate students and undergraduate students producing dissertations. Scholars can discover many new ideas for their particular research papers and can use this book as a valuable source of reading material. On the other hand, firms can use this book to develop their strategic marketing planning. Topics such as co-creation of value, branding and social media marketing can all contribute to more successful marketing strategies for businesses. Therefore, this research handbook can make a vital contribution to society in general by targeting both academia and industry. The chapters of the book are arranged as follow.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The Handbook of Research on Integrating Social Media into Strategic Marketing is organized into twenty-one chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 discusses one of the fundamental elements of social media – e-word of mouth and the new concept of social commerce. In this chapter the editor argues that individuals who are involved in social interaction with others through online communities, make more informed and better decisions
when buying on the internet. This is mostly due to the rise of SNSs through the recent development in Web 2.0 technologies. The increasing popularity of social media and SNSs has developed e-commerce into social commerce. In this social climate and commercial era, consumers provide social support in a network by not only persuading consumers to have more interconnectivity with their peers, but also by giving a number of unique opportunities to firms. Therefore, in chapter one the editor discusses the ways in which social commerce has emerged. As social word of mouth is one of the key constructs of social commerce, social word of mouth, as well as the applications of social commerce and social support theory in a business context, has been explained in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical base for the new research stream of co-branding where customers use social media and social commerce. This empirical study also features another recent piece of research carried out by the editor in collaboration with a colleague from Auburn University. Chapter 2 looks at the opportunities of social commerce for branding. The chapter examines social commerce constructs and their impact on brand development. The results of this empirical study show that both relationship quality and social commerce constructs have positive effects on co-branding intention. This study also highlights the moderating effect of privacy concerns between social commerce constructs and co-branding. The chapter highlights the combination of social media, social commerce and social support in branding strategies, which produces a holistic co-branding strategy. Chapter 2 also provides practical implications for the market to develop co-branding strategies through social commerce.

Chapter 3 through a qualitative study of online sports brand communities, examines the research on branding and sports marketing through social media. In this chapter, the editor puts forward the view that organizations have reached the point where they need to change their strategies in order to create value with customers. This is the modern marketing logic. It has mainly come about because consumers have been empowered to exert influence on companies. In addition, a different perspective about consumer care has emerged through social media; consumers are no longer passive information users but are now active content creators who can be part of value creation in the market place. Chapter 3 analyzes the opportunities that sports organizations can generate by co-creation of value through social media. The findings of this research create a picture of how virtual communities support co-creation of value for sports organizations.

Chapter 4 is concerned with employer branding and social media. This chapter explains how employer branding applies marketing tools to promote an organisation as an employer. This chapter frames the creation and communication of the employer brand as a “strong communication system.” A framework for assessment of the system’s strength is introduced and a practical application of this framework is demonstrated in two case studies. The conflict between the traditional top-down one-way marketing communication flow and bottom-up bi-directional communication on social media is highlighted and the impact of this apparent conflict on the strength of the system is discussed. Social media appears to change the way in which an employer brand is created, communicated and perceived and this chapter aims to help our understanding of this development.

Chapter 5 describes a conceptual framework elucidating how consumer social media marketing experiences lead to more favorable brand affects, and in turn, enhanced brand equity. Importantly, perceived social media marketing activities are identified as a key moderator that influence the effects of consumer social media marketing experiences on brand equity. Repeated measures ANOVA and regression analyses were conducted to test the proposed model in a study composed of three phases. The results of this chapter provide support for (a) the main effects of consumer social media marketing experiences on
brand affect and brand equity, (b) the mediating effect of brand affect and (c) the moderating effect of perceived social media marketing activities. A discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of the research findings and recommendations for future studies is then established.

Chapter 6 has a timely reminder about intellectual property rights and social media. In this chapter the author argues that little work has been carried out on the issues confronting their usage and associated Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs). This chapter investigates the issues surrounding copyright in the digital era, where the market is increasingly being exposed to social media. The chapter describes the legal risks confronting people on using content in the digital era and examines the issues in this area. Valuable discussion will be generated for all users of digital content.

Chapter 7 analyzes a new concept namely value of co-creation that has emerged in the context of marketing and business management research. In today’s market environment, companies are continually pressurized to innovate in order to attract and maintain consumer loyalty with a view to gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage in the market. The authors identify factors and variables that are leveraged to determine value co-creation in firms. The chapter then examines how the development of information and communication technologies, in particular the internet and social media networks, has become the main engine of co-creation activity in a marketing context. The chapter also discusses the consequences and benefits of implementing such concepts, showing how competitive advantages for firms can be achieved.

Chapter 8 provides an insight into the impact of social media on incremental New Product Development (NPD) and its contribution to NPD success in the context of customer involvement. The review is mainly derived from 286 relevant papers published in top-ranked journals between 2005 and 2014. The results of the review suggest that social media provides an effective and efficient method for collecting information and knowledge about customer needs, expectations and experiences.

Chapter 9 aims to firstly identify the exact dimensions of online social support on SNSs through an extensive review of the existing literature. Secondly, this chapter uses these dimensions to model online social support and test its effects on other SNS factors such as satisfaction and continuance intention. The authors then demonstrate that the results support all proposed hypotheses.

Chapter 10 attempts to address some concerns around dual screening by providing evidence obtained from the neurosciences and from a relevant case study. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates the opposite effect, establishing that social media can actually be used to enhance viewer engagement.

Chapter 11 links higher education and social media. After presenting the background for social media marketing and higher education, the chapter investigates whether the use of social media as a marketing tool has been effective in raising awareness of British universities.

Chapter 12 probes into constructs and theories from a social psychology perspective. Intention and behaviour prospects are examined by extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and integrating the Social Support Theory (SST) to purport a continuance model of optimized participation for some virtual communities in Malaysia. This chapter establishes a practical continuance model and illustrates how theory from social psychology literature positions the constructs of SST, TPB and perceived value in enhancing the participation of virtual communities. The SEM-PLS method used to analyze the data shows that the intention and behaviour of the virtual communities determine users’ participation level.

Chapter 13 introduces the opportunities and challenges of social network sites towards marketing strategies. The chapter also provides a foundation for viral marketing by reviewing how online word-of-mouth activities develop on social networking sites and exploring strategies for successful viral marketing.
Chapter 14 aims to determine whether predictive web data mining models are accurate patterns in predicting marketing performance compared to traditional statistical methods in global business. In addition, particular attention is paid to the identification of the main marketing drivers undertaken by potential customers before purchasing a given service online. Finally, an explanation is given on how the criteria based on the loss functions confirm the high predictive power of the web data mining models in detecting the probability of customer conversion.

Chapter 15 posits the social network literature by highlighting the terminologies of social networks and details the types of tools and methodologies used in prior studies. The list is supplemented by identifying the research gaps for future research of interest to both academics and practitioners. Additionally, the case of Facebook is used to study the elements of a social network analysis. This chapter highlights past validated models with regards to social networks which are deemed significant for online social network studies. A systematic position for future research and practice is then established.

Chapter 16 addresses the issues on information technologies and systems in the context of non-profit making organizations. The author argues that this scope of research is an under-developed field of study. Hence, this chapter reviews current literature in this field. It maps four conventional views on the benefits of ICT for the sector. Then, through an ethnographic study, the challenges and issues surrounding the process of adoption and use of both typical and new information technologies are explored. A final discussion ensues, concluding that social technologies, based on Web 2.0, may have some partial advantages for volunteer-based organisations but that most benefits would be found at the individual level.

Chapter 17 is a qualitative research investigating the attitudes of customers in the UK towards internet banking by conducting 25 in-depth interviews. The author uses a variety of documents to supplement the analysis. Results indicate that security is the most important factor affecting internet banking adoption in the UK. Furthermore, motivated by the growing importance of social media, this chapter also discusses the role of social media on internet banking and provides some suggestions on how banks can engineer social media to enhance the adoption rate of internet banking.

Chapter 18 investigates the notion of distributed leadership and its effectiveness in health care settings, including its potential relationship with patient outcomes and patient engagement from a social media perspective. The chapter argues that social media can enhance the distribution of leadership and collaboration by increasing the interaction between patients and health professional staff.

Chapter 19 is a report on sports marketing research. This chapter investigates the history of how Spurs FC have embraced the internet and social media and asks why a club renowned for its flair and enterprise on the pitch has been so slow to embrace modernity in the digital world.

Chapter 20 explores the ways how social media is being used amongst sports organizations and how it has changed aspects of the sports industry.

Chapter 21 discusses the benefits of social media for marketing.

This book represents an attempt to bring together the diversity of information available across myriad platforms into a comprehensive accessible resource which will hopefully be useful to those involved in the social media and marketing fields. This book provides a wealth of vital knowledge from scholars who are experts in their fields from around the world. The book emphasizes the most topical issues in integrating social media into strategic marketing. The chapters are well written and informative providing a necessary reference point for academics and students alike researching in this field of study. This book makes a valuable literature resource for both researchers and business as we have much to learn about contemporary concepts and issues of strategic marketing in this social media era.