Foreword

Social media’s enormously rapid development in just a few years has caught some businessmen/women on the hop! Marketing directors who grew up with what we now call traditional media are nervous of something new and to them untried, and perhaps rightly so. Should companies be investing money on digital marketing, or should they stay offline? As this book points out, an online presence is now imperative. Every organisation, large or small, public or private, commercial or not for profit, should now have a digital marketing strategy as an integral part of their marketing plan. A social media portfolio is becoming an increasingly important tool. However, fools rush in! This book guides the reader through strategic implications of digital marketing, pointing out its pitfalls as well as its potentials.

Building relationships has always been at the core of marketing (even if this went unrecognised for much of the 20th century). In Relationship Marketing: Exploring Relational Strategies in Marketing, first published in 2001, I argued that many organisations had lost sight of this and that the traditional 4Ps and transactional marketing strategies should be challenged. This was before the digital age really got going (four and five years before Facebook and Twitter, respectively), but it noted that technology offered an opportunity for relationship building. This current book argues that social media should be part of this strategy. Converging technologies mean that we have access at home or on the move. When I first travelled to work, it was newspapers that helped while away the commute. Today, while the odd (free) paper is still read, it’s Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, and many more that are capturing the attention of the public.

This book guides the reader through a series of papers, outlining various strategy opportunities open to the organisation. It promotes local area marketing, which is particularly appropriate to franchise businesses who can maximise community-wide interaction whilst building relationships. It notes the behaviour-changing nature of technology and that technology, being interactive, has the ability to replace face-to-face contact without necessarily demeaning the social element. CRM (customer relationship management) has had its critics, but the book argues that with the appropriate platform, social CRM would enable organisations to interact across a range of Internet tools. It promotes analysis of user-generated content from consumers and influential bloggers and the lessons that can be learnt from them. A further consideration is the role of social media in situations where things have gone wrong. Service failure and recovery strategies are crucial. As research has shown, it is frequently not the original problem that really iritates customers but the organisations’ response to it. Not every community, home or abroad, has the support services available. A coherent argument is made that, through stakeholder engagement, communities can encourage involvement through social media. The shopping (in its widest sense) environment is examined from the perspective of smart, often handheld devices such as smartphones. In addition to local communities, a chapter is devoted to brand management in a global context and how
this can be built around social media. SEM (search-engine marketing) is not ignored in this debate; indeed, its importance is underlined. Finally, industry-specific uses (for example, in luxury categories) are examined and solutions proposed.

All in all, I recommend Competitive Social Media Strategies to all of you interested in expanding your knowledge in this area. Whether you are a student or a seasoned professional, it has something to contribute to your learning.

John Egan  
Regent’s University London, UK

**John Egan** is head of the Department of Marketing and Strategy at Regent’s University London. Professor Egan is also chair of the Academy of Marketing.