Preface

Online Social Networks (OSNs) continue to evolve and take a significant role in current human societies. OSNs are the most popular and top ranked websites based on popularity and traffic. Additionally, they also clearly mark and identify the current Internet where regular users are involved in Internet information uploading.

As public and private companies and business start to realize the richness and the value of users’ uploaded information, they continue evaluate tools that can understand their clients or customers and plan their future business decisions based on knowledge extracted from OSNs. Jobs and research areas in information science grow significantly in the last decade beyond the classical Natural Language process (NLP) or Information Retrieval (IR) tasks.

In this scope, this book integrated a collection of chapters with subjects and case studies related to how business can understand their customers based on information from OSNs.

In this book, several chapters are introduced within the scope of our book subject.

In the first chapter, Rawan Khasawneh presented a chapter on how OSNs are used recently as business marketing tools. The chapter introduces concepts related to social media marketing. The amount of information users upload through OSNs and the nature of such dynamic interactions are two major factors to consider and utilize for marketing purposes.

In the second chapter (Towards a Framework for Integrating Social Media, Customer Relationship, and Knowledge Management) by Olayiwola W. Bello, Modupe Folarin and Nasir Faruk, authors discussed a framework; through data collected from expert interviews, on how to integrate social media concepts and knowledge in particular with Customer Relation Management (CRM). Their framework extended an already existing customer knowledge management (CKM) framework. Ideas were also used from the business framework for CRM and Social CRM. The framework also presented key themes to consider for a successful integration between social media and SRM.

In the same scope of the relations between social media and CRM, Chapter 3 (Social Customer Relationship Management [SCRM]: A Strategy for Customer En-
gagement) By Ameen Al-Azzam and Rawan Khasawneh is presented. The chapter elaborated on tools and methods used in Social media CRM (SCRM) in comparison with classical or traditional CRM.

In a focused study on one OSN (i.e. Tumblr), Kristen Smirnov presented the chapter: Marketing on Tumblr: Where It Helps to Be Honest (And Weird). Tumblr, recently own by Yahoo, is a microblog website that allows users to post short text or comments. Three Tumblr case studies are presented in depth to illustrate best practices (1: Denny’s diner chain and 2: the musician Taylor Swift) and 3: to warn against certain common pitfalls (Nordstrom). The chapter discusses also some of the strategies (e.g. paid advertisements, gradual customers’ interactions, etc.) that businesses use to be more involved with their customers in OSNs.

OSNs and interactions with users can also impact business names and brands. This is the subject of Chapter 5, “The Effect of Social Networks on Branding: A Factorial Analysis Approach,” by Meriem Nouala, Marwa Imene Mekki and Abdelmadjid Ezzine. Classically users tend to like to buy always from the brands that they used to buy from. They trust them or are loyal to them based on either previous self-business interactions or based on general public trust in such known brands. OSNs represent new channels for business to be more known or visible. Nonetheless, some companies may have a better success be more visible in OSNs in comparison with other businesses that have been very successful in classical methods. The words of mouth about positive and negative product aspects in OSNs can spread very quickly and can have serious impacts on businesses. For example, several case studies about customer’s negative interactions with airlines got very popular through OSNs and prompted a serious business response to those incidents.

Wafaa Al-Rabayah, introduced Chapter 6, “Social Media as Social Customer Relationship Management Tool: Case of Jordan Medical Directory.” The chapter focused on Social media CRM in one business or domain sector: Medical section in the country of Jordan and one company in particular: Jordan medical directory (JorMedic) which is involved in medical as well as health-related tourism. JorMedic as a click-mortar business type, heavily depends on web presence and OSNs. One of the interesting challenges introduced in the chapter is related to how we can effectively collect data from OSNs and also how we can, reasonably, make rational findings based on the collected data. This is considered one of the major challenges in the analysis of data from OSNs.

In the subject of OSNs impact on business brands, Chapter 7, “Determinants of Brand Recall in Social Networking Sites,” by Kaan Varnali and Vehbi Gorgulu is introduced. Businesses vary in their level of involvements in OSNs. For example, for some businesses, a Facebook or a Twitter page is considered as one of the main pages for the business website. On the other hand, some other business use those OSNs just for the cause of being present, as all others, in those social media websites
without much activities in those pages. In other examples, some businesses allow users to post, respond and interact with the business website and all its activities, services, products. They also allocate a significant number of customer services to be involved in those pages and respond to users. In the brand recall, which is the focus of this chapter, results showed that users’ trust on the brand and its product and services is an ongoing and a continuous process. Businesses should be heavily involved with their customers to understand their feedback and act accordingly.

Arturo Haro-de-Rosario, Laura Saraite, Alejandro Saez-Martin and Maria del Carmen Caba-Pérez introduced in Chapter 8 (The impact of Social Media on Customer Engagement with U.S. Banks) a case study related to US banks. Facebook was the OSN website which was used in this chapter evaluation to show how customer engagement can be enhanced. Several metrics related to: popularity, commitment and virality are used to measure customer involvement or engagement. Results showed that focusing only on one metrics (e.g. number of fans) can be misleading if considered in isolation from some other metrics.

In Chapter 9, “Social Networks Impact on Potential Customers’ Buying Decisions and Current Customer Loyalty,” three characteristics: contagion, connection, and virtual word of mouth are used to evaluate customers loyalty and interactions with businesses. Studies showed that users, recently, depend heavily on the Internet in general and OSNs in particular in their decisions to buy a product, a service or attend an event. There is of a course a possibility that users can be possibly mislead by some sort of spam in OSNs where such public information may not be precise or accurate.

Rawan Khasawneh and Izzat Alsmadi introduced in Chapter 10 (Opinion Mining: A Tool for Understanding Customers – Challenges and Approaches) the subject of opinion mining and sentimental analysis. As we mentioned earlier, one of the most significant challenges in knowledge extraction from OSNs is what data to extract and how to use and utilize such data. This is why goal-oriented approaches are more important than data-driven approaches as the collection of a large amount of data without early or initial specific goals can be useless and time consuming. Authors showed some tools and techniques to conduct opinion mining and possible future trends.

In the same opinion mining or sentimental analysis scope, Wafaa A. Al-Rabayah and Ahmad AlZyoud introduced Chapter 11: (Sentiment Analysis of Social Media as Tool to Improve Customer Retention). With focus on customer retention, the paper focused on challenges of final extractions of customer opinions on the business products or services (i.e. positive or negative). The amount of false positive and false negative cases can be very large in many cases specially as users typically use slang language, expressions, images, strange symbols, sarcasms, etc.
Mambo Governor Mupepi, Patience Taruwinga and Wafaa A. Al-Rabayah introduced Chapter 12 (Can the Usage of Social Media Increase the Gregariousness of the Family to Grow Successful Family-Owned Businesses? The Usefulness of Social Media in Growing a Family-Owned Business). The chapter focuses on one type of businesses (family-owned businesses) and how to utilize OSNs in this type of businesses. What can be possibly unique in many family-oriented business is their small-scale in general and their dependence on a focused local sector of customers where loyalty is built largely based on words of mouths. The studies showed that in the current global and connected world and environments the terms family, small, local can be different as the Internet and OSNs make the whole world as a small connected, local town.

In the last chapter, 13, Wafaa A. Al-Rabayah presented “Using Social Strategy to Retain Customers: Cases and Tips.” Customer retention and loyalty are important goals for CRMs. Deep understanding, communication and interaction with customers are important tools and methods to assess and improve such loyalty. Perhaps nothing like OSNs can be useful and valuable to empower such factors between business and their users or customers.