Chapter 7
Social Media Usage and Adoption: Are People Ready?

Line L. Olsen
BI Norwegian Business School, Norway

Tor W. Andreassen
NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Norway

ABSTRACT

Social media is in vogue, but managers need to know their customers’ social media readiness to help them overcome any resistance to adopting the new benefits that social media offers and to secure customer satisfaction with the services offered through these channels. In this chapter, the authors present findings from two studies. In the first study, general technology readiness is investigated and pockets of users are identified. This study works as a backdrop for the second study, in which consumers’ social media readiness, the construct and its drivers are investigated. Overall, the authors find that customers seem to be ready for social media, as social media readiness has a positive, indirect effect on attitudes toward interaction in social media. Moreover, the effect is mediated through ease of use and usefulness.

INTRODUCTION

When brands get [mobile apps] right, the returns can be huge. The problem appears to be that most are getting it wrong. (Howard Davies, media partner at Deloitte)

Social media (SOME) is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, pp. 61). SOME is in vogue with new users flocking to, e.g. Facebook, Tumblr, Flickr, Pinterest, LinkedIn, SnapChat and Twitter. According to Wikipedia.com, there are 15 global social media sites that have more than 100 million users each, with Facebook, Twitter and Qzone being the top three at 1 billion, 500 million and 480 million active users, respectively. According to Fox (2010) at the Pew Research Center the general trend is that there has been a steady increase in the
people’s readiness for social media. The general idea is that in order to understand the latter, we need to understand the first. For managers, we offer a way of identifying social media readiness that allows firms to better adapt their social media offerings (i.e. speed of implementation and the solution’s degree of sophistication) to segments’ readiness. For researchers, we open a new approach to studying social media readiness. In the following sections, we will sequentially present the two studies, and for each study, the rationale and procedure are presented first, followed by the results. We discuss the results from both studies together before concluding with recommendations and future research avenues.

People’s Readiness for Technology in General Study 1

According to Parasuraman (2000), technology readiness is “the propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home life and at work” (p. 308). As part of a larger research project on service innovation and e-Government in a highly developed, Northern European country, we collected data on people’s attitude and motivation to adopt and use technology. We employed the established model and scales developed for the Technology Readiness
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