Chapter 18
Getting New Business Contacts in Foreign Markets through Social Networking Sites: Perspectives from Professionals of Basque Region in SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

Being able to find information, people and expertise helps business to grow and remain competitive. Professional networking using the web 2.0 is providing entry opportunities into international markets, allowing professional workers to interact with both workers and companies in markets worldwide. For that reason our research seeks identify the Social Networking Sites (SNSs) used with business purposes by professional workers, as well as to test the importance given by workers of the Basque Country region in Spain, to the use of social networks, particularly SNSs, to find new professionals around the world and help the workers network. Business Networking is a valuable way to expand knowledge, learn from the success of others, attain new clients and tell others about the business.

INTRODUCTION

The need for a cross-border collaboration and information sharing has never been greater, given the trend towards remote control and the rise in the number of companies spread across different territories. Web 2.0 tools, particularly social networking sites (SNSs), make it possible to bring together thoughts and ideas from professional workers scattered across a country, or even around the world.

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In the midst of Web 2.0, we find SNSs, which include professional networking sites (SNSs for business purposes). One key reason behind the growth experienced by business networking sites recent years is the ability of Internet to connect people globally and cost effectively on the professional networking aspect (Benson & Morgan, 2015). Individuals and businesses need to explore all possible avenues of professional and corporate growth (Lloyd, 2009). On the one hand the environment in which small and medium enterprises (SME) are set up, move and develop has radically changed in the last decade (Ruzzier, Hisrich & Antoncic, 2006). On the other hand the creation of business networks a decade ago started to became increasingly important (Holmlund & kock 1998) as a tool that facilitated internationalization process (Coviello & McAuley 1999).

The penetration of social networking sites in all areas is reaching its mature stage: Eight out of ten internet user aged between 18 and 55 use SNSs with general-purpose, with as many purposes as it offers possibilities (IAB, 2013, p.10). At the professional level, tools provided by Web 2.0 in general and professional SNSs in particular, give a new boost to establish and maintain relationships and new ways of making things. It is in this area where we wanted to know the level of SNSs use among professional workers.

There are few studies focused on how workers use web 2.0 as highlighted in (Benson & Morgan, 2015) and most of those that do exist consider companies mainly in Marketing. For that reason our research seeks to test the importance given by workers of the Basque Country region in Spain, to the use of social networks, particularly SNSs, to find new professionals not only in domestic markets but also in foreign ones. A field study therefore conducted involving a web based survey among professional workers of the Basque Country. A descriptive analysis was then applied to their responses.

This chapter offers two fundamental contributions:

1. To identify the SNSs professional workers are actually using for business purposes, and
2. To find out what these professionals think about the usefulness and the perceived potential of Web 2.0 tools, in order to contact professionals of interest businesswise all around the world.

In both cases, we consider the differences in terms of certain socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, type of worker (self-employed or salaried employee) and also of the features of their companies, such as size of the company (measured in number of workers), operating economic sector and type of target consumer (other business or final consumer).

BACKGROUND

Business Networks in International Trade

As a consequence of SME environment conditions, many enterprises considered export as an easier option than continuing operating in the intensely competitive domestic market (Chetty & Campbell-hunt, 2004). With regard to SMEs, we can state that they were forced to begin or accelerate their internationalization processes and that the main driver pushing them beyond country boundaries was the need to overcome the aggressive local competitiveness in search of new markets for their products, new opportunities and enterprise profitability growth in an economic environment that had been dramatically open to the world.