

Chapter 85

Polish Firms' Innovation Capability for Competitiveness via Information Technologies and Social Media Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as innovative tools and the use of Social Media (SM) by Polish medium and small sized companies. The chapter aims to present the scope and importance of the use of Information Technology (IT) and SM in the process of companies' functioning and management. Presentation of the results of empirical research is another important aim. Companies' assessment of IT tools and SM's effective use as a prerequisite to improve the company performance is also examined. This is an exploratory study based on a sample of 166 southern Polish firms and it adds to the scant literature on firms' internal IT capabilities to support SM. The paper makes a theoretical and practical contribution in that it brings forth the emerging theme of IT resources that small and medium-sized enterprises adapt to their processes. It further examines the SM use from these firms based on the IT technology they implement as a whole. Managerial implications for marketers are provided since findings illustrate the tendency from small and medium-sized Polish companies not to implement ICTs and SM to a full extent and they could further incorporate SM in the firms' advertising and communication campaigns. Limitations and further research are discussed.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5643-5.ch085

INTRODUCTION

Firms' resources that include assets, human capital, information, knowledge and even the way messages are reported and communicated can be a strength for a company that may lead to its competitive advantage (Buckley & Ghauri, 2015). Sources of competitive advantage have been a major research topic where research has been devoted to technology resources and their innovation that may influence industries to gain such an advantage (Porter, 1985; Powell & Micaleff, 1997). Literature on companies' competitiveness has illustrated external and internal considerations in firms' performance such as the influence of the environment but also internal firm factors and the managerial skills and technical know-how of employees and the people involved in top positions of the company as factors influencing (Cooper & Gascon, 1992; Man, Lau, & Chan, 2002; Darroch, 2005; Camison & Fores, 2015). Research though into firm competitiveness should put more emphasis on firms themselves and the resources they employ and external elements such as in their location in a specific environment or in the markets that they operate (Camison & Fores, 2015).

Among the resources firms employ, are the presence of ICTs in an interconnected world we live has allowed much space and an open field for further research especially with the emergence of SM that is not so much researched in relation to their implementation by firms in their communication strategies.

"Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 52). They are internet tools where people selectively interact, creating user generated content; the channel of communication is available whether one is available online synchronously or not. Firms need to incorporate SM in their communication with their stakeholders.

Nonetheless, research so far has shown that different sectors, seem reluctant to make full use of the SM because people involved are unaware of its full potential while there is still more to be made in regard to the internet use by companies (Chatzithomas, Boutsouki, Chatzithomas, & Zotos, 2014; Hay, 2011, Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Vlachvei & Notta, 2014). In fact, managers do not believe that SM have such great influence on consumers' decision primarily because they want to avoid the fact that there is too much effort involved for them. This is due to the fact that extra time is required from salespeople and work staff to devote to SM in order to communicate with the company' customers, human resources management is not yet ready to be involved with extra working hours, more people are needed to learn new competencies and skills in regard to digital technologies and when employing new communication technologies is a negative motive for them since this will take most of their free time (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Moncrief, Marshall, & Rudd, 2015; Nylén & Holmstrom, 2015).

Thus, firms do not though implement SM in their communication strategies in a two-way approach (Lazzeretti et al., 2015; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014; Vernuccio, 2014). Limited research has put emphasis on the way companies may benefit from the use of SM in their communication campaigns (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Vlachvei & Notta, 2014; Lazzeretti et al., 2015). Although companies are aware of the positive emerging results from the application of SM they still do not use it to its full extent (see for example, research that took place in Greece, Notta & Vlachvei, 2013 or research in Sweden, Bang & Hell, 2015). Firms and their employees are slow to adapt the implementation of digital technologies and SM tools as part of their innovative communication activities.

Obtaining information and knowledge from customers and technology and in the mean time, being able to share and comprehend this information, may lead to the firm's competitiveness (Darroch, 2005).

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