

Chapter 6

Marketing Orientation Embedding Internet Capability as Best Practice for Medium– Sized Global Firms: Some Evidence From a Medium– Sized Italian Fashion Retailer

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary competition in the distribution sector is becoming increasingly more cut-throat and consumers have multiple channels to choose from for making their purchases, each with different characteristics and practical methods. The objective of this work is to obtain information and identify the elements that allow for highlighting the ability of the medium-sized retailers who use the web and the social media to expand their own reference markets. The information will be acquired by means of interviews with Italian and international (USA and UK) customers of a medium Italian global fashion retailer. The analyses of the results will provide useful indications concerning the marketing activities for the medium retailer firms operating in the global market. This approach is followed by future research directions and a conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with its innovative applications and Web 2.0 with the interaction on line, the existence of blogs, as well as the intervention of the apps and artificial intelligence (Web3.0) marks the emergence of a new form of communication and reflects

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the switch from interactivity to interaction, thus contributing to the construction of networks based on the sharing of knowledge (Nadeem, Andreini, Salo & Laukkanen, 2015; Torres & González, 2017).

The majority of firms now participate on the Web by means of a website, blog, Facebook page, LinkedIn, apps or other online spaces. The web consequently represents a powerful way for firms to interact with users and let them know their products.

The multichannel shopping experience is now becoming standard practice; indeed, many purchasers are in the habit of buying the same categories of goods through both the online and physical channels. The consumers usually have their own repertoire of stores where they go shopping, however they tend to have one particular store/distributor to which they show greater loyalty.

At the same time, while numerous customers regularly carry out multichannel purchases, not all of them do (Dawes & Nenycz-Thiel, 2014).

In order to achieve adequate competitive positioning, companies must be able to define the proposal of an offer to their own customers with a higher perceived value than their competitors. In addition, the objective of those which operate through e-commerce must therefore be that of building a website capable of involving visitors while they browse, creating a pleasant and useful environment containing available information, which is capable of transforming the navigation experience into a behavioural experience (Elg, 2007; Gruber-Muecke & Hofer, 2015).

Various elements contribute to the development of a richer navigation experience on the website, such as environments in virtual mode, 3D representations of the products, etc. (Demangeot, Demangeot, Broderick & Broderick, 2016).

In this perspective, this chapter examines a medium Italian global fashion retailer operating in various countries on the apparel market. This retailer has reached an extremely high position internationally through the e-commerce channel.

The study that has been conducted attempts to find out how the consumers' purchasing experiences are influenced with the quality offered by the company both offline and online, with particular focus on e-commerce as this is the channel that represents the greatest turnover volume for the company. The empirical research analysed in this work was developed based on a questionnaire with a set of scales, tested in literature and adapted to the context of apparel retail firms (Kim, Choi & Lee, 2015; Ha & Stoel, 2012). The survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 132 retailer customers, asking them to evaluate by means of a five-point Likert scale in order to measure all the variables. The empirical research carried out by the authors has highlighted the positive responses of the consumers to the choices relating to the website and internet instruments used and the methods of involving the clientele implemented by the enterprises.

This chapter first of all examines the literature concerning three different areas of interest: a) the characteristics of retailers and the specificity of their marketing activity; b) the digitalization of the retailing sector and the role of the website; c) the role of the social network, customer satisfaction and word of mouth. Secondly, it addresses the theoretical results in the aim of highlighting the entrepreneurial and marketing elements that making it possible for retailers to offer an offline and online commercial service that meets the customers' demands (Webster Jr, 2009). The aim of this work is finally to interpret the results of a questionnaire filled out by consumers and customers of an Italian medium fashion retailer in order to explore the best marketing practice for medium retailer firm in the global market.

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