Chapter 5
A Literature Review of Social Media for Marketing:
Social Media Use in B2C and B2B Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Digital economy has become a priority for companies and countries since consumer profile and consumption habits have greatly changed. Companies have begun to transfer the services they offer to the Internet. Also, a digital economy creates networks amongst individuals, communities, companies, and markets. With digitalization, not only have consumers' profiles changed, but marketing tools have changed as well. Social media marketing (SMM) is the product of this trend and is marketing through social media channels (SMCs). Therefore, this chapter examines social media use within business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) contexts. Moreover, the authors focus on the differences of SMCs adoption in B2C and B2B contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has expanded in recent years. Social media is a term that academics and professionals use to describe this media. One of the basic definitions of social media is "sites where users actively participate to determine what is popular" ("SEMPO," 2017), and another definition is "a platform for interaction and networking" (Eisenberg, 2008). Social media is beginning to be considered as an important marketing tool in digital economies for companies. The use of social media is assumed to make changes in the ways *business-to-consumer* (B2C) and *business-to-business* (B2B) marketers communicate, interact, consume, and create within and outside the company (Vize & Sherrett, 2017, p. 46).

This chapter aims to provide a literature review of social media for marketing. The main objective of marketing is to reach consumers and influence their purchasing behaviors. As social media is an effective tool to reach audiences and promote products or services, companies give value to Social Media Marketing (SMM). SMM is used for the purpose of brand awareness, developing brand image, increasing communication efficiency, improving customer relationships, and to stimulate sales. However, the purposes of SMM have to be evaluated in terms of the customer life cycle process.

The social media literature gives special emphasis to consumers in the B2C context (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). In other words, researchers have focused more on the user side rather than on the companies' views (Jussila, 2015, p. 3). B2C companies are aware of the importance of social media and desire to reach consumers by using social media channels (SMCs). They use social media to attract new customers, develop relationships, and increase awareness. Moreover, they enhance interaction with consumers through SMCs. In contrast, until recently, B2B organizations believed that social media use was only beneficial in a B2C context (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014) and perceived SMCs to be inadequate for their industry. Nevertheless, B2B has begun to realize the importance of social media in today's marketing environment. For instance, the Content Marketing Institute (CMI, 2018) put forth that 92% of B2B marketers support using SMCs (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) more than using traditional tools such as trade shows, direct mail, and catalogues.

While trying to adopt social media, B2B companies have different purposes. First, companies desire to scan market trends and evaluate changing customer attitudes. Moreover, demonstrating products and providing training to business partners via social media are important to them. In addition to this, employee recruitment and retention are the leading motives for using SMCs (Vize & Sherrett, 2017, p. 50). Therefore, the use of SMCs as marketing tools has increased. Some B2B brands have their own original content and others have YouTube pages. They publish special content for SMCs on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and share the videos produced via YouTube with users.

Since market characteristics are different from one another, the usage of SMCs also differs within B2C and B2B contexts. While some empirical studies do explore the differences in SMC usage between B2C and B2B contexts, this topic is limited in much of the literature (Moore, Hopkins, & Raymond, 2013; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014; Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2018).

This chapter, therefore, aims to focus on the differences between SMC usage within B2B and B2C contexts. For this reason, this chapter includes background information, definitions and classification of social media, a definition and the purposes of SMM, and social media usage in B2C and B2B environments. Finally, solutions and recommendations, future research directions, and conclusion are also provided.

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