Social Media Marketing: Measuring Its Effectiveness and Identifying the Target Market

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ABSTRACT

The use of social media sites as part of a company's marketing strategy has increased significantly in the past couple years. Regardless its popularity, there is still very limited information to answer some of the key issues concerning the effectiveness of social media marketing, ways to measure its return on investment, and its target market. Twitter activities and sales performances of five companies from the Fortune 500 companies and its competitors were analyzed to identify the correlation between the company involvement on the social media sites and its financial outcomes (ROI). In addition, a survey of 1,000 University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's students was conducted to determine whether generation Y is the main audience of the social media marketing, and to find the relation between the respondents' involvement in social media marketing and changes in their buying decisions. The study finds that social media marketing effectiveness is highly influenced by its messages/contents quality, the company's involvement, and its association with the other marketing platforms. In addition, a complex and detailed analysis of the strategy is needed in order to accurately measure the return on investment of the social media marketing. The study also finds that generation Y might be the main users of social media sites, but they are not the main target audience of the social media marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The social media era was started around ten years ago. It began with LinkedIn, which was launched in 2003, followed by both MySpace and Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005, and Twitter in 2006. In less than a decade, its population has grown rapidly, and it has reached billions of people worldwide. Facebook has more than 500 million users worldwide; Twitter has approximately 175 million users; LinkedIn has more than 90 million users; and MySpace has 57 million users[1] (Curtis, 2011).

The popularity of social media sites has also spread to companies and firms as part of their strategies. A study by public relation firm Burson-Marstteller shows that 86% of 100 largest companies on the Fortune 500 list use at least one of the social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or blogs, and 28% of them use all four platforms[2]. The study also shows that 65% of these companies use Twitter, which makes it as the most popular social media site among business firms (Burson-Marstteller, 2010). According to *Social Media Marketing Industry Report,* 64% of marketers spend five hours or more per week on social media and 39% of them spend ten hours or more weekly (Stelzner, 2009). These findings show that more and more companies are becoming actively involved in social media, which also shows the emerging of social media sites as the new marketing/promotion platform that is also known as social media marketing.

A number of businesses have gained some advantages from social media marketing. For example, Dessert Gallery has increased visits by 20% per month after its Facebook fans jumped from 283 to 817 (Woessner, 2011). In addition, a Facebook page with a portfolio of pictures has helped a wedding photographer from Michigan, Aaron Deckrow, get new customers (Yankee, 2009). According to Gary Vaynerchuk, who is the author of *The Thank You Economy*, social media sites allow companies to enhance the customer interaction that has already been established through traditional media (i.e. TV ads, print ads) to a more personal level. In addition, social media sites have enabled businesses to build closer relationships with their customers, as well as to expand the market to the customers that they could not reach before (Rooney, 2011).

In contrast, Creamer uses SAT test analogy to describe the effectiveness of social media marketing, "SAT test doesn't measure intelligence. It can't possibly measure your future success in college. The SAT measures one thing,

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[1] The population declined from its peak at 75 million people.
[2] The data reflects the use of social media between American companies only.

and one thing only: how good you are at taking the SAT. The same thing might be said of many current ways of looking at effectiveness on Twitter. They have little respect for how an action on one of those networks might relate to behavior beyond Twitter" (Creamer, 2011). Vaynerchuk (2011) adds some companies are still hesitant to include social media in their marketing program due to lack of solid information about the social media platforms, especially in regards to its effectiveness (Vaynerchuck, 2011, pg. 51). Executives are concerned with their budget justification for a social media plan, when there is lack of supporting materials to confirm the effectiveness of the social media platform (i.e. conversion rate, the relation between buyer-seller relationship and increase in sales), and the rate of return on investment (ROI) that they can earn from this plan (Blanchard, pg.208). Others also believe that their companies' performances are not affected by their lack of involvement in the social media sites (Vaynerchuk, 2011, pg. 76-77). A study shows that 40% of Fortune 50 companies have accounts on social media sites, but have not integrated it into their company's websites (i.e. Facebook/Twitter icons are hard to locate on their webpage). The reluctance to promote these sites is mainly due to concerns such as legal and content control issues (Ochman, 2011). This reluctance is supported by the fact that many examples show little to no relation between brand/company's activities in social media sites and its business performance. For example, a failed pop star Peter Andre has approximately 450,000 followers on his Twitter (Ritson, 2010). On the other hand, Apple does not have an account on any of the social media sites, but yet it is still one of the most popular brands in the world (Creamer, 2011). Firms' executives also questioned the purpose of social media marketing as part of their promotional tools, as well as its relation to the other marketing platforms, such as public relations, sales, and advertising (Vaynerchuk, 2011, pg. 113).

Clearly, the fact that social media marketing is still relatively new among business practitioners and scholars has raised some major concerns, such as its effectiveness (ROI), the main purpose of including social media in a company's media platforms, its relation to the existing platforms, and the target audience of this strategy. These four major concerns are the issues that the author tries to address in this paper.

METHODS

There were three different methods of study that were used in this research. First, literature reviews of articles and books on the subject of social media marketing effectiveness, social media ROI, online marketing, and social media marketing demographic, which give basic information to deepen understanding of these issues. In addition, testimonies and information from Mr. Stephen Woessner who is the Outreach Coordinator of the Small Business Development Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and also a search engine optimization expert are used to solve some unanswered issues about social media marketing effectiveness.

The second method involved analysis of Twitter activities and revenue data for five companies from the Fortune 500 most profitable list (Microsoft, Wal-Mart, P&G's Charmin, Merck's Claritin, and AT&T) and then compared this to its main competitors (Oracle, Target, Kimberly-Clark's Cottonelle, Johnson & Johnson's Benadryl, and Verizon Wireless). Some variables that are examined in this analysis include: length of Twitter membership; number of *follower*[3], *tweet*[4] (and its type), *listed*[5], *following*[6]; as well as the latest data of the company/brand's sales revenue or market share. This analysis will help to identify the relation between company's Twitter activities and its business performance, which ultimately will help to address the issue of social media marketing effectiveness.

Third, an online survey was conducted and sent to 1,000 randomly selected University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's undergraduate students who were enrolled during spring 2011. The main purpose of the survey is to identify the respondents' involvement and activities in social media sites, and how it affects their buying decisions. The result is used to determine whether Generation Y (participants) is the main audience of this strategy. The result is also applied to see the correlation between social media sites' involvement and changes in consumers' behaviors, which also related to the issue of social media marketing effectiveness.

RESULT
Social Media Marketing Online Survey
   A. Sample characteristics. The survey was distributed using survey software (Qualtrics) to 1,000 undergraduate students of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. This sample was randomly chosen by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Office of Institutional Research. The survey generated 257 respondents, which showed

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3 "To follow someone on Twitter means to subscribe to their Tweets or updates on the site." (Source: Twitter help center)
4 "A message posted via Twitter containing 140 characters or fewer." (Source: Twitter help center)
5 "To be included in another Twitter user's list." (Source: Twitter help center)
6 "the quantity of other Twitter users you have chosen to follow on the site." (Source: Twitter help center)

25.7% response rate. The age of the participants ranged from 18 years old to 33 years old, with 20 years old being the most common age (23.73%). This survey generated 29.57% responses from male students, and 70.43% responses from female students.

   B. Social media sites' activities. The result shows that Facebook was the most popular social media site among the participants (98.83%), followed by Twitter at 17.50%, LinkedIn with 9.73%, MySpace at 15.95%, and 2.72% of the respondents had other social media sites such as Tumblr, YouTube, and Stumbleupon (see Figure 1).
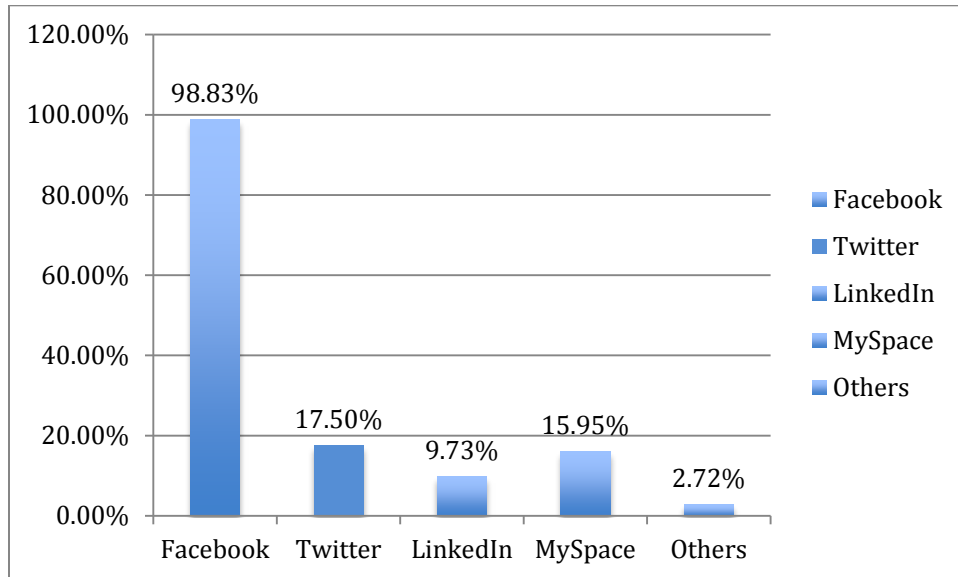

Figure 1. Respondents' social media memberships

   In addition, 65.76% of respondents had one account with a social media site, 25.29% had two accounts, 7.39% had three accounts, 0.39% has four accounts, no respondents had all five sites listed, and 1.17% had no account on any of the social media sites (see Figure 2).
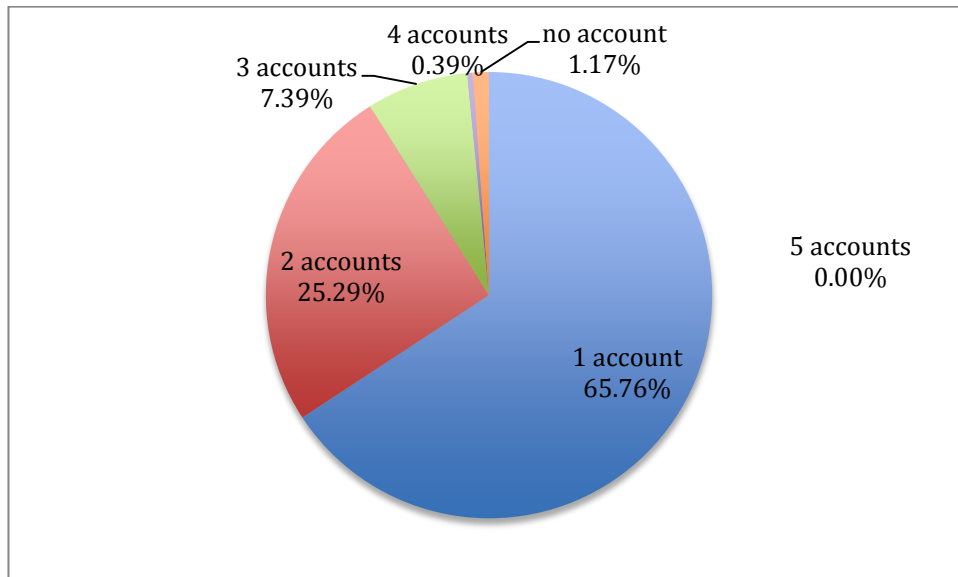

Figure 2. Respondents' social media sites account owned

For respondents who were on Facebook, 0.79% had the account for less than one year, 9.49% of them had owned the account for one to two years, 56.53% of the respondents had the account for between three to four years, and 33.20% of them had been with Facebook for more than four years. Among the 45 participants who had Twitter accounts, 61.36% of them had the account for less than one year, 31.81% of respondents had the account for one to two years, and 6.81% of them already had Twitter for three to four years. Only 24 respondents had a LinkedIn account, of which 14 of them had it for less than one year and ten had the account for one to two years. Only 40 respondents had a MySpace account, with 37 of the MySpace users owning their accounts for more than four years, and 2 respondents for three to four years, and only one respondent had MySpace account for one to two years.

When it came to their skills at using social media sites, 63.03% described themselves as average users, 33.85% as expert users, and 3.11% as beginners.

As for their involvement with any brands/companies on social media sites, 71.14% of the Facebook users were *fans* of brands/companies, but only 38.63% of the Twitter users *follow* brands or companies. The fact that respondents were loyal consumers seemed to be the most popular reason of why they would *follow* or become a *fan* of the brand or company, with 46.73% of Facebook users and 82.35% of Twitter users.

Only 3.28% of respondents who *follow* or were a *fan* read all postings or messages from their "favorite" brand, 65.57% only read the one that they were interested in, and 31.15% never read any of the postings or messages. Lastly, participants were asked the degree of influence between their social media sites activities/membership and their buying decisions; only 1% of respondents were highly affected, 20% were somewhat affected, 35% were neutral, 12% were somewhat not affected, and 31% were not affected at all (see Figure. 3).
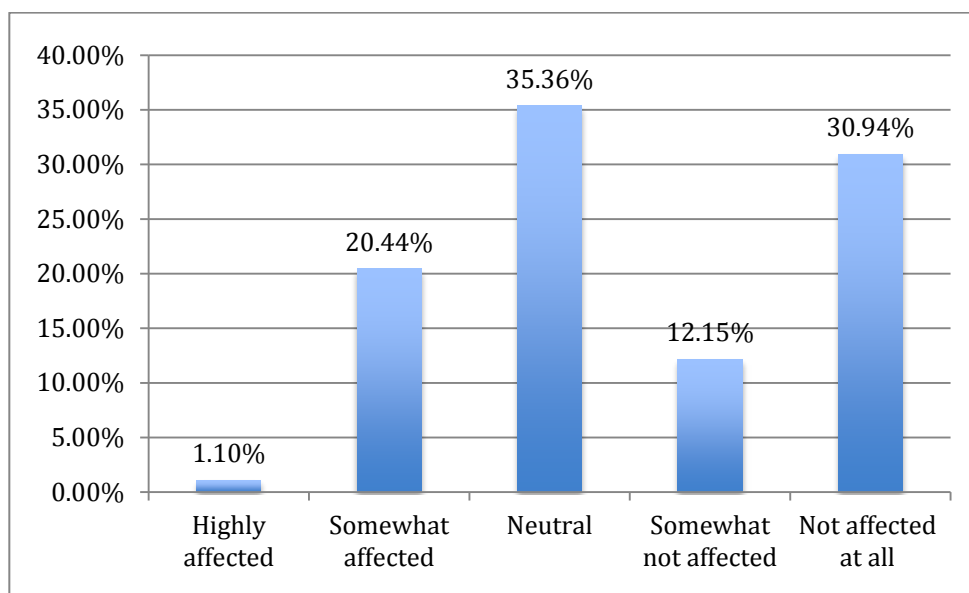

Figure 3. Respondents' social media activities and buying decisions relationship

Twitter and Revenue Analysis

Six variables were used to determine the company's participation on Twitter, which are number of *followers*, number of *tweets* and its subjects, number of being listed by its followers, and number of account follows. These data were obtained on March 24th, 2011 from the companies' Twitter account. In addition, a website named *whendidyoujointwitter.com* was used to determine the length of companies' Twitter memberships. Companies' revenue data were obtained from three different sources: *MarketLine Business Information Center*; *Market Share Reporter* (2010); and the companies' websites.

This analysis showed some mixed indications of correlation between a company's Twitter activities and its performances. For instance, Target had more *followers* than its competitor Wal-Mart, and its *tweets* were more conversational, which is important to strengthen buyer/seller relationship. However, these activities did not go along with Target's financial outcomes, because Wal-Mart sales revenue was almost four times more than Target's. In contrast, Microsoft, P&G (Charmin) and AT&T showed there were some correlations between their Twitter

activities and their business performances. For example, AT&T created its Twitter account one year before its competitor Verizon Wireless, and it had more *followers* and number of *tweets* than Verizon's. Merck (Claritin) and Johnson & Johnson (Benadryl) were the most "passive" companies in regards of its Twitter involvements. Claritin created its account back in 2009, it had only 59 followers, and 4 tweets. On the other hand, neither Benadryl nor Johnson & Johnson (Benadryl's producer) had a Twitter account. As for the companies' financial outcomes, the latest data from *Market Share Reporter* shows that in 2009 Claritin had higher market share with 10.7%, and Benadryl only hold 4% of the cold/allergy/sinus tablet (Market share reporter, 2010).

As it will be discussed later, companies use more than one media platforms to promote their products/services. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that the companies' Twitter activities were the main contributor of their business success, and companies need to conduct further analysis in order to see the effectiveness of SMM.

DISCUSSION
Social Media Marketing Effectiveness
Literature reviews shows that Social Media Marketing (SMM) effectiveness is highly influenced by three aspects: content quality; involvement; and integration with the other media platforms.

Content quality, not quantity. Blanchard (2011) suggests that millions of *followers/fans* could act as "ghost followers", which means these *followers/fans* have never been actively involved in the online conversation. In addition, research published by the *Advertising Age* suggests that the number of brand mentions are not the real indicator of the SMM effectiveness, especially when the word is so generic, which can be misinterpreted by the social media monitoring tool (Dumenco, 2011). For instance, an "accident", which the researcher called "The Salt Lake City Effect" or "The Bieber Distortion" when there was a sudden increase in number of mention for the word "salt" on Twitter, which the researcher thought was caused by the release of Angelina Jolie's latest movie at that time entitled "Salt." After spending some time to track back the individual *tweets*, he finally found out that the increase was caused by pop star Justin Bieber who was then on tour and has just arrived in Salt Lake City, where he *tweeted* "Salt Lake City is super chill. Air just feels clean…" his fans *retweets* generated a big boost for the word "salt" (Dumenco, 2011). This example also shows that managers should not totally rely on the monitoring software to measure and analyze their social media campaign.

The Twitter analysis shows that some brands/companies (e.g. Microsoft, Charmin) used their Twitter account to connect and to communicate with customers. Their tweets were about communicating and connecting with their followers, through some personal conversations in subjects that were relevant to their customers. As a result, they were able to beat their main competitors in financial performances and Twitter activities.

Building trust and long-term relationship. Rust, Moorman, and Bhalla (2010) discuss that marketing approach has changed. It used to be about persuading consumers to buy products by "bombarding" customers with numerous advertisements. Today, marketing is about building relationships and trust through effective two-way communications (e.g., talk about something that customers are interested in), and creating products that will help to solve customers' problems (Rust, Moorman, Bhalla, 2010). Ironically, some of today's social media marketing campaigns are still driven by the old-fashioned marketing and focus on short-term effect (sales), which is also known as incentive–induced behavior (Dumenco, 2011).

Blanchard (2011) says that trust and genuine buyer/seller relationships achieved through consistent and engaging conversation will increase the messages (SMM) level of influence. Amber Naslund, who is the Vice President of social-media monitoring firm Radian6, suggests "influence isn't about popularity. Or even reach. It's about the trust, authority, and presence to drive relevant actions within your community that create something of substance" (Creamer, 2011). Trust is the key factor to get the 300,000+ *fans/followers* to actually do something (i.e. change in buying decisions, influence their peers), and turn it into revenues for the companies (Woessner, 2011). Bill Zinke, who is the CMO of Tasti D-Lite, also suggests that in order to keep the campaign relevant to customers it is crucial to build a strong relationship with customers and enhance brand loyalty (Rooney, 2011).

Duncan Watts, who is a researcher at Yahoo, found that "word-of-mouth diffusion can only be harnessed reliably by targeting large numbers of potential influencers, thereby capturing average effects" (Creamer, 2011). Furthermore, customers will start talking about the brand/company to their friends/families (word of mouth) after they have become aware and engage to the company/brand (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Therefore, any postings or messages on the company's social media sites should be on subjects that are relevant to the customers and something that they can relate to, in order to get them engaged and connected to the company/brand (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Involvement. One of the reasons why some social media campaigns do not work is because executives are not fully committed to spend their time and thoughts on being actively engaged in their SMM. (Vaynerchuk,2011, pg. 52). Woessner (2011) suggests that firms should not only be involved with the online community, but also with the

offline community to extend their relationship and customers loyalty. Firms should start their involvement by inviting their customers or prospects to join their social media community (Woessner, 2011). For example, firms can post the icons of the social media sites that they are a part of on their main website, or by giving some special deals to customers who become their *fans* or *followers*.

In the online community, firms should start writing more effective posts. An effective post should reflect humbleness, honesty, and conciseness, which Woessner (2011) suggests as key elements of an effective post. It should also be informative to satisfy the customers' need for information and experts' opinions (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010). Effective contents should be able to elicit call-to-actions from the audience (conversion) so that by the end of this process, *fans/followers* will place an order, subscribe newsletter, or participate on online surveys (Woessner, 2011). In the offline community, managers/executives should share their expertise with their community by volunteering as a guest speaker in the local community, which will help to attract more followers or fans and to strengthen their connection with the community (Woessner, 2011).

As was discussed previously, it is important to maintain the content relevancy within customers main interests and to not overwhelm the customers with too many posts/messages, which is really important in keeping customers engaged (Rooney, 2011). Woessner (2011) suggests that firms to stay consistent with 2 *tweets*/day, which in this case "less is more." He also advises the 6:1 ratio, which means that to post six life/professional related contents (i.e. featured in the media, charity events) for every one product/service related content (Woessner, 2011).

Timing is also a critical factor when it comes to building trust and long-term relationships through social media sites. Firms need to reply to any comments, posts, or messages within 24 hours. Companies should also make between five to ten comments per week to any updates posted by the community members (Woessner, 2011). In doing so, it will help companies to increase their brands/products awareness especially in the smaller community/market, enhance their expertise among their colleagues in their industry as well as expand their influence, and strengthen companies' relationships with current customers (Woessner, 2011).

Integration with other marketing platforms. Some managers are worried that their social media campaign can affect the number of their main website's visitors, because more and more customers switch to Facebook or Twitter. If the social media program is done correctly, website's visitors will not be affected by the growth of companies' *fans/followers* in the social media sites (Neff, 2010). This is because in the end customers should be directed to the company's main website. As a result social media marketing becomes the medium to increase the website's traffic as well as the company's e-commerce (Woessner, 2011). For instance, Starbucks' web traffic has stayed steady regardless of its 12.7 millions (and counting) Facebook fans (Neff, 2010). In addition, to avoid the cannibalization between company's media platforms, companies should differentiate the features that they offer on each media. For example, Rich Lesperance who is Walgreens' online marketing director, said "Within Facebook, Walgreens is finding what works best are fairly frequent short updates, often ones that involve posting a question that prompts a response" (Neff, 2010).

SMM should be integrated to not only the company's website, but also the rest of the promotional platform such as TV or print advertisement, billboard (Hoffman & Fodor, 2011). As it was discussed previously, firms need to involve their other media platform when promoting their participations on the social media sites (Woessner, 2011). Through its offline community involvement (PR), firms can attract more *fans/followers* on its social media sites as well as to maintain relationship with customers, which ultimately will affect the effectiveness of firms' SMM. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) use Starbucks to demonstrate an effective combination between the social media and the traditional media, which in this case was TV advertisement. During the election season in 2008, Starbucks promoted its free coffee giveaway by running a TV advertisement during *Saturday Night Live*, and posted the video on its YouTube account. As a result, the campaign had effectively increased its brand mentions in Twitter, which had also increased Starbucks' brand exposure on the web (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Along with changes in the marketing approach from product-centric to customer-centric approach, selling and promotional approach has also changed (Rust, Moorman, Bhalla, 2010). A research shows that "most successful salespeople, over two-thirds believe social media is integral to their sales success", because social media has enabled marketers to engage with customers along their buying process (Fetherstonhaugh, 2010). From the Twitter/revenue analysis, AT&T did a good job on combining some its marketing platform in its Twitter account. AT&T has utilized its Twitter account as an additional tool to answer any questions from its customers regarding AT&T's services as well as to handle some complains for its customers/*followers* (e.g. customer service and customer support), which clearly has increased the quality of its customer service department and its customer satisfaction. By combining traditional and social media platforms, it allows businesses to extend their conversations about the products with its consumers (Vaynerchuk, 2011, pg. 114). In addition, managers should develop a strategy that allows all platforms to work together to continue the conversations, and to connect with the customers (Vaynechuk, 2011, pg. 116).

Lastly, Vaynerchuk believes that "social media is a marathon-you can't reach the finish line without patience and determination. That's why diversification is so important" (Vaynerchuk, 2011, pg. 79). He added that if it is done right (e.g. have these 3 aspects in place: content quality; involvement; and media integration) social media is one of the most effective and least expensive platforms, and it can provide never-ending opportunity for businesses (Vaynerchuck, 2011, pg. 80). For instance, research shows that customers will trust their peers more than the traditional advertising, and their peers have more influence on their buying decisions than the traditional advertisements. In addition, social media sites have enabled these "trusted recommendations" to reach billions of social media users worldwide (Vaynerchuck, 2011, pg. 53-54). As a result, it will turn a regular browser into a committed buyer, and a committed buyer into a brand advocate (Vaynerchuck, 2011, pg. 55). A study by IBM shows that brand advocates spend 30% more dollars than those who are not. Also, Advocates are more likely to keep spending and even increase their spending as time goes, and have significantly higher lifetime value[7] than regular customers (Vaynerchuck, 2011, pg. 55).

Social Media Marketing Measurement

A firm's budget is finite, and there are two main rules that influence executives when allocating their budget. First, "necessity is the mother of all business decisions." Second, "winners funded and losers don't" (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 208). To support SMM, a company needs to cover some costs, such as SMM staffs (e.g. salary/benefit), technology (i.e. software licensing fees), time, and another miscellaneous cost (i.e. to attend various trainings and conferences in social media marketing) (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 217). As was discussed earlier, the fact that there is still no clear evidence to prove that 10,000 new *followers/fans* on the firm's social media account will lead to 8,000 new customers, and $2 million increase in firm's sales revenue is one of the main reasons why some managers are still hesitant to join the SMM (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 222).

Literatures show some mixed result on the best practice to measure the effectiveness of SMM. Vaynerchuk (2011) argues that there is no hard formula to calculate SMM Return on Investment (ROI), because SMM mostly involve human interactions (i.e. positive/negative reviews, Word of Mouth), which cannot be calculated using mathematical calculation (Vaynerchuk, 2011, pg. 53). Based on his study, Woessner (2011) combined Google analytics and on Amazon.com[8] to track the effectiveness of his SMM campaign and how it affects the sales of his book. This combination allowed him to track the traffic sources as well as the top content of his campaign. Blanchard (2011) and Owyang (2010) agree that the ROI cannot be calculated with the traditional ROI formula[9], because it should involve multiple layers of data analysis to connect both financial (i.e. 16% increase in online sales) and non-financial (i.e. increase in positive mentions) outcomes of the campaign.

However, all sources agree that SMM measurement should include consumers' interactions and reactions as one of the variables on the calculation, because after all SMM main focus is conversion, which means how well consumers' involvements on the social media sites affect their buying decisions. The Literature also agrees that SMM measurement is more complex than the traditional platforms due to the "human interactions" variable. Furthermore, it also agreed that number of *fans*, *followers*, and brand mentions are not the most important indicator of SMM effectiveness, because these numbers might only look good on the paper but not in the reality. Blanchard (2011) discusses that 200,000 thousand *followers* that the company has, might only as "ghost followers", that he describes as the *followers* who have never been involved in any conversations or have not been active for a long time (Blanchard 2011, pg. 195). In addition, the social media marketing survey shows that 31% of respondents said that their activities and membership on the social media sites did not affect on their buying decisions at all. Only 1% of the respondents said that their involvements on the social media would highly affect their buying decisions, and 20% of them responded that their buying decisions were somewhat affected by their social media activities.

The bottom line of SMM measurement practice is its campaign/business objective(s) need to be very specific and measureable such as "we need to sell 245 more red bicycles in this year's Q4 than we did in Q4 last year" (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 194). In addition, objective(s) give purpose to the program, momentum, and gets everyone to involve in the campaign (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 194). Blanchard (2011) proposes two different methods to measure SMM effectiveness. First, by tracking the company's sales directly from any promotional codes/links that are provided exclusively through company's social media sites. In addition, the firm's can also create a special landing page for its unique promotion and embed the hyperlink to its social media channels. By doing so, the page will capture any customers' purchases from that particular page, and also help the firm to define its sales volume, degree

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7 Total profit (or loss) estimated to result from an ongoing business relationship with a customer over the life of relationship (Source: BusinessDictionary.com)

[8] By embedding the link of his product on amazon.com to his social media sites

[9] ROI= (gain from investment- cost of investment): cost of investment

of conversions, and the target audience of each social media sites (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 222). However, this method fails to capture the non-financial outcomes of the campaign such as changes in the brand's positive/negative sentiments, changes in brand mentions, which are the other key variables of SMM measurement (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 222). Often times, marketing campaign involves more than one media platforms, and ROI is media-agnostic[10], which makes it very difficult to precisely measure the effect of a media without considering the impact of the other platforms (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 223). For instance, on a sales revenue timeline, it shows that there was three major revenue spikes happened. It happened when the firm had just launched a campaign on its Facebook, being featured on a well-known magazine, and when the firm just dropped its product price for a special event. Without using the timeline and further analysis, it would be hard to actually determine which campaigns were the most effective, and which campaign contributed to which sales increased (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 224-225).

Therefore Blanchard (2011) proposes another method with eight steps to precisely measure the SMM effectiveness.

1. Establish a baseline. Managers should list all the data that they are trying to measure (i.e. sales volume, net transactions, number of brand mentions) as the baseline of their campaign (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 227). Woessner (2011) also supports this idea, and emphasizes the importance of taking benchmarks before firms launch their campaign to see "before and after" impact of the SMM.

2. Create activity timelines. Companies should plot all of the activities from all departments and media platforms that might have an effect on the non-financial outcomes (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 228). One way to do this is by creating a shared document that will allow all departments to integrate their campaign, which will prevent any misinterpretations/misassumptions when analyzing the result (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 228).

3. Monitor the volume of mentions. There are two things that firms need to do in this step. First, staffs need to measure the brand mentions all across the web (i.e. social media sites, blogs, news sites) using social media monitoring tools such as Nutshellmail, Addict-o-matic, HootSuite (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 229). Second, to measure the mix of sentiment of the brand mentions that is measured from the previous step. In doing so, it will give some indicators to the firm through the changes between customers' positive and negative sentiments of the brand/company. For instance, increase in positive sentiments could be a good indicator of a shift in customers' preference of the brand resulted from the word of moth value from the positive mentions (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 229).

Then again, firms cannot rely 100% to the automated sentiment analyst, which from the "Bieber Distortion" example proved that the result could be inaccurate (Demenco, 2011). In addition, there is no algorithm that can precisely translate consumers' conversations on the social media sites. Therefore, this has to be done by real people to understand the real meaning of the brand mentions in the social media channels (Dumenco, 2011).

4. Measure transactional precursors. This is where the firm need to measure the non-financial outcomes that may indicate the changes in consumers' behaviors resulted from their SM activities such as number of fans, followers, shares, recommendations, RSS subscriptions, content downloads (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 230).

5. Look at transactional data. In this stage, companies need to measure the financial data by combining both the changes in net transacting customers and the number of net transactions (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 231). This will give the firm more in depth analysis as for which customers (e.g. new or current customers) contribute to the sales increase (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 231). For example, if the percentage change in net transaction is bigger than the percentage changes in sales volume, this means that new customers have began to buy small things. (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 231). In contrast, if the percentage change in sales volume is bigger than the percentage changes in net number of transactions, it means that the current customers are spending more money than before (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 231).

6. Overlay all data (steps 1-5) onto a single timeline. This is where managers need to put the baselines, and add other relevant data such as competitors' press release, important events (i.e. natural disasters, new technology introduction) during certain timelines that might affect the firm's SMM activities (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 233).

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[10] Agnostic (noun) means a person who is unwilling to commit to an opinion about something (based on Merriam-Webster dictionary)
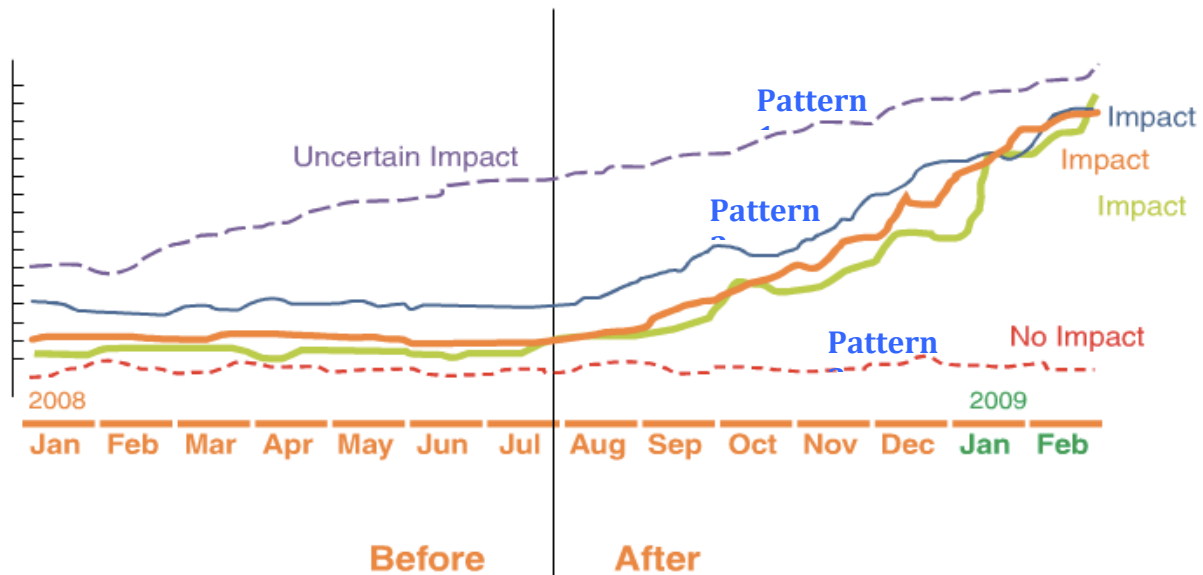
Figure 4. Step 7 Look for patterns (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 235)

7. Look for patterns. The chart shows three different patterns that demonstrate some possible impacts of the firm's social media campaign. The first pattern shows that there is an increasing trend even before the campaign was launched. The impact of social media activities is difficult to determine from this pattern, due to lack of significant changes on the firm's performance (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 233).

On the other hand, the second pattern (flat line) shows that there is lack of influence from the SM program. In this case, executives need to look closer for any particular factors that might cause this pattern. This might also be caused by the firm's activities' outside the social media. For instance, the SMM was successful to bring some new customers to the store, but there was not stock available at the store, which interrupted this conversion process (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 234).

The last pattern is the desired outcomes of the SMM. It indicates that there is a significant increase shortly after the social media campaign started, and it also shows that there might be some relations between the SMM and this performances increase, which will be discussed on the next stage (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 235).

8. Prove and disapprove relationship. In order to prove that the 3rd pattern resulted from the firm's SMM, executives need to work their way backward from the outcome to trace the correlation between the change in firm's performances and its SMM (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 236) by connecting the firm's performance metrics with the timeline from step 6. For example, whether there is a correlation between the firm's Facebook campaigns during the new product's introduction with an increase in volume of customers' conversations about the product, increase in website's visitors, and ultimately an increase in the product's sales (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 236). In doing so, it will give executives clear analysis of how the firm's SM activities contribute to the outcomes.

Blanchard (2011) adds the velocity that the social media has, has given a major advantage over the traditional media. SMM can be responded to and analyzed in real time, which means that it can be fixed right away, if it does not work (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 205). On the other hand, if the campaign works, managers can find some more information to find out how it is working, and in which sites (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 205).

As it was discussed previously, managers should not totally depend on the monitoring software to generate the analysis (Blanchard, 2011, 229). In addition, if the company uses an outside agency to handle its SMM, Blanchard (2011) suggests that the company should do its own measurement part inside the organization, because people outside the organization might not understand what the company really wants to see and measure (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 202). However, managers should involve outside agents or staff from different departments when conducting the analysis, which is really important to ensure the neutrality of the report. It is because each manager has different objectives and concerns, which might create some conflicts (Blanchard, 2011, pg. 202).

Social Media Marketing Target Market

Target market is one of the critical factors that could affect the effectiveness of a marketing strategy. Similarly, it is important for marketers to recognize the characteristics of social media marketing target market to ensure the

effectiveness of their campaigns. Literatures show various results between generation Y (18-34 years old), generation X (35-45 years old), and the younger baby boomers (45-55 years old) as the target audience of the SMM.

Research shows that 95% of the college market uses the internet, and 91% of them had involved in some type of online purchasing (Lester, Forman, and Loyd, 2005). In addition, a study by Pew Research Center shows that in 2010, 83% of Generation Y (18-33 years old) used social media sites, 62% of Generation X, and only 50% of the younger boomers use social media sites (Zickuhr, 2010). In addition, a report shows that 46.4% of Facebook users are between the ages of 13-25 years old, and 26.1% are between the ages of 26-34 years old (Burbarry, 2011). However, these numbers do not indicate whether the users are also involved in the SMM activities.

Woessner (2011) shows that 58% of Twitter users earn $60,000+, and 36% of its users are older than 35 years; 51.8% of LinkedIn users earn at least $100,000. A report by Nielsen shows that the fastest growth for Facebook users are people between the ages of 35 to 49 years old, followed by people of 18-34 years old. This data indicates that even though generation X and the younger boomers might not be as tech-savvy as generation Y, these groups have more stable income than members of generation Y. This means that generation X and the younger boomers might be more involved in SMM than the younger generation. As was discussed previously, only 21% of the survey respondents show that respondents' involvement on the social media sites affect their buying decisions. This result can be used as an indicator that Generation Y might be the main users of the social media sites, but they are not necessarily the main audience of the SMM.

Woessner (2011) suggests that social media users between 35-49 years old are more financially stable than the younger group. On the other hand, generation Y, especially college students (18-24 years old) are not yet financially stable, and they still depend on their families. This fact can also indicate that college students' buying decisions to some level are influenced by their parents' preferences.

Generation X and the younger boomers are more financially and mentally stable than generation Y, which affects their buying behavior. On the other hand, research suggests that generation Y is the most tech-savvy and embrace anything wired among all generations (Lester, Forman, and Loyd, 2005). As was discussed before, there is only small amount of research that has been done in the area of SMM. As a result, there is not enough evidence to suggest the main target audience of the social media marketing.

LIMITATIONS

Social media marketing is a relatively a new subject in the business and marketing field. There are only a few articles on this subject that have been published. Future studies might be able to find more information on SMM, since SMM has become more and more popular among marketers and scholars.

The Twitter analysis was conducted with no access to the social media or marketing department of the companies, and no further analysis was conducted. The analysis could be more precise, if the companies' Twitter activities were focused on certain period of time, and information to their media platforms were accessible. As Blanchard (2011) suggests a timeline could be used to see the relation of a company's media platforms, especially SMM and its performance.

Future studies should also use broader sample that would include social media users from generation Y, generation X, and the younger baby boomers for their survey (if applicable). In doing so, it would give researchers clearer comparison of the SMM activities among each group to define the target audience of SMM. The survey should also be distributed equally between male and female respondents, to understand the different SMM involvement between genders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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