



IJMIRD 2014; 1(2): 192-194
www.allsubjectjournal.com
Received: 27-05-2014
Accepted: 28-06-2014
e-ISSN: 2349-4182
p-ISSN: 2349-5979

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Influence of social media on customer satisfaction in b2b sales

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Abstract

Social media have changed the interaction of buyers and sellers, and increased involvement in selling through social media. It may draw positive results for sales organizations if salespeople utilize it positively. The study used the mediating effects of salesperson information communication behaviours between social media use and customer satisfaction. Using salesperson-reported data, within a B2B context, Regression used to find out the influences and it is found sales persons information communication have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Findings suggest that social media plays an important role in communicating information to customers. This encourages managers to carefully assess social media use of their sales force.

Keywords: Social Media, Business-to-Business (B2B), Customer Satisfaction

Introduction

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. One important characteristic of social media is that it introduces the creation and exchange of user-generated content from a bottom up point of view. The most distinctive feature in social media affecting professional organizations might be precisely the fact that the content and the networks are user-generated. In this literature review we have focused some of the most common social media are Facebook, Twitter, email, web 2.0, and LinkedIn. Besides these social media examples we have also applied broader definition of social media, such as phone calls, SMS, MMS, email, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, Wikipedia, Twitter, Flickr, Yogile, messenger, chat and blogs to name a few.

Social media is changing our world. In the arrival of smartphones and social media, the accessibility of information is higher. Customers are frequently asked to "like" business on Facebook, to "follow" business on Twitter, or to "connect" via LinkedIn. As a result, customers are becoming better connected to business, more knowledgeable about product selections, and more powerful in buyer-seller relationships. In broad terms, incorporating the use of social media in customer interactions is a logical progression for firms to expand communication with their customers (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2010) [1]. For instance, trade-media encourage the use of social media (e.g. Wirthman, 2013) for firms, suggesting that social media is important for business as it aids in generating business exposure, increasing traffic, and providing marketplace insight (Stelzner, 2012) [7].

Thus, social media within the sales domain provides a means to communicate to customers in a manner that may plausibly enable greater salesperson responsiveness. Hence, social media may provide one means to enable the salesperson to communicate in a more responsive manner. Also, social media may have implications on customer satisfaction. In general, with increased interactions and contact with firms, power is shifting from seller to buyer. An increase in buyer-seller collaboration and co-creation of knowledge and value has placed buyers on a more equal footing with sellers. Therefore, this research paper studies the importance of social media in a business-to-business (B2B) sales context.

Review of literature

The literatures collected have emphasized the significance of communication between buyer and seller to solidify the relationship within the exchange process (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Communication, as posited by relational marketing scholars, can be described as the "information shared between exchange partners" (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006, p. 138). Specifically, in the industrial selling context, researchers have highlighted the importance of information communication by the salesperson as a key contributor to customers' positive experiences. Jones, Brown, acknowledge the heightening expectations

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of buyers. Buyers have an increasingly higher level of expectations for the salesperson to be alert and sensitive to the customers' needs. Salespeople have a need to focus on providing vital information in a quick and responsive manner, as industrial customers are often compelled to make competent business decisions in a swift manner. Customers utilize their market relationships in a similar manner as salespersons to enable "an effective and efficient means of obtaining information". The salesperson's level of information communication can provide the customer with a responsive source of knowledge that is often required when purchasing a complex product or solution. Salespeople providing this information may be able to yield greater response timeliness and improve customer satisfaction. Hence, we suggest that a strong basis exists to theoretically link information communication to both customer satisfaction and to responsiveness.

2.2. Information technology In a parallel stream that considers the influence of technology on information communication, marketing scholars argue that salespeople should be aware of the emerging technology tools that can enable the exchange process to become more efficient and effective. The literature (e.g., Hunter & Perreault, 2007) has supported the use of sales technology within a sales force as it enhances the information communication process. In terms of technology pertinent to the sales field, extant research acknowledges the evolution of customer relationship management (CRM) and its shift to include social media as a way to increase relationships with the term social CRM. Social CRM incorporates the use of the latest technology (social media) as a way of going beyond the traditional role of technology, such that it also raises customer involvement.

Research methodology

This research investigates a large group of sales professionals involved in B2B industrial selling. The survey respondents represented a large range of diverse companies and industries. Social media use was self-assessed by each sales representative. Information communication was operationalised as communication

a. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson's information communication, Salesperson's responsiveness to customers.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.895 ^a	.800	.798	19.196	438.794	.000 ^b

a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson's information communication, Salesperson's responsiveness to customers.

Model	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.508	3.848		-.132	.895
1 salesperson's information communication	1.366	.105	.404	13.044	.000
salesperson's responsiveness to customers	.506	.204	.055	2.481	.013

Findings and suggestions

Most of the industrial buyers across the globe considers their sales contact as a business partner and anticipates quality advice about products or services from their sales representative. From the analysis, it is clear that the effects of social media used by salesperson's influences customer satisfaction that the salespeople sufficiently has to communicate information with the customer. The data also agrees the positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction suggesting that customer's appreciates the timely responses from salespeople. The current study also makes a number of contributions to the B2B sales. At first, the findings suggest that a salesperson's that use of social media enhances the salesperson's overall information communication. The information communication offers valuable information and is important in explaining the significance of social media.

of appropriate information. Convenient sampling method is used to study the role of information communication between salesperson expertise and customer satisfaction. The research uses both primary and secondary data. Secondary data is collected from journals, articles, publications in renowned Journals & Books and Social Media industry reports. Previous researches articles of various authors were also reviewed. Primary data has collected through questionnaires in order to examine the research questions. Data collected through survey method done through well structures questionnaire with sales representatives. The sample size has been taken to be around 100. The data was collected between January 1 and April 30, 2015 in Thiruvallur district.

Objectives

1. To examine the salesperson's use of social media will positively influence information communication.
2. To study the salesperson's information communication will positively influence customers' satisfaction with the salesperson.
3. To examine the salesperson's responsiveness to customers will positively influence customers' satisfaction with the salesperson.

Hypotheses

H1: A salesperson's information communication will positively influence customers' satisfaction with the salesperson.
 H2: A salesperson's responsiveness to customers will positively influence customers' satisfaction with the salesperson.

Data analysis and interpretation

The techniques used to analyse the collected data are Regression models to know how information communication will influence customers' satisfaction with the salesperson. And to find how a salesperson's responsiveness to customers will influence customers satisfaction with the salesperson.

Further, it validates that information communication serves as critical salesperson behaviour in business markets and insists that it serves as a means to derive the investment made in social media. Finally, the research reflects the value of information communication for the successful utilization of social media in B2B context.

Limitations

Several limitations have been encountered in this present study that may affect reliability of the results.

1. Salesperson evaluated their customers' satisfaction at an overall level, which is recognized as the most ideal measure of customer satisfaction and it is a limitation of this study.
2. The sample used in the current study is comprised of salespeople, operating within a B2B context and working for different companies. Thus the generalisation of results, does

not inherently control other factors.

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