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Social Media, Content Marketing and Engagement Strategies in B2B

Guest Editorial

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This call for papers came as a response to the increasing interest in understanding not simply the interactional aspect of social media but beyond that, the deeper levels of engagement that such platforms potentially provide to B2B organizations. B2B research has provided insights *inter alia* into the usage of social media (Lacoste, 2015; Leek, Canning and Houghton, 2016; Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011), the measurement and effectiveness of social media marketing (Meire, Ballings and Van den Poel, 2017; Michaelidou et al., 2011) and the determinants of social media adoption (Brink, 2017; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Siamagka, Christodoulides and Michaelidou, 2016). This special issue presents theoretical and empirical work on business customer engagement and content marketing within various B2B sectors, and contributes to the enhancement of knowledge in this domain. We have selected eight papers that present multiple perspectives, are underpinned by varied theoretical approaches, and involve different methodological and research designs.

The first paper by Hollebeek is a conceptual work that provides insights into business customer engagement through the integration of the service-dominant logic (S-D

logic) and the resource-based view (RBV) models. The integrative S-D logic/RBV-informed model treats business customer engagement as an investment of operant/operand resources in supplier interactions made by industrial customers. The model suggests that business customer resource integration, business customer resource integration effectiveness and business customer resource integration efficiency act as antecedents of business customer engagement, which in turn leads to business customer co-creation, business customer relationship productivity and business customer relationship quality. Three research propositions are derived from the model, which offer directions for future research. The second paper by Gopalakrishna, Malthouse and Lawrence examines customer engagement within the context of B2B trade shows. Viewing customer engagement as a dynamic process, the authors use pre- and after-show survey data to empirically support the dynamism of engagement. Customer engagement is found to consist of three steps, the desired behavior, the anticipated behavior and the reflection or as the author suggest, satisfaction with the trade show. The authors demonstrate that the three identified steps subsequently affect intention to purchase and intention to return to the show. The findings also highlight that the dialogue about the trade show on social media significantly affects behavioral outcomes (i.e. intention to purchase and to return to the show). The third paper by Leek, Houghton and Canning focuses on behavioral engagement and identifies the tweet functions and types of content that enhance different levels of behavioral engagement (i.e. likes, retweets, comments). The authors analyse 833 tweets by four product and service companies in the healthcare sector and find that behavioral engagement within this context is relatively low. The findings of this paper also show that tweet functions and the language used in the content of messages (content type) interacts with company type to affect behavioral

engagement in terms of likes, tweets and comments. The fourth paper by Chirumalla, Oghazi and Parida focus on social media engagement strategies that result in improved marketing and R&D interface and ultimately NPD performance. Through a multiple case study approach in two manufacturing companies, the authors put forward three social media engagement strategies that represent different stages of evolution. The three strategies (or phases in the adoption process) are coordination, cooperation and coproduction. Coproduction involves the highest level of social media engagement as well as the highest level of interface integration. The next paper by Pitt, Plangger, Botha, Kietzmann and Pitt focuses on internal stakeholders by examining how employees engage with B2B brands. Combining data from Glassdoor (employer review social medium) and Brandwatch (a published ranking of B2B brands on social media) the authors investigate differences in the way employees engage with highly-ranked and -rated brands (versus low-ranked and -rated brands). Their findings suggest significant differences across all word choice and verbal tone dimensions of the reviews particularly amongst top- and bottom- rated employer brands.

The sixth article by Barry and Girona investigates how content and dialogue behaviors in social media contexts contribute to thought leadership reputation. The work employs a mixed methods approach, via an exploratory inductive study and a survey which show that B2B marketers' thought leadership competency is affected by perceptions of operational helpfulness, market foresight, sharing generosity and dialogic responsiveness. The authors findings also show that, trusted authority recognition is a mediator of the relationship between thought leadership competency and bridging social capital. The seventh article by Wang, Malthouse, Calder and Uzunoğlu examines content marketing in B2B professional services. The authors use

panel data from a multinational consulting service provider to test a random-effects negative binomial regression model, showing that sales leads and won opportunities from key accounts are positively affected by how frequently an account's employees attend digital events and consume digital content.

The final contribution to the special issue is a paper based on the work of Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder and Yau. The authors article compares social media marketing in B2B and B2C contexts, using a survey instrument. The findings interestingly identify disparities between business models (B2B and B2C), and specifically highlight that members in B2B organizations, relative to other models, perceive social media as less effective in its usage as a channel and for relationship management.

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