On the collective efficacy of social media teams

Tafesse, W. & Korneliussen, T.

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The contribution of social media marketing teams (SMTs) to firms' social media performance: A collective efficacy explanation

By

Tafesse, W. and Korneliussen, T.

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to investigate social media teams' (SMTs) contribution to firms' social media performance. Although SMTs are tasked with planning, executing and optimizing firms' social media effort, little research has examined their role systematically. Drawing on social cognitive theory, the present study develops collective social media efficacy as a key mechanism in explaining SMTs' contribution to firms' social media performance.

Design/methodology/approach – The study tests a conceptual framework in which SMT members' prior experience and their proclivity for short-term training and online resources contribute to the emergence of stronger collective social media efficacy. In turn, stronger collective social media efficacy is hypothesized to contribute to firms' social media performance by optimizing work processes. The study employed primary data and PROCESS macro to test its proposed model.

Findings – The findings indicate that prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources contribute to firms' social media performance mainly by enabling SMTs to build stronger collective social media efficacy.

Originality/value – The findings offer novel insights into how firms can optimize their social media marketing effort by systematically managing SMTs. The findings add to the nascent literature on the organizational influences of firms' social media performance.

Keywords: Social media marketing; Social media teams; Social media performance; Collective efficacy

1. Introduction

Social media facilitate a highly interactive platform via which marketers can connect with their customers and engage them to drive firm value. Social media marketing has been associated with increased customer engagement (Dolan et al., 2016), enhanced brand experience (Tafesse, 2016), greater relationship marketing capabilities (Valos et al., 2019) and higher customer spending (Kumar et al., 2016). To capitalize on social media's promise in driving firm value, organizations are increasingly formalizing their social media marketing effort (Cawsey and Rowley, 2016; Foltean et al., 2018; Tafesse and Wien, 2018). A large number of them have set up dedicated social media teams (SMTs) and tasked them with planning, executing, and optimizing their social media marketing effort (Ragan, 2012).

To the extent that SMTs are responsible for firms' social media marketing effort, their structure and behavior can have a significant bearing on firms' social media performance (Ragan, 2012). Yet, systematic research that explicates the role of SMTs in the literature is almost non-existent. A search on Google's research database using different combinations of the terms "social media", "marketing" and "teams", returned no single matching scholarly article! This is a surprising oversight given a large number of firms are increasingly revamping their digital marketing operations by setting up dedicated social media and digital marketing teams (Cawsey and Rowley, 2016; Palmatier et al., 2018).

This study seeks to contribute to the literature by examining how SMTs contribute to firms' social media performance. To accomplish this goal, the study draws on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), and develops the concept of collective social media efficacy as a key mechanism in explaining SMTs' contribution to firms' social media performance. Building on the concept of collective efficacy from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), the study

conceptualizes collective social media efficacy as SMT members' confidence in their collective ability to execute core social media activities, such as strategy alignment, content management, customer engagement, social media analytics, and data sharing with other functions in the organization. The study then delineates three primary approaches by which SMTs build stronger collective social media efficacy: prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources. These three mechanisms are consistent with the three primary sources of efficacy beliefs outlined in social cognitive theory namely, enactive mastery, vicarious experience, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1977). Once realized, stronger collective social media efficacy can contribute to higher social media performance by increasing team members' motivations and by optimizing their work processes. Overall, the study tests a model in which collective social media efficacy mediates SMTs' contribution to firms' social media performance.

The study offers both theoretical and managerial contributions. From a theoretical standpoint, it offers a pioneering insight into SMTs' role in firms' social media marketing effort. Specifically, the study develops the concept of collective social media efficacy as an important mechanism that explains SMTs' contribution to firms' social media performance. It further contributes to the literature by synthesizing three major approaches by which SMTs build stronger collective social media efficacy: prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources. The proposed model offers a novel understanding into SMTs' role and contribution to firms' social media marketing effort. From a managerial standpoint, the study offers actionable insights for organizing and effectively managing SMTs. The findings can be used to calibrate SMTs for optimal performance.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section two discusses the theoretical background of the study. Section three introduces the hypotheses. Section four

describes the study's methodological approach. The remaining sections of the paper report the results and discuss their implications for theory and practice.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Social media teams (SMTs)

With social media's rise to prominence as a core customer engagement platform, firms are increasingly formalizing their social media marketing effort (Cawsey and Rowley, 2016; Foltean et al., 2018; Tafesse and Wien, 2018). By now, most firms have set up dedicated SMTs and entrusted them with the responsibility to plan, execute, measure and optimize their social media marketing effort (Ragan, 2012; Tuten and Solomon, 2015). By formalizing SMTs, firms can benefit from a combination of increased team collaboration and greater social media accountability.

SMTs can range from a single employee handling all social media responsibilities to a highly diverse team with specialized skills and complex structure (Ragan, 2012). The size and complexity of SMTs depend on the size of the focal firm, the nature of its core market (e.g., b2b vs b2c) and the industry in which it operates. Another likely influence is the firm's marketing strategy (Cawsey and Rowley, 2016). For instance, heavy reliance on digital marketing relative to traditional marketing calls for a sizable digital marketing team. A review of the practitioner literature as well as analysis of active social media job postings reveal that SMTs are responsible for a range of activities that can be summarized under five broad categories: developing and aligning social media strategy, creating and managing content, engaging customers, performing social media analytics and sharing social media insight with other functions in the organization.

In this study, we focus on SMTs' collective efficacy. Drawing on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), we develop collective social media efficacy as a key mechanism that explains SMTs' contribution to firms' social media performance. Collective social media efficacy captures team members' confidence in their shared ability to handle core social media responsibilities such as strategy alignment, content management, customer engagement, social media analytics and data sharing with other functions in the organization. Our basic premise is that SMTs can contribute to their firms' social media performance by building stronger collective social media efficacy. Once realized, stronger collective social media efficacy can contribute to firms' social media performance by increasing team members' motivations, optimizing their choice of work processes and helping them to sustain their effort until desired results are achieved (Bandura, 2009; 2012). Among the key approaches we identified as critical to building stronger collective social media efficacy are prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources.

2.2. Social cognitive theory and efficacy beliefs

Social cognitive theory deals with human functioning and advances a triadic reciprocal causation model to explain it (Bandura, 2001). In this triadic reciprocal causation, human functioning is viewed as a product of the interplay between interpersonal influences, the behavior individuals engage in and the environmental forces that impinge upon them (Bandura, 2001). Because interpersonal influences are part of the determining conditions in this dynamic interplay, social cognitive theory presumes that people exercise agency in shaping events (Bandura, 2001; 2012).

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is one of the most important mechanisms by which people exercise personal agency (Bandura, 2001). It refers to belief in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands (Bandura, 1977). It is a comprehensive judgement

of perceived capability to perform a task (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Although self-efficacy has a generative property that can apply in a variety of contexts, its real predictive power lies in domain specific tasks. According to Bandura (2006), "the efficacy belief system is not a global trait but a differentiated set of self-beliefs linked to distinct functions" (p. 307).

Social cognitive theory distinguishes between personal efficacy, as defined above, and collective efficacy, which represents people's shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results (Bandura, 2006). Collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members, however. Rather it is an emergent group level property. A group operates through the behavior of its members. It is people acting coordinatively, on a shared belief, that is doing the cognizing, aspiring, motivating and regulating (Bandura, 2006). Although beliefs of collective efficacy include emergent aspects, they serve functions similar to those of personal efficacy and operate through similar processes (Bandura, 2006). Collective efficacy is particularly relevant in organizational contexts where majority of task demands involve collective effort.

Efficacy judgments shape behavior directly, by determining the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors and how long they persevere in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 2006; 2012; Stajkovic and Luthans, 2002). They also shape behavior indirectly, through their influences on other determinants of behavior such as goals, aspirations, outcome expectations and perceptions of impediments and opportunities in the social environment (Bandura, 2006; 2009). Overall, both personal and collective efficacy beliefs are valuable concepts to understand work performance in organizational contexts.

2.3. Sources of efficacy beliefs

Social cognitive theory proposes four major sources of efficacy beliefs: enactive mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological states (Bandura, 1977).

These sources provide important pieces of information that people appraise and incorporate in their efficacy beliefs (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). The information obtained from these sources are not inherently informative, however. They become instructive only through people's reflective thought processes (Bandura, 2009).

Enactive mastery refers to personal assessment information based on an individual's previous personal mastery accomplishments (Bandura, 2006). Successful past experiences raise mastery expectations, while repeated failures lower them. Resilient efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Mastery experiences rely on repeated performance attainments and one's ability to learn from mistakes (Bandura, 2009; Gist, 1987). Vicarious experience or modeling is gained by observing others perform activities successfully (Bandura, 1977). Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by perseverant effort raises observers' aspirations and beliefs in their own capabilities. Competent models convey knowledge, skills and strategies for managing task demands (Bandura, 2009). Social persuasion is the third mode of influence. It refers to activities where people are led, through suggestion, into believing that they can cope successfully with specific tasks (Bandura, 1977). If people are persuaded to believe in themselves, they will exert more effort, which in turn increases their chances of success. Coaching and evaluative feedback are common types of social persuasion (Bandura, 2006). The final source of information is physiological and emotional states. Efficacy judgments are strengthened by reducing anxiety and depression, building physical strength and correctly reading one's physical and emotional states.

Consistent with the sources of efficacy beliefs outlined in social cognitive theory, we delineate three approaches instrumental in the construction of collective social media efficacy: prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources. While prior social media experience is consistent with the enactive mastery mode, short-term training and online

resources are consistent with vicarious experience and social persuasion, respectively. In accordance with social cognitive theory, we expect SMTs who capitalize on these three approaches to build stronger collective social media efficacy, which should ultimately translate into superior social media performance at the firm level. Figure 1 depicts the proposed conceptual framework.

[Figure 1 about here]

3. Hypotheses

3.1. Prior social media experience

Social cognitive theory views enactive mastery as a powerful source of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Gist, 1987). Defined as repeated task accomplishments, enactive mastery has been demonstrated as making the strongest contribution to the formation of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2009; Gist, 1987). Enactive mastery is facilitated when gradual task accomplishments build the skills, coping abilities and the exposure needed for subsequent task performance (Bandura, 1977).

Prior research has indicated that succeeding in challenging tasks provides individuals with direct performance information that enables them to form a stable and accurate efficacy judgment (Stajkovic and Luthans, 2002). Successful past accomplishments build the confidence of individuals that they can perform similar tasks successfully in the future. Since enactive mastery is directly connected to individuals' prior experience with a task, we used prior social media experience to operationalize enactive mastery. Moreover, because our unit of analysis is social media marketing teams, we considered the combined experience of SMT members.

Consistent with social cognitive theory, we anticipate SMTs composed of experienced social media personnel to demonstrate greater levels of collective social media efficacy

(Staples et al., 1999). The extended experience that SMT members have accumulated over the years should provide them with credible information to form stronger efficacy beliefs. Because enactive mastery is viewed as the most significant source of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2009), we anticipate SMTs with longer average social media experience to report higher collective social media efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H_1: SMTs with longer average social media experience will report higher collective social media efficacy.

3.2. Short-term training

Training is another influential source of efficacy beliefs in organizational contexts (Bandura, 2009; Gist et al., 1989). According to social cognitive theory, a well-designed training program models appropriate skills, conveys basic task rules and provides guided practice for trainees to develop their proficiencies. Formal training also facilitates a graduated transfer program, whereby trainees get to apply their newly acquired skills in an actual work environment (Bandura, 2009).

Learning from modeled accomplishments is especially valuable when employees lack prior enactive experiences on which to base their efficacy assessments (Stajkovic and Luthans, 2002). Research shows that mastering a modeled performance in terms of essential task skills and strategies enhances people's beliefs about their capability to succeed on their job (Gist et al., 1989). In the social media sphere, vast training opportunities are available that promise to equip social media marketers with the latest social media tools and techniques. In fact, the options available are so numerous that the practical challenge for many social media marketers is deciding which training programs to attend (Buffer, 2017).

In this study, we pay particular attention to short-term training programs since extended training programs might be ill suited to the rapid pace of change characterizing the social media marketing landscape. By the time the trainees completed their extended training

scheme, the social media landscape would have changed so profoundly that their newly acquired skills might risk becoming outmoded. Accordingly, short-term training programs appear to be a more appropriate intervention to help SMTs keep pace with the evolving trends of social media marketing, thereby capacitating them to build stronger collective social media efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H_2: SMTs that frequently participate in short-term training programs will report higher collective social media efficacy.

3.3. Online resources

One of the unique features of digital marketing as a whole and social media marketing in particular is the vast ecosystem of online resources available for social media practitioners to exploit (Social Media Examiner, 2018). These resources, which are typically freely accessible, appear in various forms including articles, blogposts, tutorials, video demonstrations, podcasts, industry reports, surveys and other forms of research insights.

Online social media resources cover a vast array of relevant social media marketing topics, such as effective social media strategies and tactics, hands on tutorials on specific social media techniques, the latest social media trends and updates, evolving user behavior and habits, and social media marketing reports and statistics. Some of these materials reflect the personal experiences and reflections of individual social media marketers, while others originate from leading social media marketing experts, opinion leaders, and social media solution providers. Although virtually unexplored in the academic literature, the role of online resources in social media marketing is the mainstay of the practitioner literature (Hubspot, 2018).

Depending on their specific influencing mechanism, online resources can be viewed as either a manifestation of vicarious experience or that of social persuasion. For instance, online resources such as tutorial articles and video demonstrations often model essential social media

skills and techniques in a manner akin to that of formal training. However, these same resources often incorporate verbal persuasion, such as encouragement and positive feedback, which alludes to social persuasion (Bandura, 2009). Regardless of their specific influencing mechanism, online social media resources can serve SMTs as an inexpensive and topical source of insight on social media marketing. With their frequent updates, online resources are particularly valuable for SMTs to keep pace with the evolving trends and practices of social media marketing. They also originate from leading experts and authoritative industry sources, which makes them a dependable source of insight on social media marketing. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H_3: SMTs that frequently use online resources will report higher collective social media efficacy.

3.4. The mediating role of collective social media efficacy

In social cognitive theory, the three principal sources of efficacy judgement namely, enactive mastery, vicarious experience and social persuasion, are posited as immediate precursors to the formation of efficacy beliefs, while efficacy beliefs are typically linked to task attainment (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2009). This causal sequence from information sources to efficacy beliefs to task performance stresses the mediating role of efficacy beliefs. In our context, prior social media experience, short-term training programs and online resources are expected to foster the formation of stronger collective social media efficacy. In turn, stronger collective social media efficacy is anticipated to enhance firms' social media performance. Collective social media efficacy can contribute to social media performance by increasing team members' motivation and outcome expectations, optimizing their choice of work processes and sustaining their effort until desired results are attained (Bandura, 2009; 2012). Therefore, we hypothesized as follows:

H_{4a}: The effect of prior social media experience on social media performance is mediated by collective social media efficacy.

H_{4b}: The effect of short-term training on social media performance is mediated by collective social media efficacy.

H_{4c}: The effect of online resources on social media performance is mediated by collective social media efficacy.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sampling and data collection

We recruited respondents for our study using the 2018 version of Kapital 500 as a sampling frame, which is an annual release of the largest 500 firms in Norway. This list provided us with a pool of firms with a functional social media program. The first step in the sampling process was to screen those firms in the list with active social media presence. Inspection of the corporate websites of the listed firms indicated that 454 of them have active social media presence.

The second step involved identifying appropriate respondents from each firm that is actively implementing social media marketing. We defined appropriate respondents as senior executives overseeing the social media marketing operation of their firm, such as social media marketing managers, digital marketing managers, e-commerce managers, online marketing managers, and so on. When these responsibilities were unavailable, we turned to senior executives with general marketing responsibilities, such as marketing managers, brand managers, product managers and commercial managers. Using this approach, we compiled the name, position and email address of 405 appropriate respondents.

We gathered data using online questionnaire. The questionnaire was reviewed by four marketing professors, and their feedback was successively incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire took its final form, it was translated into

Norwegian by a bi-lingual researcher as the target respondents were Norwegians. The correspondence between the original and the translated versions was checked by another bi-lingual researcher and minor changes were made to both versions. Finally, we emailed the questionnaire to the identified respondents. In the questionnaire, we included an explicit instruction asking primary recipients to forward the online questionnaire to at least one other member of their SMT. As it turned out, however, most of the original recipients failed to forward the link to their colleagues. In order to ensure data equivalence, we deleted the few multiple responses we received from the same SMTs. The final dataset thus comprises only responses from single informants.

The original email was followed up by three rounds of reminders sent ten days apart, which together yielded 110 usable responses (24% response rate). We compared the responses from the three rounds based on the primary constructs of the study (i.e. collective social media efficacy and social media performance) and found no significant differences. As such, non-response bias does not seem to be an issue in our study.

The final sample demonstrates a broader representation of industry, firm size and customer base. Manufacturing (11%), retail (11%), technology (11%), bank and finance (9%), transport and logistics (9%) and oil and gas (9%) were among the major industry categories surveyed. In terms of firm size, firms with less than 250 employees accounted for 49% of the sample, firms between 250 and 500 employees accounted for 16%, and firms with over 500 employees accounted for the remaining 35%. Finally, in terms of customer type, B2C firms accounted for 30%, B2B firms accounted for 31%, while firms with stakes in both B2C and B2B markets accounted for the remaining 39% of the surveyed firms.

4.2. Measurement of variables

4.2.1. Sources of collective social media efficacy

Prior social media experience was measured using the mean number of years that individual members of SMTs have worked as social media practitioners and specialists. It captured aggregate social media experience at the SMT level. On average, the sampled SMTs possessed five years of experience with social media marketing (M = 5.45, Std. Dev = 2.89).

To measure short-term training and online resources, we asked respondents to indicate how frequently members of their SMTs make use of short-term training and online resources from the following response options: *daily, biweekly, weekly, bimonthly, monthly, quarterly, biannually, annually,* and *never.* We applied a standardized method to objectively quantify the resulting responses: 1 is assigned for daily use, 0.286 for biweekly use (2/7), 0.143 for weekly use (1/7), 0.067 for bimonthly use (2/15), 0.03 for monthly use (1/30), 0.01 for quarterly use (1/90), 0.006 for biannual use (1/180), 0.003 for annual use (1/360), and 0 for never.

The frequency of use of short-term training and online resources is shown in figure 2. With respect to short-term training, most firms train their SMTs on a bi-annual (22%) and quarterly basis (22%), which makes sense given the cost of sponsoring formal training programs, especially if they involve physical travel. However, there are considerable number of firms that train their SMTs on a bi-monthly (17%) and monthly basis (17%). The preponderance of online training schemes might explain the relative frequency of social media training in some firms. With respect to online resources, most SMTs use online resources on a daily (23%) and weekly basis (20%), demonstrating the ubiquity of online resources and the degree to which SMTs rely on them. Monthly (15%) and bi-monthly (13%) use of online resources are also fairly common.

[Figure 2 about here]

4.2.2. Collective social media efficacy

The construction of a sound efficacy scale relies on a good conceptual analysis of the relevant domain of functioning (Bandura, 2006). Accordingly, we started the process of developing the collective social media efficacy scale by specifying the activity domains of social media marketing. For this purpose, we reviewed the practitioner literature and analyzed hundreds of active social media marketing job postings in Norway. From these information sources, we inferred five major activity domains: strategy development and alignment, content management, customer engagement, social media analytics and data sharing with other functions in the organization. Under each activity domain, we identified three to four specific social media tasks as summarized in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Consistent with the standard methodology for measuring collective efficacy, we presented the respondents with a concise description of each task and asked them to rate their level of confidence in their team's collective ability to execute it. The respondents recorded their level of confidence on a 100-point scale, with a 10 point interval, anchored on 0 = "cannot do at all" and 100 = "absolutely certain can do". We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using smart PLS to assess the unidimensionality of the collective social media efficacy scale. We preferred Smart PLS over covariance-based methods, as the latter require a much larger number of observations to generate reliable estimates (Hair et al., 2017). The results of the CFA indicate that the social media tasks significantly loaded on the collective social media efficacy scale and achieved strong reliability (alpha = .95). The factor loadings of the individual social media tasks are reported in Table 1.

4.2.3. Social media performance

We measured social media performance at the firm level using five items adapted from Tafesse and Wien (2018). The items were measured with a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). To assess the unidimensionality of the social media performance construct, we performed confirmatory factor analysis on smart PLS. The results show that all the five items significantly loaded on the social media performance construct. The construct also achieved strong reliability (alpha = .87). The factor loadings of the individual items are reported in Table 1.

Finally, we should point out that because we employed different measurement scales to operationalize the study variables, the threat of common method variance is attenuated in our study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Table 2 reports summary statistics and pairwise correlation of the study variables.

[Table 2 about here]

5. Hypothesis test

To test the proposed hypotheses, we used PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). The output from process macro offers tests of both direct and indirect effects, thereby allowing us to test all our proposed hypotheses.

The process macro relies on bootstrapping to test for mediation, in which a large number of *n* new samples (e.g., 5,000) is drawn with replacement from the original sample (Zhao et al., 2010). The indirect effect is then estimated for each new sample, resulting in a large number of coefficient estimates, which are ordered by size to draw a probability density distribution of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2013). The significance of the indirect effect is inferred from the confidence interval of its bootstrap distribution. If the confidence interval does not include zero, one can be statistically confident that the effect is different from zero (Hayes, 2013).

We first tested the hypotheses H_1-H_3, which predicted a significant direct effect of prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources on collective social media efficacy. The output from process macro demonstrates that prior social media experience has a statistically significant positive effect on collective social media efficacy ($\beta = 3.78$, $p < .05$), which lends full support to H_1. Likewise, short-term training has a statistically significant positive effect on collective social media efficacy ($\beta = 3.68$, $p < .05$), which is consistent with H_2. Finally, online resources has a strong positive effect on collective social media efficacy ($\beta = 4.55$, $p < .01$), which lends full support to H_3. The results of the model estimation are summarized in table 3.

[Table 3 about here]

Next, we tested the hypotheses H_{4a}-H_{4c}, which predicted a statistically significant indirect effect of prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources on social media performance, which is mediated by collective social media efficacy. The results indicate that the indirect effect of prior social media experience on social media performance is statistically significant ($\beta = .1$, LLCI = .02 ULCI = .19). At the same time, the direct effect of prior social media experience on social media performance, after controlling for collective social media efficacy, is statistically insignificant ($\beta = .04$, $p = .11$). These results suggest that the effect of prior social media experience on social media performance is fully mediated by collective social media efficacy, thus lending full support to H_{4a}.

Likewise, the indirect effect of short-term training on social media performance is statistically significant ($\beta = .1$, LLCI = .02 ULCI = .2). At the same time, the direct effect of short-term training on social media performance, after controlling for collective social media efficacy, is statistically insignificant ($\beta = .1$, $p = .61$). These results suggest that the effect of short-term training on social media performance is fully mediated by collective social media efficacy, thus lending full support to H_{4b}.

Finally, the indirect effect of online resources on social media performance is statistically significant (β = .12, LLCI = .03, ULCI = .24). However, the direct effect of online resources on social media performance remains statistically significant after controlling for collective social media efficacy (β = .17, $p < .05$). These results offer evidence of partial, not full, mediation, thus lending partial support to H_{4c}. Figure 3 visually summarizes the results of the mediation analysis.

[Figure 3 about here]

6. Discussion

SMTs are responsible for planning, executing and optimizing the social media effort of firms, yet little research has examined their role systematically. This study addressed this gap in the literature by investigating SMTs' contribution to firms' social media effort. Drawing on social cognitive theory, the study developed a model in which collective social media efficacy mediated the contribution of prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources to firms' social media performance. The empirical findings reveal useful insights.

First, we find that prior social media experience contributes to the social media performance of firms mainly by enhancing SMTs' collective efficacy. This result is consistent with arguments in social cognitive theory that mastery experiences enhance group performance by providing members with accurate, first-hand information about their collective ability to succeed in subsequent task accomplishments (Bandura, 2009). Successful past experiences raise mastery expectations, thereby contributing to better performance in subsequent task assignments (Bandura, 2006; Gist, 1989). As our findings reveal, this dynamic is at play in SMTs context.

Second, we find that short-term training contributes to firms' social media performance mainly by enhancing SMTs' collective efficacy. Well-designed training programs instill

strong confidence among trainees by conveying basic task rules and strategies, and allowing them to go through guided practices (Bandura, 2009; Gist, 1987). Short-term training programs are particularly well suited to the social media marketing landscape where social media companies introduce frequent changes to their platforms (Tafesse and Wien, 2018b). These recurrent changes call for SMTs to swiftly adapt their approaches, making short-term training programs an ideal fit to the evolving nature of social media marketing.

Third, we find that the use of online resources made a significant positive contribution to firms' social media performance. Online resources share the expertise of social media marketers, opinion leaders and industry authorities made available to users online in different formats. Online resources are also updated frequently enough to capture evolving social media marketing trends and practices. However, the effect of online resources on firms' social media performance is not fully mediated by collective social media efficacy, suggesting that beyond their contribution through collective social media efficacy, they make a direct contribution to firms' social media performance. The partial mediation could mean that the contribution of online resources is explained by a mechanism other than collective efficacy. Elaborating this mechanism should be a candidate for future research.

Taken together, the findings illuminate SMTs' role in firms' social media marketing effort. The focus on SMTs and their collective efficacy complements the nascent literature on the organizational influences of social media performance. In the marketing literature, the role of such organizational factors as social media strategies (Cawsey and Rowley, 2016; Valos et al., 2019), social media implementation (Tafesse and Wien, 2018), and social media resources (Marchand et al. 2018) have been examined previously. Our findings add to this literature by highlighting the critical role of the behavior and structure of SMTs in firms' social media performance. Moreover, the study offers a novel insight into the conceptual and measurement characteristics of collective social media efficacy. With an overall reliability score of .95, the

collective social media efficacy scale developed in this study can be applied in future research to further elucidate SMTs' role. For instance, future research can test additional predictors of collective social media efficacy, such as team cohesion and team member support. Likewise, future research can associate collective social media efficacy with additional social media marketing outcomes.

7. Managerial and research implications

Our findings offer a number of relevant managerial and research implications. In terms of managerial implication, the findings underscore SMTs' place in firms' social media effort. SMTs' collective behavior explains a substantial portion of the variance in firms' social media performance. It is, therefore, imperative that managers consider SMTs as an additional strategic lever in managing and optimizing their social media marketing effort.

Second, the findings highlight that a substantial portion of SMTs' contribution to firms' social media marketing materializes through collective social media efficacy. These findings imply that managers need to pay attention to building a collectively efficacious SMT in order to enhance their social media performance. This can be achieved by inspiring a collaborative team spirit and encouraging team members to work together and leverage their specialized skills.

Finally, and at a more tactical level, the findings emphasize the need for marketing managers to organize their SMTs using experienced social media personnel. Similarly, managers should encourage members of their SMTs to continuously develop their social media skills by attending relevant training programs and leveraging online resources. As our findings indicate, these approaches enable SMTs to build stronger social media efficacy. Emphasis should particularly be given to exploiting online resources as they appear to be an affordable yet highly effective source of collective social media efficacy.

Limitations of the study points to several avenues for future research. First, the study relies on responses from single informants to measure collective social media efficacy. Our measurement approach is akin to a supervisor or a team leader evaluating the collective efficacy of her team. Although this is a common approach to measuring collective efficacy, social cognitive theory advocates averaging ratings from individual team members to obtain a more comprehensive assessment (Bandura, 2006). Our initial plan was to obtain multiple ratings, but that plan was frustrated as the original recipients fail to forward the online questionnaire to other members of the SMT. Future research should strive to overcome this limitation and obtain multiple responses from individual social media team members. Second, the study employed a relatively small set of observation to test the hypotheses. Although we endeavored to increase the response rate by sending multiple waves of reminders and keeping our questionnaire concise, our informants' senior managerial position (e.g., digital managers, marketing managers, etc.) meant that we had to settle for a lower response rate. Nonetheless, our response rate is comparable to previous studies that use senior marketing managers as their primary informants. Finally, our empirical context is limited to the social media effort of firms, although the theoretical lens could be extended to other areas of digital marketing. Accordingly, we encourage future research to apply the proposed model to other branches of digital marketing teams.

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Figure 1: Research model

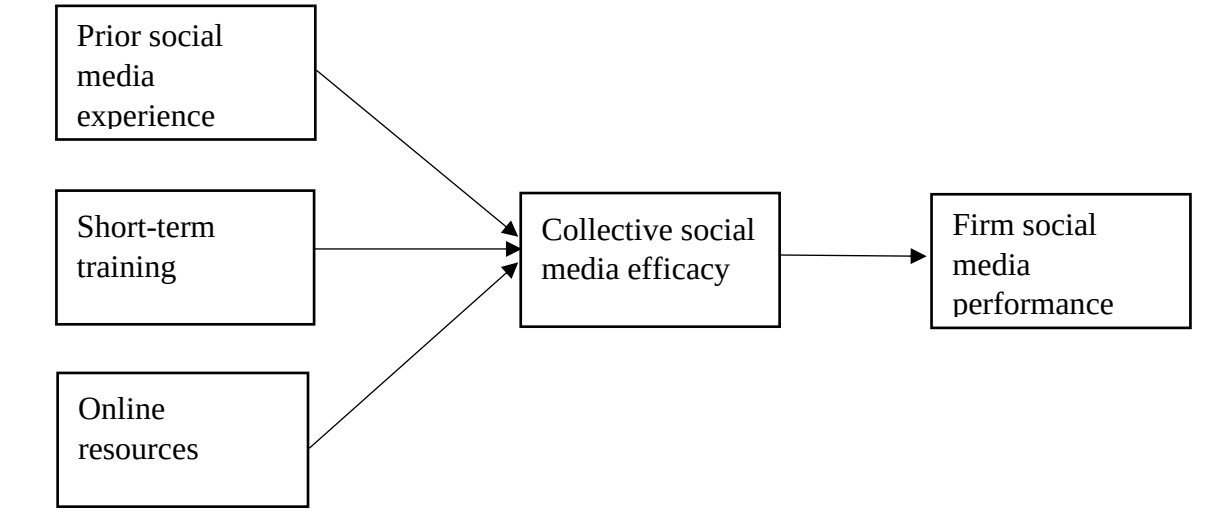


Figure 2: The frequency distribution (in percentage) of short-term training and online resources

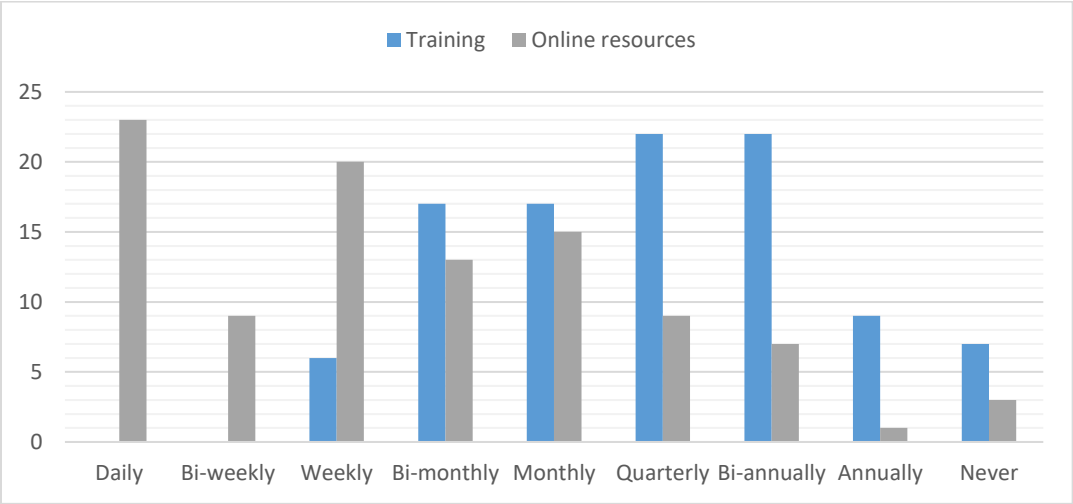
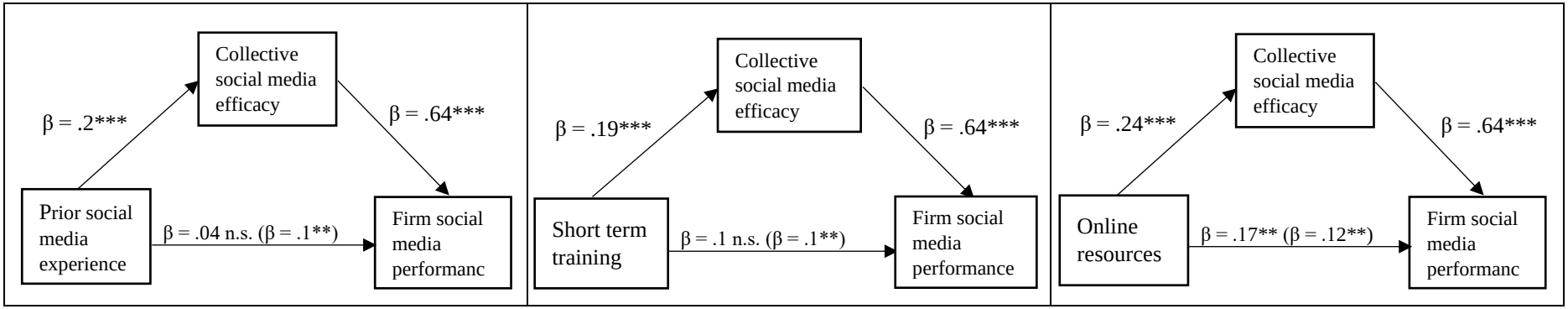


Figure 3: Visualization of mediation analysis with PROCESS



Notes: n.s. = not significant, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table 1: Measurement items and factor loadings

Constructs	Factor loadings	T-values
Collective social media efficacy		
Social media strategy		
Prioritize social media platforms, tools and solutions best suited to our strategic marketing goals	.83	19.41
Align social media goals with our strategic marketing goals	.73	13.90
Clearly define our target audience	.62	6.64
Content development		
Develop engaging social media content	.85	29.01
Design engaging visual content (e.g., photos, graphics, videos)	.82	19.74
Plan and schedule social media content	.81	16.53
Develop and execute effective social media ad campaigns	.77	19.53
Customer engagement		
Build and grow our follower base in social media	.81	20.86
Engage with customers in social media	.81	20.02
Drive community conversation in social media	.80	19.73
Social media analytics		
Measure social media activities	.81	14.60
Track useful metrics on a regular basis	.77	13.70
Implement search engine optimization and web analytics	.73	13.47
Data sharing		
Communicate with other departments/functions	.79	17.26
Share social media data and insight with other departments/functions	.67	9.54
Report social media activities to senior management	.66	9.07
Firm social media performance		
Our social media team is effective in terms of reaching customers via social media	.88	36.17
Our social media team is effective in terms of driving key customer engagement metrics (e.g., shares, comments, link clicks and conversions)	.87	32.61
Our social media team is effective in terms of drawing traffic from social media to our corporate/brand/product website	.80	13.78
Our social media team is effective in terms of driving conversions (sales) via social media	.75	13.72
Our social media team is effective in terms of growing our follower-base	.74	11.72

Table 2: Summary statistics and pairwise correlation

	Mean	Std. dev	Min.	Max.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Prior social media experience	5.45	2.89	0.5	11	1				
2. Short-term training	0.3	.04	0	.143	.22**	1			
3. Online resources	.29	.39	0	1	.13n.s.	.4***	1		
4. Collective social media efficacy	67.3	19.2	8.75	100	.27***	.33***	.33***	1	
5. Firm social media performance	3.5	.9	1	5	.26***	.26**	.37***	.64***	1

Notes: n.s. = not significant, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 3: Summary of OLS estimation for direct effects

	Standardized coefficient	T-value	Sig. value
Prior social media experience	0.20	2.2	0.031
Short-term training	0.19	1.98	0.051
Online resources	0.24	2.5	0.015
Model summary R^2 = .20, F = 8.51***			

Notes: Collective social media efficacy is the dependent variable; prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources are the independent variables.

Table 4: Table 4: Summary of PROCESS analysis for indirect effects

	Standardized coefficient	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit
Prior social media experience	.1	.04	.02	.19
Short-term training	.1	.05	.02	.2
Online resources	.12	.05	.03	.24

Notes: Firm social media performance is the dependent variable; prior social media experience, short-term training and online resources are the independent variables; collective social media efficacy is the mediating variable. The number of bootstrap sample was 5,000.