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## Best practice in the use of social networks marketing strategy as in SMEs

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### Abstract

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are often the driving force driving the economy of the countries, however, are not always fully exploit its innovative and creative capacity because many of these companies do not know the tools for today gives us the technology, worse the benefits we provide social networks. The aim of this article is intended to discuss best practices in the use of social networks as strategic marketing communication in SMEs. The methodology used in the research is based on the analysis of the state of science, exploratory study on the use of social networks and case studies of success. As a result there are two contributions to the enrichment of scientific literature on the subject: i) identification of best practices in the use of social networks and, ii) social networking as a marketing strategy for SMEs.

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*Keywords:* Best practice; Social networks; SMEs

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### 1. Introduction

SMEs are often the driving force behind the economies of the countries, however, are not always fully exploit its innovative and creative capacity, because many of these companies are far from the technology, the Internet has brought a number of new opportunities, such as Online marketing that uses advertising mechanisms such as blogs, podcasts and social media to reach their consumers (Thach, L. 2009), through the web there is a possibility that users can interact and create communities (Túñez López., M., García, J. 2011). in this context, social networks are defined as bounded groups of individuals, organizations, communities or societies are linked, where members interact, discuss and exchange knowledge (Palacios N, Paiz, V., Padilla, M. 2005), on the other hand, defined as services based on the web that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public within a bounded

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system, which can be related through the development of a list of users that can be shared with members of your system or another system (Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. 2007). Most popular social networks are Facebook, Youtube and Twitter, this popularity is measured according to the level of activity presented by its members. Social networks have challenged traditional social networks, and that overcome geographical barriers that allow interaction on a global terrain (Scherer-Warren, I. 2005).

Currently there are proposals on the use of social networking applied to specific sectors, but in the literature has identified best practices that are common and allow generalized to all SMEs, so the purpose of this study is aimed at analyzing the best practices in the use of social networks as strategic marketing communication that allows them to have a competitive advantage.

The structure of this research is organized as follows: An introductory section, which makes a brief reference to the conceptual and structural context, followed by the methodology section which describes the scientific process that would lead to meet the stated objective, highlighting the thematic division: a qualitative research refers to the study of literature will, interviews and case studies of success on best practices in the use of social networks and quantitative research applied to a segment of SMEs in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico. Then we found the results section, where after deep analysis on the issue raised, Mega proposes five concepts which are supported theoretically and projected widespread application. In the form we have followed the discussion section, where the community proposes a model that allows SMEs to have a reference for the use of social networks and be more competitive. Finally, the main conclusions are issued and future research.

## **2. Methodology.**

To fulfill our goal, this research is divided into two stages: The first is an analysis of the literature on the use of social networks in business. At this point we resorted to searching the major databases, obtaining for analysis approximately 75 items, from which came the relevant ideas and then through a frequency matrix established the concepts that were repeated, and finally propose four 'Mega concepts "that integrated studies of different authors. In the second stage, we conducted an exploratory study in order to know the best practices on the use of social media in SMEs. To fulfill this activity was performed in Mexico Field Research, limiting the universe to a sample corresponding to 186 SMEs in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara, which is 30 in-depth interviews conducted exploratory, which served the same guide the development of the questionnaire and 186 self-administered surveys. The place is conducted in-depth interviews was at various addresses of the companies interviewed, surveys are conducted over the Internet to those charged with managing corporate social networks. The data collection method was non-probability, so that the results can be not generalized. Finally a comparison was made between the Mega concepts found in the study of literature and best practices on the use of social media in SMEs.

## **3. Results**

Marketing strategies focused on the customer, have grown rapidly in recent years and has increased the number of users of social networks, this situation has forced SMEs to consider these technological systems as tools to attract, maintain and manage customers as well as a resource for obtaining information on the behavior of the market and the consumer. Given this precedent, then presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted.

### *3..1 First stage. Review of the literature and case studies*

This section presents the analysis of about 75 articles, of which 37 were directly related to our topic, (See Appendix A1), then through a frequency matrix as can be seen in Table 1, were implemented 5 points key called

"Mega concepts" these being fundamental assumptions that underpin empirical research "use of social networks in business".

Table 1. Frequencies of concepts or ideas

Frecuency	Concepts or ideas	Mega Concepts
28	Social networks as a Web-Based Marketing Tool	<b>a</b>
13	Social network competitive advantages as a Marketing Tool	
7	Social media used by users to create marketing advertising	<b>b</b>
2	Media participation	
6	Social network engages brand to cocreate	
3	Communication convergence	<b>c</b>
8	Viral Marketign in social networks	
3	Social media provides transparency of information	
6	Social networks offer real time valuable information to companies	
18	Marketing opportunity found in the power of social network members to influece each other's behaviors (Elements of consumer behavior online)	
11	Social network shifts power to customers through word of mouth	<b>d</b>
7	Social networks as a new intermediary and interactive tool that is transforming media espace	
3	Using online social media create externalities	
9	Facebook a potential marketing tool (libraries)	<b>e</b>
3	Facebook is usefull to target a teen audience	
11	Facebook advantages and disadvantages (groups)	
1	Disavantage of lack of "face to face" contact that creates a perception of uncertainty and risk for the buyer	
2	Coalition formation of marketplaces	
2	The traditional physical social network	<b>Divers</b>
1	Social network in cyber space social actions and activism	
6	A challenge is to monetize social networks	

In Table 1 we find for example the following ideas or concepts: "The social networks as a Web-Based Marketing Tool" that is repeated 28 times in the literature, like "The social network competitive advantages as a Marketing Tool" that repeated 13 times, these ideas or concepts give rise to the first Mega concepts "**a**", which it defined as: "The social networks are web-Based Marketing tools; that provide competitive advantages to the companies and users". Similarly the following ideas; "The Social media used by users to create marketing advertising", "Media participation", "Engages Social network brand to cocreate" repeating 7, 2 and 6 times respectively form the next Mega concept "**b**" which it defined as:" The average participation Allows users to create social media marketing advertising and to cocreate ". Similarly proceed with other ideas or concepts, leading to the Mega concepts indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Mega Concepts

a	Social networks are Web-Based Marketing tools; that provide competitive advantages to the companies and users
b	Media participation allows social media users to create marketing advertising and to cocreate
c	Social networks can offer real time valuable and transparent information to companies' trough viral marketing and thanks to communication convergence
d	Social network shifts power to customers that can create externalities through being an intermediary for the word of mouth where social network members can influece each other's behaviors
e	Facebook is useful to target audience and can create may advantages and disadvantages like the lack of "face to face" contact that creates a perception of uncertainty and risk for the buyer

### 3.1.1. Mega Concepts Analysis

a) Social networks are Web-Based Marketing tools that provide competitive advantages to the companies and users: A Social network has the characteristic of a Web-Based Marketing Tool whereby various users can join them to virtually interrelate with people around the world. (Rooney, K. 2010). By 2009 the Twitter and Facebook boom allowed companies to use special offers through them. For example; airlines used exclusive last-minute offers, and other incentives such as frequent flyer mile programs. Starbucks restricted certain promotions to only Facebook fans; it promoted coupons and discounts to customers that retrieved “like” in their Facebook page. By 2010, Starbucks did not only gain six millions of fans, but had also created a close relationship with its web visitors (Deighton, J. and Kornfeld, L. 2011). Youtube is the number one video sharing website; and has helped companies transmit and post videos with marketing and customer service goals (Janusz, T. 2009). An American manufacturer of blenders; Blendtec, posted videos called “Will it blend?” in Youtube showed how the Blendtec blenders were able to crush a variety of items such as ipods, golf balls, redbull, cds, usb keys even a mouse (Hoffman, D. L. and Fodor, M. 2010).

b) Media participation allows social media users to create marketing advertising and to co create: For example when Gillette created a contest in which participants had to create a short video showing their abilities in ball sports, and these videos were posted on Youtube. The Gillette’s user were able to co-create according to the brand request and objectives (Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. 2009). Ford Fiesta marketers decided in 2009 to put their launching campaign for the United States in the hands of potential Ford owners, that enjoying blogging. They agreed to produce and post videos on [fiestamovement.com](http://fiestamovement.com). The campaign had a great impact, and exceeded the desirable objectives (Deighton, J. 2011). Social Media not only allows customers to co create, American Express with its “Go Social” initiative it allows intermediaries; in this case merchants to also transmit information and co-create through Facebook to the end customers (Needham, A. 2008). Facebook allows merchants to sign up and distribute American Express deals via Facebook to generate sales, which will translate to credit card usage for American Express (Piskorsky, M. J. & Chen, D. 2012).

c) Social networks can offer real time valuable and transparent information to companies’ through viral marketing and thanks to communication convergence: The Communication convergence is the merger between the information technologies and the communication networks that have been created in the social media (Campos Freire, F. 2008). Social networks have evolved and are now able to provide diverse and specialized communication channels for branding and to segment niche markets more easily (Jansen, B. J., Zhang, M. et al. 2009). The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them (Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. 2009). This behavior allows the viral marketing technique that consists in the fast and massive diffusion of a message through the web, in which the users themselves transmit the message (Túñez López., M., García, J. 2011). Twitter is a source of information for Sephora who had about 100,000 users following it at its @Sephora address used to spread news about promotions, contests, events, and other timely information. This communication channel was very useful for Sephora Claus sweepstakes campaign (Ofek, E. and A. B. Wagonfeld 2011).

d) Social network shifts power to customers that can create externalities through being an intermediary for the word of mouth where social network members can influence each other's behaviors: Through social networks, technology-enhanced word-of-mouth advertising creates the impression of peer-determined credibility and achieves an economy of scale that is elusive to traditional marketing (Rooney, K. 2010). Word-of-mouth can create various sales, that will later generate an impact on other potential buyers; this is called an externality (Immorlica, N. and Mirrokni, V.S. 2010). Positive externalities will be the consequence action that induces further sales and revenue for the seller (Hartline, J., Mirrokni, V., et al. 2008). Internet companies commonly employ several types of Word of mouth marketing activities (Trusov, M., Bucklin, E., et al. 2009). The major categories include viral marketing where communication through entertainment or information messages are

passed on electronically or by email that are valuable for building traffic (Eisenmann, T., Stuart, T., et al. 2010). Secondly the referral programs that allows satisfied customers to refer friend or family member that could have a similar interest (Janusz, T. 2009). Last, the community marketing created around niche segments in which people partake of interests and form a community (Trusov, M., Bucklin, E., et al. 2009). A study made with data from Cyworld, an online social networking site in Korea proved that there is a significant and positive impact of “friends” purchases on the purchase probability of other users. This viral social behavior could potentially be a significantly brought to the attention of managers since it can provide a unique new marketing opportunity (Iyengar, R., Han, S., et al. 2009).

e) Facebook is useful to target audience and can create many advantages and disadvantages like the lack of "face to face" contact that creates a perception of uncertainty and risk for the buyer: Facebook offers opportunities such as fan pages to promote products; applications made by third-party developers to play games and interact with other users; and pages where users can create their own groups of users and communicate with them (Mart, S. M. 2011). Companies must be aware of the use of social media as a platform to communicate and share in an easy and cost effective manner (Khan, A. & Khan, R. 2012). One of Facebook group disadvantages is that it proves not to be as influential as brand pages; because the amount of members cannot be taken as a consistent number since a user might join the group but diminish its visits, as it become less interesting (Xia, Z. D. 2009). For example; Sephora's team identified an opportunity because Facebook does not allow its customers to share information privately or anonymously or information about who was a loyal users and who was not Sephora overcame this Facebook deficiency by create their own forum where clients could ask questions to a expert (Ofek, E. and A. B. Wagonfeld 2011).

### 3.2. Second stage: Best practices on the use of social media in SMEs

This section presents the result of quantitative and qualitative research was conducted in order to know the best practices on the use of social media in SMEs. In Figure 1 you can see the results after surveying 186 SMEs according to the objectives previously raised. It should be noted that the 10 questions asked using Likert scale where: **SA**: Strongly Agree, **AG**: Agree, **NAD**: Neither Agree nor Disagree, **DA**: Disagree, **SD**: Strongly Disagree. Here are the questions and their interpretation:

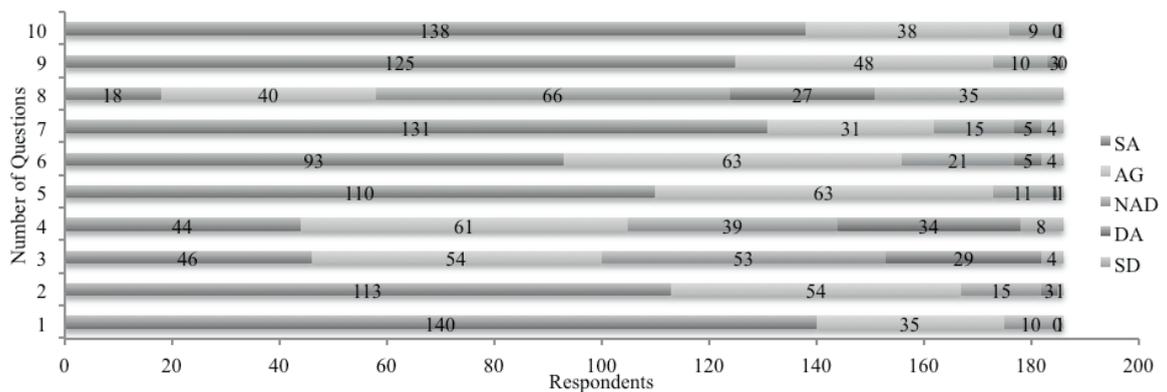


Fig. 1. Quantitative Research Results

### 3.2.1. *Quantitative Analysis*

The question number 1 refers to: "Social networks are a complement to the marketing strategy." 94% (140 +35) of respondents are SA and AG with the statement, so we can conclude that at present most employers believe that there is a new and powerful tool that will complement traditional marketing strategies. The question number 2 refers to: "It is essential to have a clear strategy for social networks", 90% (113 +54) of respondents are SA and AG, supplementing with the above statement entrepreneurs to consider the impact social networks on their consumers, believe it is necessary to have a strategy that allows them to generate greater value to your brand and get the information of your product to your prospects. The question number 3 refers to: "An expert or community manager to manage my social media accounts." At this point, the opinions are somewhat divided as 54% (64 +54) is SA and AG, we have a 28% (53) who is undecided and 18% (29+4) is DA and SD. This means that while entrepreneurs believe it is necessary that a specialist in the management of social networking manage your accounts, these are not yet ready to hire their services. The question number 4 which refers to: "The purpose of being present in social networks is to sell" shows that 57% (44+61) of the companies surveyed are SA and AG, while 21% (39) undecided. Perfectly shows the trend, there is no assurance that through social networks can sell the products, is still considered to social networks as a communication tool only family and friends. The question number 5 refers to: "The purpose of being present in social networks is to generate brand positioning". Even as businesses not certain that through social networks to sell their products, 93% (110+63) SA and AG is that through social networks can position your brand, because viral marketing or word of mouth spread. The question number 6 refers to: "The biggest advantage of social networks is the global reach you can have for free". The 84% (93+63) this SA and AG, although not unanimous in considering the global reach and free the advantage of social media, every day entrepreneurs tend to change their minds as demonstrated with 11% (21 ) found NAD undecided. The question number 7 refers to: "Facebook is the social network that is used more for marketing of my business". The 87% (131+31) of respondents are SA and AG, thus proving the popularity of Facebook. The question number 8 refers to: "Social networks are not for all brands". Interestingly, this section already shows that there is lack of knowledge about the actual extent of social networks, although they are aware of the global diffusion and low cost, a large percentage 35% (66) respondents who are undecided NAD , only 32% (18 +40) is SA and AG, This situation is often the lack of operational policies that establish social networks. The question number 9 refers to: "It is essential to know my marks and knowing my final consumer in order to create an online strategy". The blunt answer is 93% (125 +48) of respondents are SA and AG, not only to establish a traditional marketing strategy (marketing mix), but also for the benefits it has to create an online strategy. Finally the question number 10 refers to: "You need to learn to track the effectiveness of marketing efforts in social networks". 94% (138+38) this SA and AG, Some companies measure their effectiveness by the number of sales achieved in a period determined by social networks and make reports thereon. The vast majority of companies rely on statistics that Facebook throws and those graphs do an analysis of the behavior of their social networks.

### 3.2.2. *Qualitative analysis*

As a complement to quantitative research, we proceeded to conduct interviews with 30 entrepreneurs in order to know the best practices on the use of social media in their businesses. Asked What are the social networks used by your company?, Respondents firstly to Facebook and Twitter in second followed by LinkedIn, Foursquare, YouTube, Pinterest, Word Press, Flickr, Foodspotting, Instagram. On the frequency of use, commented that 2 or 3 day post but only relevant content, other than no more than 4 to 5. When asked about how much budget on average the company intended social networks?, Most entrepreneurs said they generally do not have a defined budget, agree that traditional marketing is a good tool to grow their businesses, despite of the benefits of digital marketing have not yet considered a specific budget and would rather find free options. About Who is responsible for managing social networks?. Found two marked tendencies, companies that take their social networks within the company and those who hire an outside agency. The first are usually handled by the

owner of the company or some assistant who becomes the Community Manager or Social Media Manager. Furthermore External Agencies are contracts by SMEs in general are responsible for adding content, track questions or comments, upload a promotion, etc.

#### 4. Discussion

Taken together the results indicate that SMEs currently unaware of the wide range of possibilities is the use of social networks. In the review of the literature found only the analysis and application of best practices in specific sectors (application in tourism, medical, educational, etc.), but has not been providing information on best practices of general application. In Figure 2 we can see the flow and general implementation aspects of best practice in the use of social networks that must be present in order for SMEs to become more competitive in a globalized environment.

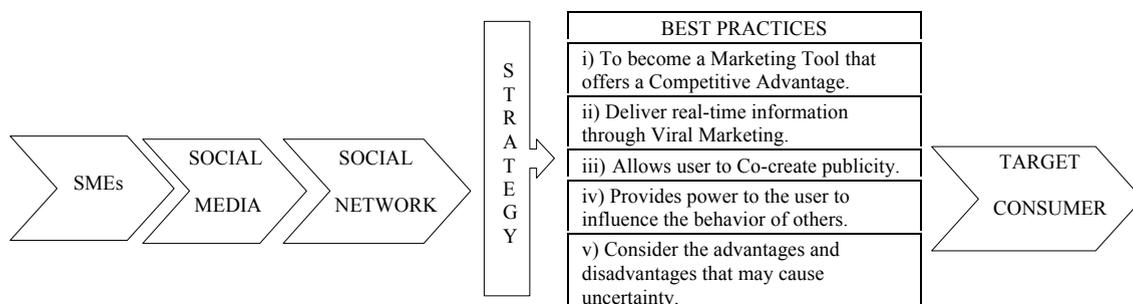


Fig. 2. Best practices in the use of social media in SMEs.

In the first place, it has to identify the target consumer, which will depend upon the analysis of the traditional marketing mix 4P. Second, the strategic selection of the structure that the company has to use to spread, position or market their products, either through the creation of a platform like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogger, YouTube, etc.. (Social Media), or leverage generated by these media channels to engage with users of social networks created by them. Third, apply the following general order Mega concepts and best practices in the use of social networks:

i) Social networking tools are Web-based marketing that provide competitive advantages, which means saving resources through interaction between users and the company, and can serve as generators of traffic and potential market (Janusz, T. 2009, Rooney, K. 2010, Diaz Llairó, A. Octubre, 2010, 9, Hoffman, D. L. and Fodor, M. 2010).

ii) Social networks can provide valuable information and transparent in real time, thanks to the convergence of viral communication, which consists of massive and rapid dissemination of a message over the web that the users transmit. The information flowing through the network presents a challenge for the marketing of products since as it has little control over what is being communicated (Campos Freire, F. 2008, Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. 2009, Jansen, B. J., Zhang, M. et al. 2009, Túnñez López., M., García, J. 2011).

iii) The involvement of the media allow users of social networks Co-create your own advertising. It involves not only the company interested in selling your products but also the buyer, brokers and the general public through competitions, exchange of information or direct suggestions, always according to the policies of the

Social Media (Needham, A. 2008, Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. 2009, Deighton, J. 2011, Mart, S. M. 2011, Piskorsky, M. J. & Chen, D. 2012).

iv) The Social media can empower the user to influence the behavior of others through word of mouth communication. What happens when it is transmitted in the first instance satisfaction information through emails, then through friends referral programs that might have similar interests finally marketing in the community built around common market segments (Trusov, M., Bucklin, E., et al. 2009, Janusz, T. 2009, Eisenmann, T., Stuart, T., et al. 2010, Deighton, J. and Kornfeld, L. 2011).

v) Both Facebook and other social media can create advantages and disadvantages which would cause uncertainty and risk to the consumer, which means that both companies and consumers need to plan your sale strategies in order to significantly reduce the risk (Xia, Z. D. 2009, Ofek, E. and A. B. Wagonfeld 2011, Piskorsky, M. J. & Chen, D. 2012).

## 5. Conclusions and future research

The aim of this article is aimed at exploring the use of social media as a communication tool in Internet marketing through the use of social media in SMEs. This study contributes to the literature the following:

i) Social networking as a marketing strategy: It has been shown by quantitative research that there is a large area of opportunity to educate small businesses about the potential that a good social media strategy for your business can generate. Many of them have no knowledge of the existence of tools that could be useful in their daily operations as promote their products, customer approach, monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of its strategy, brand positioning, etc. The findings show that in Mexico we have a technology gap in usage of new communication technologies, marketing and advertising technologies, situation that involves a loss of national and international competitiveness.

ii) The identification of best practices in the use of social networks: This study contributes to the literature to generalize good practices alleged variables. Thus, it is demonstrated that the strategic use of social networks are an additional tool of traditional marketing can offer a greater competitive advantage. Another great advantage is that through social networks can co-create publicity among those involved in the marketing of the product of interest, allowing savings largely market research. Can also influence consumer behavior through information dissemination word of mouth. Finally we have to consider the variable uncertainty that improper handling of social media can have on the consumer.

Among the future research, we could raise in general, the incidence of the variables obtained in this study on the competitiveness of SMEs, derived from it, the following: Determine the impact of Viral Marketing in brand positioning, Incidence of social networks on consumer behavior, Disadvantages of inappropriate use of social media in SMEs.

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## Appendix A.

### A1. Concept Matrix: Social Network usage in Business

Title and Author	a	b	c	d	e
1. Consumer-Driven Healthcare Marketing: Using the Web to Get Up Close and Personal. Rooney, K. (2009).	x				
2. Las redes sociales trastocan los modelos de los medios de comunicación. Campos, F. (2008).	x	x	x	x	
3. Trust as the basis of coalition formation in electronic marketplaces. Walter, F. (2011).	x			x	
4. Do Friends Influence Purchases in a Social Network?. Iyengar, R; Han, S. and Gupta S. (2009).			x	x	
5. Embracing new media in Fiji: the way forward for social network marketing and communication strategies. Khan, A. and Khan, R. (2012).	x		x		
6. Redes sociales y marketing viral: repercusión e incidencia en la construcción de la agenda mediática. Túñez-Lopez, M; García, J; and Guevara-Castillo, M. (2011).	x		x		
7. Word of mouth, youth and their brands. Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers. Needham, A. (2008).		x		x	
8. Online Marketing Strategies for Reaching Today’s Teens. Peowsk, H. (2011).	x	x			x
9. La cara oculta del comercio: Las redes sociales. Caso quesilleras de Nagarote. Palacios, M. (2005).			x		
10. Marketing library services through Facebook groups. Xia, D. (2009).					x
11. Redes sociales y de movimiento en la sociedad de la información. Scherer-Warren, I. (2005).			x		
12. Using online advertising to increase the impact of a library Facebook page. Chan, C. (2011).					x
13. Ten years of net work. Anklam, P. (2009).	x				
14. Optimal Marketing Strategies over Social Networks. Hartline, J; Mirrokni, V. & Sundararajan, M. (2008)	x	x	x		
15. You’ve got Tweets.. Yost, L. (2010).	x			x	x
16. Marketing on Social Networks: Twitter, MySpace and Facebook Demystified. Janusz, T. (2009).	x	x			
17. Alcohol Marketing in the 21st Century: New Methods, Old Problems. Mart, S. (2011).	x			x	x

18. Using Twitter for Promotion and Branding: A Content Analysis of Local Television Twitter Sites. Greer, C. and Ferguson, D. (2011).	x	x		x
19. Optimal Marketing and Pricing in Social Networks. Immorlica, N. and Mirrokni V. (2010)	x	x	x	x
20. Optimal Marketing Strategies over Social Networks. Hartline, J; Mirrokni, V. and Sundararajan, M. (2008).	x		x	x
21. The Next Phase of Wine Marketing? Exploring US Winery Adoption of Wine 2.0 Components. Thach, L. (2009).	x	x	x	x
22. Intoxigenic digital spaces? Youth, social networking sites and alcohol marketing. Griffiths, R. and Casswell, S. (2010).		x		x
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