

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

(Extended abstracts)

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CENTER FOR BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL MARKETING

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS: INTEGRATING EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS AND TECHNOLOGY

18-20 JUNE 2018 MADRID (SPAIN)

Hosted by Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid, Spain)



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**Conference Proceedings (extended abstracts) of 23rd International Conference CBIM2018
“Sustainable business models: integrating employees, customers and technology”.**

Edited by Martín-Peña, María L & Ruiz-Alba, José L.

info@cbim2018.org

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These proceedings contain the *extended abstracts* of the papers presented at CBIM2018 23rd International Conference on “*Sustainable business models: integrating employees, customers and technology*” held at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos 18-20 June 2018 (Madrid, Spain) <http://cbim2018.org/>

The aim of the CBIM International Conference is to gather academics, professionals and doctoral students from around the world to promote a rigorous, candid and friendly discussion of current and potential future topics in B2B marketing and sales. Because of our long relationship with the IMP Group we also discuss relationships and networks in business.

Prof. Wesley J. Johnston, Prof. Spiros Gounaris, Prof. Eric Boyd, Prof. Thomas Brashear, Prof. Brian P. Brown and Prof. Michael Kleinaltenkamp has served as keynote speakers.

Papers submitted to this Conference were revised by two reviewers and those accepted were invited to present.

María Luz Martín-Peña and José L. Ruiz-Alba.
Co-Chairs CBIM2018 International Conference

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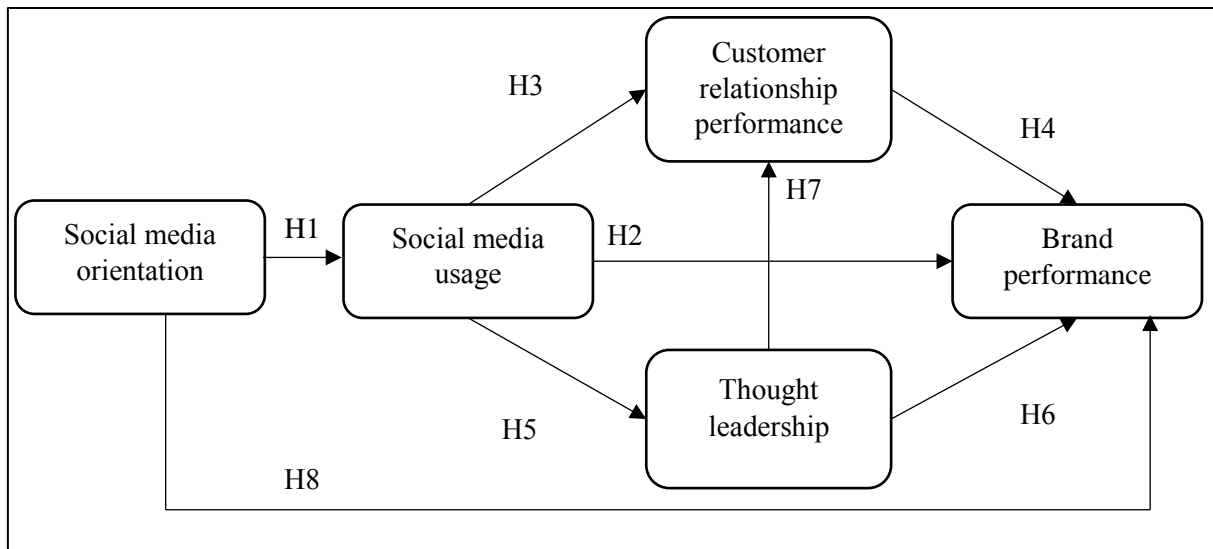
The impacts of social media usage on B2B brand performance

Francesca Magno, Fabio Cassia.

Aim of the study. A growing body of research has examined usage and impacts of social media in business-to-business (B2B) contexts (Salo, 2017). Available studies have suggested that communicating the brand and increasing brand awareness are among the most important reasons for B2B firms to use social media (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011). However, extant research has not explored the mechanisms through which a firm's usage of social media may positively affect its B2B brand performance. To fill this gap, we suggest and test a model which combines available knowledge from three interrelated B2B streams of studies: branding (Seyedghorban, Matanda, & LaPlaca, 2016), social media marketing (Salo, 2017), and thought leadership - content marketing (Barry & Girona, 2017).

The model (fig. 1) highlights that social media usage (defined as a company's level of use of social media technologies) positively affects brand performance both directly and indirectly through the improvement of customer relationship performance and through the enhancement of a company's thought leadership. In addition, the model shows that a company's social media orientation improves social media usage and brand performance.

Fig. 1 – The suggested model



Previous research has demonstrated that a social-oriented corporate culture increases social media usage (Keinänen & Kuivalainen, 2015). Hence, we state that (H1) a company's social media orientation is positively related to social media usage. The usage itself of social media can strengthen the credibility of a company (Wang, Pauleen, & Zhang, 2016). Therefore, we state that (H2) social media usage is positively related to brand performance. Social media can be used to support sales, improving customer service (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014) and responsiveness (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016), thus strengthening relationships (Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Valvi, 2015) Therefore, we state that (H3) social media usage is positively related to customer relationship performance. Relationship quality influences brand performance by arousing customer attitudes toward the brand (Cassia, Cobelli, & Ugolini, 2017). Hence, we suggest that (H4) customer relationship performance is positively related to brand performance. In B2B markets, companies often use social media to transfer valuable and timely contents to communicate their industry thought leadership role (Salo, 2017). Therefore, we state that (H5) social media usage is positively related to thought leadership. Through thought leadership, companies stimulate favorable attitudes toward their brands (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), giving them a trusted

brand status (Barry & Gironda, 2017). Hence, we argue that (H6) thought leadership is positively related to brand performance. Thought leadership can arouse positive reaction not only among prospects but also among existing customers, thus strengthening existing relationships (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Therefore, we state that (H7) thought leadership is positively related to customer relationship performance. Finally, drawing on studies showing that a market-oriented and branding-oriented corporate culture has a positive direct impact on customer and brand performance (Hirvonen, Laukkanen, & Salo, 2016; Lee, Park, Baek, & Lee, 2008), we hypothesize that (H8) social media orientation is positively related to brand performance.

Methods and results. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted. A list of 784 Italian companies with a presence on B2B social media was compiled by consulting three social media for a period of six months. Only companies that had published and/or shared contents at least once during this period were selected and sent a questionnaire. Multi-item measures taken from previous studies for all constructs were used (the items used in this study together with the sources are shown in table 1). Up to now 112 usable answers have been received⁴. A confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model (CFA) ($\chi^2/df=1.52$; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA=0.06 and $p_{close} = 0.10$). Structural equation modeling was then used to estimate the measurement model. The results indicated good model fit (overall model fit: $\chi^2/df=1.55$; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA=0.07 and $p_{close} = 0.08$). The analysis shows that all suggested relationships are supported. Fig. 1 provides a brief summary of results.

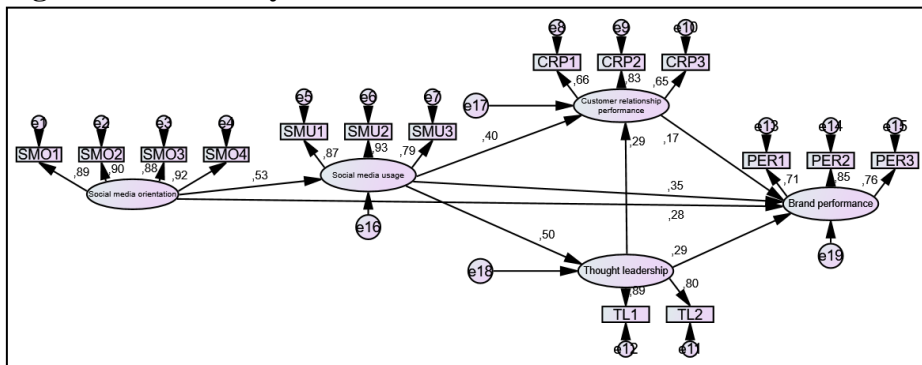
Table 1 – Constructs / Items

Construct	Item
Social media orientation (AVE: 0.80; C.R.: 0.94) Source: Keinänen and Kuivalainen (2015)	SMO1 - My company encourages taking part in public social media (e.g. comment, write a blog, share documents).
	SMO2 - My company encourages taking part in restricted social media networks (e.g. comment, write a blog, share documents).
	SMO3 - My company allocates time and resources for communicating via public social media and updating and monitoring public social media applications.
	SMO4 - My company allocates time and resources for communicating via restricted social media

⁴ More answers are expected as data collection is still going on.

	sites and updating and monitoring restricted social media applications.
Social media usage (AVE: 0.74; C.R.: 0.89) Source: adapted from Agnihotri, Rapp, and Trainor (2009)	SMU1 - My company is using social media to its fullest potential for supporting its business. SMU2 - My company's use of technology on the job has been integrated and incorporated at the highest potential. SMU3 - My company's use of technology is pretty much integrated as part of its normal business routine.
Customer relationship performance (AVE: 0.51; C.R.: 0.75) Source: adapted from Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman, and Raman (2005)	CRP1 - The use of social media has contributed to improve my company's performance with respect to achieving customer satisfaction CRP2 - The use of social media has contributed to improve my company's performance with respect to keeping current customers CRP3 - The use of social media has contributed to improve my company's performance with respect to promptly satisfying customer requests
Thought leadership (AVE: 0.71; C.R.: 0.83) Source: adapted from Barry and Girona (2017)	TL1 - Through our social media we share innovative contents about our industry TL2 - Our firm is recognized as a trusted authority for the contents it shares through social media
Brand performance (AVE: 0.60; C.R.: 0.81) Source: Hirvonen et al. (2016)	PER1 - We have reached desired image in market PER2 - Our firm has built a solid reputation PER3 - Our firm has built strong customer brand loyalty

Figure 1 – Summary of results



Implications. The paper provides marketers with evidence about the mechanisms through which social media usage positively affects brand performance and with insights about the interrelations among social media marketing, content marketing and branding strategies.

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