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Systematic mapping on social media and its relation to business

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse the reach of existing investigation on *social media* and its relation to companies throughout 2014–2015. To achieve the proposed, the study proceeds in classifying such information and identifying methods to study *social media* and its relation with different marketing associated topics. The research uses a mapping process that uses the database generated from references of Web of Science's publications during 2014–2015, amounting to 185 articles. The results found that the initial method is a descriptive analysis on the usage of *social media* as a tool for marketing. Nevertheless, during the past years studies have proposed that *social media* is becoming more an instrument for marketing and business management.

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1. Introduction

The appearance of the Web 2.0 gave rise to *social media*, a phenomenon that changed the way how software developers and end-users started to use and view the World Wide Web. This is best exemplified by one of the characteristics of *social media* where its contents and applications are created and published by all types of users, whom continuously participate in modifying (improving and/or personalize) them in a collaborative manner (Domínguez, López, & Ortega, 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media is best understood as links that connect the Internet with channels of instant communication where people can express thoughts and share it collectively. Moreover, authors mention that social media has evolved rapidly and that its growth has been spurred by communicational advances, such as the present day mass availability of mobile portable devices (such as iPhones, iPads, among others) and the introduction of 3G surfing speed in 2007. According to Yamaki (2016), *social media* is an aggregation of

mutual interactions composed by a relational structure of actors and their respective relationships. Thus, *social media* covers a wide array of different forms of online communication which include blogs, discussion forums, company sponsored chatrooms, mails, websites (created by users and companies), news sites, download sites, commerce-oriented communities that offer goods and services (eBay, Amazon.com), collaborative sites (Wikipedia), *social media* sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc.), business networks (LinkedIn), networks that focus on shared content (YouTube), photo-oriented sites (Instagram, Flickr), microblogging (Twitter), and much more (Study: Statista, 2016).

From Earth's 7.39 billion inhabitants, 3.4 billion have Internet access (with a 10% annual growth) from which 2.3 billion use *social media* regularly (over 10% growth since January 2015). It is also important to note that approximately 3.8 billion people use mobile phones (an increase of 4% per year) and almost 2 billion people access *social media* through them (Study: We Are Social, 2016).

Currently, the Internet and *social media* have become relevant tools to manage brand experience and consumer loyalty, as these platforms allow consumers to express their identity, thus reinforcing their individuality through personalization and adaptation. Furthermore, through these, consumers can satisfy their social needs by exchanging and sharing their consumption related experiences of goods and services (Christodoulides, 2009).

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As an effect, companies use *social media* (Azorín-Richarte, Orduna-Malea, & Ontalba-Ruipérez, 2016) to support the creation and development of brand-oriented communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Brands such as Jeep, which has a famous offline brand community (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009), actively connect with their clients and fans (strengthening said community) through the use of *social media* platforms such as MySpace and Facebook. Companies are measuring their online positioning with cybermetric (Orduna-Malea & Alonso-Arroyo, 2017).

This modern emphasis on the digital interactions between the Corporate and the Private is an effect from *social media's* ability to empower consumers in voicing their complaints with less physical and mental effort, allowing them to share such opinions with a large number of other consumers (Lee, 2005). This is a complex subject for companies as they no longer are capable of controlling directly the communications between their consumers. Nevertheless, firms can influence these conversations and discussions in different ways such as: by providing a *social media* platform themselves, by using blogs and other *social media* tools to attract clients, by using traditional promotional tools and online media, by providing information on *social media* platforms, by providing exclusivity, by designing products based on conversations held with clients, and by supporting causes that are important for consumers, among others (Mangold & Faulds, 2011).

Taking into consideration the paradigm's speed of change, in relation to the importance of consumer communication towards a brand and/or company, the impact of their opinions through *social media* can be assessed. This exploratory investigation Paper contributes to that by developing a comparative analysis on empirical studies conducted on *social media*, specifically Twitter. By applying systematic mapping, which defines a process as well as a uniform structure, published results can be categorized in a specific determined area. The analysis is based on previous research, and although the number of case studies is low, its objective is to determine the scope of the carried out research on a specific topic to classify knowledge (Petersen, Feldt, Mujtaba, & Mattsson, 2008).

Thus, the purpose of the study is to determine the reach of the investigation conducted on *social media* and its relation with the decision-making process on businesses or marketing during 2014 and 2015. Furthermore, this study aims to not only classify such information and identifying the main approximations on the subject, but also to analyse the strengths and weaknesses and to detect and identify topics and gaps where it's necessary to reinforce to contribute to scientific knowledge.

The following section presents the applied methodology on the study, describing the steps taken when conducting systematic mapping. The subsequent sections present the results and the discussion on this study, concluding the limitations on this research.

2. Research background

Social media has influenced consumer behaviour from *purchasing information* up to *purchasing behaviour*, such as being unsatisfied on Twitter. This has been determined by studies that analyse the patterns of internet usage (Mangold & Faulds, 2011; Ross et al., 2009), where the main difference is that investigators consider *social media* communication as a distinct area of study (Hu & Kettinger, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2011). Considering that the first function of *social media* communication is consistent with traditional marketing that uses integrated communication tools, companies can use *social media* to interact with their clients through the available platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and such (Mangold & Faulds, 2011). A second function of *social media* is that clients can use the platform to communicate among

themselves without going through the companies. This is related to the colloquial "word of mouth" function.

From the various *social media*, we have selected Twitter as it has been studied in B2B and B2C as a communicational strategy as it has proven to be an effective platform to obtain information as a resource (Bollena, Maa, & Zeng, 2011; Dunbar, Arnaboldi, Conti, & Passarella, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014). This is due to its simplicity and ease of use for micro-blogging, a push-and-pull communication format (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) that attracts different user profiles, thus having greater impact on businesses (Webster, 2010).

Social networks like Twitter are recommended as a tool to develop a communication channel regarding corporate social responsibility (Reilly & Hynan, 2014). Furthermore, movements in social networks, like Twitter, affect the prices of a company's shares (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014), these authors affirm that there is a link between social networks and businesses. Fischer and Reuber (2014) as the maximum extension of 140 words per Tweet allows for brief information flows that give the messages the particular ability to reduce uncertainty, hence improving the perception of a company in the eyes of the consumers.

3. Methodology

The study uses systematic mapping of existing literature (on previous investigations) to build classifications and conduct themed-based analysis on the effects obtained from a visual map on the existing knowledge within a broader topic (Petersen et al., 2008).

As previously mentioned, systematic mapping defines a process as well as a uniform structure, where published results can be categorized in a specific determined area. The objective of systematic mapping lies on classification, and is therefore directed towards a themed-based analysis and the identification of main publication forums pertaining to the topic (Petersen et al., 2008), thus allowing a proper response to generic questions such as: 'What has been done in the field X?'. The systematic mapping process consists of the following stages: (a) defining the investigation questions, (b) revision scope, (c) search execution, (d) selection of studies, (e) filtering the studies, (f) classification scheme, (g) data extraction and mapping process, and (h) systematic mapping.

To obtain the necessary knowledge, the data will be analysed by classifying the results found and aggregating the publication frequency within each category to determine the coverage scope of each distinct area of investigation. The application of this methodology allows for the identification of topics where different primary studies exist to conduct systematic revisions. Furthermore, the study will also be able to identify topics where more primary studies need to be conducted (Kitchenham, Budgen, & Brereton, 2011).

The study takes into account the results obtained from the Web of Science (WoS), based on Merigó's proposed methodology (Merigó, Mas-Tur, Roig-Tierno, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015). This is important as it is considered to be one of the main academic databases for the study of research contributions (Blanco-Mesa, Merigó, & Gil-Lafuente, 2017; Merigó et al., 2015), specifically from the Core Collection publications between the years 2014 and 2015. The document types used (database) range from: Articles, Reviews, Letters, and Notes; following the sample proposals from other studies (Merigó et al., 2015; Yu, Li, Merigó, & Fang, 2016).

By doing a comprehensive search and filtering process on the documents found in the database, the study was able to obtain 41 relevant articles (see Table 4). For details on the systematic mapping process applied throughout the study, see Table 1.

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