Abstract

Researchers have eagerly researched social media; however there has been a lack of direction in these publications, with replications of studies or studies making little to no theoretical contribution to the literature. There is, however, a call for papers which make more of a contribution toward understanding social media. This paper provides a review of the literature relating to social media. It makes a contribution by developing the 8C’s of Social Media – Community; Communication; Conversation; Co-creation; Cutting-edge; Customised; Credibility and Culture. As this paper is a meta-analysis of literature, it is essential to undertake further research and ideas for this are provided.

Keywords: social media, communication, content analysis, meta-analysis, literature review

Introduction

A review of literature relating to social media has determined that although many papers have been written relating to social media, very few, if any, provide a comprehensive summary of the literature. Even less provide a future direction or foundation for further research. This paper seeks to provide a review of literature relating to social media and common themes across the papers. Due to the multi-disciplinary perspective of papers related to social media, this paper is not in one particular subject area. Social media usage is increasingly rapidly worldwide (Jones and Fox, 2009). It is known that there are different technology requirements for different geographical segments (Gilbert, Karahalios and Sandvig, 2008) and different social media sites have different uses, also (Chou, Hunt, Beckjord, Moser and Hesse, 2009). Social media is used commonly whereby users communicate with other users (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010), however increasingly businesses are using social media to communicate with users. The use of social media for Government and social matters can enhance transparency and acts as an anti-corruption tool (Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes, 2010). This paper seeks to provide a more detailed understanding of the direction of the literature. First, the method for the meta-analysis will be discussed. An overview of the literature will then be detailed. From this analysis, the 8C’s of Social Media have been determined and discussion of the C’s will be undertaken. The paper will conclude with limitations and avenues for future research, based on this discussion.

Method

Meta-analysis has been conducted in many different ways by researchers. Meta-analysis has been defined as a "statistical technique for combining the results of independent studies" (Mahmood, Hall and Swanberg, 2009: 114). In their paper about the Technology Acceptance Model, King and He (2006) first undertook a search of all papers related to their theoretical basis. They discarded a number of papers, if they were not empirical, and eventually analysed a series of relevant papers, based on their findings. Analysis was done in a quantitative manner. Other researchers used judgement to select case studies and relevant literature reviews and then undertook content analysis to determine key themes (Kar, Pascual and Chickering, 1999). Mahmood, Hall and Swanberg (2009) utilised meta-analysis for three key reasons. Firstly, it allows a greater understanding of the literature; secondly it provides a more comprehensive analysis and finally, studies over a long time period and scope can be utilised. Similarly, in this paper on social media, it was deemed important to have a
comprehensive understanding of the literature and therefore, we believed that a meta-analysis was required. Statistics can be utilised to undertake a meta-analysis (Hedges and Olkin, 1985; Barrick and Mount, 1991), however they are not always required. For this paper, statistical analysis was not utilised and papers were reviewed using content analysis, manually, rather than through a computer program. In order to undertake a meta-analysis of social media literature for this paper, twenty papers were reviewed. Papers were identified using a search on Google Scholar and EBSCO Host Database. Papers were searched for using the broad search of "social media" and then to narrow down particular papers, other terms were added into searches, including "marketing", "tourism", "community". Papers with higher citations were utilised. These papers will be discussed in a thematic way, with key themes being identified.

**The 8Cs of Social Media**

All papers included in the study were read and key themes identified on the basis of the common links in the literature. Table one indicates the key themes, papers applicable and any comments regarding the papers.

**Table One: Key themes in Social Media literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/s &amp; link to a &quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User segmentation - Community</td>
<td>DiMicco, Millen, Geyer, Dugan, Brownholtz and Muller, 2008</td>
<td>DiMicco et al explore how professionals use social media differently from non-professionals. This is reinforced by Thompson et al, in their study in the medical profession.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thompson, Dawson, Ferdig, Black, Boyer, Coutts and Black, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connectedness - Co-creation</td>
<td>Gilbert and Karahalios, 2009</td>
<td>Studies explore links between offline and online networks. Varied results, but generally “top friends” online are not usually people’s closest friends offline.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security - Credibility</td>
<td>Weir, Toolan and Smeed, 2011</td>
<td>Social networking risks do not seem to be more problematic than risks in general society. Although social media has numerous benefits to society, criminal activities can occur. According to Dwyer, Hiltz and Paserini (2007), members of both Facebook and Myspace are concerned about privacy. Facebook members trusted Facebook and members and were more willing to share information than Myspace members.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dwyer, Hiltz and Paserini, 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy - Credibility</td>
<td>Lange, 2008</td>
<td>Exploring how people present themselves online, including recruiters using social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value of user input - Conversation</td>
<td>Agichtein, E., Castillo, C., Donato, D., Gionis, A. And Mishne, G, 2008</td>
<td>Studies explore how to determine useful/good answers to user questions and user feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication style differences -</td>
<td>Muscanell and Guadagno, 2011</td>
<td>Differences between gender and personality in ‘friending’ and communication styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation use of social media -</td>
<td>Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010</td>
<td>Exploring ways to make a profitable use of social media, with advice for organisations seeking to utilise social media in their organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting edge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>User input - Customised</td>
<td>Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis, and Mishne. 2008</td>
<td>Social media relies on user input, however it is essential to determine how useful the user input is. This paper provides an overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User community norms - Culture</td>
<td>Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes, 2010</td>
<td>Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2002) indicate that the culture of a social media site leads to expectations, such as the transparency of an e-Government site and social change. McNab (2009) states that social media users want to contribute to discussions and add value to the sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McNab, 2009</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As evident above, a number of key themes were present in the literature. Each theme emerged through a thorough analysis of the literature. As each paper was examined, themes were manually coded and entered into the margins of the papers. Upon further analysis, common themes were identified as indicated above. Each of these themes were explored by the researchers in depth, and it was evident that eight key words applied to these themes: Community, co-creation; credibility; conversation; communication; cutting-edge; customised and culture. Each will now be discussed:

**Community:** A vibrant, interactive community is essential for any social media strategy to work. By considering user requirements and user segmentation, a community can be established. Research has shown that people from varying age groups utilise technology (Niemeld-Nyrhinen, 2007; Quine and Carter, 2006). With a community focus on social media interactions (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011), all social media strategies should consider the mix of members and how that impacts on the site's strategy. In particular, social media can make a contribution to knowledge sharing, particularly in an organisational context (Yates and Paquette, 2011). Social media has altered community exchanges and consideration about the changes of community must be made (Papadopoulos, Kompatsiaris, Vakali and Spyridonos, 2010). The user’s interest in the brand and the brand message can contribute to a user’s ‘willingness to participate’ in conversations and online discussions (Parent, Plangger and Bal, 2011).
Communication: Communication is an essential component of any social media campaign. Organisations must consider communication style differences, both of the users and also different representatives in the organisation who may post in the organisation's 'voice'. Organisations must send an integrated, consistent message to the community through their social media campaign. Organisations can utilise social media as a promotional tool, however, it needs to be supported by traditional communication and a solid marketing mix. Planning can be detrimental to a social media campaign, as it needs to be linked to customer preference and gut instinct, with limited control or intervention, instead. Memorable messages are useful, however some messages can be inappropriate (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). With all forms of marketing communication, there is a push to measure return on investment. For social media, investment relates to both costs and effort for maintaining a social media presence, and there is an increased demand to 'prove' that social media is an effective communication tool (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). Due to the nature of social media communication, however, this is not an easy task.

Conversation: As indicated in 'Community' above, the conversation is an essential aspect to building a strong, interactive community. Furthermore, the value of user input is essential - without users participating in a back and forth discussion, there is no conversation and there is no benefit to all parties. Conversation velocity is an important consideration, however the risks of joining and starting a conversation are also present with social media interactions (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011), resulting in a need for users to get comfortable with the community and community norms. Social media in general can be used for word of mouth, resulting in viral marketing through three steps: receiving, amplifying and distributing messages (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). Organisations can initiate the creation of conversations and user-generated content (Kaplan, 2012, however, customers will decide whether to continue engaging in this conversation or not. The involvement of users in engaging conversation increases engagement with the social media strategy (Kaplan, 2012).

Co-creation / connection: An organisation cannot deliver value, but they can provide value offerings to users/ consumers. As an organisation provides value offerings to the community, they co-create and connect with the organisation. The users in any community build relationships and groups through their use of social media (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011) and these relationships result in a co-creation between users. Two way communication can enhance commitment and trust (Briones, Kuch, Liu and Jin, 2011), benefitting all parties. Organisation users must consider ways to participate in these relationships without their presence impacting on the interactions. Positive and engaging relationships can be formed through social media when businesses understand social media well (Briones, Kuch, Liu and Jin, 2011). Consumers work in an active role by co-creating content with organisations and brands; however, organisations can be quite inexperienced in understanding how to interact with these active consumers (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011). Traditionally, organisations have believed they need to control their brand messages, promote to customers and reduce customers talking to other customers (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011). These traditional business beliefs go against the premise of social media and communication today and organisations must learn to adapt to new technologies.

Cutting-edge: An effective social media campaign utilises up to date communication and interaction. A social media site should not be utilised as a static promotional brochure, but as a two-way conversation with cutting-edge thinking is required. For organisations, this may require measurement of reputation, including the reach of the brand and its users (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011). To break through the clutter and be accepted by
the social media audience, organisations must consider ways to be both different and useful to users (Fournier and Avery, 2011). Social media strategies also need to consider mobile strategies, for smart phones and tablet computers, such as iPads, as this is where the social media audience is increasingly logging in from (Kaplan, 2012).

**Customised:** A social media site should be able to be customised by the user, through their user input. By participating in the conversation, a user can influence the direction of the conversation and in some ways, the direction of the site. As mentioned previously, organisations lose control of the messages disseminated when utilising social media (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This results in users having power over the message and users being able to customise messages distributed. Individualising social media strategies is essential, to ensure user preferences and interests are considered (Kaplan, 2012).

**Credibility:** Users must believe in the organisation's message. Credibility is essential for users and credibility can be built through privacy and security of the site. Engaging in social media is beneficial for an organisation (Universal McCann, 2008), as it can enhance relationships between organisations and stakeholders (Briones, Kuch, Liu and Jin, 2011). Because of the loss of control over the messages (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), credibility of message could be perceived as being higher, just as credibility of word of mouth exists. Users tend to trust their networks rather than a marketer, therefore the user input into social media sites contribute to building credibility for the message and ultimately for the brand.

**Culture:** Over time, established community norms or 'rules' come into play. Language is established and a culture grows through time. Organisations must support these norms. This C element interacts with the other C elements, as it's regarding the interactions between other community members. Users’ personality contribute to the way people interact on social media sites (Golbeck, Robles and Turner, 2011), therefore contributing to the culture of the site.

**Summary, limitations and further research**

Social media use is popular for varying reasons relating to social connections with new and existing contacts. One main reason is the informal conversations that can take place between friends, colleagues, business partners and other contacts (Zhao and Rosson, 2009). To date, researchers have enthusiastically explored social media in detail. As it is a relatively new body of literature, however, there is limited theoretical direction evident in these publications. In fact, many of the studies are making a very limited contribution to the literature and rather appear to be duplicating similar studies. This paper is limited by the lack of empirical data, however, this is also related to its contribution. The paper is designed to offer a comprehensive review of the literature with a direction of the literature. This is currently lacking in the literature and therefore it was necessary to undertake a more comprehensive literature review. The 8 C’s has provided a starting point for further research. Further research should utilise the 8C’s conceptual model of social media. Researchers could explore each one individually, to provide a comprehensive overview. Alternatively, interaction between them all could be explored. This also results in implications for businesses, particularly marketers, who should consider use of the 8Cs in their business operations. The 8Cs of social media, as introduced in this paper, include Community; Co-Creation; Credibility; Conversation; Communication; Cutting-edge; Customised and Culture and each have relevance to any organisation with a social media strategy in place.
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