

Readiness, use and enablers of digital customer interaction tools in Austria

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This contribution presents a first holistic measurement of Austrian B2B companies' readiness to improve customer interaction and sales performance through the application of digital communication services. To this end, the necessary steps to craft a sustainable and comprehensive corporate strategy for this subject matter are highlighted and the status-quo of implementation in Austrian Businesses is presented by means of a novel digital customer interaction metric on a scale of 1 to 100. The discussed digital communication services entail - but are not restricted to - well-known social media outlets as well as the interaction facilitated through digital communication such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Blogs and YouTube, which belong to the most widely used tools globally. The conducted empirical analysis, which was carried out by means of a quantitative analysis among 74 representatives from different economic sectors, assessed the effects, which directly influence the degree to which Austrian businesses have implemented structured digital communication processes in sales and customer interaction service. The thereby gathered evidence supports the hypothesis of personal and industry-specific factors exhibiting the most significant effect on the introduction of digital customer interaction tools, as do the sales experiences based on digital lead and prospect generation. However, other often cited criteria, such as the size of the company, have not been found to directly influence the level of implementation likelihood.

1 Introduction

Following tremendous technological advances in the past decade, a variety of digital communication tools are available which enable suppliers and buyers to engage with one another in a more effective, tailored and customized manner. These involve a set of social media and other communication tools, which - in this paper - are summarized by the „structured digital customer interaction” terminus.

The technological advances have made vast amounts of information available to both sides, thereby improving the efficiency of communication and transactions (Mantrala and Albers 2015). They help suppliers to investigate how customers use products and to quickly react with providing adequate information (Curtis and Giamanco 2010; Agnihotri et al. 2012). The usage of digital communication platforms provides fertile ground to spread information on products, services, events, community and company related issues among customers and partners in a timely manner (Agnihotri et al. 2012; Agnihotri et al. 2014).

Orchestrating organizational resources is necessary to bundle knowledge from different parts of a company before sending it out to customers in a highly compressed manner through the digital channel of their choice (Mantrala and Albers 2013). Thus, digital communication tools provide an important opportunity to directly talk to customers and monitor any reviews, appraisal or criticism of products and services offered by the own firm or a competitor and take actions quickly to adapt and improve product as well as service attributes (Agnihotri 2012).

These tools do not only allow to react quickly but also to be more proactive in addressing the individual needs of customers. Proactively customizing solutions for customers substantially boosts customer perceived value (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2012; Agnihotri et al. 2012). Because digital communication tools hold potential to improve almost all interactions between buyers and sellers, they also transform the selling process of products and services. Social media as a widely applied means of digital communication is found to assist in the gathering of timely and up-to-date information about decision makers, communication styles, buying risks and overall needs of the purchasing organization (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2012; Sashi 2012). Furthermore - and in contrast to many traditional communication channels - gatekeepers can be avoided because decision makers can be directly addressed on platforms like LinkedIn by starting conversations regarding latest news and developments found on social media (Minsky and Quesenberry 2016; Cuevas 2017; Greenberg 2009).

In terms of communication efficacy, research has identified the effects of increasing use of digital interaction tools in terms of trust establishment between the parties involved in the transaction (Ferrell 2010; Schaub 2014). As regards the impact on sales' processes, prospects have been found to publicly post their questions and concerns, which gives sellers the opportunity to listen, ask the right questions and analyze the prospects' underlying needs. These novel forms of communication thus enables sales organizations to inform/educate customers more efficiently and enrich the presentation process by promoting collaboration and engagement in order to arrive at win-win solutions (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2012).

1.1 Introduction of digital customer interaction methods

The implementation of digital communication tools in the fields of sales and customer interaction consists of five steps: (i) a comprehensive strategy has to be crafted, (ii) the involved people have to be trained and (iii), a change in corporate culture that spans across all levels and departments has to be fostered. Step (iv) involves the required risk assessment throughout the whole process which includes the necessary steps to address found risks appropriately. Step (v) incorporates management's oversight from taking the first step, acting as role models and providing all necessary resources. Crafting a comprehensive strategy and stating clear goals requires a deep understanding of the value that the customer is looking for (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2012).

Market knowledge and research are crucial, especially in the preparatory phase. Resources have to be dedicated to assess which digital communication tools are most important in the respective industry or customer segment. Metrics and communication plans need to be defined for each of the chosen tools (Ivens and Rauschnabel 2015). In terms of organization and human resource implication, a focus on developing employees with social media skills is generally seen as a prerequisite for successful implementation (Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus 2017). An influx of new staff is found to positively influence the identification of existing staff with digital communication's development. Thus, the design and execution of trainings, the required assistance with setting up guidelines to avoid risks presented by the usage of digital communication tools and the creation of communication plans can either be dedicated to external specialists or social media savvy people in the firm (Bowen and Haas 2015).

1.2 Digital interaction metrics

The efficacy of using digital communication tools can be assessed with different indicators, which are grouped into soft and hard metrics (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga 2015).

Soft metrics measure the effect of digital interaction with regards to changes to a company's follower base, the degree of customers' engagement with the content shared, the time followers spend on a firm's social media page and the intensity with which these contents affect associated forums and discussions. All these things can be measured with the help of features directly

integrated in most digital communication tools (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga 2010). Hard metrics on the other hand help to measure financial indicators of success like revenue and cost reduction and personnel related metrics focus on employee satisfaction. These metrics serve as indicator for organizational effectiveness related to degree of customer satisfaction improvement or customer retention as well as service time and product or service quality. Hard metrics also allow measuring system performance (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga 2010). Furthermore companies have to measure the return on investment of their social media selling activities and have to set up key performance indicators as well as benchmarks (Hughes and Reynolds 2016).

2 Empirical analysis

2.1 Methodology

In order to determine the degree to which Austrian B2B sales organizations use digital communication tools to improve sales results and raise service levels, a survey was conducted, yielding 70 individual responses from 54 different companies. To determine the exact degree of implementation a scoring model was developed. The participants could reach between 0 - 100 points. The score then allowed to classify the respondents into 4 different categories based on how intensively digital communication tools are used for conducting sales activities and providing services.

In terms of effect detection, a three pronged approach was applied. This entailed the detection of structural differences between observed company types by means of independent sample T-tests. Identification was based on the widely used ÖNACE system, which asserts the sectoral differences of industries by means of a holistic, European, classification scheme (NACE). Secondly, the investigation of sub-layer differences of accumulated implementation score was assessed over the entire sample by means of a variance analytical approach in order to detect the differences across branches.

Finally, multiple regression analysis was carried out to detect the driving forces of digital customer interaction services' implementation.

2.2 Results

The empirical investigation revealed the substantial differences of utilization of digital customer interaction tools as depicted in Figure 1.

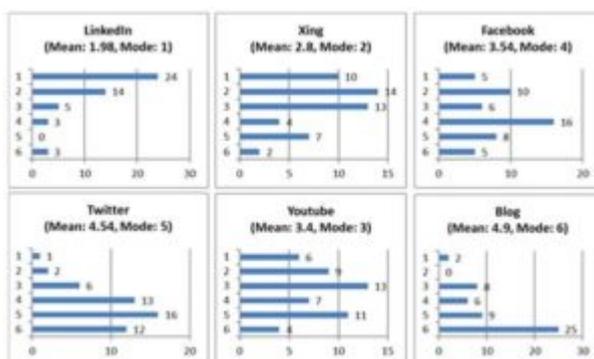


Figure 1: Social media tools and their frequency of usage by respondents (relative values, N=74)
Source: Authors

The main motivation for the utilization in terms of the different stages of the sales process was

detected within the area of customer network extension. The majority of reasons why respondents use social media on the job lies in the advanced options for prospecting and pre-approach as depicted in Figure 2.

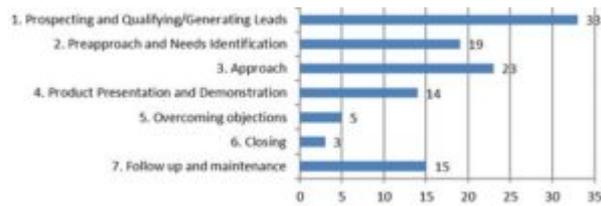


Figure 2: Distribution of Social media usage in the different stages of the sales process (absolute values, N=74).

Source: Authors

Major differences were also detected between industries, as classified by the ÖNACE classification. Manufacturing is found to show 9.8% lower implementation rates (sign. at .95), when compared to other industries.

The same holds for businesses active in information and communication (ÖNACE 10) as well as in professional, scientific and technical activities (ÖNACE 13), which score higher on social media selling adoption than firms in other sectors (sign at .95). The size of the firm is found to be insignificant by common statistical standards, whereas the age of the responsible employee is found to highly significant, thus increasing the likelihood of digital customer interaction tools' use by more than 12%.

In general, the degree of implementation among the majority of respondents is rather low. Few show a slightly advanced stage of implementing social media and even less reached a strong or full scale implementation. Austrian firms do not fully understand the role digital communication tools can play in order to overcome sales and service related problems. When looking at the degree to which social media is used in the sales process it becomes apparent that only a small fraction of respondents uses this technology throughout all stages. Respondents have profiles on professional social networks like LinkedIn but can be rather categorized as passive users. Top management does not strongly encourage using digital communication tools and little training is provided. Few companies are measuring social media success at all and only a small fraction of respondents have networks big enough to be visible in their target industries. Despite the low degree of adoption it has to be pointed out that firms are very interested in this topic because they believe that it will influence the way they sell in the future. As more and more social media savvy people from Generation Y are filling positions in sales organizations a quick change in the status quo is likely. However, it is the task of top managers to change corporate cultures and strategies in order to capitalize on the opportunities related to improving customer service through the usage of digital communication tools.

2.3 Discussion of empirical evidence

The investigated means of digital communication are found to assist overcoming a set of problems in traditional customer interaction and selling processes. Overcoming objections through social media can be facilitated through the creation of public forums where questions are discussed transparently and various parties are enabled to cooperate in order to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome. This is much in line with the findings of Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp (2012) and affect different stages of the customer interaction and sales process.

For instance, after the completion of a transaction, customers can be provided with service instructions, news and answers to frequently asked questions by adding them to networking groups and forums. At this stage, the importance of inward facing social media grows because it helps to

find solutions for service requests by faster communication between people from various departments. Again, this is much in accordance to the relevant literature (Sashi 2012). We found that a large part of changing the corporate culture involves in-depth investigation of customers' needs and wants followed by a subsequent design process for according product and service offerings. These policy recommendations are also reflected by international research such as Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga (2010) or Baird and Parasnis (2011).

The usage of digital customer interaction tools for sales and customer service related activities in Austrian B2B organizations is still in its infancy. The majority of companies are in an early or slightly advanced stage of adoption but with an increasing number of people that belong to Generation Y in sales positions this could quickly change in the next years. Few respondents show a high or full scale adoption of DCITs, social media in particular. Communication with customers via social media is happening rather infrequently. LinkedIn is the most popular social media platform among respondents.

When looking at the social media selling adoption scores by age group one cannot clearly state that younger people are more likely to use social media for their daily tasks than older respondents but it was found that the youngest respondents reached the highest scores more frequently. It was also found that people who are active in marketing, IT and telecommunications have a higher degree of social media selling adoption than those who work in manufacturing, wholesale or other industries. Austrian salespeople are confronted with a large variety of challenges. Respondents do not seem to be aware of the potential that social media holds to cope with a lot of these current problems. Nevertheless they acknowledge its increasing influence on the sales process, where the usage dominates in the early stages. Traditional ways to find new leads still dominate in Austria. Social media is more popular when it comes to collecting information about customer needs and decision makers as well as new trends.

The CRM systems in place in most companies do not allow their users to get a 360 degree view of customers because they do not integrate information about customers obtained through social media. Austrian B2B sales employees do not provide deep know how through social media, the usage of blogs is hardly existing when it comes to individuals and low when it comes to corporate blogging. Engagement with the content posted by customers or experts is relatively low. Alignment and interaction between the sales and the marketing department is high. This fulfills an important criterion for the usage of digital customer interaction tools for selling.

The size of the LinkedIn networks of Austrian salespeople is in most cases insufficient. This also holds true for the frequency in which individuals post content on this platform. Twitter plays only a small role compared to other social networks in Austria. Only few sellers use it. The ones who do often have a follower base that is too small and do not send out tweets frequently enough to exert sufficient influence and reach a large audience. All these facts give the impression of a rather passive attitude of Austrian sales representatives when it comes to using social media, which in turn could be the reason why their customers do not interact more intensively with them.

Only a small fraction of sellers could ever relate a closed deal to their social media activities. This is supported by the fact that most people did not see strong performance improvement due to social media usage and most are sceptical about the future influence of social media on their selling activities. Nevertheless, the majority of Austrian salespeople believe that digital customer interaction tools are an adequate to provide additional value to existing and potential customers.

3 Summary and managerial recommendations

The process of implementing a social media selling strategy is not different from the implementation of a new pricing strategy. It requires the identification of the most pressing challenges, redefining

and rethinking of existing processes, cooperation of several departments, strong support from top management, training by experts, putting one-self in the customer's shoes, setting up metrics and step by step altering of the corporate culture to arrive at the desired status quo. It is also vital to understand that social media sales is not about selling a product or service on social media but that the integration of digital customer interaction tools in the sales process can lay the groundwork for future sales.

A deep integration of digital customer interaction tools in the sales and customer service activities is a continuous process that does not yield immediate results. All sales organizations have to keep a close eye on how the environment in which they operate changes. Even though it may feel strange for sellers to post whitepapers or case studies online without any reassurance that these efforts will lead to a directly relatable sale, they have to understand that this is part of a much bigger behavioral shift which is absolutely necessary to move from a transactional to a value-focused approach. Buying organizations are changing and the way in which selling organization interact and communicate with them has to adapt accordingly.

This contribution sheds light on the novel opportunities of customer interaction through social media, helps to better understand what drives the implementation of digital relationship tools and investigates the current level of incorporation with a focus on Austria for the first time. Future research ought to improve the empirical assessment of customer relationships' innovations thereby improving the scientific basis of this relevant business topic even further.

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Klíčové slová/Key Words

digital customer interaction, sales performance, digital communication services, social media, digital communication

digitálna zákaznícka interakcia, výkonnosť predaja, digitálne komunikačné služby, sociálne médiá, digitálna komunikácia

JEL klasifikácia/JEL Classification

M31

Résumé

Pripravenosť, používanie a aktivácia digitálnych nástrojov interakcie so zákazníkmi v Rakúsku

Tento príspevok predstavuje prvé holistické meranie pripravenosti rakúskych B2B spoločností na zlepšenie interakcie so zákazníkmi a výkonnosti predaja prostredníctvom aplikácie digitálnych komunikačných služieb. Za týmto účelom sú predstavené potrebné kroky na vytvorenie trvalo udržateľnej a komplexnej podnikovej stratégie pre túto oblasť a následne je prezentovaný súčasný stav implementácie v rakúskych podnikoch prostredníctvom novej metriky interakcie s digitálnymi zákazníkmi na stupnici od 1 do 100. Analyzované digitálne komunikačné služby zahŕňajú – ale nie sú obmedzené len na – známe sociálne médiá, ako aj interakciu uľahčenú prostredníctvom digitálnej komunikácie, ako sú LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Blogy a YouTube, ktoré patria celosvetovo k najpoužívanejším nástrojom. Vykonaná empirická analýza, ktorá bola uskutočnená prostredníctvom kvantitatívnej analýzy medzi 74 zástupcami z rôznych ekonomických sektorov, zhodnotila účinky, ktoré priamo ovplyvňujú mieru, do akej rakúske podniky implementovali štruktúrované procesy digitálnej komunikácie v predaji a v službách zákazníkom. Takto získané dôkazy podporujú hypotézu osobných a odvetvovo špecifických faktorov, ktoré majú najvýznamnejší vplyv na zavádzanie nástrojov digitálnej interakcie so zákazníkmi, ako aj skúsenosti z predaja založené na digitálnom vedení a získavaní potenciálnych zákazníkov. Iné často citované kritériá, ako napríklad veľkosť

spoločnosti, však neboli identifikované, že by priamo ovplyvňovali úroveň pravdepodobnej implementácie.

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[Change process in the context of corporate communications: Stages for exploiting the potential of social media](#)

Change process in the context of corporate communications: Stages for exploiting the potential of social media

Many companies waive even to its use of social media, because they are afraid of losing control over their communications and their benefits concerned. It must be admitted honestly that companies have already lost this control by the various possibilities of Web 2.0. The messages of the sender as well as the reactions of the recipient on the given messages cannot or only partially be controlled. The reactions of the people in the social web can thus be neither controlled nor purposefully reliably predicted. To trigger and use viral effects, the control must be issued. Thereby is some unpredictability because of the fundamental properties and forces of social media: the relationship and exchanges between people. The loss of control is new and unfamiliar to businesses because the media Social Media sets itself apart from the previously used controllable communication channels. The implementation of a change management is a requirement that companies

can succeed utilize the potential of social media. Established thought-, action- and organizational structures need to be reconsidered, given to the power shifts in the dialogue between companies and their stakeholders.

Introduction

„The only constant is change“ is a famous quote by Greek philosopher Heraclitus. This is true, then as now. Changes are taking place more and more rapidly, and thus the rate at which companies must adapt to this change. Following the principle of „survival of the fittest“ according to Darwin only those systems survive, that have a high ability to adapt to changing conditions. The complexity of the environment is characterized for example by the long ever-increasing globalization, the development of information technology or demographics. The more the framework changes, the more organizations also need to change. Just so they can be successful in the markets of the future (Peclum 2012, p. 49).

1. Definition Change-Management

Under Change Management all tasks, measures and activities are summarized, that are intended to bring a comprehensive, cross-sector and content far-reaching change in an organization. These are used to implement new strategies, structures, systems, processes or practices. At a conceptual level, change is a matter of moving from one state to another, specifically, from a problem state to a solved state in a planned, orderly fashion. This essentially means to leave the current state, to occupy a new one and to have some structured and organized processes to get from one to the other. The aim is to effectively implement new methods and systems in an ongoing organization. The focus of change management is on the design of the path to the destination and not in the application of methods and procedures of the strategic target planning. Change Management is, as opposed to strategic management, which seeks an optimal adaptation to the environment, a task that is mainly aimed inward, on the members of the organization to be converted. The aim is to implement the derived optimal adaptations based on the strategic management (Lauer 2014, p. 4).

Lewin's 3-Stage Model of Change - Although any profound change is always unique in their complexity, so it is based on the experience firmly with various change processes, that change processes follow recurring patterns respectively different basic principles. The most famous and oldest model comes from Kurt Lewin. His three stage theory of change is commonly referred to as: Unfreezing, Moving, Freezing (Peclum 2012, p. 69).

- Unfreezing. Under unfreezing Lewin understands how to prepare a change. The unfreezing stage is probably one of the more important stages to understand in the world of change we live in today. This stage is about getting ready to change. It involves getting to a point of understanding that change is necessary, and getting ready to move away from our current comfort zone. This first stage is about preparing ourselves before the change. The more we feel that change is necessary, the more urgent it is, the more motivated we are to make the change.

- Moving. In the second phase the company is passing over to the new level. The introduction of new group standards is reinforced by direct intervention of those responsible and by training and monitoring of the process. Lewin was aware that change is not an event, but rather a process. He called that process a transition. Transition is the inner movement or journey we make in reaction to a change. This second stage occurs as we make the changes that are needed. People are “unfrozen” and moving towards a new way of being.

- Freezing. The last phase is the solidification of “getting used to” of the group. The new process must be fully seated and naturally included. This is ensured by continued monitoring via the introduction phase, whether the process works and is maintained. Lewin refers to this stage as freezing although a lot of people refer to it as ‘refreezing’. As the name suggests this stage is about establishing stability once the changes have been made. The changes are accepted and become the

new norm. People form new relationships and become comfortable with their routines.

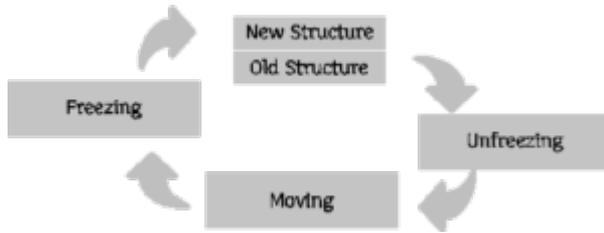


Figure 1: Lewin's 3-stage model of change

Source: Lewin 1958, p. 210

In addition to the phases it is essential to know basic error- or success factors of a change process and to take them into account in the management of the change process.

Success factors in the change process - a clear definition of vision and goals is very important at the beginning of a change. If this is not the case, so it lacks the parties to orientation and a basic understanding of the meaning and the need for change. It is important to define both the orientation and premises of the change and the reasons behind it and to communicate on a broad basis. The aim must be to create a broad awareness of the problems standing behind the change and to give the parties concerned orientation.

A change process also requires a high level of information and communication. Unclear, delayed or incomplete information within a change process often have misunderstandings regarding objective and benefits of change on the part of staff to follow. Rumours and emerging fears can also quickly arise pressure. Accordingly, it is important to continuously maintain an open, lively and trusting communication in the course of change (Doppler and Lauterburg 2008, p. 160).

Another success factor in change processes is linked to the responsible or affected executives. Leaders must therefore not only stand uniformly behind the change process, but also be able to deal professionally with the insecurity of affected employees, to engage and to win them for the planned change.

It's a crucial factor, to participate managers and employees as early as possible in the refinement of change. The ways of doing this are manifold; a possibility, for example, is the integration of individual representatives in the project organization. This allows integrated different perspectives in the process, and ultimately an increased acceptance of the forthcoming changes.

Further, not less relevant success factors are cited flexible planning and regular monitoring of the process and a profound anchoring of change. Accordingly, it is necessary to take into account in the planning of the process that major changes often take years to complete and therefore in its design must be flexible enough, to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

Risks in the change process - the ability to change is one of the success factors of a company. But wherever people work, it is not done with the pure implementation of change projects: The human being is, as soon as the change relates to him personally, skeptical and fearful. Active and passive resistance is often the result.

Missing information, no matter the reason, provide plenty of opportunity for misinformation, misinterpretations, own opinion and agitation. Some employees make their own impression of the project before it was ever substantiated. For many people, changes put considerable strain. The usual security and stability is questioned (Lindinger and Zeisel 2013, p. 137).

The main factors for failure are the lack of commitment of the top management levels, followed by unclear target images and visions of change processes and the lack of experience of the managers in dealing with the uncertainty of the employees concerned. Thereby management becomes a central element of control! Other determinants, such as disagreement among senior executives, a lack of support from line managers, insufficient opportunities to cope with anxieties and resistance as well

as the fundamental neglect of psychological factors in regards to project planning, make clear that psychological factors are particularly critical to the success of change processes (C4 Consulting/Technische Universität München 2007, p. 31).

The implementation of a change management is a requirement that companies can succeed utilizing the potential of social media. Established thought-, action- and organizational structures need to be reconsidered, given to the power shifts in the dialogue between companies and their stakeholders (Kreutzer 2014, p. 1).

2. Stages for exploiting the potential of social media

In what stages the process or the integration of social media can develop, shows figure 2.

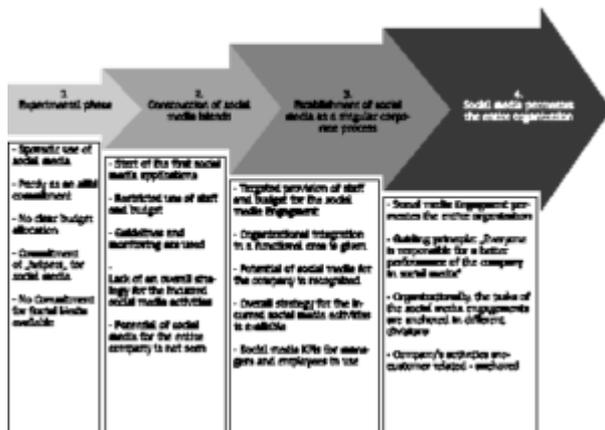


Figure 2: Stages for exploiting the potential of social media

Source: Kreutzer 2014, p. 10

The social media newcomers are mainly to be found in the stage 1: Experimental phase. Here it comes – often without dedicated allocation of human and financial resources – to initiate first steps without any real corporate commitment (Kreutzer 2014, p. 9).

The social media pioneers who deal a bit longer with different social media applications, are often found in the stage 2: Construction of social media Islands. Here social media applications are started within the company with limited human and financial use. A social media overall strategy is not visible even in batches; nevertheless first Guidelines are created and monitoring tasks are processed.

Some of the social media Pioneers are already in transition to stage 3:

Establishment of social media as a singular corporate process. In these companies, the great potential of social media has been recognized for hedging and expand its own business area and anchored organizationally in functional form. Staff and budget are – oriented to the objectives to be achieved – provided.

Stage 4: Social media permeates the entire organization represents the most complete form of organizational implementation of social media marketing. Here the company-wide commitment in social media covers the entire organization – so as it's the case today in a market-oriented business management. The activities in social media have to give up their close ties to a functional area and penetrate the entire organization (Kreutzer 2014, p. 9).

It is understandable that the requirement of a change management is particularly strong in the first three stages in this process. Finally, the existing organizational and operational structures must be comprehensively developed. Not only existing information and process silos have to be set up, but also responsibilities have to be changed, that no longer meet the new demands of social and digital age (Kreutzer and Land 2013, p. 228).

3. Survey along sanitary traders

In a snap poll in March 2016 following question was asked: „In what stage of the integration of social media is your business?“ Of the four questions one answer could be chosen.

Interview participants (n): 60

Survey method: online

Survey period: March 2016

Respondents for the snap poll are decision makers and users who work in small and medium enterprises in the sanitary business. The questionnaire is generated by using a survey software that runs on a web server. To fill in the questionnaire, the respondent has to go to the corresponding internet address. The multiple participation in the survey is excluded by matching the IP address.

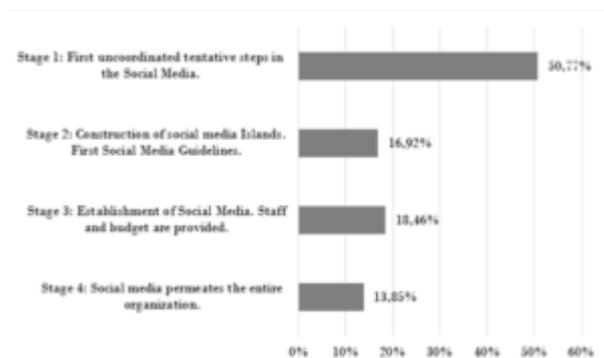


Figure 3: In what stage of the integration of social media is your business?

Source: author

Stage 1: First uncoordinated tentative steps in the Social Media.	50,77%
Stage 2: Construction of social media Islands. First Social Media Guidelines.	16,92%
Stage 3: Establishment of Social Media. Staff and budget are provided.	18,46%
Stage 4: Social media permeates the entire organization.	13,85%

Table 1: In what stage of the integration of social media is your business?

Source: author

Target of the survey – Social media marketing means mainly the long periods building of customer relationships, creating loyalty and trust as well as the sustainable improvement of the image and brand awareness. The available online tools enable rapid response to possible negative developments and provide businesses therefore the opportunity to quickly take countermeasures (Scott 2007, p. 20). Social media marketing is marketing through the targeted use of social media to publish user-generated posts and to exchange information. It is thus a form of marketing, which aims own marketing objectives through the use of and participation in social communication- and exchange processes through standard web applications and technologies to achieve (Hettler 2010, p. 38). The aim of the survey was to find out how targeted small medium sized enterprises use social media.

Result of the snap poll – The snap poll consisted of a question and four possible answers, of which one response could be chosen. About 50% of the participants responded that they are at level 1, and take the first tentative steps uncoordinated in the social media. Nearly 17% are in stage 2 and build first social media islands in the company. First Social Media Guidelines are available. 18,46% of respondents already established social media in the enterprise and provide staff and budget. In this third stage the great potential of social media is detected and used by the company to hedge and

expand its own business unit. In at least about 14% of the companies social media permeates the entire organization. These companies in stage 4 utilize the most comprehensive form of organizational implementation of social media marketing.

4 Limitations and outlook

The survey is a scientific method by which information about the level of information, opinions, values, behavior of people or basic demographic data are to be obtained. As a scientific method, they must be carried out according to strict rules. Survey forms as Polls do not meet the academic requirements. Since the survey was carried out only under specialist dealers in the sanitary sector, it gives a good impression about the current state of integration of social media within the organizations.

More than half of the companies are still in the first phase of uncoordinated tentative steps in the social media. By moving up of young people into working life, the opening up to social media will continue to forge ahead. Young people use the social media self-evident. They cannot be an indispensable part of everyday life, thus they will increasingly find its way into the companies.

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Klíčové slová/Key Words

change management, change process, social media, social media guidelines
riadenie zmien, proces zmeny, sociálne médiá, inštrukcie sociálnych médií

JEL klasifikácia

M31

Résumé

Proces zmeny v kontexte podnikovej komunikácie: Stupne pre využitie potenciálu sociálnych médií

Mnoho podnikov sa dokonca vzdáva využívať sociálne médiá, pretože sa obávajú straty kontroly nad vlastnou komunikáciou aj s tým prislúchajúcimi výhodami. Je potrebné úprimne pripustiť, že spoločnosti už stratili túto kontrolu pri rôznych možnostiach Webu 2.0. Správy odosielateľa ako aj reakcie príjemcu na túto správu nemôžu byť úplne kontrolované, alebo ak, tak len čiastočne. Reakcie ľudí na sociálnom webe teda nemôžu byť ani riadené, ani účelne a spoľahlivo predvídateľné. Pokiaľ je potrebné spustiť a používať virálne efekty, musí byť zabezpečená kontrola. Nepredvídateľnosť v komunikácii vychádza zo základných vlastností a síl sociálnych médií: vzťah a výmena medzi ľuďmi. Strata kontroly je novou a neznámou pre podniky pretože sociálne médiá sa odlišujú od predtým používaných komunikačných kanálov. Implementácia manažmentu zmeny je požiadavkou na to, aby podniky mohli úspešne využívať potenciál sociálnych médií. Zaužívaná myšlienková a akčná organizačná štruktúra má byť prehodnotená vzhľadom k posilneniu dialógu medzi podnikmi a ich zúčastnených strán.

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Recenzované

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[Social media marketing in hotel organizations and the process of creating value in a cross-cultural environment - an international case study](#)

Social media marketing in hotel

organizations and the process of creating value in a cross-cultural environment - an international case study

The development and usage of information communication technology (ICT) such as social media channels has rapidly changed the tourism and hospitality industry since it both ease the travellers need for information and helps the hotel organizations to spread information to guests all over the world. Therefore, the tourism and hospitality industry can today be seen as an electronic business or e-tourism. The focus of this international case study is hotel organizations and their usage of e-relationship marketing and social media marketing in a cross cultural market. The study includes interviews with 22 hotel managers at 14 hotels in 7 European countries. The purpose is to explore and develop a greater understanding of how hotels in this case study market themselves in social media and practice e-relationship marketing, but also to study the process of creating added value by using cross-cultural e-relationship marketing.

Introduction

The development and usage of information communication technology (ICT) such as social media channels has rapidly changed the tourism and hospitality industry since it both ease the travellers need for information and helps the hotel organizations to spread information to guests all over the world (Nga and Guillet 2011). Therefore, the tourism and hospitality industry can today be seen as an electronic business or e-tourism (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2001, Vuori 2012). As a result of globalization and growth of transnational corporations it becomes more and more significant in both understanding culture and developing cross-cultural marketing strategies. (Keegan 1984; Usinier 1993; Weiermair 2000). The hospitality industry is also affected by the growth of international travel and information technology development (Kriegl 2000). The last decade's development of ICT and social media has dramatically changed how hotel and tourism industry produce, market and deliver their products and communicate both internally and externally (Leung et al. 2013). ICT has become an invaluable tool in the hospitality industry that requires knowledge of trends (Buhalis and Law 2008; Kim and Fesenmaier 2008; Munar 2012). The new ways of communicating through social media has therefore changed how the hotel organization market itself and also changed the job of the marketers (Minazzi and Lagrosen 2014). New knowledge is needed for both the marketer such as the co-workers of the organization working with social media. Considering these trends, it is becoming more and more important to match marketing strategies with the expectations of the consumers (Minazzi 2012). Papacharissi and Yuan (2011) argue that both researchers and practitioners should have a cross-cultural perspective for social media research to be able to understand the differences among countries and cultures that affects the understanding. The focus of this study is hotel organizations and the purpose is to investigate how hotel organizations market themselves in social media and thereby conduct e-relationship marketing in a cross-cultural market. Compared to other industries, hotel organizations are more restricted towards using social media in their marketing (Sigala et al. 2012; Leung et al. 2013). The use of social media increases in the hotel industry, but in comparison with other industries such as banks and airlines, the hotel industry has been more restrictive and therefore many hotels are in the early stages of developing and using e-relationship marketing through social media (Deloitte 2010). There is a need for hotel organizations to understand the suitable way to use e-marketing and social media in their marketing strategy (Minazzi and Lagrosen 2014). Relationship marketing within digital communication channels such as social media is referred to as e-relationship marketing and can be helpful in the process of co-creating value and interaction between the hotels and their customers

(Grönroos 2008; Nga and Guillet 2011). Grönroos (2008) argues that the interaction process is the fundamental part of relationship marketing and emphasizes that it's in this process that value is created. It's important to take into consideration that the hotel industry is constantly changing as new actors persistently enter the market and increases the competition. As the hotel industry is sensitive to trends, has an extremely high competition and very flexible clients, marketing through e-relationship marketing and social media has become an important role in creating relationships with the hotels' customers (Nga and Guillet 2011).

1 Earlier research - is there a gap to fill?

The field of relationship marketing in a traditional context has been the object of comprehensive research, but there are still gaps to fill regarding the overall understanding of e-relationship marketing. What do we know about the hotel industry and its usage of e-relationship marketing? Earlier research of the hotel industry and its use of e-relationship marketing has focused on two fields. First, the consumers' perspective, how customers are using social media, creating so-called Wikipedia and evaluation systems (Sigala et al. 2012, Leung et al. 2013). Second, there's research that has focused on the industry's use of social media marketing and the effects of this (Sigala et al. 2012). Lynn et al. 2011, Munar 2012 and Sigala et al. 2012 call for more research in e-marketing and hotel organization and believes that a greater understanding of both the problems and opportunities that exist with e-marketing, and a greater understanding is needed of how leadership affect strategic change as hotels and tourism organizations undergo in the adoption of ICT and social media.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The focus of this study is hotel organizations and their usage of e-relationship marketing and social media marketing in a cross cultural market. The purpose is to explore and develop a greater understanding of how hotels in this case study market themselves in social media and practice e-relationship marketing. In order to fulfill this aim the article seek to answer following research questions:

RQ1: How does the hotels within the hotel chain, in the study called "International hotels" market themselves in social media?

RQ2 How could the process of creating added value by using cross-cultural e-relationship marketing be described and understood?

1.2 Case study

The study is a part of a PhD thesis and focus on 14 hotel organizations within an international hotel chain, in this study called "International hotels". The usage of social media is relatively new at the hotels. Until 2013 the hotels were not allowed to use social media in their marketing which makes them quite novice when it comes to social media marketing. The hotels are responsible for what type of social media they choose to communicate through but receive social media guidelines from the marketing head office, and the social media manager.

The choice of hotel chain is based on the fact that the hotel organizations are in the beginning of the process of using, learning and adoption social media marketing and e-relationship marketing, but also on the fact that the hotel chain is a part of a large, international hotel co-operation. The overall aim for the PhD thesis is to do a qualitative, longitudinal study of the organizational learning process of the adoption of social media within the hotel organizations.

1.3 Methodology

An explorative, qualitative approach was chosen for the case study, to be able to explore and develop a greater understanding of e-relationship marketing. The choice of method is based on the fact that qualitative research method can help to create insights and identify key variables in the research questions (Malhotra and Dash 2009). The methodological approach in this study is interpretive and can be characterized as hermeneutic (Alvesson and Berg 1992). Case studies can be appropriate in studies that intend to answer questions like “why” and “how” and is descriptive in nature (Yin 1998). In total, 22 semi-structured interviews at 14 different hotels in 7 European countries (Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden) has been carried out with marketing managers, sales managers and hotel managers (people responsible for social media activities) in the hotels. The interviews took place at the different hotels August -December 2014. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed (Bryman 2008). The themes for the interviews was focused on the usage of social media marketing in the hotel organization. Thereafter, the interviews have been analyzed using a qualitative analysis. It should be pointed out that no study of the marketing material published in social media has been done.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Electronic marketing in a global environment

Electronic marketing (e-marketing) on the internet has dramatically changed how companies can market and sell their products, build and preserve their brands and also develop relationships with their customers (Luck and Lancaster 2003; Luck and Lancaster 2013). The development of information communication technology (ICT) has been crucial for the development of e-marketing, making it possible to communicate through digital networks like social media platforms. Organizations ' desire to establish and maintain relationships with clients has been simplified because new technology has made it easier not just to spread digital messages but also to interact with customers online. So summarize, internet has created new opportunities both to create and to preserve relationship with customers (Bauer, Grether and Leach 2002; Gilbert and Powell-Perry 2002; Sigala et al. 2012; Luck 2013). The development of internet and information technology has fastened the progression of globalization and global, cross cultural markets. Tian and Lan (2010) argue that it's important for marketer to be aware of cultural differences between markets and customers to succeed in a global marketplace. The authors suggests that for e-marketing to become e-commerce to become effective, marketers must ensure that customers from different cultures, using different languages can understand the digital messages.

2.2 From relationship marketing to e-relationship marketing

Although the development of internet and communication technology has changed marketing, the focus of marketing started changing already in the early 1990's. Researchers argued that marketing was facing a new paradigm called relationship marketing (RM), where the main change was that there would now be a focus on creating relationships with the customers and keeping them (McKenna 1991; Christopher, Payne, and Ballantyne 1991; Grönroos 1994; Buttle 1996; Gummesson 1996). This to be compared with traditional marketing activities that focused on attracting customers to interaction with customers (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Xiang and Gretzel 2010). The traditional one-way- communication has therefore to a great extent been replaced with two-way communication (Kotler et al. 1999). The goal of relationship marketing is to create long-lasting relations, not just with the customers but with suppliers and the stakeholders (Grönroos 2008). Nevertheless the core of these activates is to create loyal customers which is one of the best advantages towards competition (Grönroos 1994; Reinartz and Kumar 2003; Ryals 2003). Loyal

customers are known to buy more frequently, reduce marketing cost, show less sensitivity to price, and bring in more recommendations through positive words of mouth (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler 2002; Payne and Holt 2001). An essential element of relationship marketing is the creation and addition of value that can increase customer satisfaction (Ravald and Grönroos 1996). Grönroos definition of the added value is that the customers, after having been assisted feel more pleased than before (Grönroos 2008). The value added, or created is generated when interaction takes place between the organization and the active customer. Therefore e-relationship marketing should be described as a value co-creation process where the customer and organization exchange skills, knowledge and information (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Grönroos 2008; Payne et al. 2009). The traditional international marketing strategy is according to Tian and Lang (2010) different from e-marketing since the messages rarely can be developed and specific for a certain geographical market. Electronic marketing material reaches all followers e.g. in social media, and therefore need to be adjusted to be understood and interpreted in the right way by all followers.

2.3 E-marketing in hotel organizations

The hotel industry has been using ICT since the 1950's, developing new booking systems, administrative work and communication, all with the purpose of creating added value for guests. Most hotels reach out to a global market, welcoming guests from different countries and cultures. Today's technology make it possible for the guests to seek information about hotels all over the world, book and review, by using the internet and social media (Buhalis and O'Connor 2005; Nyheim et al. 2005; DiPietro and Wang 2010). Despite the long-time usage of ICT, hotels has been restricted towards using e-marketing and social media marketing (Sigala et al. 2012; Leung et al. 2013). An explanation for the cautious attitude is the uncertainty about the expected return on investments (ROI) of an e-marketing investment. Law and Lau's research from 2000, show a low level of knowledge of hotel managers in terms of knowledge and understanding of IT, which according to the authors is a factor that affects the (compared to other industries) relatively slow development and investment in IT and social media in the hotel industry. Aguila-Obra (2006) and Sigala et al. (2012) argue that it is only when IT and social media is looked upon as a part of the entire hotel organization and not as an isolated phenomenon that the ROI of an investment will be made visible. E-marketing in social media has increased the visibility of the hotels but they have also led to an increased demand to understand and master the new technology (Munar 2012). It's not just marketers who are faced with new knowledge, even the organization's other employees are faced with the challenge to use of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

3 Findings

3.1 Social Media

Social media channels is the natural choice for all of the hotels in the study to perform e-relationship marketing. Since all 14 of the hotels in the case study are a part of the same hotel chain, they have all followed the hotel chains directions not to use social media until 2013. Therefore all of the hotels are in the beginning of their implementation process of social media. All of the hotels use Facebook and many of them use Instagram, these two social media application are often connected, showing published content in both channels. Several of the hotels have a twitter account but few of them actually uses it and explains this with the fact that they haven't fully embraced the communication channel and also that twitter takes a lot of time. Several hotels use and define LinkedIn, Youtube and Google+ as a social media channel. None of the hotels uses blogs to market themselves. In all of the hotels, one person, or a "social media team" is responsible for the social media activities and the posts that are published. Many of the hotels underlines the importance of quality and therefore have

strict quality control before photos and other posts are published. All of the hotels still use traditional marketing but have stopped or decreased the usage of print media and advertisement in e.g. newspapers, arguing that it costs much and gives a very uncertain outcome. The interviews reveal that few of the marketers consider the cultural factors when posting e-marketing material in social media. The answers differ when it comes to describing why the hotel uses social media and what the advantages are:

"We take note of how one can work, but then we maybe have a more personal approach. Brussels has to somehow consider the cultures of many countries. But you still have to find your own tone, I think in some we need to find out who we are [as a hotel organization] because then it becomes exciting. But of course, we have learned a lot from him [social media manager] too and of the workshops and stuff. But I also think that it's really quite banal because social media is the kind of thing we have done in all ages, responded to comments. In the past, we received a letter to the hotel and so I wrote a nice letter back and sent a gift but today, the comments on the web but the difference is that they are transparent and everyone can read them, but the part is so ... there is no hocus pocus" (Hotel manager 1)

Some of the managers, in charge of social media at the hotels, think that the main purpose of using social media is to spread the information and marketing material produced by the hotel while others look upon social media channels as a possibility to interact with customers and also an opportunity to learn more about what the hotel guests like and what they post when living at the hotel. The return on investment (ROI) causes a lot of concern at many of the hotels and they are all very insecure of what the social media marketing contributes with.

"everything should be measured...we need to know return on investment on everything we do. You always ask what's the return on investment, that's the most important thing. And from Facebook, it's quite hard to measure. Do the guests book after seeing our Facebook page or? We don't know." (Sales manager 2)

Many of the informants express that it is time-consuming to work with social media and complain about that they have to do the social media tasks above all other work tasks. Therefore the social media activities often get put aside. The informants describe that the hotel industry likes and has a tradition to measure effectiveness and sales in numbers and since it is very difficult, or impossible, to quantitatively measure the effects of social media the hotels are struggling with ways of reporting and analyzing the results of the social media implementation.

3.2 Content

What and when to post is of great concern for the hotels. Most of them try to plan their social media activities but they express that it is difficult to fill the social media channels with interesting, fun and new material. They explain that the material should be understood by many groups of customers and are sometimes a bit concerned about the fact that the hotel chain wants them to use English and not their native language. The content published by the hotels can be divided into two categories, material produced by the marketing head office that are distributed to the different hotels and that the hotels are expected to publish. This type of material often contains e.g. competitions, offers and activities concerning all of the hotels within the hotel chain. Many of the managers dislike this "by the concern" produced material, arguing that it has the nature of traditional marketing material and would be better suited in traditional media like newspapers or on websites. They also express that there is a cultural clash when it comes to the marketing content produced at the head office, explaining that they experience the material to be "too much business and sale" and explain this with different cultural values.

"Some weeks we have tons of content that we are happy about and then I'll post daily but only one post on Facebook because otherwise it's a bit spammy. But some weeks it's a bit more slow and it's hard to find content I don't just want to post something like happy Friday or something like that. I

don't really believe in that. But I we have some ideas on how create good content and then hopefully post daily on Facebook, weekly on Instagram, two to three times on twitter every day..." (Sales manager 2)

The other category consists of material produced by the hotels themselves. The managers all agree on that the quality of pictures and language is important but they disagree on e.g. how good quality pictures should have. Some of them argue that pictures taken with a mobile phone just isn't good enough while others think that the mobiles gives the staff of the hotel a chance to "capture the moment". None of the hotels are situated in a country who has English as their first language and that sometimes causes difficulties because the hotel chain social media guidelines advocates the usage of the English language. The informant's expresses that this has caused some problems and they have tried to both use English and e.g. French or Italian in social media channels but see that this "destroys" the post with too much text to take in. As a result, many of the hotels has chosen to use English and as a result of this, they notice less interaction with non-English speaking, local customers. It is of great importance to the hotels to gain the local matters, promoting "their" city or country and the material published in social media often contains events and happenings in the local area. Many of the hotels also underlines it is of great importance to reach out to their local customers to attract local guests to their restaurants and bars. All of the informants emphasizes the importance of creating interest. The usage of storytelling unifies the hotel and is a concept they all emphasizes. The informants express that storytelling gives them an opportunity to create a relationship with the customers and generating interest. Recurring posts at many of the hotels are pictures and presentations of members of the staff such as "guest of the week" where specific quests are presented and interviewed. The hotels describe that they look at other hotels activity in social media to get inspired but also to learn and get more knowledge.

3.3 Interaction and user generated content (UGC)

The interviews with the informants reveals that there are two clusters, those who active seek for interaction with customers and those that don't. The ones that do interact with customers are also active in looking at hashtags and pictures and posts published by their guests. They comment and share the posts and expresses that the user generated content is important when analyzing what the customer like or not. Some of the hotels expresses that the material produced by the user/customer (UGC) are better than the hotel's own marketing material since it interprets as word-of-mouth by other customers and not as pure marketing with the aim to sell.

"you need to be in contact with your guests and know what they are sharing and what kind of pictures, stories and reviews they are sharing with their followers. So you need to be there. You get ideas and when the guest share their experiences in social media its free marketing. And that's important. And if you are on social media you need to be active. You need to do something. Because if someone is going to follow you and ok, nothing happens, the last post is five months ago, it's not interesting." (Marketing manager 6)

All of the hotels use a program that gives them an everyday report telling them how many "likes", comments and reviews they have gotten. This is information that is used by the hotels to analyze customer behavior but also the service provided form the hotels. However, there is a category of user generated content that all of the hotels emphasize the importance of interact with, and that is the online reviews. They are all aware of that the hotels own ranking system has lost its importance and has been replaced by the user generated review on e.g. Mytravel.com. They all agree on that it's important to answer, but how fast the hotels should answer divided them into different categories. The negative comments are quite few but of great importance for the hotels. The managers describe that since they can't control the USG in sites like Mytravel, it is of great importance how they handle it. Some of the hotels do lots of research when it comes to why they have received a bad review, connecting the guest and offers them compensation.

4 Discussion

4.1 Social media in a cross-cultural environment

Although the hotels started using, and was encouraged to start using social media at the same time, the interpretation on what value social media can add to the customers differs within the hotels in the case study. Some hotel thinks that the main purpose of using social media is to spread the information and marketing material produced by the hotel which can be seen as a traditional one-way, push-marketing strategy (Kotler 1999; Grönroos 2008) only taking place in a new, electronic environment. Other hotels look upon the social media channels as a possibility of interact with customers and also an opportunity to learn more about what the hotel guests like and what they post when living at the hotel (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Grönroos 2008; Payne et al. 2009; Grönroos 2008). When it comes to cultural differences, its most of all the language that the marketing managers takes into consideration. It sometimes worries them that they are supposed to use English instead of their native language and they express that they get less interaction with local customers due to this. This can be seen as an indication that the adoption and strategy of both cross cultural marketing and social media marketing is not yet fully developed. The hotels also “suffers” from cultural differences between marketing materials produced in the USA that are used in a European market. This indicates that the social media and e-marketing process is not yet taken into the hotel marketing strategy to its full extent (Tian and Lang 2010). One reason for this can be a lack of knowledge of interest and focus or knowledge from the hotel management (Munar 2012 and Sigala et al. 2012). Although it should be noticed that some of the hotels recently has implemented social media managers with full responsibility of the digital channels and put a lot of effort in embracing the social media channels.

4.2 Value creation

According to the empirical material many of the hotels are still in the process of figuring out and what kind of value it creates. The great diversity of content, from traditional push-marketing material, to “guest of the week” suggests that the hotels are struggling with their e-relationship marketing process and what content invites to added customer value (Ravald and Grönroos 1996; Grönroos 2008). The value added, or created, emerges when interaction takes place between the organization and the active customer and in this case study the interaction seems to take place mainly in the user generated content like reviews on Mytravel. (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Grönroos 2008; Payne et al. 2009). I also understood hat one of the main reasons for using social media marketing, or e-relationship marketing was the hope for creating and preserving the customer brand loyalty by increased interaction and personal service (Grönroos 1994; Reinartz and Kumar 2003; Ryals 2002). More value could probably be added and co-created with the customers by the hotels being interactive to an even higher degree. These activates takes time and it seems like there are not enough time for the marketers to interact, and also, the social media activities are postponed when other job assignments are considered more important. Language is of great importance for the hotels and cultural differences both in how one should express oneself in marketing but also what language to use is causing the hotels some concern. By using English one could argue that the hotels satisfy and add value to customers from other countries and creates possibilities for creating a relationship with these (Grönroos 2008). Then again, using English in a non-English country creates a gap towards local customers and stakeholders and are forcing the hotels to choose what group to focus their marketing material on.

4.3 Interaction

There seems to be a discrepancy based on the nature of social media and the hotel organizations

need for quality control. Social media is based on instant interaction, transparency and presence, conditions now always easy to the hotel organization to live up to (Sigala et al. 2012). What one could argue is that both the structure of the hotel organization and the traditional marketing strategy still plays an important role in creating value and e-marketing strategy in the hotel organizations. It also seems like the managers and staffs personal interest and knowledge in social media affects the social media activities and choice of digital communication channels. Informants that enjoy and are interested in social media are also more active and interact more. The personal interest in social media also seems to affect the choice of social media channels. Twitter for example is one of those channels that several informants has chosen not to use because they feel that they don't completely understand it and/or never used it. Therefore one could argue that personal attitudes towards technology and lack of knowledge are crucial when it comes to what social media channels the hotel (Phillips 2007; Buhalis and Law 2008; Kim and Fesenmaier 2008; Munar 2012).

Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study is to achieve an improved understanding of e-relationship marketing in hotel organization in a cross-cultural environment by investigating how hotel organizations market themselves in social media and practice e-relationship marketing. I have studied how they organize their marketing activities, what social media they use and how they embrace the global interaction with the customer through these digital channels. I have found that the hotels in the case study are still in the process of learning how to use social media marketing, and to what extent they should interact with their global customer. It also seems like the hotel chain are struggling with cultural gaps within the global organization, causing some concern at individual hotels.

At the moment, the interaction from the individual hotels is focused on answering user generated content (UGC) like complaints and reviews, and few hotels are active when it comes to seek interaction with customers elsewhere and therefore one could argue that the studied hotels not fully use the potential of e-relationship and co-creation of value. The study has several limits, e.g. only one hotel chain has been studied and also, there has been no study of the marketing content used and published by the hotels. A qualitative and/or quantitative study of the e-marketing content is suggested as future research.

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Klíčové slová/Key Words

social media, marketing, cultural environment, e-tourism
sociálne médiá, marketing, kultúrne prostredie, e-cestovný ruch

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Résumé

Marketing sociálnych médií v hotelierskych organizáciách a proces vytvárania hodnoty v interkultúrnom prostredí - medzinárodná prípadová štúdia

Rozvoj a využitie informačných a komunikačných technológií (IKT), ako sú napríklad kanály sociálnych médií rýchlo zmenili cestovný ruch a služby zabezpečujúce komplexný cestovateľský servis, hlavne kvôli zmierneniu potreby cestujúcich po informáciách a pomáhajú hotelierskym organizáciám šíriť informácie pre hostí z celého sveta. Preto dnes môže byť cestovný ruch vnímaný ako elektronický obchod alebo e-cestovný ruch. Zameraním tejto medzinárodnej prípadovej štúdie sú hotelové organizácie a ich využívanie vzťahového e-marketingu a marketingu sociálnych médií na interkultúrnom trhu. Štúdia obsahuje rozhovory s 22 hotelovými manažérmi v 14 hoteloch v 7 európskych krajinách. Cieľom je skúmať a vyvíjať väčšie pochopenie toho, ako samotné hotely v tomto prípade skúmajú daný trh v priestore sociálnych médií a aplikujú v praxi vzťahový e-marketing, ale taktiež študovať proces vytvárania pridanej hodnoty pomocou interkultúrneho vzťahového e-marketingu.

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Recenzované

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