

Designing a strategic co-creation model using social media in small and medium-sized industrial businesses

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Abstract

The aim of the current research is to design a strategic co-creation model using social media in small and medium-sized industrial businesses. According to its purpose, the research method is applicable; and in terms of implementation, it is qualitative; using the data-based method. The statistical population includes 8 experts in the field of digital marketing in the B2B sector, selected by snowball sampling. The data collection tool includes semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was carried out using the coding and data-based method and MAXQDA software. Based on the findings of the research, central phenomenon is influenced by 60 indicators or causal factors; and 11 indicators or contextual factors along with 18 intervening factors are able to influence strategic co-creation strategies in the social media environment. In addition, the results led to the identification of 14 diverse strategies in this field, which can contribute to achieving 36 diverse consequences of the strategic use of social media in the co-creation actions of small and medium-sized industrial businesses. The phenomenon of strategic co-creation in the environment of social media and industrial customers depends on a set of factors and the adoption of a set of strategies, among these factors, the set of customer perceptions as the most frequent causal factor, and the outsourcing of customer relationship management measures as the most important strategies show the importance and the position of these two issues in the field of increasing the effectiveness of the central phenomenon of the research.

Keywords:

strategic co-creation, social media, industrial businesses, small and medium companies.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Customers and their cooperative behaviors are among the most important tools to improve business marketing functions, improve the quality of products and services in accordance with market expectations, needs and trends, and reduce overall marketing and advertising expenses of businesses (Xie et al., 2016). In today's highly competitive markets, those businesses can achieve success that are capable of creating value and are able to provide higher and more creative values for their customers, and create higher incentives for customers to encourage stronger and more creative interactions. On the other hand, according to Nasution et al, (2014), due to the increase in the level and intensity of competition in the productive and industrial markets; in the both local markets and international markets, the customers have the higher right to choose and the bargaining power compared to the past. Therefore, in order to maintain a competitive position and gain commercial success, businesses have to provide more value to their customers compared to their competitors. But one of the most important survival conditions in today's competitive and turbulent business markets is to focus on environmental changes and create innovation and create joint value with customers in business (Nasution et al, 2014). The strategic use of social media in industrial markets consists of programmings, plans and broad and general goals of industrial businesses in the field of using these media in dealing with industrial customers (Cartwright et al. et al., 2021). Beyond the tactical use of social media, the present study is focused on a more comprehensive aspect of using social media in the field of adding value through the customer, that is, the strategic use of social media. The issue of the need to present a comprehensive and general plan in the field of strategic use of social media in co-creation activities, along with the severe limitation of the domain of knowledge in the strategic use of social media in specific areas such as synergy with customers among industrial customers, leads the study towards providing a paradigmatic model in the field of designing a strategic co-creation model using social media in industrial businesses. Especially, studies such as Foltean et al, (2019) and Iankova et al, (2019) stated that there is limited knowledge in the field of strategic social media marketing and its various dimensions in the field of industrial marketing. Based on the explanations presented, the main research question can be raised as follows: What is the model of strategic co-creation using social media in small and medium-sized industrial businesses?

Theoretical Framework

Strategic co-creation

Co-creation of value as a strategy includes diverse but similar meanings, concepts, and contexts. In the initial definitions of this concept, Prahad & Ramaswamy (2004) introduced co-creation of value as the joint creation of value by business and customers through exchange activities of knowledge, information, and awareness, and considered these actions as a factor in creating, modifying, and updating products and services in line with the needs and expectations of customers (Piller et al, 2010).

Social media and online co-creation

Studies in the field of the role of social media in value co-creation, especially among industrial customers, are developing and still in their early stages. These studies are moving from the what question to the how question stage (Martini et al, 2017). Today, large companies and even emerging and small businesses spend a significant part of their budgets on digital marketing measures and developing interactive communications in the form of synergistic strategies with customers. These measures are taken while the real benefits of these measures are not certain for businesses, and the measures are accompanied by trial and error. Especially the position and role of social media in improving the innovation level of businesses and improving and revising

their products and services is still being investigated and studied, and studies in this field are on an exponential growth path. This issue shows that the field of customer relationship management in social media and more specifically synergy in the context of social media is a subject that still has significant hidden angles (Rashid et al, 2019).

Bashokouh Ajirlo & Ghasemi Hamedani (2023) investigated the role of influencing factors on value co-creation through technologies equipped with artificial intelligence and knowledge management in the tourism industry. The results showed that the significant effect of customer-based factors of technologies equipped with artificial intelligence and knowledge management on the effectiveness of value co-creation was confirmed, and customer-based factors could mediate the relationship between technologies equipped with artificial intelligence and the effectiveness of value co-creation. Finally, technologies equipped with artificial intelligence were able to mediate the relationship between customer-based factors and the effectiveness of value co-creation.

Shirkhodaie et al, (2023) investigated the identification of effective factors of co-creation in social media brand communities. The variables of customer participation in social media brand communities and social support have positive and significant effects on the mediating variable of communication quality, and the quality of communication has a positive and significant effect on brand co-creation. On the other hand, social support and customer participation in social media brand communities have a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty, and brand loyalty has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable of brand co-creation, and there is no significant relationship between the quality of communication and loyalty.

Research methodology

According to its purpose, the research method is applicable; and in terms of implementation, it is qualitative; using the data-based method. The statistical population includes 8 experts in the field of digital marketing in the B2B sector, selected by snowball sampling. The data collection tool includes semi-structured interviews.

Research findings

Data analysis was carried out using the coding and data-based method and MAXQDA software. Based on the findings of the research, central phenomenon is influenced by 60 indicators or causal factors; and 11 indicators or contextual factors along with 18 intervening factors are able to influence strategic co-creation strategies in the social media environment. In addition, the results led to the identification of 14 diverse strategies in this field, which can contribute to achieving 36 diverse consequences of the strategic use of social media in the co-creation actions of small and medium-sized industrial businesses. The phenomenon of strategic co-creation in the environment of social media and industrial customers depends on a set of factors and the adoption of a set of strategies, among these factors, the set of customer perceptions as the most frequent causal factor, and the outsourcing of customer relationship management measures as the most important strategies show the importance and the position of these two issues in the field of increasing the effectiveness of the central phenomenon of the research.

Conclusion

The current research was conducted with the aim of designing a strategic co-creation model using social media in small and medium-sized industrial businesses. The findings are in line with the results of Bashokouh Ajirlo & Ghasemi Hamedani (2023), Shirkhodaie et al, (2023), Hasan et al, (2023), Zhang et al, (2023), Asgharzadeh et al, (2023), Taleghani et al, (2022),

Yazdani Kachuei et al, (2022), Ghomi Kazemi & Vaziri (2021), Cartwright et al, (2021), and Cartwright et al, (2021). Zhang et al, (2023) showed that the tool has satisfactory reliability and validity. This work contributes to theory and practice by providing a context-specific and accurate conceptualization of the value of customer co-creation experience with a reliable and valid survey tool.

According to the results of the research, the following suggestions are provided:
It is suggested that future studies, while focusing on the results of the current research, apply their views and tools in the field of developing strategic co-creation models using social media in small and medium-sized industrial businesses, and thus carry out a comparative research, independent of the results of the current research, while achieving other results.