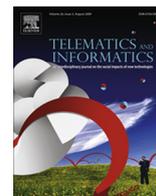




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Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature

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ABSTRACT

People worldwide are largely engaged and attached with the web 2.0 technology and Social media platforms. By the same token, businesses start looking at such technologies as effective mechanisms to interact more with their customers. Equally, the related issues of social media marketing have been also the focus of attention for academics and researchers to expand the current understanding about such phenomena over the marketing area. Accordingly, the main aim of this study is to systematically examine and review the current studies that have conducted over the related area of social media and marketing. By reviewing approximately 144 articles, the researchers were able to provide an overview of the main themes and trends covered by the relevant literature such as the role of social media on advertising, the electronic word of mouth, customers' relationship management, and firms' brands and performance. In this review, it has also studied the most common research approaches adopted to examine the related issues of social media marketing. Further discussion is also introduced followed by an explanation of the current review limitations and recommended directions to be examined by future studies.

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1. Introduction

People increasingly look at social media applications as an important part of their daily life and more likely to move their interactions to the virtual platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter). This, in turn, positively reflect on their orientations and behaviours toward all kinds of social media technology as reported by Alalwan et al. (2016a), Dwivedi et al. (2015), Rathore et al. (2016), Taylor et al. (2011), Zhu and Chen (2015). Therefore, social media applications have been observed as one of the most efficient and influential implications that have been progressively engaged in most aspects of people’s lives (i.e. social life, commercial life, business life, educational sector, political life) (Alalwan et al., 2016a; Algharabat et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2015; Hawkins and Vel, 2013; Hinz et al., 2011; Rathore et al., 2016; Usher et al., 2014; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014; Zhu and Chen, 2015).

Social media has been largely realised as an effective mechanism that contributes to the firms’ marketing aims and strategy; especially in the aspects related to customers’ involvement, customer relationship management and communication (Filo et al., 2015; Saxena and Khanna, 2013). For instance, from the perspective of the national governing bodies, social media could strategically enhance a two-way communication between firms and customers, and accordingly, attaching customers more with the organisations’ brands. This would be in addition to the ability of social media to present the content posted visually, verbally, or textually or using a mix of textual, visual, and verbal content (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). Over different contexts, firms have been looking forward to utilising the social media in many aspects of their interaction with customers such as facilitating the information search, interactivity, promotion and enhancing the customers buying behaviours (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Therefore, a variety of interactive practices and mechanisms have been developed by organisations to enhance their brand identity as well as their marketing performance (Leeflang et al., 2014; Filo et al., 2015; Schultz and Peltier, 2013). In fact, a considerable amount of time and resources have been projected over this area in order to attract more customers either in the terms of involvement or in the term of online customer relationship (Filo et al., 2015). Bennett (2013) reported that most business firms (about 93%) worldwide have adopted and engaged such innovative platforms and tools in their process to communicate and serve their customers.

In general, social media has been the focus of attention either by practitioners or researchers to know more how such applications could be successfully adopted and implemented (Billings, 2014; Hardin, 2014; Hutchins, 2014; Sanderson, 2014). This is due to the necessity to learn more about the main requirements of successful implementation of such technology as well as how much the investment in such applications is feasible (Hutchins, 2014). In this regard, Hutchins (2014) greatly supported the importance of examining the role of social media over different contexts to expand the existing knowledge toward such important issues of social media. In the same line, Pedersen (2014), Knoll (2016), Pegoraro (2014), Rowe (2014) attributed the importance of addressing the related issues of using social media platforms to the innovative nature of these technologies as well as the current state of research over this area is over initial, exploratory stage which, in turn, required further interest and understanding. As well as, in their recent review study, Filo et al. (2015) debated that despite the fact there is a good number of studies that have examined social media and its applications over different area of interest, there is still an need of proposing a theoretical model covering the most important dimensions that could have either positive or negative influence on the success of implementing such systems.

Table 1
Social media definitions.

Term Using	Definition	Reference
Social networking	An electronic service, application, platform, or site used by individuals who have a common interest, beliefs, attitudes, culture, activities and really life relationships	Wikipedia (2016a)
Social networking	Using social media as a means to directly contact and have interaction with other personnel thereby having a real relationship with them	Wells (2011)
Social media	Social media as such they enable individual to broadcast as well as to approach more people and more influence on them	Wikipedia (2016b)
Social Media	New media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of user-generated content among and between organisations (e.g. teams, government agencies and media groups) and individuals (e.g. customers, athletes and journalists)	Filo et al. (2015)
Social media marketing	A dialogue often triggered by consumers/audiences, or a business/ product/services that circulate amongst the stated parties to set in motion a revealing communication on some promotional information so that it allows learning from one another's use and experiences, eventually benefitting all of the involved parties	Dwivedi et al. (2015)
Social media marketing	The utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software is to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders	Tuten and Solomon (2015)

Indeed, researchers (i.e. Berthon et al., 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2015; Filo et al., 2015; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013) have started paying a special interest in examining and exploring the main dimensions of social media applications at diverse contexts, cultures, regions, and from different standpoints. Noticeably, and according to Dwivedi et al. (2015), the vast majority of social media studies were observed to be within the marketing area. Worthwhile, diverse dimensions and many constructs have been tested and covered by researchers who have considered the social media marketing issues. Further, in their attempts to explore and examine such area, researchers have adopted different methods and techniques. Accordingly, this study realises a need of conducting a comprehensive review and analyses of the social media marketing current literature. So that, it will be possible to have a closer view about the main important issues covered as well as which areas require further interest.

According to the above-mentioned discussion, the main aim of the current study is to systematically scan and review the related studies of social media in the marketing area as well as to synthesise and organise the main aspects considered over these studies and how such studies have addressed the related issues of social media marketing.

2. Social media concept

It is important to distinguish between the term of social media and social networking. According to Wikipedia (2016b), social networking services could be identified as “an electronic service, application, platform, or site used by individuals who have a common interest, beliefs, attitudes, culture, activities and really life relationships. On the other hand, as tools of communication, Wikipedia (2016b) addressed the concept of social media as such they enable individual to broadcast as well as to approach more people and more influence on them. Thus, Wells (2011) considered social networking as the use of social media means to directly contact and have interaction with personnel whom that one have a real relationship with or he or she would like to have a contact with (See Table 1).

Good examples of social media applications as reported by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014, p.28) are “social networking sites, consumer review sites, content community sites, wikis, Internet forums and location-based social media.” Another definition was also proposed by Filo et al. (2015) who literally defined social media as “new media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of user-generated content among and between organisations (e.g. teams, government agencies and media groups) and individuals (e.g. customers, athletes and journalists)”.

Indeed, the social media concept has been adopted over a wide range of different contexts. Yet, as the focus of the current study is the implication of social media in the marketing context, there is a need to address it from marketing perspectives. According to Dwivedi et al. (2015, p.291), social media marketing could be defined as “a dialogue often triggered by consumers/audiences, or a business/product/services that circulate amongst the stated parties to set in motion a revealing communication on some promotional information so that it allows learning from one another’s use and experiences, eventually benefitting all of the involved parties.” Tuten and Solomon (2015, p. 21) stated that “the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software is to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders.”

3. Research method

The main focus of the current study is on the literature concerned with the implication of social media within the marketing area. Therefore, other studies that have considered the role of social media over different areas (i.e. education, social, politics, and management) have been excluded. In addition, this study was also restricted to articles published in impact factor journals written in the English language. In different words, the articles are selected in the current study should be published in well-established and cited platform (Journal) that should have adequate index. This is to assure that a journal considered is a peer reviewed journals that written by experts and are reviewed by several other experts in the field before the article is published in the journal in order to insure the article’s quality.

In the current review, the concept-driven systematic review approach proposed by Webster and Watson (2002) was implemented. This method examines the literature from the concepts perspective presented by all authors rather than the author-driven approach that looks at how individual authors have analysed multiple concepts in various articles (Webster and Watson, 2002). This method was therefore found to be suitable in the current review as the area of social media marketing seems to be more emerging area. This is in addition to the fact that this method helps capturing the related studies much easier.

Indeed, over the period extending from September 2015 to January 2016, this study has started looking at the main database research engine (i.e. Scencedirect, Emeraldinsight, EBSCO, and Google scholar) to collect the related articles. The process selection has carefully identified these articles that focus on examining the related marketing issues over the social media platforms. Accordingly, Researchers have used a number of terms to reach the relevant articles such as marketing along with social media, marketing and Web 2.0, customers along with social media, social media marketing, and social media and branding. The researchers also used specific names of the most well-known social media applications: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google + along with marketing, customers, and brands terms to reach the targeted articles. Such approach to reach the most relevant articles has been adopted by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014), Filo et al. (2015) and Dwivedi et al. (2015) in their review studies. Then, all the articles collected have been screened and inspected by authors to assure that the main

focus of each collected study is relevant with our current study aim. A number of criteria were also considered in filtering the papers collected, such as the main theme of paper found should be within the area of marketing as mentioned above; the paper should be published in high impact journal; the language of paper should be in English; the paper should adopt a clear and scientific method. This process yielded 144 articles that are considered for analyses in the current study.

Social media-related issues represent an attractive area of interest for both researchers and practitioners (Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014). Indeed, there are a number of studies that have examined the relevant issues of social media over the consumer behaviour context (Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014). Yet, less attention has been paid to examine the role of social media from the marketing management perspective as mentioned by Bianchi and Andrews (2015) and Leeflang et al. (2014).

By doing so, 144 articles have been collected. These articles have been found to be in different interests and themes and therefore they were segmented in subgroups as follow:

1. Articles that have addressed the role of social media in predicting the advertising activities (i.e. De Keyzer et al., 2015; Rejón-Guardia et al., 2016; Lee and Hong, 2016; Lin and Kim, 2016; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; Swani et al., 2016; Wu, 2016).
2. Articles that have examined how social media can influence the electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) (i.e. Teng et al., 2017; Viglia et al., 2016; Munar and Jacobsen, 2013).
3. Articles that have tested how using social media could impact the customer relationship management (CRM) (i.e. Maecker et al., 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2016; Orenge-Roglá and Chalmeta, 2016; Xu, 2017; Sano and Sano, 2016; Ballings and Van den Poel, 2015; Pronschinske et al., 2012; Kim and Drumwright, 2016; Trainor et al., 2014; Elena, 2016).
4. Articles that have paid attention to brand issues over the social media platforms (i.e. Bernritter et al., 2016; Moro et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2016; Popp and Woratschek, 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017; Gao and Feng, 2016; Kohli et al., 2015; Ahmad et al., 2016; Hudson et al., 2016; Karaduman, 2013; Luo et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016; Barreda et al., 2016; Rutter et al., 2016; Godey et al., 2016; Nisar and Whitehead, 2016; Hajli et al., 2017; Latiff and Safiee, 2015; Bruhn et al., 2012; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Kim and Ko, 2012; Saboo et al., 2016; Saboo et al., 2015).
5. Articles that have examined how social media could predict consumer behaviour as a source of information (i.e. Hamilton et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016; Patino et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012).
6. Articles that have examined factors that influence the customer adoption of social media (i.e. Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2016; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016; Putzke et al., 2014; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Shokery et al., 2016; Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014; Gummerus et al., 2012; Siamagka et al., 2015).
7. Articles that have addressed the role of social media from the organisations' perspectives (i.e. Killian and McManus, 2016; Felix et al., 2016; Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Ananda et al., 2016; Chan and Guillet, 2011; Wu, 2016; Gulbahar and Yildirim, 2015; Movsisyan, 2016; Yadav et al., 2016; Hinz et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2015).

Such categorisation is also in line with Gensler et al. (2013) who conducted a review study of the main literature addressing the related issues of social media in the marketing context. Gensler et al. (2013) found that social media literature could be categorised into four main streams: brand communities; electronic word of mouth; network analysis; and product-harm crises.

In this study, it also looked at the main research approaches adopted, the kind of platforms examined, and in which context these studies were conducted (see Section 4).

3.1. Social media and advertising

Increasingly, social media are largely considered by modern business as promising platforms to conduct the promotional activities as to effectively communicate with the targeted customers (Popp and Woratschek, 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017; Gao and Feng, 2016; Kohli et al., 2015). As reported by Facebook (2014) itself, Facebook was able in 2014 to generate more than 5.4\$ billion from advertising with growing percent up to 58%. Furthermore, Facebook revenue from advertising has grown by 59 per cent during the past year to over \$5.4 billion in 2014 (Facebook, 2014), which is testament to the shift from traditional media advertising to digital interactive media advertising by organisations. Such growing interest could be returned to the high level of attractiveness and interactivity existing in social media platforms (Swani et al., 2016; Wu, 2016). In the line with this thought, Mangold and Faulds (2009) assured that social media should be integrated by firms as an essential part for a promotional campaign. Indeed, promotional campaign conducted via social media could lead to reach different marketing goals (i.e. customer experience, perception, awareness, knowledge, preferences, intention to buy, and actual purchasing) Duffett (2015).

In the light of the importance of social media in the advertising area, A fair number of studies (about 18 articles) that have addressed the associated issues of promotional activities conducted in the social media platforms (i.e. Chang et al., 2015; De Vries et al., 2012; Hill and Moran, 2011; Jung et al., 2016; Lee and Hong, 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Lin and Kim, 2016; Lugmayr, 2012; Mangold and Faulds, 2009; McCaughey et al., 2016; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; Powers et al., 2012; Rejón-Guardia et al., 2016; Steyn et al., 2011; Swani et al., 2016; Wu, 2016). In fact, most of these articles (89%) have supported the role of social media in enhancing the impact of promotional activities on the customer's perception and awareness. For instance, Duffett (2015) discussed that the efficiency and effectiveness of social media advertising activities largely depend

on how customers could perceive and formulate their attitudes toward such activities. Similarly, Carrillat et al. (2014) assured that in order to have such positive customer attitudes, hedonic aspects have to be carefully addressed in social media promotional activities to provide customer more intimate and pleasure pleasurable experience. Further, as concluded by Mir (2012), favourable attitudes were formulated by customers related to ads posted through social media platforms; they could contribute to electronic consumer buying behaviour.

On the other hand, USA students' attitudes to Facebook's advertising were observed by Bannister et al. (2013) to be negative as such advertisements were not closely related to the customers' requirements and information. Therefore, those students are more likely to ignore such advertisements; their purchasing decisions are not reflected by the Facebook advertisements as reported by the same study of Bannister et al. (2013). A study conducted by Chandra et al. (2013) who examined the postgraduate and undergraduate students' attitudes revealed that even though advertisements via social media networks have a positive impact on the buying behaviour which led to further competitive prices, such advertisements have negatively reflected on both components of customers' attitudes: cognitive and affective. In their quantitative study applied in the United Kingdom, Kodjamanis and Angelopoulos (2013) concluded that advertising complaints through Facebook did not have any impact on the behavioural intention to purchase or the purchasing habits as was reported by more than 535 of the survey participants. The impact of Facebook advertising on customers' willingness and attitudes was not moderated by the demographic factors (i.e. age and gender) as stated by Bannister et al. (2013) and Taylor et al. (2011).

3.2. Social media and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)

Via using social media, customers are more able to evangelize their own experience with many more customers. Accordingly, electronic word of mouth has more reach and influence relative to traditional word of mouth spreaded classical human interactions (Hudson et al., 2015). This, in turn, motivates a good number of researchers (about 14 studies) to pay a close attention to the issues related e-WOM (i.e. Chatterjee, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Coulter and Roggeveen, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Hudson et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Munar and Jacobsen, 2013; Priyanka, 2013; Teng et al., 2017; Tham et al., 2013; Viglia et al., 2016). It is worth mentioning that 92% of these studies have reported that social media platforms increase the impact and prevalence of WOM relative to traditional tools. As more interactive platforms with large community size, social media is really empower customers to effectively share their own experience either positive or negative about firms, their products and brands to a large number of audiences (Hudson et al., 2015; Priyanka, 2013). For instance, Coulter and Roggeveen (2012) examined the impact of a number of factors (i.e. source, network, relationship, and message/content) on the customers' reaction and response towards word of mouth distributed by way of social media platforms. Their results approved that traditional word of mouth is still able to keep their crucial impact than e-WOM. Coulter and Roggeveen (2012) also noticed that the product community size and how many members of such community are on the friends' list of customers who have a crucial role in shaping a customer's response. Chu and Kim (2011) tried to explore the main factors that could predict customers' engagement in electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Their statistical findings strongly supported the role of both trust and normative influence on the customers' engagement of e-WOM. In the tourism context, customers, who were observed to have a higher willingness to use and join the online community, also expressed a higher intention to spread positive word of mouth and recommend organisations to other customers (Casaló et al., 2010). Hudson et al. (2015) statistically confirmed the impact of social media on both the customers' emotions and relationship with festival brands over the tourism context, and accordingly, on the customers' willingness to spread a positive word of mouth.

3.3. Social media and customer relationship management (CRM)

The more capable can organisations build and sustain emotional and social ties between their customers and with their brands, the more such organisations could have a close and solid relationship with those customers. In this regard, social media applications are largely considered by firms worldwide to contribute to both customers experience and customer relationship management (Coulter and Roggeveen, 2012). By increasing the rate of content posting and sharing with customers over the social media platforms, firms are more able to foster the level of interactivity and association with their customers (i.e. Hambrick, 2012; Sanderson and Hambrick, 2012; Eagleman, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2014; Pronschinske et al., 2012)

Marketing researchers (about 23 researchers) have been recently noticed to pay a special attention to examine the effective use of social media for the purposes related to building and sustaining CRM (i.e. Abreza et al., 2013; Agnihotri et al., 2016; Ballings and Van den Poel, 2015; Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Elena, 2016; Filo et al., 2015; Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Hudson et al., 2015; Kim and Drumwright, 2016; Maecker et al., 2016; Malthouse et al., 2013; Orenge-Roglá and Chalmeta, 2016; Pereira et al., 2014; Pronschinske et al., 2012; Sano and Sano, 2016; Trainor et al., 2014; Williams and Chinn, 2010; Xu, 2017). The vast majority of those researchers (about 91%) strongly support social media as a new tools that could help organisations to sustain their relationship with their targeted customers. In keeping with Moore et al. (2013), the role of social media in shaping and forming customers' relationship with brands could be different according to the kind of platform used: Facebook or Twitter. Whilst Facebook could have a role in enhancing the customer experience, more interactivity and updated content could be reached using Twitter. In their study, Crofton and Parker (2012) indicated that engaging social

media as an effective marketing mechanism has also a considerable and positive influence on the firms' ability to enhance their loyalty and purchasing behaviour.

Gummerus et al. (2012) examined how a customer's engagement on Facebook brands could enhance the perceived relationship benefits as well as the outcomes of relationships. Two kinds of customer engagement behaviours were identified by Gummerus et al. (2012) – they were community engagement behaviours and transactional engagement behaviours. Furthermore, social benefits, hedonic benefits and functional benefits were all proposed as key relationship benefits that customers could have from engaging on the Facebook brands (Gummerus et al., 2012). By the same token, Pereira et al. (2014) conducted a research on how using Facebook could help firms let their customers get more involved. Accurately, Pereira et al. (2014) intended to explain the impact of using Facebook on the tie between customers and brands posted on the Facebook. Pereira et al. (2014) concluded that even though customers seem to be enthused to follow brands on Facebook, they are less interested in keeping contact with these brands as well as to re-share their content on their own pages. The role of Facebook on enhancing customers' loyalty was also proven by Gamboa and Gonçalves (2014) as well. According to Gamboa and Gonçalves (2014), fans of the Zara brand on Facebook were found to have a higher trust, were more pleased and perceived a higher value, and accordingly, they expressed more loyalty towards Zara than those who did not follow Zara on Facebook. Kim et al. (2014) examined the impact of customer association with brands to the extent of how much the customer gets involved in re-tweeting brand messages on Twitter. Based on data collected from 315 brand followers on Twitter, brand re-tweeters are more likely to have an extent level of brand trust, brand identification, Twitter usage frequency, intention to be a member in the community, and community commitment.

3.4. Social media and brand

The usage of social media for branding issues was also the focus of interest for a good number of marketing researchers (i.e. Bernritter et al., 2016; Moro et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2016; Popp and Woratschek, 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017; Gao and Feng, 2016; Gensler et al., 2013; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). According to Filo et al. (2015), using social media platforms contributes to the ability of firms to attach customers to their own brands more.

Such trend has recently received a considerable interest in many marketing studies. About 35 articles that have examined the related issues of branding over the social media platforms (see Ahmad et al., 2016; Barreda et al., 2016; Bernritter et al., 2016; Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Bruhn et al., 2012; Christou, 2015; De Vries et al., 2012; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Gao and Feng, 2016; Gensler et al., 2013; Girona and Korgaonkar, 2014; Godey et al., 2016; Hajli et al., 2017; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2015, 2016; Karaduman, 2013; Kim and Ko, 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Kohli et al., 2015; Latiff and Safiee, 2015; Luo et al., 2015; Moro et al., 2016; Muk and Chung, 2014; Naylor et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016; Nisar and Whitehead, 2016; Okazaki et al., 2012; Popp and Woratschek, 2016; Rutter et al., 2016; Saboo et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2016). 93% of these articles have strongly argued the crucial impact of marketing activities undertaken over social media platforms on the branding recognition and identity.

For example, Muk and Chung (2014) also attempted to see which factors could motivate customers to follow the brand page. They empirically proved that both kind of utilities (hedonic and factional) were the main factors that motivated customers to join the brand's pages. A conference paper by Christou (2015) which was conducted in Greece aimed at examining how brand loyalty could be contributed by the customers' trust in the social media. Christou (2015) also proposed brand characteristics, company characteristics and customer characteristics as key antecedences predicting customer trust. The main findings of Christou (2015) demonstrated that the characteristics of social media brands have a strong role in predicting the customers' trust which, in turn, positively reflects on brand loyalty. In their content analyses of 355 posts shared by eleven global brands for six kinds of products, De Vries et al. (2012) noticed that the acceptance of these posts by users are strongly contributed by vividness, the post position, and interactivity as well. Another content analysis study by Smith and Gallicano (2015) indicated that in comparison with YouTube, both Twitter and Facebook are more effective social media platforms that communicate with customer as well as create and present the brand stories. Nguyen et al., 2015 argued the role of social media on the brand innovation. They precisely mentioned that the knowledge created through social media platforms crucially predicts brand innovation. Therefore, Nguyen et al., 2015 assured the importance of social media as a strategic mechanism that could contribute to brand innovation. Kim and Ko (2012) empirically examined the impact of marketing activities using social media on the customers' loyalty. Their empirical results showed that such social media marketing activities have an influence on both the customers' intention to purchase and the customers' loyalty via a mediating impact of value equity and brand equity. On the other side, social media could have a negative impact on the firms' brands. This could come from the fact that customers are currently able to share their negative experiences and stories with a large number of people who use social media applications as discussed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2013).

3.5. Social media and customer behaviour and perception

A good number of articles (about 21) have paid attention to social media and its impact on the customer's behaviour and perception. In fact, social media is largely and increasingly considered a main source of information that customer could return when he is in a process to take a purchasing decision (Hamilton et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016). As well as, their own behaviour and perception are strongly predicted by information posted over these platforms (Malthouse et al., 2013). In fact, customers are noticed to use social media over the purchasing process (collecting informa-

tion, evaluating alternatives, and select the best option) or even over the post purchase process such as posting their own experience on the social media (Drews and Schemer, 2010). For example, above 20% of customers stated that social media is an important information source when they are in the process of purchasing new products (Powers et al., 2012). Further, the high extent of interactivity and personalisation provided on social media platforms, such as Facebook, could play an important role in enhancing the penchant to buy and customers' attitudes towards organisations and their brands (Persuad, 2013). In South Africa, Duffett (2015) was also able to empirically confirm the positive impact of advertising through Facebook on millennial customers' intention and actual purchase.

In their case study to test the impact of both Facebook and Twitter on the consumers' engagement and decision-making towards music festival events, Hudson and Hudson (2013) were able to confirm the positive impact of these social media platforms on the customers' engagement after purchase. A recent study undertaken in the hotel context in the USA by Leung et al. (2015) reported that customer experience with social media has an influence on consumer attitudes towards both Twitter and Facebook. This, in turn, shapes the customers' attitudes towards organisations using social media platforms as founded by Leung et al. (2015). Leung et al. (2015) added that the customers' behavioural intention to purchase is predicted by the customers' attitude related to Twitter, Facebook and organisations. In the line with this debate provided by Williams and Chinn (2010), customer experience could also be contributed by using social media platforms which could help firms to provide a good presentation of their brands by contacting and interacting more with their customers. Moreover, the dimensions pertaining to the high degree of interactivity and personalisation have contributed to both customers' experience as well as the information resources needed by customers in their purchasing decisions as stated by Chandra et al. (2013), Duffett (2015) He and Zha (2014) and Patino et al. (2012). Wang et al. (2012) indicated that customers' intention to purchase is significantly predicted by the role of involvement. Wang et al. (2012) noticed that customers' involvement was largely enhanced by using social media. Three factors – enjoyment, internalisation and identification – were found by Kang and Schuett (2013) to be key predictors contributing to travellers' behaviour to share their experiences on the social media platforms.

However, Abreza et al. (2013) argued that implementing social media could comprise of a number of challenges including difficulties of reaching the right target of customers, lack of control, challenges of accurately distributing the firm's resources, and trust issues. Leung and Bai (2013) also indicated that the social media platforms (Facebook or Twitter) do not reflect any variations between users in the term motivation, opportunity and social media involvement, and customers' willingness to keep visiting.

There are also a number of studies that have examined the role of demographic factors (such as age and gender) on the customers' orientation toward commercial activities and were conducted using social media platforms. Bannister et al. (2013) noticed that women express more favourable attitudes toward Facebook ads. By the same token, younger people, whose ages range between 19 to 24 years old, were noticed by Taylor et al. (2011) to have more positive attitudes toward social media ads. According to the study of Ruane and Wallace (2013), Facebook and Twitter were considered by females as the main source of information in addition to their role to derive the purchasing behaviour for such a group of females as well.

3.6. Social media from the organizations' perspective

In the light of their prevalence and leverages, most organisations worldwide have started thinking strategically how they can benefit from social media to make sure they reach their customers as well as contributing to their customers' experience (Leefflang et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2015; Tuten and Solomon, 2015). In fact, in comparison with traditional communication platforms (i.e. TV, radio, newspaper), social media represents a more innovative and cost-effective communication channel providing customers with high interactivity and individualisation as mentioned before (Leefflang et al., 2014). This is in addition to its ability to quickly and efficiently deliver the information required and receive feedback given by customers in a fast and accurate way (Shilbury et al., 2014). For instance, as stated by Abreza et al. (2013), using social media comprises of a number of benefits for the firms' brands such as expanding the customers' knowledge, engaging the customer more, and interacting efficiently with customers. Accordingly, organisations have spent a considerable effort and money in designing their marketing strategies using social media applications. According to eMarketer (2014), about \$138 billion were expected to be invested in this area by 2014. In the USA alone, firms' expenditure on the promotional campaign posted on the social media platforms has also been growing phenomenally over the recent years to reach about \$4.2 billion by the end of 2013 (eMarketer, 2013).

Such an effective role of social media from the organisational perspective has been the focus of attention of number of studies (about 15 articles) over the prior literature (e.g. Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Kim et al., 2015; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; Rathore et al., 2016; Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014; Felix et al., 2016; Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Ananda et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Gulbahar and Yildirim, 2016; Movsisyan, 2016; Yadav et al., 2016). Kim et al. (2015) found that a firm's value can be accelerated by a firm's marketing effort conducted through social media platforms. In the same line, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) tested how a return on investment from the marketing activities applied on the social media network could be enhanced by active customers' behaviour over these platforms (i.e. how often do customers visit such a website; how much time is spent on each visit; and the depth of their involvement on social media activities). More recently, Rathore et al. (2016) intends to explain how content published by customers on different kinds of social media platforms can contribute to the firms' ability to have more insights for product development process. By critically ana-

lysing such content, Rathore et al. (2016) supported the role of social media having such insights from customers and how these insights crucially contribute to the product's development process. Chan and Guillet (2011) addressed the strategic role of social media marketing at different levels over the hotel context. For instance, social media could help these hotels to engage their employees more in the management and planning process as well as to create more valuable content and information to their clients. This helps such hotels to have a more effective and efficient sustainable plans (Chan and Guillet, 2011). Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) also attempted to provide further understanding regarding the adoption of social media platforms and their associated benefits from the organisational perspective. The main results of Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) acknowledged that the firms' decision to use such innovative technology is influenced by internal and external factors. The key benefits pertaining to the adoption of social media by firms as mentioned by Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) were enhancing the process of collecting information, ease to use, increasing the knowledge level, enhancing the internal and external relationships, and facilitating the decision-making process.

3.7. Adoption of social media

According to Bolton et al. (2013), modern firms and directors should pay further attention to the new generation's behaviour and attitudes toward social media applications and how customers are engaging in using such systems. This is due to the fact that a deeper understanding of the usage patterns of social media platforms could help organisations to formulate a clear idea about the future customers' perception and behaviour towards these organisations and their brand identities. The usage features of the social media platforms relate to the length of usage, log on duration, log on frequency and profile update incidence) as well as how customers could access their mobile phones, PCs, and iPads). These are very important aspects that should be considered in examining the role of such platforms on the customers' attitudes, intention and behaviours as assured recently by Duffett (2015). In this regard, Chandra et al. (2013) reported that individuals are more likely to have a more positive attitude towards social media applications by increasing their usage rate of such applications.

Therefore, several studies (about 22 articles) that have tested the customers' adoption of social media applications as well as what are the main factors that could have a crucial impact in this regard (i.e. Killian and McManus, 2016; Felix et al., 2016; Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Ananda et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Gulbahar and Yildirim, 2016; Movsisyan, 2016; Yadav et al., 2016; Bolton et al., 2013; Chandra et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2015; Clavio and Kian, 2010; Girona and Korgaonkar, 2014; Killian and McManus, 2015; Lebel and Danylchuk, 2012; Mahan, 2011; Nusair et al., 2013; Parra-López et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2012; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Wilson et al. (2012) noticed that individuals' nationality reflects significant differences among customers regarding the kind of social media platforms adopted, individuals' attitudes, and motivations to use such technologies as well. Such variations could be attributed to cultural differences, social factors, and economic situations as stated by Wilson et al. (2012). Girona and Korgaonkar (2014) attempted to explain the key drivers justifying why customers are willing to adopt social media applications. In this regard, three kinds of different users' behaviours related to social media adoption were identified by Girona and Korgaonkar (2014); they are the general use of social media platforms; joining brands' page on social media; and opt on ads on the social media. To do so, Girona and Korgaonkar (2014) formulated their conceptual model based on the decomposed theory of planned behaviour. Their results strongly supported the role of attitudes, relative advantage, complexity, compatibility, and self-efficacy in shaping the adoption of social media platforms. According to Mahan (2011), customers are more likely to be motivated to use social media platforms and to interact with sport organisations using such platforms by the role of hedonic motivation (i.e. enjoyment).

Based on both the Technology Acceptance Model and the Resource Based Theory, Siamagka et al., 2015 proposed their conceptual model to predict the adoption of social media over the B2B context. According to the quantitative data that was collected using questionnaires, Siamagka et al., 2015 were able to prove the significant influence of perceived ease of use, image, and perceived barriers on the perceived usefulness pertaining to the social media. Siamagka et al. (2015) also confirmed that organisational innovativeness as well as perceived usefulness have a significant and positive impact on the adoption of social media by firms. Killian and McManus (2015) applied the case study approach to explore the main factors that motivate managers to consider social media applications as effective mechanisms in the firm's marketing communications' strategy. Killian and McManus (2015) found that social media platforms are generally classified in four main areas: creativity, relationship management, entertainment, and news gathering.

Gender reflects differences on the users' preferences towards social media and the promotional activities that are conducted when using such platforms (Lebel and Danylchuk, 2012). For instance, millennial generations' adoption and attitudes toward the social media platforms are more likely to be different between developing countries and developed countries. Such variations are attributed by Bolton et al. (2013) to the economic, cultural, and technical infrastructure differences between developed and developing countries. Clavio and Kian (2010) figured out that female followers seem to be more enthused to purchase athletic products, browsing information and news, and having a strong penchant to maintain their association and membership with bands over the social media pages.

4. Methods adopted in examining the role of social media in the marketing context

In several research methods that have adopted to test the associated issued of social media applications in the marketing area. Researchers were found be largely depend on survey research methods using questionnaire as applied by Chang et al. (2015), Christou (2015), Eagleman (2013), Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014), Gummerus et al. (2012), Moore et al. (2013),

Hudson et al. (2015), Kim et al. (2014), McCarthy et al. (2014), Walsh et al. (2013), Wang et al. (2012). Most of those researchers have employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to analyse their empirical data (see Chang et al., 2015; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Girona and Korgaonkar, 2014; Hudson et al., 2015; Kang, 2011). On the other hand, a number of researchers (i.e. Abreza et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2013; Sanderson, 2011; Schultz and Sheffer, 2010) tested the related issues of social media marketing using the qualitative approach. Noticeably, several qualitative studies have adopted content analyses technique for the material that have posted and shared by customers on the social media as conducted by Clavio and Eagleman (2011), Hambrick (2012), Pronschinske et al. (2012), Sanderson (2011), Sanderson and Hambrick (2012), and Schultz and Sheffer (2010). Likewise, interview was one of the most common instruments used by researchers to collect the qualitative data (see Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Ruane and Wallace, 2013). Other researchers like Girona and Korgaonkar (2014), Pereira et al. (2014), Powers et al. (2012) have used mix method approach to test the related subjects of social media.

Case study as a research approach has been also adopted by Killian and McManus (2015), McCarthy et al. (2014) and others to deeply identify the main aspects determining the role of social media over the marketing area. Another part of studies (i.e. Dwivedi et al., 2015; Filo et al., 2015; Gensler et al., 2013; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014) have systematically review and analyses the main body of literature related to the social media marketing. Some papers like what are conducted by Billings (2014), Hardin (2014), Hutchins (2014), Pedersen (2014), Pegoraro (2014), Rowe (2014), Sanderson (2014), Tham et al. (2013), Williams and Chinn (2010) have attempted to propose and introduce a conceptual and theoretical framework for the main factors that could predict such phenomenon.

It is also worth mentioning that Facebook has been the most social media platform examined (i.e. Ballings and Van den Poel, 2015; Chang et al., 2015; Coulter and Roggeveen, 2012; De Vries et al., 2012; Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Gummerus et al., 2012; Pereira et al., 2014) followed by Twitter (i.e. Coulter and Roggeveen, 2012; Kim et al., 2014) while YouTube has received less interest (i.e. Siamagka et al., 2015). Social media-related issues have also examined over different contexts such as sport marketing context (i.e. Filo et al., 2015); luxury fashion brands (i.e. Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Kim and Ko, 2012); music industry (i.e. Saboo et al., 2015); hotel context (i.e. Chan and Guillet, 2011); travel (i.e. Christou, 2015); tourism (i.e. Hudson et al., 2015; Tham et al., 2013; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014); and B&B (i.e. Siamagka et al., 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012).

5. Discussion

The large and growing number of researches and articles that have addressed the related issues of social media marketing obviously approved the considerable attention paid for such phenomenon over the recent years (Alalwan et al., 2016b). Closer look at the time frame that this phenomenon has taken place leads to notice that the significant part of these studies have been published in the year of 2016; 2015; and 2014 respectively (i.e. Jung et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; McCaughey et al., 2016; Rejón-Guardia et al., 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Kim and Ko, 2012; Saboo et al., 2016; Saboo et al., 2015; Filo et al., 2015; Dwivedi et al., 2015). This, in turn, provides strong evidence that social media and their application should be the focus of attention for both perspectives practitioners and researchers.

By closer reviewing the main body of literature of the social media marketing (144 studies), researchers were able to notice that there are several marketing applications and themes covered. As well as, different factors and methods that have been considered by these studies in order to provide a clear and deep insight for such issues. As presented in section three, seven main themes that have listed by current studies according to the area of interest for 144 studies considered). The first theme have examined how using social media application could contribute to the promotional and advertising efforts (i.e. Chang et al., 2015; De Vries et al., 2012; Jung et al., 2016; Lee and Hong, 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Lin and Kim, 2016). Even though such studies accelerate the current understanding about the fundamental dimensions that should be considered by researchers and practitioners regarding the applications of advertising over the social media platforms, there are some areas that require further investigation. For instance, there is a necessity to discover the impact of the kind and nature of social media platform (i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) on the effectiveness of promotional activities to reach the targeted customers. In the line with this, Filo et al. (2015) call for further interest to explain how customers' attitudes could be differently formed based on the kind of Facebook advertising. There is a need to consider the impact of other factors and dimensions (i.e. social presence and telepresence) (Beuckels and Hudders, 2016) as well as using different research methods to provide a clear picture about the social media advertising (see Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; Steyn et al., 2011). In this regard, extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012) or information Systems Success Model (Delone and Mclean, 2004) could also be integrated with other factors to examine the effectiveness of social media advertising.

E-WOM and CRM have derived a significant amount of interest from a good number of social media marketing studies (i.e. Munar and Jacobsen, 2013; Priyanka, 2013; Teng et al., 2017; Tham et al., 2013; Viglia et al., 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2016; Ballings and Van den Poel, 2015; Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Elena, 2016). Indeed, such increasing interest gives clues about the importance of social media platforms for the marketing aims associated with CRM and WOM. Therefore, more efforts are increasingly required to provide a clear picture regarding the utilizing social media for such aims (see Abreza et al., 2013; Ballings and Van den Poel, 2015; Bianchi and Andrews, 2015; Lee et al., 2016; Munar and Jacobsen, 2013). Worthwhile, marketers are more interested in engaging their customers more based on number of mechanisms (i.e. customization, interac-

tivity, and digital community) as well as how accelerating the usage of such mechanisms could do a contribution in terms of CRM and E-WOM as reported by Coulter and Roggeveen (2012), Filo et al. (2015), Kim et al. (2014), Zeng and Gerritsen (2014). However, aspects related to E-WOM still requires further exploration either in terms of what are the main factors motivating customers to post and share their attitudes and opinions or what are the main outcomes after customers posting that over the social media platforms (Chang et al., 2015).

A number of studies were also noticed to pay a close attention to examine how much using social media could do a contribution for the standpoint of organisations. Most firms worldwide are looking forward to benefiting by using such applications in their business to reach new customers or to enhance their current customer's experience. And accordingly, generating more profit and sales revenue (Ananda et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Gulbahar and Yildirim, 2016; Movsisyan, 2016; Yadav et al., 2016). Indeed, social media seems to be more novel and less costly communication way to have more interactivity and individualisation with the targeted customers. This, in turn, helps firms to do their marketing activities more efficiently and successfully relative to using traditional tools of marketing (i.e. TV, radio, newspaper) (Leeflang et al., 2014).

The impact of social media on the customer's attitudes, buying behaviour, and perception have been the focus of attention for a good part of prior social media literature (i.e. Hamilton et al., 2016; Gironde and Korgaonkar, 2014; Zhu et al., 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016). In fact such issues have been examined in diverse ways. For instance, number of researchers has considered how customers could depend and use social media platforms as source of information in their purchasing process as mentioned by Drews and Schemer (2010), Powers et al. (2012). On the other hand, the other part of literature has concentrated on how customer's attitudes and actual buying behaviour could be influenced by social media.

Customer acceptance of social media applications has received adequate part of prior studies over the related area as well (Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2016; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2016; Putzke et al., 2014; Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Shokery et al., 2016). A variety of constructs that have been considered by researchers in their attempts to explore which aspects are crucial in shaping the customer acceptance of such innovative applications; for instance: Kang (2011); Nusair et al. (2013), Parra-López et al. (2011) have tested the role of perceived benefits and perceived risk (Kang, 2011; Nusair et al., 2013; Parra-López et al., 2011); while website integrity, credibility and subjectivity were considered by researchers like Zeng and Gerritsen (2014). It was also noticed that small number of researchers who have adopted a strong theoretical foundations to propose their conceptual model. Such of that technology acceptance model along with Resource Based Theory were formulated by Siamagka et al., 2015 while Gironde and Korgaonkar (2014) have adopted theory of planned behaviour in their conceptual model. This, in turn, leads to have a necessity to propose a conceptual model based on comprehensive and solid theoretical foundation as mentioned above like UTAUT2. As well as, a need to identify the most critical factors that should be included in such model to predict the customer usage pattern and acceptance of social media platforms.

Indeed, sample has been largely discussed as one of the most important issues that have to be considered by future studies. As mentioned by Jung et al. (2016) and Harrigan et al. (2017), the vast majority of studies have derived their data from university students and usually from developed countries. Thus, it could worth considering different countries (i.e. developed, emerging, developing); cultures (i.e. collectivism versus individualism); and different contexts (i.e. tourism, sports, governmental). As well as, all segments of customers by respecting all their profiles, ages, gender, and educational levels should be well covered to have more accurate view regarding their perception and behaviour over these innovative platforms (Hudson et al., 2015). Moreover, most of these studies have only considered fans for one page over a one specified platform (i.e. Chang et al., 2015). Therefore, a comparison between fans for different page among different platforms and cultures could be useful to be conducted.

It is worth indicating that social media issues are still in their early stage so the lack of well-established measures could be the main obstacle to examine the customer's perception and behaviour toward the marketing activities over the social media platforms (Gao and Feng, 2016). Therefore, future researchers need to make further efforts in validating a robust scale to accurately have a valid and reliable results related to the consumer behaviour in this emerging area.

A closer scrutiny of main articles reviewed in the current study leads to observe a number of factors that have been the focus on attention for the most prior social media marketing studies. For instance, researchers' have largely consider the role of attitudes and its dimensions (cognitive and affect) (Mir, 2012; Jung et al., 2016; Kodjamanis and Angelopoulos, 2013; Lee et al., 2016; McCaughey et al., 2016). This means that future studies have not to ignore the importance of considering attitudes in their attempts to examine customers' behaviour and reactions toward social media marketing activities. Customer trust, perceived credibility, and reliability of social media a source of information for customers were also paid an interest by social media studies (i.e. Munar and Jacobsen, 2015; Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Chu and Kim, 2011). Thus, the impact of these factors on the customers intention to depend and engage more with social media platforms require further exploration by future studies. In this regard as well, future studies could think further how customers can shape their perception toward the credibility and trustworthiness of social media and what are the main predictors that could impact the level of customer's trust toward such merging platforms. The hedonic aspects have received an attention as critical factor motivating customer to involve more in the marketing activities applied via social media as examined by Carrillat et al. (2014), Gummerus et al. (2012), Muk and Chung (2014); and Mahan (2011). Interactivity has been another important factor determining the customers level of involvement in the social media marketing communities. Hence, future researchers should place extra efforts to explain how such factor could have an influence on the customers' reactions for the marketing actions in the social media platforms.

6. Limitations and future research directions

The focus of the current study was exclusively on the main body of literature of social media in the marketing context while it was ignored large part of studies that have conducted over different areas such as education, political, sociocultural environments. Thus, it could be worth considering these studies conducted over different areas by future studies. Even though this study does a contribution by theoretically scan the main body of literature, there is still a need for statistical evidences from these studies by conducting a meta-analysis study especially in the light of the fact that there is a good of number of quantitative studies that have conducted over the area of social media marketing. As a new trend and topic, researchers need to spend more efforts on how such phenomenon could behave different from platform to another; over different countries (i.e. developed, emerging, developing); cultures (i.e. collectivism versus individualism); and different contexts (i.e. tourism, sports, governmental). Despite of the fact that this study comprehensively examine the main dimensions covered by the prior literature of social media marketing, it does not accurately count the main factors and how these factors affecting each other (which antecedences and which consequences). This could be worthwhile direction by future studies. This, in turn, would help to establish a theoretical foundation to examine the related issues over this emerging area. In the current review, very small part was devoted to discuss the main research methods adopted by reviewed studies. Therefore, future studies could pay more attention in analysing these methods and which appropriate methods could help future empirical studies to have more valid and reliable results. This is in addition to the need to discuss how future studies could modify and improve new methods and techniques to examine the consumer behaviour in the social media marketing area.

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