Social Media Maturity and Social Media Intention by SMEs in Turkey

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Abstract

This research aims to contribute to the literature on social media (SM) adoption by small and medium enterprises (SMEs).The present paper extends current literature by conceptualizing and measuring two new constructs, namely SM Maturity and SM Intention, which can be used by subsequent researchers to measure SM adoption and future plans of SMEs. The researchers used the two prominent market orientation scales by Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990) as the starting point and conducted a thorough literature review of marketing communications and relationship marketing literature to generate items. In addition, items corresponding to Porter's value chain were also created and/or adopted to be able to capture the company-wide utilization of SM. Through data collected with a face-to face administered survey from a stratified sample of 310 SME's in Turkey, SM Maturity and SM Intention constructs were empirically tested and the psychometric properties of both constructs were identified.

Introduction

The switch from one-to-many to many-to-many communication models through online platforms (Hoffman & Novak, 1996) is probably the most influential development in the commencement of social media (SM). Various kinds of SM platforms hosting online interactions have become indispensable for our lives today as they allow individuals and organizations to communicate directly with one another without the limitations of time and place. SM has emerged as one of the major communication means where consumers can interact with each other and with companies, products, or brands. Consumers today have a substantial effect in steering marketing strategies of companies through their feedbacks and involvement in product or service co-creation. As a response, companies have begun establishing presence in various SM platforms in order to communicate with their consumers and leverage the unprecedented opportunities that SM offer.

Most studies so far have investigated the consumer side of SM adoption, however little research is available on company adoption, especially with respect to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).A big proportion of the limited work is either qualitative, relying on case study methodology, or SM adoption is measured based on usage of different platforms like Facebook or Twitter with single-item statements. Thus, literature lacks comprehensive measures capturing different aspects of SM usage by the SMEs. Consequently, the present paper extends current literature by conceptualizing and measuring two new constructs, namely SM Maturity and SM Intention, which can be used by subsequent researchers to measure SM adoption and future plans of SMEs.

Turkey is a particularly active country in terms of social media usage. For example, it is the fourth largest country on Facebook in numbers of accounts and third country in time spent per visit (Social Bakers, 2013; Marketing Charts, 2013). Driven by the significant online activity of Turkish consumers, many Turkish companies have started to adopt SM marketing. In addition, Turkey triggers a high interest from academia as well as from the business world in recent years

due to its economic growth (Bryant, 2011) and recent political turmoil (Wright, Bisson, & Duff, 2013). Turkish SMEs play a vital role in the economy as they comprise 98-99% of all firms in Turkey, represent 81% of all employment, and contribute 36% of the total GDP of Turkey (Kavcioglu, 2009).

This research therefore aims to contribute to the literature in the following ways: It extends current literature by conceptualizing and measuring current adoption, namely SM maturity, and future intentions, namely SM Intention, of SME's; thus providing new measures for future research. Consequently, the delineation of SM Maturity and Intention in our discussion is one of the most critical contributions of this paper. Moreover, this paper will address the lack of studies relating to SM adoption in emerging economies and SMEs - especially in Turkey.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: We first provide an overview of the related literature. Relying on this, we develop scales to measure SM Maturity and SM Intention. Next, the research methodology is described, followed by the results section. The paper closes with a discussion of results and a portrayal of business implications together with limitations and directions for future research.

Literature review

Organizations are recognizing the potential of SM for the development of their brands and use various SM tools and platforms to connect and build strong, long-term relationships with key customers. According to Kozinets (2002), one of the main reasons why companies use SM is that it enables them to be close to their customers. Consumers not only use SM to search for information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), but they also experience and co-create brands by actively participating and interacting with them (Schmitt, 2012). These are major contributions to the effectiveness of SM (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The evident two-way interaction allows easy communication between consumers and companies and execution of successful brand strategies with better tailored offerings (Christodoulides & de Chernatony, 2004). Previous studies investigating SM usage of SMEs also highlight that interactive nature of SM is a critical factor for companies (Derham, Cragg, & Morrish, 2011; Stockdale, Ahmed, & Scheepers, 2012). Moreover, it is used as a knowledge sharing and communication (Razmerita & Kirchner, 2011), as well as a branding tool, enhancing communication and building relationships with customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011).

Most of the limited work analyzing SM adoption of SMEs is qualitative, relying on case study methodology. For instance, Stockdale et al. (2012) investigate five SMEs in the USA from different industries that have successfully integrated more than one form of SM into their marketing strategy; resulting in 400% increase in website traffic, increase in revenues and 70% decrease in marketing expenses. The SMEs use different forms of SM mainly for enhancing marketing and social responsiveness and also see business value in increased customer engagement and in improvement of traffic flow to the firms' websites. Similar results are found by Harris, Rae, & Grewal (2008). The authors survey 400 SME owner / managers in the UK by phone and case study 30 small firms that they categorize as early adopters, which use Web 2.0 in the form of blogs, RSS feeds, or online networking tools. However, this research only discusses use of these tools very briefly and does not provide adequate information regarding how the tools are used as part of a marketing strategy. Similarly, Gligorijevic and Leong (2011) analyze four small Australian companies using in-depth interviews, and study how they utilize online consumer groups to connect to, communicate with, and maintain their customer base. The companies initially used SM for marketing intentions such as finding new customers and

communicating with them, however later adopted it as a source of social intelligence gathering information about products, competitors, and customers.

In terms of the ways SM is utilized, previous research further identifies that SM is used by SMEs as part of their online marketing efforts (Harris et al., 2008); as a knowledge sharing and communication tool (Razmerita & Kirchner, 2011), to increase responsiveness, which can also be used to manage relations within companies (Zeiller & Schauer, 2011); and as a branding tool to enhance communication and build relationships with customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011), which ultimately contributes to business value (Lacho & Marinello, 2010). Derham et al. (2011) and Stockdale et al. (2012) also highlight the fact that SMEs are using SM for its interactive nature to facilitate information flow. Not only does it provide companies with knowledge regarding consumer needs and expertise, but it also gives consumers information about the company and its products. As a result, SMEs gain business value through increased customer engagement and customer management efficiency. By investigating 50 best practices and 50 ordinary SMEs, Kim et al. (2013) identify networking, collaboration and information sharing as the three main purposes why SMEs utilize SM. According to the authors, SM not only serves as a tool to build and maintain relations for users and businesses, it also enhances exchange of information and collaborative work between all parties. The paper further reports that there is a significant difference between best practice companies and ordinary SMEs in utilizing SM for the aforementioned purposes.

Apart from qualitative analyses in the literature, SM adoption has so far been mostly measured based on usage of different platforms like Facebook or Twitter, or based on single-item statements using a Likert-scale (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). This is problematic, as adoption, especially for SMEs, is generally acquired through different levels or stages (Daniel, Wilson, & Myers (2002); and also as effective and reliable adoption of SM needs processes and structures, as well as measurement and governance within an adopting organization (Linke & Zerfass, 2013; Weinberg et al., 2013). Maturity constructs and levels have been developed for software improvement processes in the form of maturity models like the Capability Maturity Model (Paulk, Curtis, Chrissis, & Weber, 1993) as well as, more notably, for information technology governance (Becker, Knackstedt, & Pöppelbuß, 2009). The maturity concept in these contexts is based on an assessment on whether a respective process exists, is documented, followed, measured, and continuously improved. However, to our current knowledge, SM adoption has not been defined and measured in terms of underlying process maturity.

Methodology and results

Based on the literature review, survey items regarding SM Maturity and Intention for future adoption were generated since current literature does not provide a scale to measure SM adoption of companies, let alone of SMEs. We used the two prominent market orientation scales by Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990) as the starting point and conducted a thorough literature review of marketing communications and relationship marketing literature to generate items. In addition, items corresponding to Porter's value chain (Porter, 1991) were also created and/or adopted to be able to capture the company-wide utilization of SM. For maturity, we used the capability maturity model (Paulk et al., 1993) respectively IT Governance (Becker et al., 2009) levels of "non-existent", "initial/ad-hoc", "repeatable but intuitive", "defined", "managed and measurable", and "optimized", and provided the necessary definitions. Intention items were measured using a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 5 "strongly agree" to 1 "strongly

disagree".

To test the item structure of both scales, a stratified sample of 365 SMEs was approached to collect data for the study. The sample was stratified based on the geographical distribution of the SMEs in Turkey. Surveys were administered face-to-face with the appropriate key respondents. After the data was cleaned, 310 cases were left to provide useful data and were selected for further analyses. All respondents were either the only responsible person (28.1%) or one of the responsible persons (71.9%) for the marketing activities of the company. In fact, a high proportion (67.1%) of the respondents indicated that they are either sales/marketing managers or owner/responsible manager of the of the SME. The sample was purposely selected from the major cities in Turkey where SMEs generally operate. As a result, 55% of the SMEs are located in Istanbul, followed by Ankara (12.9%), Izmir (11.6%), Bursa (9%), Antalya (6.8%), and finally Adana (3.9%). The sample consists of various industries, which increases the generalizability of the findings. Top five industries included were service (21%), retail (19.4%), manufacturing (17.7%), construction (10%), and IT (8.4%). 61.6% of the SMEs indicated that they do not export.

Items measuring SM Maturity and SM Intention were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax rotation to test for the hypothesized item structure. Six items from SM Maturity and two items from SM Intention were eliminated from the analyses due to either vague meaning or low loading (<0.5) and the conceptualized dimension structure was attained. Factor analysis yields KMO values of 0.877 and 0.923 and explains 69.35% and 74.09% of the total variance for SM Maturity and SM Intention respectively (see Appendix 1). The dimensions are further analyzed in terms of Cronbach's Alpha reliability (see Appendix 1). As a result, we suggest four dimensions regarding the SM Maturity construct and three dimensions regarding the SM Intention construct:

Social media maturity
The SM Maturity construct encompasses maturity in social customer relations, social stakeholder communication (except for customers), social intelligence, and social responsiveness. These dimensions turn out to be parallel to what prominent literature depicts as the main factors supporting market orientation: Day (1994) draws attention to market sensing, customer linking, and channel bonding as important factors of awareness in the market orientation (MARKOR) (Kohli et al., 1993) realm. Narver and Slater (1990) also pinpoint customer focus, competitor focus, and interdepartmental coordination in their explanation of MARKOR. The four factors regarding SM Maturity revealed in this study resonate well with these widely used Markor dimensions in the sense that the focus is on customer, intelligence, and company-wide integration.

Social customer relations. Social customer relations dimension is one of the vital dimensions of SM initiatives. The first item corresponding to this dimension is about enhancing customer experience. Customer experience management is different from customer relationship management (Meyer & Schwager, 2007); it is the sum of managing what a customer thinks about all aspects of a company and its products. The second item measures use of SM for consumer relationship management (CRM). As stated in Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010), due to its interactive nature, SM is quite relevant for CRM activities. The third item is about using SM for lead generation. Interactivity within SM turns the medium into a primary tool for higher levels of engagement. Hence, this item covers SMEs' activities related to increasing interest; and

therefore, engagement of the current and prospect consumers (Sashi, 2012). And finally, the fourth item measures marketing communications activities related to brand building and brand management aspects of SM, such as communicating promotions and information to increase awareness. As a result, all activities captured in items of social customer relations are quite important for SMEs' strategic presence within SM channels. These items basically try to measure how close companies are to their consumers.

Social stakeholder communication. Being the main co-creators of brands, consumers are regarded as the central point in social communications (Arnould & Price, 1993); however, they are not the only stakeholders for companies. All kinds of social and economic actors have become a critical part of communication and exchange activities through networks (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) expanding the stakeholder domain. Stakeholder theory has been developed by Freeman (1984) and involves all the major actors that an organization interacts with, affects, or is affected by. Accordingly, communication platforms buttress the congregation of messages, interactivity, and stakeholders (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998) which are made up of investors, the financial community, vendors and suppliers, distributors, employees, competitors, the media, local communities, special interest groups, and government agencies. Development of SM has immensely facilitated stakeholders to co-create brand meanings as well as to expedite stakeholder integration (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010; Vallester & von Wallpach, 2013) through various sites regarding video sharing, micro-blogging, and social networking. In this study, items regarding SMEs' SM based communication channels with all these social and economic actors in their stakeholder networks were investigated, and employees, vendors and suppliers, distributors and retailers, as well as all other social enactors such as the media, government, regulators, and interest groups loaded as a separate factor than customers highlighting the effectiveness of SM as a tool for stakeholder communication.

Social intelligence. The social intelligence dimension in this research fundamentally refers to organization-wide information generation and dissemination and accordingly responding to customer needs and preferences (Narver & Slater, 1990; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), utilizing SM content and online social networks. Social intelligence is basically centered on the market orientation concept (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) with its three subcomponents. Market intelligence generation is collection and analysis of customer needs and the forces that shape these needs including macro environment. Intelligence dissemination is the organization-wide exchange of market information and, finally, responsiveness refers to action derived on the generated and disseminated information and insight. In a somewhat stricter technological sense, social intelligence is the advanced level of SM monitoring and SM analytics and, thus, SM intelligence refers to derivation of actionable information from SM to aid decision making and to develop solutions (Zeng et al., 2010; Moe & Schweidel, 2014). Given the above definitional characteristics and marketing basis of social intelligence, this dimension in our study measures whether companies are mature in collecting information through the content and by means of SM regarding their customers, competitors, and the overall environment that can impact their businesses. It further measures whether this information is disseminated across the organization both horizontally and vertically and whether any response is taken over SM to alleviate or improve the relevant issues and leads (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Dill et al., 2011, Harrysson et al., 2012).

Social responsiveness. Customer-to-customer and customer-to-company interactions in this fast, real-time, contagious, and uncontrollable media proved the need for a redefinition of responsiveness for better relationship management (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Gupta et. al, 2010). The term responsiveness was mainly introduced by the prominent work of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) in their operationalization of MARKOR concept and includes aspects of how the company responds to customer needs and wants, how it plans for their future expectations, and how the company integrates its units regarding its responses and future strategy. MARKOR (Kohli, Jaworski, & Kumar, 1993) responsiveness scale items that were modified for SM, along with a few items from CRM literature regarding complaint management (Ata & Toker, 2012) loaded into this single dimension in this study. SM platforms seem to be consumers' favorite complaint channels about various topics such as service failures. However, SM strategies have to go beyond the level of collecting and responding to online complaints. Utilization of analytical tools to analyze data, and finally preparing internal / external action plan mechanisms will enhance responsiveness of the firm in solving problems, handling complaints, and discovering opportunities involving unmet needs. These nuances have all been reflected in the responsiveness dimension capturing the actual sophistication of companies in their responses to their social environments. In the era of SM, we rename this dimension as Social Responsiveness since it became an imperative for the companies to listen to what their customers are talking about in SM and to change especially the customer-facing processes to incorporate a "social" dimension.

The maturity levels in Turkish SMEs reveal interesting results. Generally the maturity levels of the four dimensions discussed are at such levels that that the processes are not defined and Turkish SMEs mostly manage their social media activities intuitively. Social Customer Relations (3.26) turn out to be more focused on than the other dimensions of Social Intelligence (3.08) and Social Responsiveness (3.07). Social Stakeholder Communications is still at its initial development stages with mostly ad-hoc approaches.

Social media intention

SM Intention is a measure of what the company plans to do in the future in terms of developing its SM performance for business results. The intention items are centered around the engagement, presence, and commitment dimensions, which reflect the headings of possible future action plans for SMEs.

Social engagement. The items forming the social engagement dimension reflect SMEs' intention to use SM strategically for customer engagement. Thus, this dimension covers items capturing SMEs' orientation to manage their customer community, to employ better marketing strategies, and to enhance customer experience through SM. Based on the "engagement" conceptualizations used in different disciplines, the concept has begun to be viewed lately as a promising variable in the marketing discipline to provide enhanced predictive power of customer-related loyalty outcomes (Bowden, 2009). As such, it is believed to fit within the broader relationship marketing and service-dominant logic literature streams (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). Following the literature regarding engagement, this dimension is named as social engagement, referring to SMEs' intention to employ customer-related SM strategies that are believed to lead to engagement. Engagement within SM is quite an important strategic tool to generate enhanced future business performance, including sales

growth (Neff, 2007), superior competitive advantage (Sedley, 2008), and profitability (Voyles, 2007). As such, capturing SMEs' intention regarding social engagement is important in understanding companies' strategic utilization of SM.

Social presence. Social Presence in our study emerges as an extension of marketing communications, internal marketing and competitive intelligence domains. Basically, social presence is defined as an intention to ensure effective usage of SM to develop and nurture relationships with external and internal stakeholders and to maintain a superior level of coordination between internal departments. It also includes the effective usage of SM to gather competitive intelligence and act proactively on the intelligence gathered. From a marketing communications perspective, social presence as a term refers to the acoustic, visual, and physical contact that can be achieved between two communication partners. When the social presence is higher, communication partners have larger social influence on each other's behavior. Within the external communications realm, social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter and content communities such as Youtube are evaluated to have higher levels of social presence and, hence, can be expected to have larger social influence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Along the internal marketing's conception "employees as customers", it is crucial first to ensure employee advocacy and interdepartmental coordination in order to implement marketing strategies effectively so that the organization reaches out to external stakeholders and establishes long lasting business relationships (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003).

Social commitment. Social Commitment refers to SMEs' intentions to implement structural and strategic changes within the organization in order to benefit from SM in a more effective and efficient manner. Linke and Zerfass (2013) state that structural aspects of organizational management to implement online communications have been neglected by many organizations; they still lack appropriate structures and strategies for long-term SM success. Kietzmann et al. (2011) also support this argument and emphasize the importance of effective utilization of resources. The items corresponding to this dimension capture which organizational changes are intended by SMEs. It not only includes items measuring modification intentions regarding the workforce and the budget allocation, but also changes in SM share within overall communication and promotional strategies of SMEs. As stated in Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & McKenzie (2008), companies' promotional strategies highly rely on company resources such as budget, expertise, and staff capacity. As a result, social commitment items are important indicators for future action plans of SMEs regarding the use of their resources towards better SM strategy.

Turkish SMEs portray similar levels of intention in terms of Social Presence (3.58), Social Engagement (3.67), and Social Commitment (3.49). The higher value for Social Engagement might indicate that, compared to other dimensions, SMEs see more room for improvement in terms of engagement.

Discussion and conclusion
This study contributes to the research on adoption of technological innovations by SMEs, focusing on the example of SM adoption in Turkish SMEs. Two new constructs, namely SM Maturity and SM Intention, were established. First of all, the SM Maturity construct encompasses the adoption levels of SM technology in SMEs and explains these levels by investigating the dimensions of social customer relations, social stakeholder communication,

social intelligence, and social responsiveness. These dimensions are especially critical for tactical and operational orientation of SMEs regarding SM. The results show that the SM Adoption in Turkish SMEs is mostly at a stage where they have "repeatable but intuitive" processes. There is considerable progress needed to achieve higher maturity levels of "defined", "managed and measurable", and finally "optimized". The SM Intention, on the other hand, scrutinizes the plans for presence, engagement, and commitment of SMEs in SM practices, which comprises more strategic approaches needed for future performance. Our results indicate that Turkish SMEs do intend to enhance their SM strategies in all three dimensions.

Exploration and maturity in adoption of new technologies lead to easier and increased further adoption by reducing costs and uncovering new opportunities. It is also important to note that SM adoption can contribute to the development of competitive intelligence. In this respect, it should not be limited to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information, but should also comprise knowledge creation leading to competitive advantage. Strategic early warning systems as a result of SM data need to be construed as advanced social intelligence systems to anticipate and optimize business decisions.

Limitations and further research

Issues regarding validity of this study can be discussed in terms of construct, internal and external validity perspectives. Complete anonymity was guaranteed to participants to avoid evaluation apprehension. Similarly, social acceptability bias might be introduced when participants believe that certain answers are more desirable and accepted, for example related to higher maturity levels in adoption. Additional aspects of adoption or intention might be missing due to using a survey with closed questions, which might also endanger construct validity. In order to maintain external validity, participants were chosen from different geographic locations within Turkey, and the sampling procedure was designed in line with population characteristics to avoid any bias with respect to the generalization of results. Moreover, all instruments were administered in the same way to avoid threats from treatment implementation. Pre-tests were used to achieve reliable measures and questions.These limitations provide areas for future research. Analyses of different countries and cultures related to adoption of SM in SMEs would be an interesting new step. This would also provide additional support for the measurement scales derived in this paper.

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Appendix 1. Items, Loadings, Average Variance Extracted, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability.

Constructs	Dimensions	Items	Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
SM MATURITY	Social Customer Relations	We use SM to enhance customer experience.	0.581	15.65%	0.799
		We use SM to manage the customer community.	0.776		
		We use SM for lead generation.	0.790		
		We use SM for brand building.	0.656		
	Social Stakeholder Communication	We use SM to manage our relationship with our employees	0.747	16.94%	0.857
		We use SM to manage our relationship with our suppliers	0.847		
		We use SM to manage our relationship with our distributors	0.868		
		We use SM to manage our relationship with government, regulators, interest groups	0.744		
	Social Intelligence	Our company periodically circulates SM data (Twitter, Facebook comments) that provide information on our customers.	0.749	16.83%	0.832
		When something important happens to a major customer of the market, the whole business unit knows about it within a short period thanks to SM.	0.852		
		If a major competitor were to launch an intensive online campaign targeted at our customers, we would implement a response immediately.	0.812		
		We use SM as an early warning system to detect early signs of crisis.	0.690		
	Social Responsiveness	We use SM to understand what products or services our customers will and what changes or enhancements are needed for current product / service offerings.	0.578	19.93%	0.895
		We use SM to drive innovation through crowd sourcing.	0.717		
		We use SM to enable our customers to communicate their complaints easily.	0.837		
		We use SM analysis tools to collect customer complaints and respond effectively and quickly.	0.875		
		We use SM to trace whether our customers are satisfied with the quality of our products and services and take corrective action immediately.	0.829		

Appendix 1 (Continued). Items, Loadings, Average Variance Extracted, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability.

Constructs	Dimensions	Items	Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
SM INTENTION	Social Engagement	We plan to enhance our use of SM to better manage our customer community.	0.745	23.47%	0.864
		We plan to enhance our use of SM to implement better marketing strategies.	0.845		
		We plan to enhance our use of SM to develop better customer experience.	0.822		
	Social Presence	We plan to enhance our use of SM to further develop our relationship with our internal stakeholders	0.765	25.52%	0.881
		We plan to enhance our use of SM to further develop our relationship with our external stakeholders	0.818		
		We plan to enhance our use of SM to further increase interdepartmental coordination.	0.780		
		We plan to enhance our use of SM to further collect competitive intelligence and take appropriate actions.	0.625		
	Social Commitment	We intend to increase the number of in-house people fully dedicated to SM	0.549	25.1%	0.883
		We intend to increase the capacity of the workforce dedicated to SM efforts	0.574		
		We intend to increase the company's presence in SM platforms	0.758		
		We intend to increase our budget allocation to SM.	0.809		
		We intend to increase share and role of SM in our overall marketing strategy	0.762		