

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS USING SOCIAL NETWORKS: HOW PREPARED ARE OUR STUDENTS?

Regina Pefanis Schlee, Seattle Pacific University,

Katrin R. Harich, California State University, Fullerton

Abstract

Recent articles have called for the integration of social networking media in the marketing and advertising curricula (Cronin, 2011; Granitz & Koernig, 2010). The internet has not only transformed the way people in the United States and around the world communicate, it has revolutionized the way businesses communicate with potential customers. According to a recent article in the McKinsey Quarterly, “today’s more empowered, critical, demanding, and price-sensitive customers are turning in ever-growing numbers to social networks, blogs, online review forums, and other channels to quench their thirst for objective advice about products and to identify brands that seem to care about forming relationships with them” (French, LaBerge, & Magill, 2011). As a result of the increasing realization that the way of communicating with consumers is becoming more interactive, over 80% of companies with 100 or more employees expect to use social media in 2011, up from 73% in 2010, and 42% in 2008 (Williamson 2010).

This study is focused on understanding student usage of social media and student attitudes about social media as part of the promotion mix. While there is a great deal of information about the usage of Facebook and Twitter among young adults, there is little information on the use of other social media such as Tumblr, Tagged, online gaming communities, etc. There is also little information about the level of expertise or sophistication of students with social media. Do they post content and videos on other social media besides Facebook? Do they write product reviews? Do they follow companies on the web to receive information about specials? Finally, what are student attitudes about the effectiveness of social media? Do they believe they already know enough, or are they interested in learning more?

The 162 students in our sample were enrolled in marketing courses at two different universities. Although there is a public perception that millennial students are savvy in the use of social media, this research found that their social media experiences are for the most part limited to communicating with friends through Facebook. However, most students recognize the

importance of social networking tools for business communications and are eager to learn how to use them. The research examines differences between marketing majors and other majors, as well as differences between students at the two universities.

References Available Upon Request.