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Driving the markets in the 21st century: how to enhance proactive market orientation using social media

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Executive summary

Title: Driving the markets in the 21st century: how to enhance proactive market orientation using social media.

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Key words: Proactive Market Orientation, Market Intelligence, Social Media, Forward Sensing, Buzz Network, Customer Behaviour

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to discover how social media can be used to enhance specific behaviours from the proactive market orientation repertoire.

Method: This study employed qualitative approach and used semi-structured interviews and observation of social media platforms to gather the empirical data.

Theory: The framework for empirical material is derived from the theories from the field of market orientation, market intelligence and social media.

Empirics: The empirical material was collected through the interviews with social media experts from three consultancy companies: MJ Media, CGI and Croakun; with marketing and communication managers from two leading global brands: IKEA and Brand X (identity remains anonymous due to non-disclosure agreement); and supported with observation of the social media platforms of two latter brands.

Analysis: The analysis is presented in six categories: organizational culture, forward sensing, shaping customers' behaviours, educating customers, re-sketching industry segmentation and buzz network. Each of the following categories has been additionally looked at from the strategic and tactical perspective, identifying long-term goals and specific social media tactics that could be applied to achieve those goals.

Conclusions: This study concludes that proactive market orientation can be enhanced using social media. It presents multiple tactical activities that can specifically enhance above mentioned proactive behaviours what is possible due to the nature of social media.

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List of abbreviations

B2B – Business-to-Business

B2C – Business-to-Consumer

DIY – Do-It-Yourself

MI – Market Intelligence

MO – Market Orientation

ROI – Return on Investment

SM – Social Media

UGC – User-Generated Content

WoM – Word of Mouth

1. Introduction

*“If I’d asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me, “A faster horse!”” –
Henry Ford*

*“The best way to predict the future is to invent it” –
Alan Kay*

Breakthrough innovations introduced to the market are not usually a result of listening to what exactly the customers say. Henry Ford began mass production of the automobile when people wished for faster horses, Steve Jobs created its innovative iPad following his own instincts instead of the market research results, ‘Nike’ and ‘Apple’ with Nike+iPod made running a fun and competitive activity for those who found it boring, but could not imagine how to change it.

Given instances demonstrate the proactive behaviours of companies that managed to stay one step ahead of the customers’ realized needs, and delivered products that changed customers’ behaviours, made it possible for those brands to surpass their rivals and ultimately become leaders in their industries. The problem for most of other companies is that their *“systems and functions are designed to efficiently deliver a business model that was successful yesterday”* (Shaich, 2013). Nevertheless, what made a company successful in the past will not enhance its prosperity in the future. For that, a firm must always turn to discovery.

The question remains, however, how exactly can companies maintain this far-in-the-future vision and stay ahead of the competition in terms of satisfying, discovering and even creating customer needs. Market intelligence appears to be a solution, especially in the light of current volatile business environments defined by constant and sudden market changes, intense competition and general uncertainty: economic turbulences, changing customers’ expectations and significant technological progress. Scanning of the external environments could indeed bring a lot of information, which when continuously collected and analysed could shed the light on the uncertain areas and allow forward sensing. This ability to envisage the future scenarios can benefit firms; however, there are more activities that comprise on the proactive market orientation. In order to successfully drive the markets with new offers and inventions, companies should aim at re-shaping existing customers’ preferences by creating new ones that will favour new products, educate the customers about discovered trends and relevant product or service offerings, try to re-structure the current market segmentation by

creating new segments around those new products and create buzz networks through which the word-of-mouth could be spread.

In this respect, social media, the invention of the 21st century, reveals an extra layer of opportunities for companies. The user-generated content booming on social networking sites is widely available and at the same time, rich in personal customers' data, which when selected in relevance to the search purpose, can become an intelligence goldmine for companies. On the other hand, considering the conversational nature of social media, companies can also get actively involved in the dialog with their customers, influence them with interactive digital campaigns to stimulate new customers' behaviours and attitudes, hence overall shape the market. Besides, by attracting active participation of social media users, companies can stimulate online word-of-mouth regarding brand's activities, and by this, expand and capitalize on the buzz network.

Some organizations realize the potential of social media and try to implement it within their operations. For example, among the pioneers who use social media for monitoring are cinemas predicting popularity of upcoming movies (Huberman, 2011), national security (police, etc.) (Omand, Bartlett & Miller, 2012), health experts (Hoffman, 2012), and forecasters of the election outcomes (Franch, 2013). Cisco, global networking leader, leveraged social technologies by implementing "Listening platforms", which help the company to better formulate hypotheses on the market trends (Cisco Systems Inc, n.d.). Other industry leader such as Starbucks use social media for both, information gathering as well as educating customers about forthcoming innovative products (Gallaugher and Ransbotham, 2010). Others, like Dell, try to involve their customers in innovation co-creation process using social technologies (Di Gangi, Wasko & Hooker., 2010).

Seeing how social networking has been booming in recent years and recognizing competitive opportunities that social media reveals with regards to the behaviours from the proactive market orientation repertoire, this thesis aims to, firstly, create a theoretical link between those two phenomena, and by doing so, contribute to the field of research about market orientation. Secondly, it attempts to demonstrate how proactive market orientation or more explicitly, specific proactive behaviours, could be enhanced by usage of social media.

By fulfilling those goals, this thesis would do both, contribute to the practitioners' knowledge, as well as close the gap in existing theory.

2. *Problem formulation*

Business environments of today are very unstable and additionally characterized by competitive intensity and technological advancements. On a daily basis, the managers are challenged to discern and deal with the market changes. A failure in doing so accurately can cost the firm its existence. While facing this kind of challenge, the understanding of the external environment and identification of strategically most advantageous directions that would allow a firm to sustain its performance, becomes a critical requirement (Kumar, Jones, Venkatesan and Leone, 2011; Giustozzi and Martens, 2011; Ihinomoyan & Akinyele, 2011). However, this is a very difficult task due to lack of complete information about the micro- and macro-environment in which a company operates. For this reason, decision-making takes place under significant uncertainty, what further implies a risk of not only wrong, but also bad decisions and can be tremendously damaging to the firm (Technology Surveys International Inc, 2011).

Nevertheless, there are firms that are doing great despite all those challenging factors. They constantly innovate and re-shape the structure of the market by delivering breakthrough solutions and superior value to the customers, while simultaneously creating an immense competition to other firms. In academia, those companies are called market driving or else proactively market oriented (Slater & Narver, 1998; Kumar, Scheer & Kotler, 2000).

Market orientation (MO) as such, has been associated with the ability to constantly acquire information regarding market environment, disseminate this information across the organization and acting upon obtained insights (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). The ultimate MO's mission is to deliver greater value to the customers based on the analysis of customers' needs and competitors' actions and on the further appropriate alignment of the products or services (Lewrick, Omar & Williams, 2011; Kumar *et al.*, 2011).

Nevertheless, two attitudes can be distinguished within MO: **responsive and proactive** (Slater & Narver, 1998). As the first label indicates, responsive firm is focusing on responding to the current market situation, current customers' needs, hence delivers the products that the market is seeking or that competitors has already successfully implemented. Nevertheless, today, this approach, even though remains valuable, it can be and will be eventually emulated by competitors (Narver, Slater & MacLachlan, 2004). Hence, it will not facilitate becoming a market leader.

As we flip the MO's coin, there is another side to it: **proactive approach**. Proactively market oriented firm would avoid waiting for the impulse from the external environment, but rather aspire to predict the market change by discovering latent customers' needs through obtaining relevant intelligence about customers and acting on it rapidly, before the competition does (Kumar *et al.*, 2011). De Geus (1988 cited Kumar *et al.*, 2011, p.17) also claims that "*firm's only sustainable advantage is its ability to learn and anticipate market trends faster than the competition*". This particular ability is called **forward sensing** and aims to find an answer to the following question: "How the market will evolve?" (Kumar *et al.*, 2000). Market intelligence plays a key weapon in the market driving company's arsenal as it "*provides a company with a view of the market [...] and helps to understand what is happening in a market place, what the issues are and what the likely market potential is*" (Latitude Global, 2008, p. 7). These firms are also characterized by other behaviours: (a) **Shaping customers' behaviours** and creating new customers' preferences (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000) for instance by revolutionary marketing strategies that aim to "*change the rules of the game*" (Kumar *et al.*, 2000); (b) **Customer education**: putting the emphasis on educating customers about the new value proposition instead of mere selling; (c) **Re-sketching of the industry segmentation** by targeting and attracting customers from a variety of earlier-defined market segments in order to create the new market around the new product (Kumar *et al.*, 2000); (d) Stimulating **buzz network** around the products and activities and capitalizing on it in the form of increased brand attachment (Kumar *et al.*, 2000). All those activities, with particular focus on forward sensing, when approached and executed properly can supply a firm with a significant competitive advantage (Atuahene-Gima *et al.* 2005 cited in Bodlaj, Coenders, & Zabkar, 2012).

Meanwhile, in the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a new, revolutionary technological advancement introduced, which today, being roughly a decade old, is practically omnipresent (Boeri , 2012; Letouzé, 2012). It is **social media (SM)**. Boeri (2012, p.29) suggests that in the light of increasing supremacy of SM in current business environments, firms should incorporate SM within the whole "*information spectrum*". Nevertheless, SM is not only a channel for information acquisition, it forms a completely new context, presence in which is fundamental for the firm in order to stay competitive. The explosion of social networking sites in recent years, created significantly larger and more opinionated audience and a direct way of connecting with consumers (Beyer, 2011; Stavrakantonakis Gagiou, Kasper, Toma & Thalhammer, 2012). Also, seeing how SM

overtakes people's lives and how they increasingly and more willingly reveal their feelings and share opinions on social networking sites, it appears as the rich source of the most personal information about customers, but at the same time about competitors, market trends, product developments and other relevant topics. Thus, SM blossoms in real-time with digital data (Letouzé, 2012), makes the search for information way easier and quicker than it was before its advent (Latitude Global, 2008; Letouzé, 2012; Harrison and Cupman, 2008; Hawthorne & Cromity, 2012; Lopez, 2012) and finally, enables execution of digital campaigns that take interactions with customers to the next level, meaning engage customers by advancing their role from passive listeners and observers to active participants and even co-creators (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). All those possibilities brought by SM supply companies with significant business weapons – insights into untapped niche within customers' needs, but also an opportunity to further influence customers' behaviours, preferences and stimulate the online word-of-mouth.

The phenomenon that emerges out of the above presented concepts' compilation is that SM with its characteristics of enabling two-way communication and providing huge amount of real-time and personal data about the customers, presents the opportunity for the firms to use that digital milieu to become more competitive and more proactive. SM is being progressively realised as a valuable source for market intelligence generation and a channel enabling advanced communication and interaction with customers. Those features are strongly connected with proactive behaviours of forward sensing, influencing consumers to shape their behaviours, educate them and make them engaged with the brand and finally, to create buzz network. Thus, it is justified to look more closely at how the concepts of SM and proactive market orientation interlink.

Furthermore, looking at the theoretical field, Celuch & Murphy (2010) point out that the literature surprisingly have not managed so far to integrate the subjects of the internet prominence and MO in general. That gap in the theory further validates the idea for this research to combine, more specifically, SM and proactive market orientation, while simultaneously serving a spark for further research.

Existing studies in the area of proactive market orientation focus on related to this approach product-success (Narver *et al.*, 2004; Atuahene-Gima, Slater & Olson, 2005), its influence on organizational learning (Slater and Narver, 1995), its linkages with entrepreneurship (Schindehutte, Morris & Kocak, 2008) and business relationships (Tuominen, Rajala & Moller, 2004). Conversely, in the field of SM, current research

highlights how SM influences competitive intelligence process (Vuori, 2011), discusses the effectiveness of computational agents scanning social media in order to imitate humans in prediction markets (Bothos *et al.*, 2010), considers SM in terms of market research and studies how popularization of SM influences traditional methods of market research (Patino *et al.*, 2012), looks at usage of SM for predictive analysis (Huberman, 2011; Omand, Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Hoffman, 2012; Franch, 2013), and finally, describes how online idea competitions can benefit companies in their product innovation processes (Schweitzer *et al.*, 2012). However, there is virtually no direct connection in current research between the phenomena of SM and proactive market orientation or else market-driving approach.

Also, specifically referring to the forward sensing behaviour, the majority of companies are not familiar with applying SM monitoring for market intelligence gathering (Bughin *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, when it comes to influencing consumers and stimulating buzz, still high number of companies fail in undertaking a successful marketing or customer relations initiative on SM (Bunchball Inc, 2010). Forrester (2011 cited in Lopez, 2012) informs that even though today's world is characterized by online data opulence including UGC on social networks, organizations only take advantage of a diminutive fraction of this available data and many of them simply lack understanding of the online communities' needs (Bunchball Inc., 2010).

Ultimately, the research question that emerges out of the above examination is "How social media usage can enhance proactive market orientation?". More specifically, the problem that this thesis will examine is how, in the light of SM characteristics and related to those opportunities, the execution of proactive behaviours such as forward sensing, shaping customers behaviours, educating customers, re-sketching existing industry segmentation and creating buzz around the firm's products and activities, can be translated to this new virtual context.

2.1. Contribution and Purpose

This paper targets both, scholars as well as practitioners.

Recognizing the gap in the contemporary research regarding the interrelation between proactive market orientation and SM, this study aims to bridge those phenomena and build a model that would portray how they intertwine and thus, how proactive market orientation could be enhanced using SM. In this way, this thesis intends to fill the gap in the literature.

Moreover, this study aims to enrich the field of proactive market orientation within academic research.

Also, considering the practical immaturity of the topic in focus, the study endeavours to draw a map indicating the opportunities for enhancement of proactive behaviours using SM. This study intends to enlighten mainly small and medium B2C companies that embrace innovation, aspire to grow and increase their market share, and supply them with ideas how to, in an affordable way, become more competitive and more proactive using SM. Additionally, already market-driving companies would be offered the sketch of additional competitive layer that could complement their current proactive offline efforts.

3. Theory

The following chapter will draw the theoretical background of this thesis and provide the explanations of the major concepts touched upon in this study.

3.1. *Market orientation*

Market orientation (MO) refers to the capability of an organization to systematically acquire information regarding its market environment, disseminate this information across the organization and respond to it by taking coordinated actions (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Matsuno *et al.*, 2003 cited in Ihinomoyan & Akinyele, 2011). Thus, MO itself does not focus only on the marketing function, but embraces all organizational departments with purpose to create superior value to the customer. Implementation of MO function might be very useful for the company as numerous studies imply that MO brings superior performance and increases profitability (Atuahene- Gima, 1995; Deshpande, Farley, & Webster, 1993; Han, Kim & Srivastava, 1998; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Pelham & Wilson, 1996; Slater & Narver, 1994; Narver *et al.*, 2004).

Academia presents different dimensions and classifications of MO.

MO can be looked at from two different perspectives: cultural and behavioural.

Narver & Slater (1990) looked at MO from the corporate culture perspective that brings up the company's state of mind. From that angle, MO fosters "*a culture of experimentation*" and corporate push towards constant improvement of company's operations; therefore, market oriented companies should perform experiments to test and further modify offerings using gathered knowledge. Within this dimension there are, however, certain people-related obstacles that can hold back this market oriented culture and those could be linked to, for instance top-management ability (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996) or risk aversion (Avlonitis and Gounaris, 1999 cited in Tarnovskaya, 2007). In addition to this, Gray & Hooley (2002 cited in Tarnovskaya, 2007) argue that the corporate culture encourages company's behaviours. Hence, it can be concluded that MO results from the firm's attitude and mindset grounded in the organizational culture, that further leads to the firm's behaviours and actions including for

instance, collecting, distributing and acting on the intelligence (Avlonitis & Gounaris, 1999 cited in Tarnovskaya, 2007).

The second, behavioural perspective, initiated by Kohli and Jaworski (1990, p.6), refers to the firm's behaviours, namely to firstly, processing **market intelligence**: "*the generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it*", secondly to, so called in this thesis, "**customer stimulus**", that incorporates elements such as segmentation strategy, marketing strategy and customer service, meaning what companies do to influence customers, attract them to the product and make them prefer it over the competitors' products (Kumar, Scheer & Kotler, 2000), and finally, **brand management**, which is understood as the way the companies try to get its brand message across and simultaneously increase its brand equity (Kumar *et al.*, 2000).

There is yet another, important for this study, division of the MO concept in the literature, which distinguishes two approaches: **responsive** and **proactive market orientation** (Slater, 1990 cited in Bodlaj, 2012; Narver *et al.*, 2004). Those two approaches will be further examined in terms of earlier mentioned aspects of market orientation: organizational culture, market intelligence, customer stimulus and brand management.

3.1.1. Responsive market orientation

The first approach – responsive MO, is also called customer-led (Narver & Slater, 1998), customer compelled (Day, 1999 cited in Narver *et al.*, 2004) or market-driven (Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012). This approach means discovering, understanding and satisfying expressed customers' needs (Narver *et al.*, 2004) and adjusting the offer to current customers' preferences by exploitative, adaptive learning about the market (Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012). Expressed needs are those that customers are aware of and solutions to which are expected to be delivered by companies. Market-driven companies are adjusting to the markets as their innovative behaviour is often inhibited by bureaucratic organizational culture, (Narver *et al.*, 2004) where rigid structures, devotion to standard procedures, centralized decision are maintained. Bureaucracy, with its limiting information propagation, stressing job descriptions and formal

authority, is said to reduce employees' awareness and involvement and also discourage their creativity (Aiken and Hage, 1971 cited in Narver *et al.*, 2004). Hence, a firm that is responsive or else market driven, would not attempt to reshape customers' preferences, but agreeably adapt offerings to the expressed wants and needs of the customers (Jaworski, Kohli and Sahay, 2000). Also, a responsive company targets already existing market segments and with its communication aims to purely increase the volume of consumption; Thus, the customer service is predominantly used as a tactical weapon. In terms of brand management, market-driven company is simply broadcasting the marketing message for brand equity (Kumar *et al.*, 2000).

Responsive MO is perceived by academia to have multiple shortcomings. Some researchers claim that firms are likely to lose their leader position or fail when they remain myopic and overemphasise customers' views, opinions and expectations (Narver *et al.*, 2004; Christensen and Bower, 1996 cited in Hult & Ketchen, 2001) as that prevents innovativeness in product development (Lukas & Ferrell 2000 cited in Lewrick *et al.*, 2011) and leads to the "tyranny of the served market" (Hamel & Prahalad, 1991 cited in Bodlaj, 2010, p. 669). Any expressed necessities are also known by competitors, who most certainly are going to provide solutions to those, and that leads to uncompromising price competition that focuses on creating greater value to the customers (Narver *et al.*, 2004). In this way, the offerings can easily become commodities. Furthermore, as remarked by Ihinomoyan & Akinyele (2011), constant innovation in every aspect of business operations is a prerequisite not only to competing but also surviving in the competitive marketplace, whereas simple satisfying the expressed customers' needs, does not directly translate to attracting or retaining customers.

For that reason, in today business environment, moving beyond existing and expressed customers' needs towards the latent and future ones, can be a salvation for companies (Narver *et al.*, 2004). The same approach applies with regards to the competitors; In addition to monitoring the current competitors' activities and learning from their victories and fiascos, companies should attempt to anticipate their actions and strategies using the knowledge that is within their reach (Kuada & Buatsi 2005, cited in Jimenez-Zarco, Torrent-Sellens & Martinez-Ruiz, 2012).

3.1.2. **Proactive Market orientation**

Past research with regards to MO was concentrating mainly on the responsive approach (Narver *et al.*, 2004). Today, even though the responsive approach remains valuable, especially in very dynamic market environments, it can be and will be eventually emulated by competitors. In the light of this hazard, the proactive MO gains importance as a complementary approach to responsive MO (Atuahene-Gima, Slater & Olson, 2005; Jaworski *et al.*, 2000). Surprisingly, many firms are unwilling to explore the proactive dimension or just poorly attend to it (Tuli *et al.* 2007 cited in Blocker, Flint, Myers and Slater, 2011).

The main purpose underlying proactive MO is to uncover and understand the future needs of customers and provide solutions to them (Narver *et al.*, 2004). Latent needs and solutions relate to those needs and solutions that a customer does not realize. Those implicit needs are equally real as expressed ones, but have not been yet apprehended by customers themselves, therefore relate to the unknown future (Narver *et al.*, 2004). The proactive MO is alternatively called **market driving**, hence the additional aim behind that strategy is to shape or/and lead customers' perceptions and behaviours so that they would realize their new needs (Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012; Jaworski *et al.*, 2000; Narver *et al.*, 2004). Being proactive or else driving the market, also means that a firm tries to differentiate its offer from the competitors' by re-directing customers' attention to attributes that have never been considered important or relevant or simply by providing completely new solutions (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000).

These new, break-through solutions however, can be mainly discovered after disciplined search, for instance customer behaviour observation that would allow determining existing problems or deficiencies in the customer solutions' supply (Narver *et al.*, 2004). Hence, the proactive approach attempts to acquire diverse knowledge that brings something new to the existing firm's experience, mainly by exploratory and generative learning (Tsai *et al.* 2008 cited in Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012; March, 1991 cited in Atuahene-Gima *et al.*, 2005).

Moving into details, those market driving or proactively market oriented companies have certain characteristics that facilitate "*discontinuous leaps in innovation in terms of customer value*" (Stein, 2012). Those internal features include: from the corporate culture perspective: **organizational adhocratic culture** as opposed to the bureaucratic one. Adhocratic culture is characterized by strong experimental attitude, which according to Slater and Narver (1998), allows proactive companies to look more broadly and further in the future comparing to the

businesses that are just consumer-led. Also, adhocracy is understood as approach that fosters organisational risk-taking, creativity and innovativeness, flexible organizational climate, employees entrepreneurship and collective organizational learning (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004; Narver *et al.*, 2004); **strong vision** inflicted by strong, charismatic leadership (Collins & Porras, 2002 cited in Carrillat *et al.*, 2004), which further translates into consumer offerings that do not only address existing consumers' needs and desires but are likely to simultaneously reveal new ones; **innovation focus** embedded in the organizational culture making a firm supportive towards learning about customers' needs and implementing internal processes aiming at development of the excellent value propositions and exceeding customers' expectations (Narver *et al.*, 2004; Kumar *et al.*, 2000). From the behavioural perspective, it is **forward sensing**, which refers to acquiring “*state of the art knowledge*” about the market, which would allow to generate new ideas about the future developments that would modify the structure of the market (Harris & Cai 2002 cited in Carrillat *et al.*, 2004, p.4). In the aspect of customer stimulus, proactive companies aim at **shaping behaviours of the market actors** in both, a direct way by building or removing customer/competitor constraints or in an indirect way by switching/creating new customers/competitors preferences (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000), **customer education or else interactive learning**, meaning that the company is learning from the market and simultaneously educates it about the value and application of the innovation, what reduces the probability of failure of the innovative idea and makes that firm more successful in launching revolutionary products (Kumar *et al.*, 2000); and finally **destroying/ re-sketching the industry segmentation**, which means creating new industry landscape by gathering the new market around the new product by targeting and attracting customers from a variety of earlier-defined market segments (Kumar *et al.*, 2000). In terms of brand management, market driving firm is aiming to exploit buzz network to gain brand attachment; that means that market driving companies often rely on the early adopters' and opinion leaders' word-of-mouth, what further contributes to the intangible brand prestige and decreases the spending on the traditional advertising comparing to the market-driven competitors (Kumar *et al.*, 2000, Carrillat *et al.*, 2004). All above described factors comprise on the market-driving/ proactive market orientation arsenal.

There are few examples of companies mentioned in the literature that demonstrate the market-driving demeanour.

Procter & Gamble exemplifies proactive approach in terms of forward sensing. This manufacturer was aiming to discover customers' latent needs and managed to gain insights about consumers' behaviour by reaching to non-traditional methods of gathering information, specifically they sent camera crews to approximately 80 households to monitor how the customers live and work (Nelson, 2001 cited in Narver *et al.*, 2004; Blocker *et al.*, 2011).

Motorola is another company that showed proactive approach towards identifying customers' future needs by brainstorming about solutions and testing ideas to fulfil those needs (Weber *et al.* 2005 cited in Blocker *et al.*, 2011). Motorola's MotoCity is a research and development facility located, unlike the traditional R&D centres, in Chicago's skyscraper,. Knipper (2009 cited in Herhausen, 2011) reports that the atmosphere in MotoCity is very relaxed, affected by flat hierarchy, openness to external cooperation and proactivity. Free-flowing communication and teamwork are at the core of the process of probing and uncovering latent and future customers needs. In MotoCity, the prevailing objective is to lead the market instead of delivering insights on what the market wants. A senior director of MotoCity – Gary R. Weiss stated “*We did not want to be distracted by the normal inputs we get. It would not have allowed us to be as innovative*” (Weber *et al.*, 2005 cited in Herhausen, 2011, p. 29).

Another example of market driving company is IKEA. This retailer extensively demonstrated its proactivity in terms of re-shaping market segmentation and creating new customers' behaviours and preferences. This Swedish furniture retailer that will be presented in more detail in the following chapters started influencing consumers' behaviour by implementing certain customer constraints. In this case, IKEA has built huge stores with displays of its offerings, simultaneously forcing customers to follow certain established shopping path. IKEA also provided interior design solutions and self-bundled furniture modifying previous home appliances' shopping patterns towards DIY (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000).

While trying to target the future needs of customers, firms gain the ability to experiment with product development and actually use the new insights gathered about the customers and general macro-environment. Furthermore, this hands-on approach allows discovering gaps in customer satisfaction or customer's problems that still have not been solved, realizing untapped market opportunities, hence creating a competitive advantage (Atuahene-Gima *et al.* 2005 cited in Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012). Kumar *et al.* (2011) see long term benefits of proactive

MO in terms of sales and profits, market share, customer satisfaction and return on investment (Deshpandé *et al.*, 1993; Jaworski & Kohli 1993; Slater & Narver 1994).

Nevertheless, there exist certain barriers when it comes to adopting proactive market orientation. Firstly, ideas that usually drive markets are very eccentric, unconventional, so called “*mavericks*” by Kumar *et al.* (2000, p.135), hence there is a level of serendipity involved when it comes to their generation. Additionally, those ideas are usually nonconformist to the prevailing industry conventions, hence often are being rejected. Most firms tend to avoid taking risks and censor the most innovative, break-through ideas and instead favour familiar, reversible and safe ones (Kumar *et al.*, 2000). Moreover, pro-activity entails high, mainly financial risk related to certain level of incompetence due to applying unfamiliar knowledge or unconventional solutions (March, 1991 cited in Atuahene-Gima *et al.*, 2005; Kumar *et al.*, 2000). Ultimately, this very common and strongly rooted, cautious, efficiency-focused mindset as well as the obedience to the established “good-practice”, often prevents firms from seizing opportunities to shape the future (Kumar *et al.*, 2000).

Finally, as pointed by Hunt and Morgan (1995 cited in Bodlaj *et al.*, 2012), MO itself can only ensure competitive advantage when competitors do not adopt it to a large scale. Considering that today many organizations do adopt MO, the case is not anymore if apply, but **HOW** to apply MO.

In respect to this question, this thesis will look closely at how proactive companies use the advancement of the 21st century – **social media (SM)** , which presents another opportunity and another platform for developing, sustaining or enhancing proactive market orientation.

Also, the concept of market intelligence comes into picture as is positioned at the core of market orientation and is closely connected with the concept of social media, which in respect of forward sensing acts as source of information.

3.2. Market Intelligence

Market intelligence (MI) is defined as “*all activities geared toward developing an understanding of customers’ current and future needs and the factors affecting them*” (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990, p. 3). To a large extent MI is synonymous with market research or more specifically with market assessment research, “*the systematic gathering, recording, analysis and interpretation of information about a company’s markets, competitors and customers*” (Harrison & Cupman, 2008) and those insights could be derived from both primary and secondary data (Rapp & Agnihotri, 2011; Muller, 2006; Miller, 2001). Nonetheless, these processes could be conducted by both market-driven and market-driving companies. However, Bartes (2011) mostly connects MI with forecasting the future; thus, there is a strong tie between MI and the proactive market orientation and its forward sensing dimension (Jimenez-Zarco *et al.*, 2012). The in-depth knowledge is a precondition of achieving business objectives, especially when those future business environments are uncertain (Frishammar, 2003 cited in Jimenez-Zarco *et al.*, 2012). Proactively oriented companies therefore will employ systems that help in knowledge creation and then base their decision on obtained insights (Hult *et al.*, 2005 cited in Jimenez-Zarco *et al.*, 2012).

The question where many academics and practitioners differ in their understanding of MI is what to relate to the scope of MI. It is being confused with competitive intelligence, which according to Harrison & Cupman (2008) refers particularly to information about firm’s competitors. Muller (2006), on the other hand, distinguishes market intelligence from competitor intelligence and put both terms together under the label of competitive intelligence. Kohli & Jaworski (1990) on the other hand, state that MI encompasses two significant fields: competition regulation and customers’ current and future needs, and that specific characterization will be the used for MI definition in this study. Altogether, insights about competitors and customers are considered to be critically important in “*shaping strategic marketing decisions and building market-oriented organisations*” (Jaworski *et al.* 2002, cited in Rapp & Agnihotri, 2011, p. 279).

Market intelligence processing includes three major steps: MI gathering, MI dissemination and acting upon MI.

The first stage – **MI gathering** can lay in the responsibility of variety of departments, including marketing, R&D, sales and management (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). It has a long-term strategic importance as it influences process of planning, which is greatly influenced by emerging technological, economic, social or political trends (Soderlund, 1990 cited in Cornish, 1997). MI can be generated via different sources and instruments that enable remaining mindful of unforeseen marketplace changes, for instance: open-source public records, discussions with variety of stakeholders and knowledgeable parties, surveys, focus groups, product testing, store checks and finally careful monitoring of the mass-media and internet including **social media** (Miller, 2001; Latitude Global, 2008; Lewrick *et al.*, 2011; Harrysson Sarrazin & Metayer, 2013).

MI dissemination across the organizational departments can happen in both, formal and informal ways (Kohli *et al.*, 1993), for instance during staff meetings or informal “*hall talk*” (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990, p. 5). Usually, intelligence analysts often report to the communications, marketing or strategy departments as noticed by Harrysson *et al.* (2012).

Finally, MI gathering would be without purpose if it was not acted upon. For this reason, **responding** to MI requires quick decisions, internal coordination between departments (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990), as well as openness to change, what ultimately links back with the organizational culture and the leadership commitment.

Ultimately, the goal of MI is to provide actionable conclusions that would supply the firm with a competitive edge and early warnings allowing taking preparatory actions in order to sustain this competitive edge (Miller, 2001). Additionally, MI should “*help a company establish a foothold in a market*” and ensure that company grows by increasing its profits and market share (Harrison & Cupman, 2008, p. 2).

One of benefits of implementing MI function is that MI can assist in internal organizational learning (Celuch and Murphy, 2010) and help avoid wasting efforts or valuable resources when faced with sudden change in the market (Latitude Global, 2008). Most importantly for market-driving companies, the investment in MI provide a firm with capabilities that are not easily replicated by competitors and can lead to tactical and strategic knowledge, in this case to understanding latent needs of customers and ultimately cultivating proactive market orientation (Day, 1994 cited in Kumar *et al.*, 2011).

In the end, MI is of a great importance for market-driving companies, but simultaneously has certain shortcomings. More specifically, when gathered in traditional ways, MI reaches responsible bodies within the organisation with considerable delay, which makes the intelligence obsolete, hence reduce the opportunity to act on it promptly and successfully (Attaway, 1998 cited in Rapp & Agnihotri, 2011). The current and very promising solution for that obstacle, is the internet, and in particular SM, as it reveals the opportunity to obtain huge amounts of valuable data *“produced and made available real-time”* (Letouzé, 2012, p.9), hence provides a company with a first mover advantage when acted upon in a timely manner. After all, the internet has been recognized as a powerful instrument influencing the way the business is done and considered as an *“integral component of a firm’s strategy”* (Chang, Jackson & Grover, 2002 cited in Celuch & Murphy, 2010, p.132).

3.3. Social Media

The era of today is characterized by significant affordability of digital devices and omnipresence of the internet (Letouzé, 2012). Technology increasingly plays bigger part in people’s lives and therefore, digital data explodes thanks to *“the greater access to customer data from public, proprietary, and purchased sources, as well as new information gathered from Web communities and newly deployed smart assets”* (Bughin, Chui, and Manyika, 2010, p. 2). Before the internet-enabled *“data deluge”*, data was available in small volume and through limited number of channels (Letouze, 2012), but nowadays it is flooding in great volume, variety, at high speed and via numerous channels (Harrison and Cupman, 2008). This available data progressively gets younger, being even *“less than a minute old”* and also becomes available in real-time (Letouze, 2012, p. 9).

Within this information influx, SM plays very important role. It encompasses *“Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). There are multiple categories under the concept of SM, such as social networking sites, discussion forums, blogs, media sharing sites, virtual worlds, commerce communities and social bookmarking services. All these platforms attract millions of users who spend more and more time and transfer more and more personal information on to those social platforms: reveal personal details, express their needs, preferences and complaints, share their opinions and discuss them with other users on social networks (Stavarakantonakis *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, certain characteristics of SM make it extremely valuable for interaction with customers in comparison to any other means. SM offers greater speed, breadth, and richness for engaging people, besides, knowledge can be accessed at lower cost (Sawhney *et al.*, 2005). Di Gangi *et al.* (2010) support that view claiming that internal research can be enhanced at lower costs, while a large number of customers can be engaged directly into innovations co-generation.

As a result of all these qualities, SM becomes an interesting and rich source of market intelligence (Mayeh, Scheepers & Valose., 2012; Hawthorn & Cromity, 2012) and simultaneously influences activities of market-driving companies, in particular forward sensing, buzz networking and influencing customers in variety of ways in order to shape their behaviours and create new preferences.

3.4. Social Media for Forward Sensing, Customer Stimulus and Buzz Network

Joining global nets and embracing big data and SM analytics have been recognized as a indispensable step for companies in order to stay relevant and up to date (Jimenez-Zarco *et al.*, 2012; Letouze, 2012), what also means being able to influence customers and perform forward sensing.

The opportunities seen in SM monitoring for intelligence acquisition, or else forward sensing, led to the development of particular monitoring tools that for instance enable sourcing data from the UGC such as: posts, pictures and videos and ultimately shape social marketing strategies (Stavrakantonakis *et al.*, 2012; Chen, Chiang & Storey, 2012). Companies such as FordMotor, PepsiCo and Southwest Airlines, are already “*mining data*” from SM in real time (Bughin *et al.*, 2010, p. 8). They scan social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to analyze brand-related postings in order to understand consumer’s attitudes (Bughin *et al.*, 2010). This refers to the **sentiment analysis**, which measures attitudes and emotional state of users, identifies what influences people, therefore enables establishing more effective customer targeting (Bughin *et al.*, 2011). The sentiment analysis can be informative in evaluating social brand mentions and filtering positive and negative comments. The benefit of using those automatic techniques according to Stavrakantonakis *et al.* (2012) is that they are consistent, fast and tireless. What companies can also observe

thanks to those tools is revenue growth, product usage, brand mentions and marketing campaigns success. Also, monitoring of SM enables tapping the insights and innovations coming from the fans and followers by estimating the **buzz** around the products and services. Also, looking from more technical perspective, the keywords and Search Engine Optimization techniques used by competitors, forum comments, traditional press releases, information from conference presentations posted online may be used for the trend spotting (Cripe, 2012). Harrysson *et al.* (2012, p.22) defined those insights as “*forward looking*”, what greatly corresponds with what market-driving companies are trying to achieve.

The key issue with regards to the SM monitoring, however, is that the information obtained through this channel is not intelligence itself (Hladky, 2004). Information becomes intelligence when is analysed and represents a clear guidance. Hence, when a firm really want to become or remain proactive, it needs to cut through the volume and variety of available data, select the data relevant specifically to its customers, products or competitors and then analyze it to receive the intelligence that is ready to be acted upon (Lopez, 2012; Hladky,2004; Boeri, 2012). That requires certain analytical techniques which would clean, organize and interpret valuable information as well as reveal trends, understand their roots, implications and relevance, so that the companies can make effective decisions and build successful strategies (Miller, 2011; Latitude Global, 2008; Stavrakantonakis *et al.*, 2012). When not dealt in this way, companies can fall into a common trap of “*analysis paralysis*”, which means endless reviewing of data without acquiring any functional insights (Latitude Global, 2008, p. 7). Those processes however are still not very common nowadays, and only few analysts deal effectively with chaotic social data streams. The majority simply extract conversations from the “*usual suspects*” such as Facebook and Twitter (Harrysson *et al.*, 2012). Also, while speaking of challenges and risks, in the open and rich in data, SM space, the ability to track competitors means company’s own vulnerability to be observed by others (Omand *et al.*, 2012). At the same time, there exist a possibility of being misled by disinformation and rumours appearing on the web, hence for instance potting new trends when there are none (Hedin, 2010).

However, besides merely passive data gathering from SM for customer insight and market intelligence stemmed from inter-customer dialog, SM allows firms engage actively in the communication process (Gallaughar & Ransbotham, 2010). Indeed, SM and other technologies gave unique opportunities for learning, co-creation and insight generation; and

according to Austin & Schlock (2012) this ongoing collaboration between companies and their customers will lead to breakthroughs and companies' growth. With the help of SM, companies can include users in their innovation processes (Di Gangi *et al.* 2010), "*capture customer feedback, enhance market research, augment customer service, and foster innovation*" (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010, p. 200), absorb social customer knowledge as well as scan knowledge of current, potential or competitors' customers (Sawhney *et al.*, 2005).

Also, the way consumers can be influenced, so called in this thesis "customer stimulus", has been put into a completely new context. Having the immediateness of information exchange and accessibility to the social platforms by majority of consumer, companies nowadays can capture even bigger portion of the consumers' lives and make sure that those who are online engage in firm's activities and pass the message forward across their personal networks.

More specifically, customers can be involved in the environmental scanning and searching, ideas generation and evaluation as well as designing and testing new services (Sigala, 2012). That latter is mainly due to the lower costs and risks and also the instant insights into consumers' reactions triggered by certain decision or activity (Stokes, 2012). By doing so, organizations can "*support the identification of latent needs by enabling customers to reflect and consider their own needs as and when they occur*" (Sigala, 2012, p. 979), expand innovation process and increase the potential for profitable growth in future (Di Gangi *et al.* 2010).

One of the tactics used in SM for increasing engagement and ultimately shaping customer behaviours is **gamification**. The definition of gamification was coined by Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke (2011, p.1) and refers to "*the use of game design elements in non-game contexts*" with the purpose to mainly change people's behaviours by influencing and motivating groups of people (Bunchball Inc., 2010) by offering them external tangible or intangible awards (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). It is often used for "*building and activating a community of members or fans*", with ultimate goal to stimulate purchase decision (Bunchball Inc., 2010, p. 5). Gamification is not a new invention as it has been used for years in loyalty systems like for instance frequent flyer programmes applied by airlines (Nicholson, 2012). Nevertheless, since SM became so ubiquitous, this marketing discipline's efficacy has increased (Bunchbal Inc., 2010).

Success of this tactic however, depends on creating gamification system that is noteworthy to the user so that he would be keen on engaging in the offered activities (Nicholson, 2012). That meaningfulness can be created by understanding of the consumer's background, interests and needs, and that is where also SM rich in personal data about consumers, plays a significant role. Therefore, firms need to ask themselves: "how the user will benefit from it?" (Nicholson, 2012). Predominantly, gamification is applied to improve the user experience, joy of use and engagement (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). Few earlier mentioned market-driving companies benefited from applying this activity, for instance Starbucks is using Foursquare to reward loyalties within its reward program that *"employs game mechanics such as progress bars, levelling and rewards as incentives (...) motivating members to register and spend their gift cards to receive bigger and better benefits with every purchase"* (Giovannoni, 2012). Also Nike employs gamification in the form of Facebook application called "Nike Shoe Boxxxx", which is a game of trading virtual goods – Nike sneakers, with other users, but without any tangible awards. *"Virtual goods are non-physical, intangible objects that are purchased for use in online communities or online games. Users purchase virtual goods like clothing, weapons or decorations to create an identity for their virtual self while comparing and "showing off" with their friends"* (Bunchball Inc., 2010, p. 10). This is how Nike tries to connect with the audience on SM and simultaneously gather information about shoes preferences (Giovannoni, 2012).

Those examples depict how market leaders use game-like elements: firstly, game mechanics such as levels, points, challenges, virtual goods, leader boards, and second, game dynamics: reward, status, competition, achievement or self-expression. (Bunchball Inc., 2010).

Gamification can help firms to develop relationships via engagement in range of activities: online quizzes and polls, product ratings, subscribing to e-mail communication, viewing photos, creating content, answering questions, participating in forum discussions, sharing information and recommending sites, making a purchase. Another example of engaging users, specifically relevant to the market-driving companies with innovation focus, is to encourage customers' participation in the innovation processes, for instance through Online User Innovation Communities (Di Gangi *et al.*, 2010). All those engaging activities can simultaneously lead to obtaining greater ability to influence and shape consumers' behaviours (Bunchball Inc., 2010).

SM can have a great impact on one more characteristic of proactive company, i.e. brand attachment via buzz network.

Here comes in an additional benefit of gamification on SM, which is contribution to the proliferation of the online word-of-mouth, as active participants share the links and news with friends outside the community and even draft them to the community creating even denser **buzz network**. In this respect, gamification plays an important part in brand management as it can *“increase brand awareness, affinity, and purchase intent by driving their audience to spend more time on a website or related social media property and come back more often”* (Bunchball Inc., 2010, p. 6) . Also, SM makes it easier to create buzz around the products and the brand and influence the level of noise in the virtual space by identifying and involving lead users in New Service Development (NSD) processes thanks to the information that is available about consumers online (Sigala, 2012).

While speaking of buzz network creating, online social networks are particularly useful for identifying, accessing and engaging lead users (Pitta and Fowler, 2005 cited in Sigala, 2012; Sawhney *et al.*, 2005), while not being restricted neither by geographical boundaries nor by the boundaries of its served markets. SM active users might be not representative of all of the firm’s customers, but they represent a forward-thinking customer group (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010). These lead users have credibility in the eyes of their peers, hence their views can deeply impact creation of new users’ perceptions and preferences as well as dissemination of new ideas across online networks (Sigala, 2012). Additionally, those lead users’ opinions can contribute to the firm’s market knowledge by providing ideas regarding the needs and preferences regarding products by themselves (Fuller *et al.*, 2007 cited in Sigala, 2012).

All above described possibilities that SM uncovers, are especially significant for companies which want to remain or move ahead of competition and shape markets by influencing customers’ behaviours and preferences. Hence, more and more businesses publish great amount of information online and try to more actively engage with customers via SM (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, Adam Sarner from Market Research Company called Gartner, reports that over 50 percent of companies that develop some sort of marketing or customer relations initiative on SM fail. Jeremiah Owyang, analyst from

Forrester explains that that is the result of lack of understanding of what is meaningful for specific communities (Bunchball Inc., 2010).

At last it can be concluded that companies that want to be proactive and stay abreast of market changes should exploit new areas of digital skills (Harrysson *et al.*, 2012). However, once again, the reference needs to be made to the certain organizational culture which some companies do not have and therefore they cannot make the most of SM, others find open conversation at odds with their strategy (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010); openness to change and leadership attitude, especially that persuading the senior leaders and top management often unfamiliar with SM invention or sceptical about its effectiveness for forward sensing due to its infancy and lack of solid statistical evidence, remains a challenge (Harrysson *et al.*, 2012; New Vantage Partners, 2012). Therefore, it is important for firms to “*weigh investment and expectations against their ability to align social media with culture and strategic fit*” (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010, p. 209).

3.5. Driving markets in the era of Social Media

From the discussion above it is evident that SM can serve well in a numerous ways to companies that want to drive the market. UGC might be a valuable resource for conducting quick and reliable market research, getting access to market intelligence, identifying ideas for service improvements (Schröder & Hölzle, 2010 cited in Sigala, 2012). It enables spotting market trends as well as obtaining insights about missing customers’ solutions and latent customers’ needs (Mayeh *et al.*, 2012). For proactively market oriented companies, those opportunities comprise on market-modernizing, innovation-breeding toolset. Harrysson *et al.* (2012) see the future role of SM in informing competitive strategy creation taking into account that SM as a more contemporary source of market intelligence allows overcoming certain limits of traditional methods. In addition to MI gathering, SM can benefit processes of customer learning and buzz network and simultaneously brand attachment creation considering that customers nowadays pay a lot of attention to and are largely influenced by this virtual milieu. Besides, it is quicker and does not entail enormous costs.

However before companies aspiring to enhance their proactivity, could benefit from and capitalize on the SM activities, they need to work on creating appropriate and solid

organizational culture that is characterized by openness to innovation, readiness to embrace changes and strong vision.

Furthermore, from the above theoretical discussion, the links between major concepts of proactive MO and SM emerge. Those concepts are interconnected in a distinctive way as depicted by the *Figure 3. Conceptual map*. When considered holistically as an approach towards business, it can be seen as yet another opportunity layer for companies to add on to their market-driving approach.

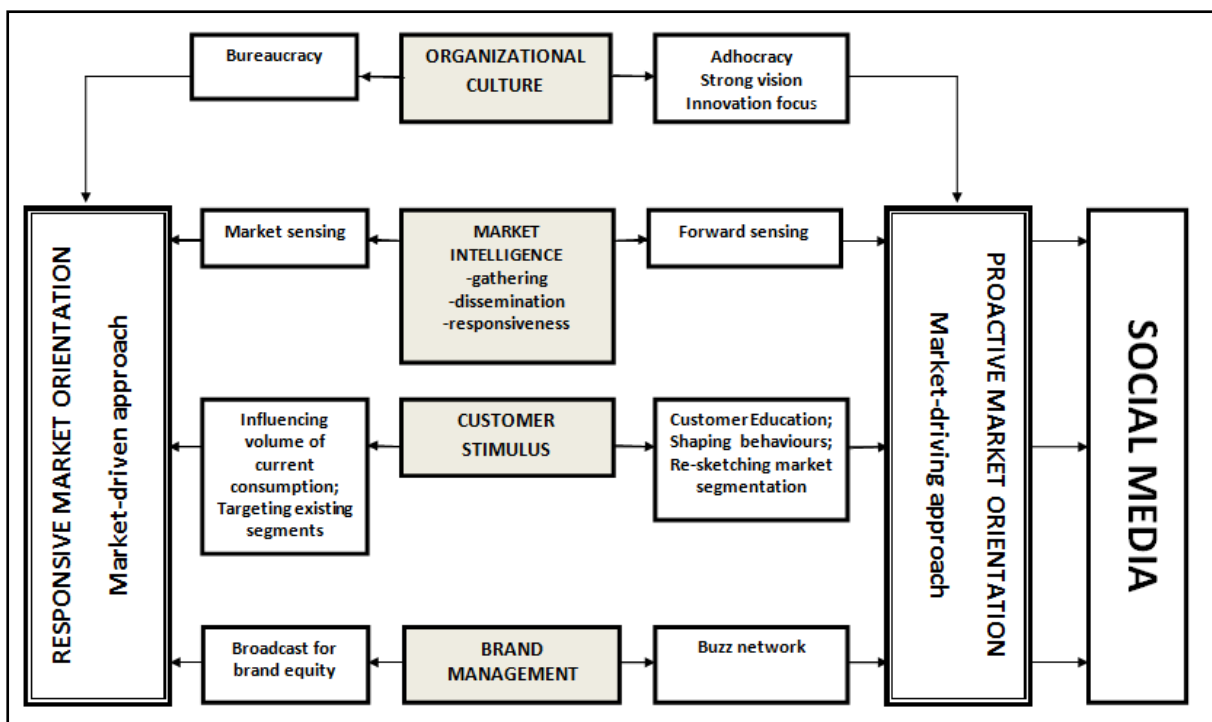


Figure 3. Conceptual map

4. *Method*

The method employed for the research can be chosen from two paradigms: positivism or interpretivism (Robson, 1993). A paradigm can be defined as a core belief system that steers investigation (Christie, Rowe, Perry and Chamard, 2000). The first paradigm - positivism is quantitative and hypothetic-deductive, while second one - interpretivism is qualitative and exploratory (Robson, 1993; McDaniel & Gates, 1993). This study employs the latter paradigm – interpretivism, which is descriptive and investigative.

Interpretivism concentrates on meaning and understanding (Geertz, 1972 cited in Roth & Mehta, 2002), and as Williams (2001 cited in Clarke, 2009) points out this paradigm appeals to the subjectivity and interpretation (Clarke, 2009). Geertz (1972 cited in Roth & Mehta, 2002) also claims that our data, which we think of as facts, cannot be truly objective as in fact it represents our individual constructions of other people’s constructions. Interpretation is at the core of interpretivism. Interpretations are said to guide behaviours and conduct of people, so the idea behind interpretivism is to capture the meaning of actor’s actions and practices. Moreover, a focus on beliefs and meanings within this paradigm, whose manifestations are special to the case, naturally entails practical preference for qualitative techniques, which try to combine those beliefs (Hay, 2011; Lin, 1998).

In this study, the interpretation process will address the perspectives of experts and managers on the usage of social media for performing specific actions from the proactive market orientation arsenal. Hence, ultimately the study will generate thick descriptions and interpretations of few subjective viewpoints and will aim to discover meanings behind market driving firms’ actions in the virtual reality.

This research investigates the interrelation between two phenomena - proactive market orientation or else market driving approach and the phenomenon of social media. The first phenomenon is moderately new and has not yet achieved the saturated stage in the academic research (Tarnovskaya, 2007). The latter one is on the other hand very recent as it has been around for 10 years, is still expanding and is being continuously investigated. Ultimately, both phenomena in questions are quite immature, dynamic, complex and context-sensitive.

This thesis therefore aimed at contributing to the ongoing investigation and theory building in the market orientation field. Moreover, there also has not been done much in academia to explore how those two phenomena intertwine. Ultimately, recognition of that theoretical gap influenced the choice of the methodology for this research. Considering that a few theoretical fields had to be bridged together to explore and describe how social media can support activities representative to the market driving approach, the qualitative method with all its qualities, seemed to be the most applicable way of investigating the topic.

The qualitative method is suited for asking broader questions, answers to which can provide a new, profound insight (Beer, 1988 cited in Christie *et al.*, 2000) and lead to establishing a phenomenon in a credible manner, hence depict '*generative mechanisms*' or '*causal powers*' of that particular phenomenon (Yin, 1993 cited in Christie *et al.*, 2000, p. 8). The qualitative analysis applied in this thesis allowed therefore asking companies general questions referring to their approach to the market and customers and moving on to the more specific points with regards to the social media usage and particular activities, hence finding out the underlying motives for those actions. The qualitative approach is also said to be the most effective method for understanding social phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Shank, 2002) as it privileges their point of view (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). When this study is concerned, it means that the standpoint of particular market driving companies can be exposed when it comes to applying social media in order to proactively approach the markets, additionally to the perspective of different social media experts.

Qualitative design of this paper also translates to describing behaviours, interactions and social contexts, but without applying statistical formulas (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, qualitative research allows specific, context sensitive conclusions, beyond broad generalization (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), hence the understanding of the specific circumstances affecting particular firms can be obtained (Davies, 2003) and those include for instance organizational culture or the industry the company operates within. With regards to this thesis, the focus on the context was crucial, as certain activities across the proactive market orientation arsenal, for instance monitoring consumers' comments about specific product, cannot be conducted similarly or with the same degree of effectiveness in all industries and by all companies. Simultaneously, qualitative approach provides a degree of flexibility and responsiveness to the context, meaning that the new questions can emerge when the new data appears (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). For instance, in this research, during the

interviews, the answers of the study participants to the interview guide questions, kept on revealing new perspectives and insights, which further, stimulated new, context-specific questions.

Finally, according to Bonoma (1985, p.202), the relationship between marketing management and other business functions is a “*nonquantifiable phenomena*” mainly because the operational connection between those roles is defined by the context, hence depends on the firm’s macro- and micro-environment. This research analyses the mixture of proactive behaviours: forward sensing, customer stimulus and buzz network creation, which ultimately engage multiple business functions including sales and marketing, strategy and planning, research and development and customer service management, hence the qualitative approach is the justified choice for that study.

4.1. Research design

Research design sets up the agenda for collecting and analysing data (Bryman & Bell, 2008). In this study, the qualitative research with application of methods such as **interviews and observation** were carried out. The research design was driven by the research purpose and aimed at firstly, by talking to professionals, obtaining the point of view of different consultancy organizations to compare against very specific and contextual findings from particular market driving companies from different industries, and finally, by looking at companies’ activities, discovering how firms’ pro-active behaviour is being translated to the social media dimension. Using the triangulation of methods, acquisition of a broader and richer picture of the phenomena was possible. A process of data triangulation according to Yin (1994, p.93) means that by using several sources of evidence to tackle the complex issue or set of issues, the researcher can develop the “*converging lines of inquiry*” that uncover those problems in a more extensive way. Hence, in relevance to this study, the interviews allowed discovering the perspectives of multiple actors including: social media experts and marketing representatives of case companies and were complemented with the observation of the content available on social media platforms used by case companies, which provided insights about case companies’ proactive activities. Ultimately, the triangulation led to producing an extensive knowledge and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Fossey *et al.*, 2002).

4.2. Interviews

The research questions in qualitative approach focus on the area of language as a mean to describe and interpret subjective meanings and to build theory by discovering connections in data (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). Thus, data in this research was collected firstly through language, meaning by interviews, and in one case, due to time and geographical constraints via descriptive e-mail questionnaire. Fossey *et al.* (2002, p.721) identify interviews as a “*technique of choice in phenomenological research*”. They allow reaching the personal opinions of the interviewees to shed more light on the phenomena of interest (Fossey *et al.*, 2002).

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily as they allow focusing on specific issues that are in the researcher’s interest and which also emerged during the pre-interview data collection stage (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). This approach allowed some degree of flexibility in the interview composition (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003 cited in Turner, 2010), but nevertheless ensures that the researcher remains “*in the driver’s seat*” (Turner, 2010, p. 755) and can adjust the way and order of how the questions are being asked (McNamara, 2008 cited in Turner, 2010). The interview guide was prepared so that the focus of the interview would not shift towards other issues, but only target the topics of interest and lead to obtaining answers to the research question. Also, e-mail questionnaire was based on the interview guide. Hence, after the extensive literature review, mostly open-ended questions for interviews were created in order to obtain information with regards to the specific areas in the field of proactive market orientation and social media.

Furthermore, the respondents were informed about the interview themes before the actual interview for time management purpose and in order to avoid confusion or misunderstanding during the actual meeting. Additionally, interviews were recorded using mobile devices to allow further transcription.

Interviews provided important insights into the ways consultancy companies help firms apply social media to, for instance, derive data that could indicate current and future customers needs, create buzz around products and use it to influence customers’ behaviours. On the other hand, interviews with managers of case companies shed the light on the way those companies indeed use and benefit from social media when it comes to specific dimensions of market driving approach. Additionally, interviews were also a good source for getting the reflection of the organizational culture as to a certain extent they captured

employees' attitudes and motivations. Nevertheless, when it comes to interviews, there were doubts concerning the subjectivity issue, hence the secondary data from observation of firm's activities on social platforms was used to verify the primary data, hence actually capture activities the respondents have talked about.

The overall interview guide synthesised several research sub-topics including social media monitoring for MI gathering with the idea of looking into the future customers' needs and industry condition, the usage of social media for educating customers, shaping their behaviours and attracting them to the new product and finally initiating the buzz around the products and the brand.

The questions towards the consultancy companies aimed to establish the general landscape in terms of the social media usage when it comes to conducting specific actions, with particular emphasis on forward sensing, meaning social media monitoring for MI gathering, and creating buzz network. The interviews asked what platforms can be monitored, what analysis can be undertaken, what can be discovered about the market via social media and how this platform can be used for effective targeting and influencing consumers and stimulating buzz around the brand. Finally, they touched upon difficulties related to obtaining actionable intelligence from social media in order to establish how that could affect proactive approach.

The questions for the case companies were targeting similar topics however were adjusted to the company's context. Therefore, the questions were more specific and aimed to find out if the interviewed companies gather and analyse the information obtained via social media, how they do that and how they benefit from this activity, especially when it comes to developing products or preparing marketing strategy. The goal was also to identify what kind of analysis the firms undertake and what is their standpoint when it comes the social media monitoring usefulness for predicting the future trends and customers' needs. In the follow-up interviews with companies, the respondents were particularly asked about their activities when it comes to marketing tactics and communication with customers via social networking sites.

4.3. *Observation: digital ethnography*

As mentioned earlier, in order to enrich and validate the research findings, the triangulation of data was applied. The final element of that process included the particular type of observation: digital ethnography or else **netnography** (Kozinets, 2002).

Social media became a revolutionary medium for social exchange between people. Concurrently, it allowed an unparalleled access to the “*heretofore unobservable behaviours of interacting consumers*” Kozinets (2002, p.63), but also put the interactions between consumers and companies in the spotlight. Netnography is based on the observation of textual discourse as opposed to typical for ethnography consideration of discourse and observed behaviour together.

Netnography, just like ethnography, is “*flexible and adaptable to the interests of the individual marketing researcher*” Kozinets (2002, p.63). Hence, in case of this research, specific set of behaviours of the companies is searched for in the content and interactions on their social networking sites.

Netnography suits perfectly the approach which aims to analyse not the person but the behaviour or act (Kozinets, 2002). Again, taking into account that the unit of analysis in this study are not people, but the actions, behaviours and practices, netnography presents an applicable choice for complementary method.

Social networking sites, as Murthy (2008) remarks, are also useful for netnographers as they reveal strength, substance and direction of the relationship ‘strands’ (fibres). That characteristic present an opportunity to build up on the brand attachment related to buzz network as well as customer stimulus dimension revealing how customers are being affected by the content on social media supplied by the market driving companies and hence, how it affects their attitudes towards companies and their products.

The content analysis of the social media platforms utilized by the case companies was undertaken. The activity of IKEA and Brand X (*named this way due to Non-Disclosure Agreement stating anonymity of the brand’s its products’ names*) on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and the companies’ own websites was tracked 6 months to 1 year back and aimed to identify examples of activities that would exemplify how range of market-driving behaviours is being translated to the social media context. The digital

ethnography method aimed to search for examples of behaviours such as: shaping customers' behaviours, engaging, interacting and educating customers, stimulating buzz around the products, expressing interest in customers' opinions.

4.4. Study participants

This study engaged six participants, who were representing five companies with five different perspectives; more specifically three consultancy companies and two B2C companies. The interviews were conducted with representatives of the following companies; Firstly, with the experts within the consultancy companies that specifically deal with social media monitoring for businesses: **Marcus Emne, Director of Customer Insight at the CGI Logica**, the company that deals with applied customer intelligence, hence supports firms in gathering, analysing and acting upon the customer intelligence and also instructs how to treat big data and operate in the database environment, **Stephen Groom, the social media expert at MJ Media**, media planning and buying agency, that helps companies with implementation of their marketing strategies in terms of media channels and **Kai Feng Chew, Managing Director of Croakun**, social media agency that *“provides real-time social media analytics and actionable KPIs to help tracking online chatter and correct the misinformation, to improve online presence, engaging better with your customers while being more competitive than the competitors”* (Croakun Inc, 2013). Secondly, officers within marketing departments within the case companies: **N.W., The UK Marketing Director and H.M. – Marketing Manager at Brand X** the video games publisher and **Johan Meltzer, Direct Communication Specialist at IKEA**, furniture and accessories retailer.

The above study participants were selected due to their knowledge and expertise with regards to the social media usage. Furthermore, when it comes to the choice of case B2C companies, the selection process was primarily influenced by both – major limitation such as access and second by set of criteria with regards to the company's profile and performance, in other words market-driving approach. Hence, the search for case companies was driven by finding firstly, industry leaders and first-movers as those companies have usually strong vision and innovation focus in place, and second, companies with extensive social media presence. Both factors are in the heart of that research and setting up those criteria was the only way to find out how those two phenomena: proactive market orientation and social media could and are combined in practice. Considering that the researchers had already

established contacts in both companies – IKEA and Brand X, due to limited time, alongside the search for other cases, the emphasis was put on finding competent people in the fields of interest of this study. Additionally, IKEA has been recognized by academia as an archetypical market driving company in terms of business systems (Kumar, 2000 cited in Tarnovskaya, 2007), customer and supplier relationships (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000) and expansion strategy applying standardisation of retail offer (Prime, 1999 cited in Tarnovskaya, 2007). Brand X on the other hand has been described by video game industry specialists as a developer of “*the most successful, controversial, and innovative games in the industry. They are best known for (...) their ground-breaking work in open world games*” (CBS Interactive Inc, 2013). Both companies are also active in the online world and to a great extent on social media. Ultimately, all those factors made both companies suitable for conducting interviews with their managers and for observation and content analysis with regards to their activity on social networking sites.

Overall, the sample for this qualitative research was determined by access, resources, time and finally the research purpose and theoretical context that imposed the requirement for interviewed companies to be market-driving and use social media proactively, hence for intelligence gathering, influencing consumers’ behaviours and buzz creation.

Nevertheless, there were certain obstacles that we encountered when it comes to selecting the research participants. It has to be taken into account that access often has to be agreed on over a period of time (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008; Bonoma, 1985); thus, having short timeframe for data collection, only limited amount of meetings could have been fixed and conducted on time. Also, considering tight schedules of the respondents, the process of discussing eligibility for interviews, choosing the suitable date and location of the meeting plus finally making it happen, was very time consuming. Ultimately, the interviews were conducted with limited number of companies. Moreover, bearing in mind the time and resources limitations, the interviews were conducted in locations easily accessible for the researchers (Rowley, 2002). Firstly, the interviews with consultancy companies were conducted in Malmo on the 26th March 2013 with CGI and in London on the 10th April 2013 with MJ Media. Secondly, case companies were interviewed - IKEA in Helsingborg, Sweden on the 10th April 2013 and the video games publisher Brand X in London on the 12th April 2013. Finally, the e-mail interview with Croakun representative, conducted in this way due to the geographical constrains (Croakun is located in Malaysia) was taking place between 30th of April till the 21st of May 2013 (e-mail exchange).

4.5. Usage of theory

The role of theory in this study was significant as it has guided the whole research process from the initial stage of establishing the research purpose and research themes to the stage of data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, the theory and empirical findings were continuously and mutually affecting one another. Hence, ultimately, the abductive approach with inductive data reasoning was applied in this study.

Even though there was a significant reliance on the theory throughout this study, empirical research did not intend to confirm the existing theory, but rather aimed at theory development. The existing theory comprised a foundation for understanding the links between the theoretical concepts used in this study, but also for creation of new conceptualisations (model).

Also, the empirical data was initially fitted into the categories and concepts derived from the preliminary framework, however at the end of the data analysis stage, new concepts were developed for better combination of proactive market orientation constituents with the social media channel and how those market driving components fit into this specific digital environment.

4.6. Data analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed and converted into a text file. The interview transcripts were analysed manually by researchers using coding method due to small number of respondents. Manual analysis entailed comparison of responses that included similar statements, and those were grouped in appropriate categories. Firstly the data was organised into conceptual topics, according to the interview guide and the theory. Those included: organizational culture, forward sensing, shaping customers' behaviours, educating consumers, re-shaping market segmentation and finally buzz network.

Also, in the qualitative work, the continuous blurring between data collection and analysis tend to occur (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Knowing this, after the literature review and the interviews with consultancy companies, new questions were developed before approaching specific firms, for instance regarding using social media for sentiment analysis

or targeting lead users and also applied by the firm gamification tactics. The data analysis was conducted in the inductive way as throughout the process of gathering data, the theory was continuously being revisited, for instance only after interviews with social media experts, the theory about gamification was added to the literature review. Ultimately, the research questions were evolving and the links with the theories were emerging throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, simultaneously making the study more focused and leading to deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Fossey *et al.*, 2002).

Speaking of the data collected through netnography, the particular social media activities and behaviours as well as customers' reactions were eternized by "print screen" function and stored in the files for further analysis. That was followed up by organizing particular files according to earlier established classification. From there, behaviours and reactions were documented in a text file and triangulated with the data from the interviews.

Overall, the process of data analysis consisted of three major stages. Firstly, data was reduced through the processes of selecting and categorizing empirical observations under specific themes that were pre-defined by the interview guide. Afterwards, data was being organised within the themes themselves and assembled under sub- themes that emerged in the process of discovering new dimensions from triangulated data.

At this stage, the distinction was made between strategic and tactical information. Thus, the first category was referring to the question: "Why using SM for specific behaviour?" and presenting the long-term importance of SM usage for proactive market orientation, while the latter one to answer the question: "How to use SM for enhancing specific proactive behaviours?", hence indicating activities that could be applied to move company closer to the strategic goals.

The final stage of data analysis took place when all the major themes and specific sub-themes were in place and involved the process of conclusion drawing, meaning that all regularities and irregularities, patterns and links between all the findings were being noted and verified (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Saturation in terms of categories or themes can be claimed when during coding no new properties or dimensions emerge. Nevertheless, as Strauss & Corbin (1998) highlight, in fact saturation takes place when any 'new' data that is additionally collected is not bringing anything new to the explanations that are already provided. Nevertheless, at some instances

saturation is claimed at the point when the researcher reaches a budget limit and/or the research deadline (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), what actually happened with regards to this study.

4.7. Research design limitations

There are certain limitations that can be perceived in relation to this study design.

Firstly, bearing in mind that this research is of a constructionist design there is an issue of validity, which in qualitative research it is characterized as trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to secure validity and reduce bias in qualitative research it is suggested to use **triangulation** of method or data (Johnson, 1997). Therefore, to make the picture more objective, the triangulation was applied and the data was obtained also via observation of the social media platforms of case companies to complement and enhance the interviews-generated data. In this way, the conceptual topics were looked at from different angles.

Another challenge relates to reliability, which addresses whether other observers would indeed reach parallel observations if measure was duplicated (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992). To grant reliability in case studies, Christie *et al.* (2000) cites Eisenhardt (1989), Merriam (1988) and Parkhe (1993), who suggest to establish and execute the interview protocol, which makes data collections process easier to re-conduct. Following these recommendations, all of the interviews were conducted based on a line of questions – interview guide, recorded and then transcribed. The interview guide for consultancy companies is presented in the *Appendix 1: Interview Guide – Consultancy Companies* and the interview guide used for interviews with case companies is available in the *Appendix 2: Interview guide – Case companies*.

The ethical issue always exists in the qualitative research and relates to ensuring that research does not aim to expose any sensitive information that could be harmful to the company (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). Establishing certain level of engagement, cooperation and trust between the researcher and participants helped in overcoming those issues (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). Thus, firstly, the extensive knowledge about the companies in question was gained. Second, genuine interest and enthusiasm in conducting the research was shown. Moreover, research relevancy to the respondents was demonstrated. Finally, the approval to proceed with the collected information was obtained and in one case, the

confidentiality of names was guaranteed by signing the non-disclosure agreement, meaning that the respondents, the company itself and its products would not be “*presented in identifiable form*” (Supford & Jupp, 1996, p.319). These steps helped to a certain extent increase participants’ truthfulness when providing information.

Furthermore, all data collected in this research is truthful and not fabricated by the researchers, meaning that none information has been faked especially that fabrication is a “*blatant form of misconduct*” (National Academy of Sciences, 2006).

5. Findings

This chapter presents the findings acquired through the interviews with three consultancy companies and two market leading brands as well as the observation of SM platforms for two latter brands.

The chapter will be organized into subchapters according to the categories related to the proactive market orientation defined in theory and illustrated in the *Figure 3. Conceptual map* categories, i.e. (1) organizational culture, (2) forward sensing, (3) shaping customer behaviour, (4) customer education, (5) re-segmentation as well as (6) buzz network. Further, these subchapters will be broken down accordingly to the commonalities emerging within the dataset, with distinction between strategic goals and specific tactical activities that can help to achieve those goals.

Before the findings are presented, the brief background information referring to the companies will be provided.

Consultancy companies

All three interviewed consultancy companies are closely working with SM. However, their functions differ. CGI, in respect to social media monitoring, advises companies on gathering, analysing and acting upon customer intelligence and overall handling of big data and database environment. MJ Media is a media planning agency, implementing clients' marketing strategies into media channels, whereas Croakun is a social media agency providing social media analytics. That mixture of expertise of those companies in the field of SM itself provided different angles in terms of enhancing proactive behaviours by usage of SM.

Case companies

Moving on to the market leading brands, Brand X is a publisher of video games with global reach, and locates itself within the wider landscape of interactive entertainment and the popular culture. Speaking of Brand X, its UK Marketing Director, N.W., says that it is *"carefully created and curated, from the heart"*. Brand X identifies its position in the video game industry: *"We do stand out within the industry, we are considered a boutique company, but with huge revenue, that's the only thing that is in contrast to our brand image. Plus we get a loyal following of fans (...) and probably disproportionately large influence on the video*

game industry, besides the number of games we create". Brand X aims to stand out from its competitors: *"What makes us unique from the rest of the games industry, we feel is that we fit into the wider entertainment landscape, and not just into the video games industry"*.

The second brand is IKEA, a global retailer specializing in home furniture and accessories that operates across different markets in about 35 countries and is still growing despite significant competition within this retail industry. J.M. (IKEA) states that *"IKEA is such a leading brand globally, we are not following competitors (...) many competitors are following us and there are even bootleg stores throughout the world, where some local initiatives from local retailers that want to look like IKEA and have the similar products"*.

5.1. Organizational culture

As it was established in the Theory chapter, proactive market orientation can only be founded on the adhocratic *organizational culture*. For this reason, a part of the interviews with case companies was devoted to understanding of their corporate culture.

Findings in this category were divided into following sub-categories: strong vision, innovation focus, flexible organizational climate, employees' entrepreneurship and organizational leaning, and finally organizational risk-taking. Also, consultancies' representatives were asked about the suitable set-up for companies willing to involve SM into their practices; thus, the external perspective on the role of organizational culture when it comes to using SM for enhancing proactive behaviours was obtained.

Strong vision

From the statements made by both case companies it became clear that they have strong vision which leads all of their activities.

Brand X has very specific view when it comes to developing products. They make the games they want to play and beyond that, they want to give the fans something they have never expected could be created. Company's Vice President claims: *"It's in our DNA to avoid doing what other companies are doing. You have to have originality in your games (...). We didn't rely on testimonials in a business textbook to do what we've done. I think we succeeded precisely because we didn't concentrate on profit... If we make the sort of games we want to play, then we believe people are going to buy them"*. Brand X's UK Marketing Director adds

that “(...) *the beauty of being a boutique label and the philosophy we have is making the products and video games we want to play. That is our guiding principle*”. H.M., Brand X’s Marketing Manager also points out: “*One of the first things I’ve heard repeatedly, once I have joined, was that we make the games we want to play*”.

Since the very beginning, Brand X was driven by strong vision, purpose and innovative approach: “*When we first arrived on the scene in 1998, we wanted to be as popular as the entertainment format as TV, film, music and books, and that wasn’t the landscape back then, but our vision for this company was enabling video games to be as widely accepted*”. UK Marketing Director gives an example that a decade ago Brand X tackled the competition from popular Japanese fantasy games by writing and developing new games that “*were more like what we were reading and watching (...) we made video games feel cool*”. Throughout the interview, Brand X Marketing Team stresses that the ideas for games are born within the company, and they aim to shape behaviours rather than having their actions guided by what is being said on social media. Also, they state that the development process is “*driven by pure creative vision*” and that “*there is no sense of what people want us to do*”, “*it’s counterintuitive*” (UK Marketing Directors). Moreover, Brand X’s UK Marketing Director adds: “*We would like to remain very free spirited and flexible, and I guess one of our strengths lays in doing the unexpected...so you cannot predict us*”.

Overall, Brand X position towards the product development process is that it “*is not dictated by what we think would be popular, as long as we find it interesting and compelling entertainment, than that is what we will publish. And hopefully, there will always be an audience for that*”.

The second case company, IKEA, has a strong vision as well. At the core of IKEA’s success lie its values, which among others include encouragement of “*a constant desire for renewal and a willingness to make changes, (...) willingness to try solutions other than the conventional ones and daring to be different while maintaining practical connections with the day-to-day activities*” (Inter IKEA Group, 2012). During the interview, J.M. also declared that “*IKEA is striving towards leadership to make co-workers grow in the sense of understanding where we are today and where we are going in order to develop the company and take responsibility for the work (...) We are also striving for developing new ideas and do things smarter every day. IKEA is a very vision driven company*”.

Innovation focus

Referring to the statement on the Brand X's website, the company's goal from the very beginning was to *"create the most innovative and progressive interactive entertainment"*.

IKEA US Marketing Chief Bill Agee, in his interview to the Hub Magazine states that *"our independence has a lot to do with our innovation because we don't know any better. (...) We feel that we are, to a certain extent, operating outside of standard operating procedures"* (Fawkes, 2009).

Flexible organizational climate

Interviewed case companies also demonstrate flexible organizational culture. Thus, for example, while being at the premises of the Brand X, the aura of very relaxed atmosphere beamed from the office set up and people's interactions: large space, home-like decor, walls dividing the space made of glass and all office doors open. Brand X's Marketing Manager defines the working environment as very relaxed *"It does not feel corporate (...). We are very relaxed and very open but it's only because everyone does the job they need to"*. Similarly to Brand X, IKEA's employees feel comfortable and relaxed at their work-places. According to J.M. (IKEA), the atmosphere is *"very relaxed, but focused on tasks and solutions"*, and constant communication and cooperation between colleagues is encouraged: *"Since we are a global company we cannot meet all our colleagues but are encouraged to meet via phone, video and Webex"*.

Employees' entrepreneurship and collective organizational learning

In this sub-category the interview with Marketing Chief of IKEA US, Bill Agee, conducted and published by the Hub Magazine, should be mentioned. His words clearly demonstrate IKEA's encouragement of people to come up with ideas and learn from each other: *"Whoever you are within the IKEA organization, you're expected to contribute your ideas — your new ideas, your old ideas or whatever it may be — and every idea is welcome"*. This considerably distinguishes IKEA from cautious, market driven competitors, because *"more innovative ideas rise to the surface, get watched, and actually get executed"* (Fawkes, 2009).

Brand X has been said to have a high degree of openness to ideas and creativity: *“We go through phases. Because we make one product a year, we have early stage which is very open and no idea is wrong”* (Brand X’s Marketing Manager). The idea-generating meetings at Brand X are also very loose. Only when the product release date is approaching the company enters more focused on detail stage and: *“that openness starts to narrow down and you take the ideas from that stage that work and is much more driven to the target”* (Brand X’s Marketing Manager).

Organisational risk-taking

Proactive approach also involves greater risk. Brand X indeed agreed that it is very high risk strategy to create products that are not a response to what customers say they want or suggest, but *“we have succeeded on high risk strategy in terms of development and mainstream marketing and public relations”*. Conversely, H.M. (Brand X) talks about responsive companies, which take on another risky approach: *“You could also say that it is very risky to always produce kind of lower denominator games, to make something that appeals to everyone, normally they would end up with a bland nonsense”*. He justifies Brand X’s approach with the following statement: *“whereas making something that one person has an overriding strategy about, that they believe in (...) when u allow small group of people to have a creative vision and follow it, you can get scored”*. Overall, the Brand X’s Marketing Team summarized: *“We would rather live and die by the controversial decisions that we make to make ourselves authentic and about the products we make and what we think is fun to play and cool than being guided by data or market intelligence”*.

Organizational set up for SM adoption

Having said that firms that aim to drive the markets effectively and look into the future with the SM support need to meet certain key requirements in terms of mindset and organizational setup, social media experts presented their opinions as well. M.E. (CGI) highlighted the importance of the extravert approach of the teams across the firm, mainly communication team, which have to consist of people with suitable communication skills so that any valuable insights derived in the process of social media monitoring would be disseminated across the company. Those analysts who deal with acquiring information within companies should use their initiative to pick up the data and say: *“This is actually a great*

thing (...). *We can actually act upon this intelligence, it's not just weather forecast, it is more than that*".

Also, S.G. (MJ Media) highlighted, while talking about collecting intelligence, how much the mindset of the senior management in the company influences usage of social media for growing revenue and sensing the future. He states that many companies do not even pay much attention to SM as: *"people at the top, they don't really understand social media, they don't want to understand it and they think it just produces a nuisance (...) They don't see the way they can put an income into that, so it's not given attention, and it is thrown under marketing department"*. He continues further that many companies perceive monitoring of this platform as *"a cost centre that is very difficult to justify on profit and loss sheet, because where is the income that goes into that? (...) people feel comfortable when they see a spreadsheet with numbers and the title at the bottom about this many positive sentiments scores, that many likes, I've got a good job, clap on the back I can go home...but actually that's just a tip of an iceberg of information that's out there, but it's quite difficult to present it in a way that people understand it or can justify the job"* (MJ Media).

5.2. Forward sensing

The next category that characterizes proactively market oriented companies is forward sensing. This dimension relates to SM monitoring for gathering MI. The findings within this category fell into sub-categories that relate to the strategic viewpoint of using SM such as importance of SM for MI gathering and importance of acting upon MI from SM, and more tactical perspective including types of possible SM analysis and difficulties related to those.

Drawing a background to this category, SM monitoring is rather young activity, according to M.E. (CGI) the analysis of internal data has been conducted since early 2000s, however, analysis of the external data, that includes data from social networking platforms is much younger. S.G. (MJ Media) also concludes that *"it's still early days"*. The major SM platforms that are being currently monitored for MI gathering are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, companies own websites (CGI) and occasionally blogs (MJ Media).

5.2.1. Importance of social media for market intelligence gathering

Speaking about SM, the participating in the study social media experts agree that when it comes to gathering intelligence, SM is just another channel, however presenting different opportunities. S.G. (MJ Media) pointed out that multiple consultancies are *"just sucking*

money out of the clients and persuading them that social media is something you have to think about differently”, while in his view: “it shouldn’t change anything; it is another channel, its PR, its advertising, it’s almost like internal communication and CRM”. However, due to its speed, SM becomes very important especially to the companies whose products have short life cycle: “If you have product life cycle time of plus 10 years, then you can do more in-depth analysis and stay with an old-fashioned tools (...) The shorter lifecycle of your product or your offering, or maybe your offer is actually changing based upon consumer behaviour, then you really need it [SM monitoring]” (CGI). Short product lifecycle however does not mean the firm cannot seize the opportunities that SM monitoring presents: “Even if you have a product that has minus 12 months of life cycle, the time to actually produce this product quite often is much longer than those plus 12 months. And then you might use it to attain valid information for your innovation department, to come up with those conceptual ideas on how to bring the value to customers in the future”. Furthermore, with regards to the benefits of SM monitoring across different industries, M.E. (CGI) testifies that for any industry “it’s equally important, but the opportunities are different”. Usefulness of SM monitoring in that case depends on the competitors, “It is more important depending on how much your competitors in your industry are using it. The more they do the more important it is, because you can get very strong competitive edge, if you use it correctly” (CGI).

Nevertheless, when speaking about usage of SM for MI gathering, the representatives of two global brands participating in this research express reluctance and scepticism, and do not perceive SM as a primary source of getting information to support product or service development. For example, IKEA in its MI initiatives rely rather on more traditional means saying that “We do all kinds of surveys and MI, and following trends, and track the customers’ behaviour and perception and everything around that (...) but not very specific within SM, I think this is not where we predict future, it’s within other tools, such as following trends from our customers”. Brand X does not conduct any research at all and claims that following what is being said on SM “could be very distracting (...) Fans are asking: When we can have this/ When we can have that? (...) All the demand from that audience is very strong, but you cannot always give in and you cannot necessarily let it dictate your decisions” (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director).

5.2.2. **Importance of acting upon market intelligence from social media**

Having MI gathered, in order to benefit from it, a company needs to act upon it. For completing that purpose, M.E. (CGI) mentions primary companies' need in possessing certain level of readiness so they could successfully execute upon the intelligence derived from SM, he explains that companies that are keen on working with predictive analysis *"have to be aware of the fact that there is more than attaining the data and information that has to be on board in order to monetize from this new strengths. That's why I often tell clients: "Sorry guys you are not ready for that. You couldn't handle that" and simply sell them a roadmap on how to go there"*. It is extremely important that an organization understands perfectly what it has to do with the gathered information and how it can capitalize on it, *"what processes internally do you need to change and where this data goes in decision points (...) We decide we need to make a change to the product, or upgrade, or we most likely need new marketing campaign, or we need extra boost in sales ... So processing, mapping those things (...) is actually the key ...and where in the processes you can actually make use of that data"* (CGI). Also, when employing predictive analysis, M.E. (CGI) warns against the tendency to make linear assumptions about the future: *"if you want to make and work with predictive analysis, you have to bear in mind that one thing that cannot happen is linear progress (...) Sony Ericsson did a lot of linear assumptions... they thought that: if we have another model or if we increase mega pixels, we just continue to rocket, but it didn't really mature"*.

Finally, MJ Media and CGI both mention that, whereas collecting and analyzing intelligence can be done by external parties, acting upon intelligence lays in the responsibility of the firm itself. M.E. (CGI) approaches this issue in a following way: *"I tell them what they can gain and when they can use it, but then "how" questions: how they would like to monetize on it... I could consult them somehow, but I think that's out of my jurisdiction (...) when you get that, it's not a rocket science"*. S.G. (MJ Media) agrees saying: *"We believe client should do that themselves. I think it's a very bad call to have an external party looking at information for you, you have to react quickly and authentically, I don't think an outside party can do that, which is why we don't do it"*.

5.2.3. **Types of social media analysis**

SM consultancies' representatives claim that SM can be used for multiple future-related purposes:

(a) for **sentiment analysis**, “to see if the campaign was successful - you can measure that, you can measure how people talk about your products versus competition” (CGI) or else “How's the public is talking about a certain product” (Croakun); to get ideas of the products “that (...) audience likes or is receptive to” and implement them to move forward (MJ Media)

(b) for quantitative analysis or else “**campaign management and measurements**” (Corakun) to see “whether you have increased in visits, so using it for marketing effectiveness” (CGI), “monitor campaigns, to see where we are, if the paper marketing we are doing is having any effect in terms of interest level (...) it's a very useful accessible tool, to monitor awareness, purchase” (MJ Media); That is further connected to **benchmarking sales against the competitive set**: “in terms of how much noise is about the product” (MJ Media) using “free tools like Google Trends which is about search volume, YouTube all the way up to the paid tools like Brand Watch , Radian6” (MJ Media); On this basis, companies can work out “where we are in this competitive set and where we want to be, and how our campaign over time affect that interest” (MJ Media);

(c) for **influencer profiling**: in order to “detect influencers that will make your product reaching more people” (Croakun) and **measuring behaviours**, hence to track “when do they (customers) look for the information; do they look for information or do they get attained by information that is pushed to them” (CGI);

(d) for **targeting** or else measuring **segmentation relevancy** (location, timeline) (Croakun) as due to the data exposed on SM and characteristics such as the age, gender, place of living as well as things customers are interested thanks to their postings can be figured out, hence companies can know whether it is worth providing certain message to specific customers.

Overall, SM can serve in obtaining actionable recommendations, for instance using **viral content tracking and analysis** (Croakun), best time to tweet: “Person A at area B, always posting about C at time D, are most likely to purchase product E if we provide the promotion F” (Croakun).

Moving on to case companies and their usage of SM for monitoring, IKEA mostly uses it to measure sentiment: “if people are positive or negative, what they are writing”, track perceptions: “we measure people's perception to be both proactive and reactive on what

people are saying and writing in their blogs” / “if many people say that we like that this table has holes, or we really dislike it, or something like that, then of course it has some kind of effect on how we develop our products” (IKEA) as well as behaviours: “We have tools (...) to track what the customers think of IKEA (...) but also to track behaviour”. Otherwise, IKEA conducts browser search: “You could search for specific words or IKEA in general (...) if you search, for example, for IKEA and sofa, so you will get from different angles, rankings, people talking about IKEA’s sofas”.

For Brand X, SM monitoring is mostly useful for identifying customer profiles and for targeting purposes. What Brand X looks at this platform is consumers’ age and gender with the purpose to *“find out how big the audience potentially is” and to “build up how many people we think potentially might buy the game we are talking about. But not in terms of (...) what people like”*, also publishing department conducts certain amount of market research, for example *“to find out how many people in particular country own a XboX”* or while they try to work what *“the forecasts for sale are going to be, which then will dictate the marketing budget”*. Nevertheless, to create its leading and innovative products, Brand X would only conduct environmental scanning and monitor what is happening within the entertainment landscape and popular culture: *“We look at the entertainment arena and we see what is exciting about what is coming out in cinema and film and we fit into that landscape rather than looking at our competitors, so our landscape and our competition is a popular culture. And we find our place and how we fit into that”* (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director).

5.2.4. Difficulties related to social media monitoring

Study participants pointed out few difficulties with regards to SM monitoring. Those could be classified in the following sub-categories:

Misreading the context

Collected data nevertheless uncovered numerous shortcoming and difficulties related to SM monitoring. S.G. (MJ Media) claims : *“In the ideal world (...) it (social media) would be the best place to pick up sentiment”*. However, nowadays companies point out its weak points: problems with detecting mood correctly, for example, *“Someone may say: “This trailer is wicked” or “This trailer is bad-ass”, all things that in everyday world would be positive, will be measured as negative, so we don’t put any faith in that”* (MJ Media).

Equally for Brand X, the sentiment analysis conducted by SM monitoring agency, Meltwater turned out to be a fiasco. N.W. (Brand X) states: *“The hardest thing about data, and for any brand regardless of particulars of our industry, is understanding sentiment”*. In the past, Brand X conducted very small data analysis while launching a new brand and tried to discover the sentiment and popularity of the new title, however after analysis: *“We have not trusted the sentiment of the data we have received”* mainly due to the concern that nowadays, the data analysis is unable to distinguish correctly positive sentiment from the negative one: *“A major setback is that it cannot keep up with the changing format of references”* (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director). Brand X’s Marketing Team admitted that they stopped using Meltwater’s tools as soon as they realized how misleading and incorrect the insights were: *“when we get analysis in, we need to really look into the analysis and pull out samples because our gut feel is very different to what analysis than come in say”*. Marketing Manager adds *“So to get sentiment, basically you need to get a small sample size, so it’s scrolling through forums to see what people say, and this is actually more useful than reading Meltwater’s sum of it”*. Brand X also tried to cooperate with another company called Game Vision, which does mixture of qualitative and quantitative analysis using samples of 5 to 7 thousand people and declared: *“That’s good for seeing what a very small group of people who like doing surveys think about something, but again it doesn’t talk to the so many people who live in Europe”*. Marketing Manager of the company concluded that *“you either get useful information that is sentiment-driven, and get a real feeling of what a very small sample feel, or you can sample extraordinary large sample which is a clever way of targeting with online ads, but you have actually no idea what the sentiment is”*.

Unreliability

Apart from the human speech context-related imperfections of SM analysis tools, it is arguable whether people are being honest on social networking platforms, *“it very difficult to cut through to actually catch (...) what people really feel, because it’s very easy for someone to just complain on Twitter, (...)but actually, it doesn’t mean they don’t like your brand or your product, not necessarily, but these platforms have given people the way to be heard and very often those are the same people who like to be heard that are using it, which is not necessarily the true reflection of the macro environment that’s out there”* (MJ Media).

Also, M.E. (CGI) touches upon this issue of reliability: *“you need to keep in mind that often people saying things online without using their brains sometimes and sometimes they*

say things when they try to be ironic". Not every consultancy, however, agrees on this point: K.F.Ch. (Croakun) argues *"Where else the platform where people are talking publicly and what they really think about a certain company? Survey? Questionnaires? Interview? No. It is social media"*.

Non-representativeness

Moving on, companies that rely merely on what is being said on SM might be misled as the group of people active on social platforms is not always representative of the overall attitude: *"those shout the loudest and not always the most intelligently either, so you can put too much emphasis on things that are said on social media"* (MJ Media). Brand X's Marketing Manager also mentions that *"(...) there are certain people that comment and certain that don't. And to say we only care about people that only post would be drastically wrong because (...) you would get very vocal opinionated minority, who is very loud on social media, and you get the vast majority who do not feel the need to share every thought they have"*. This video game publisher is also aware of the fact that all the followers on SM *"do not represent the whole of our audience. And the people that are socially very active and are big advocates on forums, chat rooms, on social networks, are very specific type of person, that does not reflect everyone we are going to get to, so we are trying not to get caught up too much with that because it could be very misleading"*.

Ineffectiveness for the long-term predictions

Market leading brands portrayed in this study, do not necessarily see SM as a reliable source of information yet and also SM experts express certain existing limitations. However, to overcome those, companies can conduct additional analysis: *"there are still a lot of people saying that with SM you don't need any other research, no qualitative or quantitative research, I don't think it's true, you need all data set..."* (MJ Media). Speaking of limitations, J.M. (IKEA) also does not believe SM could be useful for long-term predictions since on SM everything changes very quickly: *"I think within SM people are influencing each other and even brands, and this information can be used for planning for shorter time, it's not the macro perspective. When it comes to SM, it happens so fast, growing, developing, changing"*. In this particular case K.F.Ch. (Croakun) remarks that SM serves for predicting rather short-term than long-term future *"based on longer historical data"*.

Undetermined unit of responsibility

On top of above listed difficulties, companies are usually unsure where in company MI gathering through SM should be implemented, “*no one is really quite sure where it sits, within the marketing team, PR team, the R&D team...?*” (MJ Media).

5.3. Shaping customers’ behaviours and creating preferences

Following the model presented in the Theory chapter, the next category presents activities related to shaping consumers’ behaviours and preferences.

Firstly, the strategic angle needs to be mentioned. No one can forget that marketing has always been about influencing people, shaping their behaviours and forming preferences, “*you don’t do marketing if you don’t try to sell something, or influence someone to change their behaviour*” (CGI). However, what is new when it comes to this marketing principle is that “*social media is clearly mainstream, and customers are demanding attention there more than ever*” (Croakun). SM moved communication with customers to a new context as nowadays, companies can “*have two way communication (...) that wasn’t possible in the past*” (MJ Media). That particular trait created an opportunity for firms to involve their customers in co-creation of products, services and brands.

Hence, the dataset presents the tactical angle as well and that includes the activities that can be used for effective behaviour shaping, for instance: involving customers in co-creation, using digital gamification, content marketing and penetrating into lifestyles.

5.3.1. Co-creation and gamification

Observation of IKEA’s activities on SM brought numerous examples of involving consumers in the creation process. Also, as M.E. (CGI) mentions one of the ways, the companies can increase the influence on customers and increase the engagement into firm’s activities via social networking sites is gamification. IKEA uses this technique extensively to actually involve people in co-creation. In the UK for instance, IKEA runs “*Draw your dream IKEA soft toy*” competition. The best ideas from the drawings were turned into actual

products (IKEA UK, 2012; J.M., IKEA). The retailer encourages people to think creatively about interior design of their homes by organizing a contest or else shared experience. More specifically, on such web-pages as *IKEA family life* (<https://www.ikeafamilylive.com/en/>) in the UK, Australia and France, *Share Space* (www.theshare-space.com) in the US, or *Livet Hemma* (<http://livethemma.ikea.se/>) in Sweden, IKEA encourages people to upload photos of their living spaces, post their home stories, experiences and handy tips and in general share ideas and inspiration. In the US, for instance, for uploading these pictures and tagging IKEA products on them, people get so called “Kudos”, which they can collect; Also, every week one of those pictures is being selected by design experts who entitles it as the “Pick of the Week” and then expand on it with their comments in the blog, whereas the author of the picture gains the high-rank “Kudo”. Furthermore, in addition to regular sharing of the pictures within communities, IKEA involves customers in different contests where fans have a chance to demonstrate their DIY projects. The recent competition in the US was called “The Life Improvement Project” and encouraged people to share their pictures and videos accompanied with stories of “*positive changes*” made at home in order to share inspirations: “*Because what fun is being inspired if you can't inspire someone else?*”. Ultimately, the retailer was interested in getting inspired as well: “*We want to hear about the things you do to improve your life at home. Then, get inspired by ideas from people just like you, and pick up some tips that we've learned along the way*” (IKEA USA, 2012).

Moreover, behind all those activities, IKEA always brings to people the idea that everyone can have this furniture and not necessarily be well-off to be able to buy it; J.M. says: “*Among many activities we are providing pictures of room settings, always stating it is affordable*”.

Coming to the Brand X example, it is worth emphasizing that it is a company with very strong faith in its own vision stating that “*Our goal is to make the game that nobody thought they would want to play*”. For this reason, the firm does not involve customers in co-creation, nevertheless, gamification is also actively employed by the firm. One of the examples of gamification-based activities employed by Brand X is competitions hosted on company’s website and on Facebook. “*Currently, we are hosting one competition where you can win the chance to get your face in the game. I think it’s a really cool prize, there are 5 characters, so fans can apply through Newswire to attend a seminar (...) they click to attend and they enter to the Grand Sweep and the winners will be pulled out of the hat (...) it will be completely*

random and open to anyone” (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director). Other contests that are being carried out using firm’s own website and Facebook, offer tangible prizes such as company’s video games, branded gear, collectibles and apparel. Also, fun votings are taking place on the Brand X’s Facebook page, for instance, for “the sleaziest politician” - game character among all ever made Brand X’s games. Another major social initiative organized by Brand X for the community is a regular so called “Social Club Multiplayer Event”, during which all fans meet through the “Social Club” on the company’s website. *“Social Club is specifically designed in order to retain brand attachment and loyalty by hosting events”* (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director). Those online gaming events include a competitive element, hence this is another example of gamification. Fans get together into gaming crews and participate in ongoing competitions and challenges against other crews consisting of community members, but also against the crews of Brand X’s game developers. The announcements relating to those regular events are posted on the “Newswire” space on the company’s website designed for sharing brand related news and information, but also on Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, on the regular basis the recaps and summaries of the battles are reported to the fans online, what further positively affects engagement with the company. Fans keep creating new crews and use “Social Club” to find new team players. The participants do not win any tangible prizes, but their names or nicknames are being listed on the leader boards, hence it enhances player’s reputation within the community. Brand X’s Marketing Director points out: *“There is credibility. It’s a touch point with us, it’s the brand experience. There is a relationship there”*.

5.3.2. Content Marketing

In terms of influencing and engaging consumers, S.G. (MJ Media) also refers to content marketing saying that SM really comes into play when the company offers content: *“If you have interesting content that they (customers) want to engage with, that it’s vital that you have a social media strategy and you take it very seriously”*.

5.3.3. Penetrating into customers’ lifestyles

Another visible activity in terms of influencing consumer behaviour is translating the product offerings and the marketing message closer to the consumers’ lifestyles.

Brand X’s fans are clearly affected in their daily lives by the Brand X’s products due to the nature of the product itself. One of the fans stated on Twitter: *“Criminology is so boring, so I decided to act like a criminal”* referring to playing one of the Brand X’s games. Also,

another fan on Twitter influenced by the release of the maps from one of the racing games on the company's website, announced that he is going to print them out and put them up on the wall at work and was encouraging others to do the same.

Furthermore, Brand X keeps releasing the game soundtracks lists and also re-master some songs and makes them available on platforms such as Spotify or iTunes, what further encourages people to either listen to or purchase those sounds online, hence can affect even wider than game players, audience.

In addition, one of the cycling events sponsored by Brand X and designed with relation to one of the Brand X's games, made some fans change their plans. One of the followers having found out about the event, announced on Twitter that he was going to make a short trip to the contest venue just to meet the Brand X's team.

Frequent communication between the brand and its fans also adds to shaping behaviours. H.M. (Brand X) informs: *"Brand X's developers also appear online and send out tweets and comments and have a chatter with the customers and also play games with the fans online"*. Moreover, while releasing news on the "Newswire": *"We say that the Designer Director of whatever game will be online, and hundreds of people would go on and play"* (Brand X's Marketing Manager). Ultimately, Brand X's Marketing Team believes that *"It adds to people's enjoyment"* and sees the potential of those activities to be translated into purchases: *"the next time they (potential customers) are thinking "Should I buy this game or that game?", they will think "I had really good time playing that game, so I'm going to go and get that one"*. In this way, online social initiatives affect people behaviours in the long run. Also, UK Marketing Director adds *"what we definitely pride ourselves on is the experience for our fans, it's something that is gold within our company and it's the principle"*.

By doing all the above described activities, Brand X tries to raise gamers' interest organically, hence make them willingly adopt certain behaviours. N.W. (Brand X) says: *"We try not to be patronizing to fans, we try not to be in social media marketing-focused (...) we want the voice of SM to be quite natural. And we try not to give them a hard sell, not to aggressively market to our fans and followers, we want it to be much more of a personal communication, small little tip bits, points of interest, sometimes about events, sometimes we give them away the free stuff... Giving them a hard-sell is very off-putting"*.

5.4. *Customer education*

Shaping customers' behaviours is tightly connected to the customer education. Gathered data indicates that the company can educate its consumers using SM in the following ways.

Explaining value proposition

First fundamental aspect of educating consumers for market-driving companies is to explain its **new products value proposition**, hence make people understand what is being offered to them and why this particular product or service could be used and what benefits it brings to the consumer.

As in the case of Brand X, companies can use SM to enhance consumers' skills in terms of using the product. Brand X keeps educating customers with regards to their innovative games. The company releases posts that deliver new game tips to the fans, so that they can explore the game to a greater extent and that also adds to consumer engagement in the process of product usage. The articles describing game clues appear every few weeks on the "Newswire", and as understood from company's message on its community webpage, Brand X monitors the community forum and provides clues depending on what fans describe as problematic or challenging. For that reason, Brand X takes out specific screenshots from the games and includes visual clues to support fans in "cracking" the game. Those articles are published on the Brand X's website, while the message is spread across other social platforms like Twitter and Facebook and re-directs gamers to the website. Those educational posts are also very positively received by community members, as among hundreds of comments fans would usually thank the company for useful tips, which also makes them even keener on facing those game challenges, but simultaneously bring out even more game-related issues, what steers the wheel, making the company provide another dose of tips. Another major activity that Brand X accomplishes in order to educate its fans is providing videos in the series called "*Behind the scenes*", which explain to the fans how specific games were created. Those videos cover topics such as the 3D design of, for instance, city architecture or vehicles or sound design. For instance, around the release date of one of the games, Brand X released video explaining new, revolutionary technology behind the game, starring the writer and director of the game as well and head of R&D department for Brand X. The video presented how Brand X is revolutionizing the gaming industry by taking game

design to the next level by applying movie-like technology so that all the emotions on the game characters' would be easily detectable. The main platforms used for that purpose is YouTube, but company's website, Facebook and Twitter are also used to get the message across and reach to more interested users. Finally, Brand X shares articles from video gaming industry related websites that tell something new about the digital trends affecting gaming society and its culture.

Teaching brand values

Secondly, according to M.E. (CGI) "*you might do something that gives goodwill to your brand in terms of educating*"; He gives examples of messages sent on social media referring to the corporate social responsibility as one way of educating consumers and simultaneously creating brand goodwill: "*We are a caring company (...) we have social responsiveness (...) We are planting trees in the rainforest*". Afterwards, he suggests to "*(...) follow up with some sort of sales activities in SM*".

IKEA exemplifies both types of education via SM. First of all, the retailer teaches people about home furnishing. For instance, IKEA US runs a blog "Design by IKEA" (www.theshare-space.com/en/Blog), where IKEA design experts as well as influential personalities in the design world share unique tips, trends and design ideas for home and life improvements. Furthermore, IKEA educates consumers in product usage through videos on YouTube channel that provide guidance to consumers in "how to" assemble IKEA furniture. Facebook is also actively used by the company: its pages, which differ across different countries, are rich in updates and photos presenting suggestions for interior decor. Subsequently, the theme and time of those updates are matched accordingly to the different seasons and holidays that are currently taking place.

Besides the posts about products usage, IKEA also publishes a whole lot of material teaching customers about IKEA's sustainable philosophy. For instance, via its US Facebook page, IKEA educates about installation of solar energy systems on its different facilities, runs the campaign urging federal policymakers to take action on climate change, executes corporate programmes supporting kids' education in developing countries, and finally, encourages usage of more energy saving LED lamps. Those social initiatives are supported by campaign-relevant YouTube clips, for instance "Soft toys campaign" videos, also, videos promoting sustainable behaviour which is of the IKEA's values ("Creating a Better Everyday Life, Sustainably", "Design Power of LED", etc.).

5.5. *Re-shaping the market segmentation*

Re-shaping market segmentation category refers specifically to consumer **targeting**. S.G. (MJ Media) finds SM really useful and valuable for targeting: *“I do not necessary know what you think, because this tool is not very good for that, but I do know you age, your sex, where you live and the things you are interested in through your posting so I know whether it is worth my time serving you a video game”* and summarizes: *“That’s where the real power of data is”*.

Alternative targeting

ME (CGI) points out the importance of effective targeting via social media, which requires understanding of what kind of segmentation the firm wants to undertake and what people that it aims to target have in common: *“most often the companies do segmentation based on age, gender and some preferences, and here it might be completely different”*. He gives an example of alternative targeting: *“(…) all people playing “World of Warcraft”; if that would be the segment, it would be the 3rd largest country on Earth”*. In order to effectively conduct customer targeting via SM, M.E. (CGI) recommends using SM analysis tools with good algorithms to capture and filter thousands of relevant comments out of the data chaos. It cannot be done manually due to the sheer volume of information on SM and there is also an issue of questionable reliability of what is being said on SM due to human speech context: for instance, slang or sarcastic posts.

When Brand X entered entertainment industry in 1998 video games were quite niche, the UK Marketing Director of Brand X explains: *“when we started, video games were not a popular culture and we were a bastard child of entertainment”*. H.M. (Brand X) states that at that time, it was possible to identify what people who played games liked and what they were most likely to be doing, *“they were 15 to 25, they were definitely males, and they probably liked hip-hop or metal, and now when video games has exploded, who does or rather how doesn’t play video games age under 35, it’s quite hard to identify, they’ve become so universal”*. According to Brand X’s Marketing Team statements, Brand X contributed to the change in the market segmentation: *“through the hard work of this particular brand and others and manufacturers, we all played the part and made it a mainstream and a popular culture and widely accepted, and that’s global as well”*.

Nevertheless, the interviews with representatives of Brand X and IKEA, indicated that SM has not yet played a major role in conducting alternative targeting for re-shaping existing market segmentation. Citing J.M. (IKEA), *“As far as I know there are seldom possibilities for that”*.

5.6. Buzz network

The final category that emerged in the process of data analysis is buzz network. That category encompasses information relevant to the strategic points that were discovered within the dataset such as more general benefits of online word-of-mouth and tactical elements such as specific activities that stimulate buzz on social networks using specific examples of actual application of certain tactics exemplified by the case companies. The final element within this category is section of buzz-related alerts, which include certain recommendations and warnings gathered throughout the interview.

5.6.1. Benefits of social media buzz

M.E. (CGI) mentions that proactive companies would rely more on the online word-of-mouth over traditional advertising methods. He lists two major benefits of the online word-of-mouth over the traditional buzz: *“There are two major benefits, it’s **the speed**, because you get it immediately and you can respond upon it immediately and the other one is **cost**, it’s very cheap”*. Also, C.F.CH (Croakun) highlights: *“Buzz can be stimulated through advertisement and PR endorsement, but this will be very expensive. Alternatively, we’re leveraging the social media to stimulate cost effective buzz”*. Being on SM is vital for companies to create buzz, but also to monitor expansion of the buzz network to actually benefit from it long-term: *“as soon as you get off of platforms in terms of word of mouth, you can’t track any of that”*.

Consultancies identify the first step for companies to gain excellence in proactive approach with regards to creating buzz network. *“You can apply this as a competitive mean or as an insight (...) for you to make decision upon”*(CGI), for instance firms could learn from the existing buzz and consider whether running similar campaign again would be a good idea or not. SG (MJ Media) elaborates that the company can get an instant feedback on the product and on the advertising, hence, learn for the future: *“if you are clever you can react very quickly, and potentially monetize that feedback by delivering a better product or delivering better advertising campaign”*. M.E. (CGI) points out that the campaign success

can be analyzed using free online tools. Firms can check what customers have said about specific activity, whether they have responded to something important to the company: *“You can track the viral-ness of the certain campaign; how it has been shared, how it has been distributed, and how it is been commented upon” (CGI).*

5.6.2. Tactics for buzz network creation on social media

In this sub-category the tactical means that allow stimulation of buzz and expansion of buzz network, were accumulated.

Correlations

M.E. (CGI) highlights the use of existing data on SM for making correlations between events, products and people’s reactions to stimulate expansion of buzz network effectively: *“When people start talking about certain topic, such as the weather (..) it’s raining, that would not increase the amount of bookings to a sunny place and you don’t know if it’s going increase two days from now, or three rainy days from now, it’s going to increase when people get annoyed by the weather, and it could be anything from 5 to 15 days of this weather, but if you track this and follow this on Twitter and on FB and on all other SM that you find interesting and important for your business”.*

On this basis firms can correlate external events to people’s behaviours and reactions and also see what topics would be therefore pleasant and interesting for people to talk about and most likely to be shared with other users on SM *“You should try to estimate whether you believe that it would be a buzz or not”(CGI).*

IKEA does exactly that. The retailer uses digital data when it comes to creating Facebook posts. J.M. (IKEA) gives an example of how they check the weather forecasts and then target local communities accordingly with relevant ads or postings: *“what is happening around us, affects in a really short term how we communicate as well”.* He also highlights that *“companies need to optimize the search engine marketing as well to be able to target the right person at a right time”.*

Identifying lead users

According to K.F.Ch. (Croakun) a growing number of practitioners and specialists *“feel that they can predict what people will be interested in (...) and ultimately what will become viral”.*

S.G. (MJ Media) highlights that while aiming to create buzz network it is very important for companies to “*understand what are the places we can have conversation with people, what are the places we can target people for advertising?*” and establish where the target audience congregates specifically in the SM space.

Hence, to successfully simulate online word-of-mouth, firms need to figure out “*what are the decision points amongst people that would actually make them to start talking about, share it*” (CGI). In other words, identify lead users or else those influencers, who would be interested in the particular campaign so that the word about it can spread across the social platforms. ME (CGI) pinpoints: “*You have to build this in to the actual campaign - so the format of the campaign ; and the format is something that people will start talking about and share*”.

IKEA for instance, has its strategy of creating buzz by approaching selected groups: “*We are approaching bloggers, media and influencers to stimulate buzz*” (J.M., IKEA).

Gamification

Also, earlier mentioned **gamification** is a useful tactic not only for engagement, but also for more effective stimulation of buzz network expansion. As long as SM initiatives appeal to consumers and create certain benefits for them there is a great chance they will share it. Companies however should think this tactic through, before the launch, because as ME (CGI) “*it’s bad to try to stimulate afterwards (...) and actually start hiring people who start to share stuff and so on*”. Nevertheless, K.F.Ch. (Croakun) argues that companies can indeed have “*someone behind the scenes who further stimulated discussion (...). Someone was accelerating and monitoring the process in order to get people talking*”. He provides the example of the gamification of a consumer product, called Listerine Pocket Packs: “*It is a new, unique product; at the same time a game called the Germinator that is like Space Invaders was created to stimulate more buzz. You shoot the bad germs and when you get a certain number of points on the game then you can email your friends and invite them to play the game as well*”. One of the Brand X activities that also falls into gamification and aims to stimulate buzz around the brand, is organizing its branded merchandise collection giveaways, which involves no purchasing, but sheer luck as winners are being chosen at random. Hence, once again the company’s website was a major platform for announcing and organizing this activity with promotion being undertaken mainly on Twitter and Facebook.

IKEA also used gamification campaign to create buzz. While opening new IKEA store in Malmo in 2009, company was actively attracting attention and engaging people via SM. The campaign was conducted on Facebook, where the profile of store manager was created and pictures of the store showrooms were added. People were supposed to tag themselves on the products from those pictures and those who had done it first, won these products. The demand for pictures grew, thousands of people were talking about it, sharing, “liking”, passing the message on to their friends, and ultimately, promoting products. Thus, instead of making people just watch banner videos about furniture, IKEA made customers active promoters (Kungsmedia, 2010).

Online Brand Community Building

Another way of increasing the buzz network is online brand community building. This can be done by focusing on developing relationship with consumers via social networking platforms.

For Brand X, SM is a mean of communication with fans: *“to have a direct contact with our fans”*. In the eyes of the Brand X’s Marketing Team this platform allows, conversely to the traditional means, the emotional connection and relationship between the brand and its consumers to grow: *“we want it to be personal, as long as it’s honest and it’s unpredictable and it’s erratic”*. Simultaneously, Brand X tries to *“increase people’s enjoyment”* related to the products and services, which Brand X translates to building *“a sense of brand loyalty”*. One of their ways to create buzz is having game developers online to give fans real sense of connection: *“they will send out a tweet or comments”*. As put by Brand X’s UK Marketing Director: *“as long as our fans feel close to us and we feel close to them as there is a dialogue, there is a future for us, a direct link, the same as fans writing a fan mail to a band”*. The Brand X’s Marketing Team statements and also the observation of the interactions between the brand and the fans on social networking platforms drew attention to some kind of cult that surrounds the brand: *“There is a special connection and relationship between people who enjoy our entertainment. We want it to be a special and intimate, and we don’t want anything to corrupt that”* (Brand X’s UK Marketing Director). Also, throughout observation of social platforms in order to identify the buzz around Brand X, it was quite outstanding to see that “special connection”. It materializes itself in the fans’ postings expressing how attached they are to the games emphasising the sentimental value as well as the innovativeness of the products, especially those that have been out there for about the

decade or so, but throughout the years there have been a lot of improvements made and sequels released.

Also for IKEA, SM platforms enable the brand to “*reach out with communication*” in order to get customers more aware and more attached to the brand by showing that it is about the dialogue and interaction rather than just mere selling of the catalogue.

Magnetizing other networks

One more activity that can stimulate buzz and expand the buzz network is incorporating networks of the business partners into the company’s own network.

Brand X also try to connect its own network with networks of its partners: “*We work very closely with retailers in each territory to monitor pre-orders (...) We release the trailer, new news about our video game, we encourage our partners: that would be retailers, journalists, third parties so Xbox and Playstation, to re-tweet and re-use social media to reach their fans as well(...) So that increases it (buzz) by tenfold , a hundredfold, when you think about all the retailers and publishers we work with(...) So we want to generate interest into purchase*”.

Multiplying buzz using “RE” function

Company can also exploit buzz by using the re-posting or sharing, re-blogging and re-tweeting options. Brand X uses this tactic to benefit from buzz network for promotion on social media, instead of sheer selling or pushing out its products.

Brand X’s Marketing Team admits “*we are generally less comfortable talking about ourselves than seeing what other people say about us and re-tweet that... we occasionally do interviews, even when someone in the company does the interview, we match rather prefer journalist to write their impression rather than us talking to the camera or writing about something we think*”. That indicates certain degree of humbleness, as company wants to be perceived through its actions, and believes that people’s feelings and comments triggered by interacting with their brand and by experiencing their games, will express it all.

While observing Brand X interaction with its fans on different social networking sites and its website, it became visible that Brand X penetrated into consumers’ lifestyles to the degree that their behaviours were affected. And those behaviours effectively affect buzz around Brand X and also its buzz network. Fans share Brand X related news and feelings

with others on SM, hence are likely to recruit people from their networks to join Brand X's community. They often include the Brand X or its products' names in their posts on Twitter using hash tags, hence all Brand X's followers can see it appearing in their News Feed. Fans also upload pictures of themselves playing the Brand X's games, using the Brand X's toys or merchandise, having Brand X's related tattoos, dressing up as Brand X's games characters for Halloween, and even Brand X's games related car graffiti and design. They also show their own initiative by sharing on social networking sites their activities and personal contributions related to the brand, for instance they create re-mixes or covers of the game soundtracks, make videos that they later share on You Tube or else fan artists create art work, drawings, motion graphics of the game characters and share it on social platforms, including Instagram. Brand X encourages its community via its website to share everything that they find on fan sites that relates to the Brand X or its products. For that purpose, the company also created special e-mail address that deals specifically with those worth-sharing curiosities. Observed Brand X's behaviour on SM showed that this publisher further multiplies this buzz effect by regularly checking Instagram and Twitter and when it stumbles upon any Brand X-related creations and posts, it passes it forward to the community by re-blogging and re-tweeting.

Increasing visibility

Companies increasingly try to create the online word-of-mouth, which is a more cost effective way of promotion, however as remarked by K.F.Ch. (Croakun) *"That doesn't mean that money cannot influence buzz"*. What companies can do to increase the buzz around the brand is making everything that a company does on SM, *"as much accessible and visible to target audience as possible"* (MJ Media). This is the key task of MJ Media, which acts as the "receptacle" in the communication channel. S.G. (MJ Media) explains that if a company *"post a new trailer on their Facebook page, we know that even 75% of people that like that brand won't see that post"*. Unlike with TV or press, using technology, companies can now implement paid-for solutions to make sure that the new post *"comes back to the top of the news feed"* (MJ Media) to make sure that consumer will see it at some point. SG (MJ Media) concludes that getting a lot of views via paid-for means is: *"successful in terms of getting volume and engagement very quickly that again would not happen organically"*.

Furthermore, in order to stimulate the online word-of-mouth and increase the visibility of the marketing message, Brand X adopted yet another free tactic so called "Save the date";

“We make an announcement that we are announcing something next week. So we are doing two announcements, so we are first saying: “hold this date in your diary because we are going to reveal something next week”, we call it “Save the date” on social media so people are waiting for news to drop (...) we say that next week we are going to tell you something, but we cannot tell you yet” (Brand X’s Marketing Director). Nevertheless, Brand X is considering dialling this tactic back as it *“feels too manipulative”*.

5.6.3. Buzz-related alerts

Timing and Tact

Companies, which gather information via SM, often are being encouraged by the first gathered insights they rush to customers with the sale offer or marketing message. What is underscored is that on SM, traditional push-marketing will not stimulate buzz network. According to M.E. (CGI) on SM *“In your face” marketing is the worst that can happen*. And that push-out approach is often applied by companies which are so eager to send that message out to the potential clients that: *“they forget about the timing issue”* (CGI). Conversely, he advises that companies should think of the ways how to impact the clients in order to make them feel ready for particular offer: *“Take them to your site; make them curious about you in a good way, and after that, maybe 2 weeks later, here it is. And that’s what I often try to say, it is common sense. Unfortunately, common sense is not that common”*.

Cleverness

What companies need to learn is how to avoid “automatization” of their marketing and communication towards customers as that creates risks regarding buzz network and can conversely push people away. This is specifically critical today in the context of SM as *“it’s so much easier to draw away with you 20 more people that would never buy from the company again”* (CGI). Hence, the power of the online word-of-mouth should not be underestimated. Also, as people are becoming more savvy and understand how advertising on SM works, that for instance *“it is not an organic kind of recommendation or the friend or Facebook, but paid for advertising”* and often they do not like it, hence will not share it.

Delivering unique experience

K.F.Ch. (Croakun) also highlights that the term “buzz” itself suggests something “*organic and self-replicating*”, hence it depends on the customer’s decision whether to recommend the product to a friend or not, and what companies need to be aware of is that “*people are not going to recommend a product to a friend unless they have a great experience with it*”.

Engagement in buzz

Another important remark with regards to approaching the buzz network creation is continuous engagement in SM chatter conversely to the one time advertisement: “*The longer you can listen, the more you’ll learn, the more you engage humbly, the more likely those influencers will amplify your message*” (Croakun).

Readiness to respond to the buzz

The only instance when buzz around the company could be negative is when the company is not willing to monitor the reactions and learn from them: “*It could be in a negative way if you don’t have readiness to act upon it and if you don’t do it, so those two are negative parts*” (CGI). It is very difficult to quantify success on social media and put value on it: “*I don’t see any monitoring value in a Facebook like or Twitter follower (...). The value comes with what you do with it, and whether you give that person different experience*” (MJ Media). In the long run, those likes and follows in conjunction with firm’s suitable response can be: “*translated into more positive sentiment (...) purchase, repeated purchase, word-of-mouth*”. Nevertheless, the way the company handles buzz, social customer service and acknowledge different types of consumers: “*fans, advocates and influencers*” (Croakun), it will “*affect the likelihood the fans will recommend to others*”. For that reason, K.F.Ch. (Croakun) suggests: “*A brand needs to proactively engage in Twitter, Facebook, forums (including Yahoo! Answer, Quora)... any related social media services to improve concern resolution, increase customer loyalty and help influence purchase decisions*”. In the end, any interaction with consumers will affect the buzz network and customers’ feelings about the firm and the brand. Thus, a company needs to speak its own voice: “*they can only give a true voice and be up to react quickly enough to make this conversation into meaningful words*” (MJ Media).

6. *Analysis*

The findings from the previous chapter provided multiple insights about execution of behaviours from the market-driving approach repertoire in the SM milieu. This chapter aims to further analyse those findings by providing linkages with theoretical ground and also further identify linkages between specific proactive behaviours themselves when translated into social media context.

6.1. *Organizational culture*

The literature review identified organizational culture as a cornerstone of the market orientation (Narver & Slater, 1990). More specifically, market-driving approach is claimed to flourish predominantly in the adhocratic culture, which is determined by the characteristics described below.

Strong vision and Innovation Focus

Strong vision and innovation focus are the key characteristics of proactively market oriented companies with adhocratic culture in place (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004; Narver *et al.*, 2004; Kumar *et al.*, 2000). Those two elements are stemming from the strong leadership, and are inflicted by the chief idea of developing products that will go beyond customers' expectations and their current desires and needs (Kumar *et al.*, 2000).

The case companies in this study were proven to have both those principal traits. Brand X since the very beginning was led by the principle of developing games they want to play – strong vision, and the games that no one ever thought will be created – innovativeness, and is staying faithful to that rule.

On the other hand, IKEA has taken on the markets with innovative approach to retailing and the courage to put out its innovative solutions to the markets despite they were very different form existing ones.

Flexible organizational climate, Employees' entrepreneurship and Collective organizational learning

Associated with adhocracy, flexible organizational climate (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004) has been identified in the organizational cultures of the case companies. Both, Brand X and IKEA representatives pinpointed friendly working environment, which was also observed during the interviews, was enhanced by cosy and open space premises contributing to the colleagues more frequent communication and ideas exchange. Meanwhile, both companies also mentioned focus on solutions that means relaxed atmosphere in which everyone, however, realizes personal responsibility for common goal.

Collective organizational learning is also significant while approaching SM for enhancing proactivity (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004). Flat organizational structure typical for adhocracy is claimed to foster creativity and innovative spirit among the employees (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004). The major point that emerges from the dataset and simultaneously links with those theoretical statements is that adhocratic organizational culture, where people brainstorm together and exchange information on the informal basis, contributes to more effective and more thorough dissemination of the MI derived from SM, across the company's levels. As pointed out by the social media consultant, it is vital to have extravert people on communications and marketing teams so that the valuable insights from SM could be passed on to other departments. Nevertheless, analysing this connection further, it becomes clear that only in the open and friendly atmosphere with flat structure, where continuous, informal interactions between the employees from different departments take place, those information would be acknowledged and appreciated. Statement of the IKEA US Marketing Manager, pointing that regardless of the position in company, everyone is expected to come up with ideas and every idea is welcome, clearly approves this idea. Brand X's Marketing Manager also reports how on the early stages of product development, meetings are very loose and all ideas are equally valued and taken into consideration.

Organizational risk-taking

Furthermore, proactive market orientation is grounded in the openness of the firm to change and risk-taking (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004; Kumar *et al.*, 2000). All those characteristics play a significant role while a company is trying to use SM to enhance its visibility, competitiveness and pro-activity. The Findings chapter clearly indicated that the mindset and the attitude of the top management are vital when it comes to approaching SM monitoring.

As pointed out by the social media experts, the main concern for senior managers is often the difficulty to measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of that activity, thus it can be perceived as unjustified, and also risky. One of the roots of that issue that has been indicated by social media experts is the top management's lack of understanding of and familiarity with SM and its capabilities.

Brand X for instance, does not allow markets to dictate its product development, but stands behind producing what they think is "cool". The company proved that in the light of strong vision, risk-taking pays off.

Set up for social media adoption

Ultimately, it appears that SM opens up opportunities for companies with adhocratic organizational cultures. Adhocracy supports the proactive behaviour of forward sensing, by facilitating the process of distributing the intelligence derived from social networking sites. Furthermore, the vision and innovation focus can become more visible in the aspect of direct firm-consumer interaction and move a company one step closer to the actual consumers, simultaneously fulfilling consumers' desires of being heard, acknowledged and intrigued. That on the other hand, touches upon the next dimensions of market-driving arsenal: customer stimulus and buzz network creation. Thus it can be concluded that once again, the organizational culture plays a predominant role in terms of enhancing proactive behaviours using SM.

6.2. Forward sensing

The proactive behaviour of forward sensing stems from MI processing, more specifically its gathering, dissemination and acting upon it (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Throughout those steps, proactively market oriented companies aim to acquire the knowledge about the market that will lead to generating ideas regarding the future business decisions related to product development and marketing and brand strategies (Carrillat *et al.*, 2004). Social media has been identified both by the academia (Letouze, 2012; Jimenez-Zarco *et al.*, 2012; Stavrakantonakis *et al.*, 2012) and once again by the social media experts interviewed in this study, as a valuable source of intelligence that can positively contribute to decision making. It is important to note, that while SM appears from empirical findings as an important channel enhancing two stages within MI processing: MI gathering and responding to MI, the stage of MI dissemination specifically remains facilitated mainly by adhocratic organizational culture

and related to it features like: collective organizational learning and flexible organizational climate.

Also, the findings shed the light on the final step in the MI processing: acting upon MI. Social media experts indicated that not many companies approach SM monitoring in a correct way, and even if they approach it wisely, not many companies actually respond to the gathered intelligence effectively. The common mistakes that take place are: making linear assumptions about product or service success and automatizing marketing message based on the little amount of data instead of making useful correlations. That refers to the remark of Hladky (2004) about necessity of analysis of the information obtained from SM before it turns into actionable intelligence. Hence, when it comes to responding to SM intelligence, it seems that beyond engraved in the organizational culture readiness and flexibility to make changes and take risks, companies need to understand what kind of data is needed for certain processes and learn how to use existing tools of SM monitoring to obtain this data. Gathering of MI has been identified as a recipe for staying ahead of the competition, especially when future predictions allowing taking preparatory actions are obtained (Miller, 2001). Ultimately, from the findings it appears that combination of firstly, appropriate organizational mindset; secondly, gathering MI from SM using available tools and analytical techniques and finally acting upon it wisely, makes a mixture that can be very difficult to copy by competitors, hence can turn into a major competitive advantage.

Furthermore, social media experts pinpointed that proactive companies should take the full responsibility over responding to the intelligence derived from SM and not involving in this process any external company. The reason for that is that they are the only ones knowing how they want to monetize on this intelligence and what actions would authentically reflect the company's vision.

Tactical implications: Types of social media analysis

The theoretical and empirical findings identified few advantages of using SM in terms of forward sensing over traditional methods. Those include: consistency, speed and tirelessness of SM monitoring tools (Stavrakantonakis *et al.*, 2012) and also, as confirmed by interviews, availability of consumers' information on social networking sites such as: age, gender, place of living and most importantly their interests and opinions.

The findings gathered in this research, confirmed and also built on the SM techniques array with regards to obtaining actionable intelligence and predicting the future. Those

include: **sentiment analysis**, also mentioned by Bughin *et al.* (2011), which indicates how people feel and what people say about the brand and its products, indicating positive and negative attitudes; **influencer profiling**, hence measuring behaviours in terms of when and how people have been influenced, whether they have been attained by the message or another person or were seeking the message out of their own initiative; **campaign measurement**, also brought up by Stavrakantonakis *et al.* (2012), which helps in tracking how successful the campaign was, enables predicting the upcoming sales numbers, can influence marketing budget-related decisions and enhance future marketing campaign effectiveness,; **segmentation relevancy**, which is related to figuring out what group of people would be the most receptive to a certain message; That can be done by applying SM targeting capabilities, what ensures that the resources invested in marketing would be used efficiently; Finally, social media serves to obtaining marketing recommendations in terms of promotion **timing** and content, for instance by conducting **viral content tracking and analysis**, to figure out what message would be interesting to people and when time-wise would that message be the most effective. Hence, forward sensing via SM, can reduce waste of efforts and resources, which are often associated with sudden market changes (Latitude Global, 2008).

Finally, those techniques have been identified as applicable to any industry, and even though there are different opportunities depending on the business environment, product type and product lifecycle, SM for forward sensing is equally important.

Difficulties related to social media monitoring:

Harrysson *et al.* (2012) called the insights that can be obtained from SM as “*forward looking*”, and that was also confirmed by the study participants. Nevertheless, several future predicting-related shortcomings have been identified by all study participants. SM with its erratic nature, current faults related to reliability as well as the shortcomings of SM monitoring tools in understanding of the human speech, mood and context correctly, appears to be more effective for predicting short-term prospects and opportunities and providing micro-perspective based on long historical data rather than delivering confident predictions about the distant future.

6.3. Customer stimulus

Customer stimulus category in this study has been created to encompass relevant proactive behaviours that intend to generally stimulate/ influence consumers, for instance to shape their behaviours, create their new preferences, educate them, and simultaneously attract them to the new product . The strategic goal underlying the efforts to influence consumers is to increase the purchase of branded products or services. This can be done by first drawing consumers towards the brand for instance using techniques that would make customers interested, engaged, and also make them feel acknowledged or as they are gaining something in return, and finally influence them to the stage of willingness or desire to purchase the product and also stick around the brand for longer.

In terms of applying SM for stimulating customers, it has to be noted that in the SM milieu, customers, as stated by the social media expert, are seeking attention more than ever, want to be acknowledged and SM, conveniently, allows them to make their contributions. Therefore, SM by allowing greater speed, scope and lower costs of interacting with consumers (Sawhney *et al.*, 2005; Di Gangi *et al.*, 2010), makes it easier for proactive companies to execute proactive behaviours under the customer stimulus category.

6.3.1. Shaping behaviours

Shaping behaviours in the literature is associated with switching or creating customers preferences (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000). Those behaviours are now directly achievable via SM as having the dialogue with customers allows not only better influencing consumers, which could be associated with one way communication, but also consumer engagement and that indicates two-ways transmission. SM created the setting where engagement and participation are more easily attainable and more broadly available, and the latter means that SM increased the size of the audience that could get involved in the activities offered by the company.

Considering that nowadays consumers are very SM savvy, they do not settle for the first better product proposition. They seek engaging content and ultimately, only companies that have strong vision permeating their SM content and innovative products that catch their attention, will be paid attention in the SM space. Furthermore, SM users want their opinions and ideas to be acknowledged by firms. Today, this can be done much more easily, for instance, by exposing the innovative outlook via SM and encouraging users to engage in the open innovation initiatives and other customers-oriented activities organized by the company.

Co-creation and Gamification

Co-creation is one of the ways to increase engagement. With the help of SM, companies can include users in their innovation processes (Di Gangi *et al.* 2010), absorb social customer knowledge as well as scan knowledge of current, potential or competitors' customers (Sawhney *et al.*, 2005). As indicated by the empirical findings of this study, co-creation can be further enhanced with the tactic of digital gamification. The literature review indicated gamification as a tactic useful for changing people's behaviours by influencing and motivating, building the community of fans (Bunchball Inc., 2011) and improving users' experience and engagement (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). At the same time, the social media experts identified gamification as a tactic useful for applying in the SM context. Digital version of that technique has been exemplified by Brand X and IKEA, who create game-based experiences for its followers in the form of events, contests and votings.

Also, as gamification system needs to be meaningful to the user in order to be effective (Nicholson, 2012), therefore while conducting the previous proactive behaviour of Forward Sensing with the support of SM, market driving companies can use obtained intelligence to figure out what those gamification systems should be like in terms of content and timing of release.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that engagement is a key to shaping customers' behaviours and SM significantly facilitates this execution, what ultimately leads to the conclusion that SM can enhance the proactive endeavour of shaping customers' behaviours.

Content marketing

It also has been pointed out by the social media experts that the content plays a vital role when it comes to approaching SM for customer stimulus. Given that the company has a strong vision and innovative and interesting products, the content can be composed accordingly to the purpose, audience, platform and timing thanks to the SM monitoring. The correct execution of content can therefore lead to engagement, which as previously mentioned vital to shaping customers' behaviours. Ultimately, content marketing appears to be an important tactic, which translates further to influencing consumers, but in the long run also can stimulate buzz.

Penetrating into customers' lifestyle

This sub-category was purely created out of the empirical findings obtained via observation of the case companies' behaviour on SM platforms. It has been remarked that SM creates the space where the company, on top of obtain intelligence about customers, can become a part of customers' life. Specifically, the ease, immediacy and frequency of interaction between brands and its fans on SM, makes it possible for the brand to adjust the marketing message in a way to make it more effective and closely related to the customers' lifestyles, thus tighten connections between the company and its customers. Later on, when the company comes up with the lifestyle-related extensions of the product or service, it might also influence customers' preferences. This is exemplified by Brand X, which for instance remastered soundtracks from its video games and made them available to a wider group of customers on Spotify and iTunes, ultimately penetrating into the lifestyles of the customers in a different way. Hence, wisely used intelligence from SM can support the decisions of the company related to the product extensions in order to enhance the enjoyment of the products, but also augment the experience with the products so that those would become even more frequently used or purchased.

6.3.2. Customer education

Customer education can be translated into teaching consumers about the usage and value of the innovative product, what is meant to amplify the success in the post-product launch stage (Kumar *et al.*, 2000).

Educating customers about **product usage and explaining its value** becomes effortless considering the ease of communicating with consumers via social networking sites. Companies can now respond to the consumers' concerns and even better, explain in advance the issues that could be puzzling to them while facing the new product. Companies can do that by providing guidelines by using SM, for instance just like Brand X with its video games and IKEA with its self-assembled furniture, can provide tips using postings or videos on social networking sites how to use the products in order to achieve better results or enjoy the product more. That comprises on explaining the value proposition, instead of ordinary selling activity.

In terms of education via SM, the social media experts indicated, not mentioned in the theory, educating about the brand goodwill. It means that by using social networking sites, companies can educate customers real-time about company's current activities that illustrate

company's values, for instance CSR or any other benevolent activities taken by the company. Thus, the customers' awareness of the background story behind the products and their producer as well as the attractiveness of the brand increase. As the dataset in the previous chapter presented, that approach has been taken by IKEA, which shares its socially responsible undertakings on SM using for instance You Tube videos.

6.3.3. *Re-shaping market segmentation*

The major opportunity, created by SM, with regards to re-sketching market segmentation is **targeting**. As mentioned by Kumar *et al.* (2000) this specific proactive behaviour aims to attract customers from earlier established markets. The social media experts indicate that the real power of SM lies in its targeting capabilities. SM provides companies with information such as customers' age, gender, location, but unlike any traditional methods, also interests and preferences of consumers. That further allows conducting **alternative targeting** as opposed to the standard, census-based targeting that segments people according to customary criteria of age, gender, religion, location or income. Thus, by using good algorithms that filter data available on SM, SM has the ability to be used to target more effectively based on additional features such as hobbies, activities and interests. That increases the chances that those targeted people will be more receptive to the new products, hence join up completely new market segment around those products, what would simultaneously re-structure existing market segmentation.

Nevertheless, this category lacks examples from the case companies, which have not yet explored SM enabled possibilities in this aspect.

6.4. *Buzz network*

SM also created a new context for brand management. The strategic goal behind the proactive behaviour of creating and exploiting the buzz network is to gain brand attachment (Kumar *et al.*, 2000; Carillat *et al.*, 2004). Considering the previously mentioned speed, affordability and the ease of SM usage, market driving companies can now benefit even more in terms of brand management. The reason behind it is that the buzz network that can be created on SM can involve millions of users, providing a firm with significantly cheaper and more effective promotion of the brand message.

Both market leading brands, Brand X and IKEA, apply SM for communication, creating experiences for consumers, building relationships with the followers and ultimately increasing brand attachment and loyalty.

As evident from the findings, SM has been presented by both, social media experts as well as the representatives of case companies as a platform that, beyond just pure communication, offers possibilities of creating dialogue, building relationships, but also due to its nature, is the cheapest option for organic spread of the word-of-mouth about new products. Given the interesting content released at the right time to the right people - thanks to the MI that could be gathered via SM for instance by making correlations and viral content analysis - the company can identify lead users or so called influencers and ultimately, figure out what message, where, how and to whom. That would at the end enhance the buzz around whatever message or product it wants to promote.

Finally, a few points emerged out of the findings in close relation to dealing with buzz on SM. Those could be summarized in the following way: Companies should restrain from treating SM as a one-way communication channel, and instead be clever in using this platform and information obtained from it, by firstly, considering the timing and the tactfulness of the marketing message and second, authentically engage in buzz. Also, the key to buzz on SM lies in delivering interesting experience that would be worth for users to share with their networks. Finally, the company itself needs to stay watchful and geared up when it comes to buzz to be able to respond to it in a timely and appropriate way.

6.4.1. *Online buzz network creation tactics*

In the previous chapter certain sub-categories relating to the tactical angle of the buzz creation, were identified. Those form a set of activities that could be applied for buzz network creation and expansion, while bearing in mind the strategic goals triggering this proactive behaviour.

Correlations

Apart from the fact that SM allows creating buzz, hence becoming a competitive mean in terms of promotion, it also enables to monitor the buzz, to learn from it, hence becoming a decision guide. Looking at buzz on social networks allows making correlations, hence figuring out what reactions are stimulated by what events or problems. Having that

correlations conducted, a firm may decide on how to approach certain topics in order to receive desirable reactions. That point ultimately draws the link between brand management – buzz network creation and MI gathering – forward sensing. Therefore, it appears that from monitoring buzz companies can also gather intelligence and conduct predictive analysis.

Targeting lead users

Sawhney *et al.* (2005) pointed out the importance of identifying lead users a propos creating buzz around the products. Those individuals are the first in the online word-of-mouth chain, and as derived from the findings, SM targeting capabilities offer companies to identify different categories of customers: influencers or else lead users, but also brand fans and advocates, who are most likely to spread the online word-of-mouth and influence others. Subsequently, the company's network is likely to expand by networks of those customers.

Case companies, once again did not provide substantial examples of that activity due to perceived SM monitoring-related shortcomings. Nevertheless, following this principle, IKEA for instance tries to approach specific bloggers and influencers to stimulate buzz.

Gamification

Gamification, previously mentioned on the topic of shaping behaviours, was also recognized by the social media experts as significant for buzz stimulation. Literature also emphasized its role in development of relationships and ultimately in increasing the brand awareness and affinity and contributing to development of brand communities what is a crucial element for buzz network (Bunchball inc, 2010).

By engaging people in the SM initiatives or challenges, company increases the chance that participants will share the news with their personal network. Effectively, stimulated by friends' recommendations, people are more likely to get engaged in such activities themselves. As a result, customers attained in this way are more likely to explore the brand and the products and may enlarge the online brand community.

Both Brand X and IKEA demonstrated examples of effective buzz creation thanks to the gamification tactics. Companies attracted their customers by free product distribution either as a result of some lottery, or according to the rule "first come, first served".

Online Brand Community Building

Gamification also might be used for *building community*, with ultimate goal to stimulate purchase decision (Bunchball Inc., 2010).

Watching over the brand community on SM, where the communication between the brand and its customers became very personal and the anonymity has been erased, means that there is a bigger chance for strengthening the emotional ties between those two actors. That can be achieved by providing the actual touch points with the brand and the people behind the brand. Interviewed case companies further emphasised that the main goal in building brand communities is to reach their customers, engage them emotionally, and build relations rather than merely sell the products. Brand X for instance uses its “Social Club” and range of gamification tactics to fortify the bond between the brand (games developers) and its fans and also within the community members themselves. Consequently, the online brand community creates the fertile environment where buzz network can be initiated and while growing also reach beyond the community “frontiers”.

Magnetizing other networks

The tactic of magnetizing other networks seems like a logical sequel from the online brand community building. This is because companies can involve members from the brand community to expand the buzz network. Brand X example shows how this market driving company is benefiting from the buzz that translates to the brand mentions on variety of social networking sites, simultaneously increasing the chances that SM users from other networks will become be interested in Brand X specifically.

Also, alike in case of Brand X, this tactic can refer to magnetizing the networks of the firm’s business partners. Brand X, for instance, does this by encouraging collaborating retailers and journalists to promote the products across their SM networks in order to capture the followers from those associates’ networks.

Increasing visibility

In this subcategory two main activities have been identified. One is a paid for solution used by advertising agencies, which serves to making the offer or message persistently appear at the top of the “News Feed” on SM platforms. Another, free activity applied by Brand X for increasing the probability that the customers will encounter the message is so called “Save

the date” trick, which basically means pre-announcing the announcements. Making the message noticeable to the customers can therefore increase the chances that customer will speak of it, if not due to personal interest, then due to the exposure to specific message.

Multiplying the buzz using the “RE” function

Multiplying the buzz using the “RE” function is probably in the eyes of many, the most obvious sub-category that emerged from the empirical findings. It has been named this way, as it refers to the activities of re-blogging, re-posting and re-tweeting of the related to the brand information generated by SM users. “RE” function simply stands for “Repeating”, in other words multiplying the buzz by sharing the opinions [presumably only the positive ones] of others and letting the voice of brand fans, influencers and opinion leaders to come to the surface of the buzz instead of making self-praising claims.

The links between proactive behaviours

Ultimately, it appears that SM could enhance each of the proactive behaviours given that the suitable mindset and organizational culture is in place. Speaking of the mindset again, the understanding of how SM works, what capabilities it holds and how those capabilities could be employed, in conjunction with the readiness to invest the resources into SM monitoring and respond to the MI obtained via SM, are fundamental to executing the following proactive behaviours from forward sensing to buzz network creation on the SM level.

Furthermore, gathering MI and responding to it on SM, can enhance the power of influencing the customers. All the following information: a) knowing *who* would be interested in *what* message – hence setting up the right targeting b) figuring out the sentiment of customers and c) how their behaviours are being influenced depending on the stimuli, d) measuring previous campaigns’ effectiveness plus competitors’ campaigns to derive lessons for the upcoming marketing campaigns, is available today from social networking sites. Having those insights could already create a basis for execution of effective tactics aiming at shaping consumers’ behaviours, customer education and re-sketching existing market segments.

Subsequently, having engaging content, for instance gamification-based activities and interesting marketing campaigns in place, and directing those efforts towards the right group of customers, can increase the buzz network. That means that people would be sharing the company-related information via social networking sites due to their interest in the content,

involvement in the brand activities, and that would influence brand community by bringing new members; and so in the long run that would translate to the brand awareness, brand affinity, brand attachment, and eventually brand loyalty.

Interestingly, the findings also indicated that there is a reverse link between buzz network and forward sensing, which has been already brought up in the correlations sub-category. It appears that SM monitoring can not only lead to the buzz creation, but buzz itself becomes a unit of SM monitoring and analysis. The online buzz around the brand and its products could be further monitored for deciphering the sentiment and effectiveness of the marketing campaigns, hence buzz becomes a source of MI. Subsequently, learning about the buzz can lead to enhancing the tactics for customer stimulus. Those, on the other hand, will again further influence the buzz network. Therefore, it can be claimed the those three major proactive behaviours executed via SM, are interconnected and are affecting one another, hence as a result can also enhance one another.

7. Conclusions

The extensive analysis of the findings gathered in this research leads to certain conclusions on how proactive market orientation could be enhanced by applying specific social media solutions. Several SM tactics have been identified in this study across the proactive market orientation repertoire. Those are: social media analysis techniques such as sentiment analysis, influencer profiling, segmentation relevancy, campaign measurement, and viral content tracking for forward sensing; co-creation, gamification, alternative targeting, content marketing and penetrating into customers' lifestyle for customer stimulus (educating, attracting customers and shaping their behaviours); Correlations, targeting the lead users, online brand communities building, increasing visibility, magnetizing other networks and multiplying the buzz using "RE" function within the buzz network creation category.

It can be concluded that for the companies daring enough to confront the markets with their vision and innovativeness, SM can significantly enhance the efforts in predicting how the markets will evolve and stimulating customers towards participation in brand activities and purchasing branded products. Also, the above listed SM tactics support companies in the strategic operations such as planning and strategy building, decisions making, creating competitive advantage, increasing sales and developing brand attachment and loyalty. By reaching those strategic goals, companies are approaching the ultimate, desired-by-all goal, which is the increase in revenue and market share.

Finally, this study led to the creation of the model (see *Figure 2. Usage of social media for proactive market orientation*), which combines the major theoretical concepts and empirical findings from this research and ultimately presents how the proactive market orientation, with the strategic goals in mind, can be enhanced using social media tactical weapons to get the company closer to achieving those goals.

This study also illustrated the strong connections between the major proactive behaviours: forwards sensing, customer stimulus (shaping, educating and attracting consumers) and buzz network creation, which have not been previously looked at from this perspective.

The overall contribution made by this study is a theoretical link between, previously not associated in the literature, phenomena of social media and proactive market orientation,

hence adding on to the field of market orientation within academic research and closing the gap in the theory.

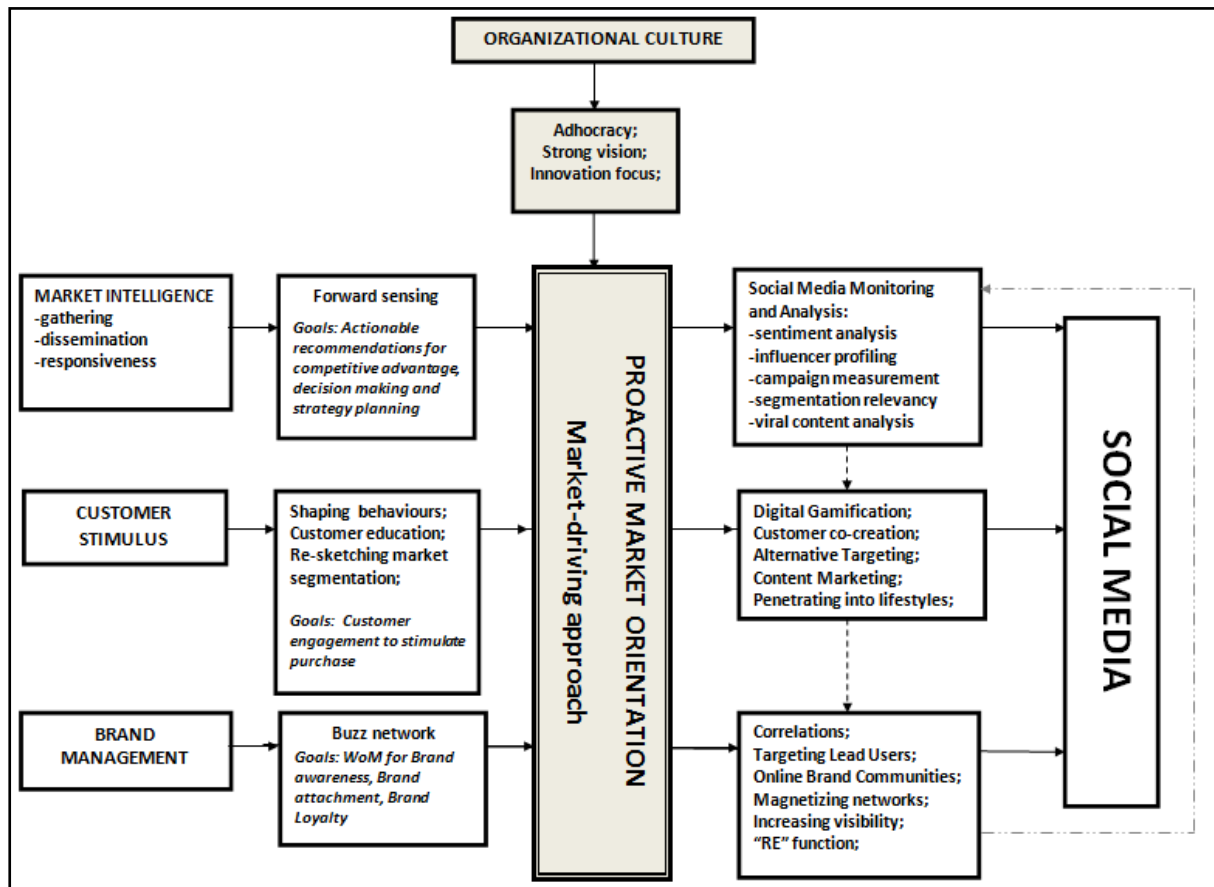


Figure 4. Usage of social media for proactive market orientation

7.1. Managerial implications

There are certain managerial implications emerging from this study, which could serve managers as guidelines while approaching SM in order to enhance proactive behaviours. Given that the fundament of this approach is the organizational culture, those implications relate only to the B2C companies that have a suitable mindset, meaning they understand the principles of SM, recognize the importance of this platform in the 21st century, acknowledge its potential and are aware that the vision and innovative products are preconditions to becoming successful with enhancing their proactive behaviours in this milieu. Furthermore, those implications include both warnings and recommendations.

Under the category of forward sensing, it is recommended not to make linear assumptions about the progress. The assumptions of linear progress can be damaging as they lead to the incremental changes only, which do not bring long lasting competitive advantage in the modern, fast changing world. Once or currently successful, does not mean constantly successful, and by not understanding this, companies can fall into the trap where instead of revolutionizing the market, they end up simply diligently delivering previous offerings, but in a new package.

Moreover, it is important to warn managers against “automatizing” the marketing message on social networking sites. The SM analytics should be used not only to discover what customers are saying, but also when. Therefore, managers should make use of the actionable recommendations that SM monitoring tools provide in terms of timing. Therefore, it is advisable to focus on creating a combination of “the right message to the right consumer at the right time in the right place” - in order to make the SM efforts fall onto the “fertile soil” and entail return on investment.

Finally, managers need to take a full responsibility over responding to the intelligence derived from SM and not involving any third parties to do it for them. This is because, managers within the actual company are the only ones knowing exactly how they want to monetize on this intelligence and in which direction they want to develop relations with their customers.

Also, it is recommended that they combine all the CRM tools under one place, which would also incorporate SM, and make sure that the action plan is continuously being updated based on the gathered intelligence.

With regards to the influencing customers, it is crucial to acknowledge the power of the engaging content and gamification tactics on SM. Also, so called “in-your-face marketing” will not bring satisfying results in the SM milieu, as SM users are more savvy and can distinguish between fake recommendations, mere advertising and actual quality content. Furthermore, SM empowered customers, meaning that they have been given the power to express their dissatisfaction when the company is being overly “pushy”, and this is vital warning taking into account that the bad news spread online even faster than in the offline reality. Instead, applying fun activities, increasing the users’ enjoyment and augmenting their experience with the brand by bringing them the content that is interesting, useful and enjoyable, can only enhance the effectiveness of the influencing consumers via SM.

In terms of creating the buzz network and ultimately exploiting it, managers need to stay ready to respond to buzz on SM, hence proactively, but humbly engage in it, and speak authentically to draw customers towards the brand.

Finally, monitoring of existing buzz is vital as it can bring a lot of insights with regards to the effectiveness of the current customer stimulus tactics, hence provide immediate feedback in terms of SM marketing strategy.

7.2. Recommendations for further research

This study presents an overview of how SM can enhance various proactive behaviours, nevertheless, it is recommended to explore the specific dimensions of proactive market orientation in more focus.

Acknowledging the immaturity of the SM monitoring tools for predictive analysis, it would be worth following up on this issue in the future.

Also, it would be interesting to delve into effectiveness of the gamification and responsiveness of users to this tactic in the social media context.

Furthermore, the thesis did not make a distinction when it comes to the type of industry that companies operate within. Therefore, it could be worth investigating how in different industries, taking into account the industry characteristics, the proactive behaviours of forward sensing, shaping consumers' behaviours or educating consumers, could be performed differently using SM.

Alternatively, the opportunities of using SM for conducting those proactive behaviours by market-driving B2B companies would be worth looking at; For instance trying to identify how SM can benefit them in discovering the industry trends, influencing their business partners' behaviours or simply building relationships.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide – Consultancy Companies

Block A: The company information

1. Tell us a little bit more about your role in the company (How long you've been working here? What are your tasks?)

Block B: Market Intelligence

1. Every company if it wants to stay abreast of change, be market oriented in a proactive way needs to gather intelligence and disseminate it across the departments. In relation to this, what platforms do you monitor and what tools and how are being used?
2. What kind of analysis do you undertake?
 - a) What can companies find out? (in relevance to a) consumers b) competitors)
 - b) Is it useful only for making a snapshot of today? Or else for predicting future trends? Are there any extra techniques for predicting the future?
3. Do you support companies with intelligence distribution across the company, or just with monitoring and analysis?
4. What are the difficulties and risks involved with monitoring SM and risks?
5. Can you tell us how over the years those analytics evolved? What were the approaches before the advent of Social Media?
6. How do the benefits of social media monitoring vary across different industries? Can some companies (depending on the industry) benefit from it more than other? WHY?
 - a) Could you give us an example how it works in different industries?
7. Why should companies monitor SM? What are the main benefits of monitoring social media?
 - a) Can you give an example of a success story?
8. Study of Hoover from 2009 showed that 80% of participating companies did use social media for promotion, but only 1/3 used it for gathering of market intelligence. Why do you think this field is still not being widely employed?
9. What are the preconditions for company to employ social media monitoring techniques and tools?
 - a) Corporate culture ?
 - b) Established Market Intelligence functions?
 - c) Industry specifications?

Block C: Customer stimulus

1. What are the tactics to influence consumers' behaviours using social media? How via social media customers can be "pulled" to engage and take on new behaviours and new preferences (For instance creating customer constraints or removing them)?
2. What are the opportunities for customer education via social media (Interactive solutions, ways to explain value proposition)?
3. How companies can use social media to re-shape the market set up – destroy existing segmentation and create new market around new product?

Block D: Buzz network:

1. How companies can stimulate buzz around their products on SM? What tactics can they apply?
2. How the buzz can affect the company (positively/ negatively)?

Appendix 2: Interview guide – Case companies

Block A – The company information

1. What is your role in this company?
2. Could you describe the industry your company operates within?
3. Could you describe the organizational culture of your company?
 - a) Are employees encouraged to think creatively, to come up with new ideas, to share them and spread among the company?
 - b) What is the working atmosphere, relations between people (relaxed or tensed, power or flat organizational set up, etc.)?
 - c) What's the vision of the company?

Block B – Market Intelligence

1. Is there MI department/ function in the company? (Is it separate, or spread across different departments?)
2. How do you gather information about your:
 - a) Customers

b) Competitors

3. Do you use social media for assessing current situation only, or also for discovering latent customer needs? (Do you do predictive analysis?)
4. What tools/techniques do you apply for monitoring social media?
5. How do you disseminate intelligence across the company (via emails, on meetings, etc.)? Are all company levels incorporated?
6. How do you respond to intelligence? Can you give examples when MI was successfully used?
7. What difficulties are you facing, or faced, if any, when it comes to gathering/disseminating/responding to MI?
8. In what are other ways do you gather intelligence?
9. What are your future plans with regards to using social media for market intelligence gathering?

Block C –Customer stimulus

1. How do you (what techniques are you using) shape customers' behaviour, influence their preferences, specifically via social media?
2. Do you engage customers in co-creation via social media? If yes, how?
 3. How do you explain to the customers your value proposition on social media? Do you teach customers about new product usage, or new ideas, trends etc?
 4. How with innovation, have you re-segmented the market by creating new markets around your products? How was social media useful for that?
 5. How do you approach targeting via social media?

Block D - Buzz network:

1. To what extent do you rely on online buzz network over traditional media?
2. How do you stimulate the buzz?
3. How do you identify your lead users? How do you include them in word-of-mouth spreading?
4. How do you benefit from online buzz? Does it translate to the brand attachment/loyalty, purchase, etc?