# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY AND MARKETING OUTCOMES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

*Undeniably, social media has come to a higher degree of popularity in the online world. Currently, most businesses have been utilizing any social media platforms for social media marketing in their strategy. Yet, in this sense it still has to be explored concerning how social media marketing strategy affects marketing outcomes. Therefore, this conceptual paper aims at investigating the relationship of social media marketing strategy and marketing outcomes. There are four dimensions of social media marketing strategy that include: customer communication channel focus, product diversity presentation awareness, proactive competitor learning capability, and market response timeliness orientation. Consequently, marketing outcome is specific in marketing operation excellence, cost utilization effectiveness, customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance in that all expect a positive relationship with the construct. In future research, the researcher should test of this paper suggestion. Interestingly, regarding evidence in Thai e-commerce firms, the key finding still expects for empirical research to manifest whether social media marketing strategy will be a comprehensive accomplishment for marketing outcome or not?*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, social media has gained popularity worldwide (Campbell, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2013). The development of internet technology has transformed the communication manner that affects billions of people. Social media is an online community built on internet technology that attains what is necessary for more interaction between business and the customer. Due to the expansion of internet users, high speed connection, ease of use, and the speedy distribution of social media; more firms have applicable marketing strategy (Goi, 2014; Zhou & Wang, 2014). The higher growth rate of internet users and registered social media is one motive to marketers concerning social media platform engagement (Carim & Warwick, 2013). Social media are important for viewing both customer and business aspects. In the customer manner that one knows as "internet users," searching product information, online reviews, rating of goods and services, and pre-purchase decision-making can be obtained from social media instruments (Wang & Chang, 2013). Therefore, businesses have more choices for determining marketing strategy such as building customer relationships, public communication, digital content diversity channels, advertising flexibility, and low cost operations (Best, Manktelow & Taylor, 2014).

Additionally, social media has evidenced interactive digital communication—a participative and collaborative social specialty through real time conversation, sharing, and

review on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or YouTube (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014; Vernuccio, 2014).  These social media tools allow consumers to get more information, search, evaluate, choose and review products and services which is a critical component in attracting people to shopping online and that influence e-commerce business. It engenders trust in the business transaction (Moscato & Moscato, 2009).   Likewise, social media advances can make more profit by attracting and alluring a potential buyer via social channels that realize the value of marketing performance (Shadkam & O'Hara, 2013).  The businesses are the initial social media employing not only communicating corporate brands as a marketing communication channel, but also remain and enhance customer involvement with brand-building (Constantinides, 2014), brand equity (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013), and a company's image formation (Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene, 2013).

Moreover, based on the literature of marketing research, most studies in social media focus on a consumer's perspective such as consumer attitude, peer-to-peer communication and online consumer review (Eagleman, 2013; Wang & Chang, 2013; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). On the other hand, a few studies are on marketing strategy at the business level.  These issues shed light on research gaps in the literature.  Therefore, the key purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship of social media marketing strategy and marketing outcomes.

The next section reviews the literature, and describes the conceptual model. Also, the linkage between the construct of the each variable is established, and develops the related proposition for the study. The sections on contributions describe suggested directions for future research and managerial contributions. Finally, the findings of the study are summarized in the conclusion section.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

In this study, a conceptual framework of social media marketing strategy and marketing outcome is explicitly discussed and elaborately examined. Thus, the concept, linkage, and research model is provided in Figure 1.
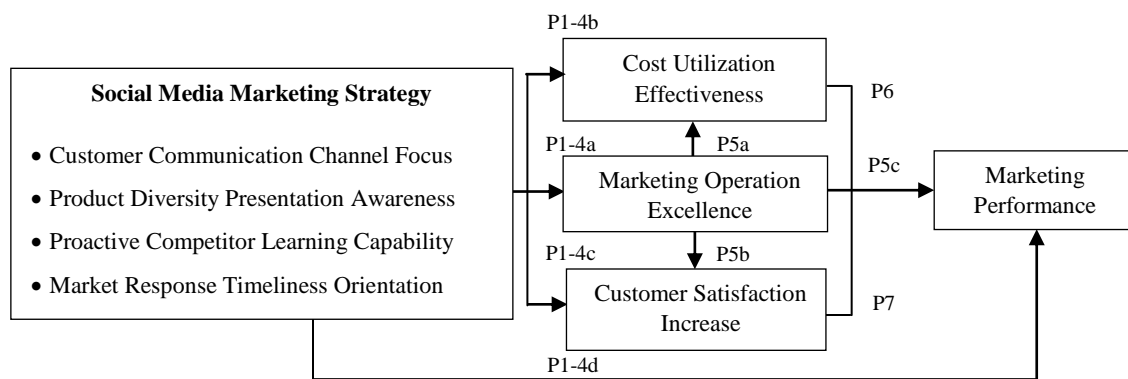


**Figure 1 A Conceptual Framework**

## Social media marketing strategy

Internet technology has been created for not only consumer communication but also reshapes the way marketers enhance their marketing outcomes (Barwise & Sean, 2010). Especially, social media is implemented by internet technology that has fast growth, is novel, is challenging, and is changing the global world of marketing.  Indeed, social media provides a mutual benefit between the organization and its customers (e.g. public relations, advertising, brand exposure, communication, review and recommendation) (Smedescu, 2012; Carim & Warwick, 2013; Fensel et al., 2014).

Accordingly, Ristova (2014) stated that most popular social media are helpful to a company's online sales and encourages its products and services.  There are several types of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogs.  Statistically, worldwide, there are 800 million active users of the Facebook application, more than 140 million active users registered on Twitter, more than 800 million unique users of YouTube per month, and LinkedIn with more than 150 million global users (Kumar & Sundaram, 2012).  Therefore, due to the fact that social media has a popular communication platform in the online world, the marketer has to go forward to cooperate with social media in his marketing strategy.  On the other hand, many businesses start by applying social media without a marketing plan and objective. The results do not appear and they are unsuccessful.  Thus, the firms have to fix a strong marketing plan for social media application which is desirable for the highest goal achievements (Barker et al., 2013).

However, social media has been an initial marketing communication tool and it is considered as a part of marketing strategy.  There are two feasible social media marketing strategies that are both a passive and active approach. The passive approach concentrates on utilizing social media as market intelligence and a source of customer feedback. In the same vein, the active approach is social media that is engaged as either a public relations or direct marketing channel as a channel of customer influence (Constantinides, 2014).  Accordingly, Smedescu (2012) mentioned that social media marketing is developing from traditional marketing into a new way of marketing, based on internet technology that supports it.  The advantages of all social media, the firms are able to consider the usefulness of either one or multiple appropriate applications to accomplish their business performance.  Thus, the key purpose and highlight in each social media type is demonstrated in Table 1.

Traditionally, the pizza corporate business promotes sales to its customers via a variety of marketing channels; for instance, newspaper, brochures, television advertising, or even magazines.  Owing to the progress of internet technology and social media dissemination by their own customers, more pizza stores are promoting their pizza business through social media channels (He, Zha & Li, 2013).  Interestingly, Ristova (2014) disclosed that the advantages of social media are several; such as information exchange; improving access; interactivity; communication; relationship creation; improved sales; and to rich, large audiences. For instance, any online consumer of Facebook can access a company's Facebook fan page by clicking the "Like" button, also allowing them to interact with any brands, organizations, reputation, or image that they like.  In the company's aspect, Facebook enables an opportunity for learning consumer behavior, attitudes, avocations, and lifestyles.  Marketing managers are able to gather any idea from online users in different demographics or cultural profiles by performing an analysis of new trends and accurately responding to their customers.  As well, the advantages of

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Twitter include: rich access to shoppers, free creation of company brand, free promotion of events and public relations, and the easiest method to get a feedback channel.

However, the design of LinkIn emphasizes connecting people for business purposes instead of being designed for conversation or talking in peer-to-peer communication. Thus, LinkIn is focused on serving online resumes for both company and employee experts, enables a new company to find new employees, and also provides for employees who are seeking a new job. Additionally, blogs forums apply shared details and features of products that are supplied in the market, and provide advertising online.

| Table 1 SUMMARY OF SOCIAL MEDIA TYPES | | |
|---|---|---|
| Social media types | Key purpose | Advantage of social media type |
| Facebook | Social networking sites | The company's Facebook fan page enable the testing of attitudes and opinions of online consumers or even promotes and sell their products and services. |
| Twitter | Microblogging service | The company always not only promotes the product and service, but also provides sufficient information as interaction and conversation. |
| blogs | Share and exchange contents | The company can share product and service features, open discussions, and review. |
| Google+ | Social networking sites | The business can share exclusive offers and discounts to its special customer group. |
| YouTube | Video-sharing sites | The firm can share content, make product and service presentation, bookmarking, rating, follower, and commenting in all collaboration of social network. |
| Flickr | Store and photo-sharing sites | The business can store and share photos online to a strong loyal social network. |
| LinkedIn | Business networking sites | The organization can create a profile in order to present that their work to the audience. In the same vein, it enables a company to seek new employees or many experts to join work together. |
| Instagram | Photos and video-sharing | The firms can share activity photos or videos of what's happening to promote the brand and company. |

Although this research acts as a literature review of social media marketing strategy, the result is that the distinguished definitions are obtained. Initially, the various marketing scholars provide the meaning in terms of social media and social media marketing as shown in Table 2. Therefore, based on an integrative prior literature review, this paper defines social media marketing strategy as the scope of marketing activity, sales, public relations and customer service through social networking, online communities, or any online collaborative media to gain superior performance achievement (Barker et al., 2013; Evans, 2010).

Furthermore, prior studies discover social media as the new media of marketing tools to interact with their customer. Accordingly, Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin (2015) found that social media is employed for several purposes such as advertising, promotion, branding, searching information, and customer relationship building. Also, it has an effect on business performance by cost reduction in marketing and customer service operations. Likewise, one study examines the impacts of social media on the bank in Malaysia such as in conversation, sharing, publishing, and participation. As a result, the communication between banks and their customers are by employing social media, in particular, to assist in new product development or product innovation, to increase the customer experience, to build an organizations' image, and to

promote strategy development (Goi, 2014). This point indicates that social media marketing can be not only a new communicative tool, but also a new medium to present product and service that the firm attempts to promote and attain competitive enhancement in the digital technology era. Moreover, Dateling & Bick (2013) revealed that there are three main points of South African business usefulness of social media that are composed of: digital product promotion, customer care/online reputation management and content dissemination, which can have potential in the marketing process. Social media are able to communicate not only with existing customers but also in acquiring new customers.

| Table 2 SUMMARY OF THE DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING | | |
|---|---|---|
| Author(s) | Term | Definitions |
| Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman (2015:190) | Social media | A group of internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. |
| Carr et al. (2014: 1) | Social media | An array of platforms that allow people to interact, create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. |
| Daj (2013: 16) | Social media | The term commonly given to websites, online tools, and other interactive communication technologies which allow users to interact with each other in some way, either by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, or interests. |
| Strokes (2009: 350) | Social media | The media that is published, created, and shared by individuals on the internet, such as blogs, images, video and others. |
| Dahnil et al. (2014: 124) | Social media marketing | Using the social media technology in order to conduct a firm's marketing activities. |
| Barker et al. (2013: 3) | Social media marketing | Using of social networks, online communities, blogs, wikis or any other online collaborative media for marketing, sales, public relations and customer service. |
| Evans (2010: 231) | Social media marketing | A philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a technology platform, business rules, workflow, processes and social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation in order to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment. It's the company's response to the customer's ownership of the conversation. |
| Weinberg (2009: 3) | Social media marketing | The process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional channels. |

As aforementioned in the literature review that is relevant to social media marketing strategy, the main conceptual framework implementation is able to provide a dimension of social media marketing strategy which considers customers, products, competitors, and market response aspects. These include customer communication channel focus, product diversity presentation awareness, proactive competitor learning capability, and market response timeliness orientation as elaborated in the next section.

## Customer communication channel focus

Customer communication channel focus refers to the ability of a firm to employ social media tools to announce, contact, educate, and connect with its customers and prospects, giving them a voice and discussion on shared interests in order to enhance the relationship with consumers (Badea, 2014). A wide range of customer communication channel focuses exist, including all forms of promotions, advertising, or publicity dissemination (Keller, 2001). Social media provides a close-up relationship between business and its customers that have direct interaction, changing from one-to-many to many-to-many solutions (Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene, 2013).

Currently, the advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) is one important factor of marketing communication (Šerić, Gil-Saura & Ruiz-Molina, 2014). The social media that rely on ICT have benefits from marketing communication, due to availability 24/24, 7/7, interactivity, time and global accessibility, and interaction (Eugenia, 2012). As Gurău (2008) stated, there are three specific characteristics of internet communication channels: (a) interactivity—the internet can become direct interaction between a company and its customers by a social media application platform; (b) transparency—online content is always accessible by any online user; and (c) memory—the content that is published on any social media platform can be archived. Hence, the practitioners of marketing communication should customize how audiences get and use information, due to social media technology that is able to rigorously capture data on customers. As a result, it takes data for analyzing consumer behavior.

One important point of customer communication is keeping a positive company image. In order to accomplish this goal, one study disclosed that a positive company image formation by social media usage is one that can be designed with the following elements: Firstly, it sets aims of communication, and defines them in the short and long-term. Secondly, it assigns a target audience that defines the group of users who will receive the media, such as youth or adult consumers, and male or female genders. Thirdly, in determining a message theme before sending out the message, the firm has to know if what they want to hear is interesting and valuable for them. Therefore, the sent contents have to match with consumer expectations. Fourthly, content form design is possibly texts, hypertexts, audio, photos, graphs, and video. Finally, select social media channels are dependent on the target audience to be reached and content which the company wants to send, such as choosing Facebook to promote company rewards to boost the "like" following, or choosing blog forums to introduce new products that they offer in the e-commerce websites (Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene, 2013). Furthermore, Badea (2014) mentioned that online communication strategy has to assign four main topics: 1) setting goals—short, medium, and long-term; 2) choosing the mix of communication—what networks are appropriate and why; 3) what will be the frequency of communication—work policy building, making the editorial plan, and implementing it; and 4) continuous monitoring. Although both perspectives study dissimilar points of strategic communication plans, these points potentially suggest the beginning of a marketing practitioner.

Moreover, customer communication channel focus gives more opportunity to regulate, and more choice that is a variety of content messages and enable feedback that communicates for each experience of goods and service consumption (Cray, 2012). Based on the above, the literature points out that a communication channel by social media tools is more likely to enhance firms to accomplish good cost utilization (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015; Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013), marketing operation optimization (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014), higher

customer satisfaction (Eagleman, 2013), and marketing performance. Hence, the first set of proposition is as follows:

> *P1:    Customer communication channel focus has a positive influence on a) marketing operation excellence, b) cost utilization effectiveness, c) customer satisfaction increase, and d) marketing performance.*

## Product diversity presentation awareness

Product diversity presentation awareness refers to the firm's attempt to meet customers' demands and distribution by a variety of goods and services, and assembling of different products' information via a social media platform.  Different products can be based on features, packaging, design, and brand image (Frambach, Prabhu & Verhallen, 2003).   Product presentation can have both vividness and interactivity that influence good feelings in consumers' perceptions (Jiang & Benbasat, 2007).  The vividness is a design cover in the form of color, product image, animation, liveliness and excitation to the senses.  It has also been disclosed that the more appearances of interesting vividness demonstrated in various products, the higher rate of purchase intention (Song & Kim, 2012).  Providing detailed product information is required for the success of e-commerce business (Jiang & Benbasat, 2007). Previously, e-commerce websites mostly employed text and pictures to illustrate product information (Lightner & Eastman, 2002) for all items available in their store.  The product diversity in an e-commerce environment can be presented by various media and information (Jahng, Jain & Ramamurthy, 2002).  Thus, product diversity in this context means a different mix or volume of products and services including physical size, complexity, and batch size (Miller, 1996).

Accordingly, Park (2002) suggested three essential aspects in online product presentations for success in online selling: Images of the product have to have the closest representation of the physical product, display related or similar products, and show various angles of the image—back, front, left, and right views. Predominantly, with a lot of products or services that e-commerce firms attempt to offer to their customers, management of product presentation is required. As a result of this reason, this paper is concerned with a product diversity presentation awareness concept.  Interestingly, one important point to promote product variety in an online presentation, that is, product coordination, is also call "mix-and-match."  It accommodates up-selling and cross-selling that are of key importance to customer relationship management and archives marketing profitability (Bolton, Lemon & Verhoef, 2004).  When products are displayed as coordinated, it fetches complementary information to facilitate the consumer's decision-making (Yoo & Kim, 2012).  For instance, a computer notebook is offered to coordinate with a printer rather than presented alone. When two or more products are displayed as coordinated offerings, consumers evaluate those products with an overall impression derived from product pairing.

Based on the aforementioned literature review, product diversity presentation awareness plays an important role in the good perception of online consumers, as well as the marketer's intelligence integrated with other related products offered to their customers.  Thus, product diversity presentation awareness is more likely to encourage firms to accomplish their cost utilization effectiveness, marketing operation excellence, customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance. Hence, the proposition is elaborated as follows:

P2:        *Product diversity presentation awareness has a positive influence on a) marketing operation excellence, b) cost utilization effectiveness, c) customer satisfaction increase, and d) marketing performance.*

## Proactive competitor learning capability

Proactive competitor learning capability refers to ability of the firm in scanning, monitoring and analyzing the competitive environment continuously in order to forecast; evaluate the competitive situation; and access information about the company profile, marketing activity, strategies, or conventions of competitors with social media implementation (Ma, Pant & Sheng, 2011). Organizational learning is divided into two categories, external and internal learning. Competitor learning is a part of external learning. Organizational learning of the firm provides the necessary business competency to accomplish a sustainable competitive advantage (Bierly & Hämäläinen, 1995). Competitor learning is one source factor of competitive advantage and advocates successful innovation, when they learn from the invention of their competitors (Lopez, Peon & Ordas, 2005). Likewise, Bierly & Hämäläinen (1995) described that new innovation is often quickly copied by competitors, due to limitations of the innovators' competitive advantage. Continuous, external learning enables the firm to build and sustain competitive advantage (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). Also, external learning routines will enhance the transforming of operations to external environment conditions (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

Accordingly, Leaf (1978) suggested three aspects to learn a competitor's performance which are: a competitor's product, cost and delivery, and sales and service. Firstly, a competitor's product, and knowing the product characteristics of a competitor, is a key to posit strategy. It might have a concern for repositioning product planning in the market. Secondly, a firm wants to know the cost and delivery processes of its competitor. The firm has to take its competitor's products and find out how they are made, cost, and the delivery process. Finally, competitors learn about how to sell and use service methods to make for more sales effectiveness. Therefore, the ability of the firm which emphasizes competitor learning is more likely to reduce the cost of marketing research, improve their marketing operations to the optimization, build customer satisfaction, and marketing performance success. Similarly, He, Zha & Li (2013) stated that the success of a company should be in the ability to analyze all rich information— the product price of a market and competitor, a review of product and service, and a customer's opinion to determine what has happened, and predict what will happen in the future, both in short-term and long-term periods. Moreover, the firm not only needs to have processing information capability but also needs to create new knowledge faster than their competitor (Huang & Wang, 2011).

Presently, much user-generated content is freely available on social media technology. To archive competitive situations and evaluate the competitive environment of the firm, a business requires monitoring and analyzing both the customer content on their social media site and the textual information on their competitor social media site as well (He, Zha & Li, 2013). Particularly, the textual data of social media tools that are created from both customer content sites and competitor content sites are important to not only discovering and detecting new knowledge—favoring brand, popular product trends, and patterns of interest—but also a comprehension of how their competitors are acting. As a result, any textual data from social media can be analyzed in-depth that is related to the know-how of a competitor in a competitive environment (Governator & Lannella, 2011). Therefore, the businesses have to learn new

technology and new managerial practices which the competitor employs (Bierly & Hämäläinen, 1995).

Based on the literature review, proactive competitor learning capability is more likely to enhance firms to archive their cost utilization effectiveness, marketing operation excellence, customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance. Thus, the proposition is elaborated as follows:

> *P3:     Proactive competitor learning capability has a positive influence on a) marketing operation excellence, b) cost utilization effectiveness, c) customer satisfaction increase, and d) marketing performance.*

## Market response timeliness orientation

Smart marketing managers must utilize knowledge to think about and find out how a market will respond to retain customers and interrupt their competitors (Day, 1992). Previously, marketing scholars had defined market responsive orientation as the establishing, allocation, and use of market information relevant to the current customers and product domain; and it focuses on expressed customer needs (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). There are a few reasons why firms have to focus on current customers and expressed needs; that is, they are more likely to reduce errors in problem-solving, make accurate predictable trends, and make use of decreased complexity in the product development process to sustain their current market (Atuahene-Gima, Slater, and Olson, 2005). Possibly, in order to develop market response, firms are able to deploy market surveys or questionnaires on social media platforms to assess customer insight and satisfaction levels. As a result, based on recording feedback and analyzing consumer trends, they focus on improving products and service that are suggested by consumer discussion (Wang et al., 2013). Responsive market orientation is not only looking to customers as "leading" the firm into developing new products or service offerings to satisfy existing needs, but also meeting immediate market needs, in order to speed up time-to-market (Lamore, Berkowitz & Farrington, 2013).

Therefore, this paper defines market response timeliness orientation as the ability of the firm, in social media utilization of discovering, understanding, and satisfying expressed customer needs, both for the present and future audience, in suitable time (Narver, Slater & Maclachlan, 2004; Bodlaj et al., 2012). It is important to react timely to shopper needs and expand new markets earlier than one's competitors (Lee, 2010). Especially, social media is instrumental for helping to gather information for both existing current customers and their prospects. According to the work by Patino, Pitta & Quinones (2012) it was demonstrated that new instruments help marketers in marketing research by using social media. That means it can be used instead of traditional market research methods such as telephony or even email. Marketing researchers employ social media in several practices, including: 1) pattern recognition, 2) consumer panels, 3) social networks, 4) market research online communities (MROC), 5) listening platforms, and 6) geo-tagging.

These patterns can be elaborated as follows: Firstly, pattern recognition is public opinion that can be obtained from aggregating searches and online mentions. Secondly, consumer panels are assigned an internet chat room with product and service questions. For some consumers, webcams are installed on their computer, by which the firms can engage with the panel member by using Skype or other communication software to research markets comfortably. Thirdly,

although social networks are live communications that are restricted to control by market researchers, there are advantages when marketers adapt suitable ways. A social network site like Facebook is able not only to create a brand or fan page, but also offer surveys for target groups. Twitter is able to be employed in research as an online listening tool. In addition, a social network can be both a focus group and used for in-depth interviewing.  Fourthly, MROCs are enrolling members for interest and special study as closed communities with longer time research than for consumer panels. Fifth, listening platforms are bulletin boards, blogs, or review sites.  The consumers just mention product and service, while market research is a rich source of any comment for comprehending essential trends and thoughts—of either attitude or thoughts. Finally, a geo-tagging service like Foursquare application both enables and provides a helpful record of visits to booths at tradeshows (Patino, Pitta & Quinones, 2012). Therefore, these new solution benefits are a part of market response that encourage over their competitors and are responsive quickly, in a suitable time, before the consumer trend has changed.

Collectively, these discussions are interesting for market response by using social media platforms that are beneficial to marketing research. The effect saves cost to the operation for real-time data recording, and satisfies their customer. Hereby, market response timeliness orientation is at a higher level, and more likely to supplement firms to archive their cost utilization effectiveness, marketing operation excellence, customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance. Thus, the proposition is assigned as follows:

> P4:    *Market response timeliness orientation has a positive influence on a) marketing operation excellence, b) cost utilization effectiveness, c) customer satisfaction increase, and d) marketing performance.*

## Marketing operation excellence

Marketing operation excellence in this paper refers to the integration of a complicated set of marketing practices to enhance its marketing outcome through the most improved efficiency in a flexible delivery process, quick service response, and low cost of operation (Yu, Ramanathan & Nath, 2014).  It can be viewed as the proportion of quantity in a marketing outcome and quantity of marketing resources input that are deployed in marketing strategy implementation (Kalaignanam, Kushwaha & Varadarajan, 2008).  Actually, marketing operation concern can help firms be successful in superior performance; not only by performing in their organization but also by collaborating with external organizations.

The internet has been a constitutive core of the marketing operations of businesses (Kalaignanam, Kushwaha & Varadarajan, 2008). Importantly, marketing operation has been focusing on minimal operational cost, flexibility improvement, and distribution of delivery with a high quality of products and service (Tan, Kannan & Narasimhan, 2007).  Although many businesses attempt to operate their business to enhance customer satisfaction and profitability (Piercy, 2010a), there are some businesses that fail in marketing operations, because they only focused on the front-end of operations, such as devoting themselves to website design and advertising for sales growth regardless of how to deliver products and services to customers.  As a result, unsuccessful customer service, lost customer retention, and poor profitability occurs (Dholakia, 2005). Therefore, Chopra, Lovejoy & Yano (2004) highlighted that the best marketing operation has excellence in design, and information on what will fulfill customer demand that is required to improve marketing processes to support their need.  Similarly, if the

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marketer has rich customer needs information, then the products and services are able to be delivered and lead to customer satisfaction (Piercy, 2010b).

Specifically, some businesses separate responsibility functions from the marketing and operation department to identify individual duties. Eventually, both functions need to work together. For example, the work by Tang (2010) concluded that marketing is an externally-focused function area to monitor either consumer trends or a competitive environment. It also implements a marketing plan to increase the marketing outcome. In contrast, an operation with internally-focused functions has a responsibility to specify how to utilize resources to deliver complete effective marketing plans. Therefore, both marketing and operations require co-existence by which the firm can act on the right thing, performing by the standards of the marketing department, do the thing right, and perform by the standards of the operations department. Indeed, firms have striven to explore, and have developed best practices as a device for benchmarking that can officially improve the marketing organization's performance through optimization of marketing processes, tools and database marketing (Larissa, 2012).

The linkage of literature reviews are drawn by the relationship between marketing operation excellence on cost utilization effectiveness, customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance. Hence, the proposition is proposed as follows:

> *P5:      Marketing operation excellence has a positive influence on a) cost utilization effectiveness, b) customer satisfaction increase, and c) marketing performance.*

## Cost utilization effectiveness

Cost utilization effectiveness refers to the minimizing of marketing cost management that emerges from applying new social media marketing rather than conventional marketing forms. The firm can also reduce its cost to advertising, promoting, and announcing marketing activity to its customers, which leads to optimizing the business process and the success of budget management (Schniederjans, Cao & Schniederjans, 2013). Essentially, the firms need to either increase or reduce their operational costs by managing the utilization of insufficient resources. Also, these firms show effort moving from traditional marketing practices— newspapers, radio, magazines, television advertising— towards more saving expenditures and social media marketing engagement (Tariq & Wahid, 2011).

The low-cost of internet access has opened up opportunities for the firm to deal directly with millions of customers (Palmer & Koening-Lewis, 2009). Obviously, social media marketing is an online marketing tool that is based on absolute internet infrastructure. It builds new challenges for marketers, advertisers, strategists, and companies (Tariq & Wahid, 2011). When a social media is deployed for a business, it is a buzz conversation that calls out the brand name. The firms are able to save time for data collection feedback, and it is also an attempt to resolve their customer responses. These practices are cost-effective methods in marketing activities (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

The cost utilization of conventional forms of marketing or traditional marketing is more costly over social media marketing, due to the social media platform being free of cost to create a company fan page on Facebook, upload a video to YouTube or even post on blogging sites. It can be alternatively mentioned that the use of social media is high volume, but low expense. Conversely, conventional marketing is low volume, but high expense. For example, YouTube can be better at content presentation to understand stories, rather than other approaches (Pace, 2008). YouTube is the best way to test the ideas of a company that will offer new products and

services, and it is more cost-effective than ever before. YouTube can offer visitor rate-checking, sharing and discussing. Recently, one qualitative research from six organizations which used social media indicated that most organizational identical answers had been a cost reduction in terms of advertising and the customer service aspect. Moreover, the senior manager interviewed stated that they used cross-media campaigns. Originally, they advertised on a social media channel that the firm utilized via hard copy print advertisement; namely "offline media or traditional media," in order to drive more traffic to their social media site (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015). In the same vein, when there was either an offline event or marketing activity, they promoted it via a social media page, and even mixed them together. These methods can reach a large audience as well as have minimal cost to business operations.

Obviously, cost utilization effectiveness can be obtained from social media practices. Likewise, Tariq & Wahid (2011) noted that an aspect of social media benefit is applicable in customer care service on the social media platform. It is more effective in responding to customer complaints than a telephone call center. The firm can lower costs for staff payment and other facilitative resources. Moreover, during interaction with customers on their social media site, various problems are recorded and many problems are resolved in conversation. Thus, a social media site is a "best instrument" for generating new ideas, know-how, and source of consumer behavior learning.

However, based on the literature review, cost utilization effectiveness might be obtained from social media marketing usage. Subsequently, the firm that can control cost utilization will show minimal sales cost and increased profitability. Ultimately, when the level of cost utilization effectives is high, the more likely will be a positive influence on marketing performance. Therefore, the proposition is posited as follows:

> *P6:        Cost utilization effectiveness has a positive influence on marketing performance.*

## Customer satisfaction increase

Customer satisfaction increase refers to the augment of the feeling level of gratification acquired from marketing service, the underlying positive consumption experience, excitement, bringing novelty, and surprising service quality to serve customers (Khan & Fasih, 2014). It is important that the customer satisfaction feeling can be incurred from both utilitarian and hedonic benefits. Utilitarian benefits are related to functional properties, whereas hedonic benefits are related to emotional characteristics and experiential sensation (Batra & Athola, 1990). Generally, the more customer satisfaction, the more likely there will be a repurchase in the future, leading to promotion by positive word-of-mouth (WOM) that is highly believable (Tripathi, 2014).

The satisfying of customers' needs and wants is a key cause of successful customer satisfaction of the firm (LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983). Statistically, customer satisfaction identifies that a very satisfied customer is nearly six more times led to repurchase, or recommend their positive experience in a product or service, more than a just obtaining a satisfied customer. In contrast, only four percent of dissatisfied customers will complain to the company. Indeed, the customer that had a problem with consumption of their product and service will ultimately pass it on by word of mouth to nine other people. The satisfied customers will inform five other people about their positive experience about their consumption (Flott, 2002). On the other hand, only the satisfaction of product and service aspects would not assure that a consumer may continue to remain with the product or service (Tripathi, 2014).

In the company's aspect, a customer satisfaction trend can be evaluated by monitoring positive and negative comments or reviewing the company's brand by social media monitoring tools. Indeed, a content analysis of negative comments is a likely approach to the analysis of customer complaints. Also, monitoring a competitor's brand together with one's own, provides a competitive strategy for strengths and weaknesses in the trading market. As a result, social media monitoring can help a firm to identify emerging interest issues and trends that affect the industry (Mitchel, 2010). This information of customer trends along with customer's needs and wants, quickly leads to new product development that directly support their customer. For example, Pepsi's Mountain Dew makes practical use of the social media to incur new ideas for supporting decision-making for new product development. A fan page of the brand has input for new flavors, colors, and name packaging design from consumer engagement to come up with promotion ideas, product style, and target groups (Holay, 2011). All these are excellent approaches. Therefore, customer satisfaction can be obtained from this issue, due to the firm providing the new product or service that is beyond customer expectation.

However, customer satisfaction increase can be obtained from the customer service of the firm that provides either a higher level of satisfaction or exceeds expectation, which leads to superior marketing outcomes. Therefore, the proposition is posited as follows:

> *P7:        Customer satisfaction increase has a positive influence on marketing performance.*

## Marketing performance

Marketing performance has been used to measure the perceived impact of electronic marketing adoption for marketing success (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). According to O'Sullivan and Abela (2007), it is noted that marketing performance can be divided into three research themes: measurement of marketing productivity, identification of metrics in use, and measurement of brand equity. However, this paper defines marketing performance as the outcome of social media marketing strategy that can be both a financial and a nonfinancial measurement. The financial aspect can be assessed from sales growth, net profit, and reduction of sales costs (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Nevertheless, nonfinancial measurements can be evaluated with the level of satisfaction from an executive, manager or stakeholder (O'Sullivan & Abela, 2007).

## CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

### Contributions

This paper provides useful contributions and implications to researchers, marketing managers, information technology managers, and top managers regarding available social media application in organizations. Social media marketing is a new challenge in the performance of a firm that is relevant to marketing operations in product and service, information management, novel ideas through applications of social media, which rise to traditional marketing fulfilment. Therefore, currently, social media marketing is a part of a strategy that business should emphasize, due to most customers participating with social media platforms. Social media is a marketing tool of a marketing mix that comprises a known promotion strategy, which underlies the 4Ps (Tariq & Wahid, 2011).

Likewise, Mangold & Faulds (2009) stated that social media is a part of a promotion mix because it is a component of conventional integrated marketing communication (IMC) tools of which there are two relevant promotional roles in the marketplace. Firstly, social media provides businesses both a dialog and a meeting place with their customers. Secondly, it provides customers an opportunity to discuss with one another by which that marketer cannot control the message. The smart marketer should follow any comment or conversation about a specific brand and company, competitors, and industry as much as possible, in order to identify what is the business's goal, target audience; and it should apply social media marketing strategy to marketing outcome success. Therefore, social media marketing strategy is an interesting issue that is able to serve the organization for supplementing marketing performance in the digital generation.

**Suggestions for future research**

This conceptual framework investigates the relationship between social media marketing strategy and marketing outcome that one knows as its consequence. In order to absolutely implement the conceptual framework of social media marketing strategy, some environment constructs are required for continuous exploring such as antecedents, moderators, or even control variables. For the empirical research idea, this study proposes that Thai e-commerce firms should be most appropriately evident in this conceptual framework. Due to the situation of Thai e-commerce having more growth and high competition, as well as an evolution of 3G technology, it has provided an expanded e-commerce to the mobile commerce era and also Thai e-commerce firms expected a growth of 39.7 to 47.5 percent from the year 2012 (Kasikorn Research Center, 2013).

Therefore, future research is required to verify, expand, and examine a hypothesis with empirical data in Thai e-commerce firms, due to the social media user that has high, continuous growth. Specifically, the statistics of social media populations and user behavior in Thailand found that Thailand ranked ninth place in the overall Facebook population of 28 million users, Twitter at 4.5 million users, Instagram at 1.7 million users, and YouTube at 2.9 million video clips (Zocial Inc., 2014). Therefore, the higher growth rate of social media is conducive to the business challenge of marketing strategy, which seeks and retains customers in this online world.

## CONCLUSION

Nowadays, internet technology has been rapidly and continuously growing and developing. Especially, social media is occurred with internet technology that has an effect on the business environment such as in business process, marketing tools, organization culture, or even consumer behavior. The business has to find out to quickly react to both their customer and competitor in the digital era. Therefore, a new strategic approach such as social media marketing strategy is very interesting to fit with business operation.

This paper intends to provide an obvious understanding of relationships between social media marketing strategy and marketing outcomes. Moreover, this paper focuses on four dimensions of social media marketing strategy; namely, customer communication channel focus, product diversity presentation awareness, proactive competitor learning capability, and market response timeliness orientation. Also proposed, is its consequence that will have an effect on the marketing outcome; namely, cost utilization effectiveness, marketing operation excellence,

customer satisfaction increase, and marketing performance. However, future research requires investigating their antecedents, moderators, and control variables.

On the whole, although based on the literature review that all positively relationship purpose between each dimension of social media marketing strategy and it consequents, the empirical research at the firm level that one knows as a unit of analysis is require to examine it as soon as possible.

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