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Social Media Metrics Importance and Usage Frequency in Latvia

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Abstract

Purpose of the article: The purpose of this paper was to explore which social media marketing metrics are most often used and are most important for marketing experts in Latvia and can be used to evaluate marketing campaign effectiveness.
Methodology/methods: In order to achieve the aim of this paper several theoretical and practical research methods were used, such as theoretical literature analysis, surveying and grouping. First of all, theoretical research about social media metrics was conducted. Authors collected information about social media metric grouping methods and the most frequently mentioned social media metrics in the literature. The collected information was used as the foundation for the expert surveys. The expert surveys were used to collect information from Latvian marketing professionals to determine which social media metrics are used most often and which social media metrics are most important in Latvia.
Scientific aim: The scientific aim of this paper was to identify if social media metrics importance varies depending on the consumer purchase decision stage.
Findings: Information about the most important and most often used social media marketing metrics in Latvia was collected. A new social media grouping framework is proposed.
Conclusions: The main conclusion is that the importance and the usage frequency of the social media metrics is changing depending of consumer purchase decisions stage the metric is used to evaluate.

Keywords: social media, social media metrics, social media frameworks, social media metrics importance, Latvia

JEL Classification: M31, M37

Introduction

Nowadays there are new social media tools appearing in the market every year, while the existing social media tools expand their range of services. In 2015 following new marketing tools have appeared in the market: Heard, Frilp, Whisper, Space tag and others. Due to new social media tools, new metrics that can measure the effectiveness of social media tools are becoming necessary. For example, with the social tool Space tag entering the market there has been a need for a social media metric that could measure the amount of users that have photographed the same room or place. Also this social media tool requires a metric that could measure the amount of comments left in the same place. In these past several years also Twitter has evolved. Users of Twitter have more communication options and tools than ever before. For example, from 2013 Twitter users can share not only text messages, but also attach photos, videos and location to their messages location (Twitter, Inc., 2016). In 2014 Twitter also added some new features, such as the option to add up to 4 images to their tweets.

There have been observations made by many studies that the amount of social media users has been increasing in the last several years. In 2013 Facebook users were 67% of all internet users that were older than 18 years. In 2014 the amount of Facebook users increased to 71% of all internet users that are older than 18 years. The increase in social media users is observed also in other social media networks, such as: LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter (Duggan *et al.*, 2015 and Statista, 2016).

There have been conducted researches about social media metrics from different perspectives. For example, social media metrics have been analysed depending on the channel they belong to. From this kind of perspective we can divide the metrics in three groups: 1. Social media sites; 2. Blogs; 3. widgets and social media applications (Fisher, 2009).

Research about how social media metrics displayed alongside online news stories is shaping users' perception of the content has been conducted (Stavrositu *et al.*, 2014).

Social media metrics have been analysed in different industries while concentrating on a specific social media tool. As for example Neiger conducted a research that analysed how to attract new customers in health industry while using only Twitter (Neiger *et al.*, 2013). And many other social media studies have been conducted, but here have not been conducted any researches that has analysed social media metric importance and usage frequency based on purchase decision process model while taking into account that social media metrics importance or usage frequency could be affected by the social media group that the social media metric belongs to. This kind of study could help marketers get more precise results from their social media activities, because they would be able to determine which social media metrics are more or less important in certain situation. This framework will help marketers divide social media metrics into groups based on social media channel and consumer purchase decision stage.

The research purpose was to determine which are the most important and the most frequently used social media metrics in Latvia. And determine if the importance and usage frequency of social media metrics can change depending on the consumer purchase decision process stage the metric is used to evaluate and depending on social media channel the metrics is used to evaluate. And to determine if the importance of a social media metric changes depending on the social media group it is used to evaluate.

1. Theoretical background and methodology of the research

Theoretical background. While conducting the theoretical literature analysis authors came across studies that analysed social

media metric importance in different companies, these studies showed that the importance of the metrics can change depending on the company. Also, these studies showed that just because the company believed that the metrics are important that did not mean that the company will use them (Shevlin, Desmares, 2010). The number of the most important social media metrics differed in various articles, but most of the authors mentioned from 5 till 10 main social media metrics (Agius, 2015 and Davis, 2012). Analysing social media metrics role in online news evaluation, author discovered, that the metrics that were used to evaluate online news were different than in other industries (Chung, 2017). Based on the previous mentioned studies and that there are some many factors that can influence social media metric importance and usage frequency, authors believe that the importance of the social media metrics and usage frequency can also be influenced by consumer purchase decision process stage the metrics is meant to analyse and social media group the metrics is from. Also, the most important social media metrics must be determined.

Methodology approach. To achieve the purpose of the paper following research questions were raised: 1. Which social media metrics are used most frequently and are most important for marketing experts in Latvia; 2. Is the importance of social media metrics influenced by purchase decision process stages and the social media channels; 3. Does the importance of a metric changes depending on the social media group the metric is used to evaluate?

To achieve the aim of the paper and answer the research questions several research methods were used: 1. Theoretical literature analysis; 2. Expert survey; 3. Grouping. With help of theoretical literature analysis, data about most often used social media metrics and their grouping methods was summarised and the research gap was identified. The collected information about social media metrics was used as the basis for the expert survey. The expert survey was used to collect data from experts about most often used and most important social media metrics.

The first method used in this research was theoretical literature analysis. To find relevant literature number of keywords were selected such as social media metrics, social media grouping, social media metric frameworks, social media metrics importance and social media frameworks journal. These keywords were used to find literature in following databases: ScienceDirect, Web of Science, SAGE, Emerald and Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus. These databases were selected of their high quality articles. When information resources were found, following criteria were used to select them: 1. Is the information resource published in a scientific journal; 2. What is the author of the information source; 3. What is the publication date; 4. What kind of institution the author represents? 5. How relevant is the topic to the research? Authors then selected more than sixty information sources. With help of theoretical literature analysis, data about most often used social media metrics and their grouping methods were summarised and the research gap was identified. The collected information about social media metrics was used as the basis for the expert survey. The findings from the social media theory research are further described in section 2.

The second method used in this research was expert survey. Expert survey took a qualitative research approach because authors used as respondents experts, the surveys had also open ended questions. The expert survey as a research method was chosen because qualitative research methods can obtain more extensive results than quantitative research methods (Taylor, Bogdan, 1998). The expert survey was used to collect data from experts about most often used and most important social media metrics in Latvia. 28 in-house marketing experts from Latvia were selected for this research. The experts

Table 1. Demographic information of the Experts.

Age Range	Type of Business	Position	Experience
Between 28 – 50 years	Manufacturing, IT outsourcing, Advertising, Telecomunications, Retail, Heat engineering, Consultation, Accounting	Marketing specialists, Online marketing speciliasts, Marketing mangers, Marketing directors	5–17 years

Source: Author's collected data from expert survey.

were selected based on the following criteria: 1. Years of experience in the marketing field; 2. Type of business they are in; 3. Age of the expert; 4. Position.

The demographic information about the marketing experts is summarised in Table 1. The marketing expert survey was sent through email to the online marketing specialists, marketing directors, marketing managers and specialists.

The experts were gathered from different industrial sectors (*e.g.* retail, marketing, advertising, accounting *etc.*). The companies that experts worked varied in terms of employee numbers from 1 to 250, with a turnover below 50 million Euros, in line the EU definition of small and medium enterprises (European Commission, 2003). The surveys were sent out to 30 returned with 27 being fully completed. One expert was excluded from the sample because he did not fully answer all the questions.

The survey consisted of two parts, and included social media evaluation metrics grouped based on the social media channel and the mentioned frequency in the theoretical literature that author reviewed. In the first part experts had to appraise the importance of the metrics in scale from 0 to 10 as 0 being not important and 10 very important. And in the second part appraise the usage frequency in the same scale but as 0 being hardly used and 10 used very often. The survey had also open ended questions were experts could add other social media metrics and leave comments for the authors. The experts proposed also other social media metrics such as: comments left in certain location and number of users who have left a comment in certain location, but because these metrics were not frequently mentioned in the literature that the authors analysed and are specific to special social media tools, authors chose to left them out of the framework. The experts had also the chance to leave a comment after the survey.

The third method used in this research was grouping. When the results of the survey were collected, the results were grouped based on the following criteria: 1. Which social media metrics are the most important in all purchase decision process stages; 2. Which

Table 2. Research mapping.

Research Question	Objective of the Study	Method	Result
Which social media metrics are used most frequently and are most important for marketing experts in Latvia; Is the importance of social media metrics influenced by purchase decision process stages and the social media channels?	Determine which social media metrics are most frequently used and which metrics are most important for marketing experts in Latvia.	Theoretical literature analysis and expert surveying.	The most often used and most important social media metrics in Latvia were determined. New social media grouping method was proposed. The research results confirmed that social media metric importance changes depending on the consumer purchase decision process stage and social media channel.

Source: Authors developed mapping.

social media metrics are most frequently used in all purchase decision stages. Grouping was also used to determine with theoretical literature resources to use in the theoretical literature analysis. To group the data, proposed social media framework was used.

Research framework. To ensure that the objective of the study will be achieved the research question, research objective, the research methods and results were formulated and presented in Table 2.

Based on the research mapping a research framework was developed. The research framework consists of two phases. The phases were linked together by the theory that was used, the research results and by the research objective. The first phase includes theoretical literature analysis. This phase resulted in the identification of the following results: 1. Research gap; 2. Most often mentioned social media metrics in theoretical literature; 3. New social media grouping framework was proposed. The second phase was an expert survey and most important and most frequently used social media metrics in practice in Latvia were established. The research framework is displayed in Figure 1.

2. Social media metric framework

While conducting the social media metric theory analysis, authors analyzed more than sixty different information resources. The theory analysis was used as the basis for the social media framework with is proposed in Table 3. Authors will only discuss eleven of the social media framework resources that were used to create the proposed social media framework, because: 1. These resources show very different approaches how social media metrics can be divided; 2. These methods also show that social media metrics should be divided according to different social media channels; 3. Pangaro P. proposed framework shows that social media metrics can also be grouped using similar frameworks to consumer purchase decision process; 4. The frameworks showed also that the same metrics can be used to evaluate different social media channels.

Here are some of the different approaches how to categorize social media metrics. Bagnall R. offers social media metrics to divide in following groups: 1. Program metrics. These metrics are directly tied to your campaign

Figure 1. Research framework. Source: Authors developed framework.

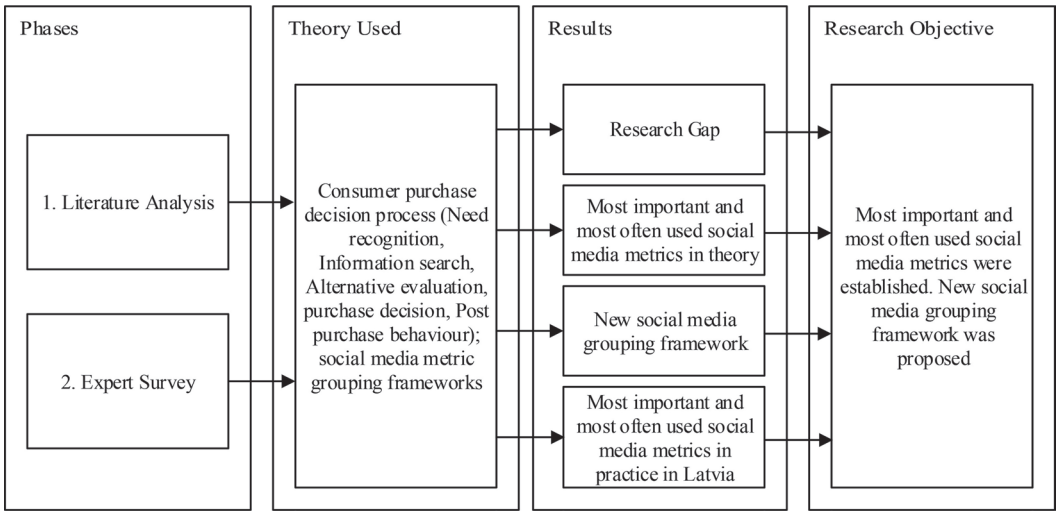

Table 3. Expert survey results.

		Customer purchase decision process									
		Need recognition		Information search		Alternative evaluation		Purchase decision		Post purchase behaviour	
		Importance	Usage frequency	Importance	Usage frequency	Importance	Usage frequency	Importance	Usage frequency	Importance	Usage frequency
Social networks	Page views	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Discussions	9	7	9	8	9	8	9	9	9	8
	Comments	8	8	9	7	9	8	9	9	5	5
	Interactions	7	7	8	7	8	8	8	7	8	8
	Active users	8	7	9	8	5	5	9	8	5	5
	Likes	8	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	5	5
	Reviews	8	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
Micromedia	Followers	8	8	9	7	9	8	9	8	9	9
	Impressions	9	7	8	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Mentions	8	7	9	7	9	8	8	7	9	8
	Retweets	8	7	9	8	9	8	8	7	8	7
	Amplification	8	7	9	8	8	8	8	7	8	7
	Reach	7	6	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Updates	8	7	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
Blogs	Engagement	9	8	9	8	9	9	9	9	9	8
	Views	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	9	9	8
	Comments	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Time spent on site	9	7	8	8	9	8	8	8	6	5
	Subscribers	9	8	7	7	6	6	7	7	9	9
	Shares	8	7	9	8	9	8	9	8	5	5
	Bounce rate	6	5	7	6	7	6	8	7	9	8
Media sharing	Favourites	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Comments	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Views	9	9	9	8	9	9	9	8	9	8
	Followers	8	7	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	9
	Visits	9	8	9	8	9	8	8	8	9	8
	Downloads	8	7	8	7	7	6	6	5	8	8
	Dislikes	7	7	8	7	9	8	9	8	9	8
Widgets and social media applications	Comments	8	8	9	8	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Time in app	9	8	8	8	8	8	6	5	9	8
	Retention	8	8	8	8	8	7	6	5	9	8
	Session interval	8	8	8	8	7	7	6	5	9	8
	Users	8	8	9	8	6	5	6	6	5	5
	Installs	5	5	6	6	9	8	9	8	9	8
	Session length	8	8	8	7	8	7	6	5	9	8

Source: Author's collected data from expert survey.

objectives or program; 2. Channel metrics. Metrics that are unique to specific social media channels – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, LinkedIn, *etc.*; 3. Business metrics. Metrics that are designed to measure the impact of the campaign or initiative (Bagnall, 2014).

Murdough C. proposes to divide social media metrics based on the objective and the goal of the campaign. In his approach the marketer first of all must determine the goal of the campaign, then based on the goal marketer proposes objectives, and based on the objectives marketer proposes which metrics he should analyse (Murdough, 2009).

Pangaro P. *et al.* offers us to divide social media metrics in 5 groups while using CLEAT-framework. The author divides social media metrics into following groups: 1. Context group; 2. Language group; 3. Exchange group; 4. Agreement group; 5. Transaction group. Next each of these groups are divided into following subgroups: 1. Primary metrics: consumer actions; 2. Secondary metrics: outcome (new & historical); 3. Supporting metrics: group statistics (Pangaro, Wenzek, 2014).

Stephanie M. offers following social media metric grouping method, the author suggests that the social media metrics should be divided into following groups: 1. Community health group. This group is divided in following four subgroups: 1.1. Engagement; 1.2 Customer satisfaction; 1.3. Social content mobility; 2. Market perception group. This group is divided in following subgroups: 2.1. Thought leadership; 2.2. Message resonance; 2.3. Market awareness; 2.4. Market position; 3. Quantitative group. This group is divided into: 3.1. Leads/sales/market share; 3.2. Efficiency of communications (Marx, 2010).

Peters proposes to divide social media metrics based on following theories: MOA-paradigm; network theory; interactionist social theory; attribution theory. And using following elements: motives; content; network structure; social roles and interactions (Peters, 2013).

Murdough C. offers to divide the social media metrics based on the social media campaign aim: First group is named "Deepen relationship with customers". In this group following metrics are included: numbers of advocates and numbers of comments posted; The second groups name is "Learn from the community". Following metrics belong to this group: rank of topics discussed; decipher of positive and negative sentiments; The third groups name is "Drive purchase intent". Following metrics are in this group: leads to ecommerce partners; retail locater results activity and product brochure downloads (Murdough, 2009).

Kaushik A. proposes to use social media metrics in a following way: Divide them into groups according to their type or name; then further divide these groups using following metrics: conversation rate; amplification rate; applause rate and economic value (Kaushik, 2011).

Elliott N. offers us to look at social media metrics from following perspective: The first group is digital, this group is divided in smaller groups such as: 1.1. Social opportunity group. Following social media metrics belong to this group: fans, members, visitors, readers, friends and followers; 1.2. Social health group, this group includes following social media metrics: posts, comments and sentiment; The second main group is brand group, this group is divided into following subgroups: 2.1. Branding group, following social media metrics are included in this group: awareness, brand attributes, purchase intent; 2.2. Product trial group, following metrics belong to this group: lead generation, coupon redemption and sampling; Third main group is financial group. Following metrics belong in this group: conversions, revenue and lifetime value (Elliott, 2011).

Bartholomew D. proposed the metrics divide into following five main groups: exposure, engagement, influence, impact and advocacy. And these five groups divide into following four subgroups: paid, owned, shared and earned (Bartholomew, 2014).

While conducting the theoretical research authors came to the idea if some of the researches indicate that the social media tools can influence different consumer purchase decision stages differently (Shantanu *et al.*, 2014), then also social media metrics can be less and more important when evaluating consumer purchase decision process in certain stages. Also author came across different social media channel grouping methods (Bagnall, 2014) and decided to propose their own social media channel grouping method dividing social media channels into following groups. social networks, micromedia, blogs, media sharing and widgets and social media applications. This kind of a grouping framework allows to divide social media metrics into five easy understandable groups.

Authors proposed social media framework is based on suggestion that social media metrics can be less or more important in different consumer purchase decision stages and on the proposal to divide social media metrics into five groups: social networks; micromedia; blogs; media sharing; widgets and social media applications. The proposed framework is presented in Table 3. This kind of approach based on authors opinion could provide marketers with more precise data about social media metrics importance when evaluating social media return depending on the consumer purchase decision process the social media metric was used to evaluate.

Based from the theoretical research authors proposed to put in the social networks group following metrics: users, active users, fans, page views, tab views, updates, check-ins, likes, interactions, comments, discussions, reviews, posts, referrals, feedback, and impressions. In the group micromedia: followers, new followers, unfollows, updates, mentions, retweets, reach, impressions, amplification, velocity, impact, influence, lists, engagement, share of voice, sentiment, keywords, resonance. In the group blogs: posts, comments, views, time spent, bounce rate, engagement, votes, shares, likes, bookmarks, subscribers, trackbacks, referrals, conversions. In the group media sharing: visits, views, followers, uploads, downloads, likes, dislikes, comments, favorites, trackbacks, shares, embeds, video plays, audio plays, photo views, video uploads, audio uploads, photo uploads. And in the group widgets and social media applications: installs, downloads, users, sessional interval, time in app, retention, session length, comments.

3. Social media metric usage frequency and importance based on the opinion of marketing experts in Latvia

The results were grouped based on the previously proposed social media metric grouping framework with is based on consumer purchase decision process model and the five main social media channels. In each channel authors displayed only the top 7 of most often used social media metrics in Latvia.

As we can see from the expert survey results, see Table 3, the importance and usage frequency of the metrics depends on various factors. Such as the consumer purchase decision process and what kind of a social media channel the metric is used to evaluate. We can see that the importance of the metric changes depending on the consumer purchase decision process stage the metric is used to evaluate. Also metrics importance in different social media channels can change, as for example in media sharing site likes are not so important us they are in social networking sites. We can see also that the metrics that are the most important in every group are very different, so marketers should evaluate witch social media metrics they will use for each campaign.

From the collected results we can see, that depending on the marketing goal that a company wants to achieve, marketing specialists must measure different metrics. For example, if we would like to influence need

recognition using micromedia, the metric that marketing specialists should monitor the most is impressions. Potential customer need to know about the product or service so the need for the product could emerge, so the more impressions micromedia account will get thus more people will know about the product or service, thus more people will consider buying it. If the marketing specialist would like to influence information search and determine how good the marketing materials are working then marketing specialists should analyse how many product mentions has the micromedia platform, the more mentions about the product are on the micromedia platform the more chance is that the potential customer will find the information about the product or service. When marketing specialists are influencing the alternative evaluation process, the marketing specialists should monitor the number of followers, because the more followers a company's profile has the more reliable the company seems, thus the chance increases that the potential customer comparing a product or a service will choose the one whit the more followers. When trying to influence purchase decision marketing specialists should monitor product or service updates on micromedia platforms, because customers need to know that the company that is producing the product or service that they are buying is systematically improving and is planning to stay in the business. Thus, depending on the consumer purchase decision process stage the importance and usage frequency of the social media metrics changes. Marketing specialists should decide in each consumer purchase decision stage, which social media metrics they need to use and how important are these metrics for each stage.

4. Conclusions

The theoretical contributions of this research are: 1. The expert survey shows that importance and the usage frequency of the social media metrics is changing depending of consumer purchase decisions stage the metric is used to evaluate. The social media metrics importance and usage frequency can also change depending on which social media group the metric is used to evaluate; 2. This research proposes a new framework how to group social media metrics while taking into account consumer purchase decision process and social media channels; 3. New data are collected about social media metrics importance and usage frequency in Latvia using proposed framework with takes into account that purchase decision process and social media channels can influence the importance of social media metrics; 4. This research shows that when evaluating social media activities marketing experts should take into account which consumer purchase decision process stage they are trying to influence, it can influence the effectiveness results of the campaign.

In practice while taking in account other factors that could influence social media metric importance in a certain situation, the expert survey data can be used with a caution as a framework when choosing the right social media metrics when analysing the return of different social media campaigns.

The proposed social media metric framework could also be used as a template for dividing social media metrics in different channels.

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