

## Customer Loyalty At Any Cost: Why Is Social Media Poorly Integrated With Marketing Strategy?

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### Abstract

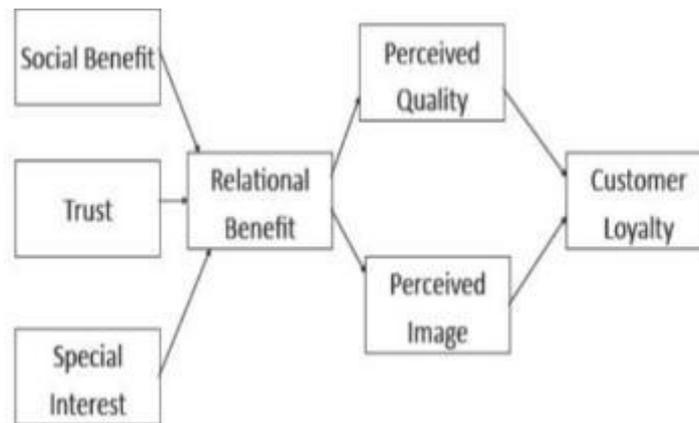
Corporations are using Social Media (SM) to form meaningful and engaging customer relationships involving online transactions. . The aim of the research study is to examine how Customer Loyalty (CL) has come under an undeniable influence of SM. The main question examined by the research study is— why is SM poorly integrated with marketing strategies in promoting CL? This research study was conducted using a quality content analysis methodology through web surveys, case studies and research articles. The results of the study suggest that the brands which are successful in achieving the goal of connecting with their customers in a more personal manner will be better positioned to take advantage of improved brand loyalty and higher conversion rates. Marketing managers can use this study to target and retain customers to ensure CL, corporate reputation and market share. The implications are discussed along with opportunities for future research.

**Keywords:** Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction; Corporate Reputation; Market Strategy; Social Media.

### 1.0 Introduction:

Social media (SM) is adding octane to the fuel of organizational customer experience imperatives (Oracle, 2012). Creating customer value and customer satisfaction are considered as primary tools of growth for organizations. Companies in various industries, including travel, hospitality, and retail, increasingly focus on improving customer relationships (Buckley, Ettl, Jain, Luss, Petrik, Ravi, and Venkatramani, 2014) and customer loyalty. The rise of SM has led to a fundamental shift in the way businesses of all sizes engage with their customers (Nadeem, 2012). Companies are escalating investments in social media. However, most firms still do not see social networks as a vehicle for cultivating and winning customer loyalty (CL), but rather as a resource for creating (Gamboa, and Goncalves, 2014) brand awareness. There is a power shift to customers where individual consumers and business customers can compare prices or product specifications online. Because of the massive increase in product selection, customers are now the driving force behind businesses.

A loyal customer base can be important to the long-term (Curran and Healy, 2014) success of any brand. The effects of perception of quality and image resulting from relational benefit have been investigated on customer loyalty. A research study (Bilgili, Candan and Bilgili, 2013) conducted on 400 customers who buy service from hospitality businesses which serve in different categories (3 stars, 4 stars, 5 stars) in Turkey-Istanbul determined that relational benefit is an influential factor on quality, image and CL especially in services. Relational benefit consists of three dimensions: social benefit, trust and special care, Fig.1.



**Figure 1:** Research Model---Relational Benefit to Customer Loyalty.

**Source:** A research study on the relationship among relational benefit, perceived quality, image and customer loyalty in different hospitality businesses (Bilgili, Candan & Bilgili, 2013).

Moreover, in an another research study, Mende, Botton, and Bitner (2013) tested their predictions with survey data from 1199 insurance customers, including three years of purchase records for 975 of these customers. The authors argued that attachment styles and preferences for closeness influence loyalty intentions and behavior.

The authors suggested that managers can use customer segmentation criteria and actionable guidelines to improve their ability to tailor relationship marketing activities and more effectively allocate resources to match customer preferences, Fig, 2:

ENRICHING CUSTOMER SEGMENTATION BY CROSSING CUSTOMER PREFERENCE FOR CLOSENESS AND LOYALTY TO THE FIRM

		Customer Preference for Closeness to the Firm	
		Low	High
Customer Loyalty to the Firm	High	<p>1 High loyalty due to perception of offering's superior utility regarding technical feature (e.g., network reliability of phone provider). Yet, no desire for closeness to firm → Low need for closeness-triggering RM activities.</p> <p>N = 201</p>	<p>2 High loyalty and preference for closeness can be leveraged → Allocate closeness-triggering RM activities (i.e., consistent contacts via multiple touch points over time).</p> <p>N = 179</p>
	Low	<p>3 Despite low levels of reported loyalty, firm might benefit from customer inertia → Underline strengths of offering without bothering customers; low need for closeness-triggering RM activities.</p> <p>N = 346</p>	<p>4 Customers whose preference for closeness has neither been recognized nor addressed by firm → Underline strengths of offering and allocate closeness-triggering RM activities (i.e., consistent contacts via multiple touch points over time).</p> <p>N = 473</p>

**Figure 2:** De-Coding Customer Firm Relationships.

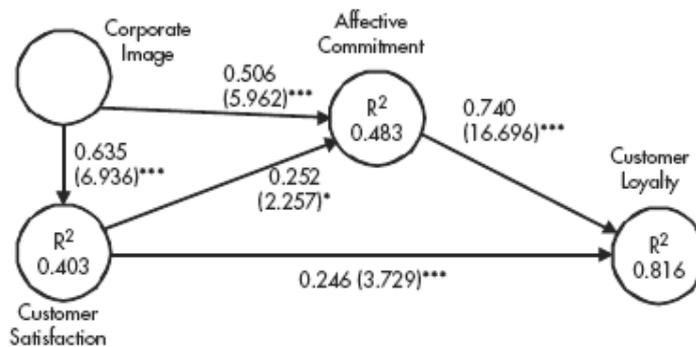
**Source:** How Attachment Styles Help Explain Customers' Preferences for Closeness, Repurchase Intentions, and Changes in Relationship Breadth (Mende, Bolton and Bitner, 2013).

In addition, a recent research study (Richard and Zhang, 2012) conducted in New Zealand reported the results of a mail survey highlighting that corporate image has a significant positive influence on customer commitment and customer satisfaction. The key implications are about building strong emotional bonds with customers and improving corporate image through trust and service delivery, Fig.

3:

**Figure 3** Alternative structural model path coefficients.

Note: t-statistics shown in parentheses; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .010$ , \* $p < .05$ .



**Source:** Corporate Image, Loyalty, and Commitment in the Consumer Travel Industry (Richard and Zhang, 2012).

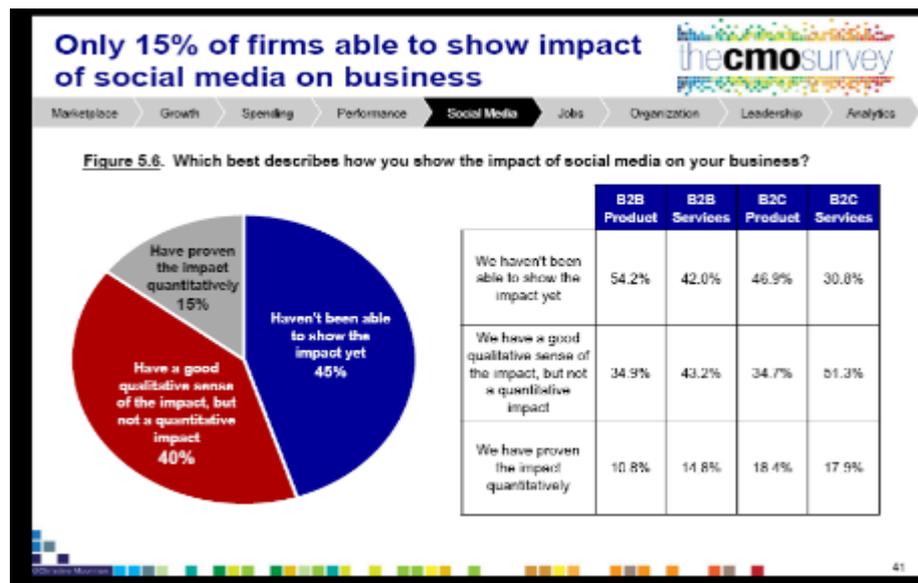
Moreover, loyal customers on average obtain greater discounts (Wieseke, Alavi and Habel, 2014) which in turn drive CS. Loyalty Programs award elevated customer status to consumers who meet (Wagner, Henning-Tharau, and Rudolph, 2009) a predefined spending level. Benefits for customer loyalty initiatives are tied to a front line worker (Brady, Voorhees and Brusco, 2012). Loyal customers believe that greater effort results in greater likelihood of obtaining (Reczek, Haws, and Summers, 2014) randomly determined promotional outcomes. Lucky

Loyalty Effect is due to deservingness felt by the loyal customer (Reczek, Hawk and Summers, 2014). Market share and customer satisfaction performance (Rego, Morgan and Fornel, 2013) are positively related indicators of marketing promoting customer loyalty. Marketing research has contributed to the rise of CL (Wieseke, Alavi and Habel, 2014).

Hardy and Zatsman (2008) in their Cineplex Entertainment case study reported that---the customer reward program should be structured in terms of offerings, retail value and discount rates in order to appeal to a variety of current customer segments. However, today customer engagement through social media is splintered across departments, resulting in inconsistent and poor customer experiences. For many years, customer service organizations, and the contact center in particular, have been focused on developing a 360-degree view of the customer and providing a consistent customer experience across interaction channels—including such channels as phone, Web, and chat. Poor customer experiences result when channels and processes remain separate silos.

Social media is no different from this perspective—it must be treated as an integrated customer engagement channel. Most organizations today are at the early adopter stage of the social contact center maturity model, attempting to “bolt on” social media as an ancillary process. For this reason, most organizations have been unable to realize any tangible returns on their social media investments and are probably experiencing higher costs and poor, inconsistent customer experiences as a result of not articulating (Oracle, 2012) a clear social strategy.

In addition, findings from the CMO Survey 2014 which tracks marketing spend, revealed that social media spending currently accounts for less than 10% of marketing budgets, but is expected to be 21.4% of marketing budgets in five years and that social media remains poorly integrated with marketing strategy. Firms are using a variety of social media such as blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, internal social collaboration platforms like Yammer and others, but still haven’t woven social media into and across their business and marketing ecosystems in ways that fully leverage effort and optimize outcomes (Davenport, 2014). Moreover, only 15% of firms are able to show impact of social media on business. Fig. 4:



**Figure 4:** Impact of Social Media on Business

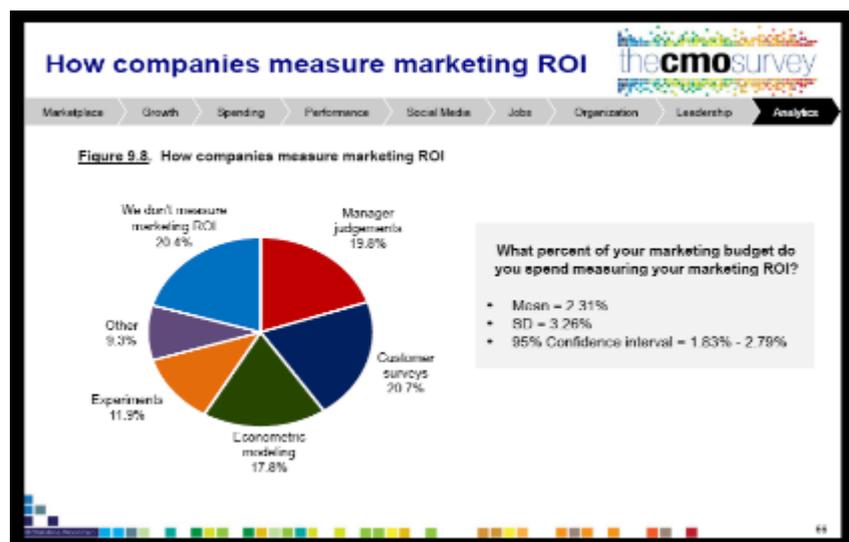
**Source:** The CMO Survey – [www.cmosurvey.org](http://www.cmosurvey.org) (December, 2014).

The question is---why? To fully leverage the transformational nature of social media in which the financial and customer experience benefits become tangible, measurable, and repeatable, organizations must migrate to a mature enablement model. In this model, a culture of transparency empowers customer-facing employees to engage in meaningful and measurable ways. More importantly, social media becomes tightly woven into existing customer engagement processes, a shift that requires a technology platform that seamlessly manages customer interaction across all channels, including social channels, and accounts for social media within existing knowledge management processes (Oracle, 2012). Hence, an important research query involves the relationship of customer loyalty and social media, particularly—why is SM poorly integrated with marketing strategy? To our best knowledge, no academic research study has yet fully examined this question. The findings are important for both marketing researchers and practitioners.

## 2.0 Study Methodology

The amount of user-generated content (UGC) in social media is rising constantly. More and more consumers exchange their product and brand experiences using social media platforms. For this reason an in-depth analysis of content in social media seems to be an attractive alternative to traditional research methods because data is already available and, at first glance, only has to be analyzed (Faber, Eihorn, Hofmann and Loeffler, 2012).

New tools and strategies, combined with drastic financial and organizational shifts, have changed the way marketing professionals approach their craft – both now and in the (CMO Survey, 2014) coming years. As companies are interested in building more enduring and lucrative relationships with their stakeholders (Nadeem, 2013) many Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) are still wondering how to properly demonstrate ROI on social spending, Fig. 5:



**Figure 5:** How Companies Measure Marketing Return on Investment (ROI).

**Source:** The CMO Survey – [www.cmosurvey.org](http://www.cmosurvey.org) (December, 2014).

Nearly nine in 10 US marketers are using social media marketing (e-Marketer, 2014). According to a Business Insider Intelligence survey (2014), companies plan to spend \$14 billion by 2018 on SM and major Players including: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Brands which are successful in achieving the goal of connecting with their customers in a more personal manner will be better positioned to take advantage of improved brand loyalty, higher conversion rates, and faster audience growth (Forbes, 2014).

In this study, social media research provided valuable additional insights, e. g. ideas, explanations and backgrounds for the initial results. Using the quality content analysis procedure, this study is primarily built upon recent case studies, research articles, and surveys. This research study also shows the advantage of mixing traditional research methods (research articles, and case studies) with the analysis of existing social media (e.g. CMO Survey 2014) content by identifying additional insights which complement traditional research results. The approach of creating additional value by analyzing existing data in social media focused on innovative and creative insights (Faber, Eihnorn, Hofmann and Loeffler, 2012) when addressing the main question examined by the this research study—Why is SM poorly integrated with marketing strategies in promoting CL?

### 3.0 Discussion:

Carter and Laseter (2014) in their Zappos Corporation case study reported that---“one of the ten core values of the Zappos Corporation’s CL team is to deliver WOW through service”. A recent research study from Duke University (2014) found that spending on social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter currently represents 9% of marketing budgets and is expected to increase to more than 13% over the next 12 months. And in the next five years, that percentage is projected to rise to more than 21%. Despite the increasing investment in social media, it’s still difficult for marketers to quantify their return on investment. Only 15% of marketers in the study said they can show the impact of social media on their businesses using quantitative approaches, while 40% of marketers can only demonstrate the impact qualitatively. Nearly half of marketers said they haven’t been able to demonstrate the impact

of social media spending on their business at all. Justifying how ad dollars get spent is a constant concern for marketers, who face increased pressure to deliver on margins and show results. Marketing spending typically generates more than 8% of company revenue (Tadena, 2014). It is very important to understand that there are varying degrees of loyalty and the firm must understand where its customers fall on the loyalty spectrum in order to employ appropriate SM tactics to strengthen their loyalty.

In a research study Curran and Healy (2014) demonstrated that the path to true loyalty is through perceived value, perceived brand superiority, meeting customer expectations, and 'social' bonding, Table 1:

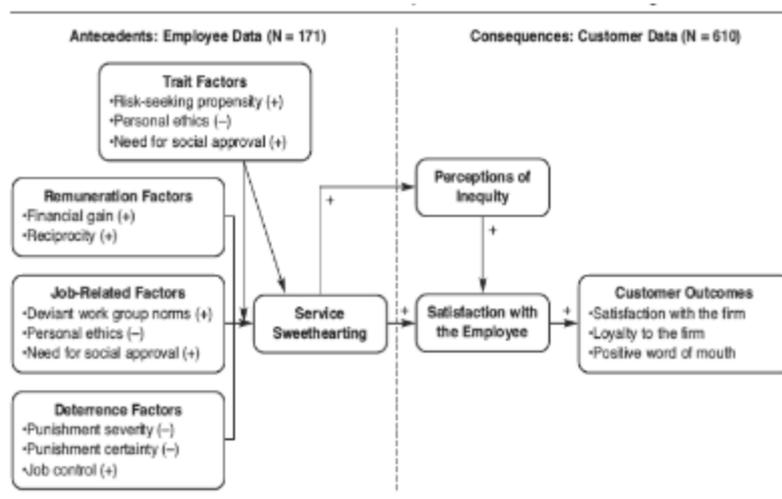
**Table 1:** Hypothesis: 'Social Bonding' – Outcome: Supported

Summary of Hypothesis Support		
Number	Hypothesis	Outcome
1	Different Loyalty Stages Exist	Supported
2a	Satisfaction (High Loyalty Versus Others)	Partially Supported
2b	Satisfaction (Intermediate Versus Lower)	Not Supported
3a	Commitment (High Loyalty Versus Others)	Supported
3b	Commitment (Intermediate Versus Lower)	Not Supported
4a	Meeting Expectations (High Loyalty Versus Others)	Partially Supported
4b	Meeting Expectations (Intermediate Versus Lower)	Supported
5	Price	Supported
6	Perceived Value	Supported
7a	Superiority (High Loyalty Versus Others)	Supported
7b	Superiority (Intermediate Versus Lower)	Supported
8	Inertia	Partially Supported
9	Convenience	Not Supported*
10	Perceived Risk	Partially Supported
11	Reward Program	Not Supported
12	Social Bonding	Supported

\* Found significant in a relationship other than the one hypothesized.

**Source:** The loyalty continuum: Differentiating between stages of loyalty development (Curran and Healy, 2014).

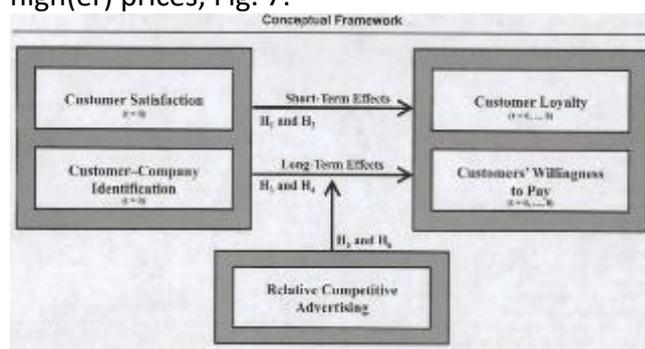
Close customer–employee relationships are known to increase customer satisfaction, stimulate positive Word of Mouth (WOM) and loyalty (Brady, Voorhees and Brusco, 2012) to the firm. These traits could be much more easily monitored and tracked using SM, Fig. 6:



**Figure 6:** Antecedents and Customers Consequences of Service Sweet-hearting

**Source:** Service Sweet-hearting: Its Antecedents and Customer Consequences (Brady, Voorhees and Brusco, 2012).

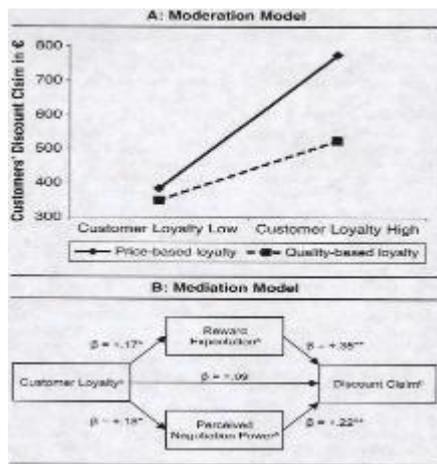
Hauman, Quaiser, Wieseke and Rese (2014) argued that managers should not solely concentrate on either increasing customer satisfaction or engendering customer-company identification but should try to augment both to keep customers loyal and willing to pay high(er) prices, Fig. 7:



**Figure 7:** Relationship Concept on Customer Loyalty and Customer Willingness to Pay.

**Source:** Footprints in the Sands of Time (Hauman, Quaiser, Wieseke and Rese, 2014).

Wieseke, Alavi and Habel (2014) reported that loyal customers on average receive greater discounts in price negotiations for two reasons: (1) loyal customers develop a stronger intention to negotiate, which is driven by their expectation of a reward for their loyalty and their use of their elevated perceived negotiation power; and (2) salespeople intend to retain loyal customers and therefore grant discounts more willingly. We find that these effects are moderated by the basis of customer loyalty (quality vs. price), relationship length, and salespeople’s functional and relational customer-oriented behavior. Thus, loyal customers are willing to pay more—but eager to pay less. Companies should thus work to establish quality-based rather than price-based customer loyalty by consistently emphasizing high quality when interacting with customers and thus establishing a quality image, Fig. 8:



**Figure 8:** Willing to Pay More, Eager to Pay Less.

**Source:** The Role of Customer Loyalty in Price Negotiations (Wieseke, Alavi and Habel, 2014). The role of CL continues to evolve in the age of SM. SM is an increasingly important tactic in companies’ marketing strategy, yet results from The CMO Survey (2014) continue to indicate that many companies manage social media as a separate activity. Asked how effectively social media is linked to their company’s marketing strategy on a 1-7 scale where 1 is “not integrated” and 7 is “very integrated,” the average level of integration was only 3.9. Although we see companies planning to increase social media spending as a percent of marketing budget from 9.4% to 13.2% over the next year and 21.4% over the next five years, the level of integration has not changed in the past four years (Moorman, Ross and Gorman, 2014), Fig. 9.



**Figure 9:** How effectively is social media linked to your firm’s marketing strategy?

**Source:** The CMO Survey – www.cmosurvey.org (December, 2014).

In the Terra Bite case study, Cotte and Trudel (2009) reported that---“Terra Bite was not only an experiment of public honesty, but it was also a visible demonstration of a high level of honesty and trust. Terra Bite trusted its customers to pay aptly, and they responded to this trust by doing so”. A small team within T-Mobile has used the simple act of listening to turn unhappy customers into happy customers— and happy customers into recommendation engines (Baldwin, 2014), but until CMO’s have metrics that point to significant value, companies may be reluctant to explore a more integrated approach. Although 95% of business-to-business (B2B) companies have set up social media accounts, only half are actually using them regularly. According to a study by SiriusDecisions, 60% of respondents weren’t using any Social Media Intelligence (SMI) tools on their active accounts (Fogel, 2015).

Social media is transforming customer care as we know it. The change really began with the shift in focus from customer care as a case triage tool to customer care as a strategic vehicle for delivering excellent customer experiences. Social media has accelerated this transformation. The majority of social conversations are not germane to an organization. Other conversation topics are relevant to different parts of the organization, such as marketing and customer service. The problem is that organizations don't know how to reconcile these conversations. Historically, marketing has taken the lead on monitoring them, but when the topic is customer-service-related, they are ill-equipped to deliver the level of support needed. This results in a splintered, disjointed customer experience.

The bottom line is that service isn't a silo. Organizations need to leverage social channels for the delivery of customer care, and customer care extends beyond the customer service department. At the same time, your brand extends beyond marketing—customer service is your brand. Organizations must respond to the splintering of conversations across service, marketing, and other departments by enabling the co-mingling of customer conversations. The most effective philosophy can be summed up as the following: one voice, one brand, one experience.

To implement this philosophy, organizations need to recognize three aspects of the social world: 1. Social media is a channel. It is a collection of channels, really—but one that is not unlike traditional interaction channels. As in traditional channels, customer experience consistency is the key. What that means is that, just as with traditional channels, social media needs to be woven into a unified customer engagement process. 2. Social media is not a silo. The enablement of that single voice and unified brand experience—and the resultant ROI—requires true cross-functional ownership of social initiatives. 3. Social media requires a social mindset. The core tenet of this mindset is transparency. The level of organizational transparency will dictate to a large degree not only the level of social adoption but also which types of social engagement fit into which parts of the organization. The following is true of the processes of these organizations: • Social interactions are not integrated across the organization, and there is no way to share business processes across departments. • Social interactions constitute a process ancillary to existing contact center customer processes. Social management is either completely (Oracle, 2012), separate, or poorly bolted on, Fig. 9:

**Figure 10.** Poorly integrated businesses exclude social media from the CRM system.



**Source:** Customer Care in Social World (Oracle Corporation, 2012)

In a mature enablement model, leveraging social media in the contact center as an engagement channel is a linchpin for upholding brand value and fulfilling corporate-wide customer experience objectives. Organizations are able to enjoy tangible, measurable benefits and ROI by fully operationalizing and scaling social media within their existing customer engagement and knowledge management processes.

#### 4.0 Findings:

In the Olympic Rent-A-Car case study, Deighton and Kindly (2014) concluded that---“Small things, like a friendly agent, count a lot in service businesses”. The Davenport (2014) report found the following in order to fully integrate social media into marketing strategy and other functions to optimize internal communication and improve customer loyalty experiences:

- Governance - share responsibility for social media across functional groups. Getting governance right is actually pretty important to integration. While the CMO can have a leadership role, decisions like new channels, policies and brand voice, can be regular agenda items and generate a shared understanding of goals and tasks. Establishing a social ‘task force’, ‘council’ or ‘coalition’ is a good idea, and could include representatives from every silo that will be affected and derive benefit from social media. The point is that each functional area needs a champion to be the advocate for their silo, and work actively towards getting buy-in. Gathering people from all functions to this group will help get everyone on the same page about how social media can be integrated across the firm.
- Specifically address the divide between sales and marketing - the lack of alignment between sales and marketing still exists, and as more firms use social media for lead generation it’s critical the gap is closed. So when marketing and sales help each other, and, for example, focus on personas and social content to address context, they’re both having critical input into a process where marketing generates leads that sales wants. The result? Better leads and more sales.
- Think holistically about your prospects and clients - take a personal approach and go beyond demographics. Rooted in social psychology, personas help understand the social psychological dynamics of clients and prospects, explore insights into how buying decisions are influenced and help connect on the things which matter most to clients. This approach cuts across functions and facilitates a client experience approach to social marketing.
- Take a journey approach - focus on the clients’ experience, and consider how a social component impacts each stage. This will necessarily involve a range of stakeholders from cross-functional parts of your firm. A bird’s eye view of how clients interact with you and what they expect from your firm is incredibly enlightening. Perhaps not surprisingly, they don’t really see functional areas. Clients only care about their last interaction and your brand is as good as every interaction in that journey. So an Omnichannel approach to social media that considers this journey is valuable to give you opportunities to focus on consistency.
- Tackle content planning collaboratively - generating quality content is a never-ending challenge.  
Produce an editorial calendar collaboratively and engage with subject matter experts from across your firm. Secure commitment and buy-in to an Omni-channel program to provide a fully-integrated client experience that works across multiple client touch points so you deliver a connected and consistent brand experience across all the places your clients hang out.
- Use social marketing to drive loyalty - strong brand advocacy is our holy grail, and client interaction via social media creates loyalty and grows brands. Provide opportunities to enhance client relationships in real time, for example:

- Generating case studies can be difficult, so think about giving clients a chance to promote your firm in a positive way and share their experiences on social media sites
- Engage clients by inviting them to share feedback directly via comments on blogs
- Set up your own LinkedIn group; use it to survey or poll client needs (Davenport, 2014).

To build loyalty capability into social media program, the most direct method is to step beyond traditional marketing and move attention to operations – to customer care, to pre-sales, support. Furthermore, to what makes customers tick, what they respond to and taking that knowledge to customer care, for example, and create social customer experiences that make customers say "Wow!" It's super important that the very next experience — recovery from failure, exploration of an upsell option be equally "wow." As ads give way to recommendations, it is equally important to build firm capability to generate favorable recommendations. In addition, it is vital to stretch marketing to include customer experience everywhere, and to stretch social media to encompass social technology and all of the touch points where your customers are using these new digital tools to interact, to experience product or service, and to create and share stories about that experience with others. Not only will this help curtail the shift away from interruptive ads, but it will also help in building (Evans, 2014) customer loyalty.

#### **5.0 Implications:**

As pointed out by Roese and Kompella (2013) in the Harley-Davidson's case study---"Harley-Davidson's customer not only purchases the branded product but lives a branded lifestyle embedded within a unique subculture. The customer represents the pinnacle of brand loyalty, a pinnacle few other brands could ever hope to achieve. CL embraced is not just a repurchase but also a commitment, a psychological state in which the individual places large stakes on continued affiliation with the brand and its community." As consumers increasingly turn to social channels to seek information and advice and to express opinions, there is no doubt that organizations must engage with those channels to deliver appropriate customer care and ensure positive experiences. As the epicenter of multichannel customer engagement, the contact center could become a key strategic focal point for customer engagement via social channels. Enablement of the social contact center requires the organization to be able to 1. Listen and respond; 2. Be where their customers are; 3. Build and leverage community. Lessons learned from these early forays into social engagement suggest that it cannot be an ancillary bolted-on customer process. To reap the full benefits of social engagement, organizations must skip over these failed Band-Aid approaches and set their sights on a mature engagement model. This mature model is characterized by a unified customer engagement platform that infuses and seamlessly manages customer interaction across all channels, including social channels. It is also characterized by a corporate culture of transparency in which social media is an organization-wide imperative and employees at all levels are empowered. The resultant benefits include greater cost savings from operational efficiencies, improved customer loyalty, satisfaction and retention rates, and revenue increased through greater cross-sell and up-sell (Oracle, 2012) opportunities.

The most important social media relationships are the ones between members of the brand community. Most marketers still view social media platforms as another way to broadcast their brand messages to customers and get some viral spreading of that broadcast message. More enlightened marketers are leveraging social media platforms to build relationships with their customers. The most successful social marketers are building communities (Bradt, 2014) for greater CL.

There are several variables that could impact a company's social media strategy, including new social trends, human behavior, and technological advances. When integrated properly, SM marketing offers a multitude of benefits, including brand-building and reputation management. Social networks are ideal for personal brand-building and proactive online reputation management. Similarly, content syndication sites (i.e. Flickr, YouTube, iTunes, etc.) offer opportunities to distribute existing media assets (photos, videos, audio and more) to a much larger audience. Last but not least, blogging and micro-blogging (i.e. Twitter & Plurk) offer an opportunity for competent writers and technologists to spread their company's messages and engage (Lewis, 2014) in direct conversations.

### **6.0 Recommendations:**

As reported by Deshpande and Hogan (2011) in the Singapore Airlines case study---"Singapore Airline bases its continued success on its culture of service. Our culture is we care for our customers and we all sense that we have a certain reputation to keep up" (Deshpande and Hogan, 2011). Based on the sponsored research study by the American Marketing Association, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, and McKinsey, Inc., and the CMO Survey (2014), this study suggests the following recommendations based on Moorman, Ross and Gorman's (2014) analysis to improve social media integration:

1. Choose strategy over tools. Social media is still in its infancy, so change is constant and new tools are being introduced at lightning speed. Using the latest and greatest technology may benefit the company, especially when its target audience includes younger and more mediasavvy customers. However, it is always important to judge the value and impact of a social media tool against the company's marketing strategy rather than its innovativeness. Will the tool help the company design or develop a more effective marketing strategy? If not, leave the shiny object on the shelf for another day.
2. Drive social media actions against marketing goals. If social media actions are undertaken without a clear customer objective, integration is likely to be elusive. This means that marketers should always identify a specific customer objective when employing social media tactics. One common approach we observed was marketers using social media to help move the customer into and through the purchase funnel.
3. Be forward looking. Like traditional media campaigns, social media is often used to generate brand, product, or company awareness. If awareness is the goal, marketers must have a clear understanding of what happens next in the company's marketing strategy to convert awareness into purchase intent. Likewise, if building brand advocacy is the goal, marketers should be clear about how to use these evangelists to amplify the company's message and increase customer loyalty.
4. Align social media channel to marketing strategy. While practically every brand is on Facebook and Twitter, there are many other social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat. Brands typically do not have the resources to be on every social media platform, so how do marketers prioritize? They should choose the social media platforms that fit the company's target audience and brand positioning. For instance, Facebook and Twitter tend to reach a broad demographic, while Instagram and Snapchat have a younger user base.
5. Create social media toolkits. Brand toolkits have become standard procedure for many companies and are effectively used to guide local markets on how to portray global brands by providing templates and guidelines for tailoring content. In a similar way, some companies are starting to create social media toolkits which include templates

for Facebook and Twitter posts. These kits can ensure strategic alignment and create a more cohesive brand image across geographies and platforms while reducing the time and resources required developing social media content.

6. Put social media experts on brand and customer teams. When social media operates from a separate group or from a separate location, there is a greater probability of poor integration. Instead, social media experts should be closely linked to the brand and customer teams so they are involved as soon as communication objectives have been established. This involvement pays off because social media experts are tuned in to the latest platforms and know what approaches generate interest from current and potential customers, fans, and enthusiasts. As a result, these experts can guide brand teams to the most effective results.
7. Balance in-house and agency expertise. With so much to learn and social media moving at such a fast pace, many companies outsource social media activities to multiple agencies. This structure threatens the integration of social media because agencies rarely understand the totality of a company's marketing strategy. This concern leads some companies to move more social media activities in house or utilize deep partnership models with their agencies.
8. Convert to purchase. Social media is one of the very few places where companies can engage with their customers in an ongoing, personal, and real-time manner. As such, it can serve as a key touch point that brings the company's marketing strategy to its raison d'être—purchase. If, for example, a follower posts she is going shopping for a particular item, companies can respond with a tweet containing helpful information or personalized discounts, and/or promotions.
9. Be willing to say no. Given the buzz surrounding social media, every brand or customer-facing function likely wants its own Facebook page and Twitter account. Marketing leaders need to hold the line and decide which social media platforms are ideal for a given brand from a strategic and customer point of view. Controlling social media access through a social media group ensures that someone is accountable and knowledgeable about the best ways to use it as part of a company's or brand's marketing strategy.
10. Champion integration. For integration to be valued and sought, leaders need to share success stories throughout the organization. Success stories can become part of the company's ethos and can organically influence the integration of social media in marketing activities.
11. Sort out attribution. If social media is part of a company's marketing strategy, questions will be raised about its contribution to sales revenue and how it works alone and in conjunction with other tactics. These are worthy questions and steps must be taken to understand and measure the effects of social media in order to integrate it with the company's marketing strategy in the most efficient and effective manner. Marketers shouldn't let these attribution questions keep them from pursuing social media, but instead consider them an opportunity to demonstrate the company's value.
12. Learn from failures. Because it is much easier to experiment with social media than traditional media, companies can test and learn quickly. Also, social media execution costs tend to be much smaller than traditional media, so the losses from failures are less severe. By experimenting with social media, companies can more accurately

determine which social media posts and campaigns have the greatest impact on their marketing strategies—helping to further integration efforts.

13. When social media is integrated with the company's marketing strategy, the company's management of its customer and brand assets is seamless. Strategic elements such as segmentation, targeting, positioning, and all go-to-market activities reflect a clear and consistent understanding of the value the company offers to its customers and show how the company seeks to capture value from attracting and retaining these loyal customers over time. The result of social media integrated into marketing strategy is improved efficiency and effectiveness (Moorman, Ross and Gorman, 2014) in all aspects of the marketing plan for superior CS.

#### **7.0 Future Research:**

The outcomes of this study suggest additional opportunities for future research. A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction particularly considering shopping, by participating in all viable, relevant social networks would be highly beneficial. Furthermore, another area of research to explore is measuring performance and track results to improve ranking and market share with engagement and customer metrics. Moreover, the relationship between overall marketing strategy and its impact on corporate image and reputation by going more digital and social needs to be further explored.

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