

Looking for better customer engagement value? Be more strategic on social media

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The more interactions and connections a firm's social media marketing strategy generates, the more customer engagement value it brings.

In a new study, Fang Fang Li and Jorma Larimo from the University of Vaasa and Leonidas Leonidou from the University of Cyprus looked at the strategic use of [social media](#) from a firm's perspective, and systematically consolidated and extended present knowledge on social media marketing strategies.

The study was published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.

"Despite widespread understanding among marketers of the need to integrate social media into firms' marketing strategies, relatively few firms have strategized their social media appearance and involvement. For most companies, the ongoing challenge is not to initiate social media campaigns, but to effectively and strategically use social media in order to engage customers and build valuable relationships with them," say professor Jorma Larimo and doctoral student Fang Fang Li from the University of Vaasa.

To gain insights from both academics and practitioners, the authors interviewed 15 [decision makers](#) from China, Finland and Sweden and conducted two separate surveys: the first, of 52 marketing managers from the U.S.; the second of 43 social media marketing [international scholars](#).

The study shows that the mere use of social media alone does not generate [customer](#) value, but rather, the connections and interactions between the firm and its customers—as well as among customers themselves—can be used strategically for resource transformation and exchanges between the interacting parties.

"Interacting with customers via social media provides tremendous opportunities for firms to learn more about their customers and opens up new possibilities for product or service co-creation," says Fang Fang Li.

Another key result is that in the study, four distinctive social media marketing strategies were identified: social commerce strategy, social content strategy, social monitoring strategy, and social CRM [strategy](#), representing progressing levels of strategic maturity in social media use. Their adoption does not follow a sequential pattern, but is highly depended on the firm's ability to identify and leverage customer-owned resources, as well as firm's willingness to allocate resources in order to foster collaborative conversations, develop appropriate responses, and enhance customer relationships.

"Actively interacting with customers using social media should be a never-ending process, which, with proper monitoring and right incentives, can help favorably influence customer behavior," says Professor Jorma Larimo.

The results offer fresh insights into the nature, conceptualization and types of social media marketing strategies. Furthermore, the findings have important implications for social media marketing scholars and practitioners in identifying social [media](#) resources and capabilities. The authors also present several possible future research directions.

More information: Fangfang Li et al, Social media marketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (2020). [DOI: 10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3](#)

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