

Business Administration State Examinations

Bachelor's Thesis Evaluation by Defense Opponent

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Student Name: Jana Viola Hofbauer	Student Number: 510823
Opponent Name: Christopher Shallow, BA, MSc	Date: 28 th August 2016
Specialization: Marketing	
Thesis Title: The Effect Of Social Media On Purchasing Of Sporting Goods	

A) OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE DIPLOMA WORK:

The stated overall purpose of this more practical than theoretical, yet well-underpinned by secondary research, and useful paper is to address marketing experts and people who are interested in the Effect of Social Media on Purchasing Goods, in general, and specifically, on Sports Goods.

The main topic is, therefore, to investigate, analyze, and summarize "how social media influence the purchasing of sporting goods. It focuses on the social media strategies of the main sporting goods brands - Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma and Under Armour. Moreover, it [also attempts to investigate] . . . how the customers [buyer] behavior process [has] changed since the introduction of social media and how . . . the companies [have] adjusted their marketing strategies to the changing requirements and expectations of the customers. It also covers the topic of leveraging customers' brand loyalty and overall brand awareness through electronic word-of-mouth. Further, it evaluates the influence of social media marketing on the firms' revenue and profit and [the] methods how . . . the return on investments in social media propagation [can be] calculated. The thesis also includes [a] survey of consumer behavior in the Czech Republic and how it is influenced by social media tools and campaigns." As can be seen, this is an ambitious scope for an undergraduate final thesis.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the Research Objectives (there are no Research Questions) are:

To investigate, analyze, and summarize "how social media influence the purchasing of sporting goods", "how the customers [buyer] behavior process [has] changed since the introduction of social media", how "companies [have] adjusted their marketing strategies to the changing requirements and expectations of the customers", "leveraging customers' brand loyalty and overall brand awareness through electronic word-of-mouth", "the influence of social media marketing on the firms' revenue and profit and [the] methods how . . . the return on investments in social media propagation [can be] calculated", and [a] "survey of consumer behavior in the Czech Republic and how it is influenced by social media tools and campaigns". The paper's effectiveness at successfully addressing each of the above points will be considered, below.

In the final section, the researcher concludes that, "all of the sporting goods firms' social media strategies are centered on their products [as would be expected], while dividing their audience into several segments according to their interests by creating several social media accounts. All of their campaigns do have motivational context, while each of them focus on the slightly different type of an athlete, according to their brand story." Furthermore, "[d]ue [to] the change of social expectations, the lifestyle brands of the companies are growing in popularity and broadening the number of potential customers. In addition, social media enable to share electronic word-of-mouth as an alternative to face-to-face communication while still preserving all of its benefits for both customers and firms. [A v]ery important part of their campaigns are the ambassadors . . . an athlete or personality, with whom can the customers easily identify themselves and who matches the overall brand story." There is, thus, no specific mention in the Conclusion about any of the points in the above paragraph. It is merely a descriptive summary.

The paper is not organized in the conventional, recommended undergraduate thesis structure of Abstract, Acknowledgements, Table of Contents (instead, the Abstract follows the ToC; there is no Acknowledgements – however, this is optional; there is also no List of Tables or List of Figures), (as recommended by Riley et al, 2007) followed by the Chapters, (which do not all start on a new page as is best practice) then, after Chapter 11: Conclusion, comes the Appendix A, then the Bibliography (there is no Works Cited plus a Bibliography, which would have been good academic practice); however, the Appendix should have come last. The Chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction, as its title implies, includes a brief overview of: how the Internet and Social Media have changed the way of communication between marketers and consumers.

Chapter 2: [A] History of Sports and Current Situation of the Sporting Goods Market, includes:

2.1 [The] Leading Players in Sportswear and the Sporting Goods Market

2.2 Main Distribution Channels

2.3 Customers of Sporting Goods Brands

The chapter title is a little misleading as it is not really a history of sports although it is mentioned in 2.1.

Chapter 3: Changes in Marketing Strategies

3.1 Tools

3.2 Role Models and Important Personalities

Chapter 4: Changes in Purchasing Process

Chapter 5: Social Media Strategies

Chapter 6: The Most Effective Channels regarding Sporting Goods

6.1 Different Social Media Channels

6.2 Sporting Social Networks

Chapter 7: The Most Common Tools Used in Social Media Communication

7.1 Sponsorships of Athletes

7.2 Sponsorships of Events

7.3 Cooperation with Celebrities

7.4 Cooperation with Sports Associations and Sports Teams

7.5 Bloggers

7.6 Events

7.7 Smartphone applications

Chapter 8: What is the Effect of Social Media on Brands Recognition, Brand Loyalty, and Firms' Revenues?

Chapter 9: Social Media Strategies of Major Brands Operating the Sporting Goods Market

9.1 Nike

9.2 Nike Women

9.3 Adidas

9.4 Reebok

9.5 Under Armour

9.6 Puma

Chapter 10: Survey

The Internet survey took place from 21st April until 3rd May 2016. There were 66 respondents.

10.1 The Structure of the Survey

10.2 The Respondents of the Survey

10.3 Favorite Sports and Frequency of Performing Them

10.4 Sports Equipment and Their Purchasing

10.5 Purchasing of Sporting Goods

10.6 Social Media and Sporting Goods

10.7 Brands and Their Ambassadors

10.8 Smartphone Applications

Chapter 11: Conclusion

The quite brief contents (approximately one page) of this final chapter have already been summarized, above.

The greatest strength of this work is its extensive secondary research, evident in the form of extensive citation (but no page numbers are cited), in the form of a review of current literature relating to the principal topics covered, together with – apart from the fact that chapters do not start on a new page – good page formatting, e.g., no titles at the bottom of one page and

the text beginning at the top of the next page, in the paper which makes understanding the writer's meaning as easy as it should be in such a paper. However, there are some unnecessary additional gaps between words; however, this may be the result of not following normal academic practice to left-justify text. Full justification, however, is ugly and more difficult to read, because this stretching of lines results in uneven spacing between words. Another strength is that the student undertook primary research in the form of an online survey to improve her understanding of the customer's decision process when purchasing sports equipment and their related use of social media. Another weakness was the, at times, poor use of English grammar and, sometimes, even spelling, (and, perhaps, lack of final proof-reading). For example, (p8): "As a more successful tool, how to attract consumers to use the e-commerce interfere were proofed to be newsletters and internet promotions, such as Add Words and in Czech Republic Sklik, provided by Seznam.cz (Effectix.cz, n.d.)."

What is missing from this thesis, however, are in-depth answers to all the points listed at the beginning of the paper as being covered. The use of original research, ideally, also required the addition of chapters or sections within a chapter, giving an explanation of the thesis methodology, the research philosophy, approach and strategy, followed by the methodology of data collection, the methodology of data analysis, ethical considerations and the research limitations, and the research information sources; a formal, separate literature review, and a review of the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Lastly, in-text citation is not in the Author, Year, Page Number(s) format as page numbers are omitted.

B) OVERALL EVALUATION/REVIEW OF THE DIPLOMA WORK:

Note: The evaluation (review) should consist of between 400-700 words (i.e. minimum 1 A4 page). It should cover ALL of the AREAS below:

(1) Effectiveness of approach/research methods used by student in work

The approach chosen by the writer is an effective but, I consider, an overly ambitious one. In her paper, the student provides extensive evidence of how she undertook secondary research in order to analyze how social media influence the purchasing of sporting goods, in general, and, in particular, the social media strategies of the main sporting goods brands – Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma and Under Armour. Additionally, she undertook primary research to find consumers' preferences and social media usage regarding sport and sporting goods, using a survey on the Internet. The survey took place from 21st April until 3rd May 2016. The overall number of respondents answering the questions regarding their preferred sports activities, sporting goods brands and social media usage regarding sporting goods brands was, however, only 66.

Given her stated objective, the secondary research in the form of a search for appropriate literature is effective and quite extensive. The resultant secondary sources are well-balanced between relevant textbooks and up-to-date online sources, with a good but not very up-to-date selection of academic journal articles, with all the sources listed in Bibliography (but not both a Works Cited plus a Bibliography, which is good practice); all the sources are correctly arranged alphabetically. A more effective approach would have been to have reduced the scope of the project and to have undertaken some additional primary research (for example, interviews or surveys undertaken with marketing practitioners regarding the relative merits and effectiveness of using social media as part of an integrated marketing strategy.

(2) Use and effectiveness of literature appropriate for the theme studied

The student's choice and use of literature is both effective and appropriate. There is frequent in-text citation of a wide range of relevant sources, (but not Kotler and Armstrong, the university's standard marketing course textbook), together with a good variety of appropriate online sources. There is, therefore, considerable evidence of an extensive Literature Review having been conducted with some appropriate but, mostly, not very up-to-date academic journal articles also seeming to have been studied.

(3) Usefulness of the work for the student and the study program

The thesis appears to be a useful work for the student in increasing her understanding of the topics covered in the paper. It is also of interest to individuals who wish to gain an understanding of social media marketing strategy, in general, and who wish to understand the effectiveness of using social media to market consumer goods and, specifically, to encourage the purchase of branded sporting goods. It is also useful for the study program as a good example of the practical application in a specific field (marketing strategy for businesses and organizations) of a variety of business disciplines (including both secondary and primary market research) in the important areas of marketing, marketing communications, social media, and

buyer behavior.

(4) Ability of the student to use and apply theory

The student's work demonstrates her ability to apply some of the most important elements of business (including marketing) theory and practice to a specific topic. More detailed knowledge of marketing research theory and practice would, in my opinion, have enabled her to better describe the theory underpinning the limited primary research she undertook.

(5) Strengths and weaknesses of the work as a whole

The principle strengths of the work are its being based not only on extensive secondary research (albeit not properly cited as page numbers are omitted) but also limited but interesting primary research, in the form of an online survey. However, it lacks a methodology chapter with all the required sections. It does, though, contain appropriate charts, diagrams, and tables. The principal weakness was its over ambitious scope. A minor weakness was that the chapters do not begin on a new page and that the paper appears not to have benefitted from a final, careful proof-reading of its contents and layout as it contains some grammatical errors (as mentioned above), although it does not suffer from any separation of section headings from their accompanying text.

The importance of market research is recognized as there is appropriate use of both secondary research (in the form of a literature search) as well as primary research in the form of an online survey. However, as already stated, there are no interviews with marketing practitioners whose experienced opinions could have added to the paper's value. There are academic journals cited as well as an ample and varied selection of relevant textbooks and up-to-date, relevant online sources listed in the Bibliography (the lack of both a Works Cited and a Bibliography is, however, an additional minus point against the writer of the paper's work).

There are no formal cited definitions of the main terms used; another important weakness.

C) SPECIFIC POINTS/QUESTIONS TO BE RESPONDED TO (DEFENSE QUESTIONS/MANDATORY):

1. On p8, what did the writer mean by "Add Words"?
2. On p15, what did the student mean by "Harvard Business Review Services"?
3. On p16, the researcher states: "the popularity of Twitter is continuously declining (Twitter, n.d.; Griffith, 2014)." What does she consider is the reason(s) why the popularity of Twitter is continuously declining and what change(s) would she make, and why, to reverse this?
4. On p17, the writer states that: "in the Czech Republic the [sic] Snapchat is still waiting for its boom (Socialbakers, 2016e)." Does she believe that Snapchat will be successful in the Czech Republic? If yes or no, please, explain why she thinks this?
5. On p21, what does the student mean by: "artificial word-of-mouth"? Please, explain.

D) POINTS AWARDED:

Criteria	Maximum Points	Points Awarded
Effectiveness of approach/research methods	25	18
Use and effectiveness of appropriate literature	40	35
Usefulness of the work	10	6
Ability of the student to use and apply theory	25	20
	Total Points	79
	Grade	3

OPPONENT RECOMMENDED GRADE:

Grade	Points	Explanation
1	90-100	Excellent, demonstrates full and complete understanding of the theme or topic.
2	80-89	Very Good, demonstrates effective understanding of the theme. Average to above average level.
3	70-79	Good, demonstrates adequate understanding of the theme appropriate for a Bachelor's level student, with some shortcomings. Below average to average level.

4	0-69	Insufficient, significant shortcomings in understanding or knowledge base, below the expected competence level for a bachelor's degree.
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IACBE measures (mandatory):

Additionally, please provide the below information for IACBE accreditation tracking purposes. Simply place an 'x' in the box that applies in each category.

	N/A	Inadequate	Adequate	Good	Very Good	Excellent
The student is able to demonstrate knowledge of the ethical obligations of business and apply them to business decisions.	X					
The student is able to apply appropriate management theory to intercultural business scenarios.	X					
The student is able to use appropriate decision support tools.				X		
The student is able to describe the global and economic environment of business.					X	
The student is able to demonstrate effective analytical and critical-thinking skills in an organizational context.					X	
Marketing Specialization Questions:						
The student uses concepts that are specific to a marketing specialization					X	
The student integrates concepts that are specific to a marketing specialization					X	
The student's conclusions are based on knowledge specific to a marketing specialization.					X	