

## Social media activities of small and medium-sized enterprises – Special contents and their consumer reactions in the case of Hungarian catering establishments<sup>1</sup>

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Presence in social media is an important element in the communication of catering establishments. The most frequently used platform in Hungary – that is extraordinarily important, and the only reasonably accessible marketing communications platform for many catering companies – is Facebook. The marketing approach of small and medium-sized enterprises help us understand how these organizations exploit the opportunities offered by social media. In our empirical research we analyse how users perceive the business-purposed information forwarded to them on the social media platform, and how intensive are the consumers' activities on their most preferred catering establishment's site. For this purpose, we content-analyse subjective consumer narratives (N=151) where respondents were asked to write about their relationship with their most preferred catering establishment in the online social sphere. Based on the results of the present analysis, and in a practical perspective, conscious content management of brands could contribute to reach and to engage users in the virtual sphere more efficiently.

**Keywords:** social media, brand community, small and medium-sized enterprises.

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## **Introduction**

Applying social media as a marketing communications tool has become nowadays a requirement, because consumers expect it as a substantial ingredient. Besides, the competitors' social media activities force companies to be present on these platforms (He et al. 2014). A good example of this pressure is that on Facebook – considered to be the most famous social media platform – 30 million companies are present (Paradiso 2015), and this platform can give the companies the opportunity to engage existing customers, and attract new ones (He et al. 2014). The question is whether this “physical” presence goes hand in hand with an informed use of the platform. Indeed, the fact that the majority of these companies are not able to use these platforms effectively as a marketing communications tool can be described as a general phenomenon (Csordás et al. 2014). That is especially true in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter referred to as SMEs), which have limited resources and experiences for their marketing activities. The constrained use of these SMEs' financial, IT, and human resources, compared to their larger counterparts (He et al. 2014) can lead to distinctive social media strategies and usage patterns (Vuori–Okkonen 2012). Scientific papers formerly studied how companies in general can harness social media and reach their consumers (Kaplan–Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Culnan et al. 2010; Csordás et al. 2014). Most of these studies examined the case of large, international enterprises and their social media usage (He et al. 2013), and the SME-specific-analysis is yet to come. This study is focused on the social media – and especially on Facebook – usage of small firms, focusing on their application of specific social media contents that are rather accessible for SMEs than large companies. We consider these companies' social media contents as distinctive marketing communications tools to achieve better business outcomes.

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### **Attributes of small and medium-sized enterprise marketing in social media usage**

The general definitions of marketing are more applicable to large companies. Carson (1993) suggests applying general marketing notions and theories in a way that these approaches adapt to the unique attributes of SMEs. SME definitions for marketing are present in the related literature – nevertheless these are not widely accepted –, and the common point is that they are in connection mostly with entrepreneurial behaviour (Carson et al. 1995; Reynolds 2002).

According to Reijonen (2010), the main purposes of SME marketing is not substantially different from that of large companies' (i.e. informing consumers of the company and its products, raising sales, marketing communications), but what it is more relevant and feasible is the elaboration and maintenance of significant and honest relationships with consumers or business partners (Hill 2001). The larger a SME is the higher the probability that marketing officially becomes an integral part of the business processes, and it is not identified anymore as sales and/or advertising. The relevance of the question whether marketing is a standalone function in the life of the company or not increases with company size. Reijonen (2010. 279) presumes that “marketing is used as the needs of the moment”, that is only insignificant attention is paid on planning, strategy, and analysis. Moreover, it is typical that SMEs have a marketing that is informal, loose, unstructured, spontaneous, and reactive, adapting itself to industry norms (Gilmore et al. 2001).

SMEs cannot compete with large companies with their marketing practices, because they lack the resource conditions of a neck and neck competition (Carson 2001).

Table 1 presents the contradictions among the marketing theories and the SME-specific reality. The specific characteristics of SME marketing presented in Table 1 help us understand how these organizations exploit the opportunities offered by social media.

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**Table 1. Differences of traditional and SME-specific marketing theories**

| Formal marketing practices   | Gap between the traditional marketing theories and the actual SME-specific behaviour | SME marketing behaviour   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• linear, rational behaviour-predictions</li> <li>• faith in rationality</li> <li>• ignoring social effects on behaviour</li> <li>• limited information and knowledge exists in the real world, and that leads to theoretical disadvantage</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• application of marketing practices in a non-linear, irrational way</li> <li>• limited resources</li> <li>• entrepreneurial decision-making under the conditions of limited knowledge</li> <li>• uncertainty and market turbulence</li> <li>• owner/manager effect on SME behaviour</li> <li>• dependence on manager intuition</li> </ul> |

*Source: own design, based on Fillis (2003)*

The advantages harnessed by social media in the case of large companies is already known: branding (advertising, public relations, content delivery); sales; enhancing customer and firm interaction; understanding customer needs and wants; attracting new customers; retaining customers (He et al. 2014). Although SMEs do not have the same resources as large companies, social media usage as – in a way, “free” – social networking can be a potential competitive tool for achieving the aforementioned advantages. Moreover, consumers tend to interact more with SMEs rather than with large enterprises; SMEs are seen by consumers as “friends”, inspiring them to support small business owners in the social media sphere (Vorvoreanu 2009). The more personal tone is a potential opportunity and a potential threat for them, only because of their limited resources, and at the same time, limited number of fans in the social media sphere (Michelidou et al. 2011).

**Content marketing and special Facebook content types**

Content marketing is “the marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Pulizzi 2014. 5). Indeed, content is the instrument of choice through which

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interaction can be stimulated in social media (Sabate et al. 2014). Content marketing alone, or in line with what is referred to as native advertising on one hand or brand storytelling on the other hand is a current trend in marketing communications. While firms struggle to make “ads not to act like ads anymore” (Campbell–Marks 2015) and insert their messages into user-relevant contexts, small businesses – by dint of their limited scope of activity, but also the personal tone of communications – can offer an organic context to their (social) activity. Moreover, in an engaged environment, with consumers making the first step in communications by hitting, for various reasons, the “like” or “follow” buttons at a firm’s social media pages, a two-sided marketing (and social media) communications pattern emerges, with organizations operating in two different environments, thereby becoming media content providers. On one hand, a more direct, “marketing” (target) audience is made up by the actual consumers of the firm’s products or services. They remain of primary importance, and are reachable by both traditional and new marketing (communications) techniques. At the same time, an extended, less direct, secondary audience, that we can refer to as the brand’s “media” audience is likely to follow the various channels of the firm for the sake of their contents (Csordás 2015).

As the two target groups only partially intersect, the firm needs to emphasize on handling the needs of both, or – as it is often the case with SMEs – find an active niche at the intersection of the two, thus appealing to the interest of a clearly defined target audience with the aim of making them actual “fans” (or, in business terms, long-term partners) by effectively serving the reasons for their “likes”, through valuable, relevant, and consistent communications. For best returns, the organization should set up this niche by identifying and properly stimulating key influencers in order to repackage and curate the brand message (Kilgour et al. 2015). In this consumer-oriented logic, the members of this community, their reactions, activities and preferences are then ready to define the brand’s (social) communications (e.g. expected incentives, tone of voice, content types) on the long run.

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Content marketing techniques are intended to offer users less disruption in their online experience. By changing the function of advertising (Ha–McCann 2008), they aim to make commercial contents perceived by users as useful and/or interesting (i.e. clickable) and less as out-of-context advertising. One important reason behind this movement is that in an era of limited attention consumers are free to follow but then also to unfollow brands on social media. More, it was shown in several studies that consumers are repelled by overt sales and promotional messages (see e.g. Baird–Parasnis 2011). Still, in order not to make corporate publishing a self-serving function, the organization is bounded to structure its communications activities around its activity (yet in a differentiated way), as well as around its target audiences' interests (Holliman–Rowley 2014). Key objectives for content marketing can include brand awareness or reinforcement, lead conversion and nurturing, customer conversion, customer service, customer upsell, and passionate subscribers (Pulizzi 2014).

To elaborate a successful content strategy, a company's activity in online communities can take various shapes (Miller et al. 2009): monitoring, gathering information, supporting or sponsoring communities, establishing or managing sites, or taking part in these groups as a member. Not many empirical studies have revealed a defined typology for categorizing social media contents (Kwok–Yu 2013). According to Csordás and Gáti (2014), company-generated posts on the Facebook pages of catering establishments can be divided into two main groups: informative and entertaining. Whilst in the first case, the main aim is the satisfaction of the consumers' information need with primarily formal impersonal information, hitherto in the latter case, more personal, lighter contents appear, supporting time-out and experience. Many informative contents are normally about the marketing-mix of the catering establishment. This includes information about the physical product, price reductions, or public relations (reference to the news about the company, e.g. in a daily newspaper) included in marketing communications (see also in He et al. 2014). The importance of public relations (hereinafter referred to as PR) contents in

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a social media environment cannot be underestimated (He et al. 2014), because long-term relationships with customers and company image-related marketing communications aims can be cost-effectively achieved through social media-driven PR messages. Additionally, informative contents can give many extra service marketing-mix elements of the company like news about the store itself, or about the staff. Entertaining contents are diverse in their topics, but some main themes can be differentiated, such as pictures and comments of the catering establishment, or activity-based contents like games, quizzes, votes, funny pictures and posts, etc. (Csordás–Gáti 2014) that can inspire consumer engagement.

Another differentiation of Facebook contents identified the rather unidirectional sales/marketing messages, and the interactive conversational messages that imply more two-way communication with consumers (Kwok–Yu 2013). The latter can be more personal as a specific type of social media content in the context of catering establishments (see He et al. 2013). Conversational messages can generate more active participation of the consumers, inspiring them to take part in the interactive company-consumer communication.

### **Research methodology**

It is a great challenge for SMEs to apply Facebook appropriately as a strategic marketing tool, since they have to face limited user attention, and continuous and gradually increasing noise caused by their competitors' similar activities (Paradiso 2015). In order to offer a unique tone of voice in social media these firms have the opportunity to create unique content (Vorvoreanu 2009; James 2014). Yet, they equally need to engage the community to participate in the brand's co-creation of value.

As there is no simple formula for successfully publishing in social media due to sectorial characteristics and the diversity of each firm's goals (Agresta et al. 2010), our work aims to extend the knowledge on the characteristics of popular (i.e. memorable) company-generated contents in a specific context, by answering the following research questions:

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RQ1. What kinds of unique contents do catering establishment SMEs have?

RQ2. What kinds of contents can be used for the company to inspire consumers for active participation?

We based our research on consumer narratives (N=151) written by university students at business studies related to their preferred catering establishment's Facebook pages (see Table 2). The resulting narratives represent the view of the respondents' own reality (Heinonen 2011) about the Facebook content of the analysed SMEs. The respondents were asked about their perceptions of the different types of contents that the company shared with them. The sample contains restaurants, confectionaries, bakeries, cafeterias, pubs, and bars. We have conducted content analysis of the narratives to identify the categories of contents that were memorable enough for our respondents to mention in their recollections. In this sense, our codes of different content types are the reflections/extracts of the consumers' perceived reality of the SMEs' company-initiated Facebook messages. The coding was done by two independent coders. The content analysis – the “study of recorded human communications”, which is “particularly well suited to the study of communications” (Babbie 2010. 333) – was conducted, because we created rules and categories for classifying the units in question to distinguish different social media content types based on our literature review. We tested our preliminary presumptions through qualitative content analysis, which is appropriate for our explorative research design.

**Table 2. Research design and methodology**

| Objectives  | Methods   | Sample characteristics   | Industry   | Inclusion criteria             | Period of analysis               |
|---|---|--|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Analysing consumer narratives to identify catering SME-generated social media content | Qualitative content analysis of consumer narratives about experiences in social media | 151 consumer narratives of business university students, aged 20-35, 64 male and 91 female | Services; catering establishments (restaurants, confectionaries, bakeries, cafeterias, pubs, bars) | SMEs (less than 250 employees) | February - April 2015 (3 months) |

*Source: own design*



We focused our research on a selected sector to provide our sample a more homogeneous environment for the more transparent and comparable analysis. Few former studies worked with the use of social media in catering establishments (Durkin–McGowan 2013; He et al. 2014), but we found our selection reassuring, because “eating and drinking motivates people easily, and it is visible on their Facebook sites, too. A restaurant or a confectionary that communicates properly with its fans can attract them even without serious campaigns” (Lévai 2012. 42).

We have used Facebook as our analysed social media platform. The reason for this is the following: in Hungary, the most commonly used platform is Facebook. This social media platform has a great importance for many such SMEs. Moreover, it is even the only really available (affordable and manageable) marketing communications platform.

## **Data and results**

### ***Special Facebook content types***

Mentions of unique and idiosyncratic SME-generated Facebook contents were given special attention in the study. Indeed, mentions of these are proof of being most memorable to consumers, and as such these contents performed as unique differentiators from the competition, thereby supporting the company to emerge from the information clutter present on the social media platform. Among these unique contents, we found that the informative and entertaining dimensions as observed by Csordás and Gáti (2014) were identifiable, although often with a significant overlap.

Informative contents (in the form of menu offers, contacts, opening hours, or sales/discounts) are more formal, mainly sales/marketing-related contents that are rather unidirectional and impersonal in nature. In contrast, entertaining contents are related to offers, employees, holidays, funny pictures, and music. These are conversational messages, implying consumer engagement and interaction. A relative liberty of expression and personal tone that SMEs are more prone to use are what makes these contents special and

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unique, leading to a more personal and close relationship between SMEs and their consumers.

Among the unique features mentioned in connection with the respondents' favourite catering establishments, five main topic areas were identified, two of which (PR and news) can be related to the informative, while three to the entertainment dimension.

First, PR contents were present in several forms in the narratives, where casual informative content is complemented by different unique information disclosure:

(1) In using social media as a PR channel, companies can promote their media appearances on the social media platform (e.g. promote a blog post), or they can relate to physical events on their Facebook site. PR presence can be identified as informative content, which can be considered special in a way that it can give extra experience for the consumers. Those consumers who liked the site can have additional experience through confirming their positive attitude towards the company. Therefore, PR presence can be useful not only for acquiring new customers, but also for confirming already established relationships.

(2) Second, companies can exhibit extra information about the catering establishment in more personal ways. These contents benefit the consumer for offering instantly useful information (e.g. the store running out of a product). So if some kind of internal, in-store changes happen, the company can report it on its Facebook page. These kind of contents can be reports on the situation, posts about renovations or innovations, special guests (e.g. cute pictures of guests with pets, or updates on the visit of a celebrity), and news attracting customers (e.g. special short-term offers or attention-raising messages about the place broadcasting sports events on a given evening), or job offers. These contents can facilitate consumers getting an inside look into the life of the company, thereby raising their interest for their next physical visit into the store.

If the company informs its Facebook followers before opening time, or about news, it can mean some kind of exclusivity for the consumers,

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which can enforce binding towards the company (Vorvoreanu 2009). Based on these findings, the extension of the already existing image and binding can be advantageous.

(3) As special entertaining contents, companies posted private, more personal information (e.g. like a personal blog of the operators, containing many intimate additional traits to their social media platform), with the primary aim of building relationships. SMEs, with their flat organizational hierarchy and a more personal social media management can upload messages more quickly, and without an overcomplicated top level control, because the SME owner/manager mostly immediately gets to know about the content uploaded.

(4) Consumer-generated contents are integrated into the posts, thereby expressing and enforcing the importance of the relationship with the consumers. Based on the consumer narratives, in one of the examples a restaurant lends a teddy bear to guests who wish to travel anywhere in the world. The teddy bear thus becomes an idiosyncratic and identifiable element of the SME's corporate identity. The guests then take photos of the teddy bear, and finally the catering establishment shares these photos on its own Facebook site, which makes the whole content more personal, giving us the feeling of "one of us".

(5) Company-generated contents include entertaining stories, pictures, or videos about the SME itself, or about the atmosphere of the place where the company operates (e.g. company-generated video about Budapest, where the restaurant is situated can give a unique feeling to the consumer). These special media contents are shared by the companies, with the primary aim of mediating some kind of atmosphere, to give the feeling of being special, have an intimate experience with the SME and thereby to engage more the consumer. These special contents can be created by the company itself, but the company can share e.g. artistic photos, too.

Based on the consumer narratives we can observe that the catering SMEs mentioned in the respondents' accounts try to differentiate themselves from their competitors on their Facebook page with

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**Table 3. Examples of special informative and entertaining Facebook contents**

| Topic of post                                   | Example   |
|---|---|
| <b>Informative content</b>                      |   |
| (1) PR: promoting activities and media presence | “They posted the blog posts written about them right after the opening, and it was part of their popularization.”   |
|   | “I find posts related to festivals, e.g. the latest post about Budapest Essentials urban festival that informs the fans of the page that the representatives of [the bar] will be present, and how and for how long can we get tickets for it.” |
| (2) News about the store                        | “If they have a quadruped guest on that day (dog-friendly place), they immediately post it on their Facebook page.”   |
|   | “It is important that under the shared pictures the waiters update the information, e.g. if you still want to taste it, hurry up, we only have 3 pieces left.”  |
|   | “Occasionally, they have small competitions, too, e.g. who solves the Rubik’s cube in the pub gets a free shot.”  |
| <b>Entertaining content</b>                     |   |
| (3) Private information                         | “The two operators view the page as a personal blog, and they post a story every week.”   |
| (4) Sharing consumer-generated content          | “They have a teddy bear that can be borrowed if someone goes to a special place, and photos can be made of the bear that the restaurant posts.”   |
|   | “If any guest sends something interesting, they usually share it. For example, a dear customer made a painting portraying the store, and then a picture was posted of it on the Facebook page, too.”  |
|   | “They present some creative, consumer-generated salad mix.”   |
| (5) Company-generated media content             | “They made videos with the same exaggerated care, which presented the food production process, and they gave a good impression of the atmosphere, too.”   |
|   | “The place shares (...) Youtube videos of the music bands that perform at the bar (promoting the concert to be organized).”   |
|   | “They share an artistic photo of Budapest every day, which makes me think how beautiful city we are living in, and the short films of Budapest make me feel alike.”   |

*Source: own research*

distinctive, idiosyncratic contents that outline their unique, differentiating attributes (see Table 3.).

***Contents that encourage active participation***

Bearing in mind that the majority of consumers are passive in the social media sphere (van Mierlo 2014) and special Facebook content types have only a limited capability to activate the passive crowd, whereas activity-encouraging, conversational messages have this virtue (Kwok–Yu 2013), content managers have to encourage Facebook contents that generate active consumer participation. Creating engaging contents is a challenge for companies, since only a part of the

consumers are willing to express activity in a greater extent (van Mierlo 2014). However, this activity should be of key priority for companies from different perspectives: on one hand having successfully generated engaging content is a positive affirmation and reflection for the company and by being a channel of communication, it is also a tool to manage the operations in the community. All these contents are powerful only if they can emphasize the peculiar characteristic of the current SME, and if they can highlight its unique positioning strategy.

In the consumer narratives (see Table 4), respondents remembered several attempts for their engagement by the company. In the case of activity-based messages, the main objective is not to inform or to entertain consumers, but to inspire the passive crowd for different activities. Namely:

(1) Encouraging for votes, where the possibility is given for consumers to express their opinions, thereby emphasizing that their remarks are precious for the company. The object of this activity can be directly connected to the main activity of the company, but their other, supplementary opinions can be inquired, too. If the vote is significant in any company-related activity (e.g. the menu depends on the consumers' votes), it can, in turn, generate additional user involvement (e.g. consumers experiencing their voice being heard by the company) and participation in social media activities related to the SME.

(2) Another inspiring activity mentioned by the consumer narratives is questioning, where the emphasis is put on the importance of consumer opinions. As compared to voting, a higher degree of freedom can be identified by asking consumers to express their opinions. Based on the narratives, we were able to differentiate substantive, opinion-requiring, and inviting questions, where the main aim is to raise and maintain interest. On a larger scale, however, one can identify a number of potential risks for the establishments under study, and SMEs in general. Indeed, while SMEs' social media pages can be often considered as higher-involvement than many large brands' pages, for reasons detailed beforehand, they, however, often operate with a smaller number of fans, which can harm the users' willingness to

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**Table 4. Types of contents that encourage active participation**

| Contents that generate active participation | Examples   |
|---|--|
| (1) Encouraging votes                       | “In a spirit of democracy, anyone can vote on particular elements of the menu for the next week.”  |
| (2) Questions                               | “This is a large part of their page, they attract their “fans” into their store, but you don’t feel that they force their products on you. There are many offers, generally in the form of an interrogative sentence, like: »Today, all our outlets are open; do you come for a baby sandwich or for an outdoor milk shake? : )« |
| (3) Game                                    | “The essential of these games is that they draw lots from among the people who share their weekly menu, and then the winner gets a free menu the next day.”  |
|   | “They try to inspire their fans to interactivity, and they ask in their post every time what is their favourite food/drink, and they encourage them to take a photo of their self-made hamburgers.”  |
|   | “They used to promote some kind of game once a week, e.g. last time we had to search for a cup of tea on a photo, and the first one who solved it got a prize, unfortunately I was only the fourth.”   |
| (4) Promotion                               | “I liked the Facebook page of [the bar] a long time ago, because they had a sale, that if you like the page from a smartphone, they give you a discount from their beer.”  |
|   | “According to a former initiative, the first visitor who checks in on Foursquare gets a free soup.”  |

*Source: own research*

participate (Parent et al. 2011). Thus, as well as being a tool for consumer involvement, both voting and questioning can be considered as tools for testing a fan base’s actual level of involvement. If the firm does not generate enough interest for the users to be involved, these tools should not be used until a higher level of involvement is reached.

(3) Games are probably the most wide-known form of contents that generate active participation. Games appear as external motivating factors, and a form of branded recreation. Beyond conventional games, various competitions and creative tasks were equally described in the narratives. Companies using games need to take into consideration that, on a long run, consumers who are active on a social media page because they expect to win prizes are likely to be harder to be reached without external motivation factors (Baird–Parasnis 2011), and do not belong to the brand’s actual community. All this indicates that these kinds of activities should be used in a limited way.

(4) While the above-identified content types can be linked with

raising interest, providing time-out, and underpinning consumer opinions, promotion-type contents have the main purpose of raising sales. In this case, consumers are motivated by various direct incentives offered by the company. Promotions surely raise sales on a short run, however, this tool can be effective in social media on the long run if consumers are motivated to share these pieces of information with each other. Two types of promotions were identified in this category: like-collecting, and check-in promotions, where participants get remunerations for liking the site, and for checking in from the catering establishment, respectively.

Summing up, companies have more opportunities to inspire their consumers for interactivity by conversational messages. Votes and questions (asking about their consumers' opinions, and giving them "power" by e.g. influencing the actual menu in the form of votes or answering questions) give the opportunity for their consumers to get their opinions to the company, thereby creating the bedrock of interactive communication. Inviting questions can persuade consumers to enter the catering establishment even if they did not plan the visit. If done well (i.e. in ways peculiar to the place and/or memorable to their fan base) games can raise commitment towards the SME, while promotions can stimulate online word-of-mouth processes.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Although there are numerous opportunities on Facebook for consumer activities, consumers mostly do not harness these opportunities: while they perceive (and as the narratives show, they remember) company attempts, some of our respondents qualified themselves as passive users, even of their favourite catering establishment's social media site. This result underpins earlier research findings, namely that only a very few users actually participate online, a phenomenon that was summed up as the "1% rule" (Ebner et al. 2005; Arthur 2006; van Mierlo 2014).

As such, the majority of the consumers in virtual communities are only observers or lurkers, i.e. they view events in the community from outside, instead of posting. Most of the consumers mentioned "liking"

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their preferred posts as the only activities they undertake, but some of them carry out other activities as well (e.g. share, comment, check-in, and evaluation). This supports the results of Alhabash and McAlister (2014), who found that consumers tend to give cognitively the least arduous feedback on the content coming towards them. In the case of Facebook, this means clicking on the like button, then sharing, then finally commenting, which happens the most rarely. These three activities were mentioned on several occasions by our respondents, others only occasionally. Nevertheless, companies should give considerably more attention to inspire their consumers for other activities – commenting, check-in –, because these contribute significantly to the word-of-mouth processes, too.

We can sum up that special SME social media contents can be differentiated by their informative and entertaining attributes. These categories are not mutually exclusive, a company can satisfy in the same time both the cognitive and emotional needs of their consumers. That is why we have to look at the personal, more intimate, “one of us” characteristic of a certain social media message besides its informative and/or entertaining nature (RQ1). These contents can only create added value for the SMEs if these businesses’ product/service positioning can be used to generate distinctive, idiosyncratic contents.

Based on the analysed consumer narratives, contents that trigger consumer activities are more likely to be games, questions, or votes. Moreover, behind consumer activity, we can identify traditional sales promotion motives (company incentives related to sales, coupons, or presents), thus mixing the sales/marketing and conversational purposes of the message as proposed by Kwok and Yu (2013). Our results, in accordance with Alhabash–McAlister (2014), suggest that it would be advantageous for catering establishment SMEs to inspire more cognitive activities for faster information diffusion. Consumer activity is mostly characterized by clicking on the “like” button, showing a massive presence of passive consumers. This tendency can be reversed by properly positioned, activity-inspiring content creation (RQ2). To harness the opportunities given by social media, a SME from the

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catering industry needs time and energy to manage its own official page(s) (Culnan et al. 2010; He et al. 2014). SME digital and social marketing research is in a relatively early stage of development, with few academic results so far in the area.

One of the main limitations of our research is the limited applicability of our results to other sectors, due to the sample selection. Besides, narrowing the focus of the research to Facebook has decreased the generalizability of our results to other social media platforms.

Further research should be conducted on different social media platforms, differentiating between small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, we should extend our research into more quantitative methodologies (see He et al. 2013, He et al. 2014), like quantitative content analysis, or exploring case studies from the best-case scenarios in the topic of social media content marketing management. Finally, our future research should focus on other sectors of industry (with significant SME activity), to compare companies' social media content marketing practices under different conditions, as social networking sites may be more relevant for certain industries than for others.

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