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Current state of online response strategies in literature and its future direction.

Author: Veronika Miller
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede
the Netherlands
v.miller@utwente.nl, s1233947

Abstract

Nowadays social media does not have only a high impact and influence on individuals and groups, but also on business sectors. Consequently, appropriate response strategies to overcome reputational damage are needed. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to identify the current state of literature and develop propositions as an incentive for future research.

Previous investigation has concentrated solely on the importance of the World-Wide-Web, possible threats and their effects. However, previous research has failed to develop effective techniques for organizations to deal with customers' complaints in social media. Accordingly, due to a lack of response strategies the current state of literature is very limited.

The absence of proper strategies can lead to radical effects organizations need to deal with. In negative comments and reviews in form of tweets on *Twitter*, comments on *Facebook* and videos on *YouTube* customers complain about quantity of products and services. It can even scare away potential customers.

The paper will underline the urgency of further studies and motivate researchers to fill the gap of information. The expansion of studies will provide companies with the necessary response strategies they can integrate as guidelines in their organizational processes.

Supervisors: R.P.A. Loohuis, Dr.E. Constantinides

Keywords: social media, reputation threats, reputation damage, response strategies, digital reputation strategies, reputation management, online reputation strategies

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1 Introduction

The intention of the following section is to give important background information needed to understand the increasing importance of social media in today's society. Moreover the research problem and the structure will be introduced.

1.1 Background information

In the 1990s the development of computer technology opened the door for a higher number of digital tools. In the beginning of the 21st century social media started to facilitate communication and information share in the World-Wide-Web. In the course of time a burgeoning interest on the social media could be observed. *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Myspace* and others accumulated a greater number of users. This new digital area enables a fast communication and informational share with the ability to overcome global distances. The increasing utilization of social media in today's society leads to a so called "social media phenomenon" (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, Silvester, 2011, p. 241). Nowadays social media covers all sectors beginning with economic organizations and ending with religious associations. So, newspapers like the *New York Times* participates successfully in social media (Nolan, 2009). Even the *Catholic Press Association* offers webinars for churches in order to explain them how to gain opportunities from being active in the digital world (Kietzmann, et al., 2011).

Organizations have diverse possibilities in interacting with social media. They can participate in microblogs, social networks, media-sharing platforms, social bookmarking, voting-sites, forums and blogs (Kreutzer & Hinz, 2010). The most important aspects of the utilization of these platforms are communication with users, authenticity, honesty, transparency, and the ability to react successfully to complaints (Kreutzer & J.Hinz, 2010).

1.2 Bright and dark side of social media

Like Kreuzer and Hinz mentioned in their article, the creation of strong emotional commitment and loyalty to products and brands can be seen as one of the most important advantages of social media. Consequently the perception of brands can be easily changed. Moreover using social media is one of the most useful marketing tools as it is cost-efficient and has a wide customer reach.

Despite the various advantages of social media the "collaborative unfair ratings in such systems have been recognized as an important but difficult problem" (Yang, Sun, Kay, Yang, 2009, p. 1). Social media users do not need a permission of firms in order to communicate about brands, products or services. Based on the inexperience of organizations they try to ignore and avoid participation in social media due to the fact that they do not realize exactly the effects and opportunities (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Organizations do not understand the "various forms social media can take and how to engage with it and learn" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 241). As complains impact companies' reputation, sales and survival, appropriate response strategies are needed in order to guard companies against reputational damage. For this reason it is crucially important to have guidelines how to engage with social media and how to "develop strategies for monitoring, understanding, and responding to different social media activities" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 243).

Organizations need to decide whether to ignore or to react on complains. Unfortunately, both reactions lead to serious impacts on firms (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). The ignorance of communication leads to even higher damage. For example more

complains and negative rumours may appear, whereby a reaction can calm down negative appearing reputations (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Like BBC Business Editor Tim Weber (2010) explains in his article, "these days, one witty tweet, one clever blog post, one devastating video forwarded to hundreds of friends at the click of a mouse, can snowball and kill a product or damage a company's share price" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 242).

In order to prevent reputation crisis in social media organizations need to monitor the web before starting to develop a Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategy. The goals of SMM are to increase the knowledge of the brand, an improved search engine ranking and management of reputation (Kreutzer & Hinz, 2010). Fast and active responding can prevent crisis and PR-catastrophes. Organizations need to fight and correct negative perception, whereby positive perceptions need to be reinforced (Kreutzer & Hinz, 2010).

1.3 Research Problem

Social media is a digital technology that allows communication between users. It is not only used as a communication tool, but also as an informational source to be political, economic and environmental up to date. Increasingly, the different platforms of the social media like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube* and others are also utilized in order to exchange experiences with brands, products or services. The experience of customers can be delivered through comments or reviews on social media sites. The hereof emerging *reputation* of a company can be explained as a picture of a firm individuals have. So, past activities and interactions with customers lead to positive or to negative reputation. In the worst case, potential customers can be scared away if they see an inappropriate behaviour of a company. Accordingly, organizations need proper *response strategies*. They allow organizations to react to negative comments in an appropriate way. These guidelines can help organizations to overcome reputational damages caused by complains or negative reviews in social media.

As a matter of fact a really suitable example for dealing successfully with complains destroying reputation is *Domino's*. In 2009 an employee filmed a movie of a colleague who disregarded the hygiene standards. These movie was posted on *YouTube* and spread quickly all over the world (Ross, 2009). The consequence was a nationwide cut into their profits. Also the branch store needed to be shut down. Responding to this sensible mistake, *Domino's* produced their own video clip in order to decrease the raising criticism in the World-Wide-Web. On the one hand, customers have the right to complain, but on the other hand, it harms the company. Such actions can lead to significant consequences, as seen in the example above. Though organizations understand the need of being active in the social media, the overall problem of many companies is that they do not truly understand how and what kind of performance indicators they need to measure (Hanna, Rohm, Crittenden, 2011). Organizations need to identify the reasons of attacks such as missing enthusiasm of companies, inappropriate behaviour of customers and others. Anyway, as customers have the power to influence profit, success and reputation it is crucially important to react. In fact, before starting to react, companies should consider the different types and styles of attacks, as different response strategies are needed. In section two the reasons, styles and types of attacks will be explained in more detail.

Organizations treat social media platforms like *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter* as "stand-alone elements" instead integrating these into their organizational processes and strategies (Hanna, Rohm, Crittenden, 2011, p. 265). As a matter of fact a variety of attitudes toward social media sites such as

Facebook can be found at any level among various organizations. Some use digital channels successfully to communicate with existing and potential customers. Others are afraid of their inability to react properly on complaints (Hanna, Rohm, Crittenden, 2011). The characteristics of this channel such as; empowerment of customers, publicity of bad reputation and negative comments in conversations may lead to radical and damaging outcomes. (Hanna, Rohm, Crittenden, 2011).

A successful appearance of organizations in conflicting situations requires reliable concepts and guidelines. Many articles explain diverse impacts of social media and their negative effects. On the one hand, organizations start creating accounts and use social media as a communication platform. On the other hand, it is not known much about response strategies after a customer's attack via social media. Sufficient literature covering this research topic is not given. Based on the missing factual information and studies, the goal of the conceptual paper is to examine the current literature focusing on strategies to response on complaints and reviews to avoid reputational damage. In addition, an agenda for further research will be created.

Therefore this conceptual paper conducted to this point will focus on the following question:

What is the current state of the literature on social media strategies to overcome reputational damage and in which direction should literature develop?

1.4 Materials and Methods

Since the bachelor thesis is based only on paper analysis it is crucially important to identify the selection criteria that will be used in order to answer the research question.

Scientific articles will be reviewed that deal with social media response strategies or instructions how a react on threats caused by customers, employees or even competitors. Because of the scarcity of strategies, an important source of knowledge for this thesis is provided by the book *Attack of the customers: Why critics assault brands online and how to avoid becoming a victim*, written by Paul Gillin and Greg Gainfort (2012). So, the complete section two will rely on information of this book.

1.5 Research Structure

After the introduction of the topic and the problem will be observed in the following. The second paragraph of the conceptual paper deals with the reasons, importance, styles and types of attacks. In chapter three, various scientific articles will be reviewed dealing with existing online response strategies. The analysis of the current state of literature will lead to the discussion in chapter four, summarizing the identified research gaps. In the same chapter six propositions will be suggested as an encouragement for future research.

2 Attacks of customers

As attacks are not uncommon in social media it is necessary to understand why customers attack companies. The following section will explain the causes of attacks, why they should be valued, styles of attacks and the types of complainers, relying on the book *Attack of the customers: Why critics assault brands online and how to avoid becoming a victim* written by Paul Gillin and Greg Gainfort (2012).

2.1 Why do customers attack?

One of the reasons why customers attack organization is the missing respect they receive from companies they do business with. For example customers are unsatisfied and irritated by robotic voices integrated in service hotlines, instead they want to communicate with a person in authority from the beginning (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). Above and beyond missing enthusiasm of organizations during problem solving and absent apology predetermine a complaining behaviour. Even a poor customer service is a trigger to attack companies. Other triggers that lead to attacks are the following: poor experience, bad treated customers with high influence in online communities, violation of ethical practices like trust, transparency etc., inappropriate manner of employees and the fact that some companies pretend to do something, while doing nothing (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). Further customers complain about "legal guidelines like disclosure or terms and conditions that are violated" (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). Besides customers become angry due to the fact that companies control a community on social outlets, give incorrect information and neither respond insufficiently nor in time (see Appendix, table 1). Although an absolute satisfaction is not possible, organizations should concentrate on the most important complaints to help business ahead of the competition.

2.2 Why should attackers be valued?

Through complains customers make companies aware of existing problems, which they can solve timely and give companies a hint to change and learn (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). Attacks can be used as early warning signals. Problems can be fixed faster in order to prevent possible escalations. Further customers who complain in social media influence others by sharing their opinions and experiences.

2.3 Styles of attacks

Most of the complainers are *voicers* (37%) who help companies to improve their appearance by attacking them directly (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). *Passives* (14%) continue business but without enthusiasm. When they complain, their complaints are natural and do not influence people. The *irates* (21%) do not directly complain to companies, instead they criticise products, services and share their displeasure with other social media users (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). This style of attack is neither helpful for attackers nor for companies. The last one are the *activists* (28%). It is the most dangerous style. Complainers seek revenge by spreading their bad experience to everyone in social media. Even if a company tries to change and improve the occurring problems they will never support the company. This kind of behaviour can even damage the stock price of an organization (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012).

2.4 4 types of attackers different personas

The bad experience of *casual complainers* leads to irritation, but not to dramatic actions. They also have a limited brand loyalty or no other alternatives. This type of attackers complains, but does not leave the organization (Gillin & Gainfort, 2012). In consequence, a high concentration on them will not bring a high reward. The *extortionists* are motivated by personal gain like big rewards, damage or compensation. They can even start blackmailing in order to reach their aim (Gillin & Gainfort,

2012). Consequently, companies need to evaluate them individually and move the conversation offline. A confident appearance is necessary. Another type of attackers are the *committed crusaders*, who are the most stubborn and most successful attackers. They are motivated by the environment, human or animal rights, and public health or consumer rights like Greenpeace. Moreover they dispose knowledge of how to complain successfully about their cause and enemies (Gillin & Gainforte, 2012). Therefore, organizations should treat them with respect. The last group of attackers are the *indignant influencers*. They attack from nowhere. In the most cases they are actors, athletes, politicians, etc. More to the point, they are very powerful and have a high ability to influence others. Organizations need to be careful and to act with tact (Gillin & Gainforte, 2012).

3 Literature Review

There is a large amount of research that deals with the effects on organizations participating in social media. But research that includes response strategies is very rare, as “more than three quarters of the social media-driven crises studied could have been prevented if the companies had been better prepared” (Gillin & Gianforte, 2012).

This chapter combines several theories to obtain an overview of existing literature dealing with strategies helping to overcome reputation damaging attacks in general.

3.1 Honeycomb framework of social media

Drawing on early work by Kietzmann (2011), the following section will concentrate on his *honeycomb framework of social media* (see figure 1). Kietzmann developed a framework consisting of seven functional building blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups. As social media is defined as “interactive web platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content” organizations can utilize the honeycomb framework to clarify the social media ecology and understand the audience and their needs (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 241). All in all this framework leads to an understanding of how companies should monitor, engage, and exploit different functionalities of the diverse social media platforms such as *Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn* etc. Organizations need to decide in which block they want to be present. So, the intention of the honeycomb framework to “understand and develop social media platforms, and the social media landscape more generally, is increasingly important” (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 249).

The first block of the framework is **identity**. This block represents to what extent users reveal their identities in the social media. It portrays an individual or a company by giving information about age, gender, professions, and characteristics. Published information within social media can vary between the real and fictional identity. Moreover, different identity strategies varies between organizations. Some utilize social media as a business card, whereby others focus on self-promotion or self-branding. Therefore organizations should use this block in order to create and manage the reality, intimacy and immediacy of a context.

The **conversation block** explains the communication process between users. Some use communication tools in order to create new contacts or to increase their self-esteem. Others utilize it to draw attention to environmental problems, economic issues, or political debates. Organizations can even manipulate topics of conversations. For example *Unilever*, in their *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* in 2004, asked their reviewers to vote whether a woman displayed was “fat” or “fab”. Manipulation can lead to advantages as well as to drawbacks. Organizations need to know when and how to manipulate, otherwise it will lead to the opposite of the firm’s original goal. As the differences in frequency, content, speed and numbers of conversation impact the company’s way of monitoring, they need to implement specific tools to analyse behaviours and complains.

In the **sharing block** content is exchanged, distributed and received. People are connected by a shared object, for example text, video, picture, sound, link or location. During the utilization of social media it is crucially important to differentiate between two fundamental implications. At first organizations need to identify existing or new common objects which can convey users shared interest. *YouTube*, as an example, allows people to upload homemade videos. Secondly organizations need to categorize the degree to which the object should be shared. It is important to integrate user rules in order to prevent ethical, legal or social violence. For example *YouTube* was forced to re-think their user rules after critic appeared based on copyright laws since users started to upload not self-made videos.

The **presence block** allows social media users to identify their accessibility and the location of individuals in both the virtual and the real world. It is important to consider that intimacy and immediacy of a relationship influences the subsistence in the social media. Additionally a relation between presence and communication can be drawn, as a higher presence in social media lead to higher influence during conversations.

The next block, dealing with **relationships**, extents how users are related to each other. Common interests of users lead to conversation and the share of objects, to meet up or add friends to their lists. Furthermore it determines which and how information is exchanged and how the block consists of three types of relationship; formal, regulated and structured relationships. As strong relationships are long-lasting and affective, weak relationships instead are infrequent and distant. As follows firms need to understand how they can maintain and/or build relationships.

Reputation as Kietzmann explains in his article is “the understanding the standing of others”. Further reputation has significant implications for how firms should effectively engage social media.

The **group block** explains the extent to which individuals can build communities or sub-communities. The number of followers, members and contacts depend on the degree of the sociality of the group. The block can be divided into two types of groups. Individuals can “sort through their contacts and place their buddies, friends, followers, or fans into different self-created groups (e.g., *Twitter* has lists) and online groups can be analogous to clubs in the offline world: open to anyone, closed (approval required), or secret (by invitation only)” (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 247). Nowadays it is remarkably important to concentrate not only on one block, but rather on three to four blocks. As follows, organizations should utilize for example *Facebook* as it concentrates on relationship, presence, identity

conversation and reputation. Additionally *YouTube* as it focuses on sharing, conversation, groups and reputation.

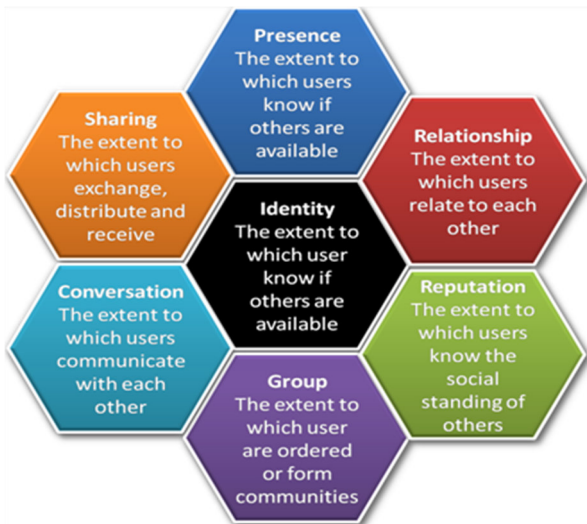


Figure 1. Honeycomb model of social media.

Retrieved from: <http://smbp.uwaterloo.ca/2013/10/honeycomb-and-social-crm/>

3.2 The 4 C's

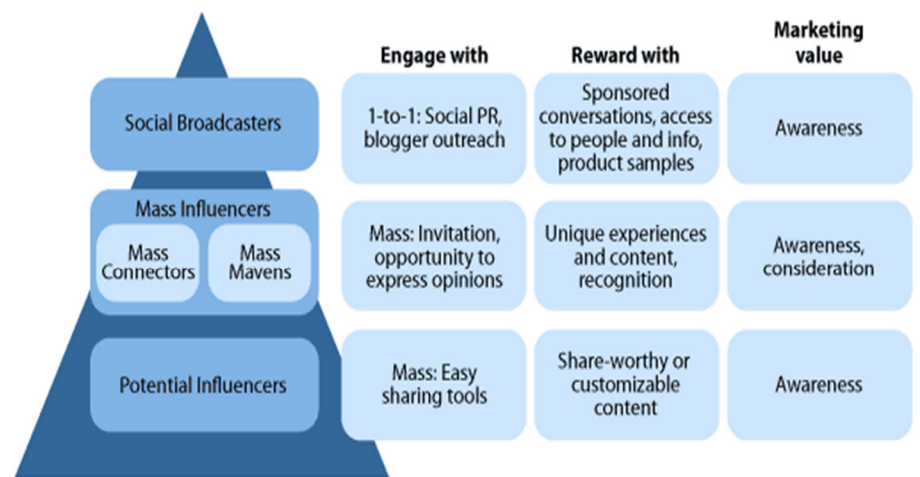
The following section will deal with the 4 C's of Kietzmann. In order to develop monitoring, understanding and responding strategies it is significantly important to apply the 4 C's guideline: cognize, congruity, curate and chase. Starting with the first organizations need to **cognize** (recognize) and understand the social media landscape. The aim here is to "unveil the social media functionality and engagement implications for understanding your customers and identify if and where conversations already take place" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p.249). Additionally it is important to identify the main influencer. Besides organizations need to collect information whether or not rivals are active in social media and on what kind of strategy they rely on.

Further **congruity** is also important for organizations. They need to "develop strategies that are congruent with, or suitable to, different social media functionalities and the goals of the firm" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 249). Additionally, firms need to concentrate on the execution of the customers' satisfaction. So, if a customer is dissatisfied with a product or service the duty of the company is to improve their performance. Accordingly the increased satisfaction of customers would lead to higher trust. Further, the responsibility of a firm is to act as a **curator**. It determines the time and sequence of intervening into conversations on social media platforms. Auxiliary it delegates the responding responsibility to chosen employees who are capable of utilizing social media comments, identify customers' needs and create content. In order to appeal as reliable, organizations need to create "mash-ups which combine content

and functionality from a variety of sources that already exist" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 249). Along these lines, organizations can utilize third party material like existing research or videos of individuals covering the appearing problem in the social media. The last C is the **chase** of information of social media activities. It is considerable to observe the "environment in order to understand the velocity of conversations and other information" affecting the current or future market position (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 250). Companies need to follow conversations of brands, products or services in order to capture the opportunities which are given through social media. The ignorance of negative comments leads to serious impacts, so if a reaction seems to be too late, "an appropriate social media response may turn the tide" (Kietzmann, et al., 2011, p. 250). As customers expect a listening, engaging and responding behaviour of organizations in the social media, the combination of the honeycomb framework and the 4 C's can help to react in the right way. Organizations can monitor and understand social media activities in order to create the right social media strategy.

3.3 Categories of social media users

The following section relates to Kreutzer and Hinz dealing with different categories of social media users. Users can be divided into three categories: the influencer, above-average active users and regular users. The user's high frequency of communication and high amount of friends lead to the strong ability to influence less active users. According to Kreutzer and Hinz *Forrester Research* (2010) **influencers** can be divided into three groups.



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 2. Categories of social media users.

Retrieved from: Kreutzer, R.T. & Hinz, J. (2010). Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von Social Media Marketing

His Peer-Influencer Pyramid was developed in order to distinguish between the social broadcasters, mass influencer and potential influencer (see figure 2). The **social broadcasters** belong to the smallest group of influencers. Nevertheless they have many followers and fans who follow their recommendations. **Mass influencers** are the most influential users. They generate the majority of products and services. This group can be divided into two sub-groups. Firstly, the mass connectors create content of social networks, secondly the mass mavens spread the content all over the different social media platforms. Last but not least the largest group consists of the **potential influencer** who have the largest trust based network. After organizations have identified the platform they want to use and

influence, the following responding guidelines according to Gainess-Ross (2010), Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) should be implemented in the organizational process of organizations. Running a business and being active on sites requires a lot of time and work (Kaplan & Haenlin). As a result before starting to implement the right response strategy on social media platforms it is momentous to carefully choose on which of the diverse platforms to be active. In this manner, companies need to concentrate on the target group and the activity of customers in the Word-Wide-Web. They need to be clear on which platforms users are more active. Time and effort will be wasted if the organizations would decide to be active on *Facebook* whereby users mostly prefer blogs as a platform for complaints (Kaplan & Haenlin, 2010).

Relating to the article of Gainess-Ross published 2010, six response strategies guide organizations to react on reputations in a profitable way. First of all, organizations need to avoid force as this attitude will deteriorate the current inconvenient situation. Responding to negative reputations or threats with force may lead to an increase of negative word-of-mouth in the social media. A forceful action will spread like a wildfire. Instead of using force organizations should concentrate on responding at high speed and advanced training “as damage of an attack continuous to spread” (Gainess-Ross, 2010, p. 4). That is why responsible team “need to be trained in their new-media tolls so that they can use them quickly and without friction” (Gainess-Ross, 2010, p.5). Further frontline teams should be empowered in order to meet messages without counter messages. Additionally organizations should utilize the same tactics like their rouge customers. In the Dominos case, mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, the company responded to the tell-it-all video on *YouTube*. This strategy preserved the organizations from a total bankruptcy. Besides companies should “recruit and develop force multipliers who will echo” the organizational messages (Gainess-Ross, 2010, p. 6). Thus, independent third parties willing to take the organization’s side should be used as a backup. Last but not least companies should “go into battle with credentials in place” (Gainess-Ross, 2010, p. 7). Positive recognition by third parties in the recent place can help a company to gain the benefit of the doubt in a situation where the facts are in dispute.

According to Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) all social media activities should be aligned with each other, as the use of different communication channels is a profitable and inexpensive strategy. But companies need to consider that the communication goal of social media is to reduce uncertainty (Kaplan & Haenlin, 2010). For that reason, they need to take attention not to confuse contradicting messages across different channels. Further a media plan should be integrated into their organizational processes and an access for all should be ensured. Although everyone in the organization should have an access to all platforms, it is crucially important to align responsibility of monitoring and responding to reputations to a group of people. The responsible group could start conversations and react properly to negative comments, whereby the other members should be informed about the current dissatisfaction and actions will be taken, as they are part of the whole organizations. A guideline with appropriate behaviour advices in social media should be integrated as well. One example of a possible behaviour advice could be to interact with customers with the real identity in order to prevent a feeling of anonymity and manipulation that “fake messaged and overly-positive feedback” are utilized (Kaplan & Haenlin, 2010, p. 66). Responsible individuals should also be interesting and humble. They need to create an interesting response in order to catch the attention of a

higher amount of users. They also need to learn the basic rules of how to use a platform they are active on. Also unprofessionalism is needed. Organizations need to “avoid overly-professional content offerings” and do not need to hire a professional writer for blogs, as it would create a feeling of to be a cut above users (Kaplan & Haenlin, 2010, p. 67). Last but not least they need to be honest by creating action transparency.

4 Discussion

In this section the current state of literature will be analysed critically. It will summarize the identified missing information in existing literature. Moreover this paragraph will shed a light on the future direction by delivering propositions.

4.1 Research Gapes

This paper examined the current state of literature on social media strategies which are needed to overcome reputational damage. Indeed, the amount of literature dealing with response strategies is very limited. As a matter of fact organizations do not have sufficient data and literature they can rely on. All articles miss exact guidelines which predetermine companies’ reaction on complaints and negative reviews. All suggested strategies are taken for granted, as none of the articles rely on evaluated data. Likewise a lot of questions appear like: *How strategies should be integrated? What is needed for a successful implementation of the strategies?*

Related to the above mentioned literature, companies misunderstand the various forms of responses in social media. It is clear that there is no real coherence between the strategies discussed. As Evidence Based Management is a fundamental base to make good and sustainable decisions, sufficient and reliable information is needed to develop reacting strategies, as social media comments influence perception of brands and products. In view of that organizations need action plans which explain step by step how to react on negative and positive reviews to prevent a pathetic, defensive and negative image. It is obvious that specific guidelines are missing. On the one hand, the honeycomb framework helps companies to interpret the social media ecology, understand audiences and their needs relying on needed technologies and tools. On the other hand, a concrete explanation of technologies, tools and their implementation are missing. The framework does not give specific information about how to act successfully after deciding where to be active. Even the 4 C’s have some points of criticism. Again no specific actions are given. For example, as an organization needs to act as a curator it is important to identify how often and when the company should interfere into conversations.

4.2 Propositions

The following part will concentrate on the future direction of literature. Resulting the following propositions are recommended and utilized as outcomes and encouragement for future research.

P1: *Companies with defined social media based action plans will sooner recover from reputational damage from customer attack than companies who don’t.*

For organizations it is momentously important to have a guideline which predicts the behaviour of organizations and with customers. As the reputation of a company influences the customer’s buying behaviour and their coherent financial

position, problems need to elucidate as quickly as possible. A fast corporate reaction based on defined action plans leads to a faster recovery of a firm's bad reputation. The future research should concentrate on the identification of the efficiency and results of response strategies mentioned in the existing literature. As a result interviews or surveys can be utilized as a tool to collect strategies already applied by companies.

P2: Differentiate social media messages by target groups will sort a more effective recovery as an undifferentiated strategy.

Due to different target groups it is necessary to differentiate between actions. Organizations cannot only copy and paste an excuse, comment or message as situations and complain personas differ from each other. Exempli gratia aggressive customer complainers and meek complainers require different approaches and contact. Meek complainers are satisfied with an "I am sorry" and will transform to passive brand advocates, whereby aggressive complainers require a fast reaction, offline communication, identification of every customer's dissatisfaction and concrete explanation what will be done to solve the problem. Therefore, researchers should make a study which identifies specific strategies for different target groups and industries.

P3: Explicit strategies for most common situations will reduce misunderstandings and confusion of organizations.

Research that identifies the most common topics of conversation is needed. Thus problem-based response strategies should be identified, as they would guide companies throughout the conflict in social media.

P4: Organizations with adequate technological resources can react faster than companies without.

Organizations need to be clear what kind of technologies and tools are needed in order to react faster on comments in social media. They should know in advance the different possibilities to overcome negative reputation. A late identification of existing and not-existing technologies companies will waste precious time which can upset the customer even more. Consequently, future literature should concentrate on the identification of the most adequate tools, so that inexperienced companies can rely on them. Moreover the research should concentrate on the identification of different response strategies for different organizations like big companies or environmental associations.

P5: Organizations knowing how to find influencers and how to connect them will lead to a faster recovery than others.

Organizations should have an ace in the hole. As a result they would have the possibility to contact the influencer as the most important counterpart when reputation needs to be rebuilt. Companies need to know exactly who the influencers are and how to contact them, as they dispose of influence on social media users. Hence the future research should identify characteristics of influencers so that organizations could recognize them on short time. In addition the literature should analyse the most effective and efficient contact strategy.

P6: Companies being active on the same sites as their customers will prevent waste of time and costs.

Companies operating actively on the customer's most visited sites will prevent waste of time and costs. Accordingly, knowing from the start where the customers are present in social media

will avoid unnecessary business profiles. As a result researchers should identify the most visited sites. Henceforth, future research should provide substantial data of users, the age, other characteristics and the activity.

5 Conclusion

The integration of solid response strategies for organizations being active in social media is an essential part of a successful operational process. However, how to respond to complaints and reviews in a proper way remains unclear, as literature dealing with response strategies to overcome damaging reputation is rare. In the last decades the importance of social media in business sectors has increased significantly. As a matter of fact a company's reputation can be offended through the direct exchange of customers' experiences in comments or reviews. Consequently, strategies need to be implemented. During the analysis of existing strategies incomplete information could identify. The approaches are helpful, but specific guidelines are missing. Therefore, misunderstandings and confusions can be found among businesses trying to respond to negative comments. More complete and accurate response strategies containing explicit defined action plans, differentiated strategies and identified tools and technologies will facilitate organizational response to various negative comments and reviews. Moreover companies' reputations can be fixed faster. Once organizations have a clear understanding of the future direction of the literature research can take steps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of current strategies. It is highly recommended to utilize substantial data to substantiate the suggested propositions. All in all additional research is necessary to fully understand which strategies fits best for special reputation situations. Besides, more sophisticated methods would be needed in order to identify if the chosen strategies can be applied in every business field in the same way.

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8 Appendix

Table 1: Cause of attack

Cause of attack	% of incidents
A customer has a proper experience not attributable to an individual employee	17%
A customer, who happens to have high influence in a community, is treated badly	16%
A company broke common ethical practices (for example, trust, transparency, fair competition) in social media	14%
A few employees behaved inappropriate	8%
A company posts inappropriate or controversial content on social media outlets	8%
A company pretends to be something it isn't	7%
Legal guidelines like disclosure or terms and conditions are violated	7%
A company attempts to control a community on social outlets	6%
The attacker is a group promoting a cause (for example, Greenpeace or PETA)	6%
Incorrect information is reported, not necessarily with the company's knowledge	5%
A company fails to respond to a complaint sufficiently and in timely manner	5%
Other	4%