

## **Social Marketing in Sport Communication**

### **Marketing Sociale nella Comunicazione dello Sport**

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#### **Abstract**

The present paper was created with the aim of considering, in its various expressions, the role of social marketing in sports communication.

In recent years, social media have radically changed the way Internet users are: they are considered one of the main elements through which effective marketing campaigns are carried out.

Starting from a general definition of social marketing, the involvement of users through online sports marketing will be analyzed, both at an amateur level and at a competitive level.

Il presente elaborato nasce con l'obiettivo di analizzare, nelle sue varie espressioni, il ruolo del marketing sociale nell'ambito della comunicazione sportiva.

I social media negli ultimi anni hanno modificato in modo radicale la maniera in cui gli individui utilizzano internet: essi rappresentano uno degli strumenti principali attraverso cui svolgere campagne di marketing realmente efficaci.

Partendo da una definizione di carattere generale del marketing sociale, sarà analizzato il coinvolgimento del popolo degli utenti attraverso la promozione online dell'attività sportiva, sia a livello dilettantistico che a livello agonistico.

#### **Keywords**

Sport; marketing; communication, social media.

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## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

In recent years, social media have established themselves in the panorama of the habits of Italians, influencing the way people communicate and creating the so-called “2.0 generation”.

Since the creation of Facebook we have witnessed the birth of new platforms to keep people always in touch with each other and promote communication between individuals thousands of miles away even more immediately than with the classic email.

Until today, when those who use the web are no longer content to browse through the various sites as a simple observer of what is published but can himself create content, share images, express opinions making online communication a two-way exchange.

The enormous development of digital technology has therefore irreversibly changed the nature of communication and in particular of sports communication. Facebook, Twitter, but also blogs and digital networks are attracting the resources and investments of sports clubs, opening new paths and giving life to more and more innovative projects.

## **1. Social marketing**

Marketing is the process, which is used to determine what products or services can be of interest to customer. Social networks help in improving the marketing of organizations to new insights about the brand, which offers innovative ways to implement the basic marketing programs, as well as new methods to win in online discussions of important business (Hepp A, 2013; Greenhalgh G, 2017). So they can use these new opportunities, they need the tools that their companies can monitor conversations across the Internet effectively and participate. The goal is to link the success of activities in social networks with marketing programs and processes (Ngai K, 2015; Kaplan AM, 2010).

Social networking sites are the source of almost inexhaustible views of clients and situations, and the challenge is to control this information in an appropriate manner and in a meaningful way for the company and that brings real benefits for them. Social networking is also a suitable framework for core activities in marketing on the Internet (Hutchins B, 2012, 2016,2017).

Social networks provide the opportunity to talk with customers on a personal level, which is usually difficult to achieve or impossible through traditional channels. Marketing on social networking sites is not a substitute for traditional marketing. It should be treated as an additional channel with unique characteristics that can complement other marketing activities. With this approach, we can increase the effectiveness of each channel (Thackeray R, 2008; Treddinik L, 2006).

Traditional media such as television, newspaper, radio and magazine, are one way, static technologies. For instance, the magazine publisher is a large organisation that distributed expensive content to consumer, while advertisers pay for the privilege of inserting their ads into the content. Social networks can be used as great tools for people who typically share a common interest or activity (Jensen JA, 2016; Di Palma D, 2017).

They provide a variety of ways for users to interact with each other. And every person, who wants to join a social networking site he must create his own profile. This profile describe his interests, his need and his wishes. Through the person’s profile we can know his friends (other users) who have similar interests by searching the network, or inviting others to join (Miah A, 2017).

There are, however, some basic strategies that can help organizations for better leverage of

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is the result of a collective work of the authors, the specific contribution of which is to be referred to as follows: Antonio Ascione: Introduction and paragraph n. 3 – Patrizia Belfiore: paragraphs n. 1, 2 and Conclusion

the social networks as a part of their overall customer management strategy:

- Treat social networking as a new channel within CRM: Many companies already use CRM solutions to manage customers, contacts, interactions, and communications, so it makes sense to continue to use customer management tools when these activities move into social networking channels.
- Enhance and extend CRM through social networking: While social networking activities can be considered as an additional channel in CRM, they also extend and enhance the capabilities of CRM with new ways of engaging customers and managing conversations.
- Play to the strengths of both CRM and social networks: Use CRM and social networking sites together to listen better to customers, analyze information, and respond to customers in a way that's meaningful to them.

## **2, Social media, social networking and information**

Literature from several areas of study reports social media play an important role for companies and society in the third millennium (Ngai et al., 2015). The quantity of information available through the social media is voluminous (Bronwyn H, 2014).

Social media provides opportunities for users to generate, share, receive, and comment on social content among multi users through multisensory communication (Boyd DM, Ellison NB. 2008; Thackeray R, 2008, Kaplan AM et al.2010). Although the terms “social media” and “social networking” are often used interchangeably and have some overlaps, they are not really the same. Social media functions as a communication channel that delivers a message, which involves asking for something.

Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan AM et Haenlein M, 2010) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”. They suggested that social media can be classified as two components: media-related and social dimension. The media-related component involves how close to synchronous face-to-face communication different types of social media come and how well they reduce ambiguity and uncertainty.

The social dimension is based on Goffman's notion of self-presentation, whereby individuals' interactions have the purpose of trying to control others' impressions of them. Social media can be classified in a number of ways to reflect the diverse range of social media platforms, such as collaborative projects (eg, Wikipedia), content communities (eg, YouTube), social networking sites (eg, Facebook), and virtual game and social worlds (eg, World of Warcraft, Second Life) (Stewart SA, 2012).

Social networking is two-way and direct communication that includes sharing of information between several parties.

There is a variety of definitions of the term Social Networking Sites. User participation and user generated content is a common element of many definitions (Tredinnick, 2006; Constantinides et al, 2008). According to Constantinides and Fountain (Constantinides E et al. 2008) are one of the five application types of the Web 2.0 domain (Social Media) and defined as “applications allowing users to build personal web sites accessible to other users for exchange of personal content and communication”.

## **3. What is the role of social media in sports marketing?**

The classic mass media, with their standardized forms of advertising and communication, are today an outdated format and the key words of the social media era are today connectivity and interactivity. The consumer is no longer content to watch the football game or the individual sports competition passively but wants to share his opinions and interact with others in real

time: these are aspects that today represent a fundamental component of being a fan regardless of kind of sport (Thorpe H, 2017; Belfiore P, 2018; Funk DC, 2016).

The fan and the sports fan of today wants to have the opportunity to follow live the events of his team or his favorite athlete, receive news and updates in real time, watch the clips of the race at all times and also and above all mobile. Moreover, as we said above, the new need was born to express impressions and opinions on what happens and it is in this context that social media are positioned as the perfect platform for communication (Hutchinson J, 2016; Ascione A, 2018).

A role, that of social media in sports communication, which is becoming predominant for the possibility of immediate interaction between users and replaces the classic "Sports Bar" of the country where fans gathered on Sunday to see the games of the team of the heart.

Even sports clubs have now understood the importance of being present online with their Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram profile to interact in real time with users and build a solid base of fans and fans attentive to all initiatives proposed by the team. This creates a relationship that goes well beyond that of simple consumption and that is based on the emotional sphere, involving feelings and deep-rooted values that every sports enthusiast has within himself. Brands and sports sponsorships: a growing market (Pedersen PM, 2016; Yuksel M, 2016; Smith A, 2017).

The figures that the brands invest in sports sponsorship are also enormous and thanks to the social networks it is possible to create that integration between the image of the brand and the values and achievements of the teams or athletes they support. The new technology therefore allows the sponsorship to be moved to a higher level: for the Brand to enter the sporting world by becoming a partner of an event or by joining a team does not mean just putting your logo on the shirts or the billboard on the sideline. It means to marry the values of that sport, of that team, of that athlete and to stand alongside the fan sharing successes and defeats, sacrifices and joys (Cunningham N, 2017; Tafuri D, 2017).

At a time when companies are looking for new ways to engage with customers, sports sponsorship is the new frontier to let the general public know the qualities, values and potential of its product and service by interacting directly with the consumer and getting closer to his passions.

Therefore, social media represent an instrument with immense potential to create the typical "brotherhood" of the fans and create an environment in which communication can be communicated without barriers and which can be accessed at any time of the day and from anywhere, including the screen. of your mobile phone (Kunkel T, 2017).

Concluding our forecast is that in the coming years online strategies will be increasingly important for sports clubs but also for companies that will invest in sports sponsorship. Without forgetting that social media and new technologies allow you to experience the sporting event in a more complete way and to publicly share emotions and feelings (Jular J, 2017; Tokuyama S, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

Mobile media express the possibilities, qualities, and practices of a dominant socio technical order. The building of a mobile media and communications research agenda promises new insights into how media sport interacts with the mediatised cultures and markets that structure this order. It is also an agenda that presents two opportunities for media sport scholars to contribute to the wider discipline of communications and media studies into the future.

Mobile media are intervening in media sport and reconfiguring the forms and technologies that bring it into being. In turn, these interventions are working to alter the mobile media practices and markets that are connected to and exist beyond sport, highlighting sport's status as a premium asset in media markets globally and its remarkable popularity through out wider social world.

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