

THE PARTICULARITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA UTILIZATION IN B2B RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Previous studies have demonstrated the advantages of using social networks for doing business in customer markets. The question remains as to the use of social media on business markets (B2B); as yet, only limited studies have been done. It is possible to use the internet and other interactive technologies to support doing business on B2B markets, but this field has limitations. Therefore, these marketing tools are not being used as much as they are on customer markets. The authors have determined how organizations focused on B2B markets use social networking sites (SNSs) and social CRM for contact with customers. This paper provides more detailed information from research that was conducted in the Czech Republic at the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016 and compares it with experiences taken from research focused on using social networking sites for business markets in other countries (Finland, China, Great Britain, and the USA).

Key words:

Customer relationship management, social CRM, social networking sites (SNSs), business markets (B2B), customer markets (B2C), Czech Republic.

1 Introduction

Currently, the internet is a common part of daily life. It is used to search for necessary information, make purchases, present a given individual or corporation via social networks, etc. Businesses are encouraged to use information and communication technologies to improve business processes and ensure customer satisfaction.¹ The resulting choice of a given type of media is influenced by its satisfying one or more needs². Social media fulfills such a need in many ways, and the presentation of companies via social media, i.e., on social networks, has been recently undergoing an enormous boom³. Social media is now the predominant source of information. It has changed the tools and strategies that companies use to communicate with stakeholders. The customer has more options for investigating and comparing⁴. Social media allows for mutual interaction between companies and customers, more active communication, and thus even more detailed knowledge of the customer. The significance of social CRM is also growing in conjunction with this⁵.

¹ ŠKOLUDOVÁ, J., HORÁKOVÁ, L. Information Technology: a Way for Supporting Innovation. In *Vision 2020: Innovation Management, Development Sustainability and Competitive Economic Growth*. Seville, Spain, 2016, p. 2460.

² KATZ, E., BLUMLER, J. G., GUREVITCH, M.: Uses and gratifications research. In *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1973-74, Vol. 37, p. 510.

³ WIGAND, R.T., WOOD, J.D., MANDE, D.M.: Taming the social network jungle: from web 2.0 to social media. In: University of Arkansas at Little Rock: *Proceedings of the Americas Conference on Information Systems*, Lima, Peru: 2010, Paper 416.

⁴ MANGOLD, W.G., FAULDS, D.J.: Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. In *Business Horizons*, 2009, Vol. 52, No. 4, p. 359

⁵ HARRIGAN P., Miles M.: From e-CRM to s-CRM. Critical factors underpinning the social CRM activities of SMEs. In *Small Enterprise Research*, 2014, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 99. [online]. [2015-04-25]. Available at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13215906.2014.11082079>>.

Despite the popularity of SNSes, their significance is relatively slight when creating commercial interaction online⁶. Similarly, even SNS research is very limited and primarily focuses on consumers in the area of B2C. To date, there has still been little systematic research done on how companies use SNSes – especially for companies in the area of B2B⁷. The authors of certain studies make the assumption that social media has great significance. This corresponds with the results of a study by McKinsey & Company, Inc., in which 69% of the respondents stated that their companies achieved measurable business advantages, their marketing became more effective, and they acquired a better access to knowledge, lowered business costs, and achieved greater revenues⁸.

The research dealt with in this paper primarily helps to present more detailed findings on the use of SNSes for B2B markets in that it provides empirical support, which increases understanding, and shows the degree to which certain marketing tools are used in B2B markets. It also provides a comparison with the situation on B2C markets, which the authors have addressed in more detail in previous studies⁹. At the same time, it tracks research focused on this subject in other countries (the USA, Great Britain, Finland, and China).

2 Literature Review

It is clear from various sources that using social media on B2B markets is still an insufficiently investigated subject and that it is definitely not utilized by these companies. Companies in the area of B2B are making a big mistake when they ignore social media. It is not only utilized by young people and enthusiastic internet users, but also by company representatives and professionals¹⁰. Marketers can use social media to share content, invite people to become fans, and encourage “likes” or commentary, for example¹¹. Certain studies have contributed partial information – about the fact that fans create value via their engagement, for example. This happens primarily if they like the content and comment on the posts. In this way, they popularize company content across their own network of friends and colleagues (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012). This subject has also been addressed by another study¹². This study compared the behavior and reactions of

⁶ MISLOVE, A., MARCON, M., GUMMADI, K.P., DRUSCHEL, P., BHATTACHARJEE, B.: Measurement and analysis of online social networks. In *IMC '07: Proceedings of the 2007 IMC*. San Diego, California, 2007, p. 30. [online]. [2016-08-20]. Available at: <<http://conferences.sigcomm.org/imc/2007/papers/imc170.pdf>>.

⁷ LACKA E., CHONG A.: Usability perspective on social media sites' adoption in the B2B context. In *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2016, Vol. 54, p. 88.

LEEK S., CANNING L., HOUGHTON D.: Revisiting the task media fit model in the era of Web 2.0: Twitter use and interaction in the healthcare sector. In *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2016, Vol. 54, p. 26

FELIX, R., RAUSCHNABEL, F. A., HINCH, C., Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic Framework. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2016, Vol. 70, p. 120.

⁸ JUSSILA, J. J., KÄRKKÄINEN, H., ARAMO-IMMONEN, H.: Social media utilization in business-to-business relationships of technology industry firms. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2014, Vol. 30, p. 611.

⁹ BACHMANN, P., KANTOROVÁ, K.. From customer orientation to social CRM. New insights from Central Europe. In *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice - Series D*: Pardubice: Fakulta ekonomicko-správní Univerzity Pardubice, 2016, No. 36, p. 29.

KANTOROVÁ, K., BACHMANN, P. HRDINKOVÁ, M., CRM, Social Networks and small and medium enterprises. Does it all fit together? In: *Marketing Identity 2015: Digitální život*. Trnava: Fakulta masmediální jkomunikácie Univerzity sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2015, p. 108.

¹⁰ JANOUC, V. 333 tipů a triků pro internetový marketing: *Sbírka nejužitečnějších informací, postupů a technik*. Brno: Computer Press, s. 50.

¹¹ WALLACE, E, BUIL, I, de CHERNATONY, L., HOGAN, M.: 'Who “likes” you ... and why? A typology of Facebook fans'. In *Journal of Advertising Research*, 2014, Vol 54, No. 1, p. 93.

¹² SWANI, K., MILNE, G. R., BROWN, B. P., ASSAF, A. G., DONTHU, N.: What messages to post? Evaluating the popularity of social media communications in business versus consumer markets. In *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2016, Vol. 62, p. 86.

customers on B2C and B2B markets and alleges that liking and commenting are useful for brand popularity on both markets – though with certain particularities.

In this paper, we follow the situation in a more clear-cut way in the selected countries: the USA, Great Britain, Finland, and China. The following information was established using studies coming out of these countries, which helped to establish certain of the research questions¹³:

- Only a fraction of B2B companies actively or very actively use social media. (RQ1)
- The most frequent reasons for using social media at B2B companies are the opportunity to acquire new customers, brand building, supporting sales, and communication. (RQ2)
- Roughly half of the B2B companies have not yet invested any financial resources in social media, though if they have, it has been only a very small amount.
- B2B companies realize the importance of social media and plan to increase their budgets for it.
- Most frequently, marketers from B2B companies do not evaluate social media's effectiveness because of a lack of knowledge.
- The barriers blocking the acceptance of social media into the B2B company practice are insufficient knowledge on the part of staff, insufficient time, high costs, lack of experience, not understanding opportunities, other projects' greater importance, the inability to measure benefits, a lack of solid case studies, and concerns about information leaks¹⁴.

There are also other objections to using social media on business markets. For example, one possible objection is that companies in conservative industries cannot utilize social media successfully. In contrast, a study from 2014 created under the umbrella of the University of California, Berkeley describes how the company Maersk Line (the largest shipping container company in the world) began to use social media. In 2011, this company acquired more than 400,000 fans during its first 11 months¹⁵. Another possible objection is that small B2B companies cannot use social networking. On this topic, results from a study in Finland showed that there are no differences between small, medium-sized, and large companies in relation to using social media. This corresponds with the results of a study that was conducted in Great Britain during 2010¹⁶. Thus, even small B2B companies can be active on social media¹⁷.

Regarding the finding that using social media for business markets has not been investigated sufficiently even though there is an apparent interest in using social networks on B2B markets, we used the research data from the repeat study that, using an online questionnaire during late 2015 and

¹³ KATONA, Z., SARVARY, M., Maersk Line: B2B Social Media - "It's communication, not marketing". In *California Management Review*. University of California, 2014 [online]. [2017-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.slidedoc.us/b2b-social-media-asp>>. Vol. 56, No. 3. p. 2.

LACKA E., CHONG A.: Usability perspective on social media sites' adoption in the B2B context. In *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2016, Vol. 54, p. 88.

MICHAELIDOU, N., SIAMAGKA, N. T., CHRISTODOULIDES, G.: Usage, marriers and Measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. In *Industrial marketing management*, 2011, Vol. 40, No. 7, p. 1157.

¹⁴ SIAMAGKA, N.T., CHRISTODOULIDES, G.: Determinants of social media adoption by B2B organizations. In *Industrial Marketing Management*. 2015, Vol. 51 [online]. [2017-03-20]. Available at: <<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0019850115001741>>.

¹⁵ KATONA, Z., SARVARY, M., Maersk Line: B2B Social Media - "It's communication, not marketing". In *California Management Review*. University of California, 2014 [online]. [2017-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.slidedoc.us/b2b-social-media-asp>>. Vol. 56, No. 3. p. 2.

¹⁶ MICHAELIDOU, N., SIAMAGKA, N. T., CHRISTODOULIDES, G.: Usage, marriers and Measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. In *Industrial marketing management*, 2011, Vol. 40, No. 7, p. 1157.

¹⁷ JUSSILA, J. J., KÄRKKÄINEN, H., ARAMO-IMMONEN, H.: Social media utilization in business-to-business relationships of technology industry firms. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2014, Vol. 30, p. 611.

early 2016, compiled data from 362 companies in the Czech Republic. We have now delved into this study in more detail, especially the information obtained from companies focused on business markets.

3 Methodology

There were 362 respondents that participated in the study. The questionnaires were conducted in 2015 and 2016 by trained interviewers chosen from the ranks of the students at the University of Pardubice. Answers were obtained from 248 companies with under 250 employees and 114 companies with over 250 employees. Of the companies, 25.9% conducted business only on B2B markets, 58.9% conducted business on both B2B and B2C markets, and 11.7% conducted business only on B2C markets. This paper's methodology is derived from previous studies¹⁸. A smaller sample – of companies that focused on business markets – was used for this article; it totaled 97 companies.

The study focused on the 5 following areas: the significance of traditional and digital marketing, CRM, and s-CRM; the approach in relation to customers; the way online communities are being used; the acquisition and use of customer data; and the utilization of social media.

It was possible to use a scale for most of the questions. Averages (used in Tables 2, 3, and 4) were calculated using a typical five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Next, a Student's one-sample t-test was used to determine any statistically detectable differences.

We established the following research questions on the basis of the findings listed above:

RQ1 – How actively do B2B companies use social media?

RQ2 – How do B2B companies approach online communities?

RQ3 – Is the most frequent reason that B2B companies use communities on social media the opportunity for acquiring new customers, brand building, supporting sales, or communication?

RQ4 – Do companies focused on B2B markets work with information about customers in a more sophisticated way than companies on B2C markets?

RQ5 – Do B2B companies that are distinctly more focused on building relationships with customers use social media often?

4 Results

The first research question was *RQ1: How actively do B2B companies use social media?* The first part of the study dealt with this subject. As can be seen in Table 1, the companies focused on B2B markets that were questioned do understand the importance of marketing that uses information technology (38.1% “somewhat important” and 38.1% “very important”). The perception of the importance of the role of s-CRM is similar; here, the level of agreement is even greater (36.1% “somewhat important” and 49.5% “very important”). On the basis of these answers, it can be said that digital marketing and social media play an important or somewhat important role in these companies. However, from the findings that follow, it can be concluded that the actual use of social media tools is only minimal, see the following section of the paper.

Table 1: The Significance of Traditional and Digital Marketing, CRM, and S-CRM in the Organizations (Expressed in Absolute and Relative Terms)

¹⁸ HARRIGAN P., Miles M.: From e-CRM to s-CRM. Critical factors underpinning the social CRM activities of SMEs. In *Small Enterprise Research*, 2014, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 99. [online]. [2015-04-25]. Available at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13215906.2014.11082079>>.

N= 97 B2B		Un- important	Rather unimportant	I don't know	Rather important	Strongly important
Traditional marketing	<i>Abs.</i>	10	25	2	44	16
	<i>Rel.</i>	10,3 %	25,8 %	2,1 %	45,4 %	16,5 %
Digital marketing	<i>Abs.</i>	4	18	1	37	37
	<i>Rel.</i>	4,1 %	18,6 %	1,0 %	38,1 %	38,1 %
Social CRM	<i>Abs.</i>	4	9	1	35	48
	<i>Rel.</i>	4,1 %	9,3 %	1,0 %	36,1 %	49,5 %
Customer relationship orientation	<i>Abs.</i>	18	27	13	34	5
	<i>Rel.</i>	18,6 %	27,8 %	13,4 %	35,1 %	5,2 %

Source: SEVEROVÁ, A., KANTOROVÁ, K. *Využití sociálních sítí na B2B trzích*. Pardubice, 2017. Theses (Ing.). Univerzita Pardubice.

The second and third research areas focused on the approach to online communities. This part corresponds to question **RQ2: How do B2B companies approach online communities?** The overall number of respondents was comprised of companies that focus on both B2B and B2C markets. Statistically detectable differences were found in the data. At a level of significance $\alpha=0.05$, the range of the critical values was established at -1.977054 to 1.977054. The values that fell outside this range are written in Table 2 in parentheses (these were 2 items derived from the B2C companies' data). From Table 2, it is clear that companies on the B2B markets do not use online customer communities for engaging customers in developing new products and services (a 2.24 average) nor do they proactively manage relationships in these communities (an average of 2.24). It is also very interesting that other customer communities (with a 2.98 average) are more essential for the companies than their own customer communities (with a 2.64 average). The companies focused on B2B do not try to establish a closer relationship with customers using the communities (a 2.38 average) nor do they monitor these communities (a 2.46 average). The respondents representing companies focusing on B2C markets tended towards neutral responses for practically all questions. They do not manage relationships with their online communities.

This section brought an answer to **RQ3: Is the most frequent reason that B2B companies use communities on social media the opportunity for acquiring new customers, brand building, supporting sales, or communication?** From Table 2, it is clear that B2B companies use the communities on social media more often for finding out information about customers (even those from different sources) than for advertising. This could also explain the greater use of other customer communities as opposed to the use of their own communities. These companies used social networks for acquiring positive feedback from customers (2.81) at roughly the same rate as for their own advertising (2.70), although they almost never use them for establishing relationships with new customers (2.38).

Table 2: The Approach to Online Communities in Relation to CRM

N = 141	In total		B2B focus		B2C focus	
	Mean	SD	Mean		Mean	SD
We do track customers across more media/channels	2,99	0,743	3,01	0,191	2,93	-0,252
We have a strategic approach to managing online communities	2,80	0,329	2,73	-0,573	2,95	0,745
Other online customer communities are central to our marketing	2,92	0,372	2,98	0,497	2,80	-0,755
We use communities to have conversations with our customers	2,80	0,082	2,68	-0,956	3,07	1,540
We build our online communities with our customers	2,76	0,061	2,63	-1,036	3,05	1,638

We use these communities to promote ourselves to customers	2,85	0,027	2,70	-1,205	3,18	(2,024)
Customers use these communities mainly to make positive comments and reviews	2,94	0,049	2,81	-1,122	3,23	1,598
Our online customer communities are central to our marketing	2,75	0,180	2,66	-0,735	2,95	1,180
We participate in relevant customer-owned communities	2,87	0,755	2,89	0,176	2,82	-0,255
We monitor and act on interactions between customers in these communities	2,58	0,066	2,46	-1,036	2,84	1,537
Online communities are a way of engaging with our customers	2,57	0,003	2,38	-1,719	2,98	(2,362)
These communities allow us to involve customers in product/service development	2,39	0,023	2,24	-1,350	2,73	1,744
We proactively manage interactions in these communities	2,31	0,240	2,24	-0,673	2,48	0,936

Source: SEVEROVÁ, A., KANTOROVÁ, K.: *Využití sociálních sítí na B2B trzích*. [Theses (Ing.)]. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2017, p. 46.

In the fourth section, the research focused on acquiring and using customer data. It also offers an answer to question **RQ4: Do companies focused on B2B markets work with information about customers in a more sophisticated way than companies on B2C markets?** Overall, the respondents tended toward neutral answers. In most cases, the companies regularly gathered information about customers (the average was 3.55). The companies that focus on B2B markets unequivocally stated that they monitor and use customer data more often than did the representatives of B2C companies. Here, there were statistically detectable differences found in the data as well. At an $\alpha=0.05$ level of significance, the range for the critical values was established at -1.97705 to 1.97705. In Table 3, there were no statistically detectable differences found.

Table 3: Acquiring and Using Customer Data

N = 141	In total		B2B focus		B2C focus	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
We collect customer information on an ongoing basis	3,43	0,112	3,55	0,921	3,18	-1,247
We integrate customer information from the various functions that interact with customers	3,21	0,032	3,36	1,206	2,89	-1,797
We integrate customer information from different communication channels	3,06	0,021	3,22	1,301	2,70	-1,959
We use customer information to measure the value of each customer's referrals to other customers	3,07	0,770	3,05	-0,162	3,11	0,247
We integrate internal customer information with customer information from external sources	3,19	0,046	3,34	1,108	2,86	-1,740
We merge information collected from various sources for each customer	3,01	0,004	3,22	1,613	2,57	-2,488
We use customer information to assess the lifetime value of our customers	2,89	0,560	2,93	0,336	2,80	-0,457

Source: SEVEROVÁ, A., KANTOROVÁ, K.: *Využití sociálních sítí na B2B trzích*. [Theses (Ing.)]. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2017, p. 47.

Next, the study dealt with the last subject that was mentioned above. It also offers an answer to **RQ5: Do B2B companies that are distinctly more focused on building relationships with customers use social media often?** Here, the number of respondents was different than for the previous sections (40 B2B companies); only companies that used CRM were interviewed here. It was assumed that they place a greater emphasis and focus on building relationships with customers. The resulting averages tended to fluctuate more around a value of 2, which means an answer that

tends to disagree. The B2B companies do not use social media for calculating customer lifetime value (an average of 1.70) nor for calculating the level of customer retention (a 1.88 average). An answer that tended towards disagreement also emerged for the opportunity to use social media to support planning and budgeting for marketing (an average of 1.90) and for offering other products (cross-selling) with the option of increasing value (upselling; a 2.08 average). The answers concerning the other advantages of social media fall close to a neutral position. The conclusion that arises from Table 4 is that companies focusing on B2B markets do not use social media sufficiently in their CRM systems.

Table 4: Using Social Media in the CRM System

N = 40 B2B	Mean	SD
Social media enables our CRM system (<i>continued in a row</i>)		
..to analyse responses to marketing campaigns	2,33	-1,156
..to customize our communication to customers	2,48	-1,002
..to provide sales force cross sell/up sell opportunities	2,08	-1,169
..to support sales force in the field with customer information	2,43	-0,967
..to calculate customer retention rates	1,88	-1,204
..to support marketing planning and budgeting	1,90	-1,771
..to calculate customer lifetime value	1,70	-1,458

Source: SEVEROVÁ, A., KANTOROVÁ, K.: *Využití sociálních sítí na B2B trzích*. [Theses (Ing.)]. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2017, p. 45.

5 Discussion

A study from Great Britain (23) dealt with the question of how companies operating on business markets use social networks. This study was conducted 5 years before the research used in the authors' paper. The sample for investigation included 1000 small and medium-sized enterprises. The results of the research showed that 27% of small and medium-sized B2B enterprises used social networks. Of these companies, 50% did not invest any financial resources into social networks or they invested only 1% of the marketing budget. At the same time, 44% wanted to increase investment in social networking. The main reasons why companies used social networks were to acquire new customers (91%), maintain a relationship with customers (86%), and increase brand awareness (82%) as well as for online brand communication (73%). Of the companies, 46% considered social networks to be relevant feedback, and 14% used them for mutual interaction with suppliers. **Chyba! Nenalezen zdroj odkazů.** Here, *the situation differs from that found in the Czech Republic primarily in the way social media and social networking communities are used*. In the Czech Republic, it is mostly for the purpose of monitoring customers, using positive commentary and feedback and, only afterwards, for their own advertising and communication with customers.

A later study from Great Britain tried to look into the adoption of social media by B2B organizations. The research was comprised of 105 B2B companies from Great Britain. It was found that 71% of these companies use social media. The remaining 29% stated that they are not at all certain whether they will begin to use social media in the future. However, the research states that it is highly probably that these companies will begin to use social media thanks to pressure from other partners who want to communicate using this platform (38). In comparison to this study, the research described in this paper recorded that *for the same year in the Czech Republic*, the perception of the importance of digital marketing and s-CRM was rather or very important for 80% of the respondents. From the degree to which individual social networking tools are used, that position is *clearly not supported; rather, it was discovered that these tools were used only slightly*.

One year after the study from Great Britain that was described first, a study came out of Finland dealing with how businesses perceive the potential, opportunities, and problems of using social media to interact with their customers and business partners. The sample included 125 companies. In all the sectors investigated, the companies used social media more internally than externally. For communication with B2B markets, the companies used social networks and discussion boards, which were used at least slightly (roughly 5% of the companies). Only a fraction of the companies used social networking actively or very actively. [12] *This was also confirmed by similar experience in the Czech Republic.* External communication on social media with B2B companies in Finland was used by companies for brand building, general communication, supporting sales, and communication concerning specialized projects. **Chyba! Nenalezen zdroj odkazů.** *The information acquired from research in the Czech Republic differed from this* in that social networks are most frequently used by businesses for acquiring information about customers.

A study was conducted in China in the same year as the study in the Czech Republic. This dealt with the level of adoption of social media by B2B marketing specialists; it also analyzed the factors that stimulate the acceptance and use of social media. One of the things that was studied was whether the usability of social media was a factor that prevents its adoption in B2B marketing. The questionnaire was distributed to B2B companies in China, and they were able to obtain a total of 181 usable answers. The results showed that the marketers did not recognize the importance of social media on B2B markets. The largest barrier that prevented the acceptance of social media on B2B markets was poor understanding on the part of the marketers, who did not know how to properly use them for marketing purposes. Along with a feeling of unsatisfactory advantages of social media on B2B markets, this lack of know-how created a generally negative attitude among the companies. In most cases, the B2B companies also had doubts about information leaks via social networks. **Chyba! Nenalezen zdroj odkazů.** The study thus *confirmed the situation that is also currently in the Czech Republic* – that, even though marketers realize the importance of social media for B2B markets, they have not yet begun to use it fully.

6 Conclusion

This paper is devoted to a subject that is currently relevant – the use of social media in business-to-business relationships. This is an area that offers companies untapped possibilities. Our research was conducted in late 2015 and early 2016. Using 97 companies, we determined that they do comprehend the importance of using social networks for their business activities on B2B markets. However, the opportunities that social networks offer are used only by a few and some opportunities are not used at all.

One of the subjects of the survey's focus was online customer communities. The results confirmed that companies did not build significant online customer communities. Of a total of 13 questions, the B2B companies leaned towards a neutral answer for 9 of them and tended to give disagreeing answers for the rest. The communities are used only slightly (an average of 2.85) for their own advertising directed at customers. The companies did not monitor relationships in their online communities (with a 2.46 average) and they did they did not manage them (with a 2.24 average). They did not even try to use them to establish closer relationships with customers (a 2.38 average), whom they could then engage in developing products and services (a 2.24 average). For the answers on acquiring and using customer data, the respondents from B2B companies nearly always opted for the neutral answer. The only average whose value approached the number 4, signifying that the "agree" answer was selected on the Likert scale, was information on the regular accumulation of customer information (a 3.55 average). It was also found that B2B companies did not use social

media enough in their CRM systems. The averages fluctuated around a value of 2, which meant the answer on the Likert scale meaning “disagree” was selected. The lowest average was for the option to use CRM for calculating customer lifetime value (a 1.70 average). Conversely, the highest value was for using CRM to customize communication for customers (an average of 2.48).

During comparison with the studies from Finland, the USA, Great Britain, and China, consensus was found in Finland, for example, where only a fraction of B2B companies use social networking actively or very actively. This is similar to the situation in the Czech Republic. This was also similar to China in 2015 – although in contrast to the Czech Republic, Great Britain, and Finland, it was generally true that there was still mistrust of the use of social media in B2B companies. In the other countries mentioned, social networks are used only in a limited way, but the companies on B2B markets appear to have great expectations for them and lend them a high degree of importance.

The difference that was found lay in the reason for using social networks. Whereas the main reason why companies use social networks in Great Britain and Finland is to acquire new customers, maintain relationships with them, and build their brand, in the Czech Republic, it is primarily for the purpose of monitoring customers, using positive commentary and feedback and only afterwards for their own advertising and communication with customers.

There is still room for further research on this subject. One interesting course could be to apply the tools offered by social media at a specific B2B company and use this as a basis for creating a case study encompassing information on the way the given tools were implemented and measuring their effectiveness. This could generate a practical recommendation for those who are undecided about using these tools or who lack information about how to use them. Another area for research could be a more detailed identification of the relationship between using social media and various fields of business. Similarly, insight on using it in the non-profit and government sectors or, especially, in the field of services could be both interesting and useful.

Acknowledgement:

This article was supported by the projects No. SGS_2017_019 of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of CR with title ‘Models Synthesis and Analysis for Implementation Support of Smart Cities and Regions Concept’ at the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Pardubice.

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