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Title

Wineries' digital marketing strategies: models, enabling factors, constraints

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

Web marketing; Digital marketing; Italian wineries; social media

Research Question

the paper aims at understanding of a. the obstacles and enabling factors underlying wineries adoption of up-to-date and mature social media marketing strategies, and b. identifying different strategic approaches (models)

Methods

the paper will present and discuss the results of a survey currently being administered to a sample of Italian producers of Prosecco wine in the North East of Italy.

Results

Even though referred to a sample that does not match the one selected for the present study, the pilot provides with a series of preliminary results (cf. Finotto, Mauracher, 2018).

Abstract

Aim of the paper

Digital applications and services have become key in marketing strategies across a variety of industries. Social media in particular play a crucial role in brands' attempts to amplify their messages, engage customers and drive them towards proprietary online and offline brand spaces and multichannel retail experiences (Denic et al., 2018; Pentina et al., 2012). Disparities exist across and within industries in the adoption of social media as marketing tools. According to both industry experts (McCrone, 2017) and scholarly research (Szolnoki et al., 2016), firms in the global wine industry lag behind in adopting social media in their marketing strategies and initiatives. Within the industry, the vast majority of small-sized wineries—a relevant share of the overall population of wineries in the world—still struggle to integrate digital communication tools in their marketing strategies.

Benefits of using social media, nonetheless, have been documented in a number of analyses. First, social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs and the like, allow firms to generate and feed a continuous

discourse on their products and brands. Brand image and brand awareness are typically constructed incrementally and through the cumulative effect of a variety of coherent communicative efforts. Social media, from this point of view, allow to generate and disseminate content at a fraction of the cost commanded by traditional mass media and to reach potentially an international audience.

The current gap between expectations attached to social media as a means to enhance wineries competitiveness and market reach and the sober reality of digital marketing in the wine industry motivates the present paper. In particular, the paper aims at contributing to the understanding of a. the obstacles and enabling factors underlying small and medium sized wineries adoption of up-to-date and mature social media marketing strategies, and b. identifying different strategic approaches (models) of digital marketing and social media marketing among small and medium sized wineries. To do so, the paper will present and discuss the results of a survey currently being administered to a sample of Italian producers of Prosecco wine in the North East of Italy.

Theory background

The paper moves from a systematic recognition of the literature on the factors enabling effective and mature marketing approaches leveraging social media. In particular we will consider both literature dealing with Smes in general and more focused literature dealing with small and medium-sized wineries.

Extant literature converges in identifying several factors that enable or hinder the adoption of digital technologies as marketing tools in Smes: the traits and competences of the entrepreneur or of the management team are among the crucial determinants of Smes adoption of these tools (see for instance Barbero et al., 2011); the degree to which an organization perceives the allocation of financial and human resources on digital marketing as strategically important; the lack of prepared and competent human resources represents one of the eminent hurdles in the design and execution of mature social media strategies (Gilmore et al., 2007).

Studies on wineries and on the wine industry somehow confirm the results of studies focused on other industries. On the one hand it appears that small and medium sized wineries are selective in adopting social media, converging towards one of them (Facebook in particular, cf. Szolnoki et al., 2014). Galati et al. (2017) conducted an analysis of 45 wineries' Facebook strategies and highlighted how the mature and effective implementation of social media marketing strategies depend more on managers' human capital (e.g. educational attainment) than on firm dimension or on managers' or entrepreneurs' age.

The study

The paper will discuss the results of a study carried out among producers of Prosecco wine in the North East of Italy. A survey is currently being distributed among the almost 1200 wineries of the regions where Prosecco Doc is produced. The survey aims at identifying a. the organizational, individual (related to the entrepreneurs and/or manager) and contextual (e.g. institutional, social) factors underlying or hindering the effective use of social media as marketing tools among wineries, and b. different strategic approaches—cluster of firms displaying homogenous approaches towards digital marketing—to social media marketing.

The survey will be distributed at the beginning of 2019 and closed in March. The survey was previously piloted and validated on a convenience sample of 600 Italian small and medium-sized wineries; 113 of those answered and allowed to calibrate questions, scales and the focus of the questionnaire.

Even though referred to a sample that does not match the one selected for the present study, the pilot provides with a series of preliminary results (cf. Finotto, Mauracher, 2018). In synthesis, the vast majority of firms has a clear understanding of the importance of social media in marketing strategies but lament the scarcity of resources to dedicate to social media management; one of the major obstacles to the adoption of mature social media marketing strategies is represented by the absence of skilled professionals in the firm; firms do use selectively one or two social media (Facebook first, Instagram second) but in the vast majority of the cases without any rigorous editorial planning; the familiarity of the entrepreneur and managers with these tools is highly indicative of their effective use in the firm; organization-wise, the clear commitment of the entrepreneurs and managers to the development of social media marketing strategies generates a positive tension in the organization that facilitates a shared understanding of these tools and the generation of valuable contents to be shared online.

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