Exploring Social Media's Role in Planning and Control Strategies

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Received: November 1, 2023 Accepted: December 7, 2023 Online Published: December 21, 2023

Abstract

The aim of this article is to shed light on the topic of strategic planning and control, with a specific focus on investigating its connection to the proliferation and utilization of social media. The analysis was conducted through a systematic and structured literature review. A co-occurrence and bibliographic coupling analysis using VOSviewer software was carried out. The research findings encompass a comprehensive analysis of paper frequency across different parameters, including publication year, country of origin, and source of publication. Moreover, the study involves identifying the five most frequently cited papers in the field of strategic planning in relation to the influence of social media. Social media represent a significant innovation from which companies can benefit in various ways. The originality of the study is derived from its comprehensive investigation and systematic review of studies within the field of social media and their interaction with strategic planning and control, which have not been consolidated until now. Practical implications of the research suggest a guideline for companies to discover the potentials of social media in terms of strategic planning and control. Theoretical implications are integrated into the perspectives proposed through the systematic literature review, providing guidance for future research.

Keywords: strategic plan, strategic control, social media, social network, strategy

1. Introduction and Research Aim

Central and fundamental to all types of organizations is strategic planning and control. It was initially a prerogative of large companies but nowadays assumes a central and fundamental role in all organizations (Steiner, 2010). This approach sets fundamental aims and tactics to achieve the company's goals while recognizing the strategic approaches to follow (Lombardi, 2021). Overcoming potential internal obstacles for divisions, partnerships, and communities is made possible through strategic planning (Bryson, 2012). In this context, the evolution of digital transformation and the extensive adoption of social media, has significantly impacted corporate planning, leading to a digital process (De Bernardi et al., 2019). Embracing digitalization enables companies to enhance their agility and adaptability to external changes and pressures (Rozak et al., 2021). In particular, social media stands as a powerful tool facilitating the prompt collection of data; it has become a pervasive resource in the business environment, especially in different sectors. Consider the hospitality industry, as argued by Zhang (2019), or the library industry (Steiner, 2012; Maisiri et al., 2015; Mensah et al., 2021). Social media are no longer exclusively associated with the role of marketing. They bring numerous benefits to companies in all aspects, such as the ability to establish a more direct connection with current and potential customers, to engage various stakeholders, to improve business decision-making processes by leveraging big data on customer preferences, and, more generally, to convert data into actionable information in real-time (Arora & Predmore, 2013).

As pointed out by Rimkuniene and Zinkeviciute (2014) and Charest et al. (2016), the global proliferation of the "planning" culture, internationalization and the growing utilization of social media necessitate insights from a strategic management standpoint. Recent research suggests that social media holds considerable potential for enhancing collaborative innovation and supporting strategic planning.

Therefore, given the growing prominence of social media, it is necessary to delve into the scientific literature to explore the contribution that this resource can make to strategic planning and control. For this reason, this study

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aims to systematically investigate strategic planning and control in the context of social media use. A systematic and structured (SLR) approach was adopted using the Scopus database (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008; Massaro et al., 2016; Asmussen & Møller, 2019; Garanina et al., 2022; Lombardi et al., 2022). The in-depth assessment of social media use in the context of strategic planning and control provides an overall mapping and describes the existing body of literature. The selected sample was based on 106 articles, which were subsequently analysed using VOSviewer software. After analysing the data, four clusters were identified based on recurring keywords.

The results are directed at defining the state of the art and emerging issues in strategic planning and control that determine the advent of social media and its role in the industry. One of the main findings is that companies with a more digitally oriented business model and those adopting a techno-centric view utilize social media as a tool in the strategic context (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). Moreover, another significant finding indicates that companies optimize their internal strengths, contributing to an overall improvement in performance (Zaheer and Bell, 2005). Furthermore, in terms of innovative performance with social buster, it generates a greater emphasis on diversified knowledge (Rodan & Galunic, 2004).

This paper contributes to the literature on strategic planning and control, advancing studies through social media issues and insights. Regarding practical implications, the SLR findings could potentially encourage companies that do not use social media to explore its multiple potentials for strategic planning and control. The originality of this study stems from the fact that an attempt has been made to delineate what the practical and theoretical spin-offs of social media are in the context of strategy. This research is directed to academic communities and practitioners. The roadmap of the paper is the following: after the introduction, section 2 presents the research background and context. Section 3 shows the methodology, and Section 4 defines results and discussion. Conclusions and future agenda are outlined in Section 5.

2. Research Background and Context

This section examines two foundational concepts underpinning our research. Firstly, cutting-edge discussions related to "strategic planning and control". Secondly, the analysis examines the concept by considering various aspects that the literature has emphasized to outline its relationship with social media.

2.1 Strategic Planning and Control

Strategic planning systems were first introduced in 1950 and initially developed only by large companies (Steiner, 2010). Dealing with the formidable obstacles faced by organizations, their divisions, partnerships, and communities is the core of strategic planning (Bryson, 2012). The essence of strategic governance lies in the transformation of subjective elements within a company into objective conditions, serving as the foundation for both productive operations and interactions with the surrounding environment (Galeotti & Garzella, 2013). The process is characterized by the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of a strategy through activities developed by the top management based on the company's vision and identity (Globocnik et al., 2020; Bryson, 2012). Strategic planning processes establish the fundamental aims of corporate management, while also recognizing the strategic approaches to attain these objectives (Lombardi et al., 2021). It is essential to specify that these processes have a temporal scope extending beyond the single financial year (Marasca et al., 2013; Lombardi et al., 2021). According to Al-Khrabsheh (2018) strategic planning plays a fundamental role in allowing institutions to adapt and refine their internal procedures to address crisis, thus reducing their overall impact. Other authors explore the impact of strategic planning on crisis management (Evans et al., 2005; John-Eke & Eke, 2020; Aljuhmani & Emeagwali, 2017; Karam, 2018; Vargo & Seville, 2011) founding that thinking strategically plays a critical role in securing the organization's sustained survival.

2.2 Integrating Strategic Planning and Control in the Social Media Age

In recent years, strategic planning has gained increased attention in the context of digital transformation (De Bernardi et al., 2019; Rozak et al., 2021). The objective is to develop strategic plans tailored to the pervasive use of digital technologies; a concept often referred to as "digitalization-based strategic planning". In the context of strategic planning, it is worth noting that social media has evolved into a powerful tool with the inherent potential to collect evidence that can play a pivotal role in the strategic planning process. Indeed, social media is deeply woven into our daily routine, not only providing visual and textual interaction but also influencing the behaviours and lives of individuals (Roth-Cohen et al., 2022). The strategic use of social media allows not only the company to engage new customers but, conversely, enables customers to find a company. Furthermore, thanks to social media, it is possible to gather data on consumer desires and transform them into intelligent actions in real-time (Arora & Predmore, 2013).

According to Rimkuniene and Zinkeviciute (2014) the use of social media in the communication of temporary

organizations calls for a re-evaluation of the management strategy (such us a relevant selection of social media channels), effectively paving the way for a more collaborative communication. Moreover, the study of Zhang et al. (2019) find that customers' attitudes towards hotel bookings are influenced by the presence or absence of microcelebrities (a new type of celebrity born with the proliferation of social media, also known as influencers). In fact, when a microcelebrity endorses a hotel, customers tend to have a more positive attitude, even when the hotel photos are misleading: this finding suggests that hotel managers could consider incorporating microcelebrities into their strategic planning. Consistent with the findings of this study, Charest et al. (2016) explore the strategic planning of social media managers' activities and, overall, find an improvement in terms of specific objectives, as well as the integration of influencers within the strategic planning process. Another line of studies highlights the importance of strategic planning in the adoption of social media within libraries (Steiner, 2012; Maisiri, 2015; Mensah et al., 2021)

Thus, the research question is the following: What is the state of the art in the strategic planning and control in relation to the social media's advent?

3. Methodology

In this paper, we applied the qualitative methodology using a systematic and structured (SLR) approach to analyse the literature in the field. Particularly, "A qualitative research approach is the most appropriate and indeed the only way to achieve some research objectives. Situations in which qualitative research is likely to be the preferred method include 1) which little known about a research problem or opportunity, 2) where previous research only partially on incompletely explains the research question, 3) when current knowledge involves subconscious, psychological, or cultural material that is not accessible using survey and experiments, and 4) if the primary purpose of the research is to propose new ideas and hypotheses that can eventually be tested with quantitative research" (Hair et al., 2003).

The method underlying the SLR was used, so that the literature can be forwarded, and new research paths encouraged (Asmussen & Møller, 2019; Garanina et al., 2022; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Massaro et al., 2016; Lombardi et al. 2022). To understand the current state on the issues of strategic plan and control in relation to the advent of social media, the following keywords were inserted into Scopus as leading database in the field:

"strateg*", "corporate strateg*", "social media" and "social network*".

The search was done limiting the analysis to "title, abstract and keywords", assuring main documents strictly linked to the object of the research. The first search and subsequent extractions were carried out starting from 29 September 2023. Subsequently the string was limited to the area of interest, i.e. "Business, Management and Accounting" and limited to the English language, the articles and the presence of contributions to the Journals. The final string that was derived and used is the following TITLE-ABS-KEY (("strategic plan" OR "strategic control*") AND ("social media" OR "social network*") AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")). The string reduced the number of articles taken into consideration. Thus, the sample of analysis is based on 106 documents. We applied for the following analysis the VOSviewer software to develop the co-occurrence analysis and the bibliographic coupling as the most representative way to draft evidence.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the main results achieving research aims and answering to research question. By processing the data obtained from the Scopus Database, Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 were obtained as reported below.

Figure 1 represents the frequency of papers by year, starting from 1999 up to the year 2023; the year with the highest frequency is the year 2019, in which 15 papers were produced, followed by the year 2023, 11 papers and 2022 with the presence of 10 papers.

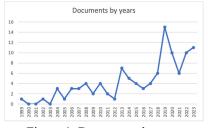


Figure 1. Documents by year

Figure 2 depicts the analysis of the frequency of the number of papers per country; in the analysed period, the United States and the United Kingdom are the countries in which there has been the greatest production of papers concerning the issues of strategic planning and control in relation to the advent of social media. In fact, the number of papers produced in these countries is respectively 27 (United States) and 14 (United Kingdom).

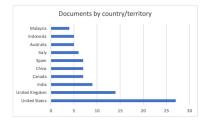


Figure 2. Documents by country/territory

An investigation into the number of papers was also performed in connection with the publication source, depicted in Figure 3. Particularly, Figure 3 shows that the journals 'Technological Forecasting and Social Change' and 'Strategic Management Journal' are the sources with the highest number of publications in relation to the investigated topic in the years analysed. Thus, the two sources present a number of 8 papers (Technological Forecasting and Social Change" and 7 papers (Strategic Management Journal). The following sources are 'Industrial Management and Data Systems' publishing three papers as well as two other sources: "Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies" and "Information Systems Research" each presenting two papers on the subject.

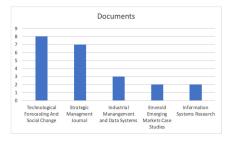


Figure 3. Documents by sources

Top five cited papers in the analysis are reported below:

- -Zaheer A.; Bell G.G. (2005), Benefiting from network position: Firm capabilities, structural holes, and performance, Strategic Management Journal, cited 1,026;
- Rodan S.; Galunic C. (2004), More than network structure: How knowledge heterogeneity influences managerial performance and innovativeness, Strategic Management Journal, cited 841;
- Dahlander L.; Wallin M.W. (2006), A man on the inside: Unlocking communities as complementary assets, Research Policy, cited 331;
- Koka B.R.; Prescott J.E. (2008), Designing alliance networks: The influence of network position, environmental, Strategic Management Journal, cited 304;
- Oestreicher-Singer G.; Zalmanson L. (2013), Content or community? A digital business strategy for content providers in the social age, MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems, cited 300.

As shown before, the top five papers are published between 2004 and 2013. The most cited paper is by Zaheer and Bell (2005) with more than 1,000 citations. The citation trend and the number of citations show an interest in researching in the topic even if some recent research trends should be furtherly analysed.

Zaheer A.; Bell G.G. (2005) assert that companies employing a network structure can capitalize on their internal peculiarities more effectively, performing better. The authors also argue how companies that manage to be innovative even manage to close their structural gaps.

Some authors examined managerial performance both in a general context and in relation to innovation founding. They found that innovative performance places a higher value on access to heterogeneous knowledge (Rodan &

Galunic, 2004).

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Other authors have pointed out that some companies manage to make strategic use of innovative sources from outside the company (Dahlander & Wallin, 2006).

Koka B.R.; Prescott J.E. (2008), argue that changes in the environment, strategy and time can yield performance benefits; consequently, managers must consider environmental and strategic contingencies when making assessments.

Finally, other authors have pointed out that the adoption of a strategic view of the use of social media will be considered by those companies that have a digital business model and adopt a techno-centric view of it (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

Table 1. Co-occurence

Keywords	Occurrences	Total link strength
Strategic planning	54	192
Marketing	20	89
Social Networking (online)	18	87
Commerce	14	72
Social Media	22	68
Marketing Strategy	12	63
Social Network	10	44

As shown in Figure 4, a co-occurrence of the keywords was performed using VOSviewer, in order to identify the most recurring keywords. The co-occurrence of keywords was created by entering the minimum number of 3 occurrences per keyword in the software. Table 1 reports the most recurring keywords in the analysis. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 4, the most recurring keyword with the highest total link strength is 'Strategic Planning' (54 occurrences).

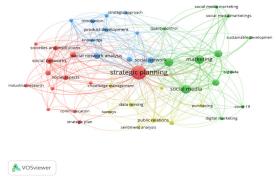


Figure 4. Co-occurrence

The software returned several clusters of the most recurring keywords. The analysis performed revealed the presence of four clusters with a total of 43 keywords. Cluster 1, represented in Figure 4 with the red color, is the most numerous, with 13 keywords, followed by Cluster 2, colored green, with 12 items. Identified with the color blue is Cluster 3 with 10 keywords; finally, Cluster 4 with the color yellow contains 8 items. The details of the keywords present in each Cluster are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Clusters of keywords

Cluster of Keywords

Cluster 1 (red color): Communication, design/methodology/approach, industrial management, industrial research, performance, project management, research and development, social aspects, social networks, societies and institution, strategic management, strategic plan, strategic planning

Cluster 2 (green color): big data, commerce, covid-19, digital marketing, marketing, marketing strategy, quality control, social media, social media marketing, social media m

Cluster 3 (blue color): competition, data acquisition, decision making, innovation, investments, knowledge, product development, social network, social network analysis, strategic approach

Cluster 4 (yellow color): computer networking, data mining, knowledge management, public relations, purchasing, sales, sentiment analysis, survey

Below is reported the bibliographic coupling analysis carried out entering the minimum number of citations per document of 4 as a entering parameter. Figure 5 shows the connections among documents revealing the presence of four clusters.

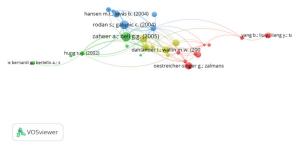


Figure 5. Bibliographic coupling

The analysis returned four clusters with a total of 33 items. Cluster number 1, identified with the red color is the most numerous as it consists of 12 items. It is followed by Cluster 2 with 8 items and identified with the green color in the figure. Cluster 3, on the other hand, has 7 articles and is represented in the figure by the blue color. Finally, there is Cluster 3 with 6 articles and is marked with the color yellow. Table 3 shows the authors of the articles and publication year of the various articles in the different clusters.

Table 3. Bibliographic clustering of documents

Cluster	Authors	
	Breschi and Cusmano (2004)	
	Castro et al. (2009)	
	Hambrick et al. (2019)	
	Kickul et al. (2007)	
	Lee at al. (2018)	
Charter 1 (and) 12 items	Lopez Iturriaga and Martin Cruz (2008)	
Cluster 1 (red) 12 items	Oestreicher-Singher and Zalmanson (2013)	
	Roumieh et al. (2018)	
	Waheed and Ogunlana (2019)	
	Wanberg et al. (2015)	
	Wang et al. (2021)	
	Yang et al. (2019)	
	De Bernardi et al. (2019)	
	Fang et al. (2019)	
	Hung (2002)	
Cluster 2 (green) 8 items	Jun and Kim (2008)	
	Ma et al. (2020)	
	Nienaber and Martins (2020)	
	Ruggiero et al. (2022)	

	Zaheer and Bell (2005)	
	Hansen and Lovas (2004)	
	Jodlbauer et al. (2022)	
	Kelly et al. (2008)	
Cluster 3 (blue) 7 items	Lee (2007)	
	Leon et al. (2017)	
	Rodan and Galunic (2004)	
	Ryall and Sorenson (2007)	
	Bjork and Magnusson (2009)	
	Dahlander and Wallin (2006)	
	Gloor et al. (2020)	
Cluster 4 (yellow) 6 items	Gutierrez and Perez (2010)	
	Koka and Prescott (2008)	
	Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Martin (2012)	

In the first cluster are grouped those articles that use information about users to be used strategically in their favor. In support of this, social media is unquestionably a tool that makes a great deal of information widely accessible, which companies can use to their advantage in their internal strategies (Yang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021; Wanberg et al., 2015; Waheed & Ogunlana, 2019; Roumieh et al., 2018; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013; Lopez Iturriaga et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2018; Kickul et al., 2007; Hambrick et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2009; Breschi & Cusmano, 2004). The second cluster highlights how the level of digitalization can help companies in the strategic choices they make. In fact, the degree of digitalization and how its absence can be seen as a hindrance in the strategic management of information was recently analysed (De Bernardi et al., 2019; Fang et al., 2019; Hung, 2002; Jun & Kim, 2008; Ma et al., 2020; Nienaber & Martins, 2020; Ruggiero et al., 2022; Zaheer & Bell, 2005). Cluster 3 highlights how knowing the social network can be analysed strategically for future events. Knowing certain behaviors at an early stage can be considered a key tool to not only predict future events, but also to identify leaders, identify potential knowledge loss or identify events that could influence employees' future knowledge-sharing intentions (Leon et al., 2017; Hansen & Løvås, 2004; Jodlbauer et al., 2022; Kelly et al., 2008; Lee, 2007; Rodan & Galunic, 2004; Ryall & Sorenson, 2007). The last cluster (Cluster 4) emphasises the use of new tools that can be used as a competitive advantage. The Internet and social media can be seen as new tools that can help companies at the level of strategy; they also suggest how marketing strategies are closely related to the use of social media and the Internet in that users can express the characteristics they require in products and companies can receive this information in real time, so that they can respond very quickly to customer requests (Gloor et al., 2020; Björk & Magnusson, 2009; Dahlander & Wallin, 2006; Gutiérrez & Pérez, 2010; Koka & Prescott 2008; Ronda-Pupo & Guerras-Martin, 2012).

5. Conclusions, Implications and Future Research

In recent times, due to digital transformation, the spread of social media has revolutionized the way organizations approach operational and strategic planning (De Bernardi et al., 2019; Rozak et al., 2021). This is particularly evident in how firms collect and utilize data to enhance their decision-making and strategy implementation (Arora & Predmore, 2013; Odim et al., 2020).

This paper aimed to investigate strategic planning and control using the lens of social media. Through a qualitative methodology systematic and structured approach, we analysed the main literature in the field. Thus, findings are directed to define the state of the art and emerging issues in strategic planning and control, determining the advent of social media and their role in the field. Starting from the first stream of search, we selected 106 documents. From the initial analysis of temporal frequency from 1999 to 2023 (Figure 1), it is evident that the topic has experienced a significant overall increase in terms of published articles, with the year 2019 standing out as the period of most intense discussion on the subject. Further analyses were conducted on article frequency by country (Figure 2) and article frequency by journal (Figure 3). The United States and England emerged with the most vibrant discourse. Additionally, it is worth noting that the journal "Technological Forecasting and Social Change" has the highest number of articles on this subject. The journal emphasizes technological and future studies as planning tools, examining their interrelation with social, environmental, and technological factors. This observation provides evidence of the growing significance of incorporating social media into strategic planning and control. Upon further analysis of the highly cited articles, it becomes evident that companies with a focus on innovation demonstrate superior performance. Among the most relevant authors, Zaheer and Bell (2005) highlight how technology and innovation play a key role in determining business success;

in more detail, the authors conclude that rapid access to new information can have important spillovers on marketing campaigns and, consequently, business performance. In the context of social networks, Rodan and Galunic (2005) point out that network structure alone is not sufficient; rather, a multitude of knowledge sources must characterize the network to have a positive impact on both managerial and innovative performance. The relevance of heterogeneous knowledge is confirmed by Dahlander and Wallin (2004), who stress the advantage of social media and corporate networks in gaining access to sources of innovations beyond the company itself. Another significant contribution comes from authors Koka and Prescott (2006). They conclude that business performance is affected differently by network positions depending on various contexts, environmental changes, and business strategies. Therefore, companies must strategically assess the context and network positions to align with contingent requirements to take advantage of them in business performance. Finally, important insights can be drawn from the article by Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2008), highlighting how social media is critical for businesses. The authors argue that business strategy should focus on active user engagement through social media to achieve greater profitability. In addition, our cluster analysis on the richest keywords revealed the existence of 4 clusters (Table 1, Figure 4).

This paper has several theoretical and practical implications for the literature in strategic planning and control advancing studies through social media's issues and insights. The analysis and references to the most frequently cited articles demonstrate that companies that embrace innovation tend to achieve superior performance (Zaheer and Bell, 2005). It is to be pointed out how important it is for organizations to adapt to network structures and exploit the potential of social media to gain strategic advantages; it is crucial for companies to recognize the influence of social media on their strategic planning and control mechanisms. (Rodan & Galunic, 2004; Koka & Prescott, 2008; Arora & Predmore, 2013).

Thus, this research is directed to academic communities and practitioners.

However, the limitations of this study can be drafted through several issues to be overcome in future research. The main limitation derives from the limited sample of analysis and the selection of keywords. The utilization of one database is also a limitation. Thus, future research will use several databases (e.g., Web of Science, Google, Scholar) to search for additional keywords and enlarge the analysis sample. Lastly, at the theoretical level, the presence of distinct clusters in bibliographic analysis suggests opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together experts from various fields to address complex challenges in strategic planning and control in the age of social media. This can serve as a foundation for advancing future research. The future agenda could be deepened on the following issues:

- examine the effects of social media on marketing and communication management within diverse business sectors;
- analyse how social media influences business decisions and strategies in response to environmental challenges and strategic changes;
- examine digital business models and the techno-centric view of companies and how these influence the adoption of social media in business strategies.

Authors contributions

Authors contributed equally to the study.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal and publisher adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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