

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SMALL ENTREPRENEURIAL FIRMS' INTERNATIONALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Small entrepreneurial firms often need to be quite creative when allocating and deploying their limited resources. Especially in grasping international opportunities, social media provides a seemingly affordable and far-reaching media to utilize. However, challenges—such as the controllability of the content and the outcomes of using social media—become apparent as the reach of social media marketing expands beyond certain threshold limits. In this study, we rely on our data on a multiple-case study to evaluate to what extent, and under which conditions

social media can support small entrepreneurial firms' international expansion. Thereby, we contribute to research on SME internationalization and business implications of digitalization. Our findings indicate that small entrepreneurial firms face somewhat different social media related challenges in the international business environment compared to domestic settings. The controllability of the contents comes with new tones. Furthermore, small firms' resources, both in terms of social media use, and in different functions, play an important role in determining the extent to which the use of social media supports these firms' internationalization.

Key words: Social media, Entrepreneurial firms, Internationalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Entering new, foreign markets comes with uncertainty and risks. International expansion requires developing and harnessing a portfolio of key resources and capabilities (Haapanen, Juntunen and Juntunen 2016; Knight and Cavusgil 2004). Among these, relevant marketing resources provide a means to learn about the markets, make the firm known, and interact with foreign customers (Knight, Koed Madsen and Servais 2004). Hence, investments in marketing typically have a positive influence on internationalization (Aspelund, Koed Madsen and Moen 2007).

Yet, in many cases, small entrepreneurial firms need to cope with scarce resources and capabilities (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat and Fabeil 2014; Kahiya and Dean 2016). Limited resource endowments narrow down available options (Kumar 2009; Lecerf 2012; Jane Hewerdine, Rummyantseva and Welch 2014) and therefore, especially internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms need to be innovative to overcome such resource limitations. In this regard, the internet, and digitalization in general, has had a revolutionary impact on multiple fronts. First, digitalization—the use of digital technologies such as the internet, mobile technologies, digital media and communications—has provided small entrepreneurial firms with totally new instruments to deliver their products and services on-line with minor overhead costs (Davidson and Vaast 2010). Consequently, digital technologies have started breeding a new form of digital entrepreneurship (Giones and Brem 2017; Nambisan 2017; Sussan and Acs 2017), such as mobile application developers (Shaheer and Li 2020), which lean heavily on the various possibilities provided by digital platforms (Kraus Palmer, Kailer, Kallinger and Spitzer 2019; Ojala, Evers and Rialp 2018).

Second, digitalization, and social media, in particular, have enabled firms to share and exchange information at very low costs (Kraus, Harms and Fink 2010; Nakara, Benmoussa and

Jaouen 2012; Miller, Fabian and Lin 2009). Social media provides firms with tools for online advertising, sales, after sales support, and collecting market information (Bianchi and Mathews 2016). Low thresholds of using social media have even brought forth a new generation of social media entrepreneurs who are highly skilled in efficiently capitalizing on the social network ecosystems and respective co-creation opportunities (Gustafsson and Khan 2017).

Social media has already received a fair share of scholarly interest—specifically in marketing research. Social media refers to web-based and mobile tools that enable users and group members to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre 2011). Current research indicates that as social media provides a platform for public communication, firms use it to establish relationships, build trust, identify business partners, increase sales, and support their brands (Kaplan 2012; Leonardi and Vaast 2017; Shih 2009; Wang, Pauleen and Zhang 2016). In a similar manner, Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal and Hughes (2013) point out that prudent use of social media enhances brand performance, retail performance, and consumer-retailer loyalty.

At best, social media is an interdisciplinary and cross-functional marketing tool, which is often combined with other traditional communications channels (Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch 2017). Scholars agree that since consumers do not have single purchasing paths, firms reach their customers better when they select, combine, and integrate their traditional marketing with digital communication channels (Batra and Keller 2016; Dinner, van Heerde and Neslin 2014; Kumar, Choi and Greene 2017). Regarding this terminology, Lamberton and Stephen (2016) note that as digitalization has become a new norm, the precipitous distinction between traditional and digital marketing is becoming less important—it is all about marketing.

Literature shows that for small entrepreneurial firms, digital marketing—social media in particular—is quite a natural means to build networks, and thus, social media constitutes a key business resource in order to maintain the relationships between firms and their customers

(Durkin, McGowan and McKeown 2013). When this notion is coupled with the features of social media as a relatively affordable, user-oriented, and far-reaching channel (Miller, Fabian and Lin 2009; Zahoor and Qureshi 2017; Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman 2015) for building and maintaining relationships (de Vries, Gensler and Leeftang 2012), not to mention brand building (Coulter, Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer 2012), it is not surprising that SMEs have discovered social media as a very useful marketing platform. However, existing research has also acknowledged that the coin has two sides. Implementing social media requires both organizational competencies (Durkin et al. 2013), resources, and commitment (Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch 2017). In this respect, the measurement of effectiveness and usefulness is difficult (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides 2011; Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou and Valvi 2015). Another challenge is that social media marketing enables customers not only to get information provided by the organization online, but also allows them to post and share their opinions, experiences, and reviews across an extensive social network in a manner that the firm cannot control (Gopinah, Thomas and Krishnamurthi 2014; Kannan 2017). Therefore, firms need to comprehend how to approach and utilize these tools.

The international expansion of those entrepreneurial firms' that lean strongly on digitalization differs from traditional firms' internationalization processes, still only few studies on this stream exist (Brouthers, Geisser and Rothlauf 2016). Some of these earlier studies focus on specific ibusiness firms or born-digitals (Monaghan, Tippmann and Coviello 2019; Shaheer and Li 2020; Vadana, Torkkeli, Kuivalainen and Saarenketo 2019), which are firms providing internet-based platforms or digital artefacts (Brouthers et al. 2016; Stallkamp and Schotter 2018). Within this stream of studies, Ojala et al. (2018) argue that technology related bottlenecks may limit entrepreneurial firms' early phase internationalization, whereas Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson (2018) show that the use of social media increases the speed of a

software firm's (digital artefact) early phase internationalization, yet acknowledging that more studies are needed.

The relationship between digitalization and small entrepreneurial firms' internationalization (manufacturing products other than digital artefacts and mainly utilizing digitalization in their marketing) is somewhat unclear. For these small firms, digitalization in general decreases the liability of foreignness (Arenius, Sasi and Gabrielsson 2006), lowers search costs (Petersen, Welch and Liesch 2002), reduces risks (Barrutia and Echebarria 2007), provides firms with direct interface with customers and suppliers, and at the same time, strengthens promotion and market knowledge (Mathews, Bianchi, Perks, Healy and Wickramasekera 2016). Arenius et al. (2006) argue that digitalization may increase the speed of small entrepreneurial firms' internationalization. Mathews et al. (2016) suggest that digitalization improves international marketing activities, but enhances firms' exports only in the presence of other supporting organizational capabilities. In a similar vein, Sinkovics, Sinkovics and Jean (2011) call this overwhelming trust in online tools as a 'virtuality trap', and Gabrielsson and Gabrielsson (2011) note that those entrepreneurial firms that have reached a sufficient degree of internationalization are able to rely more on digitalization compared to their counterparts in the beginning of their internationalization journey.

Gaps remain. First, as we show above, prior research on how social media in particular impacts small entrepreneurial firms' internationalization is still in its infancy. The extension of social media coverage into foreign countries, cultures, and different legislation might come with unexpected consequences, thus, there is a need for understanding. Second, and more importantly, social media has drastically changed the role of firms' marketing from being informing and influencing to co-creation; consumers are no longer bystanders but are dictating the nature, extent, and context of marketing content (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden 2011). We argue that causal studies that explain whether social media influences small entrepreneurial

firms' internationalization positively or negatively are too simplistic, and this relationship requires considering how this two way communication (the most elementary feature in social media) between a firm and its customers evolves, and in particular, how this trajectory influences international expansion over time.

In this study, we acknowledge that more research is needed that combines insights gained in different scholarly areas, and that introduces related empirical evidence. For example, while the benefits and challenges of social media use are already quite well known considering marketing and brand building purposes, there might be adverse effects for internationalization that are yet to be uncovered. We turn attention to these issues, pulling together information on how small entrepreneurial firms utilize social media, and in what circumstances and to what extent social media can support small entrepreneurial firms' pursuit for international expansion. Likewise, we are interested in specific problems associated with small entrepreneurial firms using social media in the international context. The research question that guides our work is *to what extent, and under which conditions social media can support small entrepreneurial firms to grasp international opportunities*. In the search for the answers, we rely on empirical evidence from a qualitative study conducted among five case firms. The empirical evidence allows us to gain insight on the factors determining the means and extent to which social media can be incorporated feasibly as a part of the marketing and internationalization strategies of growing small entrepreneurial firms.

In the following, we first briefly introduce the theoretical background on small entrepreneurial firms' use of social media, and social media's role in international business activities. Empirical examination follows this discussion, and towards the end of the paper, we present the analysis combining the theoretical and empirical views, conclusions drawn from them, and implications and limitations.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE BUSINESS PROMOTION OF SMALL ENTREPRENEURIAL FIRMS

Social media generally refers to internet-based applications that carry user-generated content. The original uses of social media do not necessarily relate to business promotion as such, but this too has become a phenomenon to be reckoned. Business promotion in social media can take different forms from competitions to brand fan pages, for example (see, e.g., de Vries et al. 2012).

Existing literature has mainly focused on marketing as a primary reason for SMEs to utilize social media (Durkin et al. 2013). Social media marketing has been defined in earlier literature “as the process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional channels” (Erdogmus and Cicek 2012, 1354). As a marketing tool, social media may reinforce sales as firms can use it to provide information on offerings, gain new customers, improve their brand image, and increase brand awareness—at least to an extent (Coulter et al. 2012; Karjaluoto, Mustonen and Ulkuniemi 2015). In addition, social media enables a firm to facilitate online platforms, reduce marketing costs, and promote user interactivity (Barashi 2012; Felix et al. 2017; Michaelidou et al. 2011). Different social media channels, for example Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram, and YouTube, are pieces of an integrated social media ecosystem and they should not be treated as stand-alone elements (Hanna et al. 2011). The efficient use of social media is about creating and influencing the consumer experience (Hanna et al. 2011), and contemporary social media tools even enable firms to adopt location-based and context-based marketing (Buhalis and Foerste 2015). However, Coulter et al. (2012) point out that traditional media may still have an important role,

in particular, with regard the familiarity of a brand—even if the brand image is simultaneously prone to be affected by the use of social media.

Considering these potential benefits, the marketing budgets for social media use—as the use of social media among end-users and other customers—is constantly increasing (de Vries et al. 2012). In general, social media is a relatively affordable, scalable, and far-reaching channel (e.g., Miller et al. 2009; Zahoor and Qureshi 2017; Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman 2015). Such media is lucrative, especially for those smaller firms that have limited financial resources to develop and execute their marketing and keep it continuously in the core of the firm's functions. Reaching potential customers and communication with stakeholders does not necessarily require similar investments in social media as traditional high quality and high-resolution advertisements in the printed media channels do. Surely, the use of social media also requires careful planning, but already relatively small efforts may draw attention for the company using social media. Furthermore, social media gives degrees of freedom to use marketing in a more responsive, spontaneous and interactive manner (see, e.g., Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu and Krush 2016) than traditional channels that always require upfront planning and reservations for publication. Such flexibility can be quite relevant for small entrepreneurial firms trying to capture emerging international opportunities.

Nevertheless, using social media as a part of a firm's marketing mix is not completely unproblematic, especially for small entrepreneurial firms. Increasing sales profitably based on social media may end up being a time consuming and complex process despite the apparent initial inexpensiveness (Keller 2003). Also, the efficient use of social media requires organizational competence and commitment (Guesalaga 2016). Often in small entrepreneurial firms, the top management and owners are the ones taking care of all firm activities, including social media use, and the requirements of social media to be active may be too much to handle

(Krake 2005). Even with dedicated marketing personnel, the top managers need to be closely involved.

In addition, since social media comprises, first and foremost, user-generated content, and because it allows customers and end-users to take part in generating the contents and sharing insights (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2014), the contents are never solely controlled by the firms. As a result of the interactivity of social media, customers exchange information on the firm and its offerings with each other, and they may even find this information more reliable than the information provided by the firm (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson and McKenzie 2008; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis 2014). Prior studies note that consumers' opinions, in particular their mutual opinions do matter, 'what people think' is highly important (Gopinah, Thomas and Krishnamurthi 2014). In effect, this means that the influence power shifts—at least partly—from the firm to its customers (Okazaki and Taylor 2013).

Furthermore, the increasing of visibility takes time also when using social media. Hence, the use of such media brings results typically only after a while, so especially small growing firms may not benefit from the use of social media immediately, even if it otherwise would be more usable than many other traditional marketing and promotion tools (Ghodeswar 2008). Yet another issue is that social media can substitute traditional business approaches on selling and marketing only to a point. Rather, it needs to be used jointly with other marketing means (Neti 2011). For example, product packaging and user guides are an elementary part of product marketing that needs to meet local requirements and expectations. Furthermore, the complexity of social media use increases when a firm expands its coverage into foreign markets, that is, into different cultures and languages.

3. OPERATING IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

As noted above, internationalization and social media are still rarely explicitly combined in existing scholarly discussion and when they are, the results can be somewhat contradictory. Some initial insights provide valuable points of departure for growing understanding on these issues. Arenius et al. (2006) argue that digitalization may increase the speed of small entrepreneurial firms' internationalization, and Gabrielsson and Gabrielsson (2011) add more detail by noting that the adoption of social media increases the speed of international expansion during an early internationalization phase. Mathews et al. (2016) suggest that in order to support exporting, social media requires the presence of other supporting organizational capabilities. This indicates that growing, internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms are, in fact, likely to be very much influenced by social media, and that the use of social media can bear notable importance for them.

Generally speaking, scholars in international entrepreneurship indicate that the use of social media can ease entry to online networks and allow managing of multiple international relationships (Sigfusson and Chetty 2013). Social media decreases the liability of outsidership that foreign firms face (Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson, 2018). This is relevant, as limited resources set constraints, and consequently, push expanding SMEs to co-operate with other actors (Oviatt and McDougall 1994). Previous research has comprehensively described that personal networks, partnerships, and strategic alliances are important enablers of early and rapid internationalization of firms (McDougall, Shane and Oviatt 1994; Bell 1995; Coviello and Munro 1997). However, also in the international entrepreneurship field, the studies on how social media marketing in particular impacts small entrepreneurial firms' internationalization are still in their early stage.

Based on the above considerations, while there are challenges also, the benefits of social media for internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms seem to be at least two-fold. It may open the access to the international markets relatively directly by increasing brand

awareness/image, and by reducing uncertainty regarding a firm among potential customers (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp 2012; Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson 2018). Additionally, support for internationalization may be reached also more indirectly, through the improved chances to entering different networks that enable foreign entry (Durkin et al. 2013; Laurell, Achtenhagen and Andersson 2017). However, as literature is still relatively silent on the connections between social media and internationalization efforts of small entrepreneurial firms—with regard the positive and negative elements and the cause-effect relationships, for example, we turn next to empirical evidence for further insight.

4. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE – CASE STUDY OF FIVE INTERNATIONALIZING SMALL ENTREPRENEURIAL FIRMS

Considering that the topic of our study calls for both theoretical and empirical research work, we found the qualitative case study approach appropriate to enable the exploration of a poorly understood phenomenon (see Eisenhardt 1989) without prior theories, and hence, with no testable hypothesis (Ketokivi and Choi 2014). In our exploratory study (Patton 2002), we examined five young small entrepreneurial firms that have made efforts to build strong, internationalizing brands by using the means of social media. The companies in our study focus on customers that value individualism and uniqueness. These five small entrepreneurial firms represent different fields of industry, but they are similar in many respects, especially in their international expansion aims and emphasis on transparency, responsibility, and their roots and origins.

The data comprises interviews (semi-structured expert interviews) and documentary data. We focused on key themes, and the interviews were conducted with the firm representatives responsible for the use and development of the digital marketing tools—

especially social media—in their firms. As the companies are young and relatively small (see Table 4.1 for firm and interviewee information), these interviewees are well informed about the developments and strategies of the organizations that they represent. This data was completed with information gained by studying the firms' web pages and social media channels. The contents of these materials were examined already before the interviews, but they were also scrutinized again after the interviews in order to capture the themes emerging from the discussions with the firm representatives. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for content analysis.

Table 4.1. Case companies and summary of interview data.

<i>Firm</i>	<i>Year of establishment/ International market entry; international coverage</i>	<i>Turnover (1000 €)/ personnel (2017)</i>	<i>Social media channels in use</i>	<i>Interviewee (position)</i>	<i>Time and place of interview/ Duration</i>
Kyrö Distillery	2012; 28 countries	4500/ 25	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Marketing director	17 Jan 2018/ 43:50
Goodio	2015; 13 countries (especially Nordic countries, USA)	640/ 3	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blog	Marketing director	13 Feb 2018/ 27:59
Supermood	2014/2016; USA and other English- speaking markets, EU	176/ 0	Facebook, Instagram	Entrepreneur, CEO	26 Jan 2018/ 1:09:28
Népra	2015/2018 Germany	55/ 2	Facebook, Instagram, Blog	Owner- entrepreneur (founder)	24 Jan 2018/ 28:58
Vimma Company	2013; EU	2400/ 8	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	Development director	23 Jan 2018/ 35:05

For analyzing the data, we took several interrelated steps. We first wrote case descriptions, showing the approaches adopted by the firms to their businesses and to the use of

social media. We also documented information on their experiences in regard to social media use and internationalization at this phase. The individual case analyses were followed by case comparison, in which the extent and conditions of social media use were taken under closer scrutiny. In parallel, we organized the information from the cases following the steps introduced in the study by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) to identify central constructs and their relationships as they emerged in the data. In the following, we discuss each of the case organizations, introduce the combined insights from them, and propose a framework that captures relevant aspects in social media use for internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms.

5. CASE FIRMS

5.1. Kyrö Distillery

Five friends founded Kyrö Distillery in 2012. The firm builds on rye, and the brand reflects this strongly. Kyrö Distillery's marketing director highlights the brand values, "*Rye. In the very heart. In everything. Our slogan is 'In rye we trust' and it shows in everything we do.*" The firm was originally established for distilling whisky, but as it takes three years to mature, the owners decided to make some gin on the side. The outcome, Napue Gin, has become an international success, winning the 'World's Best Gin for Gin & Tonic' prize in 2015, and in 2016, a gold medal in the San Francisco World Spirit Competition premium gin-series. The brand reflects the wish of the owners to break distillery stereotypes. Kyrö Distillery is positioning itself as an easy-to-approach premium-house and consequently, is emphasizing transparency and openness, an adventurous spirit, and the founding members' Finnish origins.

Kyrö Distillery delivers most of its products in Finland, but is aiming at being a globally significant gin and whiskey manufacturer, the world's best-known rye distillery by

2022. Hence, internationalization is an inseparable part of the firm's strategy. Today, Kyrö Distillery operates in 28 markets and is actively building its brand in eight of these countries. When expanding into international markets, Kyrö Distillery first approaches its distributors. Kyrö Distillery supports its dealers in marketing by doing consumer marketing and by building their brand awareness globally. *“Brand is everything ... especially in the gin industry, in which we have thousands of competitors, it is very difficult to stand out only by relying on products”* as Kyrö Distillery marketing director notes.

With regard social media marketing, Kyrö Distillery uses various channels. The contents of social media are tightly connected to the distillery and its everyday activity. It is not fancy or sugarcoated, but—following firm values—openness is important, and the firm shows on social media that things do not always go as they are planned. Regarding the design, Kyrö Distillery has a black and white look. They consider this as a distinctive feature that connects to the local origin of the firm.

The international reach gained with social media use is secured by the strong reliance on the distinctive brand, which is accompanied with segmentation based on interests rather than demographical factors. The firm seeks to address customers that are genuinely curious and appreciate new experiences. Design, unique story, and Nordic minimalism are in a central role for Kyrö to be distinguished from the competitors. Kyrö Distillery does not localize its brand visually, but regarding communication, they always carefully plan what elements they put in the frontline. For example, the picture of naked Finnish men (the five founders) running in a rye field may not be appropriate in some markets, hence, different marketing material is selected for illustrating the ideology of the firm.

The effective use of social media enables firms to expand on multiple foreign markets simultaneously. Kyrö Distillery admits that they are just in the beginning of their journey; nevertheless, as the firm's marketing director points out *“Our brand is becoming international*

... and we do believe that today any brand can be global since end users are global, borders have faded away long time ago.” For the firm, the highest priority is the building of an international brand. Firm sales have exceeded the set targets on many key markets, and to keep up this trend, Kyrö Distillery recognizes that it is highly important to ensure that distributors diffuse the brand awareness to their customers. The firm keeps a registry of users and stakeholders to keep them informed. Hence, the end users get the marketing messages from two separate channels, from the distributors and from the firm, “*an extensive grapevine effect, which we need to control,*” notes the marketing director.

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the three main social media marketing channels that Kyrö Distillery uses. Some media is targeted to specific market areas, for example, Twitter has a more important role in the UK compared to other markets. The channels are overlapping; the firm meets same individuals in more than one digital marketplace. “*It does not matter in which channel you are present, as long as you are in conversation with people,*” explains the marketing director. The firm is using the social media marketing channels to bring people with similar interests together and furthermore, to strengthen the feeling that the firm is all the time present. “*We have continuous dialogue with our customers in various digital marketing channels, we aim at replying to all the messages, and for example, in Facebook our response rate is 100 percent. We use social media like any private person, we answer, we discuss, and we share what’s up,*” explains the marketing director.

Social media enables the firm to collect such market information and industry trends that would not be otherwise available. “*We are being rewarded for being present, information drifts to us from all over the world. As an example, a fan of ours told us about a spelling mistake in a Chinese airline catalogue ... you would not believe how much these things happen. We always get back to the people who contacted us and in many cases, these individuals become our ambassadors*”, the marketing director explains. Kyrö Distillery also uses social media to

get advice, for example to get hints and information from the barrel owners on how to treat whisky while being matured.

The coin has another side as well. Active use of social media channels, particularly continuous presence in these media, is time consuming and calls for resources. The marketing director admits that “... *for us, to dedicate one person solely to digital marketing feels from time to time as a big investment, but it is very important.*” Furthermore, Kyrö Distillery acknowledges that their inventory needs to meet the demand they create by using social media marketing, “*It does not make sense to start increasing demand until there are products to be delivered.*” The marketing director also points out that social media is not the only place where the users meet: “*We cannot be sure that we follow all on-going discussions and moreover, there are discussions in many other forums in which we have no control over, nor have we any possibilities to impact on. In general, social media comes with vast benefits. Yet, on occasions opinions escalate; one must realize the nature of social media.*”

However, Kyrö Distillery does not only rely on social media marketing. Close personal contacts with distributors and bar owners is an elementary part of the firm’s marketing. “*While speaking, one of the firm founders is skiing in Lapland with our German distributor ... we have made it a personal mission ... our brand ambassadors personally knock on bar doors ... let the bar owners taste our products and tell our story ... not a very internationally scalable business model, though*” notes the marketing director. The firm believes in genuine bonds between individuals, “*We travel a lot, and we spend hours and hours sitting at bar counters with bar owners and our distributors.*”

5.2. Goodio

Goodio started its current business in 2015. The founder, whose background is connected to Angry Birds, could not find chocolate that did not include any white sugar. He decided to start making healthier chocolate by himself, focusing on health and wellbeing. Today, the firm operates in a dozen countries, mainly in the Nordic countries, the USA and the UK. In Goodio, one person is responsible for the firm's brand building. The newly appointed marketing director points out that "*... our marketing is in its infancy, we have been focusing on selling and getting our chocolate in the stores, and until now, people have been doing social media marketing part time.*" Goodio is in the middle of the strategy process, and consequently, the firm is renewing its communication and brand building strategy. Currently the marketing director has the overall responsibility for marketing and communications, including the firm's social media marketing. A trainee is helping him in this task, and he explains, "*We go through what we post and the style we post, to keep social marketing aligned with our brand.*"

For social media marketing, Goodio is actively using web pages, its own blogs, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, all targeted to a global audience. In addition, in terms of marketing, they provide shops with sales promotion material and print media with press releases. However, Goodio has separate Facebook pages and Instagram account for their cafes. In these channels, Goodio shares their chocolate recipes and photographs of the chocolate packages. "*We decided to have separate Facebook and Instagram for our cafes in order not disturb our foreign followers with these posts,*" explains the marketing director, and continues, "*Users like our recipes very much; obviously they use ours when they bake. We do not have too much time to spend on social media, hence, we also ask our employees to post what they have done.*"

Domestic markets are somewhat different from international markets. The marketing director gives an example, "*Finns are happy to see a Finnish brand succeed, Swedish consumers are not that interested in Finnish brands, but the Japanese, then again, highly*

appreciate Finnish brands. This requires localization in marketing communications and in brand building, thus indicating that internationalization is not that easy.” Goodio does not only sell chocolate but also focuses on wellbeing and environmental issues as they are “... *issues that get people interested in the firm brand. The challenge is to get such issues highlighted and communicated,*” says the marketing director. In social media, Goodio is planning to shift from nice pictures towards videos to explain the firm’s ideology, and the marketing director stresses that it is “*Good that we have digital channels. I would like to tell more about our values and see how our followers accept them.*”

Goodio acknowledges that the active use of social media marketing requires more human and financial resources than the firm currently has. “*On Facebook, one does not get visibility without investing huge amounts in advertising, and the fact is that a small firm has a small marketing budget. Hence, gaining visibility is more challenging for a small firm compared to a large one,*” concludes the marketing director. Due to limited resources, Goodio has not been able to follow and participate in the ongoing discussions in social media to the extent they would have liked to.

5.3. Supermood

Supermood is a Finnish firm established in 2014. The firm focuses on natural skincare with a fresh take on beauty and wellness. Supermood produces cosmetics and chocolate, the latter being 70% cold pressed raw chocolate from organic cocoa beans. Supermood stresses entrepreneurial attitude, ethical business, and transparency. For the first two years, Supermood mainly focused on—and learned from—the domestic markets. From day one, the firm’s strategy has been to manufacture products for international markets. Since 2016, the firm has started to expand its sales in foreign markets. Early internationalization was rapid and chaotic

as the CEO describes, *“We had leads from Korea, Taiwan, Maldives, India, Russia, the UK, the US ... four to five requests weekly from all over the world ... and we realized that we were investing huge amounts of money to register our trademarks in markets in which we did not even sell yet. At the same time, we were paying lawyers to go through the contracts from these countries. We were spending all our money to find out if we are able to make sales ... instead of investing in activities to make sales.”*

Supermood was also facing high risks in their early internationalization. The CEO gives an example of their Russian initiative, *“We were discussing with a large local distributor for more than six months, and they send us an agreement... our lawyer needed just to have a quick glance, it was an absolute no go... with a big bill. He said that if we would like to make this deal happen, it would require a number of iteration rounds, a new firm to be registered in Russia, and a remarkable invoice from him.”* According to the CEO, this was the turning point when Supermood started to reconsider its internationalization strategy. The firm decided to focus strictly on one market at time. Today, the firm has distributors in the EU, China, and the US. The firm’s expansion in foreign countries for the upcoming two years includes only English-speaking countries, the UK, Canada, and Australia.

As Supermood had a partner in the USA, the decision to focus on the US was easy. In addition, existing sales promotion material and product packaging were suitable to the US markets. The local partner is screening potential distributors and ensures that they are capable and compatible with, for example, Amazon drop shipping policy. *“Local distributors like the products. Sales in the US got a head start. Now our inventory is gone, and the production of a new batch takes time, which brings a new challenge in terms of cash flow. Also, the exchange fluctuations bring in an additional flavor,”* notes the CEO. Distributors in the US also use their own marketing channels to promote Supermood products, which has led to further cooperation with other firms. The CEO continues, *“It has been a bit confusing ... stores that have taken our*

products to be sold ... in such a short period of time. Lots of hard work and a hint of good luck.”

Empty inventories have made Supermood postpone its social media marketing and campaigns.

“The risk is that I will sell and empty my stocks ... and there is nothing to ship to our distributors ... that is not good,” the CEO points out.

One of the three firm founders has a background in cosmetics, the other two, including the CEO, have been in sales promotion and advertising agencies. The CEO is responsible of the product package design, web shop, and all brand building related activities, and notes *“Marketing, communications, and brand building are quite easy for us due to our sales promotion and advertising agency backgrounds. However, in previous firms there were plenty of people to delegate to and big customers with huge marketing budgets. Now I have had to learn how to cope with limited financial resources.”* The CEO continues, *“How can you build a brand without resources. You may have campaigns with discounts ... but having social media contents that improve your brand require time and resources; instead of discounts, you have to tempt users with emotionally attractive contents. This really requires delving, time and money.”*

Supermood recognizes the benefits of using social media marketing. Supermood is not only able to reach a vast number of potential customers, but also can receive their opinions and feedback. Yet, the firm is using social media marketing channels cautiously; social media marketing also requires financial resources, capabilities, and time. The firm is short in all of these. The CEO explains, *“We produce all the social media contents in-house. To use social media wisely, the contents must make sense and have to be interesting. For this reason, we do not post often, but share posts with substance ... rather than crank out something meaningless.”* The majority of the contents is disposable, which means that the firm needs the capacity to produce new contents continuously. The CEO continues, *“Digital marketing calls for both personal commitment and continuous involvement ... as soon as we have enough money, I will*

trace a partner to help us with our social media. I am capable of doing it, you just need to select your battles and outsource the rest.”

Supermood uses social media to communicate with its customers. The firm returns to posts and keeps up dialogue with its fans. Supermood does not utilize this on-going communication in product development, though. The firm is not about to bring new products to the markets, as the main challenge for the time being is to build brand and awareness.

Supermood receives a large number of cooperation requests from bloggers and influencers. The firm has learned that many of them are only after free samples without any further reciprocity. The firm has now implemented criteria to verify engagement and possible reach. Moreover, as the CEO notes *“We believe that true influencers find our products, buy our products, and like our products, without us paying them.”* As a departure from the core activity, the firm that provides Supermood with its product packages has a web site, where end users can order varying products. This provider has a large on-line customer base and these customers are very active in social media. Supermood got on the provider’s lists, and consequently now receives high quality end user reviews through this channel also.

5.4. Népra

In 2015, two young Finnish women established Népra, an ethical sportswear brand. Népra designs and manufactures sportswear especially to crossfit trainers. The firm provides long-lasting activewear (e.g. tops, tights, socks, long-sleeved shirts, and shorts) and lazywear (e.g. T-shirts, sweaters, and hoodies). Népra is aiming at becoming a Europe-wide sportswear brand. Népra is currently selling its products mostly on the domestic market in Finland, but also to some extent in the EU. The firm’s current inventory limits the further expansion to foreign markets, and as the owner of Népra mentions, *“Next year we will put more effort to foreign*

campaigns to enhance our foreign sales, in particular in Germany.” The firm utilizes social media in their internationalization, especially in Germany. *“When we take photos in Germany, we tag them to those locations in which they were taken”*, the owner notes.

Népra has been participating in carefully selected sales promotion events in order to build a team of athletes who wear Népra’s sportswear. *“Athletes are wearing our clothing, and in this way, they are also building our brand. We also use social media as a complementary marketing media, and also in order to interact with the customers,”* explains the owner. The firm owner believes that buyers trust the advocates wearing the firm’s products, *“Buyers follow highly ranked and appreciated sportsmen”*, points out the interviewee.

Through social media, the firm receives customer feedback, both positive and negative. Hence, Népra is continuously gathering information that the firm further transfers to product development. *“For a small brand like us, it is extremely important to learn if there are any weak spots, specific problems, wishes where to place logos, etc. We have a hunch that people have accepted our products well, and as a token, they provide us with lengthy messages,”* points out the firm owner.

Népra is investing in the firm’s web pages in order to provide relevant information for the buyers. In addition, Népra posts newsletters on a regular basis. For the firm, the most important social media channels are Instagram, Facebook and a blog. In these media, the firm communicates daily and shares as much information as possible. *“Social media is a good channel to share something daily, to share bits of our story, values, product news, and our athletes. Moreover, social media has become an intrinsic part of everyone’s life. Since we are running a web shop, we need to be part of it,”* explains the owner. The firm pays close attention especially to the quality and colors of the pictures they use, even if there are limitations, *“We usually have a color theme. At the time being, we are not able to have all the Instagram*

photographs taken by professionals, thus, the quality is not always the highest possible.” The firm utilizes texts from its blogs in its other social marketing media, for example on Instagram.

Népra uses the same social media marketing channels in all of its target markets. In order to differentiate the media in different geographical or language areas, they would need to hire additional resources. *“Not at the time being, maybe within the next two years. We do see all the possibilities in communicating using customers’ own language, but today, the workload is not in balance with the possible benefits,”* answers the firm owner when asked about this issue.

Népra considers that *“Giving customers too green of an image, or giving them an impression that the firm does all things 100% right or provides the world’s most ecological products,”* runs the risk of giving a misleading image in social media. *“The world is not just black and white. We need to be cautious how much we want to build our brand based on the ecological premises. We need to be transparent. The problem is that if you make a claim in social media that is incorrect, you soon ruin your image,”* points out the owner of Népra. *“Bad news travel fast,”* she concludes.

5.5. Vimma

Vimma is a Finnish company manufacturing design clothing. The firm was established in 2013 and originally focused on children’s clothing. Over the past years, Vimma has been gradually including also clothing for adults into its pool of offerings. Vimma highlights transparency, honesty, ecological friendliness, and its roots in Scandinavia, particularly in Finland. Brand building leans on high quality products that are made of ecological materials. Vimma sells its products mainly in Finland and, to some extent, also in Europe. The firm is seeking further foreign growth in Europe, regardless of the fact that the firm’s products have gained interest

also in Asia and North America. As the firm's development director notes, *"Vimma is a respected brand. For the time being, we will focus on Europe, but in the future, we will not exclude other markets."*

The CEO of the firm is responsible for the firm's product design and production planning, but also for the firm's brand building. *"She has been in this firm since day one, she knows the firm inside out, and she has been working hard to build our brand,"* explains the development director. As a strong personality, the CEO is the firm's figurehead, yet, she also gives guidelines for the firm's marketing and communication.

Vimma's main social media communication channels are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In addition, the firm also uses print media, *"We do not rely solely on digital marketing. One has to be versatile when it comes to the use of marketing media. We have also made some experiments of targeted printed advertisements in foreign markets, in Baltic countries, for example,"* notes the development director. Currently Vimma uses only English in its social media marketing, but the firm has plans to adopt more extensively local languages one geographic market area at the time. Vimma has local resellers to distribute its products, and they use influencers and bloggers to write stories of the firm. *"Building a presence in social media calls for local actors. To get your products in local shops, a new brand requires familiar salespersons who believe in your products,"* points out the development director.

For Vimma, social media is a fast channel to share information. *"For us, social media is an easy channel to handle, is responsive, real time, provides an opportunity to reach a large number of people in a short period of time, and when utilized in marketing, is inexpensive,"* lists the development director. On the other hand, Vimma recognizes that negative messages spread fast in social media, and hence, the use of social media calls for alertness and accurate information. *"One has to take into account possible multiplicative effects,"* points out the Vimma development director. In foreign markets, Vimma uses social media in a similar manner

as they do in Finland. The firm acknowledges that in the near future, it needs to adapt to the social media marketing channels that customers use in different countries. The development director says, “*In some countries, Facebook and Instagram may be less used, say in Russia, for example.*”

Vimma notes that users use social media to give feedback. Social media is fast, and hence, it requires that the firm follows discussions continuously and reacts in real time. Vimma involves its customers also in product design, “*We may ask about the patterns, if the users have any wishes. We do listen carefully what our customers say about our models. We are trying to genuinely meet our customers’ needs,*” concludes the development director. At the same time, Vimma has experienced that social media is not without challenges. “*... Problems in our on-line store, and then the problems in the functionality of the payment methods. Furthermore, operating in international markets comes with language challenges, and combining different languages, digital marketing, and logistics is far from straightforward. Moreover, the same clothing models that we sell in Finland do not necessarily suit every European country*”, says the development director.

6. AGGREGATE FINDINGS

Our case study among the five internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms points toward some quite specific issues to which the management reacts in slightly different ways, not only compared to larger firms, but also among our case firms.

For the firms in our study, the *benefits* accruing from utilizing social media involve the ones already identified in the prior research, such as the possibility to communicate the firm brand and share news about the products, wide (global) reach among customers, interactivity, and possibilities to tap into networks (see Andzulis et al. 2012). The conclusion that these

benefits lead to a higher market awareness of the brand, and a subsequent increase in sales, seems quite straightforward.

However, our case firms also bring up some benefits that stem from using social media for quite specific purposes and in different manners. Internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms may approach the feedback and information from the international customer base—gained through social media—in different ways. Social media is a highly valuable source of foreign market information, and hence, provides a small firm with ‘an extended marketing resource’, or, more specifically, a market intelligence resource. Social media provides an access to market information and feedback into the firms’ R&D from such (potential) foreign customers and networks that small firms would otherwise not reach. Yet, our results indicate that not all firms capitalize on such an extended resource. This can be at least to an extent due to the nature of the firm offering. For example, fashion industry product development, which is more seasonal, benefits more naturally from wider international feedback than companies with longer product or service life cycles. The relevance level of the benefits varies, which can also be considered a relevant area of further research. For example, it could be studied if social medial usage facilitates dynamic consistency (cf. Demil and Lecocq 2010), that is, the ability of companies to utilize their existing assets while at the same time exploring areas of renewal.

According to our findings, *some benefits are also controversial*, such as the speed of the media. While the firms appreciate the possibility to communicate fast and to promote visibility daily, they also acknowledge both the weight of the necessity to react rapidly and the burden of the information-overload. This requires resources (see also Sigfusson and Chetty 2013). The increased visibility, in particular, is a two-edged sword. Growing, especially international, audiences in social media acts like snowballs; demand may pass the level where the company cannot respond to customer needs. If the company does not have the inventory or good enough logistic services to match the demand, the benefits gained through social media

use may be short-lived, and in the worst cases, even transform into bad reputation—a manifestation of the uncontrollability of social media. This has some implications on social media use also. For example, a need to limit promotional activity may emerge until there is certainty that the production can match the possibly emerging demand. Likewise, it may be necessary to design the content in a manner that makes the distribution challenges more understandable among the customer-base (consider, e.g. Kyrö Distillery posting also about problems and failures). In best cases, limited availability of products and services can be communicated in a positive light, making the offering a luxury item. Building on these notions, future research can uncover specific features of social media in this sense.

Figure 6.1 illustrates how social media can support internationalization to the extent that it increases, rather than effectively limits marketing and production resources—the vertical arrow at the right-hand side of the figure indicates that input gained from markets can influence the level of resources at the firm’s disposal, and simultaneously illustrates the turning point where the risk of adverse effects emerges. Our data suggests that market awareness can promote sales, but only to the level that marketing and production resources are adequate to handle the demand. If control is lost (and demand caused by awareness exceeds resources), a negative spiral may be initiated by the inability to respond to demand leading to negative reputation effects, and lowering demand and lowering interest in social media. In the optimal case, market awareness leads to a situation where full capacity production and sales are balanced, and where the effective marketing and production resources extended by the social media penetration are used to their fullest.

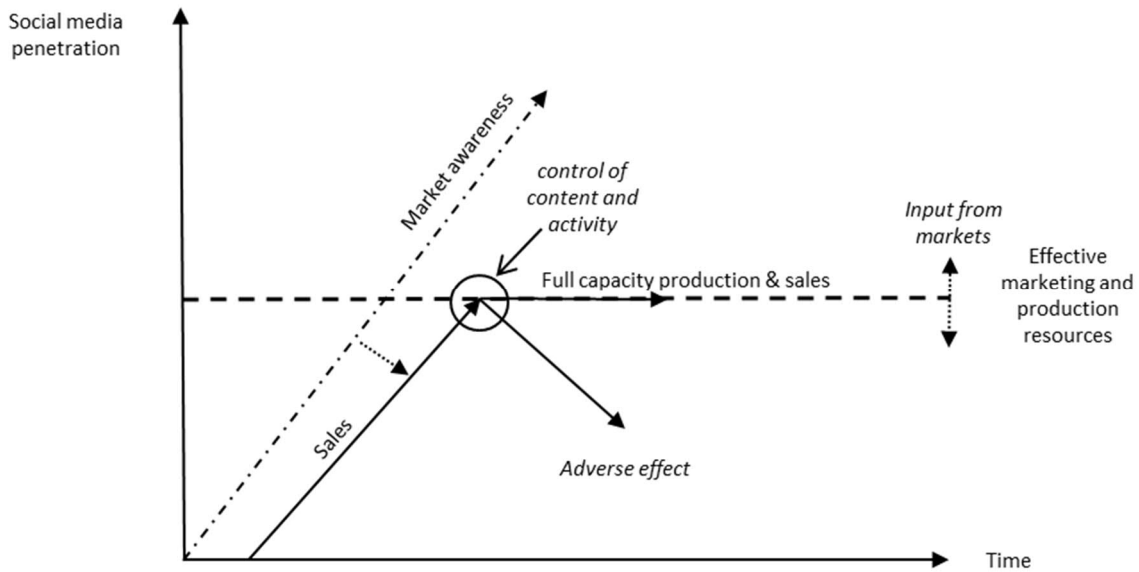


Figure 6.1. Effective resources, control, and social media.

Indeed, as noted in the prior marketing literature (e.g., Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi and Mäläskä 2015; Kannan 2017), our results also indicate that the lack of controllability of social media content may become a notable *challenge* for internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms. In our data, social media audiences are considered an extension of the firms' resource base, although the firms have recognized the risk of abuse. While growing, especially by expanding into international markets, it is not always sure which contacts and ambassadors are appropriate. Social media and digital platforms (on-line stores, on-line sales, and order-delivery processes) are to an extent under a firm's influence. Small firms can control the contents they share themselves; however, the further spread of the information is beyond the firm's influence.

To mitigate the controllability challenge, the small entrepreneurial firms in our case study have made some specific efforts. For example, they have utilized social media to lead their (potential) customers and collaborators to their webpages and blogs rather than left them in these platforms solely. The firms consider that in these forms of digital media, the content is more controllable and accurate. Small firms also utilize the replicability of the contents in

different social media channels, thereby effectively localizing their social media use—not in terms of contents, but in terms of making sure that the materials are available in the most used channels. Related to localization, the firms in our study also acknowledge that the norms and regulations of a specific international market area may be an important factor that influences social media use, especially in regard to content. Sometimes, this leads the firms to naturally adapt their social media contents. The contingencies and details of retaining and regaining control when it has been lost are interesting areas for future research.

We verified the initial findings illustrated in Figure 6.1 also by organizing the data in a more structured manner, starting from the raw data, translating it into first order concepts, which we further combined into second order themes, and finally, aggregate dimensions (see Gioia et al., 2013). Appendix 1 shows the development of the main elements from the data. This step of data analysis provided us with a way to develop a framework that captures the logic illustrated in Figure 6.2 in a concise manner. Initially, a firm can decide if it sets up social media and digital platforms to promote its internationalization, and how these look like. However, beyond this point, the control starts to shift. At the core of the framework is the notion that ‘the grapevine effect’ in social media is typically positive if a firm can deliver its promises, but if this fails, negative news, shortages in deliveries, disappointments, and doubts travel fast. Inherently, market awareness may enforce either a virtuous or vicious cycle, which is highly relevant for internationalizing SMEs. Market awareness influences buying behavior, but in social media, and especially international markets, this is largely beyond a firm’s influence. On the other hand, with social media use, a firm can gather relevant and appropriate market information on the buying behavior of foreign customers, and support favorable development trajectories, and try to avoid failures. This happens when the firm learns from markets (e.g. by experimenting), and—as a highly relevant issue—feeds this learning back to its use of social media. Firms need to react correctly and adjust their social media contents in order to improve

customer experiences and expectations (see Appendix 1 for examples on these issues). The five internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms in our study seem to be in different stages of this learning. They use social media in different ways (as already depicted above). In managing the challenges and potential benefits, some of them use social media as the main marketing and communication channel, supported by other media. Others like to have it as a complement to the main channels that they find easier to control. How these decisions are made is one area where future research can add to existing knowledge building on the framing provided here.

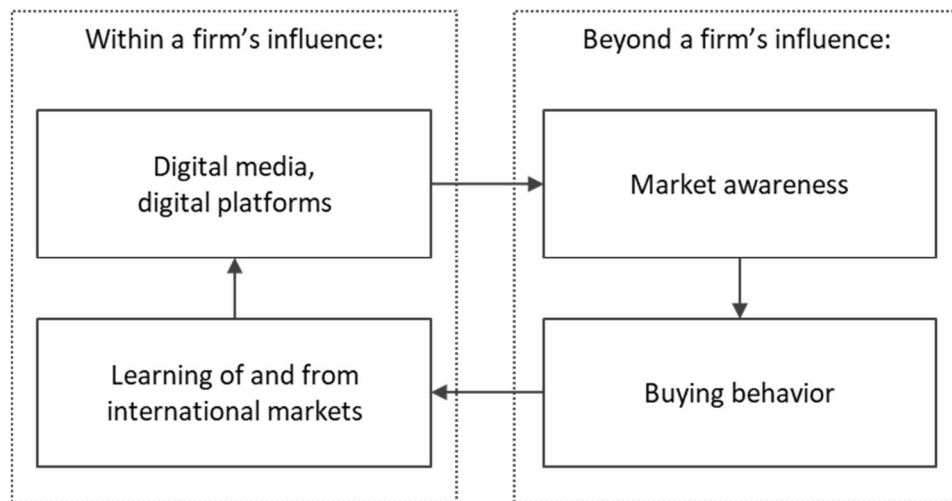


Figure 6.2. Social media in supporting small entrepreneurial firm internationalization.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Our study builds on, integrates, and extends various streams of existing scholarly knowledge. Marketing literature has already provided numerous insights on social media use, most notably as a marketing and brand-building tool (Andzulis et al. 2012; Kannan 2017; Karjaluo et al. 2015; Rapp et al. 2013). Many of these insights apply to international marketing, and international activity in more general, but there also are features related to international expansion that are less well covered and understood (e.g., Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson 2018).

Considering an even more specific context—that of internationalizing and growing small entrepreneurial firms—there is a need to understand the premises, benefits, and limits of social media use. In fact, existing research has almost completely neglected the relationship between social media and the internationalization endeavors of SMEs (Brouthers et al. 2016; Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson 2018; Mathews et al. 2016). In a recent study, Cao, Ajjan, Hong and Le (2018, 228) state that “[as] the research on social media evolves, more studies may examine what specific forms of social media are most influential in achieving the performance goals of organizations beyond national boundaries—in global market contexts.” While beneficial in many ways in an international operations environment—even when considering the downsides related to the uncontrollability of the messages and contents that generally affect brand image, for example—social media also may bring some benefits and challenges that are not clearly visible.

Our study adds to existing knowledge on the internationalization of small entrepreneurial firms and digitalization by showing how social media may help overcome resource limitations in some respects, e.g., in regard to liabilities of foreignness, newness, and outsidership (see, e.g., Arenius et al. 2006; Fraccastoro and Gabrielsson 2018). However, somewhat paradoxically, the removal of these liabilities, and the increasing visibility and acceptance, may create such demand that the small entrepreneurial firm cannot respond to due to limited resources in its R&D and production. Control is therefore needed, which again demands resources. For example, the limited production resources generate the need to control promotional activities. Therefore, the extent to which social media is relied on, and used for different purposes, may change according to a firm experiences and accumulated learning in regard to the influences of social media on the effective resources at the firms’ disposal, and on the need for control. The (expectations to gain) increasing sales are not, therefore, necessarily

the most decisive issue, and dynamic consistency (Demil and Lecocq 2010) throughout the organization is needed.

While our findings build on only five case firms, they reveal relevant features in the relationship between social media use and internationalization in small entrepreneurial firms. We acknowledge the need to study the connections between benefits and challenges and uses of social media in a more detailed manner still, as different interactive and mutual connections seem to emerge. Our within and between case analyses provide a good overview of and some in-depth insights on small firms' approaches to social media use and the related issues, but as the sample is limited and comprises companies in one country only, there is plenty of room for addressing other issues, such as those identified in the above sections. Likewise, for generalizability, a wider range of cases and practical examples should be examined through quantitative and qualitative means. This study provides a point of departure for those subsequent research endeavors.

Simultaneously, our study provides some guidance in terms of managerial practices. The experiences of the case firms can be a valuable learning point for other small entrepreneurial firms targeting international markets. Already acknowledging the different alternatives, such as whether to communicate about products or the corporate brand, whether to do everything in-house or to outsource some aspects of social media use, whether to limit or to increase communication, which channels to select, and so on, eases creating a strategy for social media use in internationalizing small entrepreneurial firms. The stories of the case firms, together with the theoretical considerations, form a basis for informed management. At the same time, each of these decision points for managers can be considered as relevant areas of deeper academic examination as well. We hope that both managerial and scientific work can be promoted based on our contribution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Professor Tanja Leppäaho, Professor Olli Kuivalainen, and Professor Jorma Larimo for their valuable insights into an earlier version of the results, Editor Professor Leon Schjoedt for his helpful advice, and the Foundation for Economic Education for their financial support.

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Appendix 1. Data analysis (cf. Figure 6.2)

<i>Quotes from data</i>	<i>1st order concepts</i>	<i>2nd order themes</i>	<i>Aggregate dimensions</i>
- "...today any brand can be global since end users are global, borders have faded away long time ago"	International expansion	Nature of customer base	Buying behavior
- "...we decided to have separate Facebook and Instagram for our cafes in order not disturb our foreign followers with these posts ... [different markets] require localization ... making internationalization not that easy" - "... next year we will put more effort to foreign campaigns to enhance sales, in particular in Germany"	International activity		
- "...we had ... four to five requests weekly from all over the world ..."	Customer contacts		
- "...The risk is [social media] that I will sell and empty my stock and there is nothing to deliver our distributors" - "It does not make sense to start increasing demand until there are products to be delivered" - "...if only we have stock...we would have an event..."	Production challenges	Visibility/ awareness risks	Market awareness
- "...an extensive grapevine effect, which we need to control ... we cannot be sure that we follow all on-going discussions and moreover, there are discussions in many other places in which we have no control over." - "...but we get an unbelievable amount of contact requests... there are so many networks..."	Uncontrollability		
- "...we need to be cautious ... if you make a claim in the social media that is incorrect, you soon ruin your image"	Wrong/false information		
- "...for sure on daily basis we need to work on this." - "... bad news travel fast"	Speed		
- "possible to reach a lot of people within a short time" - "...we had very fast a lot of followers in social media" - "...world wide reach, definitely"	Wide reach	Marketing/ promotion- related gains	
- "Very important for brand visibility"	Visibility		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...every day we can tell our story" - "It is very good that we have a channel where to communicate... We have seen that [posts] receive a lot of likes" 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "... we use social media as a complementary marketing media, and also in order to interact with the customers" - "... I think it really is the interaction with the customer interface that is very valuable, from the ivory tower it is very difficult to do this, we need to know what people really think about our products" - "...if someone posts us, we do open the dialogue..." 	Interactivity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...the dealers without physical stores... you kind of create the customer streams to both sides" - "...we spend hours and hours sitting at the bar counters with our distributors" - "this is a network business, and we need to be there" 	Networking/ dealers and potential customers	Expansion of effective resources	Social media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...small firm with a small budget" - "In social media... there is reasonable cost in trying to reach even larger target groups" - "lowering the costs" 	Affordability		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...information drifts to us from all over the world" - "At any time, we can ask the barrel owners if we need further information, for example, on making whiskey" - "... it is extremely important to learn if there are any weak spots, any specific problems, any wishes where to place logos, etc. ... people has accepted our products well, and as a token, they provide us with lengthy messages" - "... you get feedback all the time and you need to study it constantly and react to it" 	Market knowledge		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "... we use social media as a complementary marketing media, and also in order to interact with the customers" - "...we do not rely solely on digital marketing. One has to be versatile" 	Role in marketing	Social media use	

what comes to the use of marketing media...			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "... Facebook is the main channel...Instagram and Twitter" - "We need to use different channels, we can't rely on one channel reaching people in every country" 	(Multi)channel approach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...to dedicate one person solely in digital marketing feels from time to time a big investment" - "...we do not have too much time to spend on social media ... a small firm has a small marketing budget, gaining a visibility is more challenging for a small firm compared to a large counterpart" - "... having such social media ... tempt users with emotionally attractive contents, this really requires delving, time and money" 	Resource requirements	Resources allocated for Social media	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - "...We do see all the possibilities to communicate using customers' own language ... the workload is not in balance with the possible benefits" - "We wish to provide this to Europeans in their own languages" - "Different channels for different countries – not yet anyway...we would need employees for that" 	Activity type		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "... it has brought some sensitivity in marketing.. you need to be pretty careful" 	Experiences	Learning as a means to develop social media use	Learning