Session 3

A Strategic Group Analysis of Social Media Platforms for SMEs in the UK and Case Examples from the US (Prof. Christopher Holland and Maria Manuela Gutierrez-Leefmans)

Abstract: A new set of social media websites have emerged to cater for the specific needs and characteristics of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the US and the UK. Unlike consumer markets, where one or two websites dominate each type of social media platform, e.g. Facebook for social networking, there are 100s of SME social media websites, which form a complex social media landscape. The UK landscape is mapped out using strategic group theory and online panel data from comScore. Four specific groups are identified: laggards; simple networkers; network innovators; and sales leaders. The characteristics of each strategic group are described, and the differences between the groups are outlined. In addition, some case vignettes from the US are presented to illustrate the dynamic changes occurring in the use of social media platforms. The theoretical implications of the research results for the analysis of social media are explained and the managerial implications for SME business owners and managers are outlined. The methodological significance of online panel data in social science research is evaluated, and future research opportunities are identified.

Prof. Holland’s main areas of research are digital marketing, Internet strategy, Information Systems and supply chain management. He has published articles in a wide range of journals including Strategic Management Journal, Long Range Planning, IEEE Software, Organization Science and Sloan Management Review. He has been an international consultant on digital strategy to blue-chip companies in banking, retailing, grocery, telecommunications and technology. Prof. Holland has been an invited lecturer and speaker in Europe, South Africa and the United States.

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