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Women in business and social media: Implications for female entrepreneurship in emerging countries

Francesca Maria Cesaroni[1], Paola Demartini[2] and Paola Paoloni[3]*

[1]Department of Economia, Società, Politica University of Urbino Via Saffi, 42, Urbino (PU) Italy.
[2]Department of Business Studies, University of Rome 3 Via Silvio D'Amico, Rome, Italy
[3]Department of UNISU, Niccolò Cusano University Via Don Gnocchi 3, Rome Italy

The aim of this study is to carry out a literature review on women in business and social media in order to know the state of the art, and to understand whether and to what extent the studies conducted so far have addressed these issues: how and why are women entrepreneurs and managers using social media? Do they use social media for marketing, networking or personal reasons? The article relies on a literature review about women entrepreneurs/managers and social media. For this purpose, a literature search on Scopus has been carried out, using a set of selected keywords. Selected papers have been analysed and classified in an attempt to identify main topics, and results obtained thanks to research and analysis carried out so far. This study contributes to the expansion of literature on women in business studies, and offers a new perspective applied to a topic of high relevance such as social media. The study literature review puts in evidence that this is a new issue, which gives us the possibility to identify new trends and future directions for research. Surprisingly, none of the extracted papers concerning how and why women in business use social media refer to developed economies. The common feature of these papers is that they concern women entrepreneurs in emerging economies, mainly Kenya, Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa. In these countries, social media can open up new opportunities for female entrepreneurs, and encourage the creation of new businesses run by women, thanks to their flexibility and their attributes. The major implication is to advance knowledge and practice in the area of gender in management and use of social media by focusing on empirical research, theoretical developments, practice and current issues. Benefits are related to a better understanding of the debate on "gender and management" themes by reconsidering networking activities with social media.

Key words: Women entrepreneurs, women manager, big data, ICT, social media.

INTRODUCTION

Web-based technologies and digital culture have become an important part of our daily activities, and this topic is at

the top of the agenda for many researchers and policy makers. Social media offers a set of computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, career interests, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to relations between businesses, organisations, communities, and individuals (Ang, 2011; Agerdal-Hjermind, 2014). In particular, social media can make new ways of networking and doing business possible, based on innovative concepts such as sharing, collaboration and co-creation (Antes and Schuelke, 2011).

This study aims to contribute to this emergent topic through a literature review on women in business and social media in order to understand whether and to what extent the studies conducted so far have addressed these issues: how and why are women entrepreneurs and managers using social media? Do they use social media for marketing relations, networking or personal connections?

However, this is a little-known topic, with implications on management and organisation that are still unknown. For this reason, it is important to understand how social media can really facilitate, promote, and support relationships for women in business, and if the latter are able to take full advantage of them. The study literature review puts in evidence that there is a lack of research on the use of social media by women in business, which gives us the possibility to identify future directions for investigation. On the basis of the study search strategy, only a small percentage (10) of papers has been extracted using "social media" and "woman (or female) entrepreneur" as search terms.

As a matter of fact, none of the paper refer to developed economies. The common feature of these papers is that they concern women entrepreneurs in emerging economies, mainly Kenya, Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa. The same characteristic also distinguishes the authors, coming from the same emerging countries.

This distinctive feature may explain the approach adopted in analysing implications associated with the use of social media by women entrepreneurs, as well as the main themes emerging from these analyses. In fact, women's subordination, marginalisation and lack of inclusion in the analysed countries explain the positive impact of social media's on female entrepreneurs thanks to their flexibility and connectivity power.

This study contributes to the expansion of literature on entrepreneurship studies, and offers a new perspective applied to a topic of high relevance such as social media. The major practical implication is to advance knowledge in the area of gender in management by reconsidering communication and networking activities using social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Companies create value through relationships. In fact, relations with the environment are a way of growing up as well as a chance to create added value in the long term and increase cash flow and stock of resources.

In this perspective, relational capital (Stewart, 1998) represents a key factor to gain competitive advantage in the market, a source for companies and female entrepreneurs and a supporter of the training and the transfer of a collective knowledge. It is formed by the quality and quantity of relations that companies have with stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell **e**t al., 1997) such as clients, suppliers, banks, employees. It is the brand, image, reputation, satisfaction and loyalty that companies build in their relationship (Donaldson, Preston 1995).

Despite the recognised importance of relations, there is very little empirical research that has focused attention on them in a gender perspective (Paoloni and Demartini, 2016). Some authors (Carsrud et al., 1986; Rodriguez and Santos 2009) have highlighted the differences that exist between the relations created by female entrepreneurs and the ones built by male entrepreneurs, registering differences in their composition and in their use. The common agreement (Gillian, 1982; Shapero, 1982) is that "female companies" are characterised by frequent use during all of the life cycles of the company, of connections and networks (a cooperative vision) rather than being willing to carry out an atomistic management.

The latter referred to as a kind of management that can be found as a typical characteristic of male companies, predisposed towards a clear separation between the family, social and working sphere. The idea of the network for women is the creation of a necessary connection between work, family and the community (Aldric, 1989, Paoloni, 2011; Paoloni and Demartini,

*Corresponding author. E-mail: paola.paoloni11@gmail.com.

Table1. The use of social media by women in business (examples).

Variable	Individual level	Organisation level
How	Use of FB chat to talk with friends, relatives, etc.	Build an external community of followers on social media (that is, FB, Twitter, etc.)
Why (expected benefits)	Maintain social contacts and improve the work-life balance	Obtain feedback from customers or potential customers on new products

2012; Paoloni and Dumay, 2015) that often coincides with the main reason to start up a company. Today's networks are becoming more virtual, and we wonder how the importance of relational capital is transformed and is also used virtually, especially in those countries where it is difficult to create (for various reasons) a real network.

Social media can open up new opportunities for female entrepreneurs, and encourage the creation of new businesses run by women, thanks to their flexibility and attributes. Moreover, social media can support women in business to express their capabilities in networking by building virtual communities. Finally, it can also be seen as a means to take care of personal relationships, which can be relevant for women in business that, in most cases, have to balance their private life responsibilities with work commitments (Perrons, 2003; Drew and Murtagh, 2005; Emslie and Hunt, 2009). On the light of these premises, the study research questions are the following:

1. How and why women in business (that is, female entrepreneurs and women managers) are using social media?
2. Do they use social media for marketing, networking, or personal reasons?

Accordingly, we are interested in analyzing both women in business who use social media in their private life and women in business who use social media as part of their entrepreneurial or managerial roles. As shown in Table 1, in the literature review, we address both the use of social media by business women:

1. In their private life (for example, to maintain social contacts; to improve work-life balance; to share personal opinions; etc.) and
2. In their organization (for example, to widen their social network in the business; to promote a company product or brand; to involve clients or potential customers in product innovation; to promote employee collaboration and networking, etc.).

METHODOLOGY

The research protocol

With the aim to draw a literature review about women entrepreneurs/ managers and social media, we decided to search for academic contributions on the Scopus database. Scopus, in fact, is a bibliographic database containing abstracts and citations for academic journal articles. It covers nearly 22,000 titles from over 5,000 publishers, of which 20,000 are peer-reviewed journals in the scientific, technical, medical, and social sciences. The study research protocol concerned:

1. Definition of the subject area, as the social media phenomenon interests researchers from different research fields: life sciences, health science, physical sciences and social sciences. The study investigation addresses the topic of women in business and social media, and we decided to limit our search to journals belonging to the social sciences domain;
2. Definition of the data range time-period of publishing. We decided to include papers published from 2010 onwards in our analysis, because social media is quite a recent phenomenon, which is continually evolving. As a matter of fact, the most well-known types of social media were created about ten years ago: namely Facebook in 2004, Myspace in 2004, LinkedIn in 2003, YouTube in 2005 and Twitter in 2006;
3. Selection of key words to find papers through the Scopus searching engine. To this end, we combined the words "social media" with different search terms: "gender" or "entrepreneur" or "manager" or "woman/female entrepreneur" or "woman/female manager";
4. Perspective/model/framework for analysing selected documents. The framework for the analysis of the papers is related to the study research questions, and therefore the content of the papers was examined and discussed, addressing how and why women in business use social media, both at a private and a corporate level.

The dataset

Hereinafter we explain how we created the paper dataset with reference to the number of articles, the type of journals, and the nationality of the authors.

First, we used the search terms "*social media*" and "*gende*r" in the article title, abstract or keywords of different document types (articles, books or book chapters), published from 2010 to 2017 in the Scopus database (search was made on 30-01-17).

773 papers of very heterogeneous content were extracted

Table 2. The data set of selected documents.

Key words	No. of documents extracted	Nationality of authors	Journals
Social media and entrepreneur/manager	102	The majority of authors is from North America (40%) and Europe (45%)	Most articles are published in specialist journals
Social media and woman entrepreneur/manager	10	Emerging countries	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences; Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development; International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business; International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship; Gender and Education; International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues.

(belonging to research fields such as science, mathematics, engineering, technology, health and medicine, social sciences and arts and humanities). The papers address the use of social media in a variety of contexts, however, none of them explore the use of social media by women in business.

In fact, using "gender" as a search term, we found a lot of empirical studies on the use of social media in which the variable gender (male or female), as well as other demographic and socio-economic variables (for example, age, education, profession, nationality, income, etc.), were used to describe or predict specific investigated phenomena.

As a result, we decided to direct the scope of our research to the use of social media by managers and entrepreneurs. With the aim to carry out a literature review on this topic and to draw a framework to be used later to better focus on the specificities linked to gender, we decided to use the search words: "*social media*" and "*entrepreneur*" or "*manager*".

In the first case, we got 107 documents, of which 43 were specifically classified in the subject area of business, management and accounting. In the second case, 800 papers were extracted, 360 belonging to the "business management and accounting" area. Hence, choosing a second subject area brought us to a total amount of 403 selected papers, removing those classified in other subject areas (for example, computer science, engineering, economics, medicine, arts and humanities).

Then, to focus the study analysis on the most relevant academic contributions, we identified papers that had five or more citations. As a whole, the result was equal to 102 papers. Subsequently, we downloaded all the selected papers and we classified them on an Excel sheet, highlighting the following factors:

1. Journals where they were published
2. Number of citations
3. Authors' nationality.

Moreover, we analysed each paper to figure out the different uses of social media, the expected benefits and possible obstacles associated with its use.

In short, results show that a large part of those papers is written by Northern American (40%) and European authors (45%) (Table 2, and for further details Figures 1 and 2). Papers are published in a wide range of journals: from specialist journals (for example, *Public Relations Review,* 6%; *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 4%; *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 4%; *Journal of interactive Marketing, 3%*) to generalist journals of management (for example, *Business Horizons,* 12%; *Management Research Review*, 3%; *Advanced Series In Management*, 2%).

The most recurring topic is the use of social media and its related implication on marketing/advertising/brand management, followed by social media and networking (with different kinds of stakeholders and communities) and social media and innovation. Finally, we focused on the

literature concerning the use of social media by women managers and entrepreneurs.

Accordingly, we selected the search words "*social media*" and "*woman entrepreneur*" or "*female entrepreneur*" or "*woman manager*" in the article title, abstract or keywords of different document types (articles, books or book chapters), published from 2010 to the present, in the Scopus database. Only ten papers were found (only three were classified in the business, management and accounting area, while the others belonged to economics, econometrics and finance, arts and humanities and the computer science area).

This result was surprising, and it suddenly highlighted a tremendous lack of research in this specific field. Furthermore, all articles focus on women entrepreneurs in emerging countries (that is, Indonesia, Egypt and Kenya) and are written by women scholars living in the same regions.

Based on the survey results, we can therefore say that even if research on social media in the enterprise has begun to represent a large number of studies, we are still at an early stage of research.

This is demonstrated by the fact that most of the papers are published in specialist journals and only a few have been published in top ranking review. As regards to social media and women in business, research is still in its infancy (Table 2). A thorough review of the selected documents in light of the stud search queries follows in the next paragraph.
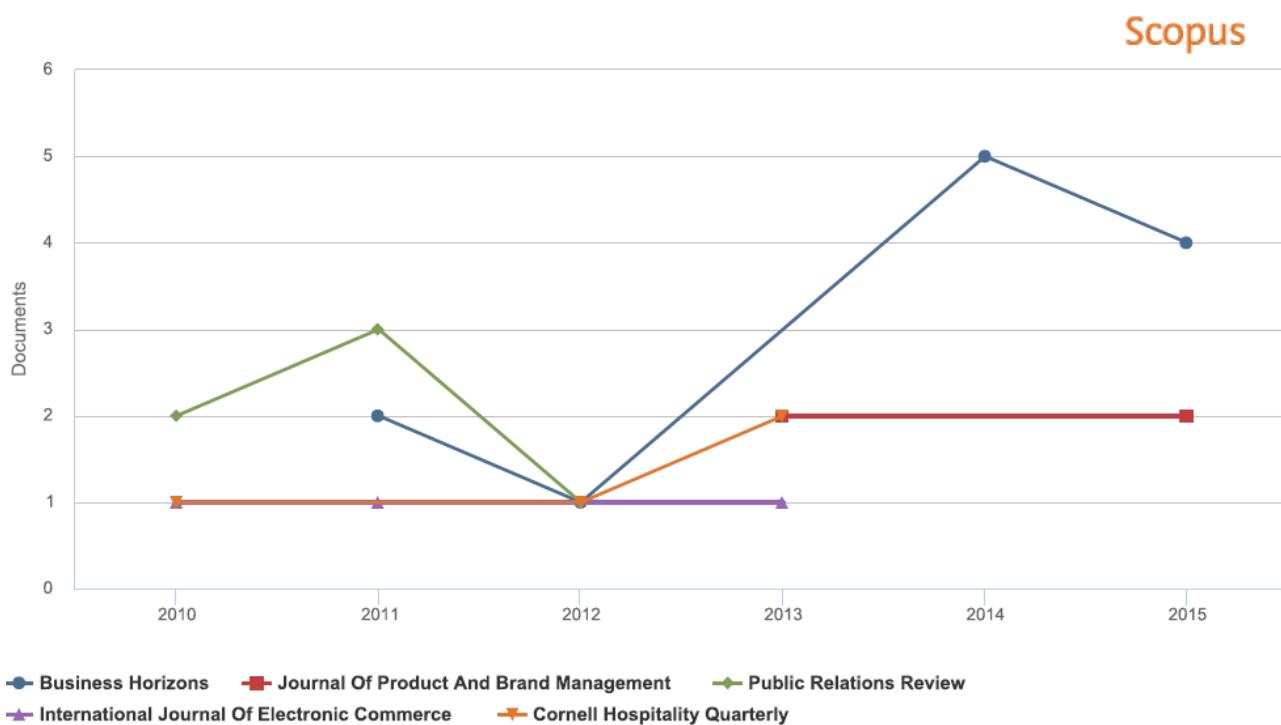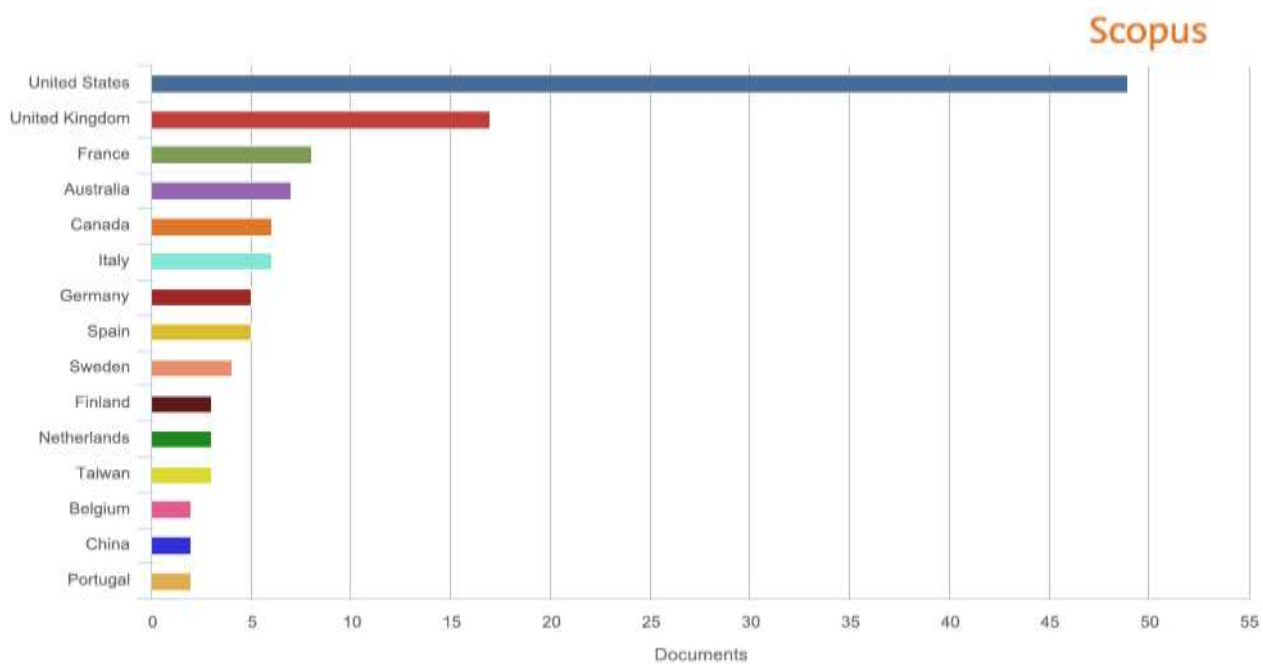
Figure 1. Documents trend per year by main sources.

Figure 2. Documents by authors' country (ranking 15 countries).

RESULTS

Social media as a challenge for management

As shown in Table 2, in the first group, 102 papers were extracted. All researchers agree that social media is a broad term to describe software tools that create user-generated content that can be shared, while social media technologies include social network websites, blogs, wikis as well as online photo and video sharing sites (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011; Choi et al., 2014).

The study analyse the use of social media by companies as well as their impact and implications for the business. For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that none of these articles investigate how personal characteristics of the entrepreneur/manager (such as gender) can impact the use of social media by companies. Nor is the individual level of analysis taken into account, which is related to the personal and professional benefits that managers/entrepreneurs can obtain from the use of social media.

All papers focus on the use of social media at the organisational level. They refer to a large range of firms with regard to the model of business adopted, the dimension, industry and country. Accordingly, current research in this area reflects the different stage of adoption in which organisations are working to identify uses and evaluate success factors for online social networks and virtual communities.

It is evident that these technologies have a great impact on consumers, allowing them to share their experiences and information on products, services, companies and brands. This shifts the power to influence customer's behaviour from organisations to consumers. As a consequence, this phenomenon has suddenly caught the attention of scholars interested in its implication on company marketing and advertising. In this field, researchers' main concern is to investigate how companies interact with virtual communities (Shen et al., 2010; Liang and Turban, 2011; Ang, 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; De Vries et al., 2012; Gummerus et al., 2012) and for what purposes (Hensel and Deis, 2010; Trainor, 2012; Naylor et al., 2012; Yadav et al., 2013), in order to gain benefits.

Only a few studies address the adoption of social media by organisations from a strategic perspective. The latter underlines how social media can be successfully managed to gain competitive advantages in the short and/or long-term by adopting conscious initiatives and proactive behaviour (Fisher and Reuber, 2011; Sinclair and Vogus, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Paniagua and Sapena, 2014).

To this end, interesting insights can be found in the study of Sinclair and Vogus (2011). It presents a survey on how 72 top global companies are using social media. In detail, the following uses and related expected benefits arose:

1. Promote a company, product or brand (in 100% of the companies analysed) (Hipperson, 2010; Dhaoui, 2014; Dessart et al., 2015).
2. Build external communities of followers (90%). This initiative aims to link to a group of customers who purchase products and services, and are willing to share product and service experiences with others (Denning, 2011; Brengman and Karimov, 2012; Baghdadi, 2013).
3. Build brand loyalty (60%) (De Vries et al., 2012; De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Chauhan and Pillai, 2013; Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Vernuccio et al., 2015; Zavattaro et al., 2015).
4. Build internal communities of followers (18%). This action aims to network employees or other allied groups (Huang et al., 2013; Agerdal-Hjermind, 2014).
5. Educate customers on specific topics or technologies (7%). These actions aim to facilitate new products and directions for the organisation;
6. Promote a social cause (7%). This action reflects a company's interest in issues that concern our society (Paulin et al., 2014).
7. For product improvement or product development (7%). This use of social media aims to solicit input or feedback from customers or potential customers on new products or products that are under development.
8. To defend the company against attacks (7%) (Liu and Kim, 2011; Alexander, 2014).

As a result, this study shows that there is an increased use of social media by organisations. Use of social media is both passive and active, both tactical and strategic. Moreover, it should be highlighted that in the last few years, there has been an increased awareness of the relevance of social media for the following two reasons:

1. Social networking sites give consumers a voice over design, product/service promotion and support. As a result, companies have the opportunity to change and promote innovation, gathering information from social networking and virtual communities and creating value for customers (Dahl et al., 2011; Mount and Martinez, 2014; Moncrief et al., 2015; Palacios-Marqués, 2015);
2. Bearing in mind that there is a young generation which is digital born and very social-networking-active, managers are aware that the use of social media is vital to communicate with the younger consumers (Bolton et al., 2013; Ruane and Wallace, 2013).

Finally, form the study literature review, it is important to

underline that the adoption, use and implications of social networking tools depend on contingent factors that characterise the firm context (Jiang et al., 2014).

Some of them are related to the business organisation (that is, its size and the sector in which firms operate), (Geho and Dangelo, 2012; Sood, 2012; Nakara et al., 2012; Durkin et al., 2013; Kwok and Yu, 2013; Lagrosen and Grundén, 2014; Leung et al., 2015). Others refer to the environment (that is, the geographical location and the cultural and socio-economic factors featuring the country in which the company operates) (Berthon et al., 2012).

Analysing "the country factor" is noteworthy for the sake of this research. In fact, none of the papers extracted using "social media" and "woman (or female) entrepreneur (or manager)" as search terms refer to developed economies, which contrasts the highlighted general trend (Table 2). Berthon et al. (2012) advocate that social media use "is a function of a country's technology, culture, and government".

First, the country's level of technological development, such as the average bandwidth, the speed available and other characteristics of the infrastructure enabling social media will make some of them more or less popular than others. For example, YouTube is less popular in emerging countries where it consumes considerable bandwidth than it is in North America and Western Europe.

Second, the diffusion of a social medium in a country will also depend on the attitude of that country's government (that is, the well-known regulation imposed by the Chinese Government on Facebook use). Third, the choice, use and related implications of social media are also determined by cultural norms and shared values. In business, a social medium is a tool for sharing "content" within a community and its potential impacts are enormous in terms of spread of communication, engagement and co-creation (Gorry and Westbrook, 2011). However, how and why entrepreneurs and managers, employers, consumers and other stakeholders interact is markedly related to socio-cultural factors and ethical values.

In light of these considerations, in the following paragraph, literature on the use of social media by women in business will be analysed with regard to emerging countries.

Social media in emerging countries: implications for women entrepreneurship

On the basis of the study search strategy, only ten papers have been extracted using "social media" and "woman (or female) entrepreneur" as search terms. After reading these articles, we decided to consider only eight papers, as the content of the other two was considered inconsistent with the purposes of our analysis. In fact, they do not discuss the use of social media by women entrepreneurs, but they analyse women entrepreneurs, using data obtained thanks to social media (Revell-Love and Revell-Love, 2016; Swartz et al., 2016).

Surprisingly, none of these eight papers refer to developed economies. The common feature of these papers is that they concern women entrepreneurs in emerging economies, mainly Kenya, Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt, Malaysia, India and South Africa. The same characteristic also distinguishes most of the authors, coming from the same emerging countries.

This distinctive feature may explain the approach adopted in analysing implications associated with the use of social media by women entrepreneurs, as well as the main themes emerging from these analyses. In fact, women's subordination, marginalisation and lack of inclusion in the analysed countries explain social media's impact on women entrepreneurs.

In these papers, attention is not only directed to business aspects, that is the impact of social media on business organisations, competitive strategies, logistics, relationships with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders, marketing and communication strategies, etc.

On the contrary, analyses are extended to women entrepreneurs' personal dimension, that is, social media's impact on women entrepreneurs' private and family life, their social interactions and, more generally, their role in their social context. These papers in fact highlight the deep-rooted impact of internet and social media on women's lives in these countries, as they have now the opportunity not only to start a business, but also to redefine their role in society. Upkere et al. (2014a, 2014b) emphasised that many women entrepreneurs in Africa have used social media to launch informal businesses, later converted into formal businesses, by reinvesting profits earned in the informal phase.

According to the authors, women entrepreneurs' ability to take advantage of social media could result from their greater propensity to adopt a community-based approach and to maintain social relationships, and from a greater predisposition to interact with customers and perceive their needs. This is why social media exerts a particularly strong impact on women, since the latter are better able to glimpse potentialities of social media and to take advantage of them.

Authors also emphasise women's willingness to get rid of the stereotype that considers them technology averse and somewhat unable to use it. Indubitably, this desire is

the basis of some successful projects, such as Women Weavers Online, a network of Moroccan women (Upkere et al., 2014b) who have the possibility to sell their handworks online, even if they live in very remote villages.

Alkhowalter (2016) presented an analysis concerning the ability of women entrepreneurs from Saudi Arabia to exploit Instagram to start and manage online businesses. The author emphasises the great impact that social media like Instagram may have on women in this country, because it can help women to start a business and help increase the involvement of women in the labor force, which is now quite limited.

For Melissa et al. (2013) and Beninger et al. (2016), empowerment is the central theme of analysis. It is defined as a process of change that occurs as women gradually emancipate themselves from a position of marginality and subordination and strengthens their role in the social context. The concept of empowerment is also linked to that of "human agency", defined as women's freedom to make their own choices without fear of consequences. It is also interesting to note that analyses about empowerment refer not only to the social context in general, but also to women's role within their family.

Social media's ability to generate an empowerment effect on women entrepreneurs is mainly due to social media's ability to support the creation of online communities and social networks. Melissa et al. (2013) analysed social media effects for Indonesian women's empowerment. As a matter of fact, social media:

1. Has encouraged women to undertake an entrepreneurial experience: several activities in fact have been launched to offer manufactured products for sale online that women only used to post on Facebook. Social media has allowed women to perceive a business opportunity and has convinced them of the possibility to gain profit from their homemade products.
2. Has made it possible to start a business with extremely low investments and operating costs. Cases observed by the authors, in fact, are mainly home-based business, selling homemade products or services online.
3. Has allowed women to implement or maintain a network of social contacts even if they were forced to take care of their family at home. This has reduced their isolation and has significantly enriched their social life.
4. Has enabled women to have greater financial resources, and therefore, they enjoy more freedom and financial autonomy. Thanks to their own income, women can now contribute to the family welfare not only as caregivers, opposed to the breadwinner role of their husbands.
5. Has enabled women to redefine their role within their family, to acquire greater importance and to actively participate in decision-making, thanks to their contribution to family income.
6. Has offered women the opportunity to realise themselves and to redefine their role in society.

Vivakaran and Maraimalai (2016) were also concerned about the entrepreneurship situation in India, where a serious gender gap exists due to the lack of adequate education/appropriate training among women entrepreneurs. This is why he proposes an innovative learning system which uses Facebook to help Indian budding women entrepreneurs to expand their training and the effectiveness of their businesses. With regard to business activities, Upkere et al. (2014b) highlighted advantages that social media can offer women entrepreneurs:

1. Low start-up costs and low running costs: To sell handmade products or services online, women only need a smartphone to post pictures of the products and to manage payments.
2. Low competences: Women's businesses are very simple and a basic technological literacy is sufficient to manage them.
3. Wider social networks: Thanks to social media women entrepreneurs can build a broad network of contacts and increase business visibility;
4. Better work-life balance: women entrepreneurs can better manage their work-life balance and they can also involve family members in their home-based business (Melissa et al., 2013).

Overall, these papers show an integrated vision of female life experience. Issues concerning private, family, social and professional life are not considered separately. Instead, they converge to form a single picture of women's life experience. In fact, social media can have a major impact on various aspects of women's lives:

1. Family life, social media helps to significantly increase women's negotiating power.
2. Social life, it favours the inclusion of women and enables a more active and productive participation in a social life.
3. Professional life, social media helps to start a business using women's expertise, with low costs and investments.
4. Private life, social media promotes women's self-realization, enhances their skills and helps women to satisfy their ambitions, while obtaining a financial reward.

DISCUSSION

The literature review provides some insight into the relationship between women in business and social media and it offers some suggestions to define a research agenda in this area:

1. The role of social media as a relationship management tool is central in the analyses on this topic.
2. Literature on social media and entrepreneurs/managers does not focus on the use of social media in personal networks. In most of the analysed papers, attention is focused on the analysis of business relationships and networks.
3. Literature specifically focused on "social media and woman entrepreneur" emphasizes the deep intertwining of personal and business relationships. This theme, however, is analysed in a specific context, both from a cultural point of view, given the condition of subordination, marginalisation and lack of inclusion of women in emerging countries, and in terms of characteristics of women's enterprises, since they are mainly small and micro enterprises.
4. For all of these reasons, results from such analyses cannot be translated tout court to women in business in other countries, characterised by very different conditions about diffusion of new technologies, socio-cultural context and women's role in society;
5. In our literature search, an article that analyses the use of social media by women managers or entrepreneurs working in large companies hasn't been found. The only papers we found refer to women entrepreneurs running micro-enterprises. Thus, issues emerging from these papers cannot be transferred to larger companies since in the latter the role of entrepreneur/manager is very different than in micro-firms (Cesaroni and Consoli 2015).

In larger companies, organisation and management are more structured and organisational roles are more formally defined. Therefore, personal characteristics of an entrepreneur/manager are less influential on organisation, and a profound intertwining between personal and professional dimensions of his/her life is less likely to occur. For this reason, we believe that research on the impact of social media should keep micro and small firms separate from medium and large firms.

To summarise, we can refer to the classification proposed in Table 1 to underline that, so far, literature on the use of social media by women entrepreneurs in emerging countries has mainly focused on the organisation level (that is, how and why women entrepreneurs use social media in their entrepreneurial

activity). In fact, studies on private uses of social media don't exist. Nevertheless, when consequences connected to the use of social media are observed, we notice that main implications and benefits relate to the individual level (private, family and social life), even if the adoption of social media was motivated by business reasons.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The literature review presented earlier shows that so far studies on women entrepreneurs and social media have been mainly concerned with emerging countries and have primarily analysed how social media can help budding women entrepreneurs to start a business.

At the same time, these analyses have clearly shown that the use of social media can help women to enlarge their network and, in so doing, can deeply affect women's conditions, not only in their business life, but mainly in their private, family and social life.

This emphasis on women's networking is in line with studies showing the importance of both formal and informal relationships for female firms' survival and growth (Husu and Koskinen, 2010; Kamberidou and Labovas, 2012). Indeed several studies show that networking is a strategic capability for female firms. Moreover, research shows that female entrepreneurs' ability to network is more developed than male entrepreneurs. The latter, only in recently, has discovered the value of relationships as strategic tools to run a company (Larson and Starr, 1983; Herron and Robinson, 1993; Aldrich and Elam, 1997; Lee and Roh, 2012; Paoloni, 2011; Paoloni and Dumay, 2015). These findings can be of some interest to scholars and politicians.

In fact, the study analysis offers a further example to support the statement made by Berthon et al. (2012) about social media use being *"a function of a country's technology, culture, and government"*. In emerging countries, the role of cultural factors (that is, women's subordination, marginalisation and lack of inclusion in the analysed countries) is of great importance to understand how women entrepreneurs use social media to start and manage their business and why social media has such an important impact on their private and family life and their social condition.

In light of this, it is very important to carry out further analyses in order to better understand how to promote and improve the role of social media as an amplifier of formal and informal networks developed by women entrepreneurs in emerging countries. Future research

could also be aimed at identifying factors affecting the success of female social media-based small businesses.

The results of these analyses also suggest new lines of research concerning the use of social media by micro and small-sized women enterprises in developed countries. This analysis could aim to understand whether and how, in developed countries facing new socio-economic challenges, the use of social media can enable women entrepreneurs to increase their business effectiveness and competitiveness as well as improve their quality of life. This stream of research could allow a greater understanding of a relevant subject for those, scholars or politicians, who are involved in promoting women's entrepreneurship.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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