

Facebook as A Way to Internationalize the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises from Mexico

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ABSTRACT: *This research aims to describe the internationalization process of micro, small, and medium companies through Facebook, which is used as a means to carry out international transactions. To achieve this objective, owners and decision-makers of seven companies were interviewed. It was found that Facebook offers these companies an opportunity for faster internationalization, as a simple Facebook exposure helps companies in targeting customers from anywhere in the world. It can save costs in commercial operations, reduce transaction barriers, and eliminate the physical limitations of time and space; hence, companies can increase their sales and access distant markets. Numerous researches have addressed the topic of internationalization but not through social networks. The originality of this document lies in addressing the issue of internationalization through social networks, such as the Facebook, which have been deemed as effective tools for exportation.*

KEYWORDS: *Internationalization, exports, social networks commerce, international commerce, e-commerce, strategic market, commerce online, globalization, Micro to medium-sized enterprises.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The process of internationalization has been the subject of many studies and under different perspectives in recent decades. This process consists of a series of stages through which companies venture into the international businesses, wherein they increase their resources and commitment to foreign markets as they gain more experience in international business. However, a new paradigm has opened in this process of internationalization with the use of the internet, as companies are in real time contact with a wide audience of potential consumers in the world; consequently, the traditional strategies of marketing are now becoming obsolete and entry to markets abroad become easier and faster for any types of company, regardless of size (Pereira, et al., 2014).

These changes in the information age, as well as the theories of the free market and globalization, have encouraged companies to envision a global approach, which makes them consider international markets and encourages them to search for these markets using their available resources. Therefore, this classic approach, in which exports were accessible to some firms only, is currently changing, as most of the barriers in exporting are no longer present; this has led to entry to new markets, which resulted in managers seeking competitiveness on a global scale (Valente de Andrade, Costa Silva, and Gonçalo Pereira, 2015).

Although numerous researches on the process of internationalization of companies, as well as social networks and their influence on trade, were conducted, no studies have linked both issues nor addressed and documented the use of social networks and their influence on the process of internationalization of companies. For the aforementioned importance of social networks in the global community, this research aims to contribute to the knowledge in existing international business and internationalization of companies by describing how the internationalization of companies occurs through Facebook, which is used as a tool to carry out international transactions, and by distinguishing the essential elements that promote the internationalization of companies through this platform.

This paper is arranged as follows: first, theories related with social networks and internationalization of companies are presented in the literature review; followed by the methodology used to carry out this investigation; then, the results obtained from the field work are discussed; finally, the discussion of the results, conclusions, and references are presented.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Social networks

Social media is defined as a set of applications established on the internet that are based on the ideological and technological principles of Web 2.0, which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated

content in virtual spaces such as discussion forums, wikis, blogs, and microblogs, particularly Twitter (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Turban, Bolloju and Liang, 2011). Many of these spaces are called social networks. Social networks use new information technologies so people from different communities can easily interact and share knowledge, experiences, and mutual interests with each other from and to different geographical points in the world and at any time (Leal, Yu, Maguluru, and Nichols, 2006; Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007). That is to say, once an individual connects to the network, he/she will be able to communicate with others, as the networks allow them to reach a virtual audience (Pereira, et al., 2014). The axes of social networks are the users and their digital identities, whose main source of value in this environment is the systematic exploration of the user's digital profile, where the device, service, and user can be connected (Pereira, et al. 2014). In summary, members who participate in social networks can provide solutions to solve problems among themselves (Leal, Yu, Maguluru, and Nichols, 2006).

The popularity of online social networks and the media, in general, provide platforms for socialization and business opportunities for entrepreneurs (Song, 2015). These social spaces not only have the capacity to improve social advances but economic ones as well, as they encourage commercial activities and the economic development of those who use them for this purpose (Leal, Yu, Maguluru, and Nichols, 2006). In addition, they link consumers with companies, so that interactive relationships based on conversation and collaboration between both parties can be established (Lang, 2013; Hajli, 2013). When social networks are used for commerce, users can share information about the products they sell, as well as its costs and quality (Hogg and Adamic, 2004). Therefore, social media revolution, in the use of the Web, is turning social commerce into a new extension of electronic commerce (Liang and Turban, 2011).

III. PROCESS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF COMPANIES

The Uppsala School is where Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) developed their first theory on internationalization process of companies, in which they pointed out that the process takes place through four sequential stages. With the Uppsala model, other studies were conducted, in which many authors have agreed that the internationalization of companies takes place through a series of steps – from the moment the company is not interested in the export activity until the moment in which it becomes a consummated exporter. Moreover, some studies still go further and report that the creation of subsidiaries is the last step in the internationalization process. Albeit all these studies were conducted in different contexts and with different companies, what they can all agree on is their growing participation in international operations, as well as the increase of resources and commitment to foreign markets as more experience in international business is gained (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Fillis, 2008).

Leonidou and Katsikeas (1996) made a comparison of different studies and divided the process into two phases: (1) companies that have never carried out any export activity and (2) companies that sporadically export. Each phase, in turn, has three stages, which are defined as follows:

Stage 1. Companies do not intend to export, because they feel comfortable in the local market. As the firms do not carry out export strategies and commercial operations, their sales in their own country are reduced (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Hodkingson, 2000; Jansson & Sandberg, 2008; Scherer, Gomes, & Kruglianskas, 2009).

Stage 2. Companies evaluate the possibility of exporting through moderate research by collecting information on how it is done. The firms have the option to export and disembark in another market or have enter new markets for business opportunities (Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Reid, 1981; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994).

Stage 3. Companies actively explore the possibility of exporting with the firm intention of doing so. They obtain information on international businesses, government foreign trade advertising, chambers of commerce, and regional entities. At this stage, firms begin to attend international fairs and make commercial trips or seminars to collect orders and export their products (Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson and Welch, 1978; Reid, 1981; Czinkota, 1982).

IV. COMPANIES THAT EXPORT SPORADICALLY

Stage 4. The companies carry out export activities without consolidation. They do not have much experience in international trade and export to countries with a topographic identity similar to their own, whether on cultural and language aspects or simply a neighboring country. In this stage, firms can have access to resources so as to expand to other foreigners markets (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Albaum, Duerr, and Standoskov, 2005; Johansson, 2006).

Stage 5. Companies can participate more actively in exporting activities, reach a greater number of countries, adapt more to the environmental factors of international markets, and gain experience and knowledge on international businesses. In this stage, companies are consolidating their position in international markets, so that a large volume of sales comes from customers abroad (Johansson, 2006; Jansson & Sandberg, 2008; Scherer, Gomes & Kruglianskas, 2009).

Stage 6. Companies achieve a great export experience, allocate resources for both national and international markets, and have a greater participation in the distribution channels. These companies reach physically distant countries and establish sales branches (Czinkota, 1982; Crick, 1995; Scherer, Gomes & Kruglianskas, 2009).

V. THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF COMPANIES THROUGH THE INTERNET

The internationalization of companies through the Internet is produced differently from the incremental process of traditional internationalization, and therefore can be faster, as it is supported by the adoption of electronic commerce, use of Web 2.0 technologies, and expansion in social networks, which has facilitated and accelerated the internationalization process (Plakoyiannaki, et al., 2014). In other words, a company can skip several stages in its internationalization process, because the theories and classical models of company internationalization do not acknowledge the use of the Internet in its process (Moini and Tesar, 2005).

Grochal-Brejdak (2016) mentioned that the internationalization of online companies can follow a series of stages without distinction of such stages as compared to the traditional process of internationalization, wherein each stage is deeply rooted in the behavioral perspective human behavior and decision making. Therefore, to explain the internationalization process of commercial enterprises, it is necessary to refer to universal internationalization models and to indicate which are the most appropriate in studying the internationalization processes in e-commerce companies. Hazarbassanova (2016) mentioned that internationalization of online companies varies per company (like traditional companies) and that this difference is supported by the creation of value that the company itself generates to achieve its internationalization process, as being an online firm gives you a competitive advantage.

Foscht, et al. (2006) affirmed that small businesses and retailers that are dedicated to a niche market can have international success and achieve growth in foreign markets in a short time through e-commerce, without the need for large amounts of capital investment and in-depth activities abroad, which unlike other forms of internationalization, more resources are required and considered as advances in the process.

Ueasangkomsate (2015) mentioned the following advantages of e-commerce to the export market: reduce transaction costs and advertising and promotion costs, hastens communication between buyer and seller, minimizes transport, and eliminates the physical limitations of time and space.

Therefore, with the internet, the barriers to internationalization are reduced. Entering foreign markets does not cost that much as compared to traditional input methods, as decisions should be based on as much information as possible (Valente de Andrade, et al., 2015). The correct use of e-commerce technologies could help overcome export problems such as the lack of relevant and timely market information (Hinson and Sorensen, 2006). In addition, it can help companies cope with the lack of local government support by using and basing on Internet communication to develop network relationships with international partners and clients (Plakoyiannaki, et al., 2014).

VI. METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study that aims to describe the context of internationalization of companies through social networks, and for that purpose, we selected the Facebook platform, as Facebook is a site with a lot of potential for researchers who wish to study the social networks and because their heavy use of patterns and technological capabilities establish bridges of electronic circuits whether online or offline (Ellison, et al., 2007; Ueasangkomsate, 2015). In addition, Facebook is a social network with potently increasing advertising and marketing activities, with the participation of about one million companies, as it provides free communication between people separated geographically (Turban, et al., 2011). It has the capacity to mobilize and amplify individual power and the interaction and trust between consumers and companies, thus heralding Facebook as the dominant social network (Pereira et al., 2014).

In this study, we used experts sampling, because the opinion of connoisseurs in the subject are necessary to collect more accurate opinions (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010); therefore, the interview was conducted with the company owners, as they are considered to be the best people to obtain necessary information from in this investigation.

The sample size was not pre-established, as it depended on the category of responses that the interviewees generated, so in consideration of the requirements of the study, the researcher determined the number of individuals to interview (Creswell, 2009). Patton (1990) also mentioned that the number of interviews would be difficult to determine, hence it is necessary to cover the topics of the script to see if some information are missing and to determine how many interviews are needed as well. In this study, seven interviews were enough to obtain relevant and complete information, because no other company that could provide new and different information to those obtained from the interviewed companies was found. The sample is distributed as follows: three microenterprises, two small enterprises, and two medium enterprises; the size was

determined according to the classification issued by the Ministry of Economy of Mexico. The following discussion provides a brief description of the companies surveyed:

VII. MICRO COMPANIES

Yusdivia is a store of accessories and clothing for babies and children. We interviewed the owner herself on May 28, 2017 in Morelia, Michoacán. She started to make accessories and clothes for babies and children in a locality in Mexico, called La Ruana in the State of Michoacán. Today, she sells clothes in California.

For Handicrafts Michoacana de San Nicolás Obispo, we interviewed Eder Omar Martínez Saenz, the marketing supervisor of the company, on July 20, 2017 in San Nicolás Obispo, Michoacán. They sell molcajetes or instruments used for making sauces, made in Mexico since pre-Hispanic times, and human figures with native Mexican features. They sell their products to California and, in one occasion, Spain.

For Mx Handcraft, we interviewed its owner Jesús Sotelo on June 12, 2017 in Mexico City. It is a company that manufactures clay-based handicrafts. The company has been operating for four years, and they only use Facebook to market their products. They are not exporting their products yet but hope to do so soon.

VIII. SMALL BUSINESSES

For Comercializadora Asacof, S.A. Of C.V we interviewed its owner Miguel Ángel on June 18, 2017 in Mexico City. Asacof Comercializadora, S.A. Of C.V. is a company that has been already 26 years in the market selling snail products and its derivatives. They export to the United States, Canada, and Guatemala.

For Oaxaca handicrafts, we interviewed the owner Guadalupe Sánchez on June 15, 2017 in Mexico City. It is a company that sells handicrafts from the State of Oaxaca, where handmade markets of international fame in Mexico City can be found. This company has been operating for more than 40 years, and its Facebook profile was made three years ago, as they consider it important to maintain contact with international customers. Today, it has sales to France and the United States.

IX. MEDIUM BUSINESSES

For Sauces D V, we interviewed Karla N., in charge of the Department of Foreign Trade, on June 30, 2017 in Morelia, Michoacán. It is a company that has been operating for 31 years, with branches in 31 states of Mexico. Their main line of products are spicy sauces, and nowadays, they also manage to sell coffee and chocolate beverages. Today, they export to Guatemala and are in the process of selling products to the United States and Russia.

For Silver Jewelry, we interviewed Claudia González, company's in charge of international sales, on June 2, 2017 in Taxco, Guerrero. It is a company with more than 25 years of experience in the production and sale of silver jewelries. It has sales throughout the Mexican Republic through its official website and social networks. They sell abroad in the traditional way, but they also process orders through the internet. They export to the United States, Canada, and several European countries.

On Facebook, we searched for companies that had information published on their walls, whether they have export activity, sales, or export products. Subsequent contact was made through messaging and then by telephone to arrange an appointment and arrange an interview, either at the researcher's address or at the company's facilities. Many refused to participate in the exercise, which was a strong limitation; however, we were able to obtain an adequate number of interviews that provided the necessary information to carry out the analysis. For information collection, a semi-structured interview was conducted, wherein the main topic is international negotiation, with the following questions:

- What was the main reason that led you to export your products?
- Did you have experience locally or internationally in selling products online?
- When did you start exporting online through social media?
- Which country/ies did you export your products to for the first time through social networks?
- What is the process you did to export products through social networking sites (Facebook)?
- Did you have contacts abroad?
- Through what means did you do the international distribution when you sell through social networks?
- How do you receive payments on the products you sell abroad online?
- How long has it been since you announced on Facebook that you will be exporting your products until you made your first sale abroad?
- How do you advertise your product?
- Have your customers abroad recommended you through social networks?
- What knowledge must you possess to be able to export products through social networks?
- Did you need any information to export through social networks?

- Did you have communication problems with foreign clients?
- Do you provide customer service and after sales with customers abroad?
- What do you think of social networks as tools for exporting?

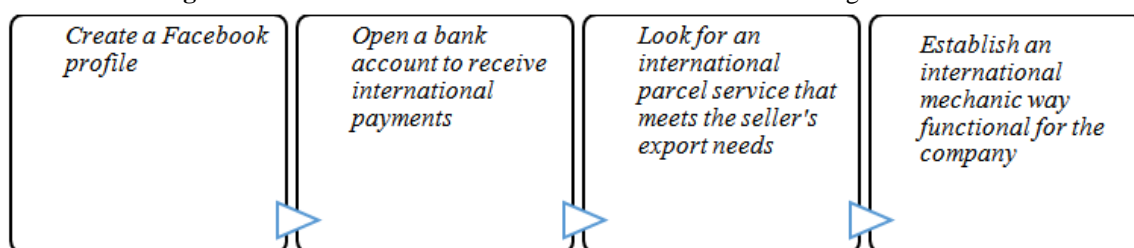
We asked the consent of the participants to record the interview, and we also discussed the objective of the interview with the participants, so that they can feel free to express their answers. During the interview, we focused on certain subjects and questions when deemed necessary. To carry out the interview, practical, ethical, and theoretical aspects were taken into account, with the intention of fully and profoundly understanding the study phenomenon (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010).

For the data analysis, we first structured the answers, then described the experiences of the interviewees to fully understand the context. Subsequently, the information gathered were interpreted and evaluated with respect to the literature review to explain the phenomenon studied.

X. RESULTS

It cannot be mentioned that there is such a process of exporting, because when referring to the process of internationalization of companies, such internationalization compose of a series of steps that place a company from a stage in which one does not have to export to a stage wherein one is considered as an accomplished expert in international business, with subsidiaries around the world. In the case of this investigation, these companies were internationalized through order placement on Facebook, without the intention to export their products to other countries or establish branches, with the exception of medium-sized companies that are experienced in traditional exports and use Facebook as another channel for sales. In the case of medium-sized companies with export activity, their Facebook profiles keep them in contact with final consumers, and they also handle orders through this medium. The companies interviewed followed a series of actions that were not necessarily sequential to carry out international operations. These actions are outlined in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Actions to be carried out for internationalization through Facebook.



Source: self made

Therefore, it is not considered whether internationalization through Facebook should follow a series of steps, as indicated by the process of internationalization of companies, or a well-defined and functional sales method in the local market rather, that can be used correctly every time an international deal is made.

It was found that to sell products through Facebook, it is necessary to have an updated wall, with the information both or photographs of the products being marketed, as well as the procedure that must be followed to make the transaction, as it was found that some companies have the abovementioned information on their walls for the consumers to follow to make the transaction.

It was generally detected that the international buying / selling process is very similar in several companies and is as follows:

- The customer reviews the items that the seller offers on his Facebook wall.
- The customer requests their complete order or any necessary information through messenger or by leaving comments on the Facebook wall.
- Through messenger, the seller provides the client a quote of the total amount of the purchase, so that the sale can be closed. The account numbers of the financial institution where the client can make the deposit or transfer is provided as well.
- Once the payment is covered, the customer must provide a photo or scanned copy of the payment receipt, as well as the name, full address, and telephone number of the person who will receive the order.
- As it is corroborated that the payment was actually made, the seller pays the merchandise and sends it through the international parcel service that arrives in the country and domicile of the foreign customer. At this point, procedures may vary, because there are companies that directly ships their products as if it were a local sale, whereas other companies do it through traditional process wherein the commercial invoice is done first, then products are labeled with the legend "Made in Mexico", then packing list are, and finally they hire a customs agent.
- The seller sends an image of the guide number so that the customer can trace his product.

• The process ends when the customer receives the product. The consumer can comment directly on the Facebook wall of the seller and provide a review of the received product, if it is according to what was established, which then provides a good reputation to the seller.

Another important aspect of this research is the analysis of elements involved in traditional exports such as knowledge, information, and experience and resources allocated (Leonidou and Katsikeas, 1996); The elements involved in virtual exports include international prices, distribution, territory, and means of payment (Palumbo and Herbig, 1998). Moreover, the natural elements of social networks include communication, information, and trust. Discussing these elements is vital so as to know how it is addressed in the internationalization of businesses through a Facebook wall, as shown in Figure 2.

These elements are described below according to the comments made by the people surveyed:

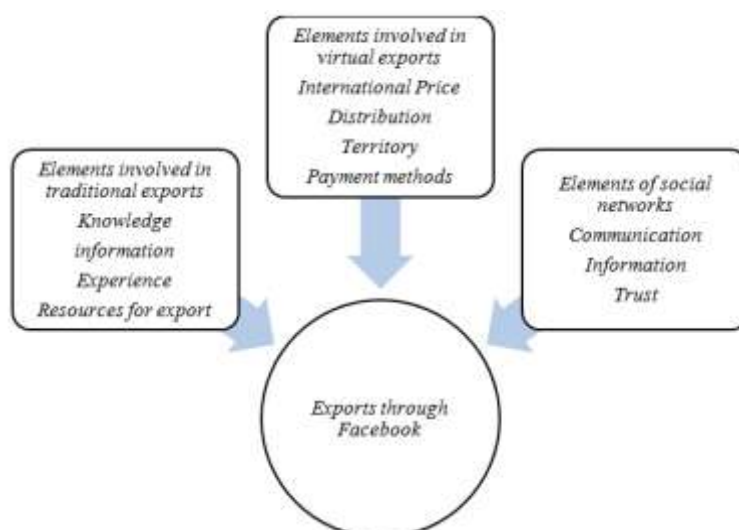
Elements of traditional internationalization

Knowledge. Companies have the necessary knowledge to handle a Facebook profile but not necessarily those that are essential for international negotiations as such can be established through this platform. An average company must maintain accounts in different social networking sites aside from Facebook.

Information. Some respondents reported that they find it necessary to know the legal aspects in creating a Facebook profile, international shipping fees, and specifications of countries for exports.

Experience. Experience in foreign markets is not necessary to conduct international transactions through Facebook.

Figure 2 Elements for exports through a Facebook wall



Source: self-made

Resources destined for export. The micro and small companies do not allocate resources to exporting, because they treat exporting in the same way as a local request and any extra expense to the shipment is charged to the buyer. However, in the surveyed medium-sized companies, they have economic and human resources for their international operations, but they have traditional foreign sales. Elements of internationalization of virtual companies

Price. The price at which products are sold is in dollars, and this may be according to the value of the international market or the value of the Mexican market, which consequently makes the price of the product more competitive in economies where the value of money is greater Than the Mexican currency.

Distribution. The distribution is made through international parcel services, either conventional or those offered by bus lines when traveling abroad. This allows both small and large orders to be sent.

Territory. The exports made by the companies surveyed are to countries that are physically close, which is where they may find Mexican people who want the product or contacts that help them to place it.

Payment methods. The means of payment is digital, either through deposit or transfer to the bank account or through international money transfer and transfer systems. Confirmation of customer's payment is essential for the initiation of the shipping process.

Elements of social networks

Trust. Trust is a key issue for international business and is given through the "likes" and comments made by satisfied customers in the Facebook wall of the company and it solidifies through the contacts and non-virtual consumers that the company has in foreign markets.

Communication. Communication is essential in this type of operations, and it is done through the messenger or Facebook wall. The seller maintains communication with the customer at all times until the product is delivered.

Information. The information provided by vendors is essential for the success of a transaction. It was found that all Facebook wall posts of updated and relevant information regarding the products and their usage, as well as journalistic notes or the way in which the sale procedure is done, are necessary. Any information that would be beneficial to the client is important for the transaction to be carried out.

In summary, it was found that people and companies can access exports through a series of well-established and mechanized actions already proven in the local market that is reproduced in the international market, without the need for knowledge, information, or previous experience in traditional exports, as well as the allocation of large amounts of resources for this activity. These companies were found to offer competitive prices in international markets through their low costs and introduce some products that are not seen in international markets, as the case of handicrafts. As for distribution, it has not been a problem that firms could have either, unlike in traditional exports, because as these companies do not need to fill a container, they make relatively small shipments with companies that offer the service to the countries they want to reach. The collection of payment is usually not a problem as in traditional exports, because the items are only sent after the payment has been received, thus allowing sellers to have a lot of confidence in this type of transactions and reduce the uncertainty and fear of not being paid.

XI. DISCUSSION

Grochal-Brejdak (2016) mentioned that the internationalization of online businesses differs from the traditional internationalization process, wherein the behavior of the decision-maker is essential to progress. We found that decision makers have a preponderant role in responding to shipments coming from abroad and looking for ways to ship the product, which is a situation that is similar to responding to unsolicited requests coming from abroad as mentioned by Reid (1981). Hence, the decision maker definitely influences the company's internationalization – both on the internet and in the traditional way.

Social networks, particularly Facebook in this research, now offer companies an opportunity for faster internationalization, because with the simple exposure of their products online people can see and contact them from anywhere in the world. Such result confirms what was described by Leal, et al. (2006) and Plakoyiannaki, et al. (2014).

When a company makes their own Facebook profile, people can see their products and buy it from anywhere in the world. They may or may not intend to internationalize, which indicates that the form of internationalization of the companies surveyed is of passive type, as they had received orders from customers abroad and international sale carried it out is as if it were a sale and shipped to consumers of various nationalities. Furthermore, even the companies surveyed do not look for other markets, as confirmed by Leonidou and Katsikeas (1996); they wait for an order from someone who lives in another country and let the online network do the rest.

This study is consistent with that of Foscht, et al. (2006), wherein they reported that the use of the internet, which is ideal for small and medium-sized enterprises, and Facebook makes it easier for companies, whether micro, small, or medium enterprises, to acquire international sales without the normal complications of traditional exports.

In contrast to Tseng and Johnsen (2011), the process of internationalization, through the use of the internet, occurs through intelligence gathering; our study showed that the companies surveyed did not need any particular knowledge to send their products abroad, whereas in traditional internationalization, such task can be considered an obstacle as indicated by Johanson and Vahlne (1977) and Merlos (2015). Knowledge on bureaucratic paperwork and international standards for shipping is not really a problem for companies that want to send their products abroad, because they can place it in the international distribution through logistics service, which does the rest of the work for them (Kedia & Chhokar, 1996).

In contrast to the study by Merlos (2015), most of the companies surveyed needed only limited information in investigating the operation of distribution and logistics services and international deposit and transfer services and in determining the legal aspects of creating a profile on Facebook that can legally conduct operations internationally.

It should be mentioned that the internationalization through Facebook is greatly aided by the use of international deposit and transfer services to collect sales, as they offer a quick payment mechanism, which is beneficial for both company and customers. Regarding payment services in international sales via Facebook, our results were in line with that of Turban, et al. (2011), wherein it was affirmed that e-commerce aids companies in their transactions without the need for physical payment.

Moreover, a relevant advantage among the companies interviewed that sell their products to the North American and European countries through Facebook is that they can sell their products in dollars or euros; as

the costs of the companies are in their local currency (Weights), they obtain a higher profit when they sell their products in the US, Canadian, or European market (Hamill, 1997). Thus, the internet can be an effective tool for exporting products, because of its low cost (Freund and Weinhold, 2004); Hinson and Sorensen, 2006; and Ueasangkomsate, 2015).

The mistrust in payments or shipments is often an obstacle in online export operations according to Henari and Mahboob (2008) and Flavian et al. (2005); however, this research coincides with that of Mamonov, et al. (2016), because we was found that the information provided by the company on their wall and the reviews or likes and comments made by satisfied consumers are considered as determinants of a social network. It also assures new customers to place orders. On the other hand, the seller would not be distrustful of receiving his payment, which can be a problem in traditional exports (Moini, 1997). In fact, the payment is the catalyst for the subsequent activities prior to shipment of products abroad; therefore, the payment is the basis of these transactions once confirmed by the company. It is responsible for making the necessary procedures through the international parcel services to deliver the product to customers.

Gonçalves, et al. (2016) mentioned that ordering efficiently is an important element in e-commerce, and this research is consistent with the exposition of these authors, as the companies surveyed use utilized the efficiency of the distribution and logistics services of international companies. These logistics and distribution service companies have positively benefited the firms surveyed, because they can send small orders and even a single item, and facilitate the distribution process. Having an efficient logistics system is an important element to consider in placing international orders (Gonçalves, et al., 2016).

XII. CONCLUSIONS

As can be observed from the results of this study, it is clear that social networks are becoming a means by which a number of companies access international businesses quickly. Furthermore, social networks are able to overcome commercial obstacles seen in traditional way, wherein internationalization requires a tedious process and large amounts of resources, thus making it such a lengthy and expensive task. Through social networks, one make progressions without employing large amounts of money and efforts as compared to traditional internationalization; this research confirms the results of Ueasangkomsate (2015), in which it was mentioned that e-commerce offers aids companies in exports market through saving transaction costs, reducing advertising and promotion costs, hastens communication between buyer and seller, and by reducing transaction barriers and eliminate physical limitations of time and space.

Conducting export activities through social networks is as simple as creating a Facebook account, opening a bank account, finding a reliable system for delivering of products anywhere in the world, and establishing an efficient functional shipment mechanics. Therefore, to do international business through Facebook, it is necessary that one must have a well-defined sales system first in the local market.

By using social networks as a tool for business, companies can increase their sales and access distant markets, which implies that companies that have social network presence are more likely to export than companies that are not affiliated with any social network. Therefore, the greater the participation of exporting companies in social networks, the greater their international and commercial strategic value would be.

Moreover, our results also show that those who do e-commerce through social networks have the upper hand, as customers can interact with sellers and / or companies sharing their information, knowledge, and even emotions online, which allows customers to have an increased confidence and ability to make decisions (Hajli, 2013). Therefore, a company, regardless of its size, has the same business opportunities as global companies. Through social networks, the firm has a permanent communication with final consumers, which allows them to know the preferences and comments of customers, their purchasing patterns, and satisfaction level on the products purchased. Thus, companies that have social network presence become more competitive.

Nonetheless, two major limitations were found in our study: first, we have to find companies that have a Facebook profile, send their products abroad, and use Facebook as a means to export their products; next, we have to find people that are willing to be interviewed, because not everyone wanted to participate at the time of the first contact due to the climate of insecurity that exists in Mexico.

Future researches regarding this topic are necessary to increase our knowledge of internationalization through Facebook, as each country is diverse, and therefore the results of future studies may be different from the results we have obtained. It is also necessary to gather more information on how other types of social networks influence the internationalization of companies to expand the vision field.

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