SNeM^{2}S: a Social Network Model for Marketing Strategies

Alessia D'Andrea, Fernando Ferri, Patrizia Grifoni

Istituto di Ricerche sulla Popolazione e le Politiche Sociali, CNR

Via Palestro 32, 00185, Roma

alessia.dandrea@irpps.cnr.it; fernando.ferri@irpps.cnr.it; *patrizia.grifoni@irpps.cnr.it

Abstract- **This paper proposes a marketing model (SNeM^{2}S) starting from Social Networks features related with marketing processes. The model gives the rationale of strategies and processes that companies use to provide and capture value through Social Networks. It includes the selection of potential Social Networks to use; the definition of a financial plan; the definition of organisational structures to manage the Social Network in the market; the selection of target (consumer); the promotion of products and services and finally the performance measures with specific indicators. SNeM^{2}S is applied to You-Tube in order to explain how companies and consumers can use this Social Network to implement their marketing strategies.**

Keywords- Social Networks; Marketing Model; Social Interaction; Social Influence; Marketing Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing strategies are relevant to each company, they enable companies to address consumers in their choices of products and/or services that satisfy their needs; these include the processes of informing, persuading and removing all barriers for consumers to possess products and/or services. Virtual Social Networks do not alter this ultimate objective [1] [2]. The term Virtual Social Network refers to social structures made of nodes, which are generally people or organizations that are connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as visions, idea, financial exchange, friends, and so on. These social structures are designed to support information sharing and interaction between consumers and companies. In the following of the paper we will use both the term Virtual Social Network or Social Network, with the same meaning.

The aim of the paper is to analyse Virtual Social Networks features related with marketing processes and to provide a marketing model (SNeM^{2}S) based on Social Networks. Social Networks provide marketers with new potentialities, not available in traditional channels, in particular for the products and services diffusion. The importance of Social Networks and the key aspect of the companies' interest on them are due to the wide number of consumers that can be reached using these tools. Marketers start from building a loyal constituency of consumers through advertisement on discussion forums, providing links to experts in specific areas for free consultation, and use of knowledge from other forums to honestly counsel consumers. Marketers may also open discussion to specifically attract new members according to their profile of interest. The real advantages of Social Networks can be exploited when marketers use the interactive capabilities of this new medium and build a personal community environment for the consumers, on considering each consumer as an individual in addressing promotional messages, providing all related services at a unique point, and

making the virtual community a truly worthwhile place for the consumer to visit. The possibility to individually and interactively address consumers allows marketers to understand their target better and to provide new products and services in fulfilling the consumers' needs. The importance of Social Networking is, moreover, connected to the symmetry between companies and consumers in their communication process. Indeed, consumers do not passively receive marketers' messages they actively express their needs, preferences and choices [3] [4]. All these features of Virtual Social Networks allowed the introduction of new marketing models (marketing 2.0 models) that present different aspects for successful marketing strategies such as: the databases/applications & integration, the user information sharing and interaction, the brand & corporate identity, the search engine optimization (SEO) etc.. In the new marketing 2.0 models, databases play an enormous role in allowing the use and the integration of online tools. In particular they make it possible for consumers and companies to login to a website account, to have your own profile on a Virtual Social Networking site etc.; this give consumers and companies the possibility to connect each other and to fulfil their specific needs for information sharing and interaction and companies the possibility to outline the core concept of identity that, in the case of marketing strategies, can be extended to the analysis of the way in which consumers and companies develop their online profiles. However a successful marketing model may also depend on search engine optimization (SEO) that include: the building of high quality Virtual Social Network to engage and persuade, the set up of analytics programs to enable owners to measure results, and the improving of the Virtual Social Network conversion rate.

The paper presents the following structure. Section II provides a discussion on related works about marketing models. Section III gives a categorization of consumers/companies' scope in using Social Networks and describes aptitudes of Virtual Social Networks to generate Interactions and Social Influence and to improve Knowledge Sharing among consumers. In section IV the positive and negative aspects of Virtual Social Networks are described. Section V provides a marketing model (SNeM^{2}S) based on Social Network. In Section VI the provided model is applied to the You-Tube in order to analyse how companies and consumers use this Social Network for their marketing strategies. Finally Section VII concludes the paper.

II. RELATED WORKS

The literature on marketing models began to emerge in a significant way in the 1960 following the successful application of mathematical models to the areas of production,

logistics and financial operations. Literature provides three essential purposes of marketing models: measurement, decision-making, and theory building; so three corresponding kinds of models are defined: measurement models, decision-making models and stylised theoretical models [5]. The purpose of measurement models is to measure the demand for a product depending on different independent variables (usually marketing mix variables such as: variables to account for seasonality in employment, competitors' actions, consumer characteristics etc). The decision-making models incorporate measurement models as building blocks [6]. The methods used to drive the strategy include dynamic programming, calculus, optimal control and calculus of variations techniques, as well as integer and linear simulation and programming. Finally the purpose of stylized theoretical models is to provide insights into marketing phenomena. They can describe such things as how many actors there are, who are these actors, how they have behaved in the past, the external conditions under which they make decisions, etc.. Other classifications of marketing models have been provided by King [7] that distinguishes iconic, analog and symbolic models. The iconic models are look-alike representation of a specific entity within the model while the analogue models are the representation of entities by analogue entities within the model. Finally the symbolic models are the representation of entities within the model through symbols. Montgomery and Urban [8] distinguish among descriptive, predictive and normative models. Predictive models analyse past performance behaviours of the customer to predict a specific behaviour in the future, while descriptive models quantify relationships in order to classify customers into groups. Finally the normative models examine the company external environment and internal conditions, and the use of a set of objective criteria. Kotler, [9] introduces micro-marketing and macro-marketing models. Micro-marketing models describe the activities of a company, beginning with originating and producing products and ending when the products reach the final user. Macro-marketing models by contrast, describe how the whole system of production and distribution works in a company.

These "traditional" marketing models present an important disadvantage; they are limited by the ways customers can be reached. Marketers develop a mailing list, a brochure, a radio/television/print message that spoke to what the company believed was a typical potential customer, but often, these communications would mainly be focused on explicating the products or services the organization offered rather than being focused on the needs, and therefore, on customer benefits [10]. Moreover, the organization was offering the communication to everyone in the market with the hope of reaching his or her target. With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and in particular with the widespread diffusion of Social Networks a new generation of marketing and consequently a new marketing model have been developed. The new generation is called: Marketing 2.0 [11]. The term indicates the latest integration of all aspects of print media, mobile media & creative media, web development & marketing. All of these marketing components work together synergistically to improve the company presence and the brand identity on the Web. According to this evolution a new marketing model has been developed that completely integrates traditional print media and online marketing in ways that are more effective and more efficient [12].

With these "new" marketing model marketers have the possibility to try and reach their audience and to use market segmentation more effectively now than ever before.

III. KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

This section describes Social networks uses for marketing strategies starting from some concepts defined in the literature. A Social Network is a group of people who share their ideas, experiences and other information related to specific topics of interest [13]. It is composed of four elements:

- members that interact to satisfy their own needs or play special roles;

- a shared purpose, such as a need, an interest that provides the reason for belonging to the community;

- technology and server architecture supporting social interaction and promoting a sense of being together;

- contents accessed by members to achieve their goals.

Companies argued the relevance of Social Networks for marketing strategies. Currently Social Networks represent a different, but extremely effective way, to engage the final consumer for products and services diffusion. Understanding the attraction of Social Networks is crucial to analyse their enormous potentials connected with scope in using them. In particular, in order to categorise consumers/companies' scope in using Social Networks, we propose the following motivational categories (Table 1).

The most important scope to join a Social Network is the possibility for consumers and companies to connect each other and to fulfil their specific needs for information sharing and interaction. Consumers have the possibility to talk with other consumers with the same profile to exchange their opinions and advices about products/services. They can also provide their opinion and judgment about products/services to the production company. Companies can engage consumers in selling their products/ services providing information about them. In this manner Social Networks can be viewed as tool for matching the product/services' supply and demand.

TABLE I CONSUMERS/COMPANIES' SCOPE IN USING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Motivational Category	Description	Examples
Meet Consumers	Interaction/Information sharing	Talk with users with the same consumers profile
		Get/give opinions
		Get/give advices
		Engage consumers in selling products/ services
Create and Manage Brand & Corporate Identity	Define and explore identity.	Impression management
		Friendship management
		Network structure
		Bridging of online and offline Social Networks

Moreover, according to Ellison's [14] Social Networks outline, the core concept of identity in the case of marketing strategies, can be extended to the analysis of the way in which consumers and companies develop their online profiles to carry out different processes:

- *Impression management*: that refers to the personal identity formation through the information consumers and companies provide in their profile.

- *Friendship management*: is linked to the way consumers and companies of Social networks use the publicly displayed profiles of others consumers to choose who they would like to include as friends and/or to carry out market researches.

- *Network structure*: relates to the roles that consumers and companies play in the social community in which they participate (passive or active posters of information).

- *Bridging of online and offline Social Networks*: that refers to the degree to which the Social Networks become an integral part of the consumers and company's real life.

Starting from the different motivational categories introduced to classify consumers/companies' scope in using Social Networks, it is possible to define different approaches to maximise the impacts of Social Networks on marketing process. The first element to consider is the aptitude of Social Networks to generate Interaction among consumers. Interactions can be achieved by using synchronous and/or asynchronous tools. Synchronous tools, such as chat room and instant message, allow consumers to communicate together at the same time while asynchronous tools such as e-mail or discussion lists, allow consumers to communicate at different times. These tools make more immediate, more global and less expensive the relationship, enhancing their efficacy as they allow consumers to share opinion and knowledge about the market products and/or services. Many companies have recently started to capture data on the social interaction between consumers in Social Networks, with the objective of understanding and leveraging how this interaction can generate Social Influence. Social Influence is the process by which the individual opinions can be changed by other individual(s) [15]. It is characterized by three main features:

- conformity, that occurs when an individual expresses a particular opinion in order to meet the expectations of a given other, though he does not necessarily hold that belief that the opinion is appropriate;

- power, that is the ability to force someone to behave in a particular way by controlling his/her outcomes;

- authority, that is power that is believed to be legitimate by those who are subjected to it.

Consumers can really modify their opinions about products and/or services according to the Social Influence process [16] as shown in Figure 1.
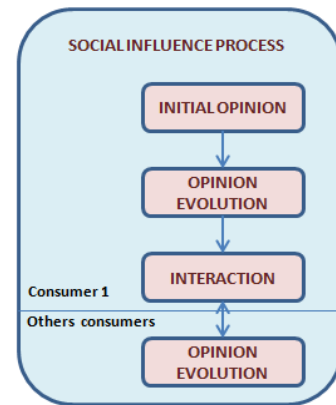

Fig. 1 Social influence process

In the Social Influence process a consumer "A" has her/his initial opinion about products and/or services. This opinion evolves as a result of interaction with other consumers that, in turn, evolve their opinion as a result of interaction with the complex network of social influences.

Social Network emerges as one of the most authoritative and influential source of knowledge about products and services related to the area of interest of a community. They have the aptitude to generate knowledge sharing among consumers, and facilitate the collaboration and exchange of ideas among consumers by preserving explicit as well as implicit (or tacit) knowledge created by the consumers' relations. Community's explicit knowledge is stored in the community repository and includes any kind of information readily available to community's members, while tacit knowledge resides in minds of the community's members and, consequently, it is intangible. Both these kinds of knowledge have to be managed in order to preserve and organize information and to improve the marketing power of Social Networks.

Knowledge management involves a set of practices aimed at creating, organizing, sharing and disseminating knowledge, at making this knowledge more productive and at producing significant benefits, such as shared intelligence and improved performance.

Knowledge management technologies enable marketers to facilitate collaboration and exchanging of ideas among community's members, and to preserve explicit as well as implicit knowledge that is created through the Social Networking among consumers. Social Networks provide a more dynamic environment, oriented to innovation and knowledge sharing, than traditional communities. As a consequence, it emerges the increasing number of skills, competencies and "knowledge profiles" of each consumer involved into the Social Network. Even if advantages related to the use of Social Networks in marketing process often seem obvious, however the widespread deployment of these technologies does not come without its potential disadvantages. The most important concerns the lack of (face-to-face) social contact between customers and companies. Social Networks offer company the opportunity to establish a contact with a wide amount of customers, but they must never replace the interpersonal contacts that are the basis of companies-customers relationship. Actually, the idea of "virtual interaction with companies" disturbs a lot of customers. These customers believe only in interpersonal contacts with companies and they assign a relevant role to a

face-to-face communication. This is due to the absence of a very important element: the trust. Rousseau et al. [17] define trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". Similarly, Lewicki et al. [18] describe trust as "an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another". The need for trust arises from our interdependence with others. We often depend on other people to help us obtain, or at least not to frustrate, the outcomes we value. Many studies provide evidence of the importance of trust for Social Networks marketing models. Customers who trust the company are more likely to visit its "virtual location" again and to recommend its products and services to other peoples. This means that companies are increasingly encouraged to build trustful relationship with customers. Through the interaction with the members of a Social Network, companies will learn more about the needs of their customers, they will strengthen their relationships and they will be able to customise their products and services.

IV. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON MARKETING PROCESS

There is a growing body of literature that underline the benefits of Social Networks to support new marketing efforts [19]. In particular Social Networks seems to have the potential to be the new infrastructure providers for customer-to-customer (C2C) marketing because they are exceptionally effective at putting individuals who are geographically dispersed into virtual contact with each other. That, in turn, they have the potential to support the growth of virtual worlds, by bringing in users interested in trade who would not otherwise join them, in a closed feedback loop process [20]. Moreover participation in a virtual community could motivate consumers to cooperate with a marketer in such efforts. Nambisan [21] puts forth several typologies of customer roles and interactions in virtual communities that are focused on developing new products.

The key aspect is the critical mass of members that can be reached that could facilitate stronger relationships between firms and their customers [22]. So the benefits of Social Networks in marketing process can be view on considering the consumers as well as the companies' point of view. From consumers' point of view the key useful characteristics of a Social Network to consider are:

- interactivity: a consumer who joins a Social Network can seek information, test the product and proceed to place order for products. Consumers can also have access to the feedback of other people to make better informed decisions;

- aggregation of services: a Social Network allows aggregation of different services, coordinated and hyper-linked by the seller of the products or services. This gives consumers access to all the necessary information to make a better purchase decision;

- deliverability: a Social Network is delivered in real time 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week.

These characteristic allow satisfying consumers needs to:

- gather information about products and services offered by companies;

- interact with other consumers without spatial and temporal constraints and with reduced search costs;

- provide information about the product, to the company and to other consumers;

- add "collective content" using discussion forums;

- have economic benefits deriving from special prices, customized offers and better service from the qualitative point of view;

- being part of a powerful bargaining group that can influence important marketing decisions.

From the companies' point of view the most important benefit that a Social Network can offer is given by the possibility to reach out and build interactive relationships with consumers on a global basis. In the past companies have been constrained by the inadequacies of the traditional channels, particularly in the products and services diffusion. Social Networks have the potential to transform and enhance this activity. As said before the key element for the interest in the use of Social Network is the critical mass of consumers that can be reached. Companies usually start from building a loyal community of consumers through advertisement on discussion forums, providing links to experts in specific areas for free consultation. Companies may also open discussion forums to specifically attract new members according to their profiles of interest. These discussion forums are rich sources of information about companies and their products/services and, at the same time, should be closely monitored by the marketer to identify the needs of the consumers. Companies can also facilitate an immersive experience to consumers, for example, by using 3-D virtual communities such as Second Life, they can create customized graphical user interfaces and include tutorials (Avatar), which can better explain to consumers how to move around and interact with the environment. Many real-word companies are taking interest in this latest online trend. American Apparel is the first "real world" company that has opened a store in the virtual world of Second Life. Its ultra-modern clothing store is located on a beach resort and has quickly become a hot spot within Second Life. Second life provides companies with the opportunity to build a strong trademark. Some brand owners have established an online presence by building retail stores to sell products in the real world. Moreover they have the possibility to create an event in the largest world virtual 3-D environment to directly communicate with the wide audience of the community members. For example, the MacArthur Foundation uses events on Second Life to introduce the foundation to a new audience and to stimulate discussions about the real-world issues that it seeks to resolve; William Gibson, the influential author who coined the word "cyberspace", had a reading in Second Life to promote his novel "Spook Country"; the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic have built a replica of their concert hall where they will perform works by Rachmaninov.

The benefits related to the use of Social Networks in marketing process often seem obvious; however the widespread deployment of this technology does not come without its potential disadvantages and risks. One of these concerns the lack of (face-to-face) social contact between consumers and companies. Social Networks offer to companies an opportunity to increase the involvement of consumers in their marketing process, but must never replace

the interpersonal contacts that are the basis of companies-consumers relationship. Actually, the idea of "virtual interaction with companies" can disturb a lot of consumers. These consumers believe only in interpersonal contacts with companies and they assign a relevant role to a face-to-face communication. This is due to the absence of a very important element: the trust, that is a fundamental component of the consumers-companies relationship; without trust there are not relationships and there does not exist any interaction or communication. A good and trusted communication between consumers and companies is important not only to reduce the risk of misunderstanding. The vulnerability of consumers forces them to trust companies. When this trust is created, it can generate an interactive process that increases satisfaction. Additionally, the fundamental premise that a Social Network relies on for its success, i.e., its unique capacity for interaction amongst consumers and/or with the company, is subject to considerable risks of failure. This is because customers can always turn this capability to the company's disadvantage by spreading adverse comments about the company's products and services. Moreover frequently, many of Social Network members have visitors but not consumers. Essentially, the e-marketing would like each visitor to make the transition from a mere surfer to a repeat customer. Affective bonds with other members and a developed obligation towards the community can hasten this process.

V. A MARKETING MODEL (SNEM²S) BASED ON SOCIAL NETWORK

In order to integrate Social Networks within their marketing strategies, companies have to develop a marketing model. The marketing model is essential to any successful marketing. It offers companies a wealth of information that - if correctly applied - can ensure the company success. In this section a marketing model (SNeM²S) based on Social Networks is provided. The model includes the following steps:

- selection of potential Social Networks to use;
- definition of a financial plan;
- definition of organisational structures to manage the Social Network in the market;
- selection of target;
- promotion of products and services;
- performance measures.

Fig. 2 SNeM²S structure

The first step consists of a selection of potential Social Networks to use. Companies should select the right Social Networks for their marketing strategies based on what outcome they are looking for. The i-Prospect Search Marketer Social Networking Survey conducted by Jupiter Research, asserts that almost half of the marketers surveyed had "proactively placed content" on social networks including del.icio.us, MySpace, YouTube and Linked In. The survey illustrates, what are the best sites according to their goals. In particular for:

- driving traffic to a site: are Yahoo Answers, del.icio.us, and MySpace;
- building brand awareness: are MySpace, YouTube, and LinkedIn;
- influencing purchase decisions: is Yahoo Answers;
- directly selling a product is Amazon.

In the second phase a financial plan must be defined; it establishes if the companies' idea to use Social Networks for marketing strategies is viable or not, and it is a key component in determining if the marketing model is going to be able to attract any investment in the company marketing idea.

Basically, the financial plan consists of three-steps that help companies to look at where they financially are and where they want to be. These steps are the followings:

- collection of financial data - such as details on companies income and expenses, debt level, commitments, etc.;
- identification of companies goals and objectives;
- identification of any financial problems.

The financial plan is important also to evaluate the economics of increasing returns. An investment needs to start the Social Network. Usually, this investment enables the allocation of Social Network management resources. The cost of adding a new member to the Social Network decreases with each additional membership. The cost of setting up additional communities also gets reduced as assets and other resources are shared. This effectively increases the advantages from each additional member. The reduction in costs and the increase in profits become significant beyond a threshold membership level.

The other aspect to face concerns the definition of organisational structures to manage the Social Network in the market. Organisation could be in charge of:

- making operational strategies;
- defining pricing policies compliant with market supply and demand;
- operating in an entrepreneurial way, interpreting administration and market needs;
- adapting existing services and products in consequence and proposing new ones.

If companies know very well the market, they can probably break it down into different target-groups of similar customers. For each target, marketers need to look at what customers want, what they can offer and what the competition is like. Marketers want to select target (consumers) where they have a competitive advantage. At the same time, they should assess whether they can expect high enough sales to make the target worthwhile. Often, in the most promising target companies have existing customers. If companies are

targeting new customers, they need to be sure that they will be able to reach them. Once companies have selected what their target market is, they also need to decide how members of the Social Networks will position themselves in it. For example, companies might offer a high quality product at a premium price. Some marketers try to build a strong brand and image to help them stand out. Whatever their strategy, they need to differentiate their self from the competition. The next step consists in the promotion of products and services in the different phases of products/services diffusion, testing and redesign. Social Software carries out the diffusion of products/services in a way that has been traditionally reserved to manufacturers and large-scale distributors. In products/services testing it allows companies to receive the feedback from customers around the world. Finally, in products/services redesign it enables consumers to share their ideas and to post their suggestions to the community on a continuous basis. Concurring with the open source movement, the development process evolved incrementally as new suggestions from consumers appeared.

The last step considers the performance measures. This activity can be carried out periodically or on an ad hoc basis to assess the ongoing monitoring and reporting of results. Companies, to evaluate the Social Network performance use different performance indicators such as, the number of visitors that Social Network receives each month. Once companies know the value of this indicator, they should divide it by the expected number of people they planned to engage in the Social Network. This is the Social Networks "conversion rate". Companies can maximize the conversion rate and make Social Network more persuasive and easy to navigate. This is the best way to increase leads and sales without costs efforts on increasing traffic. If companies have invested in Social Network development only to find that their Social Network use is not optimised to generate high conversion rates, they are missing out on the opportunity to increase the quality of services, products and profits.

VI. SNeM^{2}S APPLIED TO YOU TUBE

In order to describe how companies and consumers can use the SNeM^{2}S for their marketing strategies, the model has been applied to You-Tube (as illustrate in Figure 3), as it is the largest video sharing website and the second biggest search engine on the Internet (http://weblogs.hitwise.com/james-murray/2011/07/google_accounts_for_92_of_uk_s_1.html).

Fig. 3 SNeM^{2}S applied to You-Tube

According to the statistics provided by the SearchEngineWatch.com (http://www.squidoo.com/social-media-marketing-stats) related with You-Tube: "13 million is the number of hours of video that were uploaded in 2010; 10,000 is the number of partners, hundreds of which make six figures a year; 2 billion is the number of global video views per week being monetized; 10 percent is the amount of videos available in HD; 4 million is the number of people connected and auto-sharing to at least one social network and 100 million is the number of daily mobile views". The first reason for this success is that You-Tube is free and easily accessible, where consumers and companies can view and upload video for commercial use by recording their message/advertisement. In fact, due to all these aspects, many are the examples of companies that provide their marketing strategies on You-Tube.

Consumers and companies can access to four different sections of You-Tube to implement/satisfy their marketing strategies/goals: videos, categories, channels and communities:

- videos: take consumers and companies to a page where they can browse videos based on various statistics (most recently uploaded, most viewed videos etc.);

- categories: arrange videos into broad subject categories, like vehicles, entertainment etc.;

- channel: divide videos into sections based on the type of member who uploaded the videos (musicians, gurus, sponsors, nonprofits, partners etc.);

- communities: divide videos into two sections: groups (formed by YouTube members on specific subject or theme) contests (games and competitions sponsored by YouTube members).

After choosing You-Tube and its sections that better satisfy the marketing strategies, the company has to define the financial plan that consists of: (i) the budgeted balance sheet that shows the effects of planned operations (video uploaded on You-Tube) and capital investments on liabilities, assets and equities; (ii) the cash budget, which forecasts the flow of cash in the marketing strategies on You-Tube.

An important role is also assigned to the organizational structure of the company. An organizational structure consists of activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision, which are directed towards the achievement of the marketing strategies. The structure of an organization will determine the modes in which the company operates and performs the different activities on You-Tube.

After defining the financial plan and the organizational structure, company has to define its target. There are two different kinds of targeting on You-Tube: (i) Public targeting and (ii) Content targeting.

Public targeting involves:

- demographic, geographic: allows to target audiences based on age, sex or a combination of two factors;

- interest categories: allows to target users based on their video display behavior in the past;

- remarketing: the ability to target users in a list of cookies that company provides;

- type of user and uploader: allows targeting users based on user type set, with the following options: Director, Musician, Comedian, Guru, Political or Partner.

Content targeting involves:

- keywords: related to search terms or content of a video;

- videos category and content packages;

- word of mouth: among users.

Using these different techniques of targeting, companies have the possibility to better address the products/services promotion on You-Tube. The great thing about using YouTube is that companies can be as creative as they like, from developing their own series of "how to" videos or even creating simple promotional videos to building brand awareness for their products and services.

Finally, companies need a strategy to determine video's contribution to their bottom line. The You-Tube only tracks limited video data, e.g., the number of views and unique views.

So looking at programs that measure more detailed video statistics, one of the best is Tube-Mogul, which helps companies to post their video on You-Tube and then brings together in-depth tracking of all the statistics. This allows them to monitor their performance and profit in a more effective and continuous way respect to the traditional marketing models as it allows having a real-time view of trends.

VII.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The paper provides an analysis of Social Networks features related with marketing processes and proposes a marketing model (SNeM^{2}S) based on Social Networks. The paper starts from the assumption that the use of Social Networks models for marketing strategies is increasingly relevant respect to any other traditional marketing model. This assumption is confirmed by a report conducted from over 170 survey aimed at markets - Focus Research Study – Marketer's Benchmarks 2011 (http://media.focus.com/assets/research/foc us-survey-results-marketers-benchmark-report-2011/marketer s_Benchmark_Survey_Results_Q2_11.pdf) from this report emerges that "social media marketing is one the top performer for 28% of the companies; it is considered one of the top five strategies for B2B and B2C businesses so that the fifty-nine percent of marketers say they will be increasing their social media budgets this year". Moreover according to the survey published by Booz&Co and Buddy Media (http://www.booz.c om/media/file/BoozCo-Campaigns-to-Capabilities-Social-me dia-and-Marketing-2011.pdf) "all businesses agree that they will continue spending on social media; while 95% projected to increase their spending, the remaining 5% settled for merely continuing with the same social media budget".

Starting from this assumption the paper provides a discussion on related works about marketing models and gives a categorization of consumers/companies' scope in using social networks. The most important scope to join a Social Network is the possibility for consumers and companies to connect each other and to fulfil their specific needs for information sharing and interaction. Social Networks outline the core concept of identity that, in the case

of marketing strategies, can be extended to the analysis of the way in which consumers and companies develop their online profiles.

Then starting from these motivational categories different approaches, to maximise the impacts of Social Networks on marketing process, are discussed: the aptitude of Social Networks to generate Interactions and Social Influence and to improve Knowledge Sharing among consumers. On considering the marketing process, there is a wide literature on marketing and e-marketing models, but pervasiveness of social networks suggested us to identify e-marketing features using them. For this reason the paper has developed SNeM^{2}S. The model consists of six steps: the selection of potential Social Networks to use; the definition of a financial plan; the definition of organisational structures to manage the Social Network in the market; the selection of target; the promotion of products and services and finally the performance measures. In order to describe how companies and consumers can use the SNeM^{2}S for their marketing strategies, the model has been applied to You-Tube.

The model allows to interactivity improve the marketing strategies, as companies can continuously monitor trends and needs of consumers.

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Alessia D'Andrea received the M.S. degree in Communication Science at the University of Rome "La Sapienza", Italy in 2006 and the Ph.D. degree in Multimidia Communication from the University of Udine in 2011. She is currently a young Researcher with the Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies of the National Research Council of Italy in Rome. She is mainly interested in Communication Science, Social Networks, Virtual Communities, Human-Machine-Interaction, Health Studies and Risk Management.

She is author of more than 20 papers on international conferences and international books. She was reviewer of some papers for the Multimedia Tools and APplications (MTAP) journal and for the Handbook E-Novation for Competitive Advantage in Collaborative Globalization: Technologies for Emerging E-Business Strategies.

Fernando Ferri received the degree in Electronic Engineering in 1990 and the Ph.D. in Medical Informatics at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in 1993. He is senior researcher of the National Research Council of Italy since 2001. He was researcher from 1990 to 2001. He was contract professor from 1993 to 2000 of "Sistemi di Elaborazione" at the University of Macerata. He is author of more than 160 papers on international journals, books and conferences. He has coordinated and participated in several national and international research projects.

He has organized several international events such as scientific conferences and workshops and special issues as Guest editor on international journals. He is member of some Program Committees of International workshops and Conferences, and member of the editorial board of some international journals. His main research areas of interest are: Social Informatics, social computing, Social Networks, Data and Knowledge Bases, Human-Machine Interaction, User-machine natural interaction, Multimodal Interaction, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, Internet of the future, User Modelling, Visual Interaction, Sketch based interfaces, Geographic Information Systems, Risk Management and Medical Informatics.

Patrizia Grifoni received the degree in Electronic Engineering in 1990 at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". She is researcher at the Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies of the National Research Council of Italy since 1990. She has been contract professor from 1993 to 2000 of "Image processing" at the University of Macerata. She is author of more than 130 papers on international journals, books and conferences. She is leading and participating in several national and international research projects.

She has experience in organizing several international scientific workshops and special issues as Guest editor on international journals. She is member of some Program Committees of International workshops and Conferences, and member of the editorial board of some international journals. Her main research areas of interest are: Social informatics, Social computing, Social Networks , Human-Machine Interaction, Multimodal interaction, Sketch based interfaces, Multimedia applications, User Modeling, Data and Knowledge Bases, Geographic Information Systems, Risk Management, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, Internet of the future, GIS, Social Networks.