



Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg  
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**DEPARTMENT INFORMATION**

## ***Bachelor Thesis***

Comparing Social Media Presence and Branding online

A Social Media Communication Strategy Study for Lufthansa Industry Solutions about its top 3 competitors in Germany (Accenture, Capgemini and T-Systems)

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## 1. Glossary

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Customer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
DSAG	Deutsche SAP Anwender Gruppe (Translation: German SAP User Group)
IMP	Industrial Marketing and Purchasing
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LHIND	Lufthansa Industry Solutions
ROI	Return on Investment
SAP	Systems, Applications and Products in data processing
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
URL	Uniform Resource Locator

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Status quo of the Social Media Management at LHIND

Lufthansa Industry Solutions (LHIND) is an IT consulting firm with a B2B model, which offers customized software solutions for medium and large size enterprises in industries such as aviation, healthcare, energy and logistics amongst others. Their target customers are medium and big sized businesses needing to set complex automation processes in order to improve production chains. Some of their customers include Bosch, Linde, Vattenfall, Asklepios Klinik and Volkswagen. The actual headquarters are located in Norderstedt, Germany followed by seven settlements within Germany and 2 international settlements in Switzerland and in the USA (LHIND, 2015).

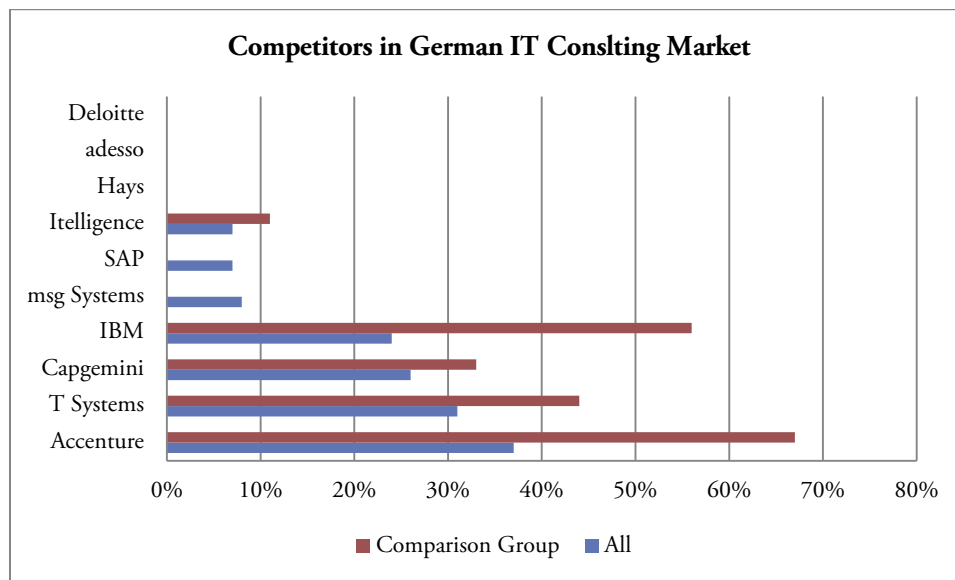
Since August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 a significant part of the IT consulting services of Lufthansa Systems was outsourced to IBM. For this to be possible Lufthansa Systems downsized by splitting into 3 new societies: Airline Solutions, Industry Solutions and Infrastructure Services. After splitting, the Infrastructure services division belonged to IBM while the remaining Airline and Industry solutions continued as separate societies of the Lufthansa affiliate group (Lufthansa, 2015).

The decentralization of functions brought for almost every department, including the marketing and communications department, at LHIND new functions to overtake. Since mid-August 2015 the marketing department of LHIND had become officially independent, which meant that central support by the Frankfurt headquarters was no longer available. Additional functions such as the administration of the social media channels and event stand logistics were and are to be fully carried out by the central marketing department now located in Norderstedt. For instance, the social media management from the Facebook, Twitter, Xing and LinkedIn pages, among other tasks, is currently being partly carried out by two people. These profiles are relatively new since they were created after LHIND registered as a society between June and July 2015. The fact that the pages are relatively new and that the team is currently lacking manpower are the reasons for the low amount of followers and fans on the firms' social media profiles. To attract more followers and fans on the social media profiles, the marketing team decided to give the author the assignment to do a comparative research in order to improve the social media presence of LHIND.

### 2.2. The Lünendonk study: the most relevant competitors at the time

The Lünendonk corporate group specializes in methodical market research, sector and corporate analysis and market consultancy for information technology companies since 1983. Lünendonk has a market research division responsible for creating the Lünendonk® Lists, Studies and corporate rankings which are recognized in Germany as trustworthy market benchmarks (Lünendonk, 2016a). The main goal of the particular market study that the Lünendonk group made for LHIND was to compare the company's performance to similar IT consulting companies (potential competitors) in the German market by conducting a benchmarking analysis. Based on the results of the Lünendonk 2015 study titled *Der Markt für IT-Beratung und IT-Service in Deutschland* (the market for IT Consulting and Service in Germany) for

which employees on 100 German IT consulting enterprises and 45 IT decision makers (such as CIOs) in mid- and big sized corporations were surveyed a the strongest IT consulting competitors overall were identified (Lünendonk, 2016b) as Table 1 shows:



*Table 1 Question: which corporations represent your most important competitors? n=54  
Source: Lünendonk Study 2015 the market for IT consulting and service in Germany*

A customized industry based comparison group was drawn from for LHIND consisting out of the following 9 enterprises: All for One Steeb, BTC, Capgemini, Infosys, Itelligence, Mieschke Hofmann und Partner, msg systems, NTT Data Deutschland and Tata Consultancy Services. These enterprises represent relevant competitors for LHIND because of the similarity of service portfolios and market expertise they have. All surveyed employees on IT consulting enterprises seem to agree on the fact that Accenture and T Systems represent the 2 first strongest competitors overall, however the opinion differs between the comparison group and the whole sample when it comes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> strongest competitor: Capgemini is seen as the 3<sup>rd</sup> strongest competitor by the overall group instead of IBM as it is for the comparison group. After this matter was discussed among with the marketing team members it was decided to pick the 3 strongest competitors according to the whole sample (Accenture, T-Systems and Capgemini) because portfolio content was not seen as a critical factor that would influence the benchmarking analysis of social media presence.

The main research questions surged based on main findings of the Lünendonk study combined with what the team members of the marketing department wish to find out in order to build a social media communication framework.



### 2.3. Main research questions and overall purpose

The main research questions were developed over 3 sessions with the marketing team members responsible for the social media content management in LHIND. After conducting the sessions, team members came to the conclusion that a benchmarking analysis of the three strongest competitors in the four selected social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Xing) would be the best way to set a realistic reference point to improve the existing communication strategy. Team members wished as well to get practical recommendations based on related examples on how to find and showcase audience relevant content to amplify the conversation rate on the existing social media pages. Following questions surged upon discussing the goals and challenges of the social media management together with the marketing team members:

**1. *What is social media performance and how can it be measured with KPIs?***

**2. *How are social media statistics to be interpreted?***

**3. *How are the 3 strongest competitors performing on social media channels?***

**4. *How can LHIND improve its Social Media performance?***

*(a) In which Social Media channels should LHIND be present?*

*(b) Who is the target audience in social media for LHIND? Does the target audience represent a potential customer?*

*(c) How could LHIND create brand awareness and strengthen its reputation through social media platforms?*

*(d) Who are the relevant influencers (bloggers, experts, forums and communities) in the (German) IT consulting sector? How can LHIND engage in team posts with bloggers and experts?*

*(e) How could LHIND make the targeted audience aware of their existing social media channels?*

*(f) Which Monitoring tools and automation procedures could LHIND profit from?*

*(g) How much time will the ongoing administration of the social media channels consume when applying the recommended strategies of 4c and 4d?*

The main research question of this benchmarking study is to find out if there is any correlation between how content is presented and how audiences react to it: either positively by sharing, liking and commenting constructively or negatively by posting unrelated comments, critics, or by showing no reaction at all. After conducting the before mentioned reaction to content evaluation the main research question will be addressed: how is content to be presented to potentially lead to more reactions, participation and 'organical' (non-paid) growth of a genuinely interested audience in the existing social media pages of LHIND?

### **3. How do the selected social media channels work?**

#### **3.1. Facebook**

Mark Zuckerberg along with Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes and Eduardo Saverin founded Facebook in 2004 at the time when Mark was still being a student in Harvard University. The inspiration to build Facebook came to Mark right after dropping out from a similar project with other fellow students of a networking site called Harvard Connection that had the purpose of building a private dating networking platform for Harvard students'. The idea behind the social network was to build a site based on user generated content where Ivy League students could create their own profiles in order to share pictures, stories and memories. Right after the first release, the platform became successful very rapidly: in only six months one million people had opened a profile in the social network. By then Mark decided to drop out of college and move to Palo Alto, California in order to dedicate himself full time to the Facebook project. After one year of the first public release Zuckerberg's enterprise became a \$12.7 million capital invest from Accel Partners, a venture capital company based in Palo Alto California. After the funding Zuckerberg granted Facebook access to more colleges, high schools and international universities which pushed Facebook's user number up to more than 5.5 million users by the end of 2005. Society's attention was rapidly turning to this relatively new medium, which caused it to become a relevant communication channel for companies as well. Zuckerberg did not want to sell Facebook out and turned down various advertising cooperation offers from corporations such as Yahoo! and MTV Networks. Instead, Zuckerberg's focus was to dedicate his energies and money to the site's expansion and feature development which contributed to Facebook's great success (biography.com, 2016).

Along with the user variety growth, the complexity of the platform grew along, which caused Facebook developers to create different types of pages dedicated to private persons, celebrities, companies and communities. As stated on Facebook's Homepage, creating a Facebook page is free and will remain so for anybody. The financing of this giant social network runs on a targeted advertising business model in which any page owner such as companies or individual persons can pay in order to promote self-generated content.

#### **3.2. Facebook for Business**

The fact that Facebook finances itself with targeted advertising means that there is a great interest in having companies, which are potential advertisers, being present on the social network. In order to ensure this, Facebook developed a help section online dedicated only to company pages called Facebook for business. Video tutorials, step-by-step guides and user manuals are available for free in this page. The purpose of this free accessible knowledge database is for businesses to optimize their pages to reach better results when implementing targeted advertising.

According to Facebook for business creating a company page is quick and easy, as Facebook is a complex social network there are various categories of pages optimized with customized functions to fulfill different purposes. Business pages can be only created when related to an individual person's account, so firstly to open a company page is to have an already existing individual Facebook page. Once having decided to

which individual page the business page is going to be connected to, the user has to select a business page category. The existing business page categories are: local business or place, company or institution, brand or product, celebrity or artist, entertainment and cause or community. After selecting a category it is necessary to select an industry-specific category and to give the firm's location (address) and only then a business page can be created. In order to optimize a company page Facebook encourages page administrators to take following steps (Facebook for Business, 2016a):

**Page Description with link:** Create a short and clear description of what the company does, it is as well recommended to add a link to the company's website.

**Add multimedia content:** Add a related profile and header picture

**Bookmark:** Adding Facebook page to browser favorites for easy access

**Advertise:** Enable the function "reach more people" (targeted advertising)

Facebook has developed different rating functions and analytic tools exclusively for business pages; however most of these features are useful primarily for classical B2C companies such as restaurants or stores. This can be observed on the Facebook for business website on the 'learn how' section where the business page functionalities are explained using an example of a classical B2C company.



*Image 2 Mobile view of example business page  
Source: facebook.com*



*Image 1 News feed post with reach overview  
Source: facebook.com*

The example business page belongs to a non-existing grocery store called jaspers market where business page functionalities such as regional user ratings, opening hours, product listings and directions are showcased. These particular functions are less likely to be useful for an IT consulting firm such as LHIND because of its B2B model: user ratings and opening hours are irrelevant to LHIND because they do not sell consumer goods but software solutions to other businesses. Additionally, creating a catalogue of the offered services by LHIND would not be possible because the services offered are tailored software solutions that address specific complex processes. Nevertheless other functions such as a contact now buttons, sharing of special business events or milestones, pinned posts on top of page, embedding of posts on the company's website are more likely to be practical for B2B companies present on Facebook (Facebook for Business, 2016a).

A better example that LHIND could use as a reference point is the success story of a B2B company in India called Knowlarity that offers cloud based telephony services to businesses. Knowlarity was the only

company among the 29 examples of technology company pages showcased on the success stories section that had a B2B model. This company had the goal of raising brand awareness among startups and SMEs on a mass scale by reaching decision makers in organizations. The products that this firm used to advertise on the Facebook business page included ads, desktop news feed and custom audiences which led to a 40% increase of its lead generation (Facebook for Business, 2016b). The function of custom audiences allows firms to migrate their current customer contact data in order to cluster audience groups and to control what kind of content is sent to separate audience groups by doing so. In other words the custom audiences function allows a better management of targeted advertising using existing customer, or potential customer data (Facebook for Business, 2016c). Other relevant function that Knowlarity implemented was the desktop news feed function which allows the integration of ads on the custom audiences' news feed. Ads are integrated between 'organical' content such as updates from friends and popular content from liked pages. Functions such as customized buttons or extended ad reach can be enabled depending on how much the page administrator is willing to invest on the campaign (Facebook for Business, 2016b). Facebook provides no public overview of ad campaign prices probably because ad campaigns are highly customizable. Ads can be customized to include direct call-to action buttons linking to an online shop or be shown to people who haven't liked the page yet but have a common friends that have already done so as shown on Image 3 and 4 below.



*Image 3 Advertisement integration in news feed with call-to-action button  
Source:facebook.com*



*Image 4 Targeted advertisement integration in news feed based on friends' interests  
Source:facebook.com*

Additional to using business page exclusive functions Facebook recommends businesses, before starting to communicate using the business page, to set goals and to identify an audience. The idea behind answering these questions beforehand is to focus the activities on Facebook to meet specific business goals and by doing so to measure the effectiveness of the communication plan. To put in in other words only when growth reference points are defined, progress and improvements can be measured. According to Facebook for business, after setting up the business page, following steps are to be followed in order to use a business page at its full potential (Facebook for Business, 2016d):

1. **Identify the audience:** gather demographic information, find common interests in the selected audience groups and identify advantages that business offers to the audience.
2. **Build the audience:** invite current customers and supporters to like the page, after first group of supporters likes the page, invite them to share the page as well. Oh the last step it is very important to consider focusing on peoples' genuine interest for the page instead of just focusing on getting a great number of likes on the page.

3. **Making the business come alive:** be authentic, responsive and consistent: only content that the company is “excited” about should be shared. Engage coworkers to reply to user comments and post regularly.
4. **Targeted advertising:** prioritizing or ‘boosting’ already popular posts is a good way to draw positive attention to a business page. The diffusion of every targeted ad is customizable to reach pre-clustered audiences based on localization data and/or ‘interest targeting’. Interest targeting allows advertisers to reach people who already have a connection or interest in related topics to the advertisement’s content on Facebook.
5. **Measure success and find out what the audience likes:** After advertising, the reach of boosted ads should be measured by using page insights (Facebook marketing analytics interface) so that marketers can find out what kind of content leads to the desired reactions.

### 3.3. Twitter

Twitter was founded in June 2006 in San Francisco, California based on an idea of Jack Dorsey, the current CEO of the company. The mission behind Twitter, as stated on their about website is “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers”.

The network counts currently with 320 million active users worldwide supporting 35 different languages and employees in over 35 offices around the world (Twitter, 2016a).

The discussion about twitter’s “official” founder is still controversial and therefore information on sources differs: on twitter’s official pages it seems that the only founder was Jack Dorsey while on Wikipedia it is stated that the founders are Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass, for the last affirmation the source is missing though (Twitter, 2016b).



*Image 5 Jack Dorsey's early sketch as he first imagined Twitter*  
 Source: [twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Twitter is a real time information network where anyone with an internet connection can search for trending topics of the world’s current happenings. A tweet is a message publicly posted on twitter, consisting of 140 characters or less; a tweet can as well optionally include attached multimedia such as text, photos, links and videos. Content on twitter is publicly visible, however if users wish to participate it is mandatory to have a twitter account. Anybody with a valid e-mail address can open an account on twitter for free in order to be able to post content or to react to other users’ tweets (Twitter, 2016c).



*Image 6 Structure of a Tweet*  
 Source: *twitter.com*

In order to understand better how the twitter interaction framework works, it is necessary to deconstruct the language and terminology of a tweet (1); Image 6 shows an example tweet from the official twitter explanatory page which is deconstructed in following blocks (Twitter for Business, 2016):

1. **Tweet:** a message that consists of 140 characters or less posted on the twitter news feed. It can contain, additionally to text, pictures, links and/or videos. If any multimedia such as pictures and videos is embedded it will count as 22 extra characters. All tweets are publicly visible, however only registered users can react to them by using the functions listed below.
2. **Reply button:** reply function to any particular tweet
3. **Retweet button:** repost or retweet function to quote other users' tweets and share with own followers with optional comment function.
4. **Like:** button to show appreciation for other users' tweets.
5. **Hashtag (#):** word or phrase without spaces beginning with the # symbol. Hashtags are used to organize and cluster conversation topics. By clicking on any hashtag one will be led directly to a search result list showing tweets containing the corresponding hashtag.
6. **Mention (@username):** when mentioning another user on a tweet it is intended to attract a particular user's attention to either ask a question, highlight a fact or to start any kind of conversation.

Only one year later after its launch Twitter won the SXSW web award, became a separate company and introduced the functionality of the hashtag (#) which serves to cluster and classify tweets in topics and categories. Later in 2009 Twitter started becoming a relevant website for journalists and activists when the US Airways plane crash was first announced over a tweet than over traditional media such as newspapers and TV news. One year later, in 2010, further functionalities such as promoted tweets, trends, accounts and an archive of public tweets dedicated to members to the library of the U.S. congress were released. Twitter continued to grow as a relevant news media aggregator as later on 2011 the Arab spring pro-democracy movement on Egypt unfolded by using twitter as a main communication channel because activists could communicate without censorship by using this medium. By this time Twitter was counting with one billion weekly tweets and 100 million active users, a number that continued to grow up to 320 million active users as of September 2015 (Twitter, 2016a). Additional to the constant growth of twitters' user pool, functionalities and multimedia integration are as well on constant development and adaptation

to mobile use. The latest released functions include broader multimedia integration into tweets such as embedding of short videos, polls and longer private messages (Twitter, 2016b).

### 3.4. Twitter for Business

Over 300 million monthly active twitter users make this real-time information network a relevant communication channel for businesses that have an interest in sharing information rapidly while staying up-to date with user trends. Around 80% of twitter users access it via mobile device, which means that the possibility of reaching the goal audience at any time is higher when compared to print media. According to Twitter, businesses can profit from using the real-time information network as it follows (Twitter for Business, 2016):

**Listening and learning:** finding by using twitter search industry relevant topics and trends.

**Driving awareness:** “tweet” regularly about driving business topics in order to attract and connect with target audience members.

**Providing customer service:** replying to customer requests rapidly and publicly is possible when using twitters reply function, this implementation is rather irrelevant for B2B firms though.

**Connect with Influencers:** communicating and connecting with influencers is easy on twitter so that businesses can demonstrate engagement with experts publicly.

Setting up a business page in twitter is a rather easy process that can take up to less than one hour. Twitter developed a series of free accessible manuals, success examples and resources online at [business.twitter.com](http://business.twitter.com) dedicated to business page administrators. It is fairly recommendable for social media page administrators to take a glimpse every once in a while in this resource pool as updates about new functionalities are explained first hand (by twitter developers) at no cost by using practical examples from a business page perspective. Additional to understanding the functionalities and structure of twitter business pages it is as well advisable to put some time and effort when first creating a profile by focusing on following fundamental components (Twitter, 2016d):

**Username:** the business unique identifier on Twitter and therefore it should be chosen carefully.

Usernames are limited to 15 characters with no spaces in between.

**Profile photo:** the chosen picture should depict what defines the business, this picture will appear on every posted tweet and therefore it is advisable to feature the logo or a separate element from it. The recommended image size is 400x400 pixels and format for vector-based images is GIF or PNG, while as for all other images JPG or PNG.

**Bio:** a short (no longer than 160 characters) and concise description of what the business is all about.

**URL:** picking a short URL that has either full company name or shortened version is a good way to make it traceable for people looking to follow the firm on twitter.

**Header Image:** a good use for the header image depicted on the upper part of the personal twitter page is a large image depicting the businesses’ products, services or upcoming events. The recommended size for this image is 1500x1500 pixels, mobile view testing is recommended as well as because a large fraction of twitter users’ access twitter using mobile devices.

**Pinned Tweet:** selected tweets can be ‘pinned’ to stay on the upper part of the news feed. This feature can be practical when trying to draw visitors’ attention to a particular tweet.

### 3.5. LinkedIn

LinkedIn was launched in May 5th 2003 after Reid Hoffman and his team of old colleagues from SocialNet and PayPal worked together to release the version 1.0 of the business networking site. The growth of the platform was slow at the beginning but after eight months the user pool was big enough to attract an investment from Sequoia Capital. In the early development years the programmers experimented on the platform by introducing new features like groups, job ads and later on subscriptions. The introduction of a subscription based business model allowed the company to start generating profit faster and to establish itself as a trustworthy business networking site. Nevertheless the company became a publicly traded company on the New York stock exchange in 2011, eight years after its foundation (LinkedIn, 2016a). Nowadays LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network having over 400 million members in 200 countries. The company’s current CEO is Jeff Weiner and the management team consists of experienced professionals from companies like Yahoo!, Google, Microsoft and PayPal. Their mission is as how stated on the official about us page of the company: “To connect the world’s professionals to make them more productive and successful. When you join LinkedIn, you get access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights that help you be great at what you do.”

### 3.6. LinkedIn for Business

Companies can profit from having a LinkedIn profile in various ways: by generating brand awareness while engaging with followers as well as by recruiting and sharing career opportunities. LinkedIn has a help center dedicated to business page administrators’ interested in improving their businesses’ image and page traffic. In the LinkedIn Help center an extensive collection of videos, tutorials and success stories are publicly available at no cost. All these help resources are easily accessible for free most likely because a significant part of the revenue model of LinkedIn runs on targeted job ad and event promotion from company pages. Following are some of the most useful advices for business pages showcased on the introduction video of the help center for company pages:

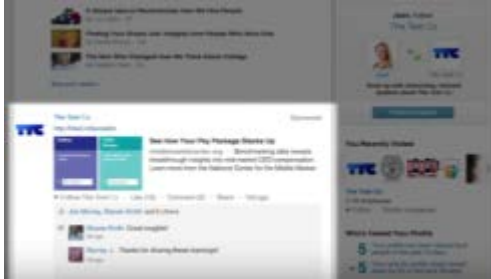
**Linking the page:** placing a link to the companies’ LinkedIn page on other company pages, such as the official webpage or other social media channels, heightens the probability of rising the website’s traffic and attracting more followers.

**Leveraging employees:** encouraging employees to keep their LinkedIn profiles up-to date by linking the company in their current job experience could as well drive to more page traffic. Listed employees will automatically become followers of the company page which might lead some of their contacts to visit the company page. Furthermore employees who share content regularly should be encouraged to share the company’s posts incentivized by the fact that the company would be then willing to share the employee’s posts.

**Investing in the right followers:** after having followed the two improvement strategies listed above, a company can choose to continue growing by using the targeted advertising paid solutions that LinkedIn



offers. LinkedIn recommends using following basic advertisement possibilities: static targeted follow ads and sponsored updates; both advertisement possibilities are fully targetable to audience members' of specific industries, companies and regions. Follow ads are static and displayed on the upper right corner of the page while as promoted posts are embedded on the users' news feed content as shown on Image 7 and 8 respectively.



*Image 8 Sponsored post as seen by target audience  
Source:linkedin.com*



*Image 7 Follow ad as seen by target audience  
Source:linkedin.com*

### 3.7. Xing

Xing was founded in 2003 in Hamburg, Germany and is since 2006 listed on the stock market as an official enterprise. Xing is a business social network primarily known in German speaking countries currently counting with more than 14 million members worldwide from which over than 9 million reside in German speaking countries (as of September 2015). In 2010 Xing was acquired by the amiando GmbH, Europe's biggest ticketing and event management agency, which shifted the focus of the platform's revenue model by integrating several business event marketing solutions in the service portfolio. Later on 2013 Xing acquired kununu, a German company rating website to create surveys for employees' reviews, which repositioned the firm as a leading business and event marketing website in Germany (Xing, 2016a).

With more than 700 employees Xing runs on a 'freemium' membership based business model in which anybody can register for free with optional paid upgrades such as insights on page views and the ability to surf privately (pro users are not identified when visiting standard users' profiles). Additional to private memberships Xing finances itself by offering targeted advertising of job ads and events to companies. Xing is an attractive offer for professionals because it opens a broader possibility to find new jobs, professional advice from expert pool groups, potential business partnerships with other users and even inspiration for new business ideas. Evidence for the ongoing engagement and participation of Xing users is the fact that there are over 74.000 expert groups in forums additional to the well visited Xing networking events where users are invited to network in person (Xing, 2016a).

### 3.8. Xing for Business

As Xing's business model relies partly on the revenue they get from business pages that pay for promoting content (targeted advertising) there is a great interest in having potential customers creating new company pages and in raising the popularity of existing company pages. Similarly to LinkedIn, Xing developed a

free and publicly accessible information section dedicated to business page administrators with useful recommendations and examples on how to optimize a company page. Xing strongly encourages company page administrators, when setting up a company page, to address the question of why do employees enjoy working there by using a combination of pictures, videos and user ratings as shown on Image below (Xing, 2016a):



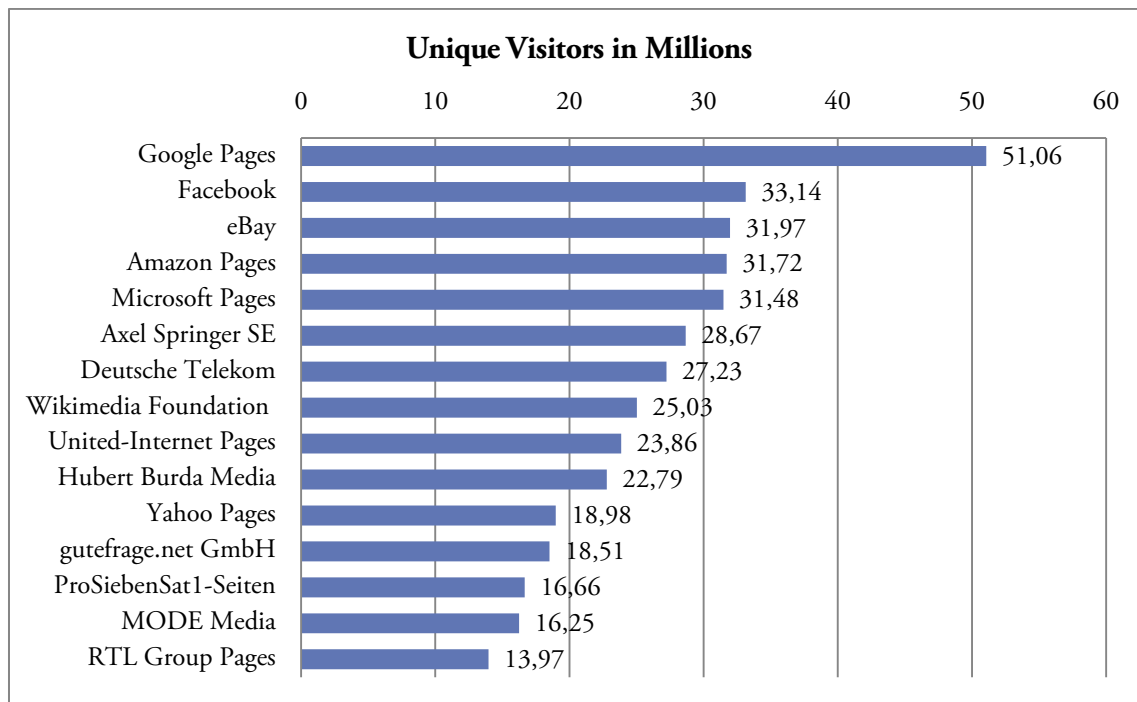
*Image 9 Ideal layout for first impression of company landing page  
Source: xing.com*

As shown on image 9 above the main numbers on followers (abonnenten), number of employees, job ads and employee ratings should be the visitor's first impression when visiting the company's profile. The upper left corner is a placeholder ideal for short introduction video showcasing employee testimonials about their positive experiences on the day-to-day life at work which should ideally be supported by the positive grade on the employee rating bar shown on the lower left corner. Xing offers via the website Kununu the possibility to create, evaluate and publish employee surveys in order to communicate about the working atmosphere transparently (Xing, 2016b).

It is arguable to affirm that Xing fulfills the same tasks as LinkedIn; because the purpose of having a company profile on Xing is very similar to the purpose of having a LinkedIn profile. Nevertheless both business networks have different approaches and niche markets: LinkedIn has a much more globalized and therefore larger user pool while Xing is primarily used by professionals in German speaking countries. Xing has extra functions such as the website 'Kununu' where surveys for employees to evaluate a company can be created as well as the Xing events website where business event planners can profit from optimized marketing solutions for business events online (Kununu, 2016). Using both platforms is highly recommendable for German firms wanting to build regional as well as international business relationships online.

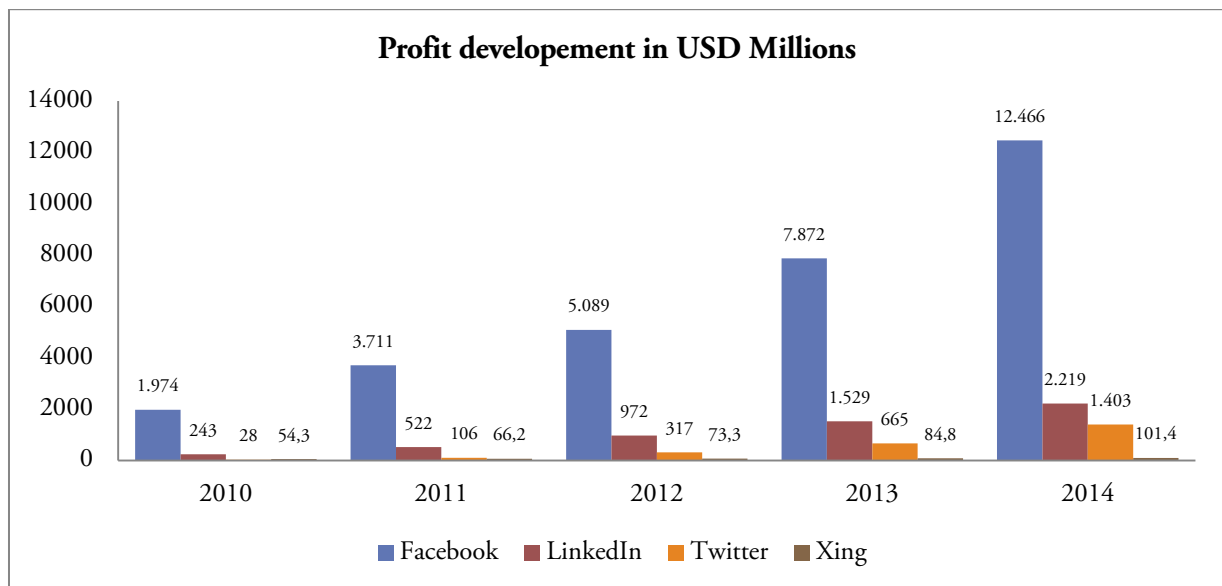
#### 4. Financial, demographic and user pool status quo of selected platforms

Despite the current phenomenon of globalization empowered by the internet and common usage of social media sites worldwide such as Facebook, the usage of social media differs between age groups, countries and cultures. The following stats intend to give an overview of the development and status quo of the financial status, popularity and demographics of users in the selected social media channels in Germany as well as worldwide.



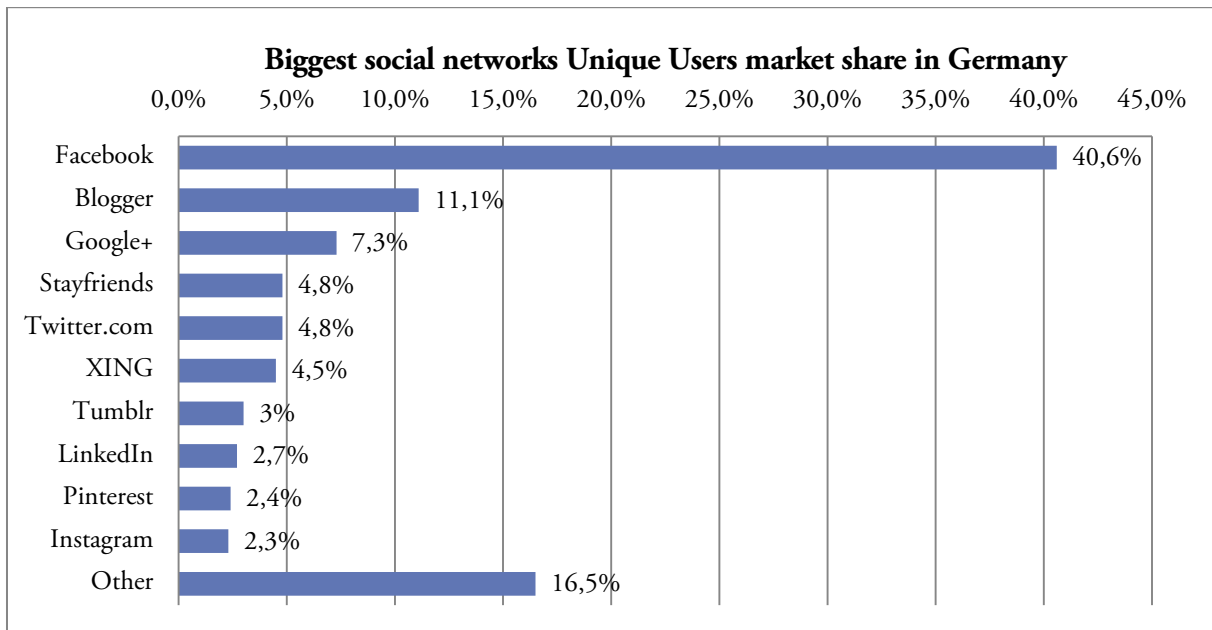
*Table 2 Top 20 Websites in Germany according to unique visitors' number  
Source:(comScore, 2014, p. 20)*

Table 2 shows that the top 5 of the 20 most visited websites in Germany fulfill following specific purposes: information searching, social networking and transactions. Google pages are the most visited websites overall with over 35% more unique visitors than the second most visited website, which is the only social network taking part on this research that made it to the top 20 (Facebook). The fact that Google occupies the first position is not surprising as its primary function is to help users to find information/other websites and therefore it serves as a 'gate' to other pages. Information searching seems to result often later in either a transactional operation or social interaction evidenced by the fact that the second most visited website is Facebook followed by Amazon and EBay, two well-known online marketplaces. Another important implementation is sheer information searching as the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> most visited pages indicate: Wikipedia and gutefrage are collaborative information platforms where users share knowledge online. Interestingly only two of the listed pages belong to public German television networks: ProSieben and RTL, occupying place number 20<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively. The remaining pages have non-classifiable usage purposes because they mainly provide hosting services to different websites that fulfil various purposes.



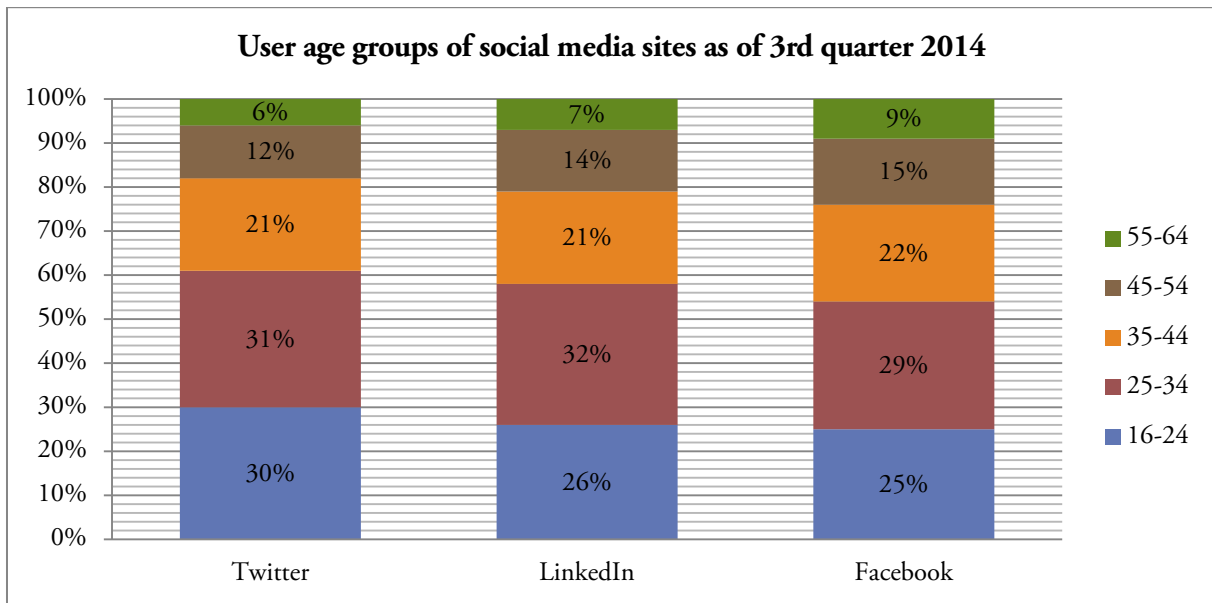
*Table 3 Profit in USD million from Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Xing 2010-2014*  
*Source: (Facebook et al., 2015) (Xing, 2015)*

Table 3 shows a clear ascending trend of the overall revenue of all social media networks. It is evident that the targeted advertising business model of the social network Facebook is the most profitable of all 3 revenue models. The great revenue difference between Facebook and other platforms is as well explained by the fact that Facebook has the largest number of active users of all: 1,59 billion monthly active users as of December 2015 (Facebook Newsroom, 2016). The two following on the revenue Scala are LinkedIn and Twitter. Surprisingly LinkedIn's revenue is greater than Twitter's revenue despite the difference between number of monthly active users: Twitter currently counts with over 300 million monthly active users (Twitter, 2016a) while LinkedIn counted only with 100 million unique visits on the last four months of 2015 (LinkedIn, 2016b). The fact that LinkedIn has 75% less traffic but makes 36% more profit than Twitter evidences that profit is not directly correlated to amount of visitors/activity but more to the website's revenue model. Nevertheless the active user number does influence revenue up to certain point, when revenue models are alike, as the revenue difference between Xing and LinkedIn evidences: LinkedIn currently has 400 million registered members and a higher revenue than Xing (LinkedIn, 2016c) because Xing counts only with 14 million registered users (Xing, 2016c). The business model of the networks LinkedIn and Xing consists of charging a monthly membership fee for premium members along with targeted job ad advertisement fees to company pages that wish to publish and promote job ads online (LinkedIn, 2016d) (Xing, 2016a).



*Table 4 Market share of unique users of top 50 social networks in Germany, last quarterly period 2014  
Source: (Nielsen and BLM, 2015)*

As Table 4 shows all selected social media platforms for this research are present on the top 10 social networks ranked by market share in Germany: Facebook (1), Twitter (4), Xing (5) and LinkedIn (7). Facebook, not surprisingly as being the 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited page in Germany, is far up on the first position with up to 30% more market share than the following 9 pages on the ranking which positions Facebook as the overall preferred social network. Facebook is followed by blogger, one of the biggest user generated content aggregators on the web. Blogger is a platform owned by Google where anybody can create a blog to broadcast publicly for free or by reaching a certain amount of visitors, to even earn money by doing so (Blogger, 2016). The three remaining relevant platforms for this research have 1/10 or less market share compared to Facebook: Twitter and Xing have similar market shares, 4,8 and 4,5% respectively, compared to LinkedIn which has only 2,7%. This evidences the fact that the business networking platform Xing has a stronger market position than its international competitor LinkedIn in Germany which is as well explains why 92% of Xing's profit comes from users residing in German speaking countries (Xing, 2015).



*Table 5 User Age groups worldwide as of 2014*  
*Source: (GlobalWebIndex, 2015)*

According to the latest global web index report where over 40.000 internet users worldwide were surveyed, the answer to the question "Which of the following services have you used or contributed to in the past month using any type of device?" is depicted on Table 5 above, which gives a fairly consistent age group overview of three out of the four relevant platforms for this research. Xing wasn't identified by the surveyed people as a relevant social network worldwide and no similar demographical data could be found on alternative sources. At first sight age groups are distributed almost equally across platforms: over 50% of the audience is under 34 and less than 24% of the audience is over 45. Nevertheless there are slight audience age differences: twitter and LinkedIn have larger young user shares than Facebook. More than 60% of users in the networking platforms Twitter and LinkedIn are under 34, meaning that the majority of their audience is relatively young. It is worth mentioning that in 10 years actual users are likely to still be active on these platforms and therefore the share of the older age groups (over 35) will grow compared to the younger age groups (under 35).

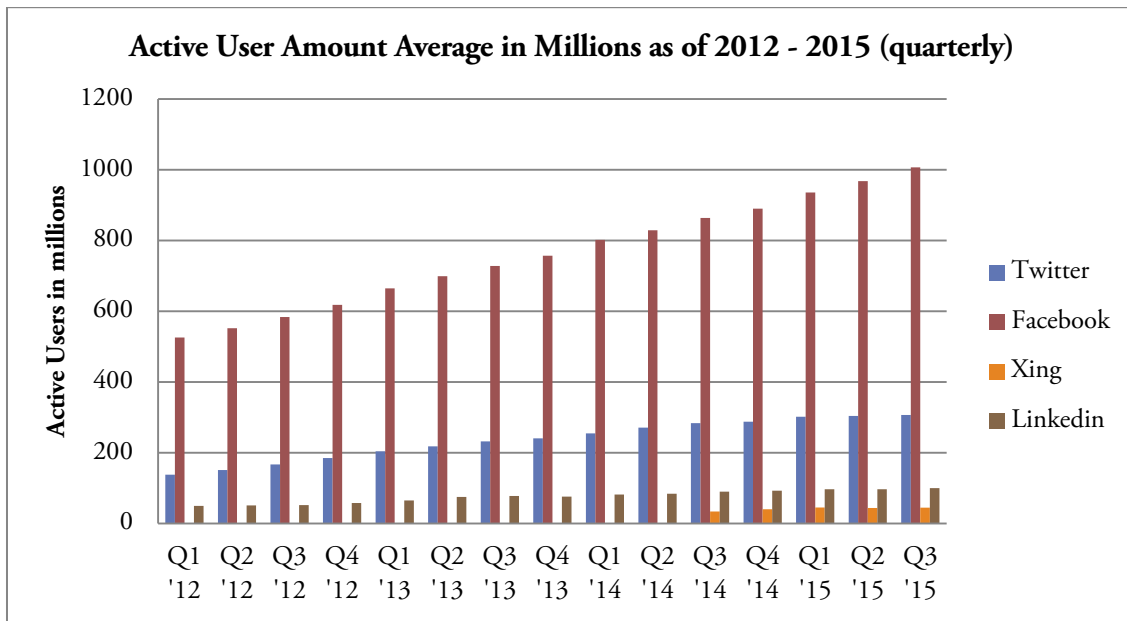


Table 6 average amount of active users quarterly  
 Sources: (LinkedIn, 2016b) (Twitter, 2015) (Facebook, 2015) (IVW, 2015)

Table 6 shows an overview of the growth of active users based on the average of monthly active users for all platforms except for Facebook which had an average of daily users. This information is intentionally shown instead of the number of registered users over time because it gives a much more accurate snapshot of the activity in the social networks. Active user data gives a more realistic reference for actual traffic on the websites than amount of registered users because when counting users the amount of non-active users remains unknown. Facebook is the page with the heaviest user traffic by having the most recent quarter with 5 times more traffic than Twitter. All platforms show a constant active user growth rate, with a small exception in the last 5 quarters regarding Twitter and LinkedIn in which the user activity stayed rather constant instead of growing. The active user data corresponding to Xing was only available for the last 5 quarters most probably due to restrictions in German data privacy policies.

To conclude this chapter, following main findings can be drawn from the past overview of the statistical comparison:

- Facebook is the strongest social networking platform worldwide as well as in Germany
- Xing is the strongest business networking platform in German speaking countries
- German data privacy policies (Xing) limited the financial benchmarking
- There is a growing trend of usage of social media networking in Germany as well as worldwide
- Business networks such as LinkedIn and Xing have lower user activity because they fulfill a much more specific purpose (business networking) compared to mainstream social media networks as Facebook
- All platforms have a constant growing user amount together with profitability.
- Twitter has the least profitable business model of all platforms; nevertheless its profit trend is slowly ascending.

## 5. Academic Literature

### 5.1. What is Social Media?

Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC). While UGC has already been available prior to Web 2.0, users have never had the opportunity to share content as massively as nowadays. Social Media pages became a massive communication media only when the right combination of technological developments as increased broadband availability and hardware capacity and economical drivers as increased availability of tools for the creation of UGC and massive production of devices, were reached. Only after such developments, users had the tools to access and interact in collaborative platforms where they could easily express themselves publicly. Along with the techno-economic development, a social phenomenon was arising: the so-called generation of “digital natives” or “screenagers” was surging. Digital Natives are younger individuals with substantial technical knowledge and willingness to engage online, while as the term screenagers describes isolated adolescents that spend most of their time looking at the screen of their devices (Smartphones). The social phenomena of digital natives has influenced how people communicate online as well as offline by dividing generations and making UGC nowadays fundamentally different from what was observed in the early 1980s (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 3).

In a nutshell social networking sites are applications that allow users to connect by using following functions: creating personal profiles, inviting or allowing friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles and optionally sending between each other e-mails and instant messages. The personal profiles are filled by users and can include any type of information and multimedia such as photos, video, audio files and blogs (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 5). The content that users publish can cause other users to react to it, this means that users can optionally interact with others by liking, sharing or commenting on posts. The frequency of interaction is high due to the fact that most users are constantly online on their smartphones and therefore there is a possibility to interact at any time, anywhere where an available internet connection is provided (Keller et al., 2015, p. 123).

Communication form	Signaling method and platform
E-mail messages	Reply, Forward, Read, ignore, cc
Mobile phone	Voice modulation, Send/Receive ISMS/MMSJ
Face-to-face	Turn-taking in conversation and body language
Micro-messages and listening	Tibbr/Twitter/Yammer/Salesforce chatter
	Google+ Sparks
	Short messages prefaced by @ or O
Social networks	<b>Facebook:</b> Poke, Status, Comment, Like, Share
	<b>LinkedIn:</b> Accept, Invite, Messages
	<b>Xing:</b> Accept, Invite, Messages, Ratings
VOIP/Instant messaging	Skype: Telepresence (Chat, Audio, Video). Status, Allow, Ignore, Block, Conference
Geo social networks	Foursquare, Facebook places

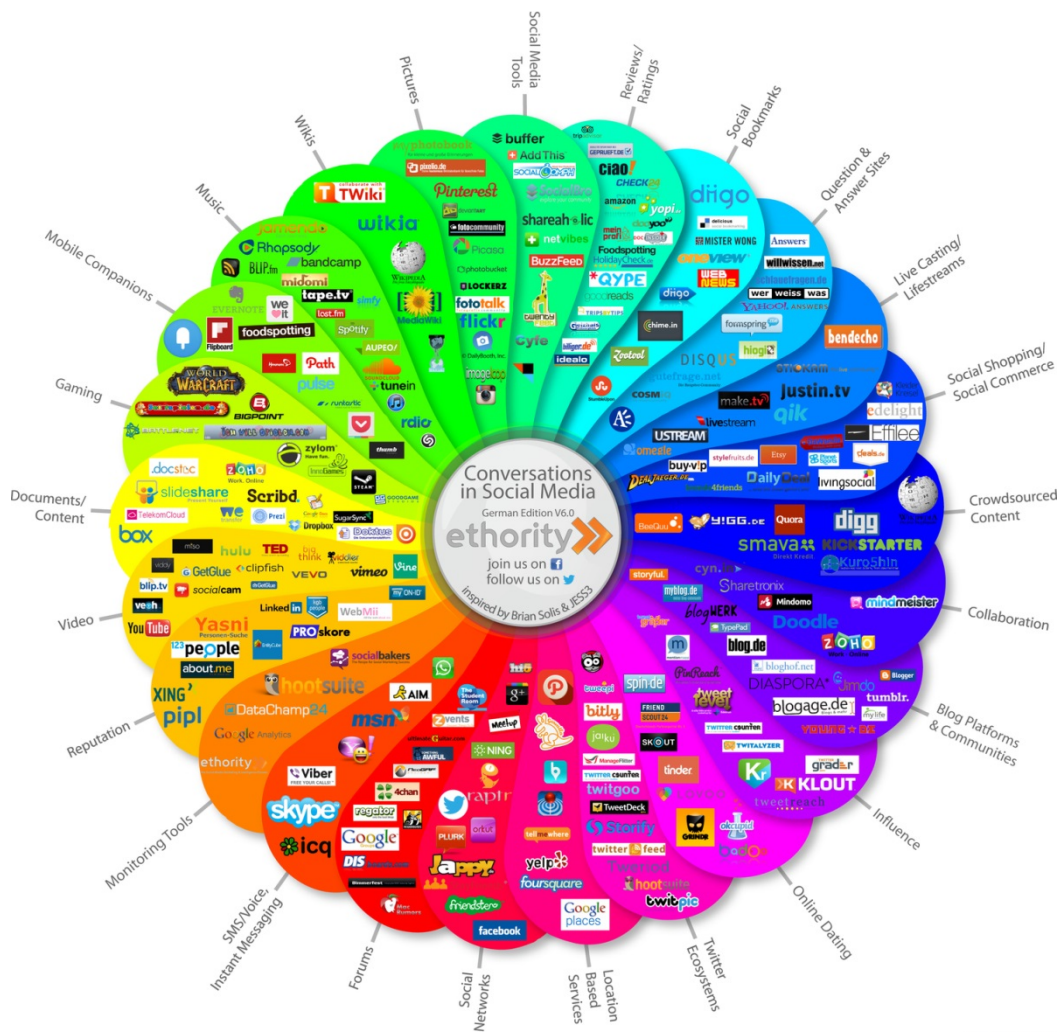


	Share business location/Latitude : Address, Map, GPS
	coordinates, invitation to meet at location, Other relevant businesses in Location proximity

*Table 7 Social communication signaling methods and platforms*  
*Source: (Sood and Pattinson, 2012, p. 122)*

As seen on Table 7 above there are various types of communication forms that people can make use of when wanting to interact. Depending on the situation one can choose to communicate by using or not using connected devices such as computers, telephones or smartphones. The listed communication forms go from the most primitive form of communication, face-to-face, to the latest location based communication trend on social media which has paradoxically the goal of bringing people back to the most primitive communication form. In order to make users interact, social media platforms have developed different signaling methods partly inspired on face to face communication traits such as comment poke and ignore among others. While as other social media interaction possibilities are far more abstract and thought for an either massive communication environment such as ratings, share, like and status. According to (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) Social Media is a further development of Web 2.0 that depends on user generated content: „Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content“.

The term social media can be used to describe a broad group of collaborative internet platforms that fulfil very different purposes with one characteristic in common: these platforms exist because of and rely on user interactions and UGC. An overview of the various functions that social media platforms provide recently can be seen on image 10 below. The social media prism is a good graphical representation of the actual social media application landscape sorted by purpose. Most of the purposes of the depicted social media platforms fulfil transactional, informative, professional and creative purposes among many others. It is worth mentioning that in a few years this image might not be up to date anymore, or might look very different, because day to day new social media sites come and go. Popularity across platforms shifts rapidly depending on which platform is currently offering the most favorable solution for users.



Global Social Media Prism by ethorty | <http://www.facebook.com/SocialMediaPrism> | <https://www.twitter.com/SoMePrism> | <http://pinterest.com/someprism> | Contact us for updates: prism@ethorty.net



Image 10 Social Media Prisma  
Source: <http://ethorty.de/social-media-prisma/>

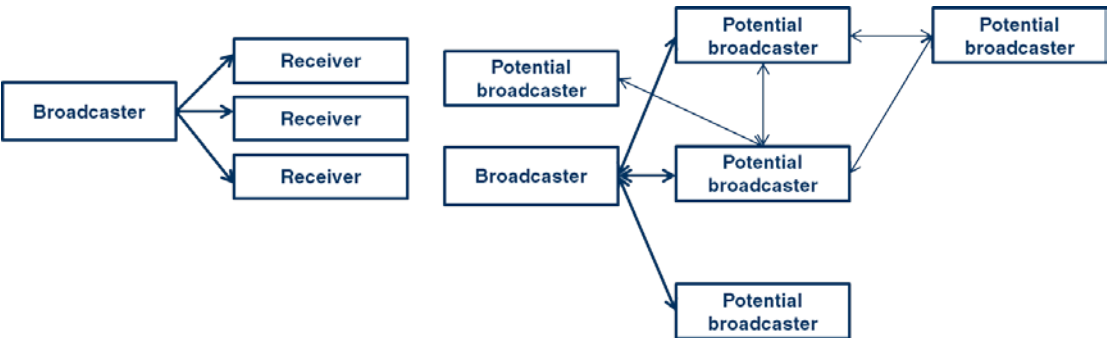
### 5.1.1. Development of the Social Media interaction framework

The era of Social Media as it is today started most likely in 1997, when Bruce and Susan Abelson founded “Open Diary,” which was pioneer of social networking sites with the intention to bring together online diary writers into one community. The term “weblog” was first used around the same time period, which was shortened to “blog” a year later when one blogger of Open Diary transformed the noun “weblog” into the sentence “we blog” as a joke. As time went by the availability of high-speed Internet access grew which contributed to heighten the popularity of the social platform concept, leading to the creation of other social networking sites (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 2).

In 2004 Tim O’Reilly mentioned for the first time the term ‘web 2.0’ to describe the communication revolution that had and is still taking place all over the internet: this term defines the user generated content phenomenon. Ever since then, the term web 2.0 established itself and was widely mentioned to describe the social phenomenon of people expressing themselves publicly using the internet. The term web 2.0 is not to be confused with a software update or an established methodology, as it often is. The term

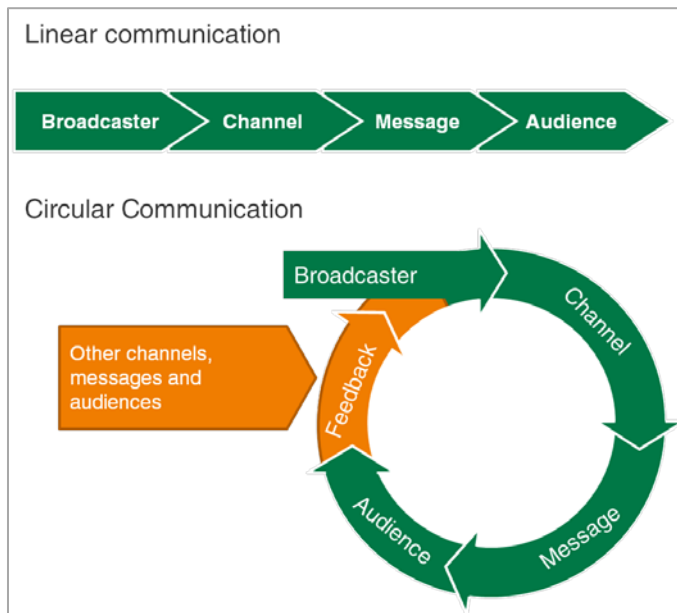
web 2.0 describes a human response to the opening of massive communication channels, an interaction that lacks of a specific method because human ways of communicating online are on constant development (Lammenett, 2007, pp. 241 –247). If web 2.0 represents the ideological and technological foundation of social networking, User Generated Content (UGC) is the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term, which became popular in 2005, is usually used to describe the various forms of media content published and created by users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 3).

Several online communities and platforms were created because the interest of society in interacting online is high; this is evidenced by the fact that some of the most popular communication platforms such as YouTube operate fully based on UGC. The creation of social media can be defined as a human social response to a new interaction possibility. This new interaction framework has not only changed how people interact but as well brought the disruption phenomenon. Disruption occurs when the so far known dynamic between broadcaster and receiver changes: information is no longer only broadcasted by centralized media giants (as shown in image 11 below) but also from a variety of random individuals who wish to express themselves through social networking platforms (Fiege, 2012, p. 15).



*Image 11 The Broadcaster-receiver information flow change: from one-to-many to many-to-many*  
 Source: self-made

Due to the information flow change new marketing tactics surged, such as the so called social media marketing. Social media marketing is defined by Tamar as a process where people and/or enterprises have the possibility to advertise through social media communities about products or services that they intend to sell to reach a specific audience that can only be reached through this channel. Social Media Marketing is therefore a response to the web 2.0 that consists of making services or products known by including them onto the conversations in specific online communities (Weinberg et al., 2012).



*Image 12 Linear and circular communication*  
 Source: self-made inspired by (Kreutzer, 2012, p. 48)

Image 12 above depicts in detail how the classic linear communication model from 1 to many (before social media) transformed onto the circular communication model from many to many (after social media). This communication process has developed extremely rapidly, disrupting advertisement models, beliefs, business models and even up to some point educational institutions. The fact that anybody literate enough to operate a device connected to the internet can profit at no cost from other people's experience and knowledge in collaborative platforms is changing how people believe what they hear from others. Anybody has the power to know something they didn't know before by just "googling" it instead of having to ask people near them. Collaborative question asking platforms such as Quora are a clear evidence of how a collaborative knowledge platform is actually helping people broaden their knowledge. To avoid a misuse and ensure a better answer quality only registered members can participate and rate answers. Additional to this people who answer questions correctly are rewarded by gaining a better status than members that are less active; in this way irrelevant content and spam are filtered out. The collaborative circular communication is taking society to a "flat world". This means that the as far known socio economic difficulties that people with no access to education had, are dropping because of the disruption caused by the availability of free information online. The trend of knowledge collaboration will continue to grow together with developments in mobile device technologies and internet television that will increasingly encourage users to interact more often (Sood and Pattinson, 2012, p. 2).

### 5.1.2. The paradox of choice: where should businesses be present?

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		low	medium	high
self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	high	Blogs	Social networks (Facebook)	Virtual Social Worlds (Second Life)
	low	Collaborative Projects (Wikipedia)	Content communities (YouTube)	Virtual Game worlds (World of Warcraft)

*Table 8 Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure  
Source: (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 4)*

Deciding in which platforms a firm should be present is a question of strategy: where does the target audience interact online? Where can they be most likely brought to discussion? As shown in table 8 above there are various levels of social presence to choose from. Depending on which channel a company decides to be present in, different self-disclosure levels and respective workload for the responsible person are to be in beforehand considered. Therefore Social media managers must ask themselves which platform is relevant for their industry before opening profiles in order not to waste time. For example: Pinterest is best suited for fashion focused industries, Facebook for B2C interactions and LinkedIn for B2B interactions. Dedicating workforces to engage and communicate in selected "best suited" platforms for a specific brand can lead to more meaningful user interactions by investing less effort (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 7).

Online Marketing is not that different from traditional marketing, in fact social media offers broader possibilities to get to know the audience faster and better. This means that marketers have nowadays more options to interact with audience members and therefore are more likely to get to know them better. After being familiarized with the audience, marketers can choose to implement known marketing techniques. Examples for traditional marketing techniques are positive advertisement, recommendation marketing and emotional advertising; techniques that were used before the internet was invented on printed ads on newspapers and movie theaters on the 1950s. Most of these marketing techniques will prevail regardless of the presence of user feedback on social media. Nevertheless before implementing classical marketing techniques, marketers should determine what goal they are aiming for. Therefore it is important to considering business model limitations as well as platforms that might deliver better results for the present business model. In the case that a business chooses to have a presence on different channels at the same time, it is crucial to ensure that all social media activities are consistent across platforms (Kreutzer, 2012, p. 54).

Apart from choosing which classical marketing techniques to implement on social media; the integration of traditional media to new communication channels is crucial. Businesses may consider these two channels to be completely different, but according to customers they are both part of the same: the corporate image. An example of a successful cross medial campaign is the one Coca-Cola featured in June 2006 where a viral video on YouTube in which performance artists mixed Mentos and Coca-Cola to create 'geysers' was used as an advertisement. The video was distributed across all possible advertisement channels: from social media channels to TV and printed ads. The campaign became a great success

because it featured content that people were already excited about on YouTube, resulting in a sales uplift for the company (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 7).

## **5.2. Building business relationships online**

Social media has changed how people as well as how businesses communicate: buyers and sellers have now the possibility to interact publicly online. Research has shown that an increased involvement between customer and seller through social media may deliver positive results for businesses if the communication is positive as well (Agnihotri et al., 2015, p. 1). It is a fact that the most common social media business interactions take place between individual customers and retailers for massive produced goods in B2C business environments. Regardless to the fact that tools of social media are ubiquitous in contemporary consumer marketing, there is little evidence about the extent to which they have been adopted by B2B marketers. A possible reason for the fact that there is much less academic research addressing the adoption of social media marketing by B2B organizations than for B2C organizations is that B2B companies represent a minority in the market when compared to B2C organizations (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 1).

When researching about how social media marketing is implemented on the German IT consulting environment, little academic research could be found. Nevertheless the author was able to find interesting expert insights; particularly of an expert named Saskia Riedel with several years of experience in social media marketing. Saskia Riedel is a marketing and communication expert with over 16 years working experience in the IT German sector. On one of her academic publications on the social media Xpert press she discusses the influence that the web 2.0 is having over the communication and advertisement strategies on a corporate level. According to Riedel there is a huge demographical gap between the "digital natives" (15 to 25 years old), "digital immigrants" (30 to 45 years old) and the older people in power positions in corporations (45 to 65 years old). She questions, considering the generational gaps, the effectiveness of measuring social media activity led by digital immigrants addressing the digital natives with business related KPIs to explain its effectiveness to people in charge. An usual problem is that most people in power positions in corporations (45 to 65 years old) regard social media marketing as a cheap direct way to a measureable increase of business transactions, which is often not the case. If the target audience uses social media they will most likely want to participate, to question, to be read and informed before investing any of their money. The kind of marketing needed to address this audience is called "dialog marketing". This communication dynamic is more time consuming than classical one way advertisement because the customer can publicly participate and manipulate the message. Even though broadcasting over social media channels is usually free, it is completely useless without proper user feedback management (Leinemann, 2013, pp. 7 – 9).

Any enterprises' main goal when investing effort in marketing is to generate sales, a task that used to be well addressed with the simple one to many advertisement models. However social Media Marketing is all about the conversations between user and seller, and above all what users say about a brand instead of what a brand says about itself. A human conversation is a non-automatable process, and therefore when advertising through social media, marketers have to be ready to invest time and money discussing with potential customers; or in the worst case scenario with a random social media user who doesn't even belong to the targeted audience. The effectiveness and cost reduction when advertising through social media platforms is therefore arguable and can in some cases be less effective and more expensive than

classical paid banner advertising because of the high unpredictability of user feedback amount. Nevertheless Riedel encourages firms to use social media in spite of the risks by having a different approach than generating leads: social media channels opened a window to marketers looking for free information about users' behavior, needs and opinions. Therefore Social media can be used by marketers as a tool to observe market trends and to get to know users better. With the 'observer' approach firms can develop a realistic social media communication strategy by asking themselves following questions:

1. Do I want to advertise one way (classical way) or in a conversational way?
2. Do I want and have the time and resources to hear and reply to users?
3. Am I measuring short-term statistical performance indicators (such as click rates, reach and likes) or am I measuring long-term user feedback behaviors (such as engagement, loyalty and trends)?

Riedel concludes with the affirmation that social media is forcing firms to ask themselves what they fear, await and want to achieve when using social media platforms. Furthermore the interactions present in social media channels are forcing people to reuse "old" abilities such as conversational skills, respect, showing interest in opinions of others amongst other face-to-face communicational traits. New chances as well as risks come with building a presence in social media channels as a firm, nevertheless Riedel affirms that there is more to win than to lose when participating in the digital revolution (Leinemann, 2013, pp. 16 – 19).

Another remarkable social media expert in the German market is Roland Fiege. Fiege established himself as a Social Media expert in the German market after publishing his book "Social Media Balanced Scorecard" (2012) which showcases, based on practical examples, how social media managements is to be integrated in firms. Fiege affirms that one of the most challenging tasks for enterprises at the moment is to successfully integrate social media activities into existing business processes. However once social media activities become integrated into the daily workflow, businesses can profit greatly thereof. An intensive discussion with a potential or actual customer over social media channels is an opportunity for businesses to identify the needs and priorities of their customers (Fiege, 2012, pp. 21 – 23).

### **5.2.1. Communicating as a B2B company**

According to (Hills and Sarin, 2003, p. 18) 'The primary objective of market driving firms is to influence the evolution of their industry in a direction consistent with their own strengths and abilities, and to derive long-term advantage from such an evolution'. Businesses have to be well aware of their strengths and abilities in order to gain a good reputation and then be able to steer users' opinions to their advantage. By doing so, businesses can actually lead the market instead of being led by it. It should be noted that this is the best case scenario of social media marketing and that it is hard to achieve, but once achieved it is the most effective social media marketing gets because it gives businesses the power to influence the market.

B2B marketing has moved from the transactional to the relationship approach, along with this new approach new targeted marketing techniques became relevant. Therefore the most successful marketing organizations in the social media environment will be those that make the most effective use of IT tools in analyzing the behavior of their audience. Targeted audience marketing is key for succeeding in social

media: instead of speaking to the masses, smaller niche groups should be assessed for better marketing results (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 4).

Smaller niche audiences are easier to bring to conversations because they share interests: content communities represent very attractive contact channel for firms therefore. A good example of successful niche marketing campaign is the contest that Procter & Gamble organized in 2007 on YouTube. The contest encouraged the YouTube community to upload 1-minute videos of themselves singing about how Pepto-Bismol makes them feel better when they experience heartburn and nausea. In response the uploaded videos related to the brand were watched by millions of people resulting in an increase of popularity of the brand (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 5).

### **5.2.2. B2B Social Media limitations**

Social Media marketing is often misinterpreted with marketplace marketing, which is a wrong approach because social media networks are not a marketplace like eBay: users on social media pages are not looking to buy something but to connect and interact with other people. This leads to the conclusion that social media is all about the audiences' interests and that audiences have the power to decide what is relevant and what is not. Nevertheless businesses can use social media as a tool for soft marketing in the long run by building relationships with the audience and in some cases with potential customers. Additional to building relations with users it is important to consider in which platform possibilities of building B2B relations are higher. Current main social media channels for the US market regarded as useful for B2B marketing are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and blogging (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 13).

The workload that comes along with having a business presence in social media remains often unconsidered: social media pages require constant surveillance and responses from page administrators to user feedback. Interaction and feedback to users are critical elements that should not be underestimated because user feedback amounts are unforeseeable. Giving feedback to negative as well as positive comments is a never ending task that must be correctly addressed and never ignored. Eliminating user comments is the worst solution possible, as the example of the Boeing blog evidences. When Boeing decided to launch its first corporate blog they decided to deactivate comment functions, which led users to think that the Boeing blog was a fake. Users regarded this blog as corporate advertising in disguise which led to a massive failure of this communication initiative. This leads to the conclusion that in order to fail in social media one must not allow user feedback, post existing TV spots on YouTube or simply put prefabricated press announcements on corporate blogs (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 8).

User feedback over social media channels will only continue to grow because the emergence of social media platforms is and still will be expanding the communications reach of consumers. Connected consumers have now the power to express their honest opinions about services and products publicly. Further than letting users express personal opinions, social media has opened a disruptive communication environment that works as a surveillance medium where society can unite to boycott companies or institutions that are breaking the law. Before the internet connected society as of today, massive media corporations were the only institutions capable of making massive boycotts happen. This represents a



communication challenge that firms need to have in sight in order to maintain brand equity online and avoid negative responses to result in a boycott (McGriff, 2012, p. 1).

If users mostly determine the success or failure of a brand in social media is the social media communication framework the end of having control over what is supposed to be communicated? The answer to this question is yes, which indicates that businesses should communicate with a different perspective: being compared and criticized should no longer be regarded as a risk but as an opportunity. Social media communication is honest: it critiques, it admires it suggests and it asks the audience what they think about it. Otherwise if a massive communication strategy is desired then firms should just simply not use social media. However choosing not to participate on the social conversation is not an effective solution on the long run. Along with the risks that open communication brings, opportunities come: society's attention is increasingly turning to social networking evidence therefore is the wide variety of online services with feedback functions. Social media managers must be prepared to work with a constantly changing communication model; particularly on the IT consulting environment, the internet has accelerated how people communicate by influencing how consultants communicate as well. The amount of people and institutions influencing and advising customers is constantly changing (Leinemann, 2013, pp. 12 – 26).

Besides moderating negative comments another important aspect that businesses need to consider is the effort needed to attract favorable user comments and in the best case scenario engaged followers. Assuming that enough marketing efforts are being made and people are becoming aware of the brand it is a fact that customer resistance to take the risk of investing time in trying out a new brand is high. However people only agree to spend time in getting to know a new brand if the reason to do so is perceived as favorable by the user. A good example of a customer choosing over a known brand based on assurance of quality is choosing Tylenol over generic acetaminophen. It is important to consider that consumption habits are hard to change, an advantage for strong brands that have already convinced followers. This is likely not to change because users in social media are human and humans are prone to stick to habits (Fiege, 2012, p. 3).

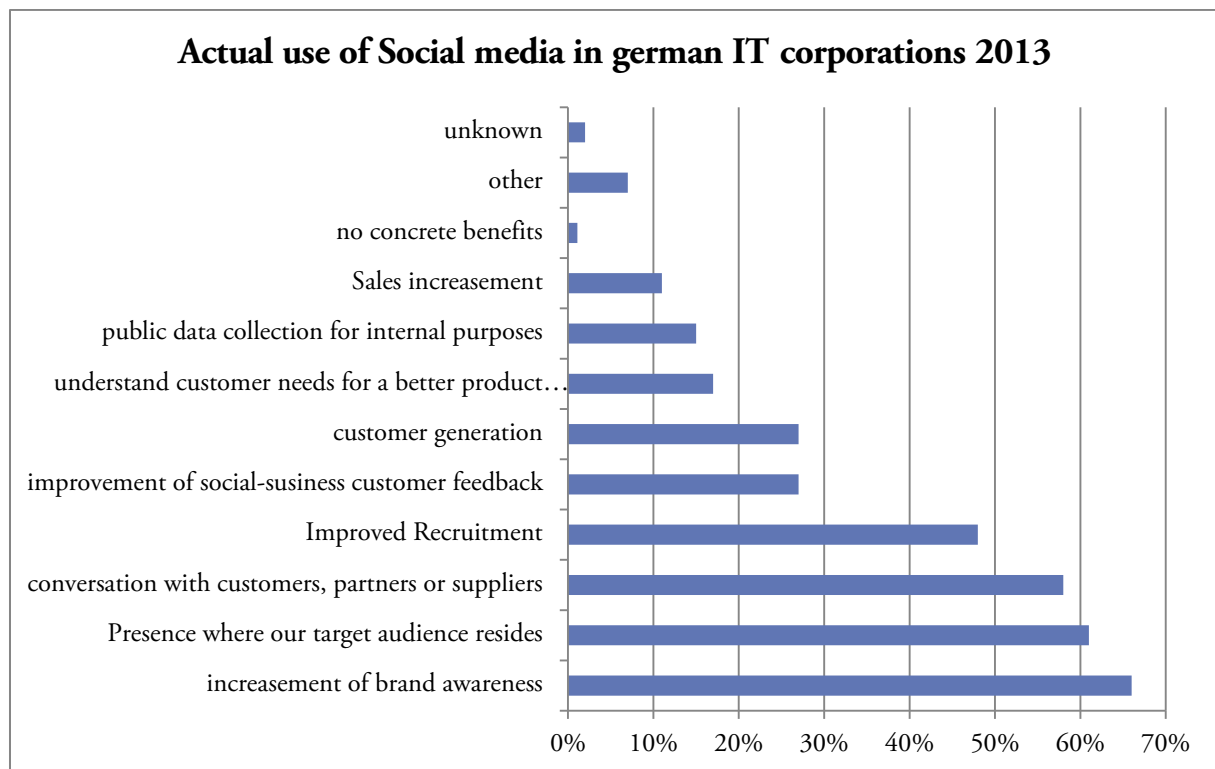
### **5.2.3. Current adoption and use of Social Media as a marketing tool in a B2B environment**

In the exploratory study as of 2012 titled “The use of social media in B2B marketing and branding” researchers had the goal to find out on which extent B2B companies have adopted and implemented social media as a marketing tool. This question surged upon the fact that experts frequently recommend social media usage for enterprise marketing by mostly using examples of use consumer brands instead of relatable B2B social media marketing success stories. The research method consisted of content analysis and text-mining applied to current B2B marketing practitioner literature on the subject. The main findings suggested that ten large B2B companies commonly use mainstream social media channels extensively, however strong regional differences were found: north American firms are far more innovative and active on implementing social media B2B marketing and therefore they are positioning themselves as ‘thought leaders’ and pioneers. In fact, the five most successful companies in terms of social media were all American, while the remaining five were European or Asian. Another important finding is that there appeared to be a direct correlation between engagement in social media and company size: the three firms

most conversational firms (Cisco, Intel and Oracle) are the three largest as well (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 10).

Further important findings of Brennan and Crofts study suggested that LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and blogging are considered to be the key social media platforms for B2B marketing. Businesses use these platforms predominantly for 'content marketing', market research, prospecting and networking. By 'content marketing' is meant the goal to deliver interesting business-related content to customers (and to potential stakeholders) by using social media in order to become an influencer. Additional to this a remarkable trend of small audiences in business-to-business sectors in social media conversations was observed, partly because many of the users involved belong to niche communities where users know each other personally. This is evidenced by the fact that unlike consumer brands most discussions on Facebook, comments on Twitter and answers on LinkedIn do not come from random strangers: most of these interactions are virtual endorsements from trusted sources. Companies adopting a vertical market strategy should consider that social media conversations can invite to strengthen business relationships because by communicating perceived risks between buyers and sellers are reduced, this is crucial at an early stage of a business relationship (Brennan and Croft, 2012, pp. 6 –11).

As a conclusion Brennan and Croft came to the view that the use of social media would inevitably become an important component of B2B branding strategies in the future, particularly in high-technology industries (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 4).



*Table 9 Question: which benefits are your external social media activities currently bringing you? n=124  
Source: Bitkom 2013*

A similar exploratory study to as the one of Brennan and Croft focused on the German market could not be found; nevertheless the closest available information on the subject is depicted on table 9 above which

shows the perceived benefits of the use of social media in German IT corporations according to marketing managers. Over 50% of the interviewees agree on the fact that social media is mainly useful for following purposes: increasing brand awareness, having a presence in online communities where customers communicate, building a conversation with customers and to improving recruitment. Aspects such as lead generation (27%) or sales increase (11%) are present but perceived by far more less managers as a direct benefit brought by social media marketing. A surprisingly small percentage sees no use at all in investing time in social media, which means that social media is currently perceived as an useful media to achieve certain marketing goals.

A further interesting study titled “a marketing communications approach for the digital era: Managerial guidelines for social media integration” gives insights on how social media is situated within a firm’s existing marketing communications strategy. For this particular study seven interviews were conducted with senior digital strategy managers and agency managers responsible for the strategy of at least one of the fortune 1000 firms. The interviews lasted 1-2 hours and revolved around the social media usage and its integration into the current communication plan from the interviewer's perspective. The intention behind the study was to deliver a pragmatic explanation of the challenges, approaches and solutions of the day to day social media management in agencies and bigger enterprises (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 2).

The main findings of the interviews suggest that managers categorize social platforms by following purposes: news gathering, creativity and entertainment. Participants recognized that it is crucial to know the benefits and disadvantages of each platform in order to communicate with full potential. In social media platforms relevance of content is determined by what the majority of users find interesting, in other what most people find themselves identified or connected with. Therefore content strategies should be developed revolving around interests of the target user audience by following the four consumer driven purposes: relationship management, news gathering, creativity and entertainment. Regardless to the fact that purposes across platforms differ, all managers agreed on the fact that brand cohesion and personality should be maintained across platforms by applying the principle of the four C's of in the communication strategy as well: consistency, customization, commitment, and caution (Killian and McManus, 2015, pp. 1–3).

When it comes to the aim of the posts, social media managers recommend that no more than 20% of posted content should contain a call to action for users. The remaining 80% of content should be informative, entertaining or encourage user interaction. Additional to a controlled content flow it is important to bear in mind that popularity of social media sites shifts fast: back in 2008 Myspace used to represent 78% of social networking traffic whereas Facebook had only 15% of the market share. One year later Facebook doubled Myspace visits, indicating that fast growth of a platform is no guarantee for constant success and that good managers have to be prepared to adapt the communication strategy to the constant changing platforms (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 7).

Another recent research regarding the determinants of social media adoption and implementation in B2B organizations delivered similar findings to the study of Killian and McManus is the one of (Siamagka et al., 2015): the data of this survey was collected from a sample of 5000 organizations in the UK derived from a permission-based mailing list. 145 senior marketing executives were contacted via email to

participate; resulting in a total of 105 valid surveys representing B2B organizations in following industries: aerospace, manufacturing and healthcare.

It is worth mentioning that most of the interviewees have already gathered experience in social media marketing: almost 71% of the companies in the sample are social media users.

The age group of the marketing executives was also found to be a significant factor that determines adoption of social media marketing in the workflow: contrary to the popular belief older executives seem to embrace the adoption of social media more frequently than younger ones (Siamagka et al., 2015, p. 5).

The B2B social media survey delivered two interesting main findings: most users do not evaluate the effectiveness of their social media marketing activities (57%) nevertheless marketing executives seem to simultaneously appreciate the importance of social media marketing by indicating their intention to increase the usage of such channels (44% of the users). These findings evidence the fact that there is a rather contradictory and aimless approach to the social media implementation as there is a growing interest in investing workforce into it without having a strategy. Regardless the aimless approach that most managers have, the growing trend in continuing to use social media is rising: almost 42% of the managers have indicated that their companies plan to use social media in the coming year. The preferred social media platform amongst B2B corporations is LinkedIn (67% of the social media users), while blogs and additional social media platforms, such as Pinterest are just starting to get the attention of B2B marketing executives (Siamagka et al., 2015, pp. 5 – 7).

A further reliable survey that complements well the past mentioned findings is the CMO survey 2014. For this survey 351 top U.S. marketers at Fortune 1000, Forbes top and alumni of Duke University were surveyed online in order to collect their professional opinions on future social media marketing trends and current marketing techniques. The main findings of this survey indicated that firms are tending to outsource the social media management due to the unexpected workload that the social media management brings with itself. When related to the main findings of the Siamagka B2B social media survey this might represent a future reaction to the aimless approach towards the social media implementation in European firms. The interviewees of the CMO Survey agreed as well on the fact that when outsourcing it is crucial to ensure that the outside firm that possesses specialized knowledge of the local marketplace and well developed escalation protocols to deal with customer issues. Another important related finding across surveys is that 45% of participants weren't able to demonstrate an impact of their social media strategies in the CMO Survey while as 57% of the managers in the B2B survey do not even evaluate their performance at all. A possible explanation why managers are having a hard time to measure their social media success might be the fact that they are either setting themselves unrealistic goals or no goals at all (Moorman, 2014).

To conclude this chapter it can be affirmed that the main findings across surveys evidence that social media marketing and analytics are still at a very early development stage and that therefore most social media managers feel lost when improvising to advertise under time pressure on social media channels. As a result there is growing trend to outsource this matter (seen across US firms) while European firms are seemingly still on the experimentation phase that is likely to end up in outsourcing if the communication strategy remains unchanged.

#### 5.2.4. Bringing the right people to start a conversation publicly

How can businesses bring the audience to a meaningful conversation in social media?

This question is hard to answer, because when trying to answer it one should first determine what is meant by audience and by social media; in other words what kind of audience on what kind of medium should be brought to interact? Finding out what the target audience desires to talk about is the first step to address this question.

In social media the target audience is not usually looking to buy something, they are looking to experience connection: they want to participate, communicate, ask and be heard; otherwise they will look for feedback somewhere else. Audiences do not only communicate with words, they can like, share or pin posts they find interesting which represent new forms of social communication (Leinemann, 2013, p. 17).

Every customer is at first looking to experience positive feelings and therefore a well thought marketing strategy should revolve around topics that make potential customers and people of interest for the company feel good. This strategy can be applied to any transaction: from buying butter to buying a car or even to making a donation in which the customer has less money in their purses but a good feeling because of it in exchange. All marketing activities should therefore be constantly evaluated up to which extent they are contributing to make customers and people interested in the brand to feel good (Kreutzer, 2012, p. 52).

A good way to develop a strategy to communicate over social media with potential customers (other firms) in a B2B environment is by using existing business interaction models. The Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) business interaction model surged on 1982 upon a research project of the University of Uppsala. This communication model can be well implemented to justify the importance of a social exchange via social media in order to maintain business relationships. The IMP interaction model was developed by analyzing the interaction process behind the marketing and purchasing of industrial goods of various B2B companies. The interaction model consists of five episodes: product or service exchange, information exchange, financial exchange and social exchange. The social exchange episode represents the conversational interaction processes and social exchange episodes that come after a transaction has taken place. Social media can be well implemented to amplify the social exchange in a B2B environment: positive interactions between customers can have a positive impact on the audience. Additionally an implementation of the IMP model can as well help social media managers to identify in which interaction episode the company is at the moment with customers. When understanding the current state of B2B interactions, managers are more likely to create a managerial action plan for optimal use of social media to support and grow the B2B relationship. Reducing uncertainties between the two parties is crucial for a successful business exchange. This is particularly important when the two parties have a spatial or cultural distance. Social exchange episodes, nowadays facilitated by social media, may be important because they avoid short term difficulties between the two parties while as maintaining a relationship in periods between transactions (Håkansson et al., 1982, p. 25).

The pervasiveness of social media technologies and applications allow B2B collaboration activities and communication to be publicly visible while as giving the audience the opportunity to participate. This new

kind of interactions offer a great advantage to businesses looking to maximize their good reputation or looking to strengthen existing business relationships (Sood and Pattinson, 2012, p. 1).

### **5.2.5. Brand equity**

Brand equity or brand reputation is what distinguishes a brand from its competitors that offer similar services. Equity can be defined as the total sum of consumers' perceptions and feelings about products or services: performance, brand attributes, brand name and what it stands for. These perceptions and feelings are often not directed to the physical attributes of the product or service but to the feelings that consumers relate to them. These feelings are determined by what the brand stands for combined with the consumers' objective perceptions about what is right and what is wrong (McGriff, 2012, p. 3).

Maintaining a good brand reputation is key for a successful social media presence for companies, many factors such as type of business model and brand dominance influence up to which point a solid reputation can be maintained, for example: having and maintaining a good reputation is easier for B2B companies than companies that sell massive produced goods such as washing machines. Sellers of massive produced goods are way more vulnerable to user critiques than sellers of non-massive produced business services because of the higher amount of customers automatically comes along with a higher probability of bad user feedback on social media pages. Nevertheless dominant brands are likely to retain a strong brand presence in social media, regardless of which business models they have, brands that have established themselves across generations such as Lufthansa for flying or Knorr for cooking have an advantage over newcomers because the public has already been familiarized with their services and good reputation (Fiege, 2012, p. 6).

According to (Brennan and Croft, 2012) when using social media, the hard-sell approach that is usually used on classical advertisement should be avoided. Instead the communication goal should be to develop trust in the brand with a view to generating a medium- or long-term business pay-off within users. Unlike classical advertising, published content in social media can only reach more people if users are genuinely interested in the topic.

Another important aspect for maintaining a good brand reputation is the consistency of messages across platforms: a consistent communication plan is important because mismatching information may lead to a confused audience that doesn't feel identified with the brand.

For this to be achieved it is recommended to measure and control message content, timing and tone across all social media profiles (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 6).

Almost every brand nowadays is striving to build a strong brand reputation in social media channels, which means that there is a relatively large competition regarding who gets the audience's attention. Therefore getting positive user feedback is a challenging task: first a brand has to get noticed and immediately differentiate itself from similar brands. Secondly, the brand has to prove it delivers what it promises, and how far the users' needs are addressed. Once a brand addresses the users' needs, consumers are prone to develop a preference for it and patronize it based on following reasons: desire to stay with the brand, trust in brand and expression of self and aspirations. Only when a consumer has decided to

patronize a brand it will avoid to try new brands and in the best case tend to recommend the known brand to trusted peers because they genuinely feel identified and/or satisfied with it (Fiege, 2012, p. 3).

### **5.2.6. The arising Social advertisement model: location based marketing**

A study named “The end of advertising as we know it” was published by the IBM Institute of Business Value has interesting insights about the current structural change that advertisement models are going through.

Social media has given advertisers the option to involve the brand in conversations and to achieve recommendations, without needing journalistic services (Siegert, 2013, p. 13). Social media has as well brought new communication functionalities and customization possibilities to communicate such as location based communication. Location based news is when the information is filtered based on how close an user is to an event, a place or a product. This feature is likely to bring advertisers much more effective results because it relates to the target audience’s day to day life and their everyday problems. On the other hand this kind of content overpowers classical public relational journalism and will therefore continue to replace it (Siegert, 2013, p. 7). Advertising has become interactive and is no longer used only “to sell,” but also “to talk about”: the advertising industry prefers to use new technologies and platforms to advertise because that’s where people’s attention is turning to (Siegert, 2013, p. 12).

If journalists continue not being paid anymore to write, following question arises: will the missing advertisement money lead the type of journalistic media that informs, disrupts and acts as a forum for political debates not to be economically sustainable anymore?

The answer to this question is: most probably yes, because “the end of advertising as we know it,” actually means “the end of the revenue model of journalistic media as we know it” (Siegert, 2013, p. 10).

### **5.2.7. Blogs in the B2B communication environment**

Blogs are websites that represent the earliest form of social Media because they rely on user generated content and consist of date-stamped entries in reverse chronological order. Blogs are the Social Media equivalent of personal web pages and reflect various interests and topics: personal diaries, recipes, psychology, or any relevant information in one specific content area. Blogs are usually managed by one person only, but a possible interaction with others through the addition of comments is enabled (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 5).

According to the study of social media in B2B marketing of the journal of customer behavior technology blogs were predominantly hosted on corporate servers rather than by using an external provider such as Google's Blogger or WordPress. Similarly 'white papers' where experts comment on aspects of technology or business solutions are uploaded on corporate servers as well. Most firms made white papers only available to people willing to register; moreover similar content-rich offerings such as slideshows were being linked to discussion groups on LinkedIn and Facebook together with whitepapers. The goal of having such scholar content on discussion groups was to encourage niche users and experts to talk about

scientific topics while multiplying the impact through search engine optimization (SEO) (Brennan and Croft, 2012, pp. 9 – 10).

A good example for a successful enterprise blog represented by an influencer is the blog of Jonathan Schwartz, CEO of Sun Micro- systems. Jonathan maintains a personal blog to improve the transparency of his company; similar to the automotive giant General Motors. Nevertheless as already noted on chapter 5.2.2 blogs do not come without risks. When taking a closer look to successful corporate blogs such as Schwartz' blog, one remarkable aspect is that overly-professional content offerings are avoided. This means that there is no need to spend a lot of money design the perfect blog template, or to hire a professional writer to manage the corporate blog. Instead, trying to blend in with other users and sometimes making mistakes can have a positive effect. This is as well evidenced by the blog of Bill Marriott, Chairman and CEO of the Marriott International Hotel chain. Bill uses his blog to post regular updates and stories from his personal travels to Marriott properties around the world, written in an informal way just as if a work colleague would describe his last vacation (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, pp. 5 – 9).

Last but not least, when blogging it is very important to use the blog as a maximizer of communication by enabling bookmarking tools as well as by including visible links to associated social media profiles. According to the study of social media usage in the B2B environment written by Brennan and Croft, technology companies actively encouraged readers to bookmark their blogs. The most used bookmark tools were delicious, digit, stumbledupon and buzz (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 10).

### **5.3. Target audience, goal setting and relevant content gathering**

#### **5.3.1. Defining goals, identifying the audience and possibilities**

Strategically seen, social media is at an early development stage as new sites develop each year, niche platforms multiply and disappear fast which evidences that audience attention can shift rapidly. A good marketing manager should be a great trend observer able to recognize the strengths of different platforms in order to implement a better communication strategy (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 10). What may be trending today could disappear from the virtual landscape tomorrow. It is therefore crucial for businesses to have a flexible set of communication guidelines to apply to any form of social media, whether they are part or not of the current most used platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 7).

A well thought communication strategy is ideally developed depending on of how much time the team has to commit to the different communication channels. Being present in every new platform can be contra productive if team members do not have the time to commit to it. Time and resource management are highly important because poor presence in social media has shown worse results than having no presence at all. Social media is all about maintaining relationships and the conversation alive, a task that requires constant commitment (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 7).

After identifying how much time employees are willing to commit to the social media presence of a business, the next step is to identify a target audience. As discussed on chapter 5.2.1, identifying a target audience in relation to the enterprises communication goals is crucial in order to develop a successful



communication strategy. The author identified 3 possible communication goals and respective audiences for a B2B environment that will be discussed on the upcoming three chapters.

### **5.3.2. Goal 1: Recruitment and Employee marketing**

Can social media be useful to recruit new employees? Can social media bring employees to positive conversations and strengthen their personal relationships by doing so?

The answer to these questions is yes, which leads to the next question: how would it be possible to achieve this? There is no specific answer to this question as some recruitment goals are more easily achieved than others: the how to or method depends heavily on the goal setting and individual needs of the company at the moment (Leinemann, 2013, p. 176). Academic literature revolving around the social media recruitment and employee marketing has delivered a few facts and recommendations based on user behavior, nevertheless a study specifically focused on measuring recruitment or employee branding performance could not be found. Some of the most significant findings about user behavior and learnings will be discussed below.

Social media opened new communication possibilities for anybody wishing to communicate; this represents an advantage as well as a disadvantage for marketers at the same time: the more information sources, the harder it gets to attract the attention of the crowd. The crowd, especially the younger generation, has its attention scattered because of the high amount of information sources and communication platforms they can potentially make use of. Classical information sources such as printed newspapers play no longer a central role as people looking for information are turning to much fresher online versions of newspapers and search engines to stay up to date and answer their doubts. This leads to the conclusion that using business networks such as LinkedIn or Xing to find younger candidates can be more effective than publishing job ads on printed materials (Leinemann, 2013, p. 52).

On the other hand, if the social media communication goal setting revolves around employee marketing and networking, informal platforms such as Facebook might deliver better results than professional networks such as LinkedIn or Xing. A few important points to consider before starting to encourage employees to engage with the firm on social media channels is to ensure checking that all employees may actually access (from the firm) and use social media. It is common for firms to block Facebook, YouTube, and Second Life on corporate PCs because they fear that employees might spend too much time networking instead of working. Additionally when implementing the employee communication strategy it is important to set limits clear and have moderators that steer conversations between employees: the possibility of the entire organization spending all its time producing funny videos and uploading them to YouTube is not that unlikely to happen if people are encouraged to communicate aimlessly. One possible approach to avoid aimless communication involves selecting groups of employees whose primary objective is the management of corporate social media channels (the moderators) while other staff members are treated as occasional participants (crowd). The moderators are given administrator rights; and have the task to encourage the crowd to start meaningful discussion threads while controlling the deletion of inappropriate posts (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 8).

The final but not least important aspect to be considered when building an employee marketing campaign is to find out which topics interest employees genuinely. This is critical because every employee needs to identify him or herself as such when posting a comment on the corporate blog or Facebook page. Otherwise, external audience members could get the impression that anonymous accounts are used to enable employees to post fake messages and overly positive feedback, which could result in a severe damage of the credibility of the whole social media campaign (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 9).

### **5.3.3. Goal 2: Brand Awareness**

How likely is a social media marketing strategy to increase brand awareness? The answer to this question is highly likely, with a well thought communication strategy of course. As discussed on chapter 5.2.3 the majority of interviewed marketing managers at the Bitkom 2013 (table 9) agreed on the fact that brand awareness increasement was best achieved by implementing social media. It appears that the more innovative users of B2B social media are striving to position themselves as experts and seeking to influence the direction in which markets evolve by providing content-rich social media material (white papers, blog posts, and so on). Social media are emerging as a component of a market driving strategy (Brennan and Croft, 2012, p. 11).

Entertainment is perhaps the most critical of all platform purposes. Contests, games, and other entertainment forms are likely to heighten users' interest and engagement with a brand in social media channels (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In order to entertain the audience, social media managers must know their preferences this is why first listening and observing the audience before drawing communication strategies is critical. A good conversation usually starts with listening, particularly when there is nothing as unstable as audience preferences. Therefore listening and observing the audience should become a habit for page administrators, a habit that will allow them to know which kind of content will lead to more positive reactions (Kreutzer, 2012, pp. 56 –57).

In order to find entertaining content it is recommended to observe users' creativity on social media platforms and by doing so identifying brand relatable trending topics. Ideal websites for creative inspiration and trend hunting are image based platforms such as Flickr or Instagram or Pinterest. Pinterest is a relatively new website where users can "pin" and classify images in pin boards related to topics they find interesting: the result looks like personalized look books that reveal a lot about user preferences and interests (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 5).

Another smart and innovative way to generate brand awareness is by launching collaborative campaigns. Collaborative campaigns are usually carried out as contests where users are encouraged to participate in creating or being part of advertisement material. A good example of a collaborative advertisement project was whooper king's whooper freak website: back in 2008 whooper encouraged customers to film their reactions when being told that a famous whooper sandwich was discontinued. The video material of funny reactions was later uploaded to the website whopperfreakout.com which later became a TV ad as well. The campaign was a total success because people featured in the videos worked as 'maximizers' of the campaign

by encouraging friends to take a look or even join the campaign, which soon resulted in a lot of people talking positively about the brand (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Brand awareness can additionally be supported by uploading know-how content to content communities. Content communities are websites where the main objective is the sharing of media content between users. There is a wide range of content communities focused on different kinds of media content, for example: text only (BookCrossing), photos (Flickr), videos (YouTube), and Slideshare for PowerPoint presentations. It should be noted that from a corporate viewpoint, content communities can be misused when as sharing of copyright-protected materials via these platforms is facilitated (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 5).

To conclude is important to highlight that regardless of which kind of marketing campaign is implemented the main driver to user reactions remains to be content. Irresistible ideas and content are main drivers for any kind of conversation. Investing effort in producing content, editorial thinking and storytelling is crucial for both journalistic and entertainment media (Siegert, 2013, p. 5).

#### **5.3.4. Goal 3: lead generation**

Does the social media audience represent a potential customer for LHIND? If yes, it is important to understand where the customers inform themselves, who they trust and where do they communicate online as well as offline.

Who are the decision takers and influencers in the IT industry? The answer to this question is rather variable. There is in fact a wide range of people that have a saying on the IT consulting industry; unfortunately some effort is needed to find them as none of them has the function 'influencer' written on their business cards. Nevertheless the group of 'influencers' in the IT consulting environment can be clustered in following categories: Analysts/Consultants, Bloggers, lobby groups, journalists and academic institutions (Leinemann, 2013, p. 25). In order to understand how influencers and decision takers in the IT consulting environment think it is important to know their priorities, habits and the current landscape of the German market.

Nowadays when deciding whether or not to invest in a new IT solution the business economical approach prevails unlike in the past when advices from technicians and traders had a higher importance than economical sustainability. One of users' main priorities is to save money; nevertheless money isn't the only decisive factor influencing the final decision. Innovation and transformation to survive on a globalized economy is becoming an increasingly important aspect that decision takers must consider before investing considerable amounts of money in software solutions, or any other product. The biggest influencer in decision taking processes is not really money but the market itself: globalization and technology have disrupted markets across almost every industry by heightening competition and accelerating change. This leads to the conclusion that a good consultant must be aware of where trends are heading to in order to drive the market instead of being driven by it. IT is becoming increasingly relevant because technology plays a central role when it comes to analyzing and understanding market trends (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 18 – 19).

The DSAG (German SAP User Group) released in 2010 a survey addressing the question „how do IT customers make retail decisions?“ For this survey 365 IT decision takers of various industries were surveyed on following three topics:

How do CIOs inform themselves to get an overview of SAP solutions?

How do CIOs and decision takers inform themselves about product details and customized functions?

According to CIOs how high is the influence that information sources have on them when being confronted to make a purchase?

The results of the survey showed that CIOs inform themselves to get an overview predominantly by communicating directly with hosts such as SAP key account managers. When addressing the first question following information sources were seen as very relevant according to CIOs: External consultants, other personal contacts and SAP key account managers. CIOs as well revealed that the preferred mediums to reach the information sources were personal contacts followed by DSAG events while social media channels and blogs were seen as least relevant medium of all. This leads to the conclusion that IT decision takers predominantly inform themselves to get an overview through personal contacts which means that the opinion of same sector colleagues represents the most important influence factor (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 29 – 30).

The landscape differs slightly when the second question is addressed: CIOs wanting to inform themselves about product details and customized function rely predominantly on knowledge of external consultants followed by personal contacts and SAP-key-account managers. Face-to-face interaction is preferred amongst CIOs for this manner, therefore the most favorable medium to communicate are the DSAG official events. Social media and Blogs were once again classified as rather not a relevant information source when CIOs are looking for specific information about SAP product details. The third and final question delivered the same results as the second one (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 33 –35).

This leads to the conclusion that the DSAG plays a central role as an information channel in the decision making process of CIOs (target audience for lead generation). Social media is seen as a non-reliable source by the target audience when deciding whether to buy a product or not. This leads to the conclusion that having the goal of lead generation when implementing a social communication strategy is not recommended.

### **5.3.5. Analyst and Consultant Relations**

Instead of having a lead generation goal, a much more realistic communication strategy would be to position the company as an IT expert on social media channels. This strategy can be reached by sharing bits of quality business related content that IT analysts and consultants agree to share therefore. Positioning oneself as expert online might leave a good impression amongst current and potential customers as well as with audience members interested in IT market trends visiting the social media profiles.

IT consultants and analysts have various identities: market researcher, technology and strategy consultant, a marketing consultant and a kind of like an IT journalist. Unlike traditional market researchers, IT

analysts deliver verdicts not only based on numbers but as well based on many qualitative interviews with market participants. Together with the growing importance of IT in all industries, analysts are increasingly becoming important as well. Technology by itself without right implementation is useless; therefore the people that implement technology to analyze the market (analysts) are influencers. On the other hand consultants, similar to analysts, can be seen as influencers because they have an influence on customers' decisions when participating in important projects.

When looking to meet analysts as noted on chapter 5.3.4 communication managers should probably start by visiting the DSAG events to engage and get to know influencers personally in order to ensure a better collaboration. Nevertheless marketers should be aware that when starting a collaborative social media communication strategy with analysts that it is rather likely for the featured analyst to become famous as an individual instead of together with the brand. This is likely to happen due to the simple fact that analysts present themselves as a person and not as an institution on social media networks. This phenomenon is called the star-analyst effect and it has happened already to various famous analysts such as Jeremiah Owyang, Charlene Li and Michael Gartenberg amongst others. The risk for the company when an analyst grows as an individual brand on social media comes when the analyst quits his/her job by resulting in a significant loss of reputation for the firm. This is a risk that cannot be avoided when implementing communication strategies featuring analyst content online (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 158 – 159).

However deciding not to build analyst relations to avoid the risk of the star analyst effect is a rather bad idea. Collaborative content generated with help of experts on the business can have a very positive impact for the social media presence in general as it not only relevant for potential customers but might as well attract engaged audience members that are interested in the IT consulting business. Collective interactions drive innovative conversations generating new ideas, information content and services that are likely to bring the audience to meaningful conversations. Formats such as wikis enable collective knowledge gathering, production of conversations and ideas pointing towards a collaborative B2B open-source marketing concept (Sood and Pattinson, 2012, p. 6).

Therefore in order to attract potential customers' attention it is important to build relationships with the right industry analysts. Before implementing a relationship program following questions must be addressed:

- Who is my customer?
- Which vertical market addresses my company?
- Who are the decision takers?
- Is there a direct sale or through a business partner?

Particularly for LHIND, as their target audience are German medium sized companies, the influencer relationship program should focus on small and local analyst groups instead of big international analyst groups because German middle class firms have a preference for German based smaller advisory firms. Once having the right analysts identified, it is recommended to check the availability of resources that the company has at the moment in order to determine how many relationship programs would be possible to

start with. Relationship programs require constant work, because analysts and consultants must be constantly informed about what is going on in the business (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 112 – 113).

### **5.3.6. Blogger relations**

Additional to analyst/consultants another kind of less ‘professional’ but as well effective relationship program can be done with blogger influencers. As discussed on chapter 5.1 companies nowadays are facing major challenges: the impact of globalization and internet based businesses are leading to fast growth and disruption across industries. Products are increasingly becoming comparable in increasingly saturated markets. The ability to develop and establish market-driven products and services, therefore, is increasingly becoming a critical success factor for companies. Information consumers are developing into information producers because of the use of social media. Customers and prospects are increasingly expressing themselves publicly about existing products and services, call suggestions and improvement suggestions. User generated content is therefore developing into an interesting advertisement format for businesses (Keller et al., 2015, pp. 130 – 131).

Nevertheless when working together with bloggers, it is critical to search for bloggers focusing on the topic rather than on the notoriety of the blogger. This means that building blogger relation might be possible or not depending on which topics are market driving for the business at the moment. Finding a blogger already familiarized with the topic means as well finding an audience that is engaged and willing to react to the topic. Furthermore, if bloggers do not have a genuine interest and knowledge about the selected topic, they will likely not be willing to participate in a relationship program (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 93 – 95).

A relatable example blogger for LHIND for a potential blogger relationship program is Carsten Knobloch (aka Caschy) who since 2005 writes about technology on ‘Caschys Blog’ which can be found on the URL [www.stadt-bremerhaven.de](http://www.stadt-bremerhaven.de). It should be noted that Caschy has intentionally selected a confusing name for his blog’s URL as a joke. Caschy is a well-known technology blogger in Germany, and was therefore interviewed in order to find out the main dos and don’ts when working together with bloggers in a corporate relationship program. Following main findings were drawn from Caschy’s interview: Firstly, personal contact between marketers and bloggers is very important, personally written requests are prioritized. Secondly a blogger will most likely not write about a topic that is not relevant for his/her blog at the moment because he might lose audience members by doing so. Thirdly, and most important, bloggers will not sell out for a corporate PR campaign and will therefore not change their writing style which is often critical, honest, informal and funny (Leinemann, 2011, pp. 100 – 102).

## **5.4. Dealing with user feedback**

It is important to consider the risks that arise when people can start a conversation with brands. Dealing with negative user feedback can become a time consuming task, because feedback is not foreseeable: social media brought a communication channel where a constant changing audience has the power to interact limitlessly. To reduce the risk of negative user feedback brands should invest time in connecting to an

emotional level with consumers. In order to connect to an emotional level with users, social media managers need to know their audience members in order to know how to capture the aspirations and reflect the identity of their target audience in the brand communication (Fiege, 2012, p. 4).

There is little research revolving around how social media audiences respond to negative brand information, this represents a contributing reason to the fact that managing brand boycotts is no priority for marketing managers (McGriff, 2012, p. 4). Nevertheless, many companies expect that when implementing social media for advertising more sales for less marketing efforts will come. While customers have exact opposite expectations from social media; customers want to be heard and have often to be almost pursued to make a purchase (Leinemann, 2013, p. 7).

Marketers often regard consumer boycotts as short lived; however, some boycotts have the potential to harm brand equity in a long term time period. The bad reputation that remains after a boycott may persist because boycotts are often based in deeply held beliefs of members driven by anger (McGriff, 2012, p. 1). Social media users who engage individually in online boycotts are particularly insistent because they feel passionate and sure about their personal engagement. This is evidenced by the fact that in most cases consumers who boycott companies for personal motives are far more powerful than boycotts that arise from social, environmental or political misdemeanors. Members of an online community that refuse to buy from companies because of social or political elapses are far more likely to letting go of the boycott because they relied on external information. While users that are personally affected are more insistent, because they rely on personal experiences that encourage them to revenge (McGriff, 2012, p. 3).

A good example of how a personal user boycott based on a single bad experience, affected a whole brands reputation is Dave Carroll's 'United Breaks Guitars' video (sonsofmaxwell, 2009). Dave, a customer driven by anger, decided to do a song about how united refused to pay the repair charges for a guitar they broke during a short flight and uploaded it to YouTube. The video went basically viral overnight as it received 3 million views within one week on and was later placed on the top charts in iTunes during the first release week. After this happened United apologized publicly to Dave and had to invest millions in a repositioning advertising campaign to regain good reputation. This leads to the conclusion that the idea of damaged brand equity because of a single poor experience is possible and therefore the potential of single angry users is not to be underestimated (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 2).

Boycotts can start offline as well as online, for example when content such as traditional sales pitch advertisements are published. This kind of content is unwanted amongst social media users and therefore prone to boycotts. Social media managers must be careful and bear in mind that these channels opened up an opportunity to connect, paradoxically, in a "private" way with single users as well as publicly with audiences. This communication dynamic, depending on how user feedback is managed, has either great potential to engage people with a brand or to damage a brands image (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 8).

To conclude this chapter it is important to bear in mind that regardless to the fact that visible user feedback in social media does not reflect the mainstream opinion but particular extreme cases of approval or disapproval of communicated content. Nevertheless this is usually not understood by audience members visiting profiles; resulting in people relating a brand to a single negative event or comment. Some social media users see this medium as a way to publicly share their personal frustrations, which sometimes

might lead to big public fights that shift the crowd's attention to negative brand aspects. A single negative event related to a brand, thus not being representative, can quickly damage a brand's image when remaining ignored (Killian and McManus, 2015, p. 8).

## 6. Data collection and Interpretation

### 6.1. Time frameworks, selected platforms and limitations

The selected social media platforms to be compared where the competitors have a company page are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Xing. The time framework for the Facebook and twitter pages will be based on a 1-Year activity data in the time period between October 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. As for LinkedIn and Xing the time framework will be shortened to one month due to lacking available services for public data scraping. This means that the data from LinkedIn and Xing had to be extracted manually. Data extraction and stats interpretation in LinkedIn is only allowed for single page administrators while as legal data extraction tools for non-administrators for Xing could not be found.

The data interpretation focus will vary depending on the type of platforms and data availability: Facebook and Twitter are nonprofessional social sites and will therefore be evaluated focusing mainly on user interactions and correlation between user responses to content type. Whereas data extracted from business networks (Xing and LinkedIn) will be evaluated focusing on content and quantity of job ads and company page engagement in interest groups. The professional networks data evaluation will be less extensive than the nonprofessional network evaluation due to the data extraction limitations that data policies of LinkedIn and Xing have.

The Facebook and Twitter data was extracted by using a free trial of a public data scraping dashboard called Fanpage Karma. By using this dashboard the author was able to automatically generate excel spreadsheets with a benchmarking of the selected social networking pages within two days. This made a much more extensive research possible, as extensive data collection usually takes much more time. It should be noted that the automatically extracted activity data From the Facebook and Twitter pages is limited to the data accessible by the public. This data consists of information visible to any external visitor of the respective page. For example, visible data includes amounts of shares, followers, likes and media content; while private data includes website bounce rates, time spent on pages per user and mouse movement heat maps. As it is not possible, and legal, to have access to private data from competitors only visible data was interpreted. This doesn't represent a major drawback on the research when considering the main question of this paper: how can LHIND improve it Social Media Presence? The available activity data can be used to focus on measuring the public presence and audience reactions of competition in the selected social media networks. Considering the before listed data limitations the selected pages will be evaluated and compared based on following statistical criteria:

**Popularity:** total amount of interaction divided by number of fans at the time

**Growth:** Amount of fans/followers over time

**Engagement:** daily sum of interactions divided by the amount of fans at the time.



**Comment rate:** total number of comments divided by amount of posts

**Like rate:** total number of likes divided by amount of posts

**Reach:** total amount of shares divided by amount of fans at the time

After the statistical comparison, the top 5 posts of each platform will be interpreted on a topical content approach. Following criteria will be considered when evaluating the top posts to find out if there are any correlations:

**Media Content:** proportion of interactions and media content such as pictures, text or video

**Topic:** most mentioned topics

**Source:** sources of links on postings

**Feedback and feeling:** positive or negative user feedback

**Feedback to users:** replies from page administrators to users

## 6.2. The KPIs: numerical, strategically and emotional

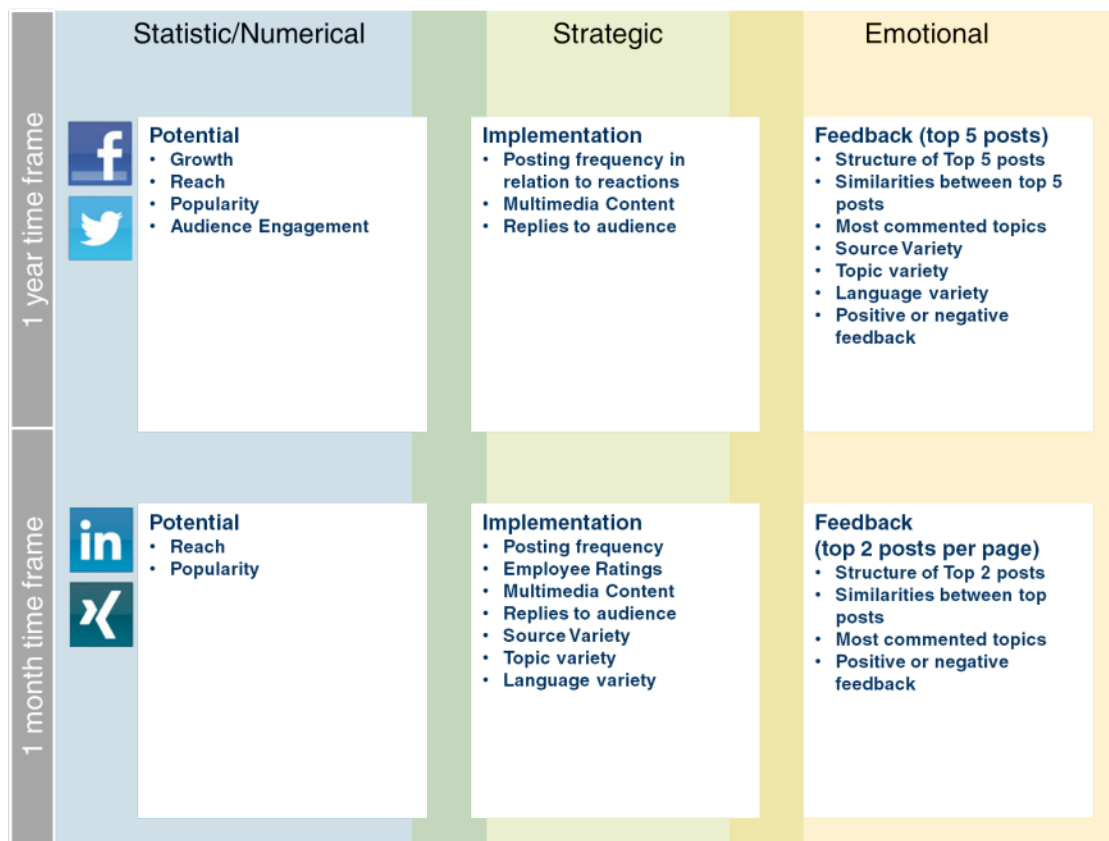
A KPI (key performance indicator) is a measurement reference point that is used to determine up to which point a certain goal is achieved. KPIs depend heavily on the particular goal setting(s) or specific desired result(s) which makes them highly variable. In order to implement any KPI it is first important to set reference points of what is desirable (goal) and what is not (failure). For example: when going to the grocery store if one desires to save money a valid KPI to measure ones success could be the proportion between amount of items bought and money spent on them. After identifying the KPI it is necessary to identify the reference points, which would be in this particular case the available resources (money) that one has over time to buy food. Only by doing so it is possible to measure up to which point the goal of buying as much items with the least amount money possible is achieved.

For this particular research the KPIs will be separated in three comparison levels: numeric/statistic, strategy and emotional. The intention behind separating the KPIs in these comparison levels is to give an insight into the quantity of content as well as its correlation to the user feedback and interactions. Parting from the fact that social media success is measured taking into account the quantity and quality (mood) of user interactions (feedback) following main questions are to be addressed across comparison levels:

**Numeric:** How often does the audience react to content? Is potential reach of each page high or low?

**Strategy:** What do page administrators talk about? How often do they post?

**Emotion:** Is the audience feedback positive or negative? What kind of content does the audience prefer?



*Image 13 Data interpretation levels*  
*Source: self-made*

As shown on Image 13 above the data will be firstly evaluated using the Statistical KPIs which represent all audience reaction related properties that page administrators have no or very little control of, such as: number of followers, shares/comments/likes average and follower engagement. Secondly, the data will be evaluated using the strategy KPIs which represent all properties that page administrators have control of, such as: post frequency, multimedia content and amount of replies to user feedback. Thirdly, the top 5 posts by reactions per fan/follower will be evaluated using following Emotional KPIs: topic variety, user feedback mood on page, showcasing and media content, for social networks. On the other hand business networks top 2 posts of each page will be evaluated on an emotional level respectively. The emotional KPIs will give an insight on what kind of content could most likely lead to an increasement of positive or negative reactions respectively; this last evaluation is necessary to avoid an “interaction bias” that the sheer numerical benchmarking delivers. The interaction bias happens when a pages’ success is evaluated based only by using KPIs such as amount of interactions and user activity in numbers. Activity amounts say very little about the users’ feedback mood on social media: a high amount of interactions could look promising on a statistical level, but devastating on an emotional level if most interactions are negative.

### 6.3. Company Benchmarking

The 3 competitors for the benchmarking study were selected according to the data of the Lünendonk German IT market study, as explained on chapter 2.2; the firms Capgemini, Accenture and T Systems are large sized IT consulting service providers which currently represent the 3 strongest competitors in the German market. It is worth mentioning before starting to analyze the data, that these three firms have a much larger income and size when compared to LHIND. Therefore, in order to avoid performance expectation biases, the introduction to this benchmarking will consist on a short comparison of the resources and income between enterprises, as shown on table 10 below.

Company	Accenture	Capgemini	T Systems	LHIND
<b>Number of Employees</b>	373.000	180.000	47.800	1.200
<b>Latest annual Revenue (in billions EUR)</b>	30	10,5	8,6	0,64 <sup>1</sup>
<b>international settlements</b>	55	40	40	3
<b>head office location</b>	USA	France	Germany	Germany
<b>establishment year</b>	1951	1967	2000	1995

*Table 10 Company Income, Size and establishment year comparison  
Source: (Accenture, 2016) (LHIND, 2016) (Capgemini, 2016) (TSystems, 2016)*

The resources and manpower of the competitors compared to the smallest company amongst the competitors (T Systems) is 39 times bigger than LHIND's. There is indeed a big difference in size of the companies. Nevertheless, the size of the team members responsible for the social media channels of competitors remains unknown, which is a relevant reference point to draw a realistic recommendation of implementation for the benchmarking. An estimation of the competitors' number of social media managers can be calculated by taking the marketing team size at LHIND as a reference point (10 full-time jobs out of approx. 1000 full-time jobs). The proportion of the marketing team size at LHIND represents 0,01% of the total number of full time jobs. Logically, when applying this proportion to the competitors' number of employees, the LHIND marketing team will be far outnumbered. Nevertheless when using such a proportion to determine the competitors team size, there is a high probability that results are far from reality and therefore it should be understood as a reference to underline the fact that other enterprises marketing teams are most likely bigger than LHIND's. Another important aspect to be considered, except for T- Systems, is that the competitors have a larger size than LHIND because they have been in the market much longer than LHIND: Accenture and Capgemini were founded 44 and 28 years earlier than LHIND respectively. As for T Systems, founded back in year 2000, demonstrates a particularly accelerated growth while its 16 years of existence in comparison to all other enterprises.

Due to the data collection limitations explained in chapter 6 the selected social media channels will be divided and analyzed in two groups: social platforms (Facebook and Twitter) and business platforms (LinkedIn and Xing).

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<sup>1</sup> latest annual revenue as of Lufthansa Systems because company name change to LHIND took place less than a year ago

## 6.4. Statistical/numerical comparison

### 6.4.1. Social Platforms

The data of the user activity on the social networking platforms Facebook and Twitter have a time framework of one year and will be benchmarked separately because different interaction functionalities across networks prevent a meaningful comparison. The respective social network and its corresponding KPIs will be first listed and then interpreted as shown below:

#### Facebook

Page	Number of Fans	Total Posts	Growth since start	Weekly growth
Accenture	72200	880	46,0%	0,7%
Capgemini	4331	188	14,4%	0,3%
T-Systems	2679	1134	0,9%	0,0%

*Table 11 Facebook statistical KPIs as of 12.10.2015*

**Growth:** development of page's number of followers over time (cumulated and non-cumulated)

**Popularity:** development of how fans engage with posts on pages over time. The showed amount represents the sum of all interactions (likes, shares, comments) per day.

**Engagement:** daily sum of interactions (likes, comments and shares) divided by the number of fans at the time.

#### Growth

The KPI to measure a pages growth is the development of the fan amount over time. This KPI is an indicator of the page's growth because the potential reach of a page depends on the increasement of audience: the more potential sharers (fans), the higher becomes the probability of a wider reach and audience growth. Furthermore it is a fact that pages with larger audiences are more likely to experience exponential growth rates because their probability of attracting fans is relatively higher than the one of pages with smaller audiences. This is evidenced on table 12 where Accenture, the page with the largest audience, is as well the page with the highest audience growth rate and upper trend overall. It should be considered that Accenture's audience is 16 times larger than Capgemini's and 26 times larger than T-Systems'. When compared to Accenture; Capgemini and T-Systems count with a much lower audience amount and have therefore a much slower audience growth and a rather constant fan number trend.

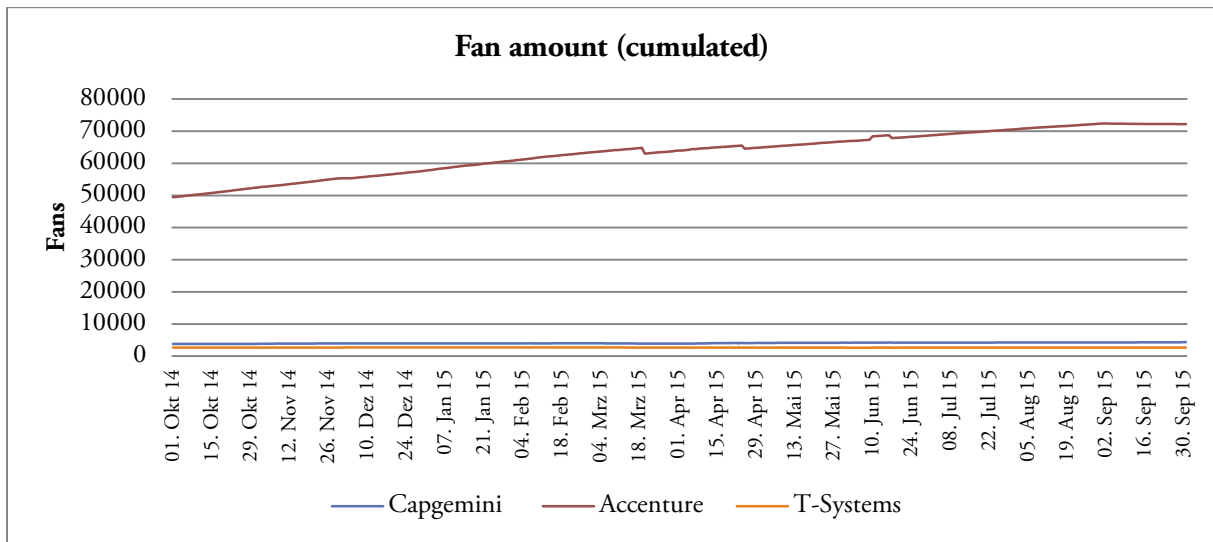


Table 12 Facebook cumulated Fan number as of 12.10.2015

The non-cumulated growth table below shows the daily gain or loss of fans. Accenture is showing the highest fan loss and gain peaks while the other two pages show an either monotonous variance. The seemingly higher and lower peaks of Accenture are partly explained firstly because of their relatively higher amount of fans when compared to the other two pages and secondly most likely due to intentional fan elimination initiatives done by page administrators. The last theory is reflected on the lower peaks (March, April and June) when most probably page administrators eliminated around 1000 fans over one or two day periods. These audience “cleanups” were probably made to eliminate users that were inactive or negative in order to replace them with bought audience members as the upper peak around July 10<sup>th</sup> evidences. Please note that these past theories might be wrong and that the real reasons behind the high variance might be another that only page administrators at Accenture know about.

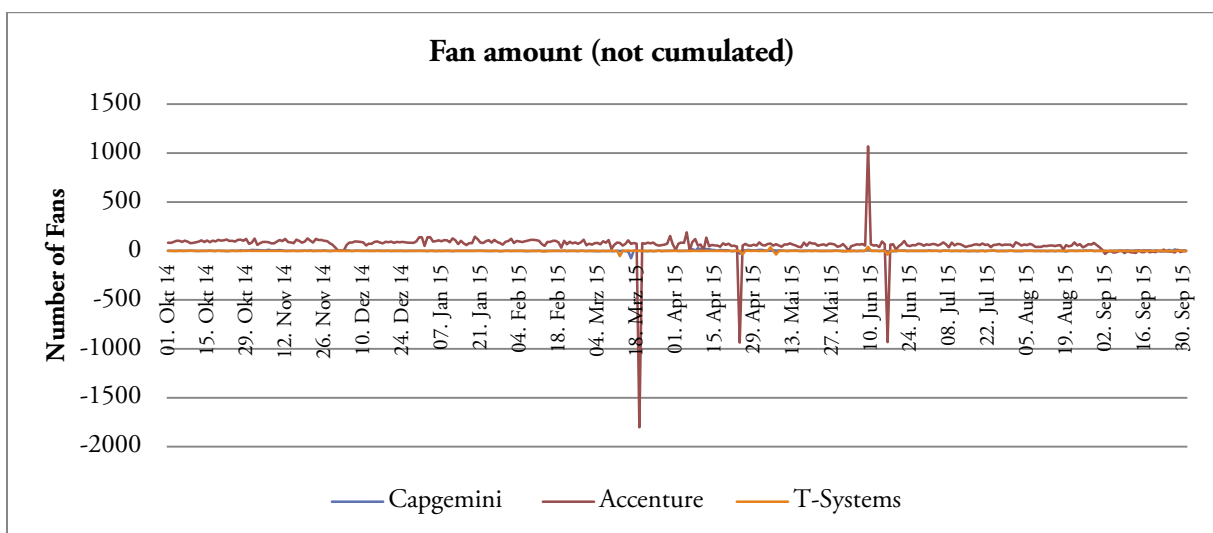


Table 13 Facebook fan amount not cumulated as of 12.10.2015

## Popularity

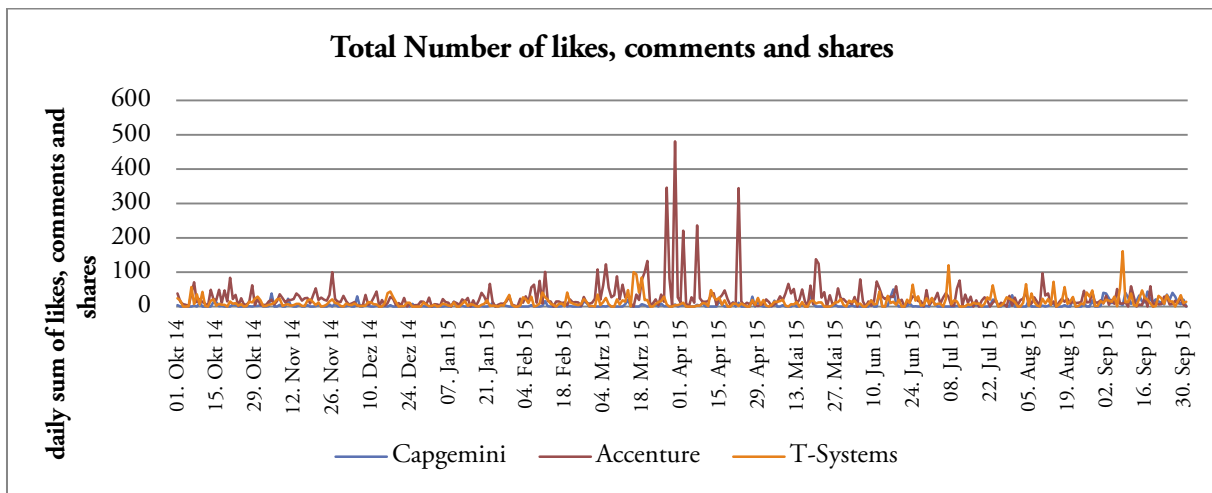


Table 14 Facebook likes, comments and shares as of 12.10.2015

The page with the highest variation and number of audience reactions is Accenture followed by T-Systems and Capgemini respectively. Audience reactions happen when any user likes, shares or comments any post coming from the respective pages: a single user can cause up to 3 reactions on each post; the most frequent user reaction is likes followed by comments and shares. It is worth mentioning that the user activity big gap between Accenture and the two other relative is not surprising given the fact that Accenture is the page with the highest audience of all and therefore it is the page with the highest user activity as well. Most of the reactions represented on the peaks of Accenture's line represent exceptionally liked posts that will be reviewed on the emotional evaluation chapter ahead. On the other hand, most of T-Systems peaks are user comments, a least common user reaction, while Capgemini has the lowest user activity of all pages with likes as the most frequent reaction. It should be noted that even though Capgemini's audience amount doubles the one of T-Systems; the average user activity of both pages oscillates between 20 and 70 total reactions per day which evidences that T-Systems audience is four times more active than Capgemini's.

## Engagement

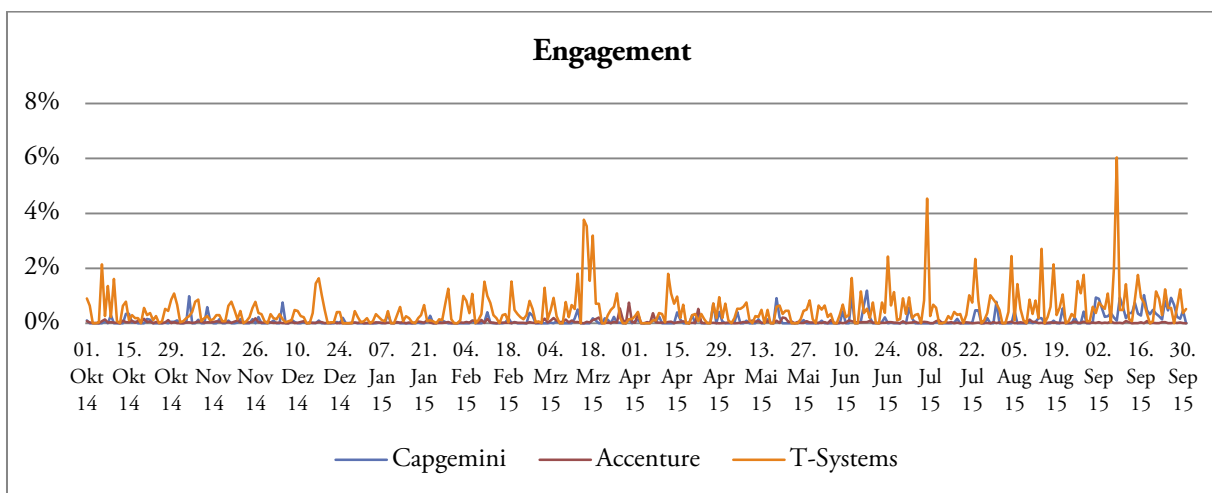


Table 15 Facebook engagement as of 12.10.2015

The engagement percentage depicts how often fans interact on the posts of a page. The engagement rate is calculated by dividing the daily amount of interactions (likes, comments and shares) by the number of fans at the time. For example if a page has 3600 fans and 10 interactions on Monday the corresponding engagement rate for that day is 0,5% ( $10/3600= 0,005$ ). Surprisingly the page with the lowest amount of audience members, T-Systems, is the one with the highest engagement of all; while the page with the largest audience is the one with the lowest engagement rate of all (Accenture). The data suggests that most of the audience members of Accenture and Capgemini are relatively inactive when compared to the audience of T-Systems.

To conclude the statistical benchmarking of Facebook following main findings can be highlighted:

- Accenture is the only page with irregular audience growth peaks. Most likely this is due intentional fan eliminations and targeted paid fans (non-organical growth).
- A large audience is no guarantee for a high user engagement, as evidenced by following facts:
  - The page with the smallest audience (T-Systems) has the highest engagement rate of all 3 pages
  - Capgemini has twice as much fans as T-Systems but half as many reactions and fan engagement rates.
  - The page with the largest user activity and highest fan amount overall is Accenture, nevertheless when compared relatively to the other two pages it shows the lowest engagement of all.

## Twitter

It should be noted that due to data policies restrictions the data of Capgemini and Accenture was only available starting from mid-November (one month less than T-Systems). Following KPIs will be measured on a numerical level:

**Reach:** development of number of retweets over time (cumulated)

**Popularity:** total amount of tweets, retweets, likes and followers

**Engagement:** daily sum of interactions (likes, retweets and mentions) divided by the number of fans at the time.

Page	Follower	Tweets
Accenture	1016	292
Capgemini	1329	865
T-Systems	4894	1632

*Table 16 Twitter follower and tweets as of 12.10.2015*

The page with the highest follower amount is T-Systems with around four times more followers than the two other pages. T-Systems is as well the page with the highest reach of all, this is rather unsurprising given the fact that the more followers a page has, the higher the probability of users reposting (retweeting)

content becomes. Please note the shown retweet quantities on the table below are cumulated with a starting from zero on the first day of the time framework; past retweet amounts (since page start) could not be considered due to data scraping limitations. Nevertheless the available data gives a realistic comparative insight on user activity across pages as it depicts awaited user activity in relation to follower amount.

**Reach:**

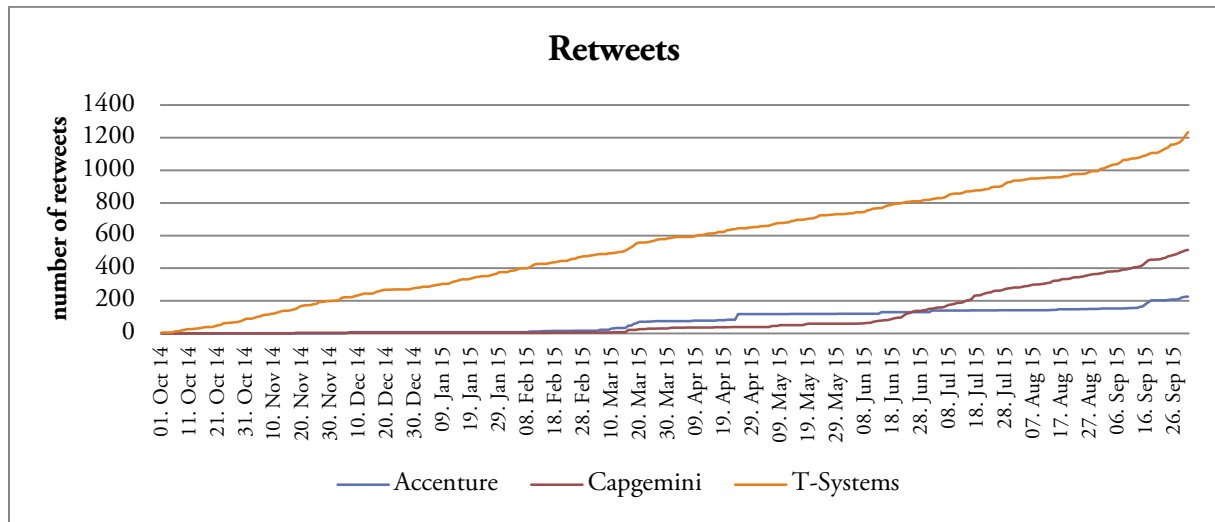


Table 17 Twitter Retweets as of 12.10.2015

**Popularity:**

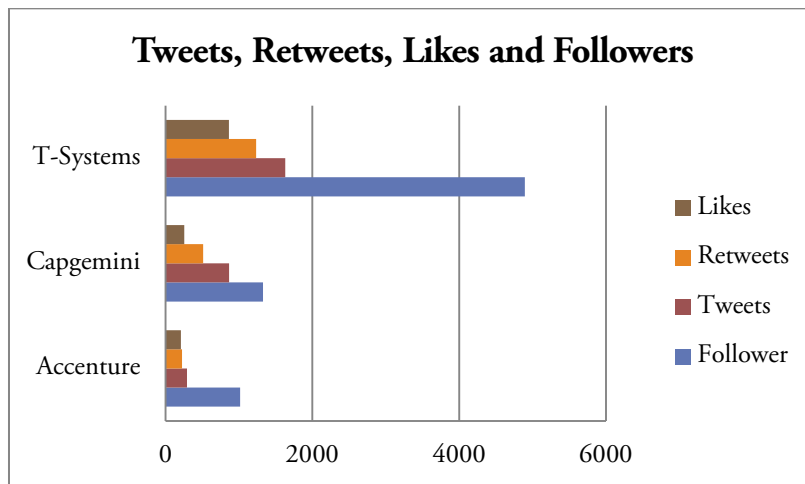


Table 18 Twitter Popularity as of 12.10.2015

Popularity is measured by weighting the total amount of followers of a page, and their reactions (likes, retweets) to the page’s tweets as showed above on table 18. Accenture is the least popular page with a relatively lower user activity proportionally compared to T-Systems. While the most popular page, relatively compared to others, is Capgemini because the proportional amount of user reactions to posted content and follower amount are much higher than the ones of T-Systems and Accenture respectively. The fact



that Capgemini is the page with the highest popularity is rather surprising because the page with the highest potential to have more user reactions is the page with the highest follower amount (T-Systems).

**Engagement:**

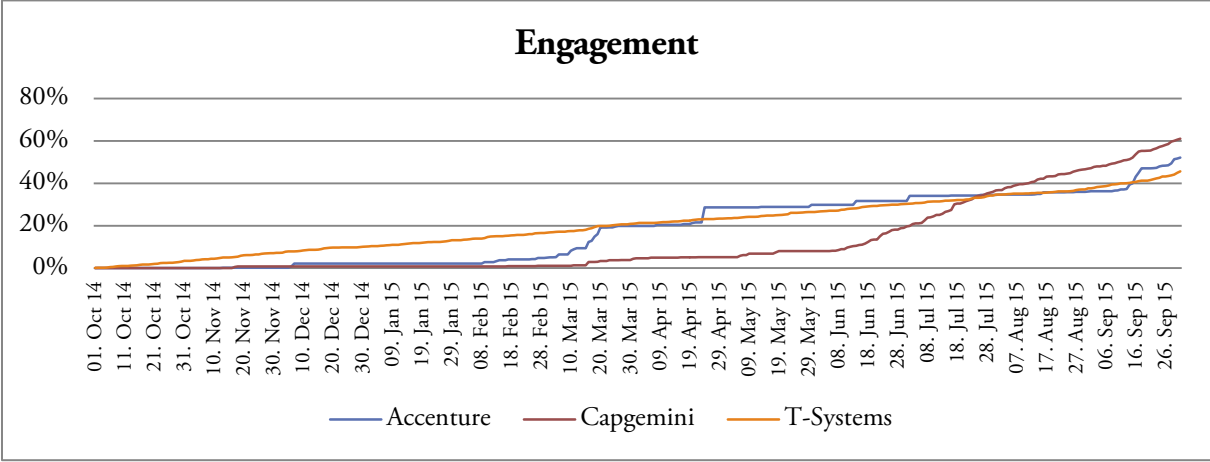


Table 19 Twitter Engagement as of 12.10.2015

Similar to Facebook, the engagement rate is calculated by dividing the daily amount of interactions (likes, mentions and retweets) by the number of fans at the time; please note that the number of interactions of twitter is cumulated and therefore the data starts at zero. For example if a page has 3600 fans and 10 interactions on Monday the corresponding engagement rate for that day is 0,5% (10/3600= 0,005). The development of engagement rates over time shows that surprisingly the most successful page over the first 5 months ended up being the least successful one at the end (T-Systems). The fact that T-Systems has a lower engagement rate is as well reflected on the popularity comparison where T-Systems had relatively lesser user reactions compared to Capgemini. Capgemini is the page with the most steep engagement growth over a short time period of all: Capgemini showed a slow initial growth but after mid-June it caught up quickly and surpassed the remaining two pages on the last two months of activity. On the other hand Accenture showed the most accelerated growth between February and July as well as the highest peaks on mid-April and September of all pages. Nevertheless Capgemini’s growth accelerated so quickly nearing the end that the page ended up having an engagement rate 10% higher than Accenture’s and almost 20% higher than T-Systems.

To conclude the statistical benchmarking of Twitter following main findings can be highlighted:

- A large number of followers is no guarantee for a high engagement rate: Capgemini has four times less followers than T-Systems but a much higher engagement rate.
- It seems that most of T-Systems followers are inactive as the relatively compared user reactions to content with the other two pages were much lower.
- Accenture and Capgemini have a lower amount of tweets than T-Systems but a higher proportion of user reaction to these tweets.

### 6.4.2. Business Platforms

The activity data on the business networks LinkedIn and Xing was scraped manually and has a time framework of 30 days. The data of each network will be evaluated separately because the amount of audience members and available functionalities across platforms differ too strongly for drawing a meaningful comparison. Xing offers less interaction possibilities, such as the comment function on postings, which makes it much more private than LinkedIn. Additional to his demographics and quantity of audience members differ strongly on each network. The respective business network and its corresponding KPIs will be first listed and then interpreted as shown below:

#### LinkedIn

**Reach:** amount of followers

**Popularity:** total amount of user reactions

page	Followers	likes	posts
Accenture	2.150.587	12054	98
Capgemini	697.965	13616	458
T-Systems	76.715	1109	20

Table 20 LinkedIn statistical KPIs as of 27.11.2015

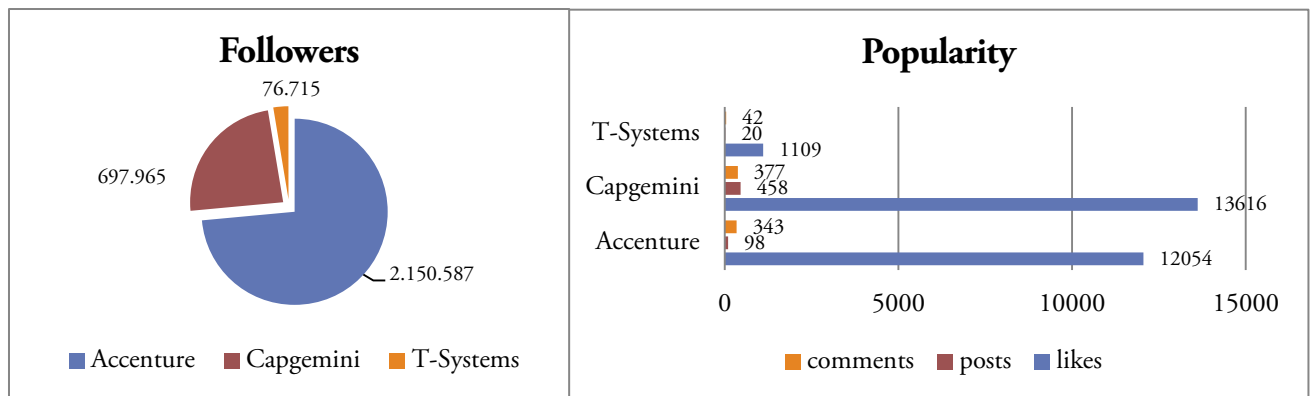


Table 22 LinkedIn followers as of 27.11.2015

Table 21 LinkedIn Popularity as of 27.11.2015

As showed on tables 21 and 22 the page with the largest audience and content amount of all is Accenture with over two million followers, followed by Capgemini with nearly 700.000 followers and 4 times less content amount. The remaining page, T-Systems, has the smallest content amount and an audience almost 9 times smaller than Capgemini's and less than one third of Accenture's content amount. It is worth mentioning that the proportion between audience amount and posts is not consistent across pages: Capgemini posts 4 times more than Accenture even though Accenture's audience outnumbers Capgemini's by 3 times. However the relation between audience reactions and content amount, as shown on table 21, is proportional across pages: regardless to the fact that Accenture has posted 4 times less than Capgemini, they show a similar reaction amount; this reaction amount is proportional when the follower amount

difference between pages is considered. As for T-Systems the proportion of reactions and follower amount can be as well seen in much more reduced quantities.

To conclude the statistical benchmarking of LinkedIn following main findings can be highlighted:

- Unlike Facebook and Twitter the relation between reaction to content and amount of followers is proportional across pages in the Business network LinkedIn.
- Content flow is not directly related to audience amount: Capgemini has 4 times more content amount than Accenture but 3 times less followers. User reactions to content amount are proportional to follower amount though.
- T-Systems has a very reduced follower amount when compared to Capgemini and Accenture

### Xing

**Reach:** amount of followers

**Popularity:** total amount of user reactions

**Employee engagement:** employee ratings and registered employees on platform

page	Followers	registered employees on Xing	people interested in	total posts	Employee ratings
Accenture	20.623	10.384	86	18	505
Capgemini	6.963	4.040	98	287	379
T Systems	42.081	23.710	46	49	1702

Table 23 Xing followers, employees, posts and ratings as of 27.11.2015

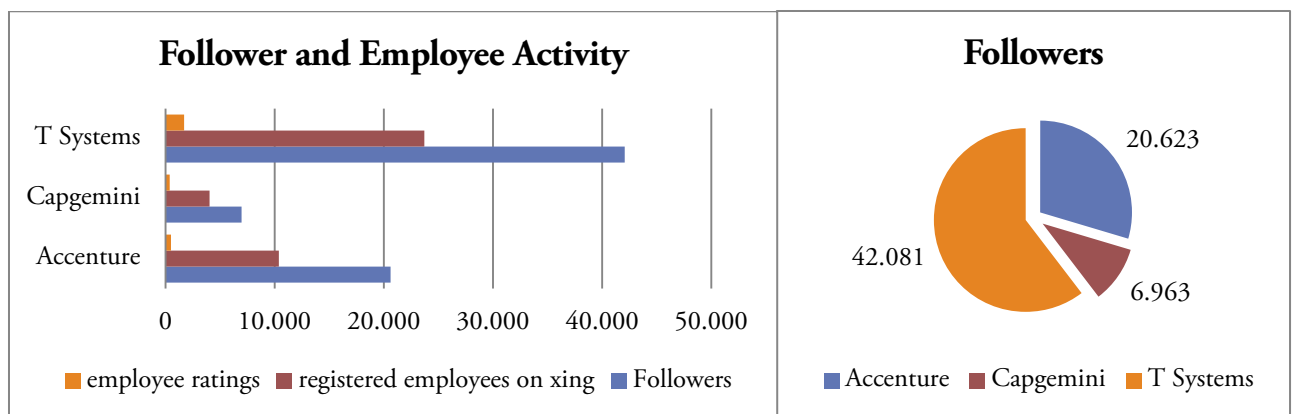


Table 25 Xing user activity as of 27.11.2015

Table 24 Xing followers as of 27.11.2015

Xing unlike LinkedIn has no comment function on posts enabled; instead they have a liking function called “interested in” which any registered can make use of by clicking on it to give feedback. In sight of a

lacking comment function, low content flow and reaction to it other KPIs that demonstrate user engagement such as employee ratings and registered employees were measured along with follower amount. Unlike the LinkedIn follower amount comparison, T-Systems is the page with the largest follower amount and user activity of all with twice as much followers than Accenture and six times more followers than Capgemini. The predominance of LinkedIn in the German business network Xing is not surprising because of the fact that T-Systems is a German based company. Similar to LinkedIn a proportion between employee feedback and follower amount can be seen across pages: the more followers, the higher the amount of employee ratings and registered employees on Xing. Another important fact to highlight is that, similarly to LinkedIn, content flow is not proportional to follower amount: the page with the least amount of followers (Capgemini) posts 5 times more than the second most active page (T-Systems). Nevertheless unlike LinkedIn user reactions on posts are not proportional to content flow: the page with the lowest content flow (Accenture) has the highest reaction amount.

To conclude the statistical benchmarking of Xing following main findings can be highlighted:

- Xing has restricted and more specific feedback functions for users than LinkedIn: no comment function on posts is enabled while user ratings and registered employees of a certain company are showcased on the first company page impression.
- T-Systems has the highest follower amount and user activity most likely because it is a German based company.
- Similar to LinkedIn the proportion between follower amount and user activity is consistent across pages.
- Unlike LinkedIn user reaction (specifically on posts) is not proportional to audience amount: Accenture is the page with the lowest content flow and a mid-audience amount shows the highest reaction amount on posts.

## 6.5. Strategy comparison

### 6.5.1. Social Platforms

#### Facebook

**Posting frequency:** posts per day in relation to user reactions

**Multimedia Content:** variety of text, pictures, links and videos in relation to user reactions

**Service level:** participation percentage of page administrator in posts (replies to user feedback)

Page	Posts per Day	Likes per Post	Comments per Post	Service Level
Accenture	2,40	9,80	0,14	59%
Capgemini	0,51	7,66	0,35	66%
T-Systems	3,10	3,63	0,08	42%

Table 26 Facebook strategy KPIs as of 12.10.2015

As seen on table 26 above the page with the busiest social media management team is T-Systems as they have the highest amount of posts per day. Nevertheless all their efforts seem not to deliver as many distributed user reactions as Capgemini's and Accenture's social media teams respectively: Capgemini shows the lowest effort investment with 0,5 posts per day and a fairly high amount of reactions per post while Accenture has a fairly higher effort investment with a proportional higher user feedback amount. However as shown on table 27 below type of user reactions between Capgemini and Accenture are not proportional because Capgemini having only one fourth of Accenture's posts per day rate has 3 times more comments per post, which represent the less frequent user feedback reaction overall as well. On the other hand the percentages of service levels across pages are proportionally high to the comment per post rate: this is rather logic because the more comments users make, the higher the possible amount of replies from page administrators will be. When regarding service level percentages it should be noted that page administrators usually comment on posts when necessary or appropriate; this means that it is normal that not every post contains a reply and therefore a 100% service level would be an indicator of a communication problem on the page.

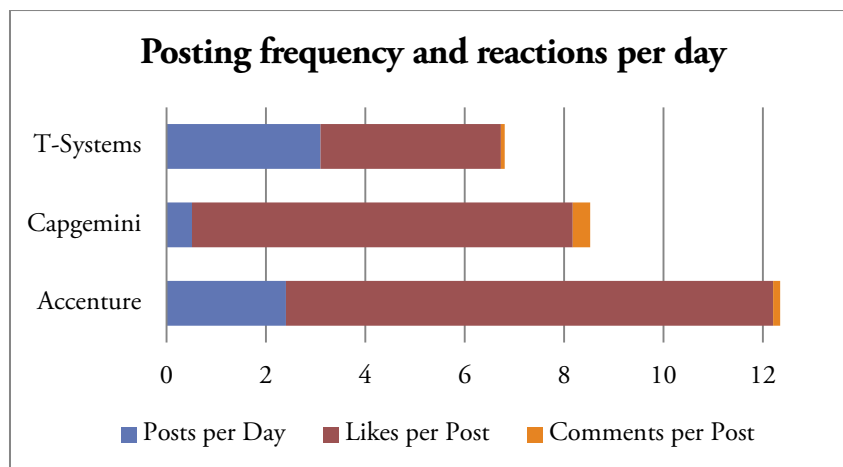


Table 27 Facebook posting frequency and reactions as of 12.10.2015

## Multimedia Content

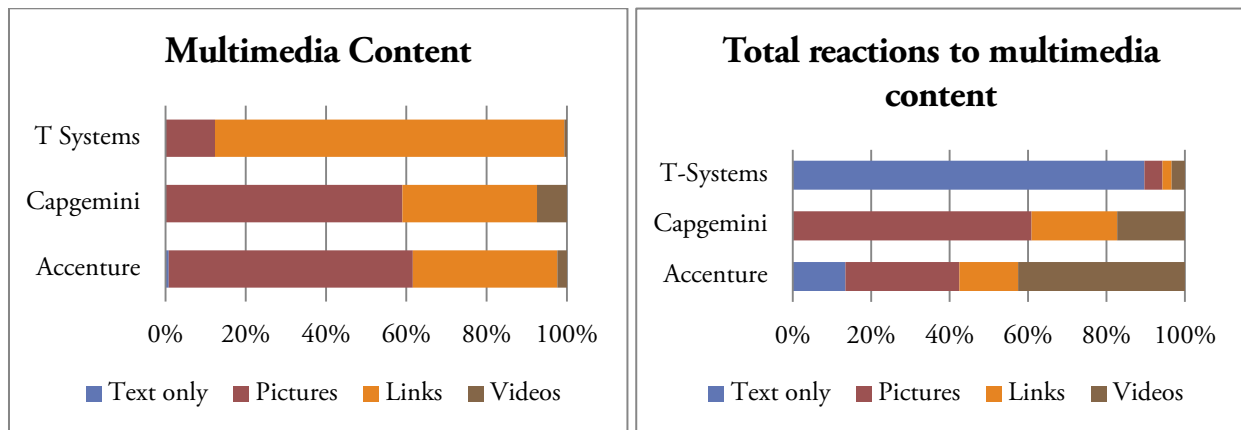


Table 29 Facebook Multimedia content as of 12.10.2015

Table 28 Facebook Reactions to multimedia content as of 12.10.2015

As seen on tables 28 and 29 above the two most frequent content elements on posts are pictures and links. T-Systems is the only page that has over 80% links without pictures in its multimedia content while as for Capgemini and Accenture about 60% of the content contains one or more pictures. When related to the like and comment rates of pages, a possible explanation for T-Systems lower user feedback might be the fact that they use less pictures in posts than the other two pages. On the other hand when looking at user reactions amount related to media content. As seen on table 28 above, user responses to the multimedia vary strongly across platforms; the possible reasons therefore will be following discussed. The data of Capgemini and Accenture reveals similarly distributed audience preferences regarding video and picture content: Capgemini's audience reacts more frequently to picture than video content while as for Accentures audience reacts more frequently to video content and less frequently to picture content. Accentures audience has a fairly high share of audience members responding to text only content, while as for Capgemini due to total lack of text content was not possible to measure such user reactions. The user reaction data of T-Systems shows that their audience prefers posts with only text content, which represents clear bias when considering the fact that only 0,08% of T-Systems posts had this kind of content. The presence of this unusual user reaction to a specific post means that there is a presence of a viral post that biased the sample: regardless of the showcasing method a specific post with the least preferred content overall (only text) caused most of the user reactions on the page. This evidences that topics have a higher influence in user reactions than the showcased multimedia on posts.

To conclude the strategy benchmarking of Facebook following main findings can be highlighted:

- The busiest social media team is the one of T-Systems followed by Accenture and Capgemini respectively.
- The page with the highest distributed user reactions is Accenture, nevertheless Capgemini has the highest comment per post rate which represents as well the least frequent user reaction.

- The service level (replies to user feedback) is proportional to comment amount across pages.
- Multimedia content plays a secondary role compared to topical content of postings awakens interest in audience members.
- Audience members prefer and therefore react more frequently to picture and video content

## Twitter

Twitter has fewer interaction functions but a similar post structure than Facebook's: just like on Facebook posts users can include pictures, videos, hashtags and links on tweets. However due to data scraping limitations it was not possible to extract the multimedia variety and related user reaction data for Twitter as for Facebook. Nevertheless total user reactions as likes and retweets along with amount of tweets were extracted for the benchmarking as showed on tables 31 and 32 below.

Page	Tweets per day	Retweets per Tweet	Likes per Tweet
Accenture	0,8	0,8	0,7
Capgemini	2,4	0,6	0,3
T-Systems	4,5	0,7	0,5

Table 30 Twitter strategy KPIs as of 12.10.2015

**Posting frequency:** posts per day

**Likes per tweet:** total posts number divided by total number of likes

**Retweets or shares per tweet:** total posts number divided by total number of shares

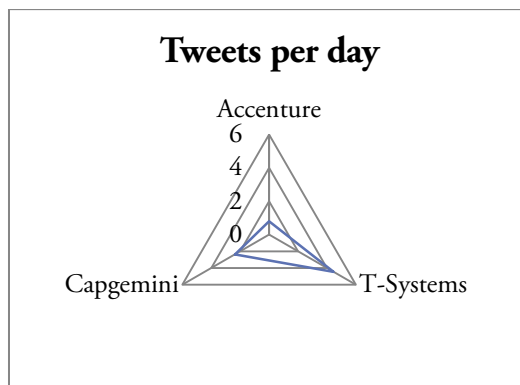


Table 32 Tweets per day as of 12.10.2015

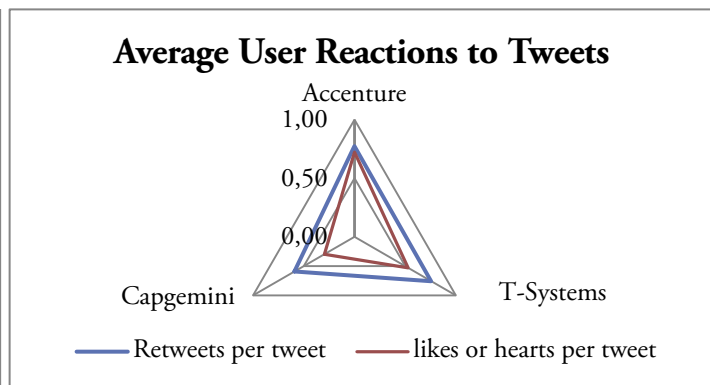


Table 31 Twitter average user reactions as of 12.10.2015

The page with the highest amount of tweets per day is T-Systems (4,5) while Capgemini has about half of T-Systems amount of tweets per day (2,4) followed by Accenture which is the least active page overall with only 0,8 tweets per day. Accenture is surprisingly the page with the lowest follower amount and tweet per day rate but with the highest user reaction rate per tweet of all pages.

Considering the fact that T-Systems has 4.894 followers Capgemini and Accenture have three times less followers (1.300 and 1.000 followers respectively), the user reaction proportion to tweet amount is irregular. According to the data the relation between posted content and user reactions is inversely proportional: the more followers a page has, the lesser user reactions to tweets. This finding is quite illogical as a page with a broader audience and content flow has higher probabilities of reaching a higher user reaction rate. The reason why results seem to be contradictory will be analyzed on the emotional benchmarking on upcoming chapter where the most successful tweets across pages will be reviewed. The only logical explanation for the contradictory data is that Accenture's content strategy is far more successful and effective than the one of the other two competitors.

To conclude the strategy benchmarking of Twitter following main findings can be highlighted:

- A large Follower amount and constant content flow are no guarantee for a higher amount of user reactions: Accenture the page with the smallest audience is the page with the highest user reaction rate overall.
- T-Systems is the least successful page despite its large amount of followers.
- Capgemini has a similar follower amount and retweet rate but a way lower like rate than Accenture.

## 6.5.2. Business Platforms

### LinkedIn

**Posting frequency:** posts per day

**Reactions to posts per day:** likes and comments per post

**Post topic variety:** source variety of linked content on posts

**Multimedia content variety:** showcasing of posts

**Language variety:** percentage of used languages in posts

**Amount of job ads**

page	posts per day	likes per post	comments per post	job ads
Accenture	3,3	123,0	3,5	684
Capgemini	15,3	29,7	0,8	667
T-Systems	0,7	55,5	2,1	4

*Table 33 LinkedIn strategy KPIs as of 27.11.2015*

As seen on table 33 above the amount of published job ads varies strongly between T-Systems and the other two pages, one possible explanation for this phenomena might be the big difference in follower amount across pages: T-Systems has 9 times less followers than Capgemini and about 27 times less followers than Accenture. It is evidenced that the available job ad amount is proportional to enterprise size as well as follower amount across pages.



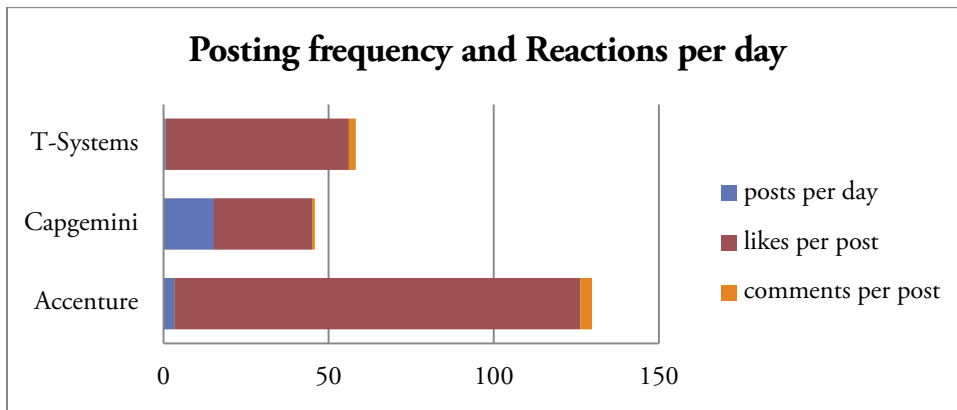


Table 34 LinkedIn posting frequency and reactions as of 27.11.2015

As seen on table 34 above the page showing the best user reaction rate is Accenture with 3,5 comments and 123 likes per post followed by T-Systems with 2,1 comments and 55 likes per post. Capgemini has the less favorable user reaction rate regardless to the fact that they post 5 times more often than Accenture. T-Systems has a way better user reaction rate when compared to Capgemini, while as when compared to Accenture the rate looks fairly good. The last comparison has a logical explanation when follower amounts are considered: Accenture has a broader probability of gathering more user reactions per post as it counts with more than 2 million followers while T-Systems counts only with 76.000 followers. But when Capgemini's user feedback rate is compared to the one of T-Systems, the amounts do not remain proportional: this evidences that T-Systems has a far better content strategy than Capgemini. On the other hand when comparing proportionally the follower amount and the user reaction rate between Accenture and T-Systems user reaction rates are proportionally similar. This indicates that Accenture has as well as T-Systems an effective content strategy.

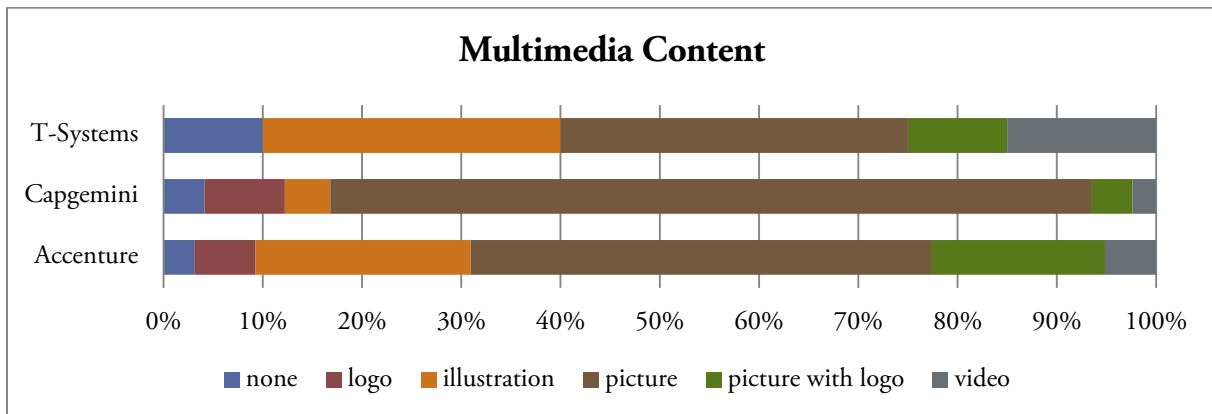


Table 35 LinkedIn multimedia content as of 27.11.2015

The structure of posts in LinkedIn is quite simple: each post has a title and subtitle on the upper part followed by an image placeholder on the left and a text placeholder on the right. The table above shows the analysis of the content of the image placeholder of each post clustered on five categories. There is a clear trend to make use of the media placeholder as only less than 10% of the overall posts have no image at all. The two most used media elements are pictures and illustrations: over 70% of content across all platforms has either an illustration or a picture with and without a logo. Video content is rare, however T-

Systems is the page with the largest amount of posted videos (more than 10%) of all. It should be noted that the low video amount might be due to the fact that generating video content requires far more effort than creating simpler media as pictures or illustrations. Accenture includes their logo most often than the two other pages on the image placeholder, this might indicate the presence of posting guidelines; for example shared content such as presentations is consistently showcased by an image with a logo. As for the remaining pages there was no logo and content consistency relation; which indicates an absence of content showcasing guidelines.

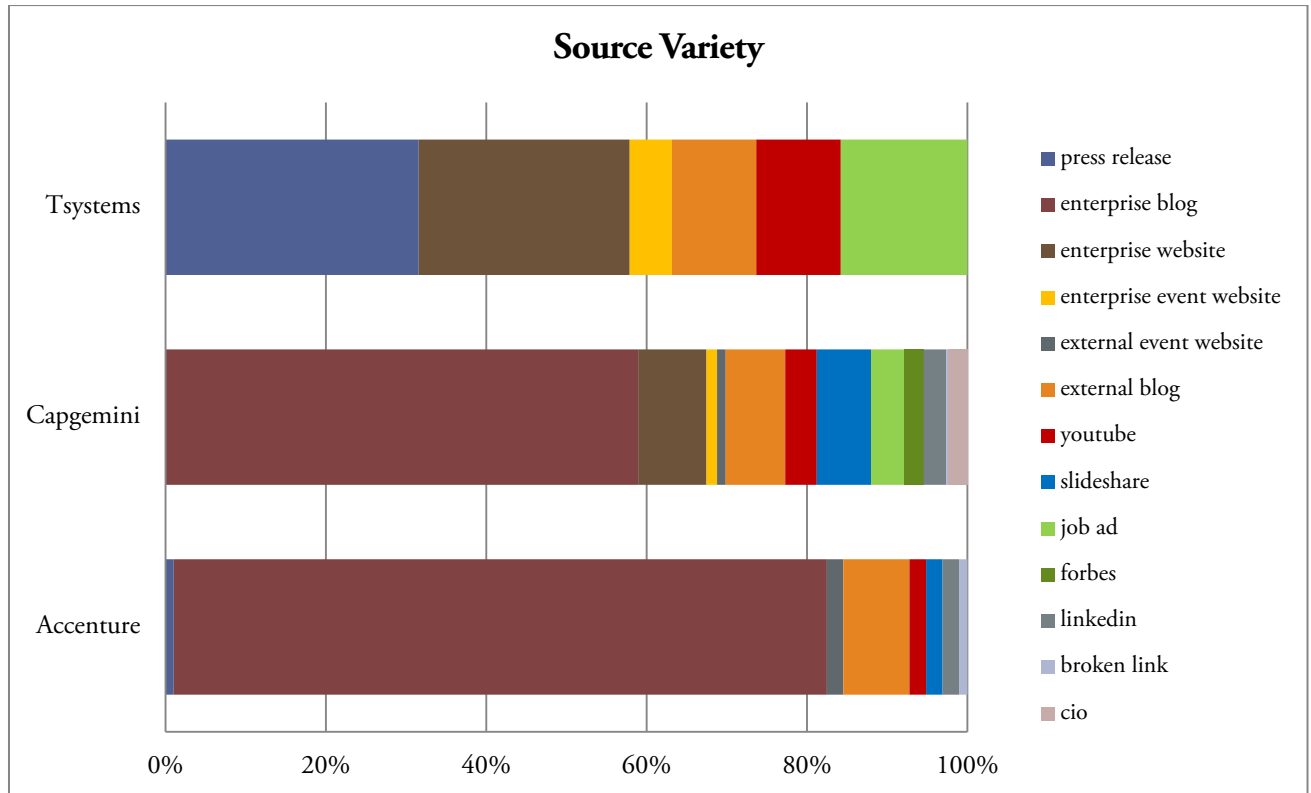
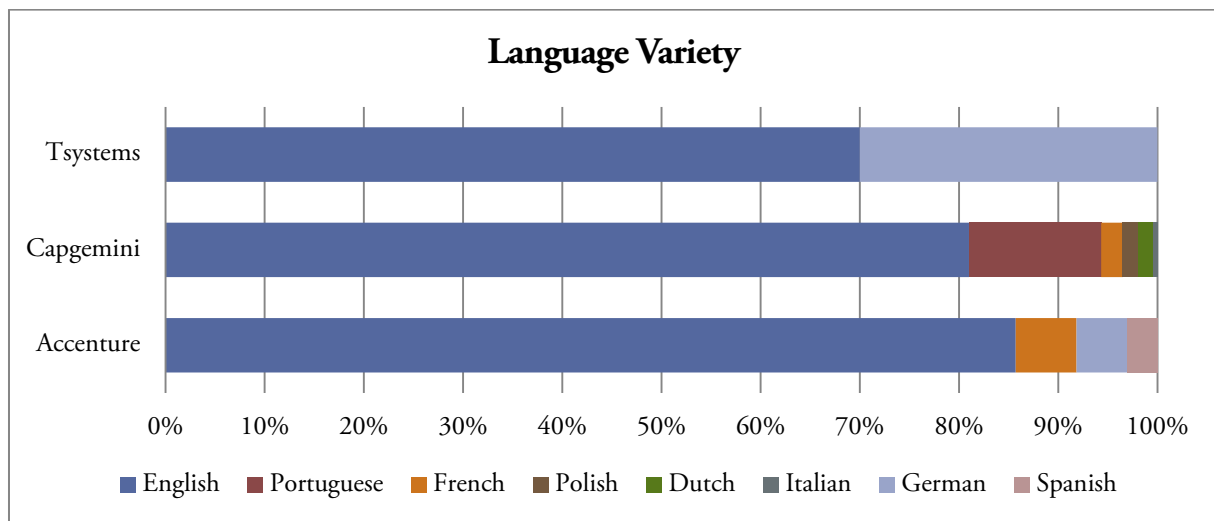


Table 36 LinkedIn source variety as of 27.11.2015

Posts usually contain a link to an external source; these sources were clustered and classified on the categories shown on table 36 above. It is worth mentioning that Slideshare is a website that belongs to LinkedIn where anybody can upload and share PowerPoint presentations; the analyzed pages they used the Slideshare website to upload know how presentations of past events. The first striking difference between pages is the fact that no content on T-Systems is linked to the most frequent source used by the two other pages: an enterprise blog. T-Systems seems not to have an official enterprise blog, instead company news are published via official press releases as downloadable PDFs on their website. A remarkable difference between links to job ads can be seen amongst postings: T-Systems links 16% of their posts to job ads followed by Capgemini which only links 4% of their postings to job ads while Accenture had no job ad content at all on their feed. It is worth mentioning that the greatest similarity across pages is that most of the posts are linked to the enterprise pages either as the enterprise blog, event registration page or less frequently as a job ad. This evidences that probably one of the goals of content posting is bringing more traffic to the individual enterprise websites. Another remarkable fact is that Capgemini has the highest external source variety of all pages: additional to external blogs, YouTube and Slideshare they shared links

to external events, the CIO magazine and Forbes. Unlike Accenture which has 80% of its content linked to the enterprise blog.



*Table 37 LinkedIn post language variety as of 27.11.2015*

Considering the fact that Capgemini and Accenture have a stronger international presence than T-Systems it is rather unsurprising that their posted content has a higher language variety compared to T-Systems. It is worth mentioning that postings across pages in other languages than English had far less reactions than posts in English: this evidences that the majority of audience members in LinkedIn is English speaking. Capgemini is the page with the largest language variety of all pages, it should hereby be considered that Capgemini have the highest post amount of all as well.

To conclude the strategy benchmarking of LinkedIn following main findings can be highlighted:

- It is evidenced that the available job ad amount is proportional to enterprise size as well as follower amount across pages.
- T-Systems has a way better user reaction rate when compared to Capgemini, while as when compared to Accenture the rate looks fairly good.
- User feedback rate is not proportional to follower amount; the deciding factor is the content strategy: T-Systems has a far better user feedback rate than Capgemini regardless to the fact that Capgemini has a much broader audience and a much higher content flow.
- Regardless of big audience amount differences T-Systems user reaction rates are proportionally similar to Accenture's. This indicates that Accenture has as well as T-Systems an effective content strategy.
- It seems that one consistent goal across platforms is bringing more traffic to the individual enterprise websites as most of their linked content on posts leads to the enterprises website.

- The most frequent multimedia content on posts is pictures and infographs while videos come up rarely. This is most probably because creating video content requires a higher effort than taking pictures or creating infographs.
- Posting in English leads to more user reactions: postings across pages in other languages than English had far less reactions than posts in English.

## **Xing**

The strategy benchmarking of Xing will be less extensive than LinkedIn's. This is due to the fact that Xing offers less interaction and post layout functions than LinkedIn: Xing has only a like function enabled while picture embedding or user comments on posts are not available. Additional to this a language variety comparison was not necessary because all postings across pages were in German.

**Posting frequency:** posts per day

**Reactions to posts per day:** people interested in per post

**Post source variety:** source variety of linked content on posts

**Amount of job ads**

	<b>posts per day</b>	<b>people interested per post</b>	<b>source variety</b>	<b>job ads</b>
<b>Accenture</b>	0,6	4,8	7	3
<b>Capgemini</b>	9,6	0,3	5	7
<b>T-Systems</b>	1,6	0,9	5	13

*Table 38 Xing strategy KPIs as of 27.11.2015*

Capgemini is the page with the highest post per day rate as seen on table 38 above, this is most likely due to the fact that they post their tweets to xing simultaneously on xing as posts, with the intention to generate a much higher content amount with less effort. This saves employees time because the content flow is automatically "shared" across 2 platforms. This shared content strategy seems to result counterproductive though as Capgemini shows the lowest interest per post rate of all pages. Other pages generate content individually and have therefore higher user response rates.

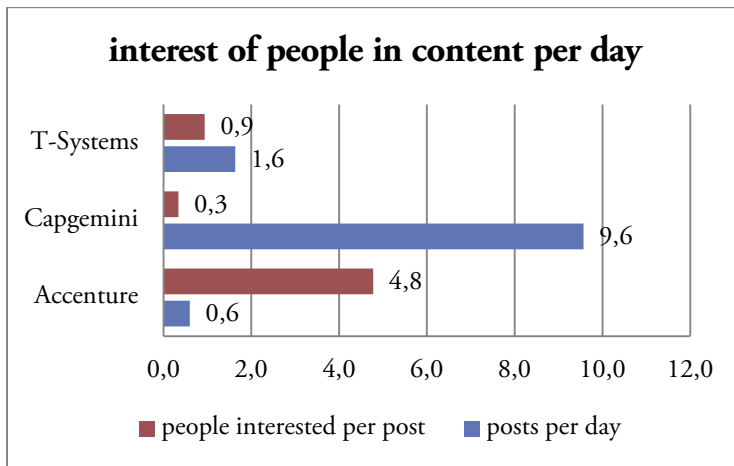


Table 39 Xing user interest rate as of 27.11.2015

As seen on table 39 above The page with the highest interest per post and lowest content flow rate is Accenture. This indicates that Accentures content quality is perceived better by their audience members than Capgemini's. T-Systems seems not to be using their user reaction potential to the fullest, as they have the highest follower amount of all pages but a relatively low interest per post rate when compared to Accenture.

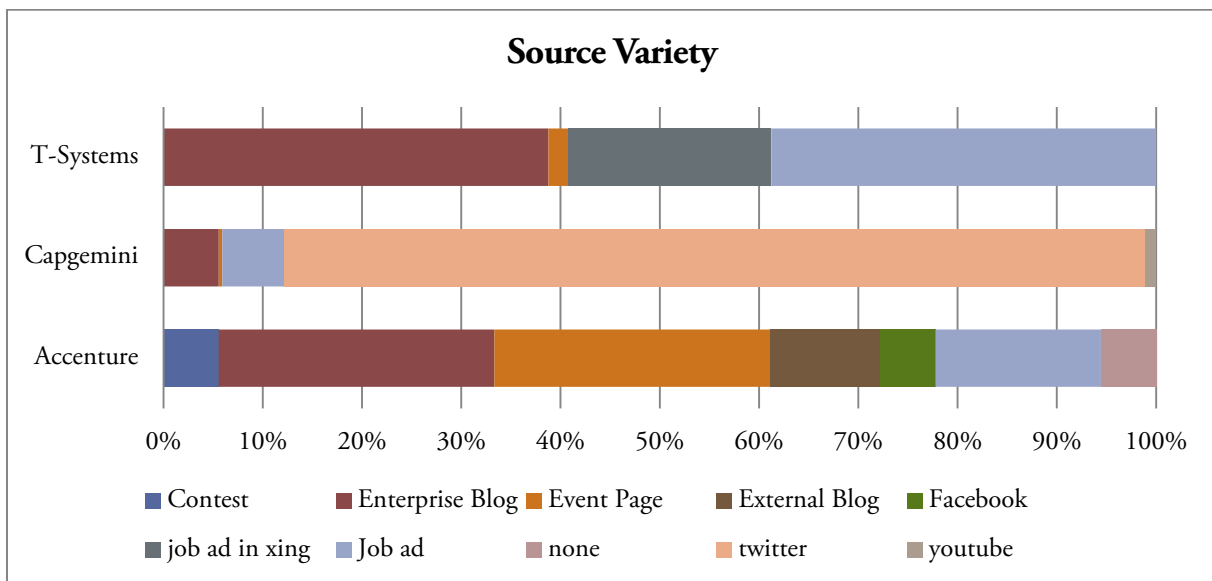


Table 40 Xing source variety as of 27.11.2015

Most posts at Xing contain links to external websites similarly to LinkedIn; table 40 above shows the 9 categories of websites to which posts were linked to. Nevertheless unlike posts at LinkedIn most of the Xing posts are not linked to the enterprise website. It is worth as well mentioning that posting frequency on Xing is much lower than on LinkedIn and most likely therefore less source categories could be identified. Accenture, the page with the highest user interest rate, has as well the highest source variety consisting primarily of links to the enterprise blog and event registration pages. The second most successful page, T-Systems, has a less wide variety of sources primarily linking posts to job ads and the enterprise media page where either articles or press releases are shown. Last but not least, Capgemini has

about 87% of tweets as Xing posts while the remaining content is linked to job ad and to the enterprise website.

To conclude the strategy benchmarking of Xing following main findings can be highlighted:

- Shared content posts across platforms seems to lead to less positive user reactions as evidenced on Capgemini news feed: the simultaneously posted tweets had almost no user reactions.
- An equally shared variety of sources on linked posts seems to lead to more positive user reactions as evidenced by Accenture
- Posting frequently is no guarantee for a higher user interest rate as evidenced by Capgemini shared twitter post content strategy with low user reactions.
- A higher amount of followers is no guarantee for a greater amount of user feedback as evidenced by the fact that T-Systems is not the most successful page in spite of their follower amount

## 6.6. Emotional comparison

### 6.6.1. Social Platforms

#### Facebook

**Feedback on overall top 5 posts:** by reactions per fan and by total reactions

**Feedback Review of top 5 posts:** mood on comments



Image 14 Facebook three most successful posts by reactions per fan

The overall top 3 postings by reactions per fan (relative to audience amount) come all from the T-Systems page as seen above. The most successful post overall is surprisingly a text only post that was shared 18 times and liked 121 times. When an user shares content it is usually intended to encourage their friends on Facebook to notice the shared post, and on the best case scenario to share it again; this reaction leads therefore to the highest reach possible. Sharing is the overall less frequent user reaction across pages and therefore the hardest reaction to evoke. The most successful post overall talks about the help of T-Systems is offering to refugees in refugee camps in Germany, this post falls therefore under the category of charity. Regardless of having no visible multimedia, charity topics seem to drive users to react strongly, especially when posts revolve around involvement in recent socio political happenings such as the arrival of refugees in Germany for this particular case. The remaining two posts talk about a professional achievement of the company and the employees' activities in summer respectively. Users reacted as well great to personal summer greetings from employees and to the fact that T-Systems occupied the first place on the Lünendonk ranking: this post was shared 14 times and liked 95 times while the picture of happy employees cooling down in summer earned 63 likes and 3 comments. All three successful postings have something in common: they all tell stories that connect the company with positive feelings such as charity, good quality and employees having fun at work. To conclude the analysis of the top 3 Facebook posts it should be noted that these stories are interesting but seldom shareable because of the fact that they revolve around rare events that require either effort or luck to happen such as charity campaigns, high temperatures in Germany or being chosen first on a renowned ranking.



Image 15 Facebook two most successful posts by total reactions

Image 15 shows the most successful posts across pages by total reactions (not relative to audience amount). Both posts come from Accenture's Facebook page, contain customized colorful infographs with slogans and revolve around enterprise specific campaigns such as an internal event and recruitment respectively. The specific topic of the event is internet of things; which is a recent technological topic that probably drew most users' attention together with the complementing image of a world map of connected devices. The remaining recruitment post connects humor with technology: an image of a bunny in a tent complements the names of the programming languages apache and jackrabbit. A common element between both posts is customization: users react well to congruent posts that connect multimedia with the intention or story of the post.

To conclude the emotional benchmarking of Facebook following main findings can be highlighted:

- Sharing is the overall less frequent user reaction across pages and therefore the hardest reaction to evoke.
- Less is more: T-Systems has the highest share rate of all pages regardless to the fact that they have less followers and post less often than Capgemini and Accenture.
- The 3 top postings per reaction per fan have something in common: they all tell stories that connect the company with positive feelings such as charity, good quality and employees having fun at work.
- Posts about rare events that require either effort or luck to happen such as charity campaigns, high temperatures in Germany or being chosen first on a renowned ranking generated the most positive reactions amongst users.
- Posts containing enterprise specific campaigns or events with customized media such as colorful infographs and slogans seem to drive to more positive user reactions.



## Twitter

**Feedback on overall top 5 posts:** by reactions per fan and by total reactions

**Feedback Review of top 5 posts:** mood on comments



*Image 16 Twitter top 3 most successful tweets by total user reactions*

As noted on the statistical chapter of the benchmarking, Accenture is the page with the highest user reactions rate of all, which explains why that 4 of the 5 post with the most user reactions were tweeted by Accenture. When taking a closer look to the topics that drew most user reactions overall some similarities with Facebook's most successful topics can be seen: once again as the first two tweets from left to right evidence that content talking about winning an award and happenings at a company specific event are well welcomed by the audience. It should be noted that the amount of reactions across all pages is way lower in Twitter than in Facebook: the most successful tweet had 20 reactions in total (9 likes, 11 retweets and 1 reply) while the most successful Facebook post had 121 likes and 18 shares. A logical reason for the lower user reaction amount in Twitter is explained by the difference between audience member amounts across networks. There is indeed a big gap between Facebook fans and twitter followers: Accenture has the smallest Twitter audience of all pages with only 1000 followers while on Facebook they count with 72.000 fans. This demonstrates as well that none of the companies performs well across all platforms at the same time; in fact some outperform in Facebook while having a very bad presence on Twitter as T-Systems evidences. Another important similarity between Twitter and Facebook audience behavior is that the posts with the most user reactions come from the pages with the smallest audience (Accenture, 100 followers) while the page with the largest audience (T-Systems, 4000 followers) showed no correspondent user response behavior.



*Image 17 Twitter 4th and 5th most successful tweets by total user reactions*

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> most successful tweets talk about topics that were rather unsuccessful on Facebook: contests and expert interviews. It should be noted that these posts are rather not significant as they drew very little user reactions: the know how post generated only 10 retweets and 7 likes and the contest post generated only 6 retweets and 2 likes. This is an indicator that user activity is way lower on Twitter than on Facebook across networks.

To conclude the emotional benchmarking of Twitter following main findings can be highlighted:

- When taking a closer look at the topics that drew most user reactions overall some similarities with Facebook’s most successful topics can be seen: decorations and happenings at a company specific event are well welcomed by the audience.
- The amount of reactions across all pages is way lower in Twitter than in Facebook. The big difference of audience member amounts across networks is the reason therefore.
- None of the companies performs well across all platforms at the same time; in fact some outperform in Facebook while having a very bad presence on Twitter as T-Systems evidences
- An important similarity between Twitter and Facebook audience behavior is that the posts with the most user reactions came from the pages with the smallest audiences.

## 6.6.2. Business Platforms

### LinkedIn

**Page overall mood:** on 1 to 5 Scala (1 very good, 2 good, 3 neutral, 4 bad, 5 very bad)

**Comment mood:** on 1 to 5 Scala (1 very good, 2 good, 3 neutral, 4 bad, 5 very bad)

**Comment mood weighted:** amount of comments multiplied by corresponding comment mood; the lower the value, the better the user mood on page.

**Review of top 2 posts per page**

**Topic frequency:** tag clouds depicting most frequent topics on posts

page	comments	posts	comment mood	comment mood weighted
Accenture	343	98	2,0	14,4
Capgemini	377	458	1,5	4,5
T-Systems	42	20	1,1	5,6

Table 41 LinkedIn emotional KPIs

**Accenture** Today, we pledged to grow the percentage of women in hires to at least 40 percent worldwide by 2017. Gender equality is an essential element of an inclusive workplace, and our diversity makes us stronger, smarter and more innovative. Read more ... mehr

**Accenture** Julie Sweet, Accenture's group chief executive for North America, on the importance of having women leaders in getting the best business decisions. <http://bddy.me/1N9SuMt>

**We Want More**  
 accenture.com · More women in our workforce. More female role models in STEM. More benefits for parents. Gender Equality. Inclusion and equality are essential to high performance—because diversity is not just good for business, it's the right thing to do.

Gefällt mir (268) · Kommentieren (14) · Mitteilen · vor 3 Tagen

Zornitsa Tsvetanova, Emilie D. Harrington +266

Vorherige Kommentare anzeigen

Amélie Juge, Prateek Tandon +1830

Vorherige Kommentare anzeigen

ERP kannan Great idea - Team vor 1 Tag

Sweta Mohapatra Accenture has always led the way for others in advancing women at workplace ... and once again by a concrete pledge ! Kudos ! vor 13 Stunden

Dinesh Nair Seems like she is preparing to enter politics vor 1 Tag

Samer Tallauze Accenture> One and the only company since I have 5+ years experience who I had the worst experience with. they lied to me and used me! They treated me like no one in the company. Don't recommend this company to anyone. Be careful vor 1 Tag

Image 18 LinkedIn top posts Accenture

As seen above the 2 most successful posts of Accenture revolve around the same topic: a recruitment campaign that supports gender equality. These two posts represent only a fraction of the recruitment campaign Accenture is talking about on LinkedIn: as shown on the topic word tag cloud below posts revolving around gender equality topic were very frequent. The popular postings have additional to the topic following in common: they both contain customized pictures/infographs and have a short description on top.



particular case post topics that demonstrate social engagement and company awards seem to drive to a higher number of user reactions across platforms.



Image 21 LinkedIn topic tag cloud Capgemini

Additional to this, it seems that Capgemini talks mainly about other topics than social engagement and awards as seen on the topic tag cloud below. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is the fact that the showcased topics are not things that happen often. Nevertheless there is no obvious reason why page administrators did not do more than one post about the same events; in this way with a little creativity they could maximize user reactions with little extra effort.

**T-Systems** ++ T-Systems launches new public cloud platform with Huawei ++ Deutsche Telekom is continuing to expand its leading position in the European market of cloud services: <http://bit.ly/1RcqW0G>

**T-Systems** ++ Cloud Infrastructure Partner of the Year ++ T-Systems has been honored! In cooperation with Red Hat T-Systems was able to win this award with the product AppAgile: <http://bit.ly/1GoVB20>

Like (243) • Comment (13) • Share • 3 months ago

**Natalie Heilmann, Claudio Gallego Filho** +241

- Lukasz Kakol** Good luck! 3 months ago
- Marcelino Pérez Ramirez** Great! 3 months ago
- Darin Redning** Congratulations !! 3 months ago
- Lehlohonolo Mokenela** Sounds interesting... ongrats 3 months ago
- Saeed Hess** Supper entwickelt! 3 months ago

Gefällt mir (132) • Kommentieren (11) • Mitteilen • vor 1 Monat

**Luis Carlos Garcia Martinez, Fabio Ribeiro Barbosa** +130

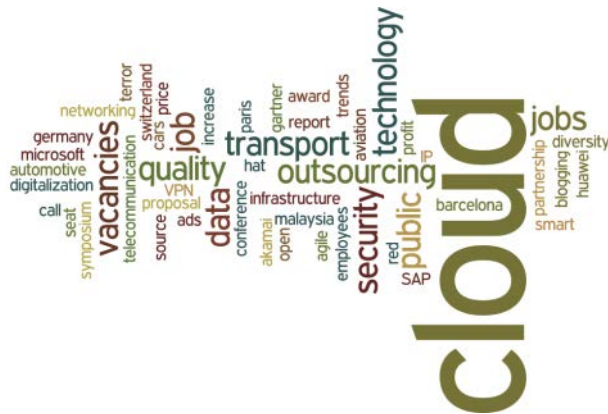
Vorherige Kommentare anzeigen

**T-Systems** Dear Mr. Redning, AppAgile is an important component of our cloud strategy. With the power of Red Hats OpenShift 3.0, our infrastructure service and our professional middleware and application management we built the foundation for many new ecosystems. Kind regards, Julia Seiter vor 1 Monat

**Darin Redning** Thank you for the technical strategy, Julia Seiter. I am very excited for the potential this has for the EMEA Cloud market. vor 1 Monat

Image 22 LinkedIn top posts T-Systems

The two most popular posts on the T-Systems page are announcements of a collaboration success story with another telecommunications provider and a technology award respectively. The multimedia showed on posts is specifically dedicated to the post content as shown on the left post where the picture of the contract signature evidences the announced good news instead of showing a related stock picture or infograph. Both The business collaboration and the award posts revolve around the same topic: cloud technologies. This is one of the most frequently mentioned topics on the page as evidenced on the topic tag cloud below. This might be an indicator that T-Systems social media managers invest time in observing the audience’s preferences to prioritize content that draws more user attention.



*Image 23 LinkedIn topic tag cloud T-Systems*

A remarkable similarity between topics of the most popular postings across platforms is the showcasing of an award. This kind of post can be seen on Facebook and Capgemini’s LinkedIn page. It is worth mentioning that as observed on the award post that T-Systems page administrator user feedback is present. T-Systems had the best page mood grade across pages and was as well the only page of the sample with presence of user feedback responses from page administrators. In general page administrator user feedback can only have positive repercussions on a page’s mood because in that way page administrators can steer the conversation and avoid further bad comments. As a conclusion it can be affirmed that brands wanting to start meaningful conversations should participate in these conversations as well in order to ensure better results.

To conclude the emotional benchmarking of LinkedIn following main findings can be highlighted:

- Talking about controversial topics as seen on Accenture’s posts about gender equality, can lead to a relative high amount negative user comments.
- Negative comments are inevitable and should therefore be somehow managed as showed on T-Systems page: to ignore bad comments is rather counterproductive; this is evidenced by the fact that T-Systems had the best page mood grade across pages and was as well the only page of the sample with present user feedback responses from page administrators.
- Administrating a social media page requires constant surveillance. Administrators should not only focus on posting interesting content bus as well on following up on post reactions by moderating and replying to user requests on posts.
- Investing time in observing the audience’s topic preferences (measuring reactions) in order to prioritize post content later is an effective tactic to increase positive user feedback as evidenced by T-Systems cloud topic predominance on posts.





Image 26 Xing top posts Capgemini

Similar to Accenture one of the two top posts at Capgemini’s page is a job ad. The second post with the most user attention is one tweet about a contest called team public. It should be noted that Capgemini has the lowest user reaction rate across pages as discussed on the strategy comparison. Therefore the two most successful posts with 6 and 5 people interested in respectively represent the least bad content found. Capgemini’s news feed is filled with automatically posted tweets which give the impression of a “spammed” feed which results in less positive user reactions. It should be noted that the topics depicted on the tag cloud below do not include the topics of the tweets that were simultaneously posted on Capgemini’s news feed.



Image 27 Xing topic tag cloud Capgemini



Image 28 Xing top posts T-Systems

The two most successful posts of T-Systems as seen above are the two most successful posts across platforms as well. When considering audiences amount this is a rather unsurprising result because T-Systems has 42.000 followers while Accenture and Capgemini have half as much or less audience members. The first post generated 28 positive user reactions while as the second post only 14; the first post announces an event that generated as well positive user reactions on LinkedIn: cloud platform collaboration with a business partner. The second post announces the launch of a new intranet for employees, a story that is rather relevant for T-Systems employees only. The topic tag cloud depicted below shows that T-Systems posts job ads primarily (career, consultant) while the most celebrated topic by users (cloud) is rather less frequent.





Additional to gathering relevant content, a common finding concerning all platforms is the importance of responding to users' requests or negative comments on posts. It is very important for page administrators to moderate negative conversations by replying to users' negative comments on posts and by doing so steering the conversation in the desired direction. Pages that had no user feedback present, had a much higher amount of negative comments overall.

## **7.2. Further research and data gaps**

The main research limitations for this research rose when data across platforms had to be compared: data was often not comparable partly due to missing information or incomparable functionalities across social media networks. Additional to this, differences in data availability could be seen most likely due to different privacy policies in Germany and the USA. German data policies are much more conservative than American data policies and therefore data scraping on Xing was much more limited than for the other networks.

Another relevant research limitation relied on the nature of the extracted data, which consisted of only publicly visible user reactions and content. A further research that manages to relate the findings of this benchmarking to private user behavior data would deliver much accurate findings. Private data are user behavior informations such as heat maps, click through rates, bounce rates, website traffic and demographics of audience members. When relating private user behavior data with publicly visible user response data it is possible to find out how non-participative users behave on social media. This represents an important research point because only a small fraction of audience members reacts to content publicly while an unknown estimate of cases only sees or shares privately content. Public user reactions are liking, sharing or commenting while private user reactions are clicks on content or sharing it via private message.

A further meaningful related research would be a research that focuses on user reactions and interactions specifically in business platforms. Business platforms have particular user interaction functionalities where reactions are partly publicly visible such as interest groups, employee ratings and events. Xing has special functionalities that could lead to interesting findings when measured, such as public employee rankings or interest groups. These features indicate user engagement and were only measured on a statistical level on this benchmarking due to time limitations. Prospectively if changes in data policies allow a dashboard tool for business networks to be developed, a further related benchmarking study of a larger time period regarding business networks would be an interesting complement for this research.

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## **Appendix**

All following informations were saved on the corresponding CD:

Business page snapshots

Screenshots of top posts

Tables and diagrams

Spreadsheets with data

Hereby I declare that I have written this work independently without external help and used no other sources and resources than those I indicated to have used. All literally extracted text passages are marked as quotes with respective sources.