



## Analysis of B-2-C Social Media Communication in Germany

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### ABSTRACT

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In this research paper, social media marketing activities of social media accounts from German business are analyzed for the social networks Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Xing and LinkedIn. As research objects were the context of the interaction, the used and targeted social network functionalities and the behavior of the companies selected. The selection of social media accounts for the research included companies which are currently member from the stock market indices DAX and MDAX, additional online and offline retail business, successful German sports clubs, celebrities and others businesses. Also and to be sure to evaluate high-class social media marketing, the German social media award winners from 2015-2017 were analyzed. Out of the results of those two analyses, the results were derivative. The results display different usage approaches between the researched networks and the business fields. As result of the research, several contexts approaches for social media posts are defined. The results contain suggestions for the standardization of those contexts and the different approaches how functions from social networks can be used for user interactions. That includes the targeted reactions and standardized reactions of user interactions.

### 1. Introduction

This research paper is part of a research project regarding the evaluation of the influence of a socio demographic variable on the usage of Internet services. Out of previous research from the field of business transactions in electronic markets and the field of customer analysis in the German market, especially for online customers, the following questions were constructed which are a scientific base for this publication:

1. Can similarities in the usage of social media be identified for different research business areas within the German online market?
2. Which functions of social networks can be used for the interaction with users?
3. Which users currently use functions of social networks for their response?

The target of this paper is to provide an analysis, based on the questions above, from the usage of social media from enterprises in Germany. The contribution of this paper is the aggregation of the results of the analysis which followed the mentioned questions. The aggregation happens in standardized contexts for social media artifacts, following the approach of a pattern for social media, as displayed in the theoretical background of this paper. The suggested contexts included the user, product and company perspective onto social media. Besides the context of the social media, communication also used functions, and media types were analyzed to provide a standardized set of social media artifacts. For the standardization of the interaction with users and customers, the reaction to interaction is also analyzed.

For the research, a qualitative analysis of German social media awards winners and existing social media accounts of German enterprises and entertainment proceeded. The accounts and award winners are analyzed regarding their technical usage of social media channels and social networks, their targets and the context in which they provide social media posts. The researched accounts are introduced in detail in the research design chapter. The result of the qualitative analysis is displayed in the research result chapter. In that chapter first, the different researched enterprises are described qualitatively. Next, the aggregated contexts are displayed, followed by the possible media types and functions, which can be included in a social media artifact and the possible reactions

### 2. Literature Review

In the current time, social media has become more and more necessary for companies for customer binding and to create customer value as with the long-tail-approach (Scott, 2007, p. 17-19). Online social networks are currently working, taking (McCarthy, 1978) four Ps into consideration, as a good place for companies to promote their products. McCarthy introduced by in 1978 already the usage of direct-to-user channels for direct interaction and direct sales support with end customers without additional sales between. During the last years, social networks have become the main area for marketing activities and reach customers (Linke, 2011). This development has taken place largely due to the establishing of Web 2.0 which focuses on interacting with users and customers (Bonsón & Flores, 2010). To gain an in-depth understanding of the market, it is necessary to view social networks as

tools and market participants. Regarding the target groups, the available social networks in Germany can be distinguished between business and private oriented social networks. Business social networks in Germany are LinkedIn and Xing. Private oriented social networks are networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Both kinds of networks are used by the international used user differentiation of digital immigrants and digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Foresighted to the results of this research paper it should be already mentioned that business networks (Xing/LinkedIn) were not used often for social media by German enterprises. Facebook itself had the highest reach in the field of those digital natives in Germany in the past (Wodzicki et al., 2014). In 2017 Facebook is still the number one social network in Germany for all kind of users, with an active user base of over 30 million accounts of German-speaking users (Statista, 2017). In the field of very young users, in the age between 14 and 17 years, Facebook is in Germany, as also in other countries, not anymore the first choice for social media interaction (Mundt, 2015). In Germany especially the age range between 17 and 34 uses Facebook. For younger people, SnapChat and Instagram is the current place to be. The reach of the network SnapChat in Germany still low in comparison with Instagram, Twitter or especially Facebook (Statista, 2017), which is the reason why this research will only focus on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and the two business networks Xing and LinkedIn.

Beside the reach in the networks and for the available user base in Germany, also the available functionality is an important criterion for social media interaction. The mentioned social networks differentiate in the term of available functions. The available amount of functions were analyzed and compared in (Linke, 2017). Facebook provides the widest range of functionalities. Instagram itself provided the lowest range. Twitter provides a little bit more functionality as Instagram but does not reach the completeness of Facebook. The amount of functions in a social network supports the users in his interaction and allows a professional social media using a broader range of interaction possibilities. For the users of social media and those people who interact with social media, the interaction can be described as customer journey (Core, 2017). The customer journey has become more and more important with the increasing influence of social networks on marketing. Social media content should fulfill special requirement so reach social network users on a personal base. Moran suggests that the content must be relevant, real and responsive to the social network user (2008, pp. 25-34). Social media content and social media posts itself can differentiate in their context regarding the objective which they are used for (Gillin, 2009, p. 181-184). In general social media has become a way for a business to support their brand creation and brand support by integrating customers and social network user into the creating and communication process in online social networks (Neudecker et al., 2015).

For the analyzing of customer and business interaction different pattern languages exists. The patterns from those languages are following the approach of (Alexander, 1979, p. X) who defined simplified as a provider of standardized solutions for recurring problems. For the analyzing of social media interactions, two pattern languages can be identified which focuses mainly on the customer interaction. Gaikhorst et al., (2013) provide social media pattern for social media usage at news agencies and in social media news channels and identified the following pattern:

Those patterns itself are slightly general and cover the interaction in social media, but do not provide detailed solutions or user interaction

approaches in a dedicated context. Also the ways of interaction, from the feature perspective of a social network, is not covered detailed

**Table 1:** Social Media News Pattern

Pattern name	Description
Comment and Discussion	Request the users for comments on a shared artifact. Users can access their expectations/opinions on the topic and use their online voice.
Connect	The connection between other users in the social network for a relationship or support of a relationship.
Create	Allows readers to create own content like logos, photos e. g. for a suggested topic and provide stories or other stories on the topic.
Other Ways	Those include the tagging of content with a hashtag, or persons or pages. Live coverage or videos news.
Share and Post	Sharing content with friends or followers in social. Content can be shared without adding something or with a comment.
Vote, Rate and Recommend	Rate, comment or vote for products, profiles, stories or other media content. Those include the usage of the like or interaction button.

**Source:** Author's construction based (Gaikhorst et al., 2013)

Beside those patterns, Tidwell (2010) introduced a set of patterns for the design of social media interaction and the design of web applications. Those pattern covers new and similar fields of social media interactions but were also partly general and more or fewer advice regarding the interaction with users in social media.

**Table 2:** Selection of Pattern for Social Media

Pattern name	Description
Editorial Mix	Provide a mix of news, human-interest content, photos and other media. Avoid self-promotion.
Personal Voices	Encourage individuals to use their voice, separate from the business social media streams. Let them publish blogs, guest posts and, other social media channels.
Repost and Comment	Post content which is not produced by yourself or your company. Add a fitting comment if necessary or possible to invite your reader for comments.
Conversation Starters	Posts questions, riddle, or topics for discussion. Let your follower posts answers and carry on a conversation.
Timing Strategy	Place your posts according to the usage of your channel. Some require more, some less. Cross-Posts content.
Specialized Streams	Provide Multichannel – for different customers and specialization

**Source:** Author's construction based on (Tidwell, 2010)

In general, the displayed patterns are more abstract and try to cover a more Meta description of an issue. Based on the idea of those patterns the following research should evaluate the context of social media to provide an overview about the different approach and to close the gap a little bit which interaction and context scenarios are possible within the field of social media.

### 3. Research Design

The research is preceded by qualitative analysis and contains two parts:

- The analysis of social media award winners in Germany
- The analysis of social media accounts from different B-2-C social media actors

The social media award winners were selected to have a fundament on good and best practices in the field of social media in Germany. Due to the expectation that market leaders will have social media on a serious level, those business participants were evaluated in the next step to identify additional social media usage approaches. For the analysis of the social media award winners in Germany, the 14 golden, silver or bronze awards winners from the category social media campaigns/offers of the German Digital Award Events 2015-2017 (BVDW, 2017) were analyzed. The awarded content was analyzed and compared regarding approach, target, using social media channels, strategic approach, and context of the campaign or social media offer. The companies which won a social media award came from all different kind of business, including different business sizes. A focus itself did not appear, except that business to business social media communication had only a minor appearance.

Beside those social media award winners, B-2-C social media actors from Germany were also analyzed. The actors were selected with the target to included different kinds of business areas and different perspectives on the usage of social media. Due to the overall research on B-2-C communication only business was selected which has a core focus on B-2-C. As first field companies from the German stock market which are listed in the German stock index DAX were selected (DAX, 2017). Due to an existing focus of B-2-B companies in the German stock index not all company from the index were included in the research. Also not more as three companies were selected from a business area to restrict the scope.

**Table 3:** Research item set DAX members

Business area	Company	Description
Automotive	BMW	Premium car manufacturer.
	Continental	Tire manufacturer.
	Volkswagen	Transnational motor vehicle manufacturer.
Finance	Allianz	Insurance company B-2-B and B-2-C.
	Commerzbank	Global finance institute.
	Deutsche Bank	Global finance institute.
Others	Adidas	Sportswear manufacturer.
	Deutsche Lufthansa	German Airline.
	RWE	Electricity utility company.

**Source:** Author`s work

In the second field, business area of digital business was included in the research. That set includes two companies which were listed in the 2nd level stock market index in Germany (MDAX) and often in the media presented start-up company. The field of digital business was selected because in the DAX no modern digital business companies are currently listed.

**Table 4:** Research item set Digital Business

Company	Description
Check 24	Comparison shopping website, MDAX member.
MyMuesli	Established custom mixed muesli provider B-2-C.
ProSiebenSat.1 Media	TV and Online Media company, DAX member
Xing	Business Social Network, MDAX member.

**Source:** Author`s work

As a third research field, retail companies were included. The field of retailers is used, because of the direct relationship between retailers and customers. This set includes online and offline retails companies. Those companies are mostly family held and not listed on the stock market. The selection criteria were first to market capitalization (Absatzwirtschaft, 2016; Hofmann, 2016). As second selection criteria, the target groups were taken into account to receive a higher differentiation.

**Table 5:** Research item set retailers

Business area	Company	Description
Supermarkets	Aldi Nord	Traditional transnational discount supermarket chain.
	Edeka	Supermarket corporation with positive brands.
	Lidl	Modern transnational discount supermarket chain.
Niche Retailers	Alternate	Dedicated supplier for (Game) PC Hardware.
	Conrad Electronics	Intermediate goods for electronic purposes and gadgets.
	Tchibo	Nondurable and selected durable goods for consumers and customers.

**Source:** Author`s work

In addition to business companies, the areas of celebrities and sports club were included in the research. The celebrities were selected base on their success and leading usage of a social media channel. The sports clubs were selected based on their reach in Germany. For the sports football, two sports clubs were included in the research.

The selected enterprises and entertainment businesses build a population sample for business to consumer interaction in the German market without a focus on a specific business or field of industry. The different groups of the research items itself cover different areas of customer

supplies and differentiate itself between their relationship to electronic markets and to the Internet itself.

**Table 6:** Research item set Celebrities and Sport clubs

Business area	Company	Description
Celebrities	Bibi Heinicke	Leading entertainment oriented German YouTuber.
	Thomas Gottschalk	Long-time Actor, Night Talker, and Saturday Evening Show host.
	Tilman Schweiger	National highly successful actor, director, and producer.
Sports clubs	Adler Mannheim	Leading German Ice Hockey team.
	Borussia Dortmund	2nd best German Football team.
	FC Bayern Munich	Leading German Football team.
	Ratiopharm Ulm	Leading German Basketball team.

**Source:** Author's work

Some of the research items have a high focus on offline markets itself or have products which are mainly distributed by other companies to customers. Other companies in comparison have a very high level of e-commerce orientation or focus highly on digital businesses models, including Internet broadcasting.

The selected research items are evaluated regarding their use of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as main social media channels. Their social media offers are analyzed regarding cross-postings of similar content and on specialized streams for subproducts. The content streams on the accounts were analyzed regarding the context in which it was presented, the way the content was distributed and the functions which were used from the social network. Also, the research items were analyzed regarding their usage of LinkedIn and Xing if available. Due to the different integration of company pages in those networks the analysis in this field regarded the usage in general. The qualitative description was analyzed afterward regarding similarities and defined by categories. Those categories were reviewed again if they fitted onto the content and behavior of the examined accounts..

#### 4. Research Results

The research results contain the results from the analyzing of the social media award winners and the analyzing of the selected business areas. Out of both analyses, the results regarding the context of social media and used functions were conducted.

##### 4.1 Results Social Media Award Winner

In this field, the 14 winners (gold, silver bronze) from the period of 2015-2017 were analyzed. The majority of the winners were awarded for their storylines, which they presented to social media users. The group of storyline winners contained two subgroups. In the first group, they tried to motivate the customers and followers from the company to interact with the company. For this, mostly a dedicated hashtag was used. In the second group, the storylines were established to receive additional media coverage, also outside of the social media accounts

from the company. It was targeted to be covered by other media like TV or newspapers with the goal to increase the reach of the campaign without the information that a company is behind the story. When reach was created on the topic from the storyline, the company behind the story appears and gets additional traffic onto their homepage and social media channels. In the most of those storylines "external" requests were integrated. Usually, companies receive contacts from customers in social media. In this case, the contact is fake and organized by a media agency.

The other winners were awarded for high-quality social media content in the field of production quality, supporting of offline events, a combination of offline and online events or for the integration of new social media functions. Those social media functions were activities as the interaction with social network users via a chatbot and the integration of live video streaming, the hijacking of a hashtag and the interaction of emotions as interaction channel between the businesses and users.

##### 4.2 Results Social Network Accounts

For the results in this field, the restriction applies that the research was not proceeded to analyze brands in detail and to provide best practice approaches for a dedicated business field. In this analysis, it was researched which kind of content was provided in which context and which techniques were used.

As general finding regarding the analyzed accounts, it can heighten that nearly none of the analyzed business areas provided specialized streams for their products. The approach of cross-posting is instead widely used. The content which is provided by the accounts differentiates. Some accounts were following an editorial mix, somewhere only focused on product promotions or specific kind of posts. Not all of the accounts focused on conversations with social network users. Even the reposting and commenting on user interaction is not always used. That might differentiate on the targeted branch and on the company behavior itself.

For the different sectors the following results can be displayed. In the automotive sector, the focus was on emotions. Those emotions were created in a way as presenting actual car products in a specific setting which fits the lifestyle or lifeworld approach of the client base. The reactions of the users were mostly very high, including the sharing of media content from the side of the users. Especially BMW customers were engaged to present their keys in front of the steering wheel from their BMW. Emotions were also generated by presenting old cars and information about racing. The presentation in a setting seems to be an important factor, which also applies to the tire manufacturer Continental. Continental provided a mixture of information about their products and events. If products were presented, they were always presented in combination with a sportive or special kind of motor vehicle. Nearly none of the posts in this field included the tagging of other accounts, but a focus on the branding of hashtags existed.

The social media marketing behavior from the participants from the field of finance business was similar. None of them had a dedicated sub-account for a special product offer or special customer base. All of them were focusing on company news and did not focus on product offers. In the usage of media, the main focus relied on the use of text and images. If the video were used, the videos were always on a high-quality level. In general, the communication was very professional. The Commerzbank was a little bit more leisure as the Deutsche Bank. The insurance company Allianz even used once emoticons for a vote. In

general, the accounts were mostly used for the communication with business stakeholders like shareholders. Those focuses applied to all researched social media channel types. In the field of the usage of Twitter other accounts were often tagged to provide more information about the shared news.

In the field of "others", no similarities exist, because of the different brands. The energy company RWE was not using social networks for customer interaction, even when they are involved in B-2-C. Adidas itself has established sub-channels for different customer groups, but those channels seem to be organically developed. A similarity in the structure of those channels was not found. Like Adidas, the companies Deutsche Lufthansa and ProSiebenSat.1 Media used cross-posting for their social media content. Regarding the communication, differences can be shown. Adidas did not interact with customers as the two other companies do. Lufthansa was very professional in their communication with customers, the media group ProSiebenSat.1 Media were more informal and more entertaining. Deutsche Lufthansa and ProSiebenSat.1 Media had together that they used (retweet or via sharing) content from users. Regarding the content, Adidas focused on brand building via product posts including the usage of dedicated product tags. Those might include the posting of sponsored athletes. Deutsche Lufthansa focuses on emotion by using images from airports and traveling destinations. The service itself was in focus, not the transport device the airplane. Airplanes were mostly displayed in a dedicated context like an event or an anniversary. In media, Adidas and ProSiebenSat.1 Media used more videos instead of images. Deutsche Lufthansa was her more traditional, but using image sets. All companies used hashtags, but mainly outside of Facebook. Highlighted should be the handling of contracted stars by ProSiebenSat.1 Media, which strongly tags and shares content from their stars and integrates them into storylines.

The social media usage in the digital field business differs strongly. Xing and MyMuesli were mostly presenting Tips and Tricks for real life. MyMuesli focused on recipes for the usage of muesli for different kinds of meals besides their usage as cereal with milk. Xing provided tips and tricks for better work experience and the work environment. For this Xing had established the dedicated Xing News channel in several networks. For official company-related news, a different account was used. Both companies used the same content approach across their channels in the different social networks. Both brands interact with their customers in an active basement. Check24 itself was providing product offers without additional value. At Instagram, Check24 had the approach to only publish pictures with the brand color blue. In general, the customer feedback for this brand was very low and contained mostly comments from unsatisfied customers.

The social media usage from the retailers Edeka and Lidl were similar regarding their approaches to creating life worlds for their customers. Both were presenting recipes for their customers. Edeka was focusing on a more modern country or rustic style by focusing on high-quality ingredients. For this, they were using the same media content (images) for all social media channels. Lidl instead seems to target a younger customer group by integrating their offers into events or storylines with recurring actors. Lidl even worked with live video and included as additional value special events or ideas (not advertisements or offers) from local markets. The traditional retail brand Aldi Nord is currently still not active in social networks.

The field of online retailers focused on the production of emotions and lifeworld experiences by their customers. All businesses focused on

nearly all channels on the product promotion. The brand promotion was the second focus. Each of them used cross-promotion for their media content. The content was mostly branded. The more technical related brands Alternate and Conrad Electronics included in their social media channels real experiences from their users, provided looks behind the scenes and information about sponsoring and events. Conrad Electronics asked their users dedicated to the sharing of their experiences and shares user content in the social networks. Alternate and Conrad Electronic were also using similar hashtags for their different social media channels. Regarding the used media Alternate was focusing on images. Conrad Electronics used videos as a video blog or for video news. The video content was not targeted at a high-quality level. Tchibo focused in their product promotion mainly on video and tried to generate direct sales in their online shop. Their videos were produced as web videos, but with an approach to reach a certain level of quality. Interesting was the approach of Tchibo to integrated their products into motivational and emotional postings. Those were set up as images. In those cases, the promotion of the product was not in a strong focus as in the promotion videos.

In the field of social media for sports clubs, a difference exists between the big clubs from the field of football and the small clubs which were leaders in basketball and ice hockey. The football clubs were mainly focusing on emotions (current and past), informed about the current status of the team like a newspaper and provided snippets of cooperations with sponsors. The small clubs were similar in the field of current status about the team and the cooperation with sponsors. In the field of emotions, they were more focusing on the team itself and current winnings. Also, both small clubs had a strong focus on the next games of the team including information about online ticket sales. Also, both small teams were providing information about fan gear on their social media channel. For all teams, it was similar that the media which were used was partly branded. Sponsors and players were often tagged in the posts. The celebrities had in common that they were presenting their private thoughts and opinions. Interesting was that all three were focusing on the specific channel social media channel, like Thomas Gottschalk on Twitter. If the celebrities were active on other social media channels, they were trying to guide the interaction with fans onto those preferred social media channel. For interaction with fans and other celebrities, tagging was used actively.

#### 4.3 General Differences between the Researched Social Networks

Each researched business or sports club was available on Facebook. The usage approaches itself differed a lot. The only similarity was that nearly all company did not use the comment section for business pages. Those were nearly hidden from each account. The communication on Facebook was in the most cases informal. The exceptions were more traditional companies, especially from the finance sector. Those companies were also very limited in the interaction with user answers in the comments. The interaction itself goes more informal as more B-2-C oriented a company is and as more customer interaction happens. The comments from the page owner of highly B-2-C oriented products contain during the last posts an increasing amount of animated gifs. Like a new trend to show more interaction in the reaction to users. In those cases, animated gifs were sometimes selected randomly and in some cases related to existing Memes. Regarding the content which was provided through Facebook, no focus applies in general. All companies in Germany did not use twitter. The accounts itself seemed to be growth unplanned and organically, which displayed for some companies accounts with a public relation or country extensions. The used itself was very different. A focus here can be set on interaction with other

brands even by more traditional companies. Nearly all companies included dedicated pictures to their posts. Only traditional companies were using more text related tweets. The content itself focused mostly on media about the company or related content. The usage of tagging of other accounts was higher as in Facebook. The usage of hashtags was also higher. On Instagram, nearly every company was available, partly with international accounts. In general, the B-2-C companies are trying to provide a German-speaking account. Regarding the usage of business, this is an easy option, because nearly every post did not contain long text, was strictly focused on the images and contained hashtags. Video content or Instagram story was currently not used strongly. The used hashtags were mainly general, contained product names and English hashtags. Regarding the user acceptance, Instagram displayed a clear difference between the producer of consumer goods which rely on a high level of emotions and other companies. The producer of consumer goods like cars or clothing seems to receive a higher level of likes and followers automatically on Instagram. From those companies, the posts in Instagram were focusing on emotions and experiences. The posts were following lifeworlds and lifestyle approaches. For this the posts were not only related to actual products, but also historical achievements and products were presented. The accounts from retailers or banking business were not frequented on such a high level. For those accounts, which were not related to brand-related consumer goods, two different approaches could be distinguished.

First, there were accounts which provided information about the company itself, like from special days, conferences, new products or upcoming events. Those were mostly accounts which were also using cross-posting. Cross-postings occurs of course also for the highly emotional related consumer goods, but in those cases, the cross-posts were more selected. Besides those companies which provides a wide range of information about their company the group of product promoters exists. Those, which were mainly (online and offline) retailer, were providing only product posts and no additional information about the company itself. In those cases, the customer was targeted to purchase the products online. For the accounts which focused on the sales via Instagram the restriction on the ability to implement outgoing references is still a problem. Nearly none of the researched account displayed a high level of activeness in the field of user comments including the reaction of those comments. The main focus for the use of Instagram seems to be the receiving of like, if the account were used. Some accounts, especially from the field where sales approaches apply, were trying to increase their reach by increasing the amount of hashtag at their different posts.

Beside the leisure social networks, the appearance of the companies on the business networks was research. For the researched business networks the following description can be done: All researched companies had a business profile in the business social network Xing. Sports clubs were only limited available. Some of the reviewed profiles were automatically generated by Xing. For companies, Xing offers a free and a premium version of company profiles. The premium version allows the individual setup of the company landing page including videos, pictures and received awards. Included in this version is the feature to publish company news. Those can be read on a separate view on the company page. The news can be streamed into news feeds from users who have subscribed to the company. The free accounts are limited to a stub company article, minor additional information, and a listing of employees from a company. A disadvantage of those free accounts is that they are used for the branch targeting advertisements from premium account holders. In free accounts, other related

companies are suggested as an alternative for the currently viewed company. Nearly 80% of the researched business had a premium account. For the usage of premium accounts, two different kinds of usage approaches could be identified: The first are companies which were presenting the company as whole including views behind the scenes. Those were implemented by adding additional pictures from the production view or videos about the company itself or departments. The second group was companies which were mainly focusing on the direct promotion of employment possibilities. In that group two kinds of approaches could be identified: The first were providing additional information with videos with employee statements. The other section in the group was only focusing on the promotion of pure job offers to view the company news. In those situations, the company news nearly only contained job offers. Regarding the actuality of the news in the different company views, it can be pointed out that the DAX companies used that option sometimes for cross-posting of existing content. A majority of accounts were not filled with actual information. The amount of feedback from the user based on company news in Xing was in general cautious. In LinkedIn, nearly all businesses were available, including the global sports clubs. Only a few businesses had done the effort to design the company page. Almost none of them used the page to provide actual information about the company, except multinational companies with international financial stakeholders in their background. The most used the page for the publication of job offers. The functions on the company page itself are quite limited. LinkedIn itself does not provide a premium version of their company landing page. Similar to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram LinkedIn offered Sponsored Content as service to business customers. With this function, it is possible to advertise special content from the business page like news to other users from the network.

#### 4.4 Context and Target of Social Media artifacts

From the research, several contexts for social media messages were extracted. It is possible that one post covers different kinds of contexts and the contexts are combined. Between the contexts, a focus on users, products or company could be distinguished. The following context overview of social media artifacts was evaluated:

**Table 7:** Identified context settings for a social media artifact – Company related

Context	Description
„Private“ information	Providing of private experiences from a stakeholder or a member of the social media channel owner, e.g., participants an on an event or from an official meeting.
General Information	Providing of general information, which is not directly related to the brand, but relates with the interested from the stakeholder of the brand (e.g., information about legal changes).
Public Relation Issue	A press statement like in a reaction to a shitstorm.
Recruiting	Information about new jobs, employee benefits or offers to potential employees.
Social Support	Information about the development of a sponsoring from the company to associated stakeholders or support of social actives by 3rd parties.

Source: Author`s work

**Table 8:** Identified context settings for a social media artifact – Product oriented

Context	Context definition
Discount Offer	An offer of a discount on a purchase of a product or service.
Event	Information about an event related to the brand, service or product or for a stakeholder.
Product	Information about an actual product or service of the brand. Might include a press release.
Test Results	Providing information about (external) test results about the brand, products or services.

**Source:** Author`s work

**Table 9:** Identified context settings for a social media artifact – User-centered

Context	Context definition
„Extern“ notification	A notification, image or other media content from the “Internet or social network user.” In this case, the interaction is planned and proceeds by the social media channel owner or a hired social media agency. The whole interaction is faked.
Contest	Information about a contest regarding a brand, product or service.
Current Emotion	In those posts, a current emotion is communicated by the account holders. The emotion can be very general and is mostly be related to a current situation. This situation can be a simple “Thank goods it’s Friday” or “Puh, the weather is quite hot – we are cooling down a bit.”
Experience	Information about the experience with the brand, a product or service. Must not be related to an event or based on specific reasons. Might include user-generated content or professional content which looks like user-generated content.
Extern interaction	Reaction on an external interaction with the social media account holder. In this case, the interaction is authentic.
Historical	Historical posts can be related to an anniversary or former product, event or service which was promoted or produced in the past by the social media channel holder.
Motivational	Motivation and support of the user for his lifestyle. Can contain motivation saying/image.
Special Day	Participation on a special day, like 4th of May (Star Wars day) or father’s day.
Tips & Tricks	Tips and tricks related to the users based which related to the offered products and services
Trend Follower	Participation in an online trend like a Meme, new app (e. g. FaceApp) or viral activity in the Internet (e. g. Mannequin challenge)

**Source:** Author`s work

In the following table, the different kinds of media content are describing which were used for social media artifacts. Those media types can also be used in a combination of a combination of Text and Live Media or a Fixed Media with a Legal Restriction.

**Table 10:** Media types which are included in social media artifacts

Media type	Context definition
Application	Includes an application like a game, which is developed in the framework from the social network, an app for customers like a fan app where you can paint your face with the color from your favorite team or a link to an external application on a web page.
Emotion	As status or included in text or fixed or live media.
Fixed Media	Fixed media content is defined as prefabricated media content. This kind of content includes videos, static or animated images (gif) and sound. Fixed Media can be presented as a set of fixed media artifacts (e. g. image gallery). Fixed media can be branded to avoid misuse of the content or to increase the reach in case of external sharing outside of the original account.
Legal restriction	Due to local laws, it might be necessary to include in the social media post a note for consumers. Those can be necessary for medical or financial products.
Live Media	Live audio or video stream. The stream can be provided as a link to an external web service or presented via the media player from the social network.
Reference	Reference to another artifact on the Internet. Can be established as the tag of a user or other account in the social network or by sharing of a link as a reference to external web pages.
Text	A message is written as text. The text itself can include emoticons.

**Source:** Author`s work

Regarding the usage of media types and the following social network functions it is important which social media channel or which social network is targeted or selected for the publishing of the social media artifact. Due to the technical differences between those channels and the available features, the selection reduces the number of functions and reactions which can be targeted with the social media artifact. The broadest range of functions is available at the online social network Facebook. The online social networks Instagram and Twitter itself have partly a lower set of technical functions. Especially the functions in Instagram are highly restricted and focus on Fixed Media. A combination of media might be a solution for social artifacts in this network. In the next step, the analysis could identify different social network functions which are used to present the social media artifact in the social networks. Those functions were partly combined in the post to the social networks and depend in their usage also on the functional approach from the social network.

**Table 11:** Used functions in a social media artefact

Function	Functional description
Feeling	Included the emotional function of a social network, like “feeling amused/crazy/...” in Facebook, into the post to present more information about the current feeling.
Hashtag	Includes the usage of a hashtag (#) for the content. The research displayed different kinds of hashtags usages like for brands (e.g. #Adidas #BMW), products (e.g. #X5 #BBQSauce), special events (e.g. #ROR17), emotions (e.g. #mondaymotivation) or general (e.g. #luxury #industry40). The usage of a hashtag can include the hashtag hijacking, like from a currently happened event.
Location	Provides the location to which an artefact is related.
Sharing	Including of a (social network) external content, e.g., via link onto the social media artefact.
Tagging	The tagging can include customers, business or other users of the social networks which might be related to the shared artefact. The tagging is done via the use of the @ character and the ability to tag an account is related to the security settings from the user account which is tagged.
Voting	Provides the ability to the audience to vote on a dedicated topic. The answers can be preset or provided by the audience from the social network page or timeline.

**Source:** Author’s work

**Table 12:** Targeted user reaction from the social media artefact

Reaction	Reaction description
Chat	The user is targeted to start a chat with the chat channel from the social media channel.
Comment	The user is targeted to comment on the shared social media artefact. A comment can contain fixed or live media, additional information like a link for external content or tagging of other users.
Creation	The user is targeted to be engaged to create additional content like in case of a contest. Content can be offline or online content. Offline content should be documented online like in a comment. The connection of created content via a special hashtag would be the recommended practice.
Emotion	The user is targeted to share an emotion on the shared social media artefact. That includes the function of emotion as a vote where each kind of emotion counts for a different choice.
Location	The user is engaged to share information about his location in the context of current or past engagement and interaction related to the social media post or social media channel.
Sharing	The user is targeted to be engaged to share the social media artefact on his timeline in the social network or into a different social network. By sharing the content, the social reach of the user who shares is used. His reach depends on his amount of friends/followers, the privacy settings of the users and that the friends/followers of the users have not muted/unfollowed him.
Tagging	The user is engaged to tags friends or other social network users in a comment or response to the post, like in a sharing of the post. The tagging is done via the use of the @ character and the ability to tag an account is related to the security settings from the account which is tagged. With targeting of other users possible customers can be targeted, which received the social media post as a recommendation from a friend. With this, a relationship exists up from the beginning. Also, users can be reached more directly as by sharing content into a timeline.

**Source:** Author’s work

The used functions in a social media artefact can influence the reaction which is targeted by the social network user. The following reaction could be distinguished when a user interacts with the social media artefact.

When users interact with a social media artefact, the account holder from the social media account should plan how to react to those interactions. For that interaction different kind of response could be identified:

**Table 13:** Targeted user reaction from the social media artefact

Reaction	Targeted reaction description
Tagging	Tagging of accounts (e.g. customers with the request, other brands) which are related to the post
Sharing	Sharing of the response to the social media account. Can be implemented as screenshot.
Chat	The user is contacted via chat by a real person or a chatbot.
Comment	A comment can include text and additional media.
Media	The term media is similar to the defined media types. Some accounts show that they had a prefabricated a set of animated gifs or images for commenting on user interactions.

**Source:** Author’s work

Out of the displayed contexts for social media artefacts, the media types and the social network functions a social media artefact can be built and standardized. It should include the analyzed and targeted user reaction and should include a reaction to the customer reactions.

**5. Summary and Future Research**

The following results can be determined by the previous research:

- Social media artefacts can have different kind of standardized contexts, media types, and reactions.
- Social media channels influence the interaction possibilities for a social media post.
- The reaction of a user is limited due to technical restrictions and should be taken into account when a social media post is planned or organized.
- Reaction on interaction should be planned and can be part of the branding.
- Different target groups require different communication approaches in social media.
- Dependent on the target group it should be defined how informal the interaction can and should be.
- Dependent on the interaction approach the right social network should be selected.
- Facebook provides the highest reach and the most similar user base. Twitter focuses on interaction and connection between users and accounts. Instagram focuses on the presenting of images and feelings.
- Business networks should be used for job offers and to provide a positive image of the company. It might be useful to spend additional time to do not provide only a stub in those business networks.
- From the results and previous research the following theses are conducted.



- For social media marketing in the field of B-2-C, it might be important to establish emotion with the social media posts. The emotional binding might be related to the target group.
- Standardized lifeworlds seem to be a fitting approach to determine what can release emotions.
- The including of common lifeworlds and the release of emotions provides identification to the users.

Social Media must not include communication from users; the identification can also exist through fitting content which convinces the followers or only via an emotional reaction. These propositions should be proved during future research. The research of the propositions should be combined with previous research results to extend the research for a more quality ensured business transaction process in social media marketing. The following research questions will be analyzed in the next research steps:

1. Who can the different identified social media contexts be used to support business transactions?
2. Does a measurable connection between Internet preferences and lifeworlds of users exist?
3. Does a measurable connection between interaction functions and life worlds of users exist?

How can emotion in the interaction with social networks and brands be measured?

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