

2. Theoretical Foundations

In the following section, the reader will be introduced to social media by clarifying the underlying theoretical foundations and giving an overview over the social media environment and its users. Moreover, it is important to understand how businesses can make use of social media marketing including the development of a social media strategy and the methods of monitoring and budgeting.

The reader will then be informed about the research landscape in Germany, including the academies of sciences and humanities and the higher education institutions on the one side, and Young Academics and their use of social media within the scientific environment on the other side.

2.1. Social Media Environment

The big excitement and hype about social media has slowed down, which does not mean that it has lost any of its significance. In fact, social media has reached the masses and has become an integral part of our daily life – the Internet transformed into a social web, meaning that websites without any social element hardly exist anymore (Aßmann & Röbbeln, 2013, p. 15). Technological progress and with it the change of user interactions and communication patterns have established a variety of possibilities for companies to contact and learn about customers and stakeholders. The available data in social networks enables the company to individualize and tailor both the offering and the communication to the preferences of the customer (Aßmann & Röbbeln, 2013, p. 15). Through social media, companies have the possibility to interact with the customer on an individual level and therefore get valuable insights about his needs and desires. By convincing the customer through honest and trustable actions, social media can be a mighty tool to build a positive reputation and a sustainable company image (Aßmann & Röbbeln, 2013, p. 15).

Furthermore, social media has also proven to be a channel for companies with a substantial reach. If content is relevant to social media users, they will share it within their reach of contacts, thus constantly increase the audience of the designed marketing message through the so called *multiplier* or *snowball* effect (Lorber, 2012; Singer, 2013). Brands like Old Spice demonstrated that by creating compelling content, the message can go *viral*, thus reaching a

great mass of customers in a short amount of time and with a reasonable budget, which would not have been possible with traditional marketing activities (Roberts & Zahay, 2013, p. 224).

2.1.1. Definition

„Social media is the media we use to be social. That’s it.” (Safko, 2010, p. 3). The social component in social media is defined through actions like sharing, collaborating, informing and communicating executed by human beings that are in some way connected to each other (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 25). In other words, social media are offerings on the Internet that allow its users to exchange experience, share contents and create contents themselves (Beilharz & Bernecker, 2011, p. 24).

Generally discussing the meaning of the compilation of these two words, *social* stands for the “instinctual needs we humans have to connect with other humans” with the “need to be around and included in groups of similar like-minded people with whom we can feel at home and comfortable sharing our thoughts, ideas, and experiences” (Safko, 2010, p. 4). The second part of the term, *media*, denotes to “media we use with which we make those connections with other humans” thus being the “technologies we use to make those connections” (Safko, 2010, p. 4). The Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft (BVDW, 2013, p. 150) defines social media as a variety of digital media and technologies that enable users to exchange experiences and to create medial content alone or as a community.

Within the social media environment, user interactions include the mutual exchange of information, opinions, impressions and experiences as well as the collaboration on the creation of content (BVDW, 2013, p. 150).

2.1.2. Channels

Different approaches for the classification of the multitude of social media categories and channels (in the course of this study also referred to as *platform* or *instrument*) exist. Safko (2010, p. 9) uses a detailed classification identifying 15 social media categories: *Social Networking, Publish, Photo Sharing, Audio, Video, Microblogging, Livecasting, Virtual Worlds, Gaming, Productivity Applications, Aggregators, RSS* (Really Simple Syndication), *Search, Mobile, Interpersonal*. Another detailed categorization trying to break down the complexity of the various social media tools is visualized in the Social Media Prisma by Euthority (2013), which tries to classify the numerous platforms in the German market by their main purpose (e.g. bookmarking, live stream, collaboration, etc.). For readability purposes, the

corresponding model is attached in the appendix (see Appendix 2: Social Media Prisma by Ethority).

Beilharz & Bernecker (2011, p. 27) use a broader classification and identify only six categories, describing the nature of the channel: *Blogs*, *Wikis*, *Social Networks*, *Forums & Usegroups* (communities), *Location Based Services*, and *Content Sharing Platforms*. This categorization is used in the following to explain the characteristics of the different channels. As a detailed introduction to all social media instruments is impossible due to the sheer amount of channels, this study mainly focuses on those relevant for the implementation of the BBAW's social media concept. Detailed instructions of how the implemented channels can be used to reach the Academy's goals will therefore be discussed in the implementation section of this study (see 4.4. Modulation of Channels).

2.1.2.1. Social Networks

The category *social networks* is certainly one of the stronger ones of social media, comprising a multitude of different platforms, and is often used synonymously with social media. Platform usage varies by location and age, with global players like Facebook that is popular in many countries around the world and throughout different age groups, and niche platforms that only play a role in certain regions or among certain age groups. Analyzing the German market of social networks, Facebook is clearly attracting the most users with an overall share of 64% enrolled in this social network and 56% using it actively. Stayfriends (20%) and Wer-kennt-wen (17%) are German niche platforms that have an even higher share of enrolled users than Xing (13%) or Twitter (13%), but are most common among older users (Bitkom, 2013, p. 5). Additionally, some new and trending social networks show a higher share of users in the younger segment (14-29 years old), with a 6% enrollment share at Tumblr (compared to only a 2% of the total sample) and 5% at Pinterest (compared to a 3% of the total sample) (Bitkom, 2013, p. 6).

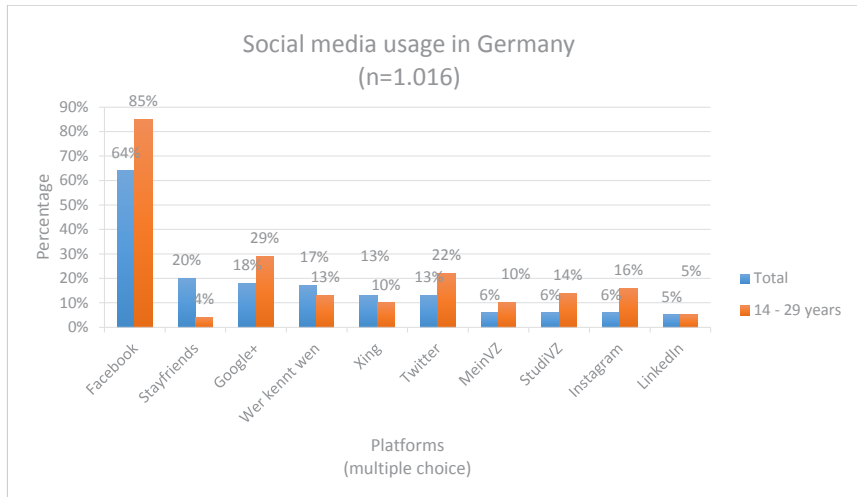


Figure 1: Social media usage in Germany

Source: Bitkom (2013, pp. 5-6)

In the following, the most important and relevant social networks in Germany will be introduced.

Facebook

Facebook offers its users to share their life with their family, friends and colleagues. By signing up with their real name, users create a profile page on which they are able to post pictures, videos, text and links they want to share with friends or even the whole world. Additionally, users can *like* company pages, bands, TV series, movies, etc. and will then receive updates about those in their *news feed* (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 274).

Facebook has grown to an impressive social network giant with users around the globe. Facebook now has 1.189 million monthly active users, 276 million alone in Europe (Facebook, 2013, p. 4). 61% of all Facebook users even log in on a daily basis. In Germany, Facebook now has 25 million monthly active users, with 19 million (76%) using the platform on a daily basis (Wiese, 2013).

Twitter

Users of the real-time medium Twitter can share their thoughts in posts limited to 140 characters. The real strength of this social network is the direct communication in real-time. The posts to the platform (*tweets*) can be tagged with so called *hashtags* (e.g. #weather) in order

to put the posts in public categories. Thus, public discussions about trending topics are made possible. Twitter is also often used at conferences or TV stations (*second screen*) to enable an interactive element or discussion with the audience (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 227).

As of the third quarter of 2013, Twitter has 231,7 million monthly active users, which is an increase by 65 million users (+39%) compared to last year's third quarter (Constine, 2013). Although growth numbers are still high, they are decelerating, as the monthly active user growth compared to the previous year was 44,37% for Q2, and 47,82% for Q1 (Constine, 2013). According to a study by Globalwebindex (2012), only 6% of German Internet users use Twitter actively. According to another study, 825.000 Twitter accounts tweeting in German were identified in November 2012 (Pfeiffer, 2012). Reasons why Twitter hasn't been successful yet in reaching the masses in Germany are manifold. One reason could be that Facebook was more accessible for German Internet users and they don't see the need to sign up for another social network with comparable features. Others see the limited possibilities and features of Twitter (e.g. only 140 characters per post) as an obstacle for Twitter's growth in Germany (Tantau, 2013).

Google Plus

Google Plus (Google+) is Google's response to Facebook in trying to get a bigger slice of the social media cake. Integrated into Google's massive portfolio, it has a profound basis of user reach through its already existing platforms and services (e.g. Youtube, Google Mail) (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 313). Although it is often directly compared to Facebook, Google Plus differs in some functions. The general structure of Google Plus is comparable to the one of Facebook, with user and corporate profiles and a news stream. By adding special features like the organization of contacts in circles (in order to share specific content only with specific users) or the video conference feature *Hangout*, Google tries to differentiate its product (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 313-317).

Google Plus has now 540 million members, with "300 million people active in just the stream" (Gundotra, 2013). As different analysts pointed out, this number might be overrated and should be handled with care because of the activities that Google takes into account (Isaac, 2013). Also, due to a lack of official user numbers on a per country basis, user numbers for Germany can only be estimated. A projection by Circlescount (2013) projects a number of 8,3 million German Google Plus users.

Xing

Xing is a social network with a focus on the D-A-CH (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) market, targeted at professionals and the business segment. It brings employees and employers together with functions like job listings, event and conference organization or the search for assignments and cooperations (Aßmann & Röbbeln, 2013, p. 31). Users with the same specializations or professions can connect and discuss in dedicated groups, comparable to user forums (see 2.1.2.3. Wikis and Forums). Like on other social networks, there are private profiles for the individual user and corporate profiles for companies and organizations. Thus, employees can connect their private profiles with the corporate profile of their company. By using Xing, companies can publish news to their followers and find prospect employees via the social network. Additionally, the event function allows for a promotion of corporate events (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 329-333).

For the second quarter of 2013, Xing reported 13,46 million members worldwide, with 6,51 million users (48%) out of the D-A-CH region (Xing AG, 2013, p. 2). Of these 13,46 million users, 825.000 users (6%) are premium users. The majority of those paying users (801.000 users, 97%) come from the D-A-CH region (Xing AG, 2013, p. 2).

Linkedin

Linkedin is the international pendant to Xing, with the goal to “connect[s] the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.” As of the third quarter of 2013, Linkedin acquired over 259 million members worldwide (Linkedin, 2013, p. 2). Linkedin is closing up to Xing in the D-A-CH region with reaching over four million members in the area of Germany, Austria and Switzerland and, thus, should be further kept in mind (Herrmann, 2013). But, for the moment, Xing has established itself as the leading business social network in the German market.

Researchgate

The “professional network for scientists and researchers” (Researchgate, 2013, p. 3) Researchgate states as its mission to give “science back to the people who make it happen” (Researchgate, 2013, p. 2). Researchgate plans to do so by giving researchers the possibility to create profiles that provide others with information on recent publications, contributions and institutions they are involved with. This helps to identify research already undertaken and to find potential collaborators in a specific field (Cherry, 2013). Signing up to Researchgate is only possible with an e-mail address of a scientific institution or research company, making it exclusively available to researchers (Yeung, 2013).

Researchgate now has more than three million members in 193 countries worldwide offering access to over 50 million abstracts, eleven million full texts and 15.000 job listings (Researchgate, 2013, p. 2). A third of the members can be identified as active users, logging into the social network at least once a month. Still being in an earlier development stage, Researchgate already shows big potential in the specific area of science and research (Cherry, 2013).

Other Networks

Numerous other networks, some of them especially targeted at the German market, exist. In general, Wer-kennt-wen, Stayfriends, MeinVZ und StudivZ are all build on the same concept like Facebook, namely to connect to and share your life with family and friends. Wer-kennt-wen claims to have over 9 million users (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 321), Stayfriends even over 14 million users (Stayfriends GmbH, 2014). But since the rise of Facebook in the German market, those German social networks have been suffering a steady decrease in page visits (see Appendix 3: Development of page visits of selected German social networks). This development doesn't mean that they can be completely ignored when building a social media marketing strategy – depending on where the target group is present – but they will be excluded from further analysis due to the predicted development in the German market and the not matching target group of those social networks with the designated target group of Young Academics.

2.1.2.2. Blogs

A blog replaces the former news section on the company website. The wording blog is an abbreviation of weblog, which explains the chronological structure that a blog normally is built upon. The blog is a much more dynamic and up-to-date section compared to the general website and gains its social nature through a comment and subscribe feature. Blogs are an excellent tool to bundle all social media activities in one place, thus functioning as a social media hub. Once published, other bloggers are then able to refer or just link to the content, thus, creating a conversation in the social web (the *blogosphere*) and additional traffic to the corporate website (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 175). Additionally, through the integrated blog feature RSS (Really Simple Syndication), users can subscribe to the blog and are thus notified if any new content is published (Kamble, 2008). Blogs can be either hosted externally at providers like Blogger, Wordpress or Tumblr or internally on an own server. The latter method has the advantage of granting the company full control over the content and design of the blog.

Although it is difficult to state an exact number, in 2012, a total number of 200 million existing blogs was estimated, with 40% of its users having an academic degree (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 178).

2.1.2.3. Wikis and Forums

A wiki (Hawaiian for “fast”) is a social network where volunteers contribute and edit “content within articles on specific subjects” (Safko, 2010, p. 159). Thus, the collective wisdom creates a comprehensive database of articles. The most prominent example of a wiki is Wikipedia, an encyclopedia built up by users around the globe. The German version alone has now more than 1,6 million articles and 1,8 million registered users (Wikipedia, 2014). The usage of the network is much higher: according to Alexa (2014a), it is the seventh most visited website in Germany. Besides open to the public wikis, closed wikis that are restricted to specific members exist. Those wikis are often used by companies and organizations to “create knowledge management systems for retaining corporate information for collaboration and for training” (Safko, 2010, p. 159). Wikis are often the first point for users to gain information on a specific topic, and should therefore be regularly monitored for up-to-date information.

Forums, also known as (online) communities, are a “great way to engage people in an interactive ongoing conversation on a particular subject” (Safko, 2010, p. 119). Subjects discussed vary widely, from cars (e.g. Motor-talk.de) to cooking (e.g. Chefkoch.de) or general questions (e.g. Gutefrage.net). Those forums have a considerably reach of users – Motor-talk.de claims to be Europe’s biggest car community with nearly 2,4 million users (Motor-talk.de, 2014). But also smaller communities with very specific topics exist, making the exchange about a subject possible on a global level.

2.1.2.4. Content Sharing Platforms and Location Based Services

It is difficult to draw the line between social networks and content sharing platforms, because social networks are also used to share content. However, due to their main function (sharing content), and for the means of a categorization of social media, the following platforms are being considered as content sharing platforms (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 339-340).

Although audiovisual content sharing platforms dominate the market, platforms to share other content like presentations (e.g. Slideshare) or documents (e.g. Scribd) exist, but are being excluded from the analysis as they are not relevant for the developed concept for the Academy (see 4. Social Media Concept).

However, audiovisual content being shared on the social web can be divided into three categories (video, photo, and audio), as depicted in the following.

Video Sharing Platforms

The biggest and most popular video sharing platform is Youtube, which belongs to Google since 2006 (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 351). Due to the embedding possibility, videos are not only watched directly on the dedicated website of Youtube, but are found across the Internet. With the subscription feature, Youtube users can subscribe to Youtube channels created by others. Available in 61 languages, Youtube has more than one billion unique visitors that watch over 6 billion hours of video each month. But those users do not only consume, they also produce – uploading a total of 100 hours of video every minute (Youtube, 2014a). Another video platform that is getting more and more attention is Vimeo, which has a more artistic and high-quality approach than Youtube and is more difficult to use for commercial reasons due to restrictions of commercial content (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 361).

Photo Sharing Platforms

One of the most established and oldest photo sharing platforms is Flickr, which belongs to Yahoo. Flickr allows its users to share their photos in high quality with the world, in order to just showcase the created artwork or to give and get feedback. Additionally, users can discuss topics in community groups (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 367). As of March 2013, Flickr counted 87 million global users that uploaded on average 3,5 million pictures a day (Jeffries, 2013).

Boosted by the technical progress of mobile devices and the underlying infrastructure, Instagram revolutionized the mobile photography market and gained rapid popularity among smartphone users. Only available as mobile application, Instagram offers its users the possibility to apply filters to their photos (or as of late also short videos). Additionally, the uploaded content can be viewed and discussed with the global community, which now has grown to 150 million monthly active users. Those users upload on average 55 million pictures per day, and *like* other content up to 1,2 billion times a day. Facebook ceased the opportunity to access the user base, data and knowledge and acquired Instagram in 2012 (Instagram, 2013). Pinterest is another network to share visual content. Users can bookmark (*pin*) any content they find in the web on their *boards*, which function as the categories the pins are put into. Boards of others can be followed, so that new pins added by contacts will be presented to the user in a stream. Each pin is linked to the original content in the web, thus driving referral traffic to the original source (Pinterest, 2014). Pinterest has now over 70 million users and is the “fastest growing content-sharing platform” (Socialable, 2014). 68% of its users are (still) American and it mainly appeals to women, who make up for 80% of the users (Socialable, 2014).

As Instagram focuses on mobile content sharing, and Pinterest appeals mostly to the lifestyle segment, these platforms might not be suited for the requirements of the BBAW.

Audio Sharing Platforms

Although video sharing platforms like Youtube are also often used to share music, specific music sharing platforms exist. Myspace, once the biggest social network worldwide, has lost many of its users to Facebook, but still counts about 200 million registered users (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 322). Last.fm is another network that helps users to find new music based on the songs already listened to. Soundcloud, a relatively young music sharing platform with the mission to “become the Youtube of audio”, is becoming increasingly popular and had more than 38 million global users in March 2013 (Mac, 2013). On networks like Spotify and Simfy, users can find numerous tracks to listen to and share those with their friends. Spotify now has over 24 million users, with 6 million being paying subscribers who pay a monthly fee in order to gain access to premium functions like offline usage and an ad-free environment (Spotify, 2014).

Location-Based Social Networks

Location-based social networks have become popular with the ability of smartphones to track the device’s geographical position. But besides the main function of sharing the location of the users with others, location-based social networks offer additional opportunities. Foursquare, one of the most popular location-based social networks, offers its users to check in at locations like stores, restaurants or public spaces. For every check-in, users collect points and are granted badges, therefore adding a *gamification* component to the concept. The user with the most check-ins at a location becomes the “*mayor*” of this venue, and is often thanked for his loyalty with specials (e.g. a free drink) by the company operating this place (Barker, et al., 2013, pp. 268-269).

Foursquare has 45 million users worldwide, who checked in over 5 billion times, adding another couple of millions of check-ins every day (Foursquare, 2014). Official user data for the German market do not exist – but the Bitkom (2013, p. 6) survey shows a very low usage of only 1% for the German market.

2.1.3. User Characteristics and Motives

In order to understand who is using social media and why, a general description of the average social media user and his motives is given. A detailed analysis of the usage behavior of Young Academics was then undertaken in the online survey (see 3.2.2.4. Social Media Usage).

Social Media for Scientific Institutions

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Hurre, D.; Postatny, J.

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