SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON MULTIPLE SERVICES – THE CASE OF THE STUDENT RUN ORGANISATION AIESEC

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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON MULTIPLE SERVICES –
THE CASE OF THE STUDENT RUN ORGANISATION
AIESEC

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Abstract

Social Media Services like Social Network Sites and Microblogging services gain increasing attention
from enterprises. This is on the one hand for internal usage but as well for utilizing these services,
with hundred millions of users, for marketing purposes. Partly this is induced by customers losing
trust in conventional advertisements. However, to date only very limited research exists on the usage
of Social Media for marketing, called Social Media Marketing. Moreover, existing studies investigate
the marketing activities on one specific service mostly, thereby neglecting potential service induced
differences. Further an understanding of the relationship between Social Media Marketing and
conventional marketing does not yet exist. We present a case study analysing the Social Media
Marketing activities of the student run organisation AIESEC, which utilizes on Twitter and Facebook.
We specifically aim at understanding how these activities are integrated into the conventional
marketing and moreover whether differences exist in the usage of Twitter and Facebook. We find that
Social Media Marketing supplements conventional marketing in addressing specific target groups in a
transparent and interactive manner. Moreover our observations highlight differences in the use of
Twitter and Facebook, which mainly seem to relate to a focus on different target groups.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Social Network Sites, Microbloging.
1 Introduction

Advertising has changed in the last decade with a major influence being the loss of consumer trust in advertising (Clemons et al., 2007). Most notably, it has been shown that customers tend to vest more trust in recommendations by other customers than in messages coming from companies (Ermecke et al., 2009). Consequently, new concepts such as viral marketing and word-of-mouth gained widespread popularity. Hence increasingly new forms of communication and interaction on the internet get into focus of marketing activities. Especially Social Software services like Social Network Sites (SNSs) and Microblogging services offer a high potential. Examples are Facebook with alone 500 Million users (Zuckerberg, 2010) or Twitter as one of the ten most visited websites on the internet (Alexa.com, 2010). Marketing efforts that utilize such new media are subsumed under the term of Social Media Marketing. Today, many online services allow for users to recommend products or services to other users. Moreover businesses have set up online presences to connect with customers and tap into their social networks by triggering them to pass on the corporate message. However, viral marketing has not yet lived up to the high initial expectations (Clemons et al., 2007). On the other hand, research and the development of practical approaches in this field are still in their infancy. To date only few studies exist, of which most contain case studies concentrated on the usage of one service for the purpose of Social Media Marketing (e.g. Li and Bernhoff, 2010; Weinberg, 2009).

In our paper we present a case study on the Social Media Marketing activity of the student run organisation AIESEC. In this case both Twitter and Facebook are used. Our research is guided by two main research questions:

1. Are services in the context of Social Media Marketing used in a similar manner, and if not, what are the differences?
2. How is the relation between Social Media Marketing and conventional marketing?

We conducted guided interviews with decision makers that designed the marketing strategy of AIESEC. Furthermore we interviewed one member of the marketing team responsible for implementing the strategy. Moreover we analysed the activity on AIESEC’s Twitter and Facebook presences by means of a genre analysis. We find that in the case of AIESEC Social Media Marketing is used as a means to supplement conventional marketing in addressing specific target groups, being more transparent, interactive and up-to-date. Moreover, we found that Twitter and Facebook are used very different, with the most outstanding difference being the concentration on different target groups.

Our paper proceeds as follows. We start by introducing the relevant terms. Further we will briefly present selected case studies from the literature on Social Media Marketing. In section three we provide an overview on our study including a description of our methodology. We present a summary of our observations from the interviews and the genre analysis in section four. In section five we present two sets of propositions that target our above mentioned research questions. We end the paper with a short summary.

2 Social Media Marketing, Social Network Sites and Microblogging

2.1 Social Media and Social Software

Social Media is an umbrella term for a variety of applications, tools and services on the internet that allow individuals to interact with one another. There is a multitude of tools perceived as Social Media, such as weblogs, microblogging services, SNSs, bulletin boards and email among others. Social Media enables one-to-one (e.g. emails), one-to-many (e.g. blogs) and many-to-many communication (e.g. bulletin boards). Especially in many-to-many communications there are communities, in which people
connect for varying reasons (Boyd, 2008). The most defining attribute of Social Media in the context of our study is the fact that it enables individuals to communicate bidirectional. This communication is restricted by neither time nor space. Boyd and Ellison’s (2008) definition explicates Social Media therefore not by its technical specification but by its architecture enabling interaction among peers. We therefore note that Social Media includes a multitude of media and that the term defines a social rather than a technical phenomenon. Some of the above mentioned tools (i.e. SNSs, weblogs and microblogging services) are moreover types of what has been termed Social Software (Hipner and Wilde, 2005). Social Software is often portrayed as being applied and used in a “Bottom Up” instead of a “Top Down” approach (Avram, 2006), as users generate the content and define the rules and reasons for usage (Boyd, 2006). As such, Social Software subsumes tools in the context of the larger phenomenon of Web 2.0 (Boyd, 2006).

2.2 Social Network Sites and Microblogging

Boyd and Ellison define SNSs as follows: Social Network Sites are “web-based services that allow individuals to [1] construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, [2] articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and [3] view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

The most popular service of this class is probably Facebook with more than 500 Million users (Zuckerberg, 2010). Facebook was founded as a network for students of the Harvard University. Comparable to other SNSs, users can create a user profile, connect and communicate with friends, post on a friend’s wall and send a private message, among other features. The main feature of Facebook however is the newsfeed. The newsfeed is a personalized stream of messages. It contains messages from friends, updates on changes in their profile as well as notifications on their activities on Facebook. Moreover messages in relation to anything one has marked as ‘liked’ are displayed. The messages are ordered either chronologically or by a priority that is calculated by Facebook based on an analysis of comments, likes and similar. Moreover users have the possibility to share status messages they like (e.g. from a company) and thus distribute them virally. Hence the newsfeed is especially interesting for Social Media Marketing activities.

Microblogging services afford the user to post short messages and are considered to be comparable to a weblog only that the published messages are considerably smaller (<=200). Messages usually appear in a chronological order and users can follow other users in order to receive their messages. The most popular service of this kind is without doubt Twitter. As several authors have reasoned (e.g. Passant et al., 2008; Zhao and Rosson, 2009), mostly due to its simplicity Twitter has attracted millions of users. Moreover, Twitter has created increasing interest from companies as well (Riemer and Richter, 2010). Twitter was founded in July 2006. The initial idea was to tell the world what one is doing right now (Zhao and Rosson, 2009). A status update on Twitter is called a Tweet and cannot contain more than 140 characters (Naaman et al., 2010). Other major characteristics of Twitter are: Tweets can only include text (and links) and nearly all Twitter streams are public. The current use of Twitter usually includes the search for Tweets by topic. In order to mark tweets topically users can use hashtags (#keyword). Further, other users can directly be addressed or referred to (@user) (Honeycutt and Herring, 2009). Moreover, a common practice is to retweet messages that one finds to be interesting. A common notation is: “RT @user message” (Boyd et al., 2010). Through the practice of retweeting messages can reach a wide audience on Twitter.

2.3 Social Media Marketing

Weinberg (2009) describes Social Media Marketing as a process, that targets the promotion of websites, goods and services on certain Social Media services, and that has a bigger potential reach compared with conventional marketing. In contrast to other channels for marketing Social Media
fosters interaction between the advertiser and the target group. Despite the naming Social Media Marketing mainly draws on the tools subsumed under the term of Social Software that offer a public interaction with the customer. Some authors even limit Social Media Marketing to marketing activities on SNSs (Weinberg, 2009). We do not agree with this limitation but think that Social Media Marketing includes all services of the tool class Social Software and hence define Social Media Marketing similar to Weinberg (2009) as follows: Social Media Marketing is a marketing approach that utilizes public Social Software platforms as a communication channel with the customer. Main objective is to foster bidirectional communication.

2.4 Case Studies on Social Media Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Brief Summary</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>6.5 Million US Dollar total revenue from hardware sales generated through advertisement of products on Twitter. Viral marketing via retweets by the customers.</td>
<td>Guglielmo, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Blendtec</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Ironic video-messages “will it blend” are created (YouTube) and posted on various services (Facebook, Twitter, …) in order to gain attention. Blendtec’s videos have been viewed more than 100 Million times.</td>
<td>Li and Bernhoff, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ernst &amp; Young</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Recruitment of potential employees via Facebook. Detailed description of work at Ernst &amp; Young e.g. by means of video documentations. Moreover the recruiting team constantly posts questions and replies on user comment in order to contain a discussion.</td>
<td>Hillenbrand, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nestle</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Greepeace utilized Nestle’s Facebook page for creating a brand image that described Nestle as a company that does pollute the environment in a reckless way. Nestle forced the negative image in not reacting to the posted information and the discussion that afterwards emerged on their Facebook page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comcast</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Usage of Twitter for customer support. Customers can post questions and receive a public answer. In most cases questions are answered instantly.</td>
<td>Weinberg, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tyson Foods</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Posting of charity events in order to positively amend the brand image.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Public customer support (cf. Comcast)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Case studies on Social Media Marketing

To date only very few scientific publications exist on Social Media Marketing. Hence we draw on case studies from popular science in order to give a brief overview on existing practices in this area. We found seven case studies that describe practices of Social Media Marketing (see Table 1 for a summary). In all cases Twitter or Facebook have been chosen as the channel for Social Media Marketing. In most cases one service was described exclusively and only in one the usage of multiple services was described (Blendtec). However in this case YouTube was the main service and all other services (including Facebook and Twitter) were solely used for posting a link to the YouTube page. In general the cases where Facebook was used show, intended and unintended, a higher degree of interaction with the customer, in contrast to cases where Twitter was used. The usage of Twitter for customer support of course also requires a bidirectional communication; however communication was described as taking place by the exchange of single messages between customers and service representatives, with no real discussion emerging. Moreover the studies on Twitter emphasise on the positive influence on the brand image that is created by positive public messages on the company. This can be by posting announcements of charity events, but as well by a customer posting a “thank you” message for good support. Further by retweeting messages customers can positively influence
the success of Social Media Marketing on Twitter, like is described in the case of Dell. Customers retweet offers and thereby extend the reach of messages in the sense of viral marketing.

3  Study Overview

We present a case study based on guided interviews at a student run organisation that we will refer to as AIESEC, as well as a genre analysis on their marketing activity on Facebook and Twitter. In the following we will introduce the case company as well as our research methodology.

3.1  Case Company

AIESEC aims at expanding relations between different countries by organising student exchanges. It is an NGO that is financed through donations and enterprise partners. AIESEC claims to be the largest student run organization in the world with its network containing about 50,000 members in 107 countries. The current objective of AIESEC is to provide “a platform for youth leadership development” and thus giving students the opportunity to be “global citizens, to change the world, and to get experience and skills that matter today”. This shall be achieved through work on local, national and international level where students are offered the chance to lead teams in different sectors. The current strategy emphasises on leadership experience, however, supporting exchange is the core service of AIESEC. Entities on the local level raise internship positions with companies. Moreover, AIESEC has several partners on the national level, which frequently offer internship positions. These positions are offered to students worldwide. In the year 2010 AIESEC mediated about 14,000 international internships. AIESEC in Germany uses Social Media Marketing alongside traditional marketing channels to promote their work. They utilize Facebook and Twitter as Social Media channels.

3.2  Methodology

We conducted four guided interviews with representatives of AIESEC. Three interview participants were decision makers responsible for the development of AIESEC’s Social Media Marketing strategy, with the fourth being a member of the marketing team that is responsible for the implementation of the strategy. This includes the management of the Facebook and the Twitter channel. The interviews have been recorded and transcribed for analysis. The question blocks are displayed in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Main Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AIESEC’s marketing strategy</td>
<td>Please describe the marketing strategy of AIESEC. What kinds of channels are used for marketing? How can usage of these channels be differentiated? What is the role of Social Media Marketing in this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Influence of Social Software for Marketing</td>
<td>How does the usage of Social Software services affect the overall marketing activity? How did it amend the marketing strategy of AIESEC? Are other channels of marketing less actively used now? How much effort is necessary for implementing the new marketing strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Implementation of the Social Media Marketing strategy</td>
<td>What are the specific marketing tasks on Social Software services? How are these tasks executed? What kind of posts are created and why? What topics are addressed? What target groups do you want to reach?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.  Question blocks of the guided interviews

Moreover, we improved our understanding on how Facebook and Twitter are used for marketing purposes by means of a genre analysis. The genre analysis allows us to understand the existing communication practices on Facebook and Twitter (Riemer and Richter, 2010), as a base for comparing the usage of these channels for the purpose of Social Media Marketing at AIESEC. Swales
Swales (1990) defines genres as follows: “A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.” (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

We draw on the purpose of a message in order to identify the different genres. Even though the use of purposes to identify genres is discussed controversially (Askehave and Swales, 2001), we believe that it best complies to our research goal. Moreover, to enrich the genre analysis with additional information about the communication practices, we also analyse the content, the type and the target (if explicit) of the message as suggested by Orlikowski and Yates (1994). We have analysed a sample of 200 status updates of AIESEC in Germany’s official Twitter channel and 150 status updates on AIESEC Germany’s Facebook Fanpage, with both samples stemming from summer 2010. The messages have been imported into the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti for the purpose of coding. The Twitter updates are exclusively created by a representative of AIESEC Germany whereas the updates on Facebook are also being contributed by external parties like enterprise partners, members and others. We often found the status updates to have multiple purposes, those updates consequently belong to multiple genres as well. Figure 1 highlights two examples for our style of coding.

![Figure 1. Illustration of the coding style](image)

4 Presentation of Results

In the following we will first briefly summaries the results from the guided interviews. Moreover we will present the genres we have identified on AIESEC’s Twitter and Facebook presence and also how they are distributed in relation to the services.

4.1 Guided Interviews

In Table 3 we summarize our main observation from the interviews, grouped by six categories. All interviewees regarded Social Media Marketing as an important means for marketing at AIESEC. The objective mentioned mostly was to enhance the transparency of AIESEC both towards members as well as external parties. Moreover the chance for recipients to react on messages and hence interact with AIESEC was regarded as extremely valuable.

Drawing on the statements from our interviewees Social Media Marketing does not substitute any other channels for marketing, but moreover supplements them. Hence the effect on the strategy is considered to be moderate. Most noteworthy is the high number of AIESEC members that participated by posting messages on Facebook or Twitter. The interviewees reasoned that this is due to an easy accessibility of the new marketing channels. The perceived effort for marketing rose slightly, mainly in areas that are related to supervision, due to the higher number of individuals involved. Hence keeping control of the messages that are spread was perceived as problematic. One interviewee partner stated that the idea of viral marketing that originated in Social Media Marketing has spread to other areas of AIESEC and that the awareness towards comments from the community of potential partners and members rose. Further statements suggest that the Social Media Marketing efforts induced an increased transparency of AIESEC towards its members and partners.
4.2 Genre Analysis

We have identified six genres on AIESEC Germany’s Facebook and Twitter presences. In Table 4 the genres and the distribution (percentage of messages that belong to this genre) over the two channels Facebook and Twitter are displayed. In the following we will give a brief description of the genres. In presenting selected examples we have removed information due to privacy and marked the spots with: "***".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Overview on stated items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Objectives of Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>Promoting the website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing transparency (internal and external)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Informing AIESEC members and external partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presenting AIESEC as an innovative organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presence in areas where the target group is active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing awareness of AIESEC and group feeling within AIESEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Characteristics of Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>Social Media Marketing (at AIESEC in Germany) is still an experiment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compared to conventional marketing, Social Media Marketing offers a better possibility for interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Messages in Social Media Marketing have a higher relevance for the recipient as they come from friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Media Marketing is faster and more up-to-date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Implications of Social Media Marketing for marketing in general.</td>
<td>Social Media Marketing does not substitute conventional marketing channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The effort for marketing rose slightly. It is now a more constant effort that includes a large share of supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Media Marketing fosters the segmentation of target groups and allows for specifically addressing these groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ideas of Social Media Marketing (e.g. viral marketing) have been adopted for marketing in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Topics that have been selected for Social Media Marketing.</td>
<td>The messages mostly represent the topics Leadership and Exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information about events and projects within AIESEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Messages from partners of AIESEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The same topics are being posted, regardless of the channel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Differences between Facebook and Twitter.</td>
<td>Twitter is used more by companies, Facebook by individuals mostly students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On Twitter messages are posted more frequent, rendering it as more up-to-date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conversations in Twitter happen publicly whereas conversations on Facebook tend to be more private.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook offers a richer integration of media (e.g. photos and videos).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Target group and usage of channels.</td>
<td>The primary target group on Twitter comprises those from an enterprise context, it is being used to inform existing and recruit new partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The target groups on Facebook are members and potential new members therefore it is being used to inform members, promote events and recruit new members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Findings from the guided interviews

Call for participation is the first genre. Messages of this genre can be found on both services, however, mostly on Facebook. It subsumes messages that are intended to motivate the reader to participate in a specific action, e.g. an online survey. Other examples are commenting on a statement of AIESEC and sharing experiences on a certain topic. Nearly half the messages in this genre contain a link pointing at a survey or a discussion board for example. The following message can act as an example for this genre:

"Want to participate in the Global Connection Session at #AIESECIC? Check out http://ow.ly/*** and send your questions!"¹

¹ AIESECIC refers to the AIESEC International Conference
Only on Facebook we found messages of the genre *contacting AIESEC*. Messages that belong to this genre are such created by none-members of AIESEC and handle a diverse set of topics, including links to interesting articles and requests for support e.g.:

“hello guys, I really do not want to disturb you, but my friends and i are coming to Berlin on *** of *** and unfortunately the guy who should host us went urgently for business trip :((( Three of us are on AIESEC internship in Budapest now, we are coming for 3 days, could anyone host us, it will be very kind of you, thanks a lot in advance”

Further some messages are status updates on a current intern (e.g.: ”the new intern has arrived last week”). However, most messages contain internship positions that require a short term match, where a match is the identification of a suitable intern from the AIESEC database. Such messages for example look like this:

“Hey AIESEC) Urgent match to Saint-Petersburg and Moscow joint project!  TN.*** You are: active, creative, initiative? Interested in event-management? Welcome))”

Messages in the genre *for your information* are intended to inform either members or partners about news regarding AIESEC. Messages of this genre therefore mainly contribute to the enhancement of transparency, which is intended by AIESEC. Here is an example of a typical message of this genre:

“#AIESECIC in India is over. Our Nat’l EB will still enjoy the cultural diversity of India before returning to office within the next days.”

A *meta comment* is a “Comment on a group process or use of the medium” (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994, p. 552). Possible messages include statistics, e.g. on the number of Followers on Twitter but also comments on projects or legislation processes within AIESEC. This first message demonstrates the usage of this genre to inform about on-going or finished projects:

“We enjoyed the celebration of our 5 year plan “AIESEC 2010” w/ fireworks at #AIESECIC tonight. Even overachieved in several parts! :)”

Further the following message demonstrates how messages in this genre inform about statistics:

“We now have more than 2500 Twitter followers - thank you for everybody interested in us and our cause! :) Now let’s rock #AIESECIC 2010! :D”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>% of Twitter Messages</th>
<th>% of Facebook Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Call for Participation</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Contacting AIESEC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>For your Information</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Meta-Comment</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Standing</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4. Genres identified on Twitter and Facebook*

Messages of the genre *response* represent those by none-members and partners of AIESEC. We only found one message of this genre on Facebook. However, this is most likely caused by our study design. We have only analysed messages in the newsfeed stream on Facebook for reasons of comparability with Twitter. However Facebook offers the chance to reply in form of comments to a message. These comments are not included in our analysis but most likely will contain messages that would belong to the genre *response*. A notable number of messages we found on Twitter are reaction to AIESEC following another Twitter user or retweeting his/her tweets e.g.: “thank you for the RT!:)”. Further the messages of this genre also include such representing on-going conversation, however no real discussion can be observed on Twitter. A typical message would be the following:

“(@*** thank you! We will surely enjoy it and do our best! :)”
Messages of the genre **standing** are those creating a positive image of AIESEC as a brand. The genre complies with the objective to present AIESEC as an innovative company as stated by our interviewees. We found such messages only on Twitter. Messages are either retweets or contain information on AIESEC e.g. statistics. Messages that are retweeted by AIESEC usually contain statements on topics like leadership that comply with the brand image of AIESEC. A typical tweet providing information on AIESEC reads as follows:

“#AIESEC is one of the 22 world’s most #democratic workplaces for 4 years in a row now! http://ow.ly/*** #AIESECIC”

We have identified three topics that repeatedly appear in all genres: News, Exchange and Leadership. The topic news was distributed among both channels. Even though Twitter accounted for about two thirds of all messages one should bear in mind that Messages on Facebook also included messages from third parties. The Leadership topic was also distributed on both channels again with a majority of messages on Twitter (14 of 22). The majority of Facebook messages with the topic leadership were contributed by third parties (5 of 8), often advertising leadership positions abroad.

5 Discussion

In accordance with our research questions we derive two sets of propositions aiming at the differences between the Social Media Marketing channels (Twitter and Facebook) and the relation between Social Media Marketing and conventional marketing.

5.1 Differences in the usage of Social Media Marketing channels

The statistics presented in Table 4 show a strong difference in the distribution of genres on Facebook and Twitter. Most notably the genre **contacting AIESEC** is only found on Facebook whereas the genre **standing** is only found on Twitter. Moreover, all messages on Twitter and only one third (55 of 150) of the messages on Facebook are those posted by AIESEC. Both facts indicate that different usage practices prevail on these two services. This corresponds with the statements of our interviewees that perceive Twitter and Facebook as two distinct channels. They moreover state that both channels are used for different reasons. This leads us to our initial proposition which we will further specify below:

**Proposition 1**: Twitter and Facebook are used as channels for marketing in a different way and with different objectives.

Our interviewees stated that Twitter is used mostly in order to communicate with companies (partners as well as potential partners), this is well reflected in the data: All messages of the genre **standing** that are used to create a positive brand image, are found on Twitter. Such messages are often retweets of messages that articulate an understanding of topics like leadership that is shared by AIESEC. Moreover **meta-comments** on the work of AIESEC, for example events AIESEC has organised, are used to create a positive brand image. Discussion in general is regarded by our interviewees as being more public but less interactive on Twitter. Hence on Twitter AIESEC seems to have more influence on the message that is created and at the same time can reach a big audience. These observations comply with those described in the case studies presented above. Especially the case of Tyson Foods (Weinberg, 2009) shows how Twitter is used to positively annotate the brand image (cf. Table 1). Moreover the usage of Twitter as a channel for customer support illustrates how the public nature of twitter is used to present a positive brand image in sense of “do good and talk about it” (Weinberg, 2009). The related proposition reads as follows:

**Proposition 1a**: Twitter is used as a channel for improving the brand image, mostly aiming at business partners.
On Facebook the rate of messages not posted by AIESEC, being about two-thirds of the messages, indicates a much higher degree of interaction with the present community. Many messages are those of the genre **contacting AIESEC**. They include internship positions, offered by companies, requests for support from students but also comments on successful internships. Further, AIESEC tries to foster a vivid discussion by messages of the genre: **call for participation**. These messages call for participation at events, discussion on certain topics or to comment on activities of AIESEC, with most aiming at members and students. Drawing on the findings from the interview especially the latter are addressed in order to establish contact for the purpose of recruiting. However a large share of messages as well aims at members reflecting the intention of utilizing Facebook as a channel for internal communication, as well. The high level of interactivity (Hillenbrand, 2010) and the usage for recruiting (Li and Bernhoff, 2010) are reflected also in two of the case studies presented above (cf. cases of Nestle and in Ernst & Young Table 1). Hence we deduce the following proposition:

**Proposition 1b:** Facebook is used as a channel for intensive interaction, mostly aiming at internal discussion and recruiting.

### 5.2 Social Media Marketing vs. Conventional Marketing

The literature on Social Media Marketing, to date, stems from popular science mostly. This literature euphorically suggests that the possibilities of Social Media Marketing justify the demand to redefine marketing as a whole (Qualman, 2009; Weber, 2007; Weinberg, 2009). It seems intuitively reasonable that due to the characteristics of the underlying communication channel a mere transfer of practices from conventional marketing appears questionable. However, we do not think that this justifies the demand, as it is formulated. Main argument leading to the plea for redefining marketing is the growing influence of customers on a company’s brand image (Qualman, 2009; Weber, 2007; Weinberg, 2009). It is argued that through public discussions customers can have an influence on the brand image. Hence not only a company’s marketing activity but as well the opinion of customers influences the brand image other customers perceive. However, in the case of AIESEC, we find no evidence, that the brand image is influenced by none-members or partners to a notable extend. Most messages amending the brand image are posted on Twitter, where all messages stem from AIESEC. Interaction mostly takes place on Facebook and emerges around single issues mostly concerning internship positions. Moreover Social Media Marketing rather appears to complement the conventional marketing instead of repressing it. Messages and events are, in addition to other channels, posted on Twitter and Facebook. Moreover target groups can be addressed more direct. Hence messages defined by conventional marketing can be transported more effectively. Still we have to acknowledge that users can have an influence on the brand image as is illustrated in the case of Nestle (Hillenbrand, 2010). Never the less in summary Social Media Marketing rather seems to be an additional channel for conventional marketing rather than a new form of marketing itself. This is as well reflected in the statements by our interviewees: They state that Social Media Marketing is conducted as a collective effort of the marketing team and used as a channel for all kinds of messages originating in conventional marketing. We hence formulate the proposition:

**Proposition 2:** Social Media Marketing constitutes as an additional channel for conventional marketing.

Never the less, external partners seem to increasingly participate in communicating the brand image of AIESEC. On Twitter a large share of the messages are retweets (45%), which originate from external parties. Such retweets are mostly concerned with topics like leadership and reflect an opinion shared by AIESEC. Further retweets contain comments on AIESEC and events organised by AIESEC. AIESEC actively has to retweet these messages and hence can choose those that comply with the intended brand image. However, the messages present the opinion of external parties and therefore are potentially perceived as more trustworthy (Clemons et al., 2007). Customers and partners thereby participate in the marketing efforts of AIESEC similar to the phenomenon of prosuming, described in the context of the production and development of products (Klein and Totz, 2004; Schumacher and
Feurstein, 2007): The customer is thereby participating in the creation of a good. In Social Media Marketing however the customer participates in the communication of the brand image and can create and distribute advertising messages (see the example of Dell in Guglielmo, 2009). We hence proceed with the following proposition:

*Proposition 2a: Social Media Marketing includes customers and external partners as co-creators of marketing messages.*

An important reason for introducing Social Media Marketing at AIESEC was the intention to interact with target groups in a dedicated manner. In this Twitter is used to address companies, and Facebook to address members and students primarily (cf. propositions 1a and 1b). Facebook and Twitter were chosen in order to tap into communities where the target groups are already present. In accordance Weber (2007, p. 35) observes that advertisers are establishing relationships by providing content “when, where and how customers want it”. However, especially on Twitter, AIESEC tries to motivate companies to visit the official website in posting teasers with a link to news on their website. Similar behaviour was observed in the case of Blendtec (Li and Bernhoff, 2010). In this case a link to the company’s YouTube page was posted on services like Twitter and Facebook. Further reasons for engaging in Social Media Marketing, as stated by our interviewees, were the higher degree of interactivity and the intention to increase transparency and be more up to date due to the possibility of posting messages in a high frequency. This leads us to our last proposition:

*Proposition 2b: Social Media Marketing is used to focus marketing activities on certain target groups, increase transparency, interactivity as well as posting more up-to-date messages.*

6 Conclusion

We did present observations from a case study on Social Media Marketing at the student run organisation AIESEC. We conducted guided interviews and also a genre analysis on the messages posted on AIESEC Germany’s Twitter and Facebook presence. From our observations we deduced two sets of propositions. We found that Social Media Marketing in our case was used to complement the conventional marketing in transporting the self-same messages, however being more transparent, interactive and up to date. Twitter and Facebook were used in order to focus on different target groups. These target groups were companies in the case of Twitter, and members and students in the case of Facebook. As our research rests on one case study this might have induced problems concerning our observations that need to be acknowledged. Besides the obvious limitations with regards to generalisation, our research might be constrained with being specific to student run organisation. However, we think that our findings might inform future research on Social Media Marketing. Moreover, we think that our case well illustrates, that most likely various facets of Social Media Marketing exist, partly depending on the service that is incorporated.

References


