

Chapter 7

Social Networks and Cultural Differences: Adidas's Case on Twitter and Sina Weibo

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is the comparison of social media strategy on Twitter and Sina Weibo by the German company Adidas. A successful social media campaign is pushing brand awareness and companies improve their focus on that. Due to the internet censorship of the Chinese government, the social media landscape in China differs from the Western world. Therefore, companies need cultural and linguistic know how to be successful on Chinese platforms like Sina Weibo. The chapter compares how Adidas uses Twitter and Sina Weibo for their marketing purpose. Cultural differences and the local adaption of their social media appearance will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is a well-developed method and is constantly changing its rules according to the needs and developments being held in and around it. To establish itself, it has begun adopting new paradigms of business (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). The rapid development of the Internet is producing new ways to connect with the customer. One of the new forms of advertisement is Social Media. Bonnie Sainsbury, who is a Canadian influencer says: “Social media will help you build up loyalty of your current customers to the point that they will willingly, and for free, tell others about you” (e-Clincher, 2015). A blog, post or tweet can be twisted and viewed by millions almost for free and enables companies to make their own interest content that viewers will follow.

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With the help of the Internet, social media campaigns can be launched globally. As a result, companies are able to increase their brand awareness around the world. Whereas famous social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook or Instagram are famous in most of the countries, it can not be used in one of the most important markets in the world. China has draconian internet restrictions and is blocking most of the western social media platforms. As a result, western marketing campaigns are stopping right at the Chinese border. However, the restriction has supported the development of Chinese social media platforms like Sina Weibo. This platform varies much from their western counterparts. Logically, they need specific advertisement approaches to be successful in the Chinese market. So, this work is based on one central research question: the presence of a brand on the social network Sina Weibo implies adjustments compared to the presence on the Twitter network?

The terms Social Media, Web 2.0, Social Media Marketing and Microblog will be described to set the framework of the article. Second, social media platforms Twitter and Sina Weibo will be described and differences will be exposed. Besides technical differences on the platform, the article also shows cultural differences by analyzing the United States of America, Germany, and China. Communication is always a matter of culture and needs to be adapted according to the target market. Furthermore, the paper introduces the company Adidas with its most important business categories. One of the main parts of the article is the usage analyzation of Twitter and Sina Weibo. Part of the analysis is the structure, frequency of posts, the use of mediums, content, design, language, and the use of models and celebrities.

BACKGROUND

Social Media and Web 2.0

The term Web 2.0 was introduced by Tim O'Reilly and defines the business revolution in the computer industry. The change is due to the movement of the internet as a platform and the attempt to understand the rules of success for this platform. The aim is to build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them. Internet users are no longer limited to a one-sided communication flow in which companies only inform through websites. Web 2.0 effects online users by how many things they can do, interact, combine, remix, upload and customize for themselves (Shuen, 2018).

The term social media refers to all posts in the form of text, pictures, videos or audio which are created in order to get an interaction. Therefore, social media is connecting technology, content, and creativity to achieve a communicational exchange on a virtual platform (Hettler, 2012). Besides the information exchange, Weinberg, Ladwig and Pahrman (2012) focus on the fact that social media enables communication without geographical boundaries and at every time. The values of social media sites are their users and the content which users are sharing. This term of information is referred as user-generated content.

Social media platforms can be divided into three groups (Kreutzer, 2018):

1. Communication: blogs, micro-blogs, private and business social networks, Messenger;
2. Cooperation between user: wiki, rating portal;
3. Content-sharing: text-sharing, foto-sharing, video-sharing, audio-sharing.

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