



Social Media: The next generation of brand management?

The significance of Web 2.0-tools for Brand Dubai

Final Report

Brunswieck, Germany, November 2010

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I. Preface

This final report of the master thesis "Social Media: the next generation of brand management? The significance of Web 2.0-tools for Brand Dubai" is a summary of the most important results of two empirical studies. As a summary it does not include detailed theoretical background information or a profound introduction to the topic of Social Media itself as it has been part of the thesis. It is meant as a reflectance of the fundamental practical findings which are visualized by several graphical diagrams and charts. The bibliography also does not match the master thesis' one. However it holds selected parts of it and new material and statistics has been added to it. The complete bibliography of the master thesis is separately available for a download under <http://www.christinaschlegl.de>.

The graphs of this report have all been – if not labelled otherwise – developed by the author. Should they be used elsewhere users are asked to give a complete indication of source.

1. Executive Summary

The figure of online users surfing the internet casually increased from 18.3 to 49 millions during the past ten years¹ in Germany. This makes two developments evident: the rapid circulation of this medium on the one hand and the fast adoption of it within the population on the other hand. Even though TV and radio can still hold their top ranks with respectively 244 and 187 minutes² compared to the internet with 77 minutes of daily user's attention so far. It is just as well apparent that the significance of the so called "New Media" with applications such as facebook, twitter or Wikipedia cannot be ignored any more. Especially the private networks and communities are on the advance. During the last four years an

¹ cf. ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de (2010a).

² cf. ibid.

increase from 6 % in 2007 to 34 % in 2010 could be observed³. An overall rise by 24 %. Such growth rates can hardly be ignored and thus make the use of social networks like facebook appealing if not compulsory to companies, products and brands.

These indicators however have to be put into perspective to that effect that the number of active users differs dramatically from the ones that only use the internet passively. According to a user study of Fittkau and Maaß⁴ only 40 % of the users communicate actively in social networks. The study displays even a stagnation of such services. Still, it is out of question that social media has conquered its ancestral place as a communication platform within consumer-brand-dialogue. Especially the communication-specific aspects along with social ones of the internet are valued by youngsters from 12 to 19 years.⁵

The second generation of the internet, called Web 2.0, has changed user's expectations towards communication. "For today's internet users it is more and more naturally that the medium matches their requirements and integrates itself into their daily routine" (Virtual Identity AG, 2009:4). The same applies to communication between companies and consumers as well as brands and consumers.

The analysis of international secondary research (academic research, commercial market media studies and press releases) displayed a second simultaneous transformation: the rising influence of brand communities. These are increasingly being used to show sympathy and support for one's favourite brand (cf. MTV et al., 2010:5).

To recheck these findings was the aim of two empirical studies on expert level: a qualitative expert survey and a web-survey among "producers" that are social media users at the same time. Within the framework of a qualitative E-Mail-survey

³ cf. *ibid.*

⁴ cf. Fittkau und Maaß Consulting (2010).

⁵ cf. Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest (2009).

among 21 international social media experts three hypotheses could be drafted based on three key questions on the basic principles of social media applications. These hypotheses were subject to verification by an additional quantitative web-survey in a second step. For that purpose 905 e-mail invitations were sent. 100 fully completed questionnaires were received and could be analysed. The findings of the quantitative data collection verified the hypotheses of the qualitative study.

Some of the most important findings are: The bigger part of the participants uses the internet at least daily (57 %), there from 16 % even constantly. Brand communication is expected to be fast in response to enquiries and complaints (47 %). Consumers expect authentic news coverage (43 %) and a brand community on the web page of the respective brand.

The results' analysis shows that in the consumer's opinion a successful communication between the consumer and the brand is based on three key points: authenticity of communication, a relevant topic selection and an individual address.

Due to the participants, the biggest asset of social media applications is the creation of brand awareness and the possible setting up of networks between the consumer and the brand.

Applied to the example of Brand Dubai the insufficient handling of criticism was most notably among the participants, resulting in the lack of trust in Brand Dubai. Efforts to market Brand Dubai via social media applications have been positively reviewed holding the chance of interactivity provided by the brand online. With the help of five criteria Brand Dubai could be rated as "community" capable, whereas the development potential is still very high.

Altogether the participants concluded that a generation change in brand management from traditional to social media applications can be identified in

general (55 %). Nevertheless Dubai does not live up to that generation change in its brand management so far. Despite the increasing significance of Web 2.0-tools the bigger part of the interviewees is convinced that the best brand effect can be achieved by a mixture of traditional and new media in equilibrium.



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Study's profile

2. Study's Profile

2.1. Context und Focus

This summary basically contains the most important findings of the empirical data collections. Parts of the theoretical background of the master thesis will only be referred to if necessary to understand possible interrelations.

2.1.1 Digitalisation of brand management

Product, company as well as nation brands cannot be managed by using traditional media only any longer. The share of so called social media applications within the daily media use of the target groups is too big to be ignored as a possible fourth way of communication. This has been proved by several studies. A recently conducted American study among marketing experts shows that the appliance of social media applications has outranked traditional media already – even if the corresponding strategies are not sufficient yet.⁶

2.1.2 Social Media and brand management

With the emergence of social media applications digital brand management has reached its third stage. After „pure“ brand management on the web which has been managed separately next to traditional media as a first stage and later converged with print, radio and TV in a second stage, it has entered another level by now: the dialogical communication with marketing officers in social networks, news services like twitter or corporate blogs.

2.1.3 Implications and tasks

Until the financial crisis in 2007 the city state of Dubai as a global brand witnessed a cometlike rise as a holiday destination as well as an investment location. The crisis impact forced Dubai not only to slow down its building activities but caused a change in reputation. Thus, its reputation management has to be more

⁶ cf. MarketingProfs; Junta 43 (2010:5).

substantially build in the future as the present “higher, faster, further” principle.

As displayed later, the market penetration of social media applications in the emirate can keep up with global standards already. Tools like YouTube videos are being used yet for the promotion of buildings like “Burj Khalifa”. Sheikh Mohammed, Dubai’s ruler, owns a facebook and a twitter account. However, the shaping of these sites according to the social media guidelines "authenticity, relevance and dialogue" is still hesitant. The summary will show what target groups expect from communication within social media and what kind of strategic tasks Brand Dubai is challenged with to act effectively on facebook, twitter or YouTube.

2.1.4 Introduction and problem

The study is based on the assumption that until today a precise picture of user’s requirements and expectations towards brand management by social media is non-existent yet. It is also understood that a majority of companies – this embeds nations – do not follow a substantial strategy for Web 2.0 so far. The efficient use of these tools requires the fixation of a long term strategy. This strategy has to be oriented towards the target group’s requirements. Especially the adoption of (brand) communities, which are increasingly being used by brands and their target groups, deserves closer attention as an instrument of brand dialogue where the user does not only consume (news) but also produce (content).

2.1.5 Objective

It is therefore the summary’s purpose to identify demands of brand users towards a useful digitally managed communication. Those demands will be compared to the present digital brand management of Dubai to tag mismatches and depict possible solutions.

The implementation of the findings will be put into some assumptions and recommendations for the support and positioning of so called "Place Brands". It is the study’s target to make the expert’s requirements towards Place Brand

management with social media applications understandable and comprehensible.

This encompasses:

- A better awareness of the demands towards digital brand management on expert level as well as from a user's perspective,
- Key points that allow for a deeper brand involvement on the user's and consumer's part,
- An implementation of theoretical findings into practical recommendations for the conceptual design and the roll out of efficient brand management with Web 2.0 applications.

As a result the study will produce crucial knowledge for the conception and implementation of digital place brand management. The findings of the empirical studies shall contribute to a deeper understanding of the functionality of social media tools as well as for demands of users towards a communication way within these applications regarding a brand-user-user-relation.



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Theoretical Background

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Definitions

Addressing the target audience by digital brand management underwent a significant change during the past ten years (cf. Mei-Pochtler, 2001 und Totz, 2005). The pre-internet 1.0-phase was characterized by a brand management which was basically conducted by a „one-to-many“- communication; the brand owner had almost⁷ 100 % control over the available information. This phase shall be named brand management 0.0 (see figure 1).

In a second phase when Internet 1.0 just took effect brand management was perceived as a „two-channel“communication: brands were often differently managed online and offline. Synergy effects were hardly being used. Possibilities of feedback by the target audience was limited to chats, bulletin boards or e-mail correspondence with the brand owner. This is labelled as asynchronous communication. The control over the brand management process still remained in the hands of the brand owner.

In a third, now prevailing, phase which is increasingly dominated by social media applications such as corporate blogs, facebook or twitter the communication channels are no longer separated (on- und offline)⁸ on the one hand. On the other hand target groups have a multitude of feedback channels at their disposal which are difficult to be kept up with and which are barely controllable by the brand owner at the same time. As a special parameter value of Web 2.0 so called (virtual) brand communities⁹ have excelled. Those have been partly launched by brands itself. The other part has been created by the target audience agitating beyond the brand owner's sphere of influence.

⁷ „almost“ refers to the possibility to write letters to the editor or to practice negative word of mouth propaganda.

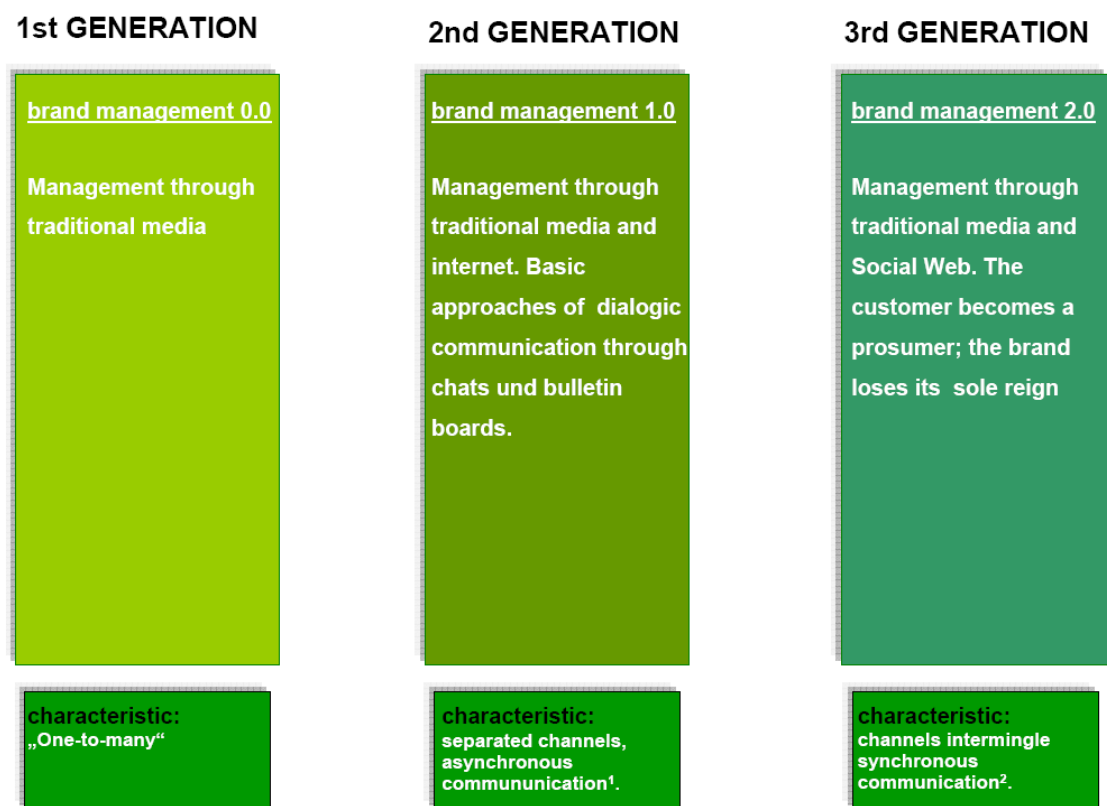
⁸ cf. Medientage München (2009).

⁹ cf. Medientage München (2008).

The multiplication of feedback channels and the loss of control over the brand communication can be identified as the most serious changes in brand communication of the past century.

3.2. Models

Figure 1: Level of development in digital brand management

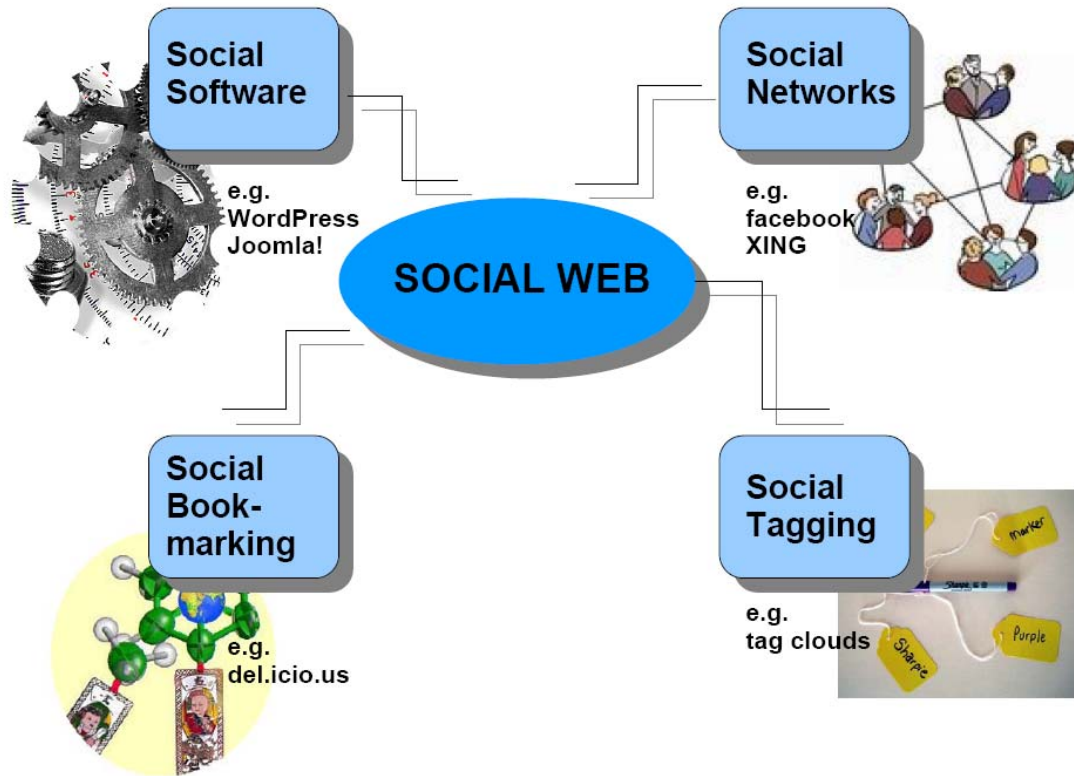


¹: cf. <http://www.e-teaching.org/glossar/asynchrone-kommunikation>

²: cf. <http://www.e-teaching.org/technik/kommunikation/synchron>

These changes are often attributed to the rise of the „Social Web“and its applications. The social web is substantially coined by four categories of applications: social software, social networks, social bookmarking und social tagging (see figure 2). According to this scheme social media can be technically related to social software and functionally to social networks.

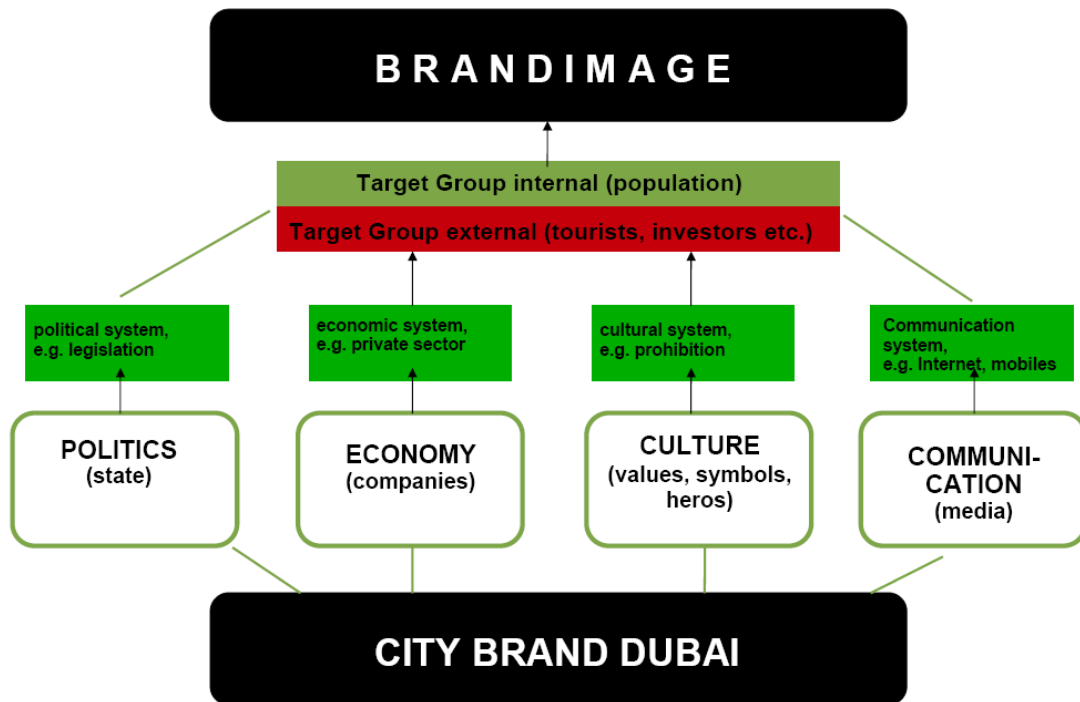
Figure 2: Elements of the Social Web



The fundamental understanding of brand management in this report follows the identity-oriented model of Meffert (2005). Accordingly brands shall build a congruent self-image and public image. The city state of Dubai as a place brand (see figure 3) is faced with a multitude of in- and external target groups which affect its brand management. The heterogeneity of the target audience makes the conduct of a place brand particular complex.

The communicative changes along with the challenges place brands will have to deal with in the future as well as the expectations of the target groups towards „their“ brand in the age of Web 2.0 are subject of two following statistical investigations.

Figure 3: Pattern of city brand Dubai, in dependence on Eitel and Spiekermann, 2006





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Methodology

4. Methodology

In order to meet the objective target laid down in chapter 2.1.5 a comprehensive mixed method approach has been chosen and conducted by:

- International secondary research that included more than 30 academic research papers, commercial market media studies and press releases.
- A qualitative data collection via e-mail questionnaire of 21 social media experts from six countries.
- A quantitative data collection in Dubai with 905 interviewees in the age of 21-60 years.

The analysis of the significance of social media applications for digital brand management distinguishes between two fundamental dimensions: on the one hand the theoretical background in regard to current standards of brand management and Web 2.0 applications as well as the user's expectations have been examined. On the other hand two statistical investigations have been carried out to detect the requirements and the motivation of the target audience (see figure 4).

Theoretical background of digital brand management

- objective:** Within a literature research an overview of the current standards of digital brand management has been generated. This included an evaluation towards the development and strategic significance of social media applications. The general results were interpreted in respect to the specific situation of the management of Brand Dubai.
- sources:** Empirical studies along with scientific literature served as a theoretical background to identify general and specific aspects of brand management with Web 2.0-tools.
- goals:** The objective was a fundamental assessment of the preconditions for a successful utilization of social media for brand management. At the same time they were supposed to deliver an overview of the user's requirements towards brand management.

Empirical evaluation of the user requirements

- subject :** The objective of the empirical evaluation were two surveys on expert level and concurrently on user level to formulate hypotheses on the one hand and to identify user expectations on the other hand.
- methods:** The empirical data collections comprised an e-mail survey among experts as well as a quantitative web-survey. The mix of both methods was supposed to combine the advantages of distinct techniques and thus create a preferably differentiated picture.
- goals:** The empirical research allowed for an aggregation of the results of the diverse target groups as well as of user specific analysis. On the basis of statistical reliable results out of the data collection continuative theses can be drafted.

The qualitative expert survey took place from May 16th to July, 22nd, 2010. Experts coming from four different fields were contacted.

The quantitative survey was carried out between July, 24th to August 8th, 2010. The initial group of participants of 1,275 addresses had to be reduced to a total number of 905 addresses due to invalid e-mail addresses and the prevailing holiday season. 100 interviewees altogether completed the questionnaire. Both surveys were conducted completely web-based. The quantitative survey took place among companies based in Dubai Media City (DMC).

The list of companies residing in DMC is based on a disposable data set from the web sites of Dubai Media City which has been prepared and purified from invalid data sets.

The analysis of both surveys were carried out computer assisted. The qualitative survey was conducted by a qualitative analysis according to Meuser und Nagel.¹⁰ Data has been analysed using MAXQDA software. The quantitative survey was accomplished with the open source software programme LimeSurvey. The programme storages the data sets in excel sheets. The data has then been edited with Microsoft PowerPoint.

4.1 Outline and realisation of expert survey

Key questions of the expert survey

1. How are the degree and possibilities of utilization for Social Media tools described– particularly the risks and chances – in general and especially for brand management?
2. What significance can be inferred from that for Social Media tools – in particular in comparison to the significance of traditional media tools – for brand management?
3. How skilfully does Dubai apply this new form of communication (Social Media) for its brand management? To what extent are findings and expert knowledge of international discussions on Social Media and web-based brand management considered?

¹⁰ cf.: Meuser und Nagel (1991).

The outline of the empirical study was based on the theoretical background from the literature review. The objective was the generation of hypotheses which were then subject to examination in the second part of the data collection.

In a first step ten experts in the field of social media were identified and contacted by e-mail on May, 16th, 2010. The invitation e-mail comprised of a letter of confirmation by the Leipzig School of Media, a questionnaire and a letter of agreement for the acknowledgement list.

The experts were selected according to the following criteria: the persons should have corresponding knowledge and experience in the field of social media applications due to their job or field of work. Four different groups of experts could be defined in regard to their function: first, the group of people who work for Brand Dubai and thus perceive it from an internal perspective (i.e. authorities, „Brand Dubai Office“¹¹). Second, the group of people which are not directly working for the government but in its surroundings (i.e. agencies). Third, the group of people which represent the external perspective and dispose of expert knowledge on social media (i.e. members of corresponding federations) and fourthly the group of people which deal with the conceptual background of social media applications and the above mentioned key questions as subject of their scientific studies (i.e. experts from research and so called „think-tanks“). To grant a comparability of data, it was aspired to carry out at least one interview with an expert representing one of the four defined groups.

The interviews were supposed to be conducted as virtual "one-on-one" interviews via a standardised e-mail questionnaire. The data acquired thereby was supposed to be evaluated by a qualitative analysis. The questionnaire's outcome did not aim at the quantification of the received data in the first place such as the frequency of consistent expert statements. It was meant to gain deeper insights and thus create a better structuring of the scientific problem in respect to the usage and significance of social media applications.

¹¹ cf. ArabianBusiness.com (2009)

In the course of the qualitative data collection which stretched over two months it became quickly apparent that mere knowledge of social media applications was not sufficient to answer the questionnaire appropriately. Therefore it was necessary to find experts who also felt confident on the field of brand management and even better on the specific field of place branding.

This could be done with the help of the "snowball-procedure" technique, i.e. corresponding recommendations were given by experts who were contacted before. Next to that the search for adequate persons continued at the same time. Thereby 21 expert interviews could be carried out.

Overall ten participants explicitly agreed to be named within the written analysis of the survey with cross-reference to their statements. The remaining participants agreed to be named on an acknowledgement list at the end of the study.

Below quotes will be cross-referenced if possible. All other quotes will be made anonymous by continuous abbreviations like I1, I2 ... for interview one and so on. All quotes will be reproduced in its mother tongue. A translation of the German quotes will be attached to this document after the bibliography and the acknowledgement list. Translations will be analogously.

4.1.2 Data documentation and analysis

18 out of 21 interviewees were questioned by e-mail; three of the interviews were conducted by telephone as requested by the participants. The obtained data was transmitted into a word document and then uploaded into the analysis software MAXQDA where it was processed in a mixture of inductive and deductive method. With the help of this system the statements of all participants were bundled and categorized with regard to contextual core areas. This method offers a good overview of the different answers in respond to the key questions and allows at the same time to seize further suggestions brought into the discussion from the participants. The documentation of this analysis by content is done by reconstructing core contextual aspects in written form. The generated text was lined by original quotes if suitable to give corresponding evidence for the

reconstruction.

4.1.3 Results of the expert survey

From the contextual evaluation which can be displayed by graphs directly from MAXQDA, so called interrelated polar opposites could be identified and three hypotheses could be set up.

The survey was conducted on an international level. The English questionnaires and the German ones were analysed separately. Thereby a comparison between the two results could have been additionally drawn.

„Eine Social Brand sieht es als Teil ihres Leistungsversprechens, dass authentische Erlebnisberichte rund um die Marke im Netz zu finden sind. Sie lädt zur Diskussion ein, lässt KonsumentInnen (sic!) partizipieren und steht zu ihren Stärken aber auch Schwächen. Dadurch wird sie erlebbarer für KonsumentInnen. In klassischen Medien wird meist frontal kommuniziert, ohne die KonsumentInnen einzubinden.“

(Sabine Hoffmann, ambuzzador Marketing GmbH)

The following polar opposites were generated from the analysis of the German questionnaires:

- Interaction - target audience
- social media strategy - target audience
- risks - social media strategy

The outcome of the English questionnaire was:

- Interaction - Target Group
- Communities - Interaction
- Communities - Target Group

The consistency of the first row in both polar opposites is striking. The interaction with the target audience seems to be the predominant characteristics of social media applications within digital brand management.

„This is 'real-time' brand management. Online campaigns are more measurable and generate instant feedback to make immediate changes/revisions to campaigns and services. [...] Because everything on the Internet is highly measurable, marketers get detailed feedback and results on their campaigns in real time.“

(121)

A target group appropriate social media strategy seems to be significant according to the results of the German questionnaires. Also bearing in mind the risks associated if such a strategy for Web 2.0-tools does not exist.

Analysing the English questionnaires the idea of a community set up with social media applications is a core point. It should be target group oriented and characterized by the interaction between the brand and the consumer.

The following hypotheses could be derived from the results which are subject to a quantitative web survey:

Hypothesis I: The more authentic and plausible a brand acts within social media applications the more distinct a created group feeling will be and thus the identification with the brand.

Hypothesis II: The more relevant the selected topics in social media applications for the target group are the closer the relationship between consumer and brand can be.

Hypothesis III: The more personal, dialogical and for the target group relevant the communication of Brand Dubai is the higher the level of perception and identity creation will be.

„You have to be prepared that you need to lead a dialog (sic!) with your users. Also THEY (sic!) have a voice in the virtual space. You need a much quicker and educated brand management to react on Zeitgeist. [...] You need to be authentic and talking with the voice and words of the user. No over promising is possible anymore.“

(Jens Monsees, Google)

4.1.4 Further results: A generation change for Brand Dubai?

Following up general questions concerning the impact of social media applications the interviewees were faced with five internet sites which represented the government of Dubai and thus the brand.

The participants consistently could not yet identify a real social media approach in

„Gute Frage! Angesichts des noch jungen Trends ist es schwierig zu sagen, ob hierdurch nachhaltige Änderungen ausgelöst werden. Meines Erachtens ja, da die Demographie der Nutzer entscheidend ist und insoweit 'junge' Trends perspektivisch stärker an Bedeutung gewinnen werden. Aber Vorsicht: Es ist gut möglich, dass nachfolgende Generationen, zumindest zeit- bzw. phasenweise, wieder mehr 'offline' sein werden als heute.“

(17)

the sites displayed. Correspondingly comments can be summarized as follows: "There is no community building, poor response to criticism, one-to-many, broadcast approach.

Too much talking, not enough listening. Lack of transparency.

Stuck in traditional PR/propaganda

(sic!) mode." (I3).

The question whether a generation change in general can be identified to due to the intensified adoption of social media applications for digital brand management could not be answered continuously positive. Whereas one part of the interviewees is comparatively sure that the change has already happened: "Yes, I definitely see a change in brand management" (Madlen Nicholas) the other part still remains unassertive: "Yes and no. No, because the change has not been implemented overall in the daily internet user's routine." (Saim Rolf Alkan) or dismissive: "No, brands are always managed media-independent." (I10).

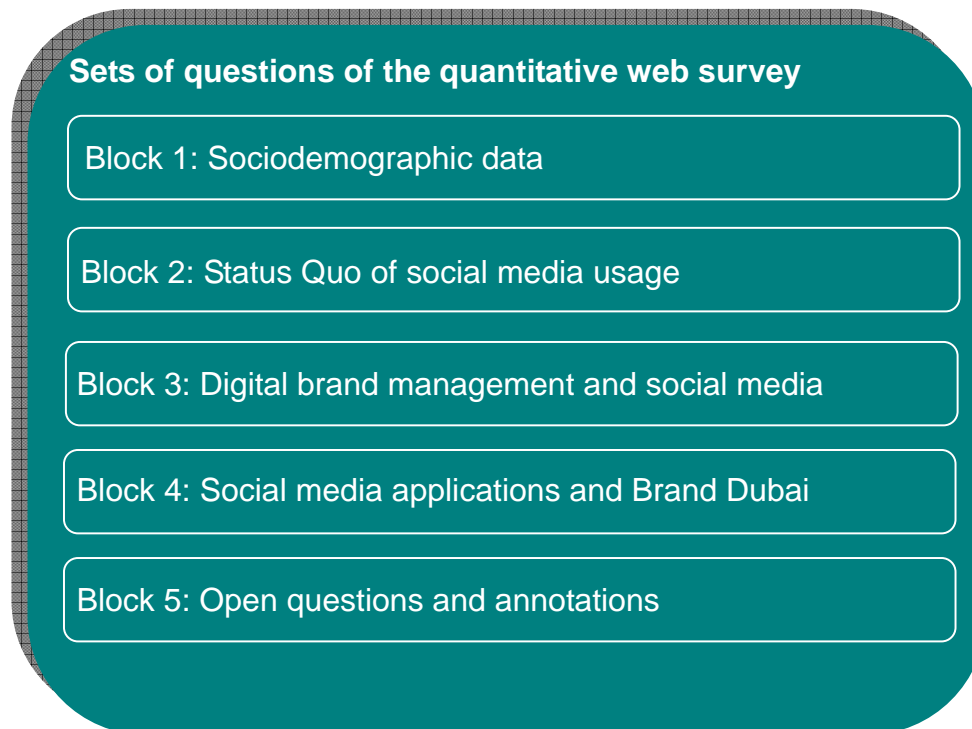
The participants agreed that the change for a digital brand management with social media applications made of transparency, relevance and authenticity has not taken place yet when it comes to Brand Dubai.

„It all comes across a very corporate and state controlled, that is the impression of Dubai. It does not seem like a country keen to engage you in conversations and gain potential consumers' opinion.“

(16)

4.2 Outline and realisation of the Web-Survey

Accordingly to the hypotheses from the expert survey the questionnaire has been structured into five different logical blocks:



The first logical block consisted of sociodemographic data (Questions 1.1. – 1.5). In the second block (Questions 2.1 – 2.3) the interviewees provided information on their consumer behaviour and the frequency of their social media applications' consumption. This block served predominantly for the evaluation of the usage frequency of applications such as facebook, twitter and XING within the defined target group. The high consumption and degree of utilisation indicate the big interest for such tools and its relevance for digital brand management. In a third block (Questions 3.1 – 3.5) the significance of social media applications for digital brand management was identified and a comparison was drawn to traditional media. A fourth block (Questions 4.1 – 4.8) asked for the significance of social media applications and correlated them to Brand Dubai. At the same time the issue was discussed whether a generation change in digital management is taking place and whether the change is visible in Dubais brand management. In a final and fifth block two open questions were posed. These questions related to the

expectations of the consumers in regard to recently established Brand Dubai Office. In another question the target group was given the chance to air personal annotations to the topic and the questionnaire itself.

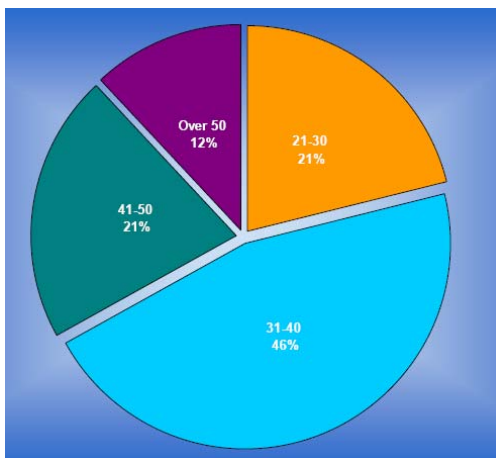
4.2.1 Results of the web survey

A total of 138 companies of Dubai Media City (DMC) took part in the survey. 100 answers were valid. The survey does not claim representativeness but holds a clear vision of a trend on expert level.

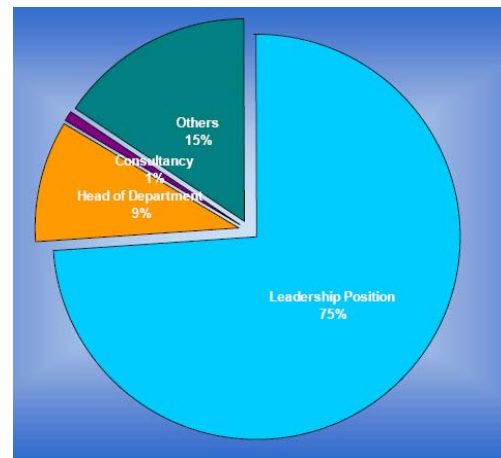
4.2.2 Sociodemographic data

Altogether 23 % women and 77 % men took part. The age distribution becomes apparent from graph 5.

Graph 5: Age distribution of participants (n = 100)



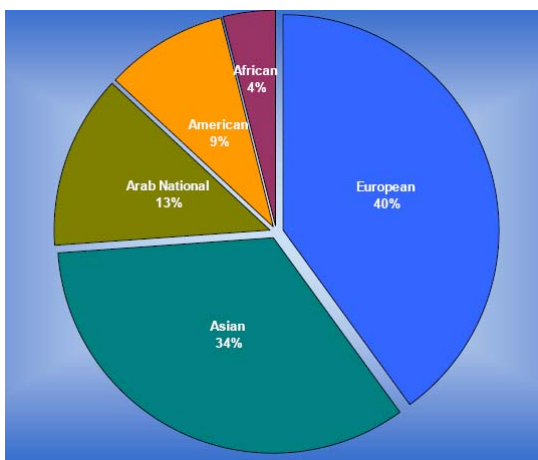
Graph 6: Job title of participants (n=100)



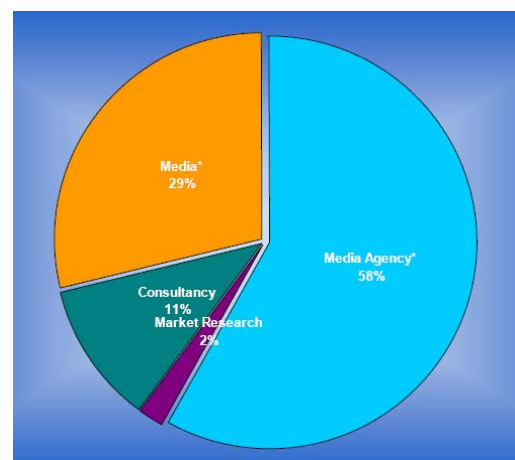
The comparatively young age (67 % up to 40 years) of the participants reflects the relevance and the novelty of the topic. The importance of and the interest in the topic are mirrored by the job titles of the interviewees. 75 % of all participants hold a leading position such as General Manager, CEO, Director or Managing Partner. A distinct overview of the group of participants is displayed by graph 6.

Dubai is known as an entity formed of many different nationalities, a fact which is also reflected in the parentage of the participants. The bulk of the interviewees came from Europe and Asia with a total of 74 % followed by „Arab Nationals“, citizens of Arabic states but not necessarily from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). American nationals formed another 9 %, 4 % of the participants came from African states.

Graph 7: Segmentation of participants to nationality (n=100)



Graph 8: Segmentation of participating sectors



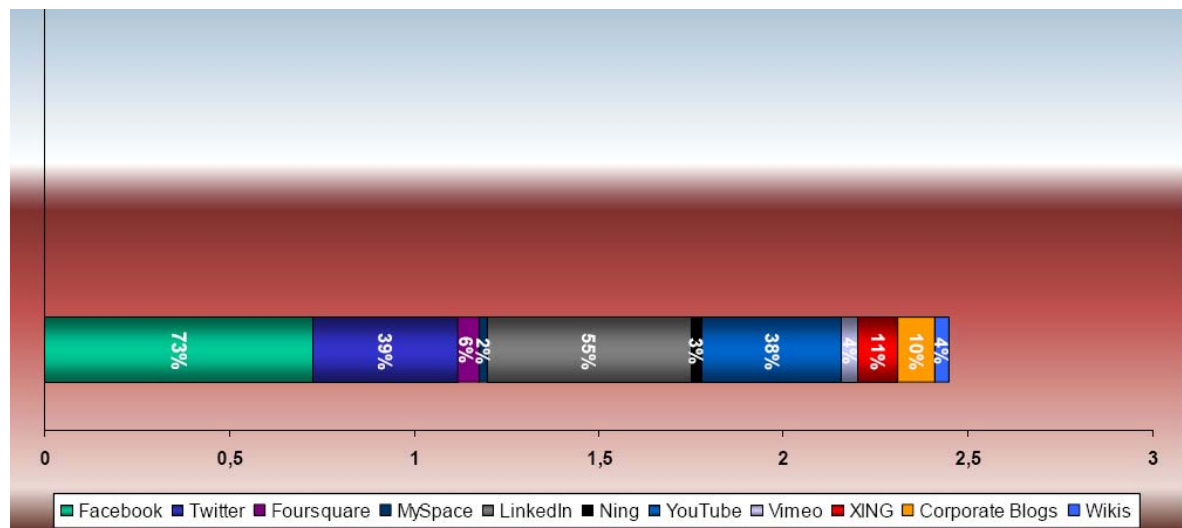
Sectors like media agencies (branding, corporate design, communication and public relations) were mostly represented. Media enterprises like TV, radio and print participated as well as market research companies and consulting firm. The latter, however, formed a minority.

4.2.3 Status Quo of social media usage

In the second block of the questionnaire the usage of and the behaviour towards social media were in focus. In order to get an impression of the relevance of the topic and the attitude towards it the consumption modes and the motives for it were explored. The world wide trend is reflected in the use of social networks: facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are in command. Corporate weblogs and Wikis are under part.

Compared to the user behaviour of Web 2.0 services in Germany according to the ARD/ZDF-Online-study¹² the figures seem to be higher among the interviewees of DMC, even though both studies are not directly comparable to each other.

Graph 9: Social media platforms being used (n=100)

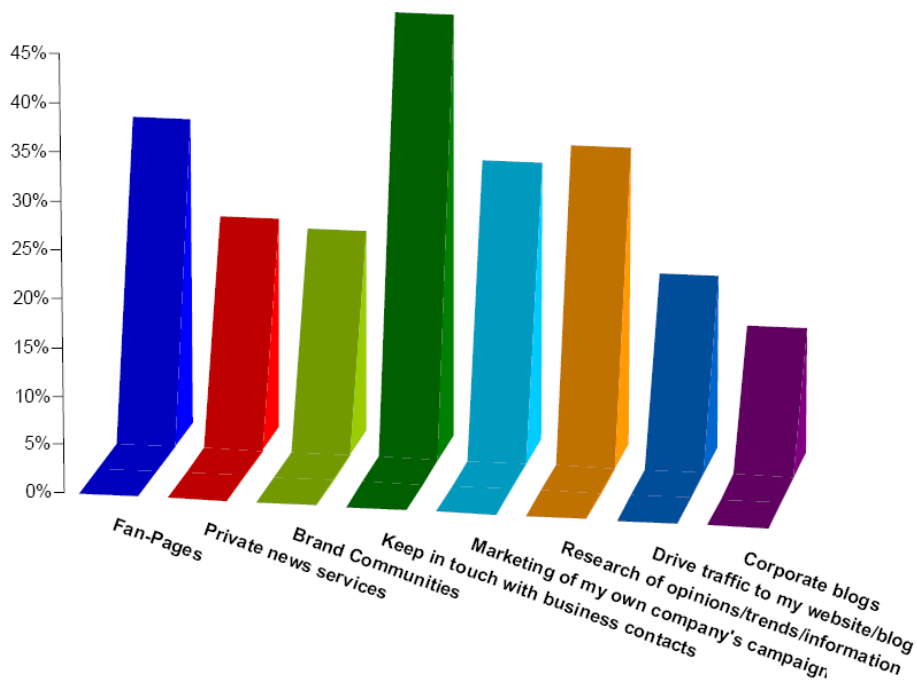


The motives of social media applications consumptions among the participants are comparable to the results of other studies¹³ conducted world wide: networking with business and private contacts rank first, followed by the usage of fan pages, the marketing of own products and the search for information or trends.

¹² cf.: ard-zdf-onlinestudie (2010b) sowie Medientage München (2010b).

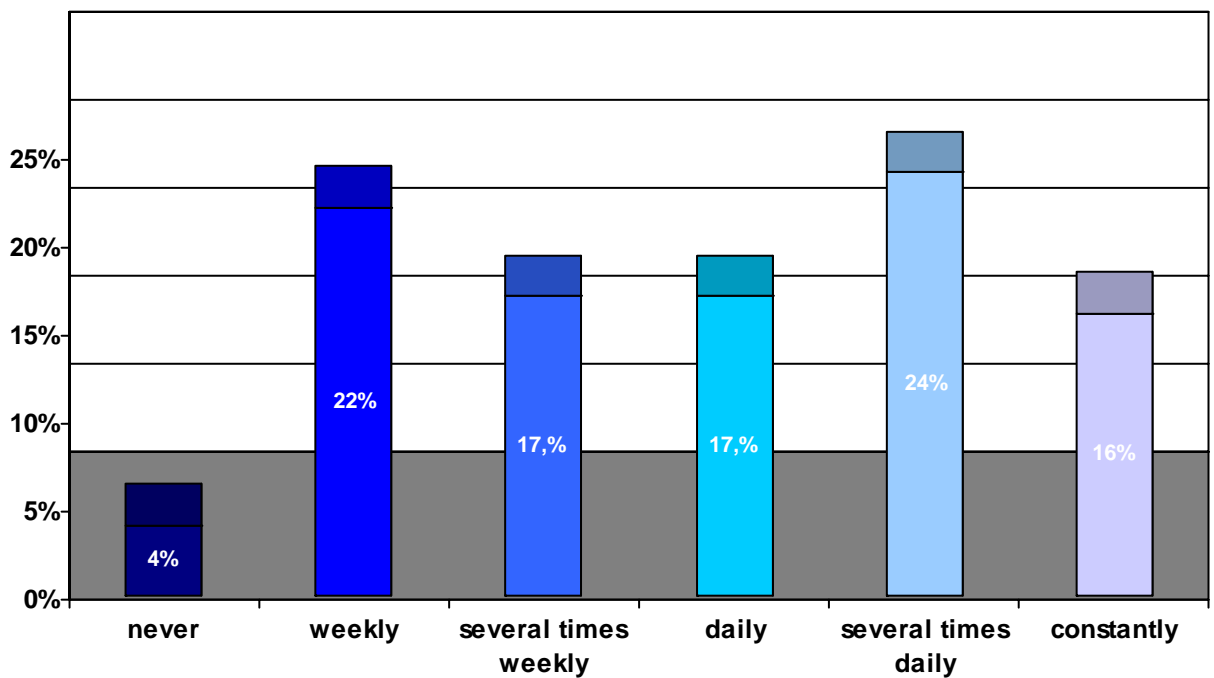
¹³ cf.: for example MTV Networks, Volkswagen AG, Nielsen (2010)

Graph 10: Motives of usage for social media applications (n=100)



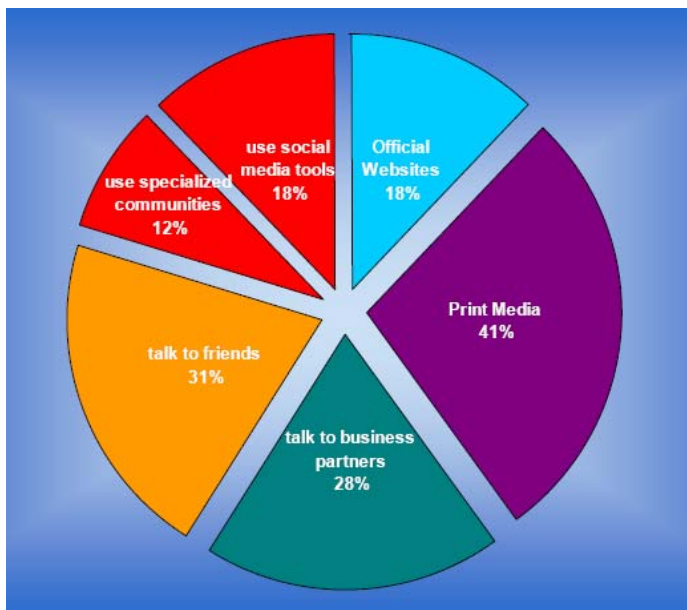
The quoted consumption period of social media applications among the interviewees within a week makes the significance of such tools clear. More than 50 % of the participants are using those applications at least daily.

Graph 11: usage of social media applications (n=100)



Furthermore the participants were queried for their information behaviour. Thereby it becomes clear which media is being used for information search and what percentage share official web sites of Brand Dubai (that is the government) hold in it. The actual question focused on the search on information for news on Dubai (see graph 12).

Graph 12: Information behaviour of the participants.



4.2.4 Digital brand management and social media

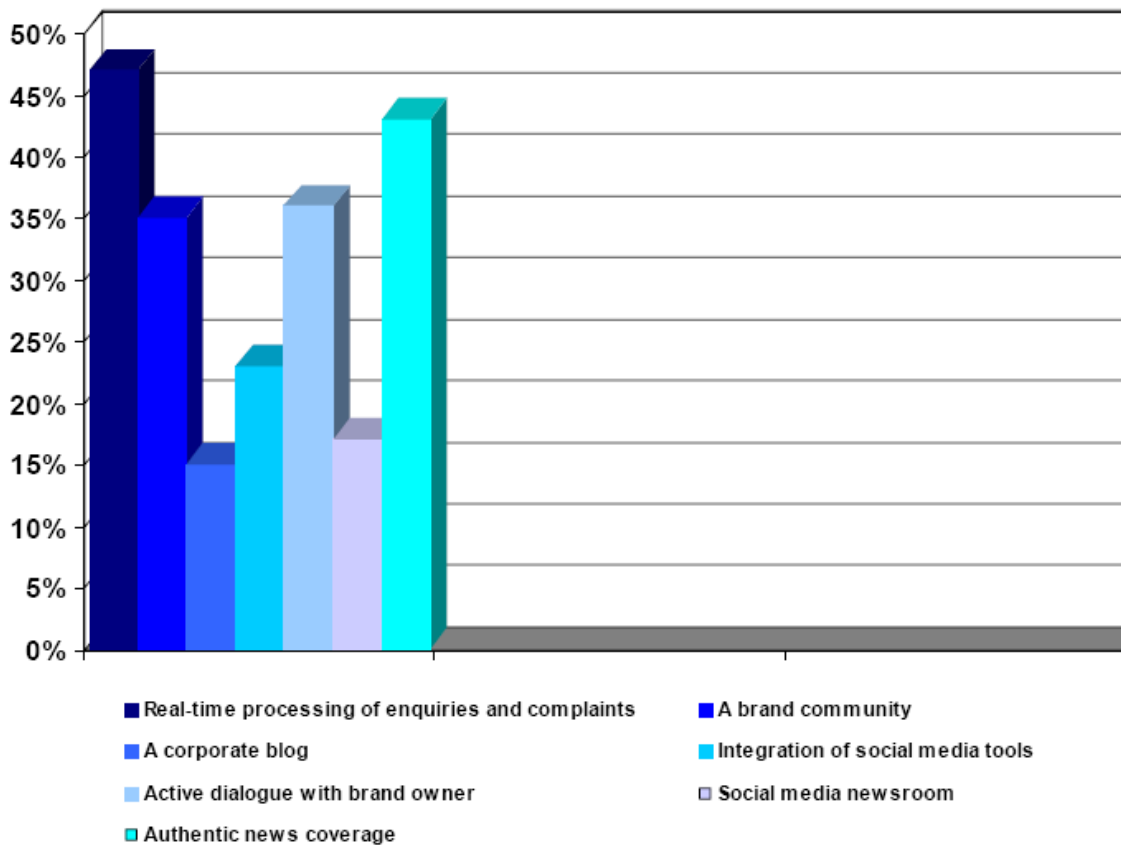
A third block focused on the expectations of the polled group towards digital brand management with social media applications. A fast reaction towards enquiries and complaints is essential in the first place along with authentic brand communication towards the customer.

„Company-controlled“tools like a social media newsroom or a corporate blog take a back seat. The information argues for less control and more sincere dialogue with the consumer at eye level (see graph 13).

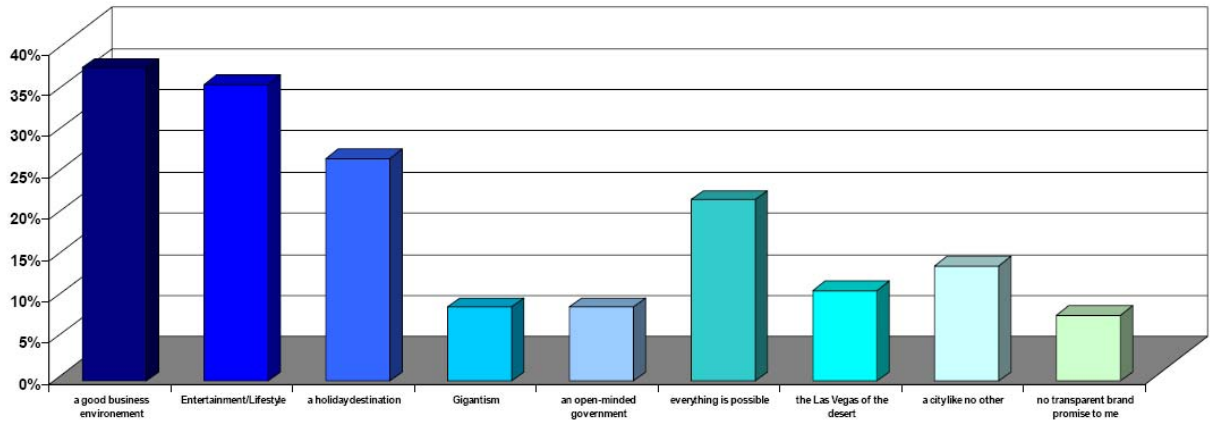
At the same time the perception of Brand Dubai (see graph 13) was asked for and how, if necessary, this could be improved (see graph 15).

The result shows that Dubai is primarily looked at as a business place and a city with a high entertainment value. The communication by government offices is being regarded as insufficient. The accusation of gigantism, as often presumed by Western media, does not seem to be a dominant association among the interviewees.

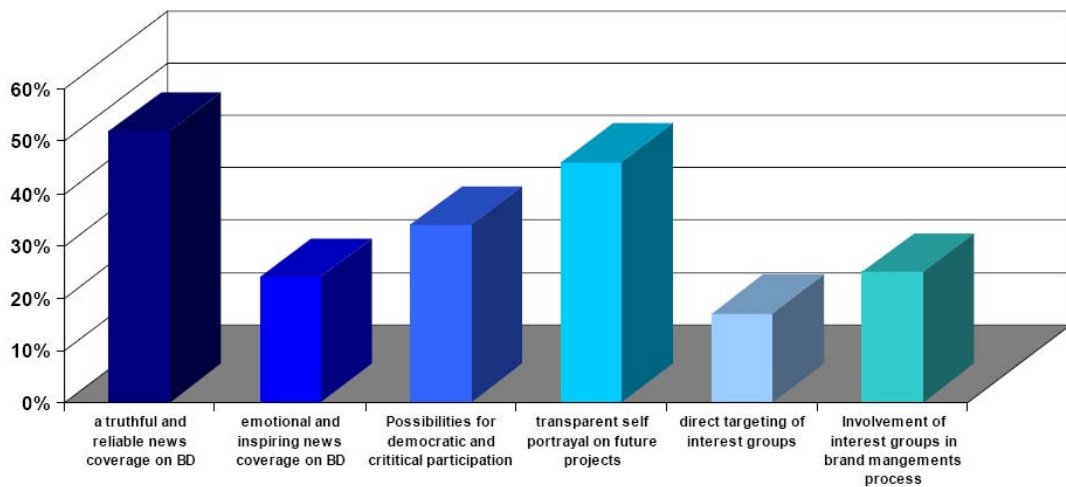
Graph 13: Elements of interactive brand management (n=100)



Graph 14: Perception of Brand Dubai (n=100)



Graph 15: Confidence-building measures for Brand Dubai (n=100)



A successful dialogue between Brand Dubai and its target audience seems to be made of reliability, relevance as well as transparency of information.

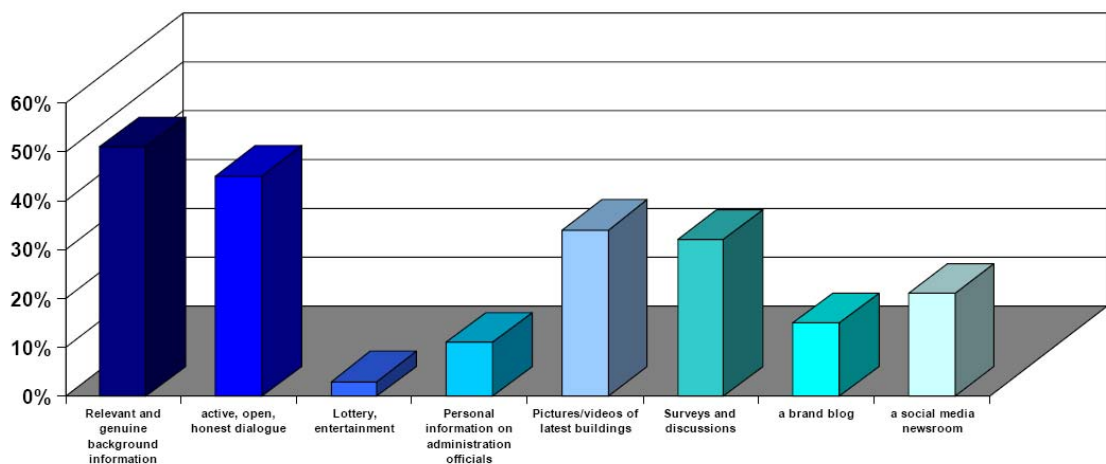
4.2.5 Social media applications and Brand Dubai

In a fourth block the interaction between social media applications and Brand Dubai stood in the limelight. In the first place the participants were being asked to

indicate on what elements an ideal brand management would be based on for them (see graph 16).

Graph 16 shows a similar picture as being already discussed in graph 12. Relevant honest information and an active dialogue between the brand and the target groups are the most important criteria. Equally video portrayals of construction projects as well as open discussions and survey results are favoured. Definitely demanding expectations for Dubai. However, all things considered however requirements that hardly differ from the ones being aired by western user groups.

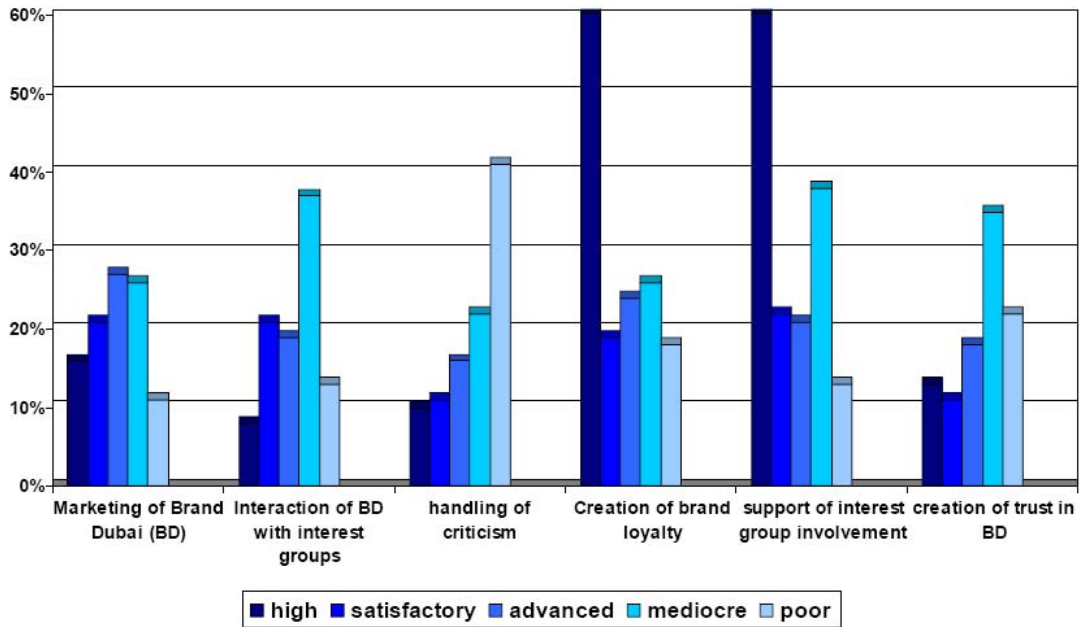
Graph 16: Elements of an ideal brand community (n=100)



The participants were further asked to estimate the significance of social media tools for the digital brand management of Brand Dubai. The effect on brand loyalty and the degree of brand involvement is especially highly ranked.

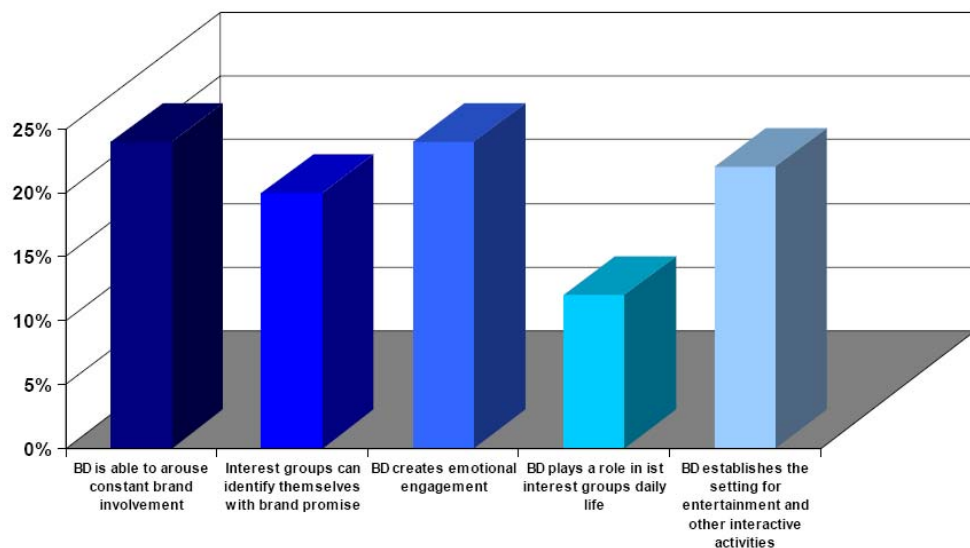
For the handling of criticism the usage of Web 2.0 tools seems to be insufficient (see graph 17).

Graph 17: Degree of usage of social media tools for Brand Dubai (n=100)



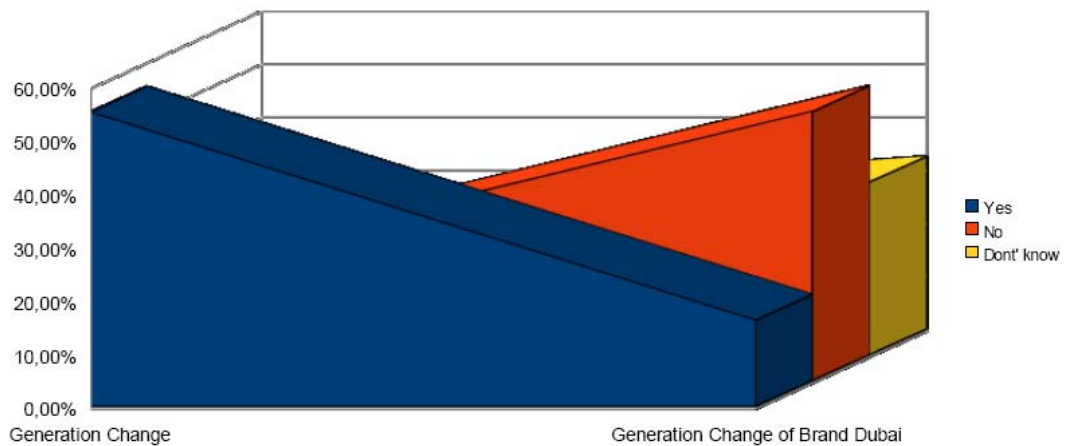
Finally the participants were asked to vote whether Brand Dubai can be considered „sociable“. This was determined with the help of five criteria. According to the result, Brand Dubai is not being perceived as „sociable“(see graph 17) yet.

Graph 18: Is Brand Dubai „sociable“? (n=100)



Consequently Brand Dubai was not certified as having implemented the generation change within its digital brand management so far. At the same time, however, the participants agreed that the generation change has been implemented on general terms (see graph 19).

Graph 19: Generation change in general and for Brand Dubai (n=100)





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Conclusion

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that there is nothing like a “one and only” true strategy for a successful appearance on Web 2.0. However, guiding principles exist and a recommendable course of action can be deduced from them. Following catchwords can be applied as parameters for target group communication (as displayed in chapter four):

- Relevance,
- Authenticity,
- Transparency,
- Dialogue on eye level,
- Serve selected channels.

As an illustration this concretely means: „Relevance“is to provide content from which the target group can derive additional benefit. „Authenticity“means honest and real communication. Such a communication should be explicitly verifiable and should reflect the truth. „Transparency“stands for comprehensible communication which conveys reliability. „Dialogue on eye level“means that the consumer's concerns and expectations have to be taken seriously and deserve a prompt answer. „Serve only selected channels“

means that in a social media strategy it has to be laid down which networks represent the target groups, in which networks they are preferentially acting in and which of these networks are being used for the dialogue.

„Aufbau einer langfristigen Social Media (Content) Strategie. Wen will ich ansprechen? Mit welchen Kanälen? Mit welchen Inhalten? In wie weit ist der Social Media Auftritt mit der Philosophie des Unternehmens kompatibel? Habe ich das notwendige Know-how mit Ressourcen im Haus? Verständnis, wie die Social Media Landschaft für das jeweilige Unternehmen aufgebaut ist (vorherige SM Analyse). Anschließend Ableiten von Maßnahmen und Strategien. Wichtig: Muss vom Top-Management gefördert werden!“

(Yasan Budak, VICO Research&Consulting)

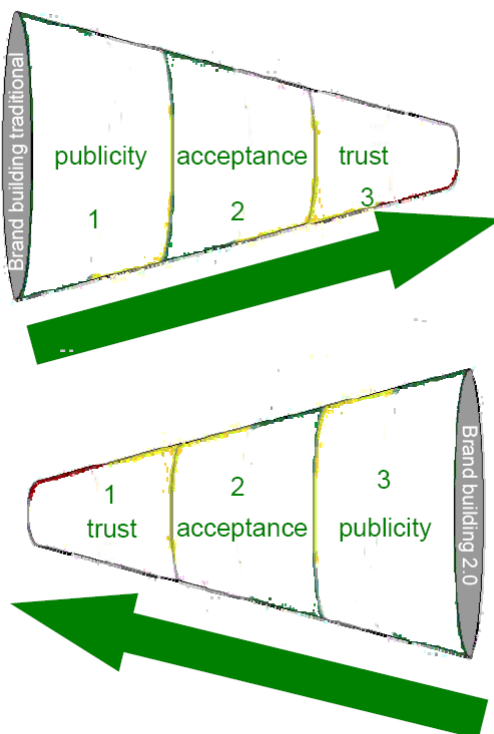
The creation and the management of a brand have changed to that extent that with the appearance of social media a turnaround of the communicative functional

„Direct to consumer communications are often best handled today by social media, which has the power to create a dialogue, not the one-way communication of advertising. "People like me" are the most trusted source of information today: social media is the most effective way to tap into that power, and join the conversation.“

(18)

chain has taken place.¹⁴ This means that brand development does not create brand awareness in the first place any longer. Trust building is the most important element. Trust induces the opinion leaders of a network to inform the community members by Word-of-Mouth-Marketing about this brand and thus create buzz for the brand which means relevance to the members across the board (see graph 20).

Graph 20: Turnaround of the communicative functional chain Web 2.0



¹⁴ cf. Medientag München (2010 e).

The diffusion and the success of social media applications are worldwide.¹⁵ Brands of all shapes no matter whether as company, product, city or nation brands are bound to find a strategy in this new way of communication.

„As confirmed by recent studies the UAE is home to over 40% social media users across entire MENA region. In Dubai, the level of computing literacy is generally high, due to constant exposure at the workplace as well as disposable income used on technology and gadgetry. Several interesting trends have emerged from this market. The growth rate of social media tools such as Twitter is a staggering 20% per month, with an existing penetration level that amounts to almost 12,000-15,000 users of the service. Facebook already has over 1 million users in the UAE according to a study conducted recently and is already the most popular social network in the country, even amongst non-English speakers. Unlike global trends, there are more socially connected men than women. Social networks like Twitter are no longer the reserve of teenaged geeks. The 24-38 age-bracket is the most socially active demographic in the UAE, unlike most other parts of the world. With businesses in Dubai embracing social media engagement tactics, the relevance of these tools is going become increasingly important in every day online connectivity. The barrier to "intake" of new technology tools is relatively low in Dubai thanks to its cultural mix, and Accessibility of practices from the Western world.“

(Danish Farhan, Xische & Co.)

City states like Dubai which make their living basically as a business place and holiday destination place are dependent on a positive brand image within their target groups' minds. Social media channels already play a vital role in brand communication. Plus they already gained ground in Dubai as shown in chapter four. Henceforth the brand needs a stronger positioning within those

applications on the one hand. On the other hand it should respond to the requirements of the target groups demanding an open, relevant and transparent brand communication dialogue.

More than 50 % of the survey participants agreed upon a paradigm shift in digital brand management. Even if this generation change did not reach Brand Dubai so far according to the interviewees the indications for a change in the

„Definitely, we are witnessing with our own eyes the evidence of this transformation as the number of organizations that have an online presence growing day by day. I'm afraid I don't have the figures to support this, but as a user and citizen of Dubai, the transformation is quite evident. “

(Moad Bukaskh, Management Consultant)

¹⁵ cf. UM (2010).

Gulf States cannot be ignored.

„In fact unless Dubai capitalizes upon and promotes its unspoken but diverse social fiber as a true system that gives it the pulse behind the iconic facades, it stands the chance of living up to the label of a “city of plastic” and not reaching its full potential as a brand.“

(Vahid Mehrinfar, Executive Principal and Chief Brand Futurist,
Vahid Associates Brand Futurists)



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translation of expert quotes**

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6.2 Translation of expert quotes (according to their meaning):

Box on page 22:

"A social brand looks at it as a part of its performance bond that authentic essays around the brand are to be found in the internet. It asks [target groups] to have discussions, enables consumers to participate and is true to its strengths and weaknesses. Thereby it becomes a real experience for its consumers. Within traditional media communication is often frontal without involving the consumer."

Box on page 25:

"That's a good question! In view to the early stage of the movement it is difficult to predict whether this will release sustainable changes. From my point of view 'yes' as the demography of the user is essential and therefore "young" trends will prospectively gain in importance. But be careful: It is also possible that successive generations will be more "offline" than today, at least temporarily or sporadically."

Box on page 39:

"Development of a long-term social media (content) strategy. Whom am I speaking to? Over what channels? With which content? To what extent is the social media appearance compatible with the company's philosophy? Do I have the necessary know how and the necessary resources in my company? Understanding how the respective social media landscape is structured for the particular enterprise (previous social media analysis). Subsequently derivation of measurements and strategies. Important: it has to be advocated by the top management!"