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“Social Media Marketing for Organic Products in
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TERMS

AMI = Agricultural Information Company, Germany

BLE = Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food, Germany

BÖLW = Organic Food Production Alliance

BÖLN = Federal Programme for Ecological Cultivation and Other Forms of
Sustainable Agriculture, Germany

FiBL = Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland

KPIs = Key Performance Indicators

IFOAM = International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Germany

IPM = Interaction per Mile

ROI = Return on Investment

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1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the study research topic and to provide readers an outline of the paper. It starts with a discussion about the background and the research problem as well as the research questions. Finally, the paper structure is shortly presented.

1.1. Background and problem discussion

Social media has been thriving in the last decade; it has become an inevitable part of everyday life: 1.2 billion users are connected in Facebook (Facebook, 2014), 500 million Tweets are posted per day on Twitter (Twitter, 2014), 6 billion hours of video are watched per month on YouTube (Youtube, 2014). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define it as a revolutionary new trend; a trend that has gained importance in all aspects of life among the web users (Kahar, et al., 2012). Many studies focus on the challenges and opportunities that social media brings, especially for the business and how to make profitable use of applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and YouTube (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010); others are investigating what are the right components for the social media marketing mix and its effects (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), (Berthon, et al., 2012), (Vries, et al., 2012). It has proven that the social media marketing requires another approach different from the classical marketing (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012), and the objectives that could be reached vary from traditional to emergent (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).

At the same time, the organic market has been booming during the last ten years where the agricultural land with organic production has tripled reaching 37.2 million hectares in 2012 (Willer, 2014). Germany, Austria and Switzerland are within the top ten countries with the largest markets for organic food (Willer & Lernoud, 2014). A numerous studies and articles have been published focusing on the consumption patterns and trends, consumer behaviour and purchase barriers in the organic branch (Maya, et al., 2011), (Hjelmar, 2011), (Ngobo, 2011). Spiller (2006) makes an overview of the target groups of organic food products, identifying the interested social milieus, diet attitudes and also examines the purchase behaviour of each target group. Kolibius (2001) analyses the chances

and the risks, problems and the obligatory preconditions for the commercialization of the organic sector using the Internet; the same paper suggests theoretical as well as practical insights for the utilisation of the ecological marketing mix for organic products.

Against this background, a further relevant step should be the analysis of the social media marketing in the organic sector. As it still remains a niche market (Schaack, 2012), the question arises as to how social media marketing activities can eliminate or limit the purchase barriers for this sector. A major problem by the purchasing of organic products comes from the uncertainty of the clients – if the product labelled as organic is indeed organic and it fills out the high quality standards. It is a challenge for the organic products marketers to apprise and distribute adequate information, as well as to inform and educate the buyers (Hamm & Plassmann, 2009).

1.2. Problem definition

The organic market is well discussed in the literature, but the organic brands presence in social media remains an unexplored field. This study aims to present a snapshot of the current market situation, focusing on the German-speaking countries: Germany, Austria and Switzerland and selecting eight well presented in the social media organic brands.

The literature provides a set of recommendations for companies how to do business with social media, what is the right social media mix and how social media can be utilised to reach the companies' goals (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), (Berthon, et al., 2012). So far however, none has examined the performance of organic brands in the social media. This paper will analyse how the organic brands are managing the social media mix evaluating each brand performance in regard to key index numbers for each application. Furthermore, this study will examine the social media activities of the selected brands to show what traditional social media objectives they manage to achieve.

1.3. Paper structure

The paper is designed in five major chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical background of the social media topic. It reviews the latest studies on the theme, summarising the characteristics and definitions of the Web 2.0 phenomenon. Also, the classification of social media introduces the different types of applications as well as the most used platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Furthermore, the social media marketing is defined mentioning the most common objectives that marketers expect to achieve using the new channels.

The second chapter reviews the organic market in the German-speaking countries – Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The first part concentrates on the supply side presenting key numbers for the market volume and turnover, as well as the main distribution channels typical for the organic food products. The second part focuses on the demand side including: trends in the organic food industry – what are the main incentives for the consumers to prefer organic to conventional products; the social milieus and target groups – who are the hard-core consumers and what characterises the potential market segments; purchase barriers – the obstacles that the market is experiencing and what drives consumers to prefer conventional rather than organically grown products.

The third chapter presents eight selected organic brands from the German-speaking markets and their social media presence. The brands are selected based on their strong presence in the social media channels and are divided in four subcategories – brands stemming from conventional supermarket chains, dedicated organic supermarkets, home delivery box services of organic food products and organic producers with own stores. The analyses focus on their social media presence on Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Pinterest and their corporate blogs.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the analyses of the social media marketing mix applied by the eight reviewed brands. The first part of the analysis investigates the level of social media usage by each of the brands – on which applications the brands are active, showcases the alignment of online and offline activities, and the integration in the overall media plan. The second part of the analysis outlines the traditional marketing objectives that are covered with the social media marketing.

In detail are discussed the incensement of the product knowledge and user engagement, establishment and maintenance of relationships with the clients, the creation of brand awareness and recall, and building of brand loyalty.

The final chapter summarises the benefits for the theory and the management in the organic niche market.

2. Social Media

Social media have gained importance among web users in all aspects of life, as well as for private as for business use (Kahar, et al., 2012). As of December 2013, the online social networking application Facebook registered more than 1.2 billion active users (Facebook, 2014) – or almost one fifth of the world population is actively checking their newsfeeds. Another 230 million users are sending around 500 million Tweets per day (Twitter, 2014). Over 6 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube – accounting for almost an hour for every person on Earth (Youtube, 2014). Revising all these significant numbers, it is therefore reasonable to claim that social media represents “a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies operating in online space – or any space, for that matter” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The following chapter will focus on the social media definition available in the literature, the different types of social media categories available and the social media marketing specifics.

2.1. Social Media Definition

According to Robinson (2007) social media are the tools that have Web 2.0 characteristics – where the content and applications are not designed and modified by the individual, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media combines many types of media content that is created by the end users and is intended for the public; the user generated content is the way the people can utilise the social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Safko and Brake (2009) define social media as “activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media”. In contrast to conversational media, social media allows readers to participate in the creation of content (Kirtiş & Karahan, 2011).

Social media content includes text, videos, pictures and networks. The social networks are a qualitatively new type of product in comparison to the standard

text, pictures, videos – they “leverage the power of relationships and the collective wisdom of many” (Berthon, et al., 2012).

2.2. Social Media Classification

Social media incorporate a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, social networking sites, creativity work sites e.g. video, photo, music sharing sites, social bookmarking sites, discussion boards, etc. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media is usually associated with the most popular brands at a specific moment – earlier it was MySpace and now in everyday life social media is related to Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

In this dynamic online world where every day new sites appear, it is quite difficult to have one general categorisation that takes into consideration all new and upcoming applications. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) present a classification scheme that allows dividing the different social media types in six groups. They work in two different dimensions – on the one hand, the content of social media could be classified into three groups taking into account the richness of the medium and the degree of social presence; on the other hand, the desire of the people to present themselves in cyberspace forms another classification into three groups depending on the degree of self-disclosure and self- presentation the social media allows. The combination of the two dimensions results into a classification table that depicts the six groups of social media types.

		Social presence / Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Table 1: Classification of Social Media by social presence/ media richness and self-presentation/ self-disclosure

Source: (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

Blogs and collaborative projects are often text based and provide a base for a relatively simple exchange, forming the first vertical level. The next level with medium social presence and media richness are the social networks (e.g.

Facebook, and LinkedIn) and the content communities (YouTube, Flickr) which in addition to the text based communication allow the sharing of pictures, videos, etc. Virtual social worlds and game worlds are involving rich media interface, where everyday life is replicated in the online world. The social media channels where the users are focused on self-presentation rather than providing content for the users are blogs, social networking sites and the virtual social worlds.

In the following paragraphs each type of social media channel would be discussed in detail, naming the most common applications at the moment, and reviewing the opportunities each of them offers companies.

2.2.1. Blogs

Blogs count for the earliest form of social media, where text was the most common tool and blogs stay for a contraction of the term “web logs” (Berthon, et al., 2012), (Onishi & Manchanda, 2012). Blogs are personal webpages, that are owned and written by individuals who post comments and diaries regularly, including text, graphics, videos, and links to other blogs and websites (Berthon, et al., 2012). When the blog content is primary focused on photographs it is called photoblog, on videos – vlogs, on music – MP3 blogs, and on audio – podcasts. Another characteristic of the blogs is that content appears in date-stamped entries and in reverse chronological order (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007).

The number of blogs has explosively grown in the last ten years with the emerging of the blog software facilitating the posting of content of non-technical users. By the end of 2011, NM Incite tracked over 181 million blogs around the world (Nielsen , 2012) and in the beginning of 2014 only two of the most common blog software platforms used for consumer-generated content WordPress and Tumblr. count over 240 million blog pages (Tumblr., 2014), (WordPress, 2014) .

Blogs are usually maintained by a single person, or occasionally by a small group, but at the same time they give the opportunity to interact with others in the comments field below the post. Lately a new trend has developed – "multi-author blogs" where posts are written by large numbers of authors and are professionally

edited, delivering higher quality content and frequently engaging articles (Samuel, 2013).

Many companies and organisations are already using blogs for marketing purposes or to update employees, shareholders and customers on new and substantial developments from their side (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These are called corporate blogs and could be applied for internal or external communication. The internal corporate blog is mainly used to enhance communication and productivity within the company, and to initiate discussions on issues of interest to other employees (Kolari, et al., 2007). The external corporate blog, on the other side, is used to enhance communication between the organization and the public. One of its biggest advantages is the low cost at which a wide audience is reached, improving marketing, branding and PR. Also it is a new source for corporations to “seek industry opinion, retrieve customer queries and public feedback, enable virtual marketing, and build a strong online community” (Chen, et al., 2007). It creates for corporations a “human” touch, which allows them to be more persuasive and informative, while in the same time it builds a relationship with stakeholders and customers and improves reputation (Strother, et al., 2009).

The corporate blog aims to achieve the organizational goals and as such, it is more than a straight forward objective that it has to fulfil. A company pursues different goals, and for that reason the corporate blog branches into different subtypes to accomplish these aims (Puschmann, 2010):

- Product blog
- Image blog
- Executive blog
- Employee blog

The product blog is a familiar form of company-to-public communication and serves for marketing of products, promoting them directly or indirectly, offers customer service, or provides background information on related topics. On the other side, the role of the image blog is to present the company and its position on specific topics, e.g. environmental sustainability, workplace safety standards. The executive blog could be used for a communication channel of the leadership to

share their ideas, plans and decisions with employees, investors and consumers. The employee blogs differ from the rest of corporate blogs in that they are self-initiated and are not exactly sharing the global marketing strategy, have a single owner who sets the agenda independently (Puschmann, 2010).

The micro-blog is a form of the traditional blog where the content is smaller in both actual and aggregated size. Micro-blogging is enabled by a variety of online tools (e.g. Twitter) and refers to the activity that users broadcast short text messages with update on their private and business life (McFedries, 2007). All messages posted on micro-blogs are public by default and once a user considers the posts of another person as particularly interesting, he can become a “follower” of that person. As a result all messages will be pushed to his own home page, creating an additional element of convenience as it minimizes the effort of accessing the news or information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011a).

Along with all individual users – average citizens to celebrities, micro-blogging is well utilized by companies. It could be useful in the “three stages of marketing process: pre-purchase (i.e. marketing research); purchase (i.e. marketing communications, especially sales promotions); and post-purchase (i.e. customer services).” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011a).

2.2.2. Collaborative projects

Collaborative projects are online applications that serve the creation of user-generated content as they enable the simultaneous and cooperative creation of content by many end-users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) differentiate two types of collaborative projects: wikis and social bookmarking applications.

The wikis are websites that enhance users to create, edit, add and remove text-based content. In opposite to blogs, the content for the wiki websites is created without any default leader or owner and evolve to the needs of the users. The biggest example of wiki application is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, available in 276 different languages (Wikipedia, 2014) and ranking 6 as the most visited website in the world according to Alexa. The high popularity of the wiki pages suggests that these are becoming a main source of retrieving information for

consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and this fact should be considered by companies planning their social media marketing mix.

The social bookmarking applications allow users to exchange resources in a collaborative way either in a professional or in a research/academic field (Arolas & Ladrón-de-Guevar, 2012). The web application provides tools for the users to save and manage their markers and favourites not in the browser, but on an online server (e.g. Delicious, Digg). Subsequently the stored information could be accessed from a different location or shared with other users (Illig, et al., 2007). Another important feature of the social bookmarking is the tagging, as the tags ease the search of resources, as well as their descriptions and enable the users to find similar resources (Millen, et al., 2005). The aim of applying social bookmarking is to help users to “discover, share and review online information resources for collectively exploring and determining the metrics of the content involved” (Lin & Tsai, 2011).

2.2.3. Social networking sites

Social networking sites are applications that give the user an opportunity, mostly free of charge, to create a personal profile and in this way to link and connect with other friends and colleagues, have access to review these profiles, send e-mails and personal messages between each other. The personal profile can include different type of information, as well as pictures, audio files, videos, and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In other words, social networking sites are “virtual collections of user profiles which can be shared with others” (Hughes, et al., 2012). Of all networking sites, Facebook has created the most publicity and is in everybody’s mouth when talking about social media.

Facebook is the number 2 most popular website in the world (Google.com keeping the leading position) and in December 2013 has counted 1.23 billion monthly active users and on average 757 million of them has used their account daily (Facebook, 2014). As any other social networking site, Facebook allows the creation of personal profile where users can post information about themselves, sharing their interests, views and hobbies. On these profiles, the users and their connections, named “Friends” in Facebook, can post links, pictures and videos. Moreover, the online application gives the opportunity for public and private

messages, chat in real time, game play or participation in special activities supported by apps, specially designed for the Facebook environment. All of these features, along with the brand and company pages, make Facebook broadly popular for online socialising (Hughes, et al., 2012).

All networking sites operate online and offer social interaction, but still there are some differences between each platform – the target groups they are serving and extra functions they are offering. For instance, LinkedIn is the biggest professional network with 250 million members in over 200 countries (LinkedIn, 2014); and Xing.com with around 14 million members, 6.7 million of whom are based in the German-speaking countries (Xing AG, 2013). The idea behind the professional social networks is to connect colleagues and partners, find new jobs, projects, business events and meet potential prospects.

From corporative perspective, social networking sites are of great interest for companies emerging as a powerful social marketing and advertising tool (Lipsman, et al., 2012). Brand managers are able to measure the success of a brand content posted as a message within the newsfeed. Furthermore, the corporate or brand page in the social media networking site serves as an information platform, as well as it helps building the brand image and creates brand loyalty.

2.2.4. Content communities

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define content communities as applications that enable the sharing of media content between users. The media content could be videos (e.g. Youtube), photos (e.g. Flickr), presentations (e.g. Slideshare) or even text (BookCrossing, where people share books). The creation of personal profile page is not obligatory for users who would like to review the content. If an account is required, than in most cases it contains only general information and the personal data is not prominently presented, but rather the content that the user has uploaded.

The companies can use the popularity of the content communities and use them as a contact channel for their marketing communications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). They can use it either as another standard “push” channel informing about new

products, functions, advertisement videos, etc. or listen to what consumers have to say, reading comments, watching product reviews, unboxing (Smith, et al., 2012).

Youtube, probably the most important member of content communities, is an online video platform that allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos (Youtube, 2014). The number of videos is impressive, accounting for 100 hours of video that are uploaded every minute. For companies, the online video community provides many opportunities to reach their consumers either with paid ads or with viral videos that spread the branding message. An own brand channel is part of the company's profile, hosting video TV and online ads, product reviews, PR events and company shows, interviews and sponsored stories.

2.2.5. Virtual worlds

Virtual worlds are platforms that reproduce the real world in a way where users act from a personalized avatar and interact as they would in everyday life (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Virtual worlds have three characteristics that distinguish them from the other social media applications – allow users to interact in real time; have access to fully customizable virtual self-presentation in the form of an avatar; and give the possibility of exploring virtual environment in three dimensions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). They require the highest media richness of all applications discussed so far and come in two different forms.

The first, virtual game worlds or massively multiplayer online worlds, is a computer-based simulated environment (Bartle, 2003). The simulated worlds could be based on science fiction, real worlds, super heroes, sports or historical background. One of the most important titles is “World of Warcraft” reaching 12 million accounts worldwide in some of its editions (Younkin, 2013).

The marketing opportunities for companies involve product placement in the simulated environment, the so called in-game advertising; or applying stand marketing campaigns including characters from the game, attracting the game fans in an indisputable manner (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The second group of virtual worlds – virtual social worlds, provides more free space for the users to set their environment as close as their own life and live in

this virtual world. Users appear in form of avatars and there are virtually no boundaries limiting the possible interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The most known hyperreality is probably Second Life – with 36 million accounts and \$3.2 billion spent for virtual goods within the Second Life economy for the passed ten years (Linden Lab, 2013).

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) there are five ways in which companies can make use of virtual social worlds – these are advertising/communication, virtual product sales, marketing research, human resource management, and internal process management. Basically there are four possibilities where firms can exploit the advertising potential of such social applications. One opportunity is to create virtual flagship stores where they can present digital equivalents of their products (Kozinets, 2002); another way is to buy advertising space in virtual malls or radio stations (Manchanda, et al., 2006); sponsoring virtual events and activities; and the positive effect of virtual activities in real life press coverage (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009).

2.3. Social Media Marketing

Since the market has evolved and social media has become a prominent part of the business environment, companies have gradually embraced the idea to add the social media element to their marketing mix. However, social media marketing is different from the classical marketing and requires another approach and strategy in order to achieve its goals (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012).

Social media marketing is commonly defined as all activities in the social media channels that companies use to bring their products and services to the market (Venzke, 2011). Moreover, social media marketing is related to relationship marketing, where the companies have the opportunity to become an influencer (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). It is not only about selling products but more about making connections with consumers, and creating brand loyalty through networking, conversation, and community building (McKee, 2010). The social media channels have become a major element in forming the elements of consumer behaviour such as “awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, and post-purchase behaviour and evaluation” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

In the era of social media, the companies' official website and product page is not the only information source for the customers. Back in 2008, a research for DEI Worldwide has shown that 70 percent of the people visited social media websites such as message boards, social media sites, and blogs to get information; furthermore, 49 percent of these consumers took a purchase decision based on this information (DEI Worldwide, 2008). Therefore, maintaining relevant and updated content is one of the most fundamental strategies to present a brand successfully on the social media (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012).

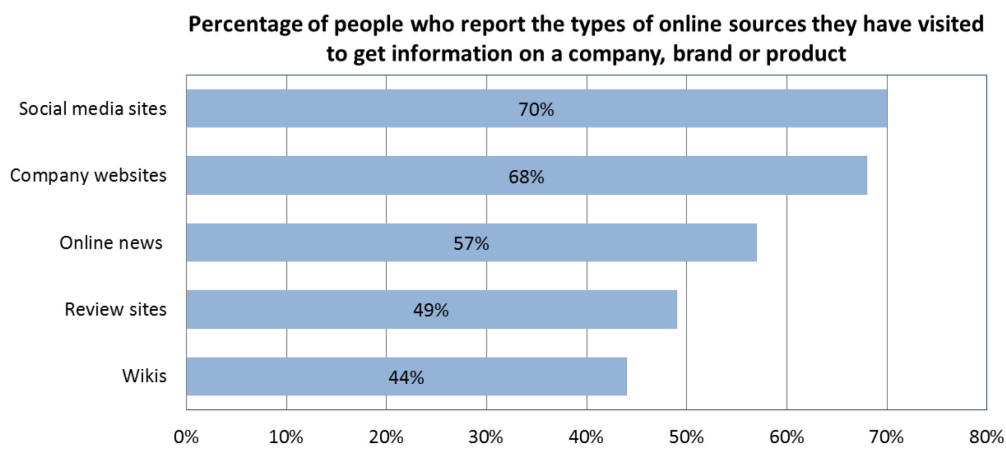


Figure 1: Types of online sources as information source

Source: (DEI Worldwide, 2008)

Moreover, social media provides a unique opportunity for customers to exchange opinion and knowledge, omitting the official company channel for retrieving information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The marketing managers should recognise the importance of integrating the social media element in the marketing mix to keep the company's values and goals.

The number of social media platforms is countless and for a company it is impossible to involve in all of them. Hence, marketing managers should focus on a few and take decision to participate in the most suitable platforms to communicate with their target audience (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). The users choose their favourite platforms based on their interest, where most of their friends are, and are also country and geographically specific. The right mix of platforms is essential for the success of the social media marketing campaign, as each platform serves different purpose and the users respond in different matter

(Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Furthermore, each platform has special rules and technical functionalities that determine the communication style. For example, Twitter has text limits as a tweet cannot be longer than 140 characters and there are special URL shortening applications that allow adding a link to the post and keep the length constraints.

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), social media has two interrelated promotional roles in the marketplace. From one side, it allows companies to talk to their customers; from the other side, social media enables customers to talk to each other. Moreover, social media gives the opportunity for customers to talk to companies, which contributes to the marketing research.

The first role is typical for the traditional marketing communication, where the companies control the information flow and post news, updates and brand messages. The second role of social media is unique as it provides the opportunity of customers to communicate with each other, an extension of the traditional word-of-mouth communication with a very high magnitude. A simple but touching story can reach not only friends but hundreds or thousands of people. In such cases companies do not have the monopoly of the information, but they can guide and shape the consumers' conversations.

For companies it is easier to monitor the consumers' conversation flow if it is organised in brand or product communities, where consumers are part of a network with other people who have similar interests. The enhancement of consumers' engagement is part of successful social media marketing. Consumers feel more engaged with a product or brand when they have the chance to provide feedback or become part of a community (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

3. Organic Industry in the German-Speaking Countries

The following chapter will focus on the organic food market size, characteristics and challenges. The three German speaking markets for organic food industry – Germany, Austria and Switzerland will be examined in detail providing an overview of the current market situation for organic food industry. These three markets are within the top ten countries with the largest markets for organic food in 2012 (Willer & Lernoud, 2014, p. 68).

The analysis will be divided in three parts – starting with the supply of organic food products, examining the market volume, market share and specifics of the distribution; following by the trends in the demand, consumer types and social milieus; at the end the purchase barriers of the organic food industry will be shortly reviewed.

The aim of this exploration is to create an overview of the current market situation for the organic food industry in order to obtain a better understanding of the usage and potentials of social media marketing.

3.1. Supply

Organic farming produces food as naturally as possible, minimizing the human impact on the environment and respecting the natural life cycles (European Commission, 2014). A special certification based on government-defined standards is required in many countries in order to market food products as organic. The logo and the labelling rules are an important part of the organic regulations within the European Union, facilitating the authorities' control, enhancing fair competition and consumer protection (European Commission, 2014a).

In the last decade the sales of international organic food products have increased substantially. The consumers have started demanding more organically grown products and the supermarkets, producers and farmers have responded, introducing new as well as adapting existing products to meet the higher demands of the clients.

3.1.1. Market volume and turnover

Worldwide the organic production is continuously growing – in the last ten years the agricultural land with organic production has tripled reaching in 2012 37.2 million hectares. However, it still represents only 0.9% of the total agricultural land in the world. The biggest organic producers are Australia, Argentina and the United States whereas the European leaders are Spain, Italy, Germany and France (Willer, 2014).

Country	Area (mil ha)
Australia (2009)	12.0
Argentina	3.6
United States of America (2011)	2.2
China (2011)	1.9
Spain	1.6
Italy	1.2
Germany	1.0
France	1.0
Uruguay (2009)	0.9
Canada	0.8

Table 2: The ten countries with the largest areas of organic agricultural land 2012

Source: (FiBL-IFOAM, 2014)

In total the agricultural land with organic production in Europe is 11.2 million hectares representing 2.3% of the total agricultural land. Germany is leading in absolute numbers where Austria (19.7 %) and Switzerland (12 %) are leaders in shares of the organic agricultural land farmed (Willer & Lernoud, 2014, p. 38).

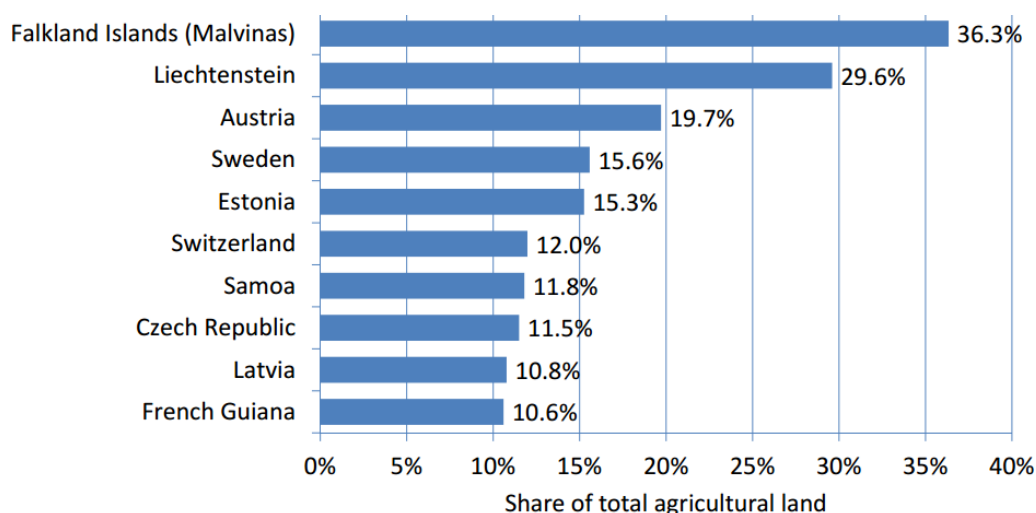


Figure 2: The ten countries with the highest shares of organic agricultural land 2012

Source: (FiBL-IFOAM, 2014)

The three markets – Germany, Austria and Switzerland are not only within the leaders of organic production but also within the biggest organic markets worldwide. For 2012 Germany has covered 14% of the overall organic retail sales in the world with 7,040 billion EUR (Willer & Lernoud, 2014, p. 69). Austria and Switzerland are also in the top ten countries with 1,065 and 1,520 billion EUR accordingly.

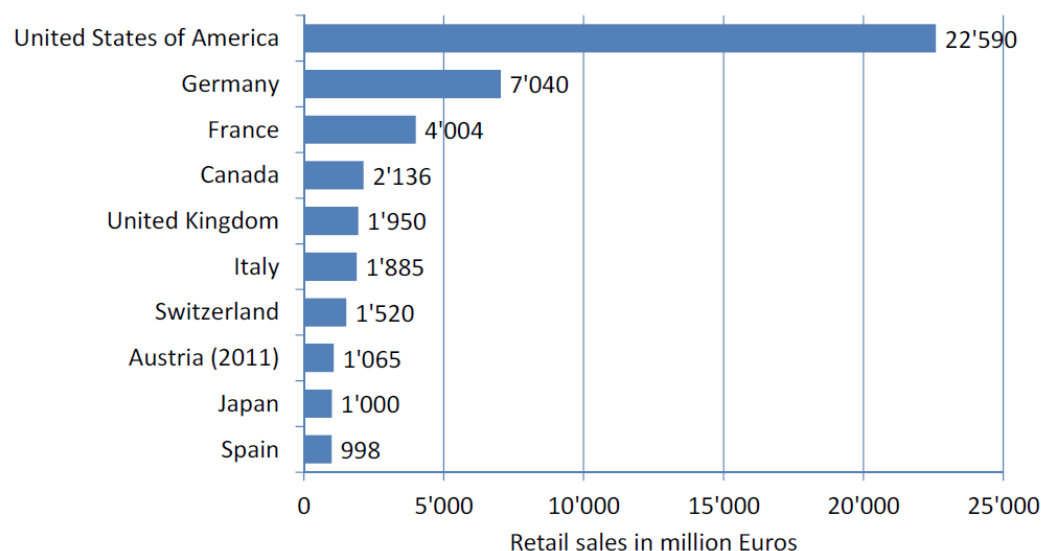


Figure 3: Global market: The countries with the largest markets for organic food 2012

Source: (FiBL-AMI-Organic Data Network, 2014)

The Swiss consumers have spent in 2012 on average 189 EUR for organic food products, standing out in the chart on first place – 30 EUR more than the Danish

consumers. The Austrians are ranking number five, with 127 EUR spent for organic food in 2011. Germany is two positions below with 86 EUR per capita paid in 2012.

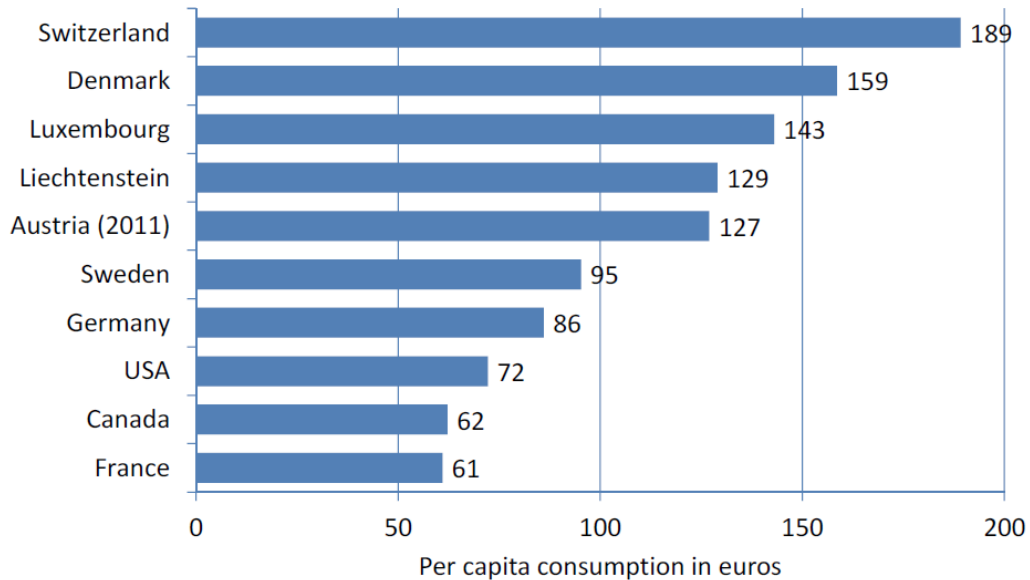


Figure 4: Global market: The countries with the highest consumption per capita 2012

Source: (FiBL-AMI-Organic Data Network, 2014)

According to the FiBL & AMI survey in 2013 the turnover of the European market for organic food and drinks has increased in 2011 with another 9%, resulting in 21.5 billion EUR turnover. In most of the European countries an upward trend is observed for higher consumption of organic products. Exceptions are United Kingdom and Ireland where a drop of the consumption of organic food is noted. The fastest growing markets in Europe are Croatia (20%), Netherlands (15%), Denmark (13%), Italy (11%) and Norway (9.5%). Germany has an average growth of 9% for the European market; Austria has an 8% growth whereas Switzerland is growing with a slower pace with 4.2% (FiBL-AMI, 2013).

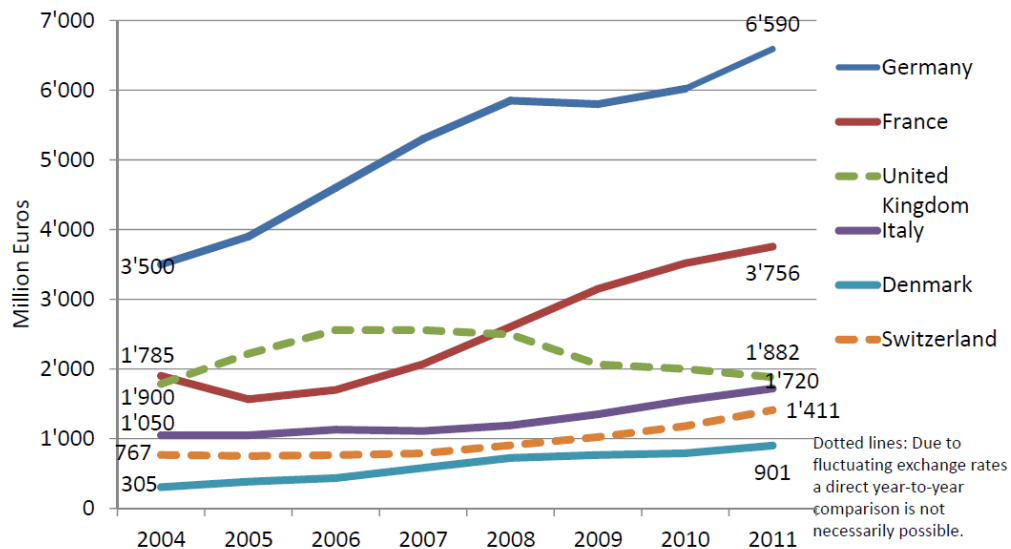


Figure 5: Development of the organic market in selected European countries 2004-2011

Source: (FiBL-AMI, 2013)

Although not all reports are available, the preliminary data shows that the dynamic growth of the organic market will continue in 2012 in most of the European countries. For the first two quarters the Netherlands and Italy are reporting 6% growth of the turnover whereas France is expecting to reach 4 billion Euro retail sales (in comparison 3,765 billion EUR in 2011). The buyer confidence is favourable for the organic food and drink products as the Europeans are putting more and more focus on sustainability and regional products. The awareness among Europeans of nutrition and food origin also increases in times of recession more apparent in some southern European countries (BÖLW , 2013).

The development of the German organic market in the first half 2012 has slowed down due to the food scandals (Dioxin in conventional feedstuff and EHEC coli bacteria in organic and conventional vegetables), but showed stable growth especially in the second half of the year. Press campaigns revealing bad situation in farms for animal keeping has drawn the attention of the consumers in 2012, pushing spend in direct sales and organic food stores. However, this intervention has not showed big influence on the total turnover results (Schaack, 2012).

The current statistics provided from the workgroup from the market research agencies GfK, Nielsen, BioVista and Klaus Braun suggest that the German organic market has grown with 6% in 2012. The organic food market is estimated

at 7.04 billion EUR and 3.9% of the entire food market in Germany (Schaack, 2012). Although it has increased its market share from 1.2% since 2000 (Willer & Yussefi, 2000) to almost 4% in 2012, it is still a market niche. The leading markets in consumption per capita – Austria and Switzerland are reaching 6% of the entire food market – an important share but still a very small part for the industry (RegioPlan Consulting, 2011), (Bio Suisse, 2013).

3.1.2. Main distribution channels

The end consumers of organic food products are in the focus of the paper (B2C – Business to Consumer) and therefore the main distribution channels are of interest for this study. As the organic food is emerging as a significant segment of food retailing in the recent years, the large conventional supermarket chains have gained more importance. One decade ago on the international market scene, the greater part of organic sales was made in speciality stores and direct distribution (95%) and only a smaller part was realized in the mainstream stores (5%) (Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Zahaf, 2012).

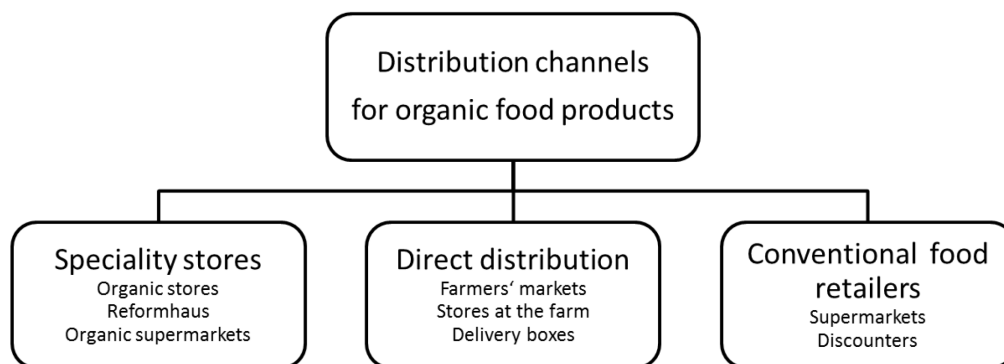


Figure 6: Distribution channels for organic food products

Source: (Faltins, 2010), (Teriete, 2007)

The speciality stores comprise the organic stores, *Reformhaus* and organic supermarkets. The organic stores or health food store is a type of grocery store that sells health foods, organic foods, and local production; often it offers detergents, cosmetics or clothes that are produced with little environmental impact. *Reformhaus* is a type of health food store which is widely spread in Germany and Austria. It specializes in groceries and personal care products,

focusing on vegetarian products, organic, and free of synthetic preservatives. In the beginning of 2013 there are over 2,400 stores in Austria and Germany under the name *Reformhaus* (ReformKontor, 2013).

The organic supermarkets are relatively new distribution channel for organic food products. They resemble the conventional supermarkets, offering a large selling area and anonymous purchasing process, in contrast to the small health stores. On the other side, they supply a full organic assortment of products that are labelled with the organic seal (Faltins, 2010). In the beginning of 2014, there are over 570 organic supermarkets in Germany, as a big part of the stores are part of chains, such as *Alnatura*, *denn's*, *Bio Company*, etc. In Austria there are around 30 supermarkets, mostly in Vienna and part of the already named big chains; as in Switzerland – there are only three local brand supermarkets (Bio-Markt.Info, 2014).

Another traditional channel is the direct distribution which includes the farmers' markets, stores at the farm and the subscription of organic boxes served mostly by farmers and producers. The farmers' markets could be specialised in selling only organic products or on general markets offering organic assortment. Typical characteristics of the farmers' markets are that they supply fresh products from local origin and typical for the season. The consumer can get in touch with the farmer and understand more about the quality and farming, fertilizing, etc. The farm store is another alternative for direct contact with the producer, accessing fresh and local production (Faltins, 2010). However, it is more accessible for people living in the country than the citizens of the big towns and cities.

A relative new channel for the direct distribution is the organic box, called veg-scheme-box or "Abokiste" in German, where consumers subscribe for a weekly delivery of fresh vegetables, fruits, dairy products or production made in the farm. The supply is growing and it offers different alternatives, e.g. including menu plan and idea leaflet with recipes.

The conventional supermarkets and discounters are the leaders of supplying organic food products to the German-speaking market. Even back in 2000 the most important channel for distribution in Austria and Switzerland was the conventional supermarket. Austria had 73 percent of the turnover of organic food

spent in the large supermarket chains such as Billa and Spar and only 9 percent spent in specialities stores. In Switzerland the predominant role was held by the conventional supermarkets with 57 percent – the leading supermarkets Migros and COOP that are pioneers within the organic food segment. Germany showed a different picture with the highest segment held by speciality and organic stores with 46 percent and only 26 percent were held by the conventional supermarkets. For the three country markets the direct purchase from the farmer had almost an equal share with 19 percent in Germany and Switzerland, and 18 percent in Austria (Willer & Yussefi, 2000).

Country	Direct Distribution	Speciality Stores	Conventional Supermarket	Others
Austria	18 %	9 %	73 %	0 %
Switzerland	19 %	21 %	57 %	3 %
Germany	19 %	46 %	26 %	9 %

Table 3: Revenue allocation of organic food products in the distribution channels 2000

Source: (Willer & Yussefi, 2000)

In 2012 the trend shows that the conventional supermarkets are taking the leading positions in all three markets and the direct distribution is losing relative importance; hence, in absolute numbers the turnover has increased within all markets and all distributional channels during the last decade.

Country	Direct Distribution	Speciality Stores	Conventional Supermarket	Others
Austria	6.4 %	13.1 %	68.8 %	11.7 %
Switzerland	5.5 %	16.6 %	77.9 %	0 %
Germany	18 %	31 %	50 %	1 %

Table 4: Revenue allocation of organic food products in the distribution channels 2012

Source: (Bio Suisse, 2013), (Bio Austria, 2012), (BÖWL, 2013)

The speciality supermarkets and *Reformhaus* stores have obtained bigger share in Austria, reaching 13.1 percent of the turnover where losing shares in Germany (31%) and Switzerland (16.6%). An uplift of the farmers' store has shown new potentials especially for the rural part of Germany (Döring, 2013).



Figure 7: Share of sales of the health foods: 2002 and 2012

Source: (Klaus Braun Kommunikationsberatung, 2013)

The highest turnover of organic products in the three markets is held by the big supermarket chains, mainly with their private labels. In Austria almost 69 percent of the turnover is covered by conventional supermarkets and discounters. The absolute leader in organic market is the REWE Group with its private label *Ja!Natürlich* with 323.3 Mio Euro turnover in 2012, forming almost 50 percent of the market share (Rewe Group, 2013). It is followed by *Zurück zum Ursprung*, the private label of Hofer (Aldi Group) for organic products with local origin, and *Natur Pur*, the private label of SPAR (Heinze, 2012). In consequence the Austrian market is highly saturated with supermarket private labels that are forming the biggest market share of organic food supply.

In Switzerland the conventional supermarket chains are covering most of the organic food market where COOP and Migros are still the leaders. *Naturaplan* by COOP and *Migros Bio* are the private labels for organic products of the two pioneer leading supermarkets. In 2012 COOP are making 47.5 percent of the market turnover, whereas Migros – almost 27 percent. (Bio Suisse, 2013).

During the last decade, the landscape of the distribution channels for organic products in Germany has changed dramatically (BÖWL, 2013). At the moment the big conventional supermarket chains are holding the half of the turnover with their private labels named with the *Bio* label, introducing no specific brand name.

3.2. Demand

The demand of organic food products is growing as the people are adopting the new trend for healthy lifestyle. The ecological sustainability and fair trade conditions are driving more consumers to prefer organically grown products. The target groups vary from hard-core organic consumers to no-buyers, characterised by their eating habits and the social milieu. The factors that drive consumers to prefer conventional to organic products are numerous, but still the strongest argument for the majority is the higher market price. Nevertheless, there are other purchase barriers that could be eliminated by an adequate marketing strategy.

3.2.1 Trends in the organic food industry

The demand of organic food products on the German speaking countries market is strongly influenced by the trends characterizing the overall food market. Today, for example, the modern society is constantly seeking improvement in every day live conditions, wellness and health, balancing the stress produced by the high career and job requirements and the growing environmental pollution.

In many cases the purchase of organic products is an expression of the general environmental awareness. In a wealthy society, where majority of the people have their basic needs covered, the social values and environmental issues are gaining importance. According to the Oekobarometer study in Germany the most important factor for buying organic food products (87%) is the local origin of the products, not only to support the regional farms, but also to avoid high transportation costs and the resulting CO₂ pollution. Another strong argument for organic consumption is the adequate animal housing (85%). As a third reason for buying organic products, the interviewees refer to reduction of pollution and use of pesticide. Another popular topic is the baby and children diet and also diet for pregnant women – 79 percent are naming it as a strong argument for organic products consumption (BÖLN, 2013).

Not only the birth of a child and pregnancy, but also other occasions in life can change the food consumption habits and can be related to the family life cycle. These factors take into account the demographical characteristics such as household form, family status, number of children and the diverse phases of life

(Bodenstein & Spiller, 1998). A research made by Nielsen in 2006 shows that the “Empty nester” (households, where the children have moved already out) and single elderly people are showing distinct interest in organic food (Nielsen , 2006). Surprisingly the young families are buying organic food for their children as long as the kids are becoming a separate meal. After that the majority of the households are not enthusiastic to continue the organic menu for the whole family (Ziemann & Thomas, 2003).

In regard to the income the most studies show that the intensive consumers of organic food products are mostly families with higher budgets. With growing income and level of education, the appreciation of local organic food products is also rising. The comprehensive information available, the increasing personal consternation regarding the environmental pollution and the individual possibilities to support a healthy life through healthy food are main arguments for the organic consumption (BÖLW , 2013) .

Furthermore, the consideration of the products quality determine the decision for organic products – 59 percent are putting focus on the foodstuff scandals such as BSE, hormone scandals in the animal keeping, gene-modified products, etc. Taste, biological diversity, fair trade and handle are key arguments in the purchase behaviour (BÖWL, 2013).

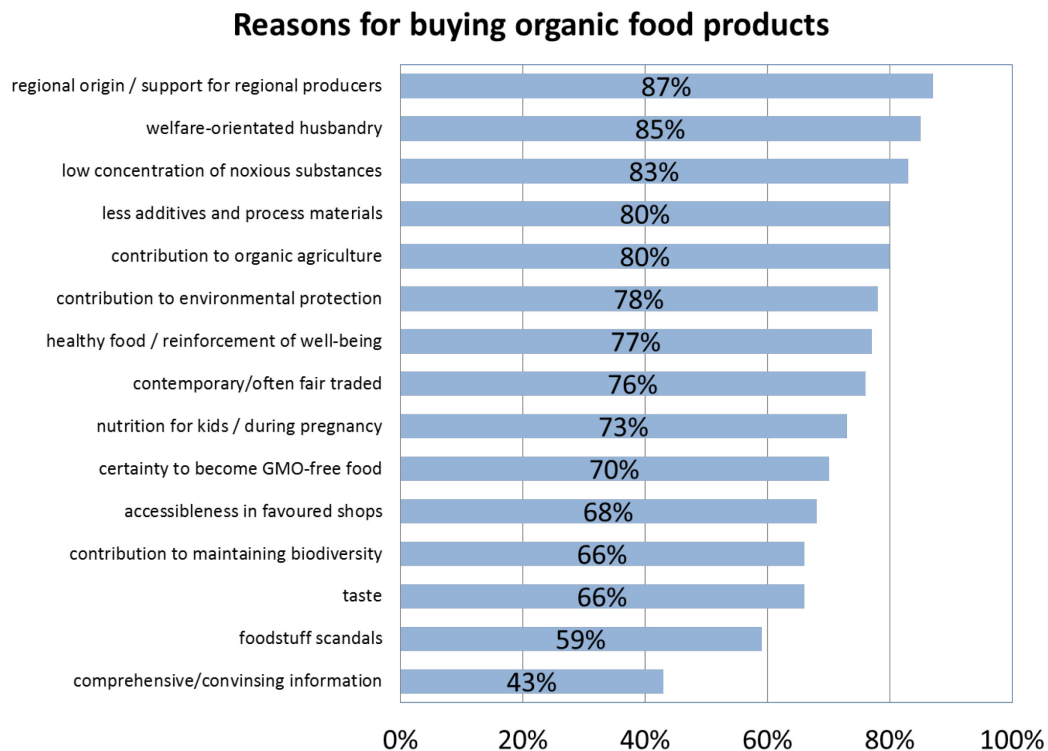


Figure 8: Reasons for buying organic food products

Source: (BÖLW , 2013)

The picture is not any different in Austria and Switzerland. The main arguments for the Austrian consumers of organic products are as first the healthiness, followed by “free from mineral fertiliser”, better taste and control; and after that comes environment protection and adequate animal housing. The consumers are also interested in the fair price conditions and 60 percent are ready to pay a higher price to support the fair labour conditions, allowing a good profit margin for the supplier of organic products (Lebensministerium, 2013), (Maier, 2011).

The results of a market research study in Austria disclose that there are four leading buy arguments for the consumers – in the first place the indulgence that accompany the consumption of organic food products; furthermore, the desire to do something good to your health and body; the recall of childhood memories and the natural nourishment in the country; and as last, the responsibility of the environment, sustainable agriculture, and fair animal housekeeping. In the meantime there is a second generation organic consumers in Austria, who has grown up with the organic food products and now it is part of their normal daily life (Lebensministerium, 2013a).

Next to all these healthy and environmental arguments the convenience and ease of purchase should not be sacrificed – still 68 percent determine the availability in the shopping locations play a decisive role. Here the niche market has something to offer with fruit and vegetable boxes and home delivery services, pointing out with personal touch and convenience (Kolibius, 2001). Also organic pioneer firms like Sonnentor are introducing “fast food products” that contain only natural and healthy ingredients, and at the same time are easy to prepare to meet the needs of working people, e.g. dry soups, ready desserts, etc. (Sonnentor, 2013).

3.2.2. Social milieus

The marketing research identifies numerous types of buyers groups based on the consumer behaviour regarding environmental motives, attitudes and needs. The most common classification approach differentiates three eco consumer types (Hopfenbeck & Roth, 1994), (Belz, 1995):

- **Environmental oriented households:** This group has a positive engagement to the environmental protection and purchases when possible always eco-friendly products. The core group is prepared to take personal limitations and to pay a higher price for eco-friendly products.
- **Households without differentiated environmental engagement:** This group express its interest and engagement to the environment protection, however, is not consequent purchasing eco-friendly products and is not ready to take personal limitations.
- **Households with no environmental orientation:** This group has negative engagement to environmental protection and purchases rarely eco-friendly products.

Nevertheless, in the praxis the ecological target groups are not so easily identifiable. The environmental protection does not form consumer types as the eco lifestyle exists vaguely in the reality. Even the environmental oriented households are not consequent in all actions in everyday life – e.g. many consumers buy an organic yogurt in the morning but still eat at a fast food restaurant for lunch.

The above mentioned conclusions are supported by an empirical study of the life style models – a classification of the population in different milieus based on the Sinus concept (Spiller, 2006). The Sinus-Milieus® link up demographic criteria like education, occupation, or income with the actual life worlds of the people, i.e. with their everyday being, their different attitudes to life, and their style of living.

The borders between the milieus are blurred and do not have clear bounds as the living environment is not as obviously localizable as the social classes. An essential element of the milieu concept is that there are many points of contact and crossings between each social milieu group. Figure 9 depicts the distribution of each milieu in Germany for 2013: the higher a milieu is illustrated in the graphic, the higher the level of occupation, education and income; the more it stretches to the right – the more modern in social cultural aspect is the basic orientation. In this strategic land map products, brands, media channels, etc. are positioned.

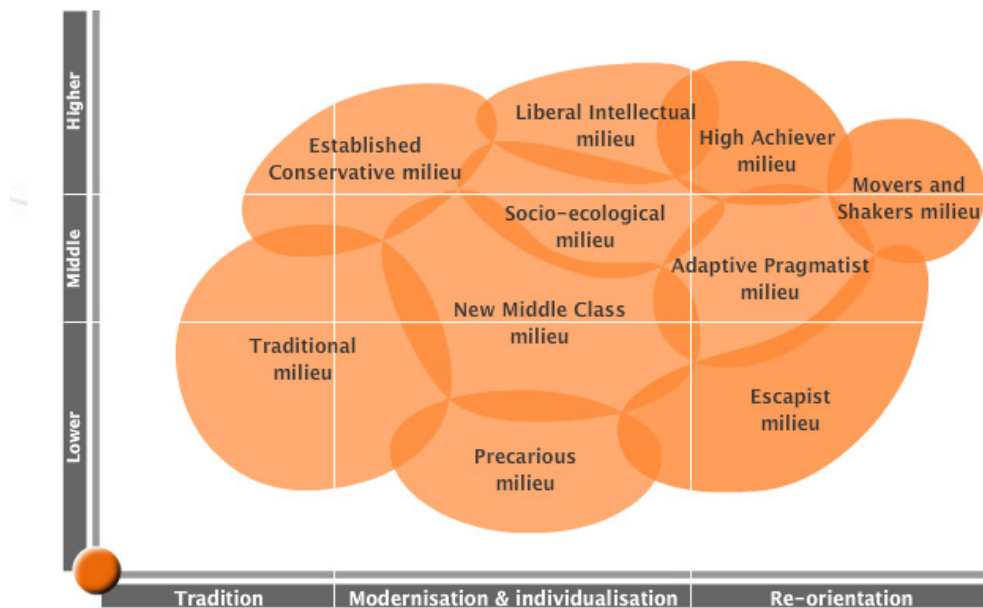


Figure 9: The Sinus-Milieus® in Germany 2013

Source: (Sinus Institute, 2013)

Research based on the milieus showed definite correlations to nutrition behaviour. The “Conservative” milieus on the left as well as the “New Middle Class” have rather traditional nutritional perception which is observed in proven recipes with regional and seasonal products, whereas the postmodern milieus consume far more fast food products. The interest on healthy food products and diet is less

present in the “Escapist” and “Adaptive Pragmatist” milieus. The part of the healthy oriented is larger in all milieus in the upper part of the graph. Preferences for organic food are showing the “High Achiever”, a small disproportional part in the “New Middle Class”, the “Socio-ecological”, the “Established Conservative” and the “Liberal Intellectual” milieus. A strong reluctance to organic consume are showing the “Escapist” and “Precarious” milieus (Spiller, 2006).

Sinus Milieus	Share of population in:		
	Germany 2011	Austria 2009	Switzerland 2011
Established – Conservative Traditional – Middle Class (CH)	10%	6%	9%*
Liberal Intellectual (D) Established (AT) Parvenu (CH)	7%	9%*	9%*
High Achiever	7%	9%	10%
Movers and Shakers (D) Digital Individualists (AT) Experimenter (CH)	6%	7%*	6%*
New Middle Class	14%	15%	17%
Adaptive Pragmatist Post-material (CH)	9%	10%	11%*
Socio-ecological (D) Post-material (AT) Status-oriented (CH)	7%	9%*	10%*
Traditional Undemanding traditional (CH)	15%	15%	9%*
Precarious (D) Consumer-oriented (AT/CH)	9%	9%*	8%*
Escapist	15%	11%	11%
* The numbers are comparable only to a limited extent because of different definitions of the milieu.			

Table 5: Sinus-Milieus® comparative table

Source: (Sinus Institute, 2013), (Integral, 2011), (Sinus Institute, 2011)

All in all it could be summarized that the social status has a strong impact on the organic consumption and preferences. The core target group for the organic food products is constituted from well-educated and higher income status people, conservative as well as liberal background. The poorer social classes are rather disinterested in the organic products. Between the “Movers and Shakers” more and more consider the organic products as trendy and modern, while within the “Escapist” and “Precarious” are the most opponents to the organic line (Spiller, 2006).

Another study based on the Sinus-Milieus back in 2006 (Wippermann, 2006) examines in depth the relations between the social milieus and the organic consumption. It discloses that the organic consumption has dispersed to many different milieus in comparison to the nineties, where the core consumer group was the so called “Alternatives” milieu. Nowadays this group is represented by the “Socio-ecological” (“Post material” in Austria and “Status oriented” in Switzerland, see Table 5: Sinus-Milieus® comparative table for a comparative milieu data in Austria and Switzerland) and is the core buyer in the special markets, has an in-depth knowledge for the organic farming and has altruistic buying motives.

During the last years, when the organic trend has grown, the organic consumption has diffused to other milieus and it is well accepted in the “New Middle Class”. However, the consumers in this social class are less aware of the products background, labels and aims of the organic farming. The most common drivers of consumption are indulgence, fitness, aesthetics, etc. for the middle-class consumers. The organic supermarkets are a trendy place for the “High achievers” and “Movers and Shakers” (see Table 5: Sinus-Milieus® comparative table for reference regarding Austria and Switzerland) (SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung, 2011), (Spiller, 2006).

3.2.3. Target groups

The following classification of nutrition style for Germany (Lüth, 2005) provides an overview of the potential target groups for the organic food products. The six identified diet types allow a clear characterisation of the organic consumption behaviour. Three types could form the regular and occasional buyers (“Cooking

Fan”, “Conscious and Critical”, “Brand and Industrial Food”) and the rest (“Bargain Hunters”, “Meat Fans”, “Apathetical”) could be classified as no-buyers.

Bargain Hunters about 28% • Very discount oriented • Rarely brand-conscious • Little interest in cooking • Figure- and health-conscious	Meat Fans about 22% • Little interest in health/fitness • No consumption of organic or trans fair products • Little risk consciousness • Fast food preference	Apathetical about 13% • Little interest in cooking/nutrition • Less local products or family recipes • More discount oriented/less brand-conscious • Fast food preference
Cooking Fan about 20% • Traditionally oriented • Health-conscious • Cooking books • Restaurant visits • Less discount • Local origins • Respond to crises	Conscious and Critical about 8% • Interest in health/fitness • Consumption of local, trans fair and organic products • Restaurant visits • Decline fast food	Brand and Industrial Food about 9% • Instant meals • Little interest in cooking • Brand-conscious • Enriched foods • Interested in fitness/slimness • Local products, family recipes

Table 6: Summary of the nutritious types in Germany

Source: (Lüth, 2003)

“Conscious and Critical” is a relative small but at the same time highly involved target group. These are consumers that already purchase on a regular basis organic products and point out regional origin, freshness and natural ingredients as a strong buying argument. Within this group could be identified the hard core ecological group that have been mentioned above in the Sinus-Milieus concept. It characterises with high customer loyalty and social consciousness in terms of consumption.

The other two groups that show interest to healthy food could be reviewed as potential target groups of organic products. The “Cooking Fans” are interested in nutrition and health, and at the same time see the good food as a significant part of their life. Their sensibility to safety and food scandals distinguish them as critical buyers. On the other hand, the category “Brand and Industrial Food” prefer ready meal products and functional foods that have an additional health aspect. Such

buyers show a special interest in popular brands and are ready to pay higher price and for that reason this target group has the highest growth potential in the organic segment.

Table 7 summarises the potential target groups in the organic segment. The core target group consists of two groups – the hard core organic consumers and the critical and conscious buyers. The expanded group of buyers interested in nutrition is divided in two subgroups – healthy and the epicures; and the expanded group hybrid consumers unite the one showing affinity to convenience and the functional food buyers.

Buyers of organic products					
Target group of organic oriented buyers		Expanded target group of buyers interested in nutrition		Expanded target group of hybrid consumers	
Core target group: hard core organic consumers	Critical and conscious buyers	Healthy	Epicures	Convenience oriented	Functional food buyers

Table 7: Target groups for marketing of organic products

Source: (Lüth, 2005)

Other researches identify a new target group of potential consumers for the organic products – LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) (Czinkota, 2008), (Schommer, et al., 2007), (Wenzel, et al., 2007). These consumers are characterised with their high social and environmental responsibility, who want to do something good for themselves and at the same time do no harm to other people and the nature. LOHAS are focused on fair trade and labour conditions, ecological production, but also on high quality products. And therefore, the organic food products are advantageously placed in comparison to the conventional products to meet the requirements of LOHAS target group for healthy and sustainable life. However, the LOHAS consumers demand high quality products that fill out the sensory perceptions. They put their focus on the pleasure of food and are interested in premium line products, containing only qualitative ingredients. For that reason, the organic label is not the only characteristic of a product that is evaluated by the LOHAS consumers (BLE, 2011).

The LOHAS consumers are actively looking for information and using the tools of Web 2.0 technologies to exchange knowledge about alternative products. They demand another marketing approach, criticise standard advertising materials and eager to disclose any problems and issues by inappropriate production (Lohas.de, 2008).

Some studies suppose that almost 50 percent of the German population belong to the LOHAS target group. Others have reported that 50 percent of the highly educated people have high awareness for environmental issues, highly qualitative and sustainable products (Gerstl, 2012). It is a fact that the consumers' consciousness is rising, and the LOHAS target group is setting trends in the organic market in terms of new products variety to communication policies and channels.

3.2.4. Purchase barriers

According to many marketing researches, the strongest non-buying argument for organic food products is the higher price in comparison to the conventional products. Depending on the product category, 30 to 50 percent of the interviewees define the higher price of the organic products as a purchase barrier (Buder & Hamm, 2011), (AMA Marketing, 2010), (Stolz, 2011).

Another research study has observed the real behaviour of buyers and it came to light that the consumers are not that price sensible as it was assumed. The results show that two thirds of the organic products were bought, although they were on average 21 percent more expensive, to what the consumers were ready to pay in the initial interview. The conclusion from the study is that if the price of the organic products is not more than 20 percent higher than the initial price willingness of the consumers, then the price should not be reviewed as a purchase barrier (Hamm & Plassmann, 2009).

A further problem by the purchasing comes from the uncertainty of the clients – whether a product labelled as organic is indeed organic and fills out the high criteria. Few consumers are informed about the cultivation and manufacturing process, the control mechanism or how to identify the organic food products. It is a challenge for the marketers of organic products to inform and distribute

adequate information, as well as to inform and educate the buyers (Hamm & Plassmann, 2009). The information asymmetry raises costs for the consumers of organic products, not always as monetary value, but more as time and efforts (Kolibius, 2001).

The taste and look of the organic products could also be seen as another obstacle for the buyers (Buder & Hamm, 2011). The taste of the organic products should be as natural as possible, which could be seen as plus for the fresh fruit and vegetables. However, for other food processed products, e.g. fruit yogurt, chips, etc. these could have more neutral taste as they are lacking the artificial flavour enhancers and many consumers may perceive them as not good enough. On the other hand, the abstinence of chemical pesticides for organic products is the reason for the unattractive vision of the fruit and vegetables, going to market with some brown dots, unequal forms and sizes (Kolibius, 2001).

The gap in the assortment in the store and unavailability of the organic product in the local supermarkets, especially in the rural areas, is another strong argument for non-buying behaviour. For many consumers the most important factor for purchasing specific food products is the availability; and therefore, they are unwilling to change their consumer habits and substitute the product, when it comes to meat, fish, bakery products, some sweets, etc. (Buder & Hamm, 2011).

4. Organic brands in the German-speaking countries

The German-speaking market is one of the most developed regions for organic food products worldwide. The abundance of organic brands and product categories makes it of special interest to examine a range of brands operating on these markets and their presence in the social media channels.

4.1. Selected organic brands

For the purpose of the paper, the study will focus on two organic brands from conventional supermarkets, two organic supermarkets, and two farmer shops delivering organic boxes. In addition to that, two brands of independent producers of organic food products will be reviewed, as well as their social media marketing strategy and activities will be analysed.

The choice of own organic brands in the conventional supermarkets is pretty ample in Austria, where almost every supermarket has its own named brand. The most known brands are *Ja!Natürlich* – available in Billa, Merkur, BIPA, ADEG (part of the REWE Group), *Zurück Zum Ursprung* – Hofer (ALDI Group), *Natur Pur* – SPAR, *natürlich für uns* – Zielpunkt (Pfeiffer Group), etc. Meanwhile, in Germany most of the conventional supermarkets are naming their organic product line with *BIO* – means organic in German, and there is no extra differentiation in the communication. In Switzerland the two leading supermarkets, holding the biggest shares of organic sales, are Micros and COOP. Micros are operating with a no name *BIO* brand whereas COOP has pointed out their *Naturaplan*. In the analysis below the two largest brands in Austria will be discussed in detail – *Ja!Natürlich* and *Zurück Zum Ursprung*. These two are standing out with an active social media communication and activities that will be of special interest for the study.

As discussed in the previous chapter **3.1.2. Main distribution channels**, in Germany the specialised shops and organic supermarkets are still holding a substantial part of the turnover. The supermarkets with the highest penetration are *denn's Biomarkt* with over 120 stores in Germany (denn's Biomarkt, 2014) and *Alnatura* (Alnatura, 2014). Other smaller chains and supermarkets are available

such as BIO COMPANY with 32 stores mainly in Berlin/Brandenburg (BIO COMPANY, 2014), SuperBioMarkt, ALECO, Erdkorn, etc. In Austria the biggest organic supermarket chain is again *denn's Biomarkt* and a few smaller such as Biofeld, Basic (Bio Markt Info, 2013). In Switzerland the diversity is even smaller with no big chain names, and only *Alnatura* has lately entered the market with their first store in cooperation with Migros (Alnatura, 2014). In the social media marketing analysis, the organic supermarkets review will include *Alnatura* and *denn's Biomarkt*.

A small but interesting for social media reach and with high growth potential are the organic farms and delivery of fresh organic products. There is a long list of suppliers of organic boxes on www.biokisten.org which allows filtering based on the location district in Germany. The majority of the organic farms maintain a website and some of them support a Facebook page with 60 to 600 likes, which is quite impressive taking into account that they cover a very limited geographical region. For the purpose of the study, the analysis will focus on an Austrian organic farm situated in the suburbs of Vienna – *Biohof Adamah*, which runs a store on site and also delivers organic boxes in the region. An interesting concept is offered by *HelloFresh*, a food box delivery combined with recipes for a healthy food approach. The company operates in Germany and Austria, but also in Australia, Holland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

An additional perspective of the usage of social media marketing could be provided by the review of organic producers. Hence, in the analysis two companies producing organic food products will be discussed – *Sonnenator*, producer of organic tea, herbs and spices, and *Zotter*, specialised on chocolate products. Both companies are established and based in Austria, and are selling their products in conventional supermarkets, organic stores and supermarkets, as well as in their own brand stores.

4.1.1. Ja!Natürlich

Ja!Natürlich was established in 1994 as a private label for the supermarket chain Billa in Austria. Two years later Billa merged with the REWE-Group and now it is available in other stores from the corporation, e.g. Merkur, Bipa, Sutterlüty, ADEG. The *Ja!Natürlich* portfolio started with 30 basic products such as fruit and

vegetables, and milk products, and in the beginning of 2014 the assortment of organic products is covering more than 1,100 items. In 2013 the sales volume reached 340 million Euros. *Ja!Natürlich* is by far the best well-known brand for organic products in Austria with a market share of almost 50 percent (Ja!Natuerlich, 2014). According to a market study in 2012 the *Ja!Natürlich* brand was selected in Austria as one of the favourite brands along with other international brands, scoring at place 11 (Brandmeyer Markenberatung, 2012).

Besides the impressive numbers, what makes *Ja!Natürlich* so outstanding is the way that the brand relies on social media channels to promote and build image. *Ja!Natürlich* maintains an official website that leads to the social media channels – Facebook page, Twitter account, YouTube channel, blog, and Instagram site (Ja!Natuerlich, 2014a).

The Facebook page was established in the beginning of 2009 and five years later it has almost 51,000 likes. It is the most prominent channel and offers up-to-date postings, videos, links to intriguing and educative blog articles, recipe ideas, product and sales action information, raffles and competitions. The YouTube channel hosts branded videos divided in five sub channels: TV ads; cooking instructions; informative and presentation videos about organic farming; event updates; and organic garden tips. The channel hosts in total 148 videos with almost 510,000 views, but at the same time counting only 250 subscribers. Almost 2,000 users are following the tweets in Twitter, as the Instagram profile has around 750 followers.

4.1.2. Zurück Zum Ursprung

Zurück zum Ursprung is the private label of the chain supermarket Hofer in Austria, part of the German Aldi Group. It is one of the favourite and most well-known brands, including over 350 regional food products. The brand was founded back in 2006 and introduced by the Austrian organic pioneer Werner Lampert. Until now he is the official face of the brand and presents the product line in all official channels, such as blog, TV spots and interviews. A distinguishing mark of the brand is the ecological carbon footprint that registers the amount of CO₂ and water that was used in the production. Another eminent feature of the *Zurück zum*

Ursprung products is the identification system that allows tracking the route from the producers to the consumers for each unique product (Hofer AG, 2014).

The dedicated website to the organic brand of Hofer – *Zurück zum Ursprung* hosts information about the products and philosophy of the brand. It also leads to the four official social media channels that are supported – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google+. The Facebook page has almost 70,000 likes and it was started in September 2009; the Twitter profile has 670 followers and over 1000 tweets in total; the Google+ profile informs relatively small audience – 101+. The YouTube channel is well maintained with 148 videos with over 540,000 views, existing from the beginning of 2008.

Beside the official communication, the brand supports the social public appearance of the organic pioneer Werner Lampert and integrates it in all channels. His company runs a blog dedicated on sustainable and organic production related topics; a Facebook page, a Twitter and a YouTube channel.

4.1.3. Alnatura

Alnatura was established back in 1984 and started by producing organic products that were distributed in *tegut* markets and *dm* drugstores. In 1989 the first *Alnatura Super Natur* market was opened in Karlsruhe, Germany, and continued to cover the whole country and abroad, and reaching in 2014 over own 80 organic supermarkets. The supermarkets offer a big variety of products – food and non-food items with organic background such as organic cotton, cosmetics, detergents, etc. Only the *Alnatura* products are over 1,200 including baby food, coffee, wine, teas, etc (Alnatura, 2014).

The social media appearance of *Alnatura* is covered by a Facebook page, Twitter account and YouTube channel. The Facebook page is well maintained, with regular postings, comments, and has over 90,000 page likes; the tweets are followed by around 4,000 users. The Youtube channel is pretty small, hosting 30 videos counting in total 23,000 views, although it was opened back in 2006. In addition to that, the channel links to two other *Alnatura* channels – *Alnatura NaturKultur* and *Vielvalterleben*, each hosting 5 and 8 videos accordingly with little reach – in total 15,000 views.

Alnatura employees maintain a blog (<http://www.alnatura-blog.de/>) that reports about the bees – their life and habits, challenges in the environment, and also the stuffs’ own experience with the bee garden they are maintaining. It rarely mentions the *Alnatura* products as it is an image blog that share the sustainable philosophy of the company. However, due to its narrow specific, the blog hosts only a few articles with no regular updates.

4.1.4. denn’s Biomarkt

The organic supermarket *denn’s Biomarkt* is part of the company Denree GmbH, a wholesaler operating in Germany and Austria. Denree started with the production of milk products in 1974, supplying other European wholesaler and later expand distribution to retailers on organic markets. In 1996 the first Denree organic supermarket was opened and at the moment it is operating under the name of *denn’s Biomarkt*, with 120 locations in Germany and 15 in Austria (Denree GmbH, 2014). In 2013 the Denree Group reported a turnover of 615 million Euros, marketing over 11,500 organic products, and around 5,000 of these are offered in the *denn’s Biomarkt* (Denree GmbH, 2014a).

The social media communication runs only through the Facebook pages – one covering Germany and another serving the Austrian supermarkets, established in the beginning of 2012. The *denn’s* Facebook page has reached around 11,500 likes and *denn’s* Austria – almost 3,000 likes.

4.1.5. Adamah Biohof

Established in 1997, the organic farm *Adamah Biohof* is just a few kilometres away from Vienna, Austria and produces a variety of vegetables and crops. It runs a farm store at place but it is mostly specialised in home deliveries of boxes with fresh vegetables and fruit. In addition to that, the farm supplies a couple of market places with their own production. The *Adamah* webshop offers a variety of products from their own production and also from other selected organic farms. The portfolio of services is complemented with a catering service providing meals and drinks from organic origin (Adamah Biohof, 2014).

Besides the informative website and webshop, the organic farm *Adamah* maintains a Facebook page as part of its social media presence. The page was

established in 2009 and has over 6,600 likes. Apart of that, a YouTube channel is available, although it is not communicated on the homepage. The channel has only 3 videos uploaded back in 2010 and so far 8,500 views. The Twitter account is newly opened with three tweets posted and 85 followers.

4.1.6. HelloFresh

HelloFresh is a new online trend service allowing consumers to receive a package direct at home with fresh ingredients accompanied by a recipe leaflet. The philosophy of the company – it saves time for shopping and at the same time, it invites people to cook and eat healthy food. The boxes contain all needed ingredients for the recipes including spices, all packed in the exact amount required for the dish (HelloFresh, 2014).

HelloFresh was established in 2011 and now it operates on three continents – Europe, covering Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Although the general concept does not include organic products, for Germany and Austria the concept is modified and offers ingredients mostly with organic origin.

In their social media strategy *HelloFresh* has successfully integrated different applications – Facebook page, YouTube channel, Twitter, Google+, and Pinterest profile. The Facebook page has the stunning 94,500 likes; however, it is a global page that includes users from all six markets where HelloFresh is operating. The Twitter profiles for Germany and Austria have around 650 followers; Pinterest – in total 200 followers; Google+ – 600 users are following the content in both countries. For all these applications there are different pages/profiles for each country, only Facebook allows at the moment the merging of business pages. The YouTube channel is hosting in total 19 videos with almost 110,000 views, including cooking instructions, how-it-works videos and practical tips for navigating in the order system. In addition to that, an official corporate blog is available through the German webpage, hosting tricks and tips around cooking, recipes and news.

4.1.7. Sonnentor

Sonnentor is an Austrian company specialised in the production and merchandising of organic products. It was established in 1988 and the initial idea was to collect rural organic specialties like tea and spices, gifts and more and to merchandise those products internationally. Now the company exports to more than 45 countries as nearly 80 percent of the production is sold abroad.

In Austria *Sonnentor* is a market leader, holding 50 percent share of organic trade of tea and spices. In Germany the company is on third place, holding 25 percent of the market share (Sonnentor, 2014).

Since 2009 *Sonnentor* offers franchise license for stores offering tea, coffee, spices, pastry, tea utensils, snacks and other related products. In November 2013 there are 15 locations in Austria, one in Munich, Germany and two in the Czech Republic (Franchise PORTAL, 2013).

The social media presence of *Sonnentor* is covered by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+ and Pinterest. However, on the official website only the links to Facebook and Pinterest have found place in the navigation bar. The Facebook page is covering content about products, news, events and company messages, and has more than 32,500 likes and 194 ratings. The YouTube channel has counted 21,000 views with 26 videos, Twitter – 1,530 followers, Google+ – 150, and Pinterest – 320 followers.

In addition to that, the company maintains a corporate blog integrated in the official homepage. It hosts information and news for all product releases, news and events related to *Sonnentor* and it is divided in five subcategories.

4.1.8. Zotter

Zotter was established in 1992 and is specialised in producing chocolate products. It started producing fair trade products in 2004, in 2005 it converted to organic and now it is the only manufacture in Europe that produces chocolates starting from the bean – the so called “bean to bar” chocolate in organic and fair quality. The *Zotter* chocolates are exported in whole Europe, Australia, USA, Japan and South Korea.

In 2006, the inventor Joseph Zotter opened his own chocolate factory where all chocolate bars and pralines are produced. In the Choco Shop Theatre, the visitors can learn more about the chocolate manufacture and observe the work at the factory. *Zotter* has three owns stores in Austria – one factory shop in Bergl, and two in Innsbruck and Salzburg; and one in Essen, Germany (Zotter, 2014).

Zotter is presented in the most popular social media channels – Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest, with links from the official homepage. The Facebook page has more than 57,000 likes, hosting information about events and product news. The YouTube channel in contrast has very small reach – as the 16 uploaded videos have generated only 250 views. The rest of the social media channels has also low reach – with less than 50 followers each.

4.2. Presence in the social media channels

Summarising the overview of the selected organic brands and their social media presence, the result shows that all eight are actively participating in the most popular social media networking site in Europe – Facebook. Some of the brands are maintaining actively a profile in the other popular networking site Google+. However, these profiles have very little followers/likes and are in most cases created in connection with the YouTube channel.

Six out of the eight brands are participating on the micro-blogging platform Twitter. In comparison to the likes in Facebook, the followers in Twitter are relatively small group. Nonetheless, the profiles in Twitter ensure the access to other group of customers or at least an easier access to them and the companies provide updated content on regular basis. The corporate blog is exploited by four brands for social media communication officially, whereas one brand is using the blog of a third party partner as a social media communication tool.

YouTube is the most popular content community across the selected organic brands – six brands have created their dedicated channels to post informative videos, TV spots, event movies, interviews or other sponsored shows. Another commonly used content community is Instagram dedicated to sharing of photos; as Pinterest is a social bookmarking site dedicated to pictures.

In the following paragraphs the most usually used social media applications will be reviewed in detail, revealing common practices by the organic industry and comparing the performance of each brand.

4.2.1. Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media application in Europe as well as in the German-speaking countries with 27 million users in Germany and around 3.2 million users in Austria and 3.5 million in Switzerland (Statista, 2014), (WebMediaBrands, 2013). The research of many organic brands on the German-speaking market shows that if any social media application is used, then it is Facebook. And certainly there is a good reason for this preference – it has an immense reach covering 35 to 40 percent of the population and also providing good opportunities for the purpose of the social media marketing campaigns, especially for business-to-consumer communication. It has a simplified interface that allows easy upload of messages, pictures, videos and company information. In addition to that, Facebook enables the integration of contests, games and other social activities; however, in such cases the special rules of Facebook should be taken into account. Moreover, Facebook provides companies with the possibility to switch on paid ad campaigns and paid “sponsored” messages that could be targeted to specific target groups.

The most of the brands have started their own brand page in Facebook back in 2009 when Facebook provided companies the chance to create business profile and establish a brand page. From the analysed brands only *denn's Biomarkt* have started their pages in Germany and Austria in 2012 and these are the only social media channels which *denn's Biomarkt* is actually using.

All brands have taken advantage of the integrated applications and possibilities, and have uploaded a logo-like profile picture, a cover photo that corresponds with the brand and products they are marketing; in addition to that, they have filled the “about us” section with company and brand information and contacts. Some of the brands, e.g. *Sonnenator*, *Zurück zum Ursprung*, *HelloFresh*, have uploaded additional applications in custom-made design that provide brand specific information. For example, store-finder application, voucher give-away, newsletter subscription, etc. On special occasions, brands use the chance to integrate special

contests, games and give-away activities hosting these within the Facebook applications.

With the transition to the Timeline design, all postings in Facebook are ordered in a chronological order and it also allows companies to fill in history data afterwards. Though, only Sonnentor have taken advantage to complete the timeline and post interesting facts and pictures from the early days of the company.

In general all brands are using the posting to share information about products, news, events, price sales, and activities; share their philosophy for environmental sustainability and healthy food choice. In the posting the use of picture as a central topic is preferred by all brands, as it results with the highest response rate from the users and better visibility in the overloaded News Feeds (Lipsman, et al., 2012).

An essential part of the social media marketing communication in Facebook is the active participation in the discussion below the official postings. All eight brands successfully manage to reply on questions and inquiries by users, as well as to provoke comments and further discussion. In such a matter, the Facebook pages are maintained interactive and “live” with on-going communication between the consumers and the brand.

Table 8 shows the summarised results of the performance of each brand and its Facebook page, based on an engagement score. This metric is called IPM (interactions per thousand fans) and has a pretty simple form for calculation. The IPM is a number that equals the sum of the comments and likes on a post, divided by the posts for the last 30 days and once again divided by the total page likes (fans).

$$\text{IPM} = (\text{Comments} + \text{Likes}) \times 100 / \text{Posts} / \text{Page likes}$$

This IPM is a metric that helps companies to observe their performance, community participation and not only page likes, but also gives opportunities to compare with competitors. It also resembles the Facebook algorithm that define if a brand posting will appear on the News Feed of a user who already liked a brand page and also show this to “friends of friends”. There are many paid and free

online tools that help companies to better understand the performance of their Facebook activities; such free app is Conversocial and could be accessed on <https://app.conversocial.com/profiler/>.

Brand	Comments	Likes	Posts	Page likes (Fans)	Avg. IPM
Ja!Natürlich	141	4,954	30	51,057	3.33
Zurück zum Ursprung	334	1,416	25	69,565	1.01
Alnatura	765	5,979	23	91,752	3.20
denn's Biomarkt	203	803	30	11,561	2.90
denn's Biomarkt AT	209	478	24	2,931	9.77
Adamah Biohof	28	432	9	6,682	7.65
HelloFresh DE	519	1,364	48	95,761	0.41
HelloFresh AT	17	69	37	95,761	0.02
Sonnenator	711	9,261	21	32,653	14.54
Zotter	253	7,337	29	57,366	4.56

Table 8: Facebook brand pages performance

Source: Own research based on data from Conversocial application, date 04.03.2014

The results of the Conversocial application show that the most successful Facebook page from the eight brands is the *Sonnenator* Facebook page with IPM 14.54. A very good performance is observed by the Austrian page of *denn's Biomarkt* where definitely the smaller fan-base shows higher interaction rate. By *HelloFresh* it is impossible to calculate the exact IPM as the fans base is for the global page and only the administrators of the page can see the exact split between the countries; for that reason, these two IPM could not be compared with the others and no realistic evaluation could be made.

Excluding the *HelloFresh* pages, the *Alnatura* page is number one with over 91,000 likes in terms of absolute page likes. The posts numbers are normally between 20 and 30 per month, as the golden rule is one posting per day, and usually the weekends are left over with no postings. The leader in the category, *Sonnenator*, has posted 21 messages which have obviously concentrated the interaction of the users on the valuable posts. Only *Biohof Adamah* has 9 postings for the last 30 days which could be due to less resource involved in the social media marketing communication.

4.2.2. Youtube

Youtube is the most important social media site for content sharing on the European market and it is ranking number 3 at Alexa. The average daily time each day, that means video views (Alexa, 2014).

YouTube provides users with the opportunity to create a profile and as of June 2013, it is called the One Channel. It is a new feature that allows users to organize videos in tagged shelves and also customize their active feeds. For the brand pages this process is vital for the organic search, increasing videos and building index. The content should be well organised – each video should have an appropriate title, searchable tags and a description spent on the platform is over 18 minutes and a user opens around 12 pages of the content. The overall layout of the channel should be attractive and compelling with the brand style guide, including logo of the brand. A short trailer that starts with the opening of the channels should be carefully selected in order to give a brief idea of the content as well as to provoke interest for other videos. The selection of a thumbnail is very important, as the visuals attract users and a well-selected shot is the best description. The usage of graphics and annotations within the videos could be used for call-to-action, as in “how-to” videos (Emerson, 2013).

As part of the social media mix, seven of the reviewed brands have exploited the opportunity to have a YouTube brand channel. The table below shows basic information about the number of videos uploaded, views, subscribers of the channel, and a calculation of the average number of views per video.

Brand	Videos #	Channels	Subscribers	Views	Avg. Views per Video
Ja!Natürlich	150	5	258	514,228	3,428
Zurück zum Ursprung	101	-	187	545,292	5,399
Alnatura	43	3	199	23,576	548
denn's Biomarkt	-	-	-	-	-
Adamah Biohof	3	-	15	8,579	2,860
HelloFresh	19	-	76	116,570	6,135
Sonnentor	26	-	27	21,581	830
Zotter	16	-	-	310	19

Table 9: YouTube brand channels performance

Source: Own research based on data from Youtube, date 05.03.2014

The two brands of organic products coming from the conventional supermarkets in Austria are the leaders in terms of number of videos and views – *Ja!Natürlich* with 150 videos and almost 515,000 views and *Zurück zum Ursprung* with 101 videos and over 545,000 views.

The content of the *Ja!Natürlich* YouTube channel is divided in 5 categorises – TV spots, organic farmers, organic events, organic gardens and recipe and cooking tips; the videos of *Zurück zum Ursprung* are not organised in different subcategories, but in 15 playlists according to the topic, e.g. interviews with organic farmers and producers, TV spots, etc. Both channels use the logo as profile picture and have a big cover photo corresponding to the brand style guide. The starting page has a video trailer that is an up-to-date TV spot and starts automatically with upload of the page. For both channels the selection of thumbnails looks appropriate and gives clue about the topic of the video. All videos have explicit titles and full descriptions, which enable better search results.

Filtering the most viewed videos for each channel, the results show that the top ten videos of *Ja!Natürlich* are TV spots with views from 32,000 to 15,000 for each video with around 10 comments below; one exception is a video that has almost 40,000 views and is a short instruction how to read the QR code for a campaign live since 2009. For *Zurück zum Ursprung* the most viewed videos are informative movies that show the life of the animals in the organic farms, some of the videos reaching 35,000 to 75,000 views.

The YouTube channel of *Alnatura* reveals that the videos that are uploaded lately are not counting many views. The look of the official channel is not updated to the new One channel design and a profile picture with company logo is missing. An old style channel design has the *Biohof Adamah* as well, listing only three videos dating back from 2010, but still with impressive numbers of views for a local firm.

The channel of *HelloFresh* Germany hosts in total 19 videos, though only three are summing over 110,000 views. These videos are explaining how the online subscription box delivery functions and what the benefits of the product are. The design is compliant with the new YouTube One channel, including logo cover photo; however, an introduction trailer is missing.

The YouTube channel of *Sonnentor* is well designed, with logo, pictures, invitational trailer, and video descriptions. Nonetheless, the videos are not ordered in playlists or categories, and that affects the easy navigation on the channel. The most of the videos have less than thousand views, whereas the most popular one is the explanation about the franchise store concept with more than 4,500 views.

Zotter has established its YouTube channel in the beginning of 2014 with uploading 16 videos in less than a month. However, one month later these have very few views, on average 20 per video. The quality of the videos is average, presented with matching thumbnail, and description.

For all brands, the number of subscribers on the channel is relatively low and cannot serve as a communication tool alone. The upload of a new video should be accompanied by an announcement on other communication channels and linked to the YouTube channel.

4.2.3. Blogs

Blogging has extended from a personal publishing tool to a corporate phenomenon and the corporate blog is now part of the social media mix for many companies (Chen, et al., 2007). It serves companies as a communication tool, helps them receive feedback instantly, as well as a promotion tool for new products and services, builds brand awareness (Ryu & Shi, 2010).

In the analysis of the organic food market, four out of the eight brands have established a corporate blog as part of their social media mix – *Ja!Natürlich*, *HelloFresh*, *Alnatura* and *Sonnenor*. *Ja!Natürlich* and *HelloFresh* are running classical corporate blogs whereas *Sonnenor* has integrated it as part of the website under the name “Blog, News and Community”. The blogs of *Ja!Natürlich* and *Sonnenor* are a mixture of product and image blogs – hosting information on new products, as well as articles sharing the vision of the company in regard to environmental sustainability, organic farming, etc. *Alnatura* are maintaining a corporate employee blog featuring a topic about bees and their environmental impact, sharing their relation to the matter and building image.

In order to compare the performance of the corporate blogs of the selected brands, data in two categories is selected. The first category is called “Characteristic of blog” and includes two components – number of bloggers and managing body (management or employee level). For the second category “Statistic data of blog” three components are forming the outcome – open date of the blog, average number of postings (per month), average number of comments (per month) (Ryu & Shi, 2010).

Category	Data	Remark
Characteristic of blog	Number of bloggers	One or many
	Managing body	Chief manager level or employee level
Statistic data of blog	Open date	Date of first posting
	Average number of postings (a month)	From Sept 2013 to Jan 2014 (6 months)
	Average number of comments (a post)	6 months

Table 10: List of Data Category Blogs

Source: (Ryu & Shi, 2010)

The field “Managing body” appears difficult to fill out for externals of the company. It could be suggested that for all companies the official communication on the corporate blog is approved by a management level. For the sake of the analysis, additional statistical field is added: the number of categories maintained on the blog. The table below shows the results of the research and illustrates the activities on the reviewed blogs.

Brand	Number of Bloggers	Open Date	Total Postings	Categories	Avg. N. of Postings (a month)	Avg. N. of Comments (a post)
Ja!Natürlich	7	13.Jan.2011	612	13	17	7
Alnatura	1	27.March.2009	37	5	0.2	0
HelloFresh	anonym	4.April.2013	74	3	8	0
Sonnentor	anonym	10.March.2010	319	5	5	0

Table 11: Blog activities by the brands

Source: Own research / Period of the research 6 months (1. September 2013 – 31. January 2014)

The blog of the organic brand *Ja!Natürlich* (<http://blog.janatuerlich.at/>) is maintained by seven bloggers – internals and externals for the company – online manager, manager alimentation, as well as cooking experts. The blog was established in the beginning of 2011 and for subsequent three years have gathered over 600 postings organised in 13 categories. In comparison to the other three corporate blogs reviewed, it is the most active one with 17 articles posted per month on average. The themes of the posts are covering product news and updates, as well as image articles sharing updates on organic farming, environmental-friendly packaging, and milestones in sustainability. Also, when it comes to food products, the cooking and recipes sections are well covered and generate a lot of interest. The average comments per posting in the last six months are seven, although this data is skewed due to two postings with extreme high comment activities. Two posts have been organised as competition give-away and as result have generated in total 553 comments. If these are filtered out, then the average comments on a posting are less than two.

The blog of *Alnatura* (<http://www.alnatura-blog.de/>) is not the typical corporate blog; it is run by employees and is dedicated on the bees' topic. Still, it covers product information, e.g. flower mixture seeds or honey. It was established in the spring of 2009, started actively with around 10 postings per season and in 2013 there were just a few published. For the last half year the activity was extremely low as there was only one article posted.

Beside all other social media channels, *HelloFresh* (<http://blog.hellofresh.de/>) are running a corporate blog, informing readers about news, recipes, and tips and tricks around cooking. The blog was opened in April 2013 and since then it has

generated 74 postings in total. For the last six months, it counts on average eight articles per month. It is not typical that users are commenting on the posts, but the blog has the function to track retweets on Twitter, shares on Facebook, Pinterest and Google+. Also, it counts when the article was liked by other bloggers – a tool, supported by the blogging tool of WordPress.

Sonnenator have integrated their corporate blog, called Sonnenblog (http://www.sonnentor.com/news_community/Sonnenblog) on the official homepage. The postings have anonymous writers and are divided in five different categories – such as recentness, product news and organic farmer stories. Although the oldest posting dates back from March 2010, it could be suggested that there are many articles that are older but added in the News archive. Since the beginning, there have been published 319 posts and in the last six months – only 28, which result is less than 6 per month. It is not typical for users to comment below the postings; however, the blog offers a liking tool which counts likes on each post. The overall likes for the reviewed six months are 2,413, which score over 86 likes per posting on average.

4.2.4. Twitter

Twitter is one of the most famous social media applications and is undoubtedly the most popular micro-blogging service. Worldwide over 240 million users are actively tweeting (Twitter, 2014); hence, in Germany it is not the most popular social media application. There is no official data showing users per country, but according to ARD/ZDF online study the Germans using Twitter are around 3.8 million, whereas only one million are the real active users (ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudien , 2014). In Austria the Twitter accounts are reaching 100,000 where only around 55,000 are active (Social Media Radar, 2014); in Switzerland the number of users are estimated to 54,000 (Beyeler, 2012).

A strong characteristic of Twitter is that messages could not be longer than 140-characters. If URL-links are used, they should be shortened to match the limit. Lately Twitter introduced multi-media functions, such as upload of photos, video links and photo galleries to meet the needs of the users for more visual elements. By default all messages exchanged on micro-blogs are public, which means that they can be read and commented by anybody (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011a). Also a

user can search in the tweets for most up-to-date information as all tweets are public.

The analysis of the eight organic brands shows that most of them are maintaining a profile on Twitter as part of their social media mix, accompanied by a logo, cover picture, and matching background design. The table below summarises the performance and key numbers retrieved from a Twitter analytical tool, called Twitonomy (<http://www.twitonomy.com/>).

Brand	Tweets	Followers	Tweets per day	Retweets	Tweets retweeted	Tweets favoured
Ja!Natürlich	7,437	1,958	6.20*	395*	440*	716*
Zurück zum Ursprung	1,071	690	0.68	38	100	83
Alnatura	1,474	3,939	1.23	54	483	347
denn's Biomarkt	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adamah Biohof	3	85	0.06	0	0	1
HelloFresh DE	864	636	1.05	83	78	60
Sonnentor	900	1,530	0.51	0	118	62
Zotter Austria	4	9	0.5	0	0	0

Table 12: Twitter brand channels performance

Source: Own research based on data from Twitonomy application, date 05.03.2014 / *Analysis are based on 3.188 tweets from October 08, 2012 to March 05, 2014

Adamah Biohof and *Zotter* have opened their Twitter accounts in the beginning of 2014 and for the first two months are not showing high activity with just a few tweets; whereas the organic supermarket *denn's Biomarkt* is not supporting an account in Twitter. *Alnatura*, *Ja!Natürlich* and *Sonnentor* have the largest groups of followers, with accordingly almost 4,000, 2,000 and 1,500 followers; *Zurück zum Ursprung* and *HelloFresh* are accessing around 650 followers.

The most active communication in Twitter is maintained by *Ja!Natürlich* with 7,437 tweets which results in more than six posts per day. All other brands publish on average one tweet per day. The number of retweets shows how much the user interacts with others and shares their content. The percentage of the retweets in total to all tweets shows the interaction ratio – *Ja!Natürlich* and *HelloFresh* are retweeting 12 percent and accordingly 10 percent of their messages. In contrast, *Sonnentor* are producing only their own content and are not sharing tweets from other users.

A useful metric is provided by the tweets retweeted and tweets favoured, in absolute and percentage numbers. If the content is shared or favoured, this means that the user has appreciated it as a valuable source of information. The best performance in regard to these metrics shows *Alnatura* – almost 33 percent of the tweets are retweeted, and 24 percent – favoured. Also well performing in terms of retweets are *Ja!Natürlich* and *Sonnenmentor* with 13 percent, whereas the content of *Ja!Natürlich* is definitely more liked with 22 percent.

4.2.5. Pinterest

Pinterest is one of the fastest growing social media networks online with over 70 million users worldwide (Semiocast, 2013). It is a social bookmarking site where users collect and share photos of interests, hobbies and events they like. The pictures are organised in collections called “boards” and each visual bookmark is called “pin”. Pinterest allow users to save images and order them in different boards selected by category. Moreover, users can follow other users’ boards if they share the same interest; repin postings if they want to keep and post the image on their board (Pinterest, 2014).

Although over 70 percent of the active users are located in the United States, the reach of Pinterest all over the world is rapidly growing with the introduction of localized versions of the application. In June 2013 Semiocast reported over half million users in Germany, and according to the latest estimations the German accounts have reached one million users in the beginning of 2014 (Semiocast, 2013), (Buggisch, 2014).

Following the trends of new social media applications, three out of the eight reviewed brands are maintaining an account on Pinterest – *HelloFresh*, *Sonnenmentor* and *Zotter* chocolates. The table below summarises the results of the performance of each brand, using data available of the analytical tool Pinreach supported by Tailwind (<http://www.tailwindapp.com/pinreach>).

Brand	Boards	Pins	Pins per Day	Followers	Followers per Week	Repins	Virality Score	Engagement Rate
HelloFresh DE	15	523	0.72	175	2	94	0.2	15.5 %
HelloFresh AT	8	123	0.19	30	1	7	0.1	4.9 %
Sonnentor	28	453	0.64	320	4	598	1.3	51.3 %
Zotter	10	84	1.92	10	4	4	0	3.6 %

Table 13: Pinterest brand accounts performance

Source: Own research based on data from Pinreach application, date 06.03.2014

The number of boards stays for the different categories in which the brand is uploading visuals – the higher the number, the wider audience could be attracted. The number of pins is also a key feature – the experts of Tailwind recommend three pins per day, in order to be competitive with the leading brands. Followers are the users who have subscribed to receive updates; the followers per week represent the growth rate of subscriptions for the account. Repins illustrates how many times pins have been shared by other users. The virality score and the engagement rate are key metrics developed by Pinreach to help business users to measure their success. The virality score equals the number of total pins divided by the number of repins; it shows how much the pins have been repined across the profile. The engagement rate is a simple way to measure how well the content is resonating with the audience; it is the percentage of the pins with at least one repin.

HelloFresh are supporting two Pinterest profiles for each market – Germany and Austria, which show different performance and key figures. *HelloFreshDE* has over 520 pins categorised in 15 boards. The daily activity shows that less than one pin per day is published. The total repins are 94, which result in very low virality score 0.2 and engagement rate of 15.5 percent. *HelloFreshAT* has even lower activity, making very irregular pins, has a small fan base that shows low engagement rate – 4.9 percent.

Sonnentor are definitely the leader in terms of performance in Pinterest. Although fewer pins have been published in comparison to *HelloFreshDE* – 453, they are ordered in 28 boards. They have 320 followers and are adding on average 4 new per week. The repins are almost 600, which result in very high engagement score – over 50 percent.

The Zotter account on Pinterest was opened recently, but for the short period of time it has created 10 boards with over 80 pins. The followers are only ten, and the activities are also quite low – with only 4 repins. There is a high potential for incensement of the engagement rate and the virality score, which is close to zero.

5. Analysis

The main part of the analysis in this paper will concentrate on the social media usage according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) recommendations and how this applies to the selected organic brands. Furthermore, the analysis will focus on the traditional marketing objectives that are served by the social media marketing – increasing the product knowledge; building brand loyalty, brand awareness, and user engagement; and establishing and maintaining relationship with the consumers via the social media channels.

5.1. Social media usage

Social media is a very active and fast-moving environment – applications are constantly changing functions and interface, and also new platforms are emerging, while others are declining in their popularity. For companies it is important to be on the pulse of time, participate in the most popular social media applications for their core target group and be social. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have formulated a set of recommendations for companies that want to participate in the social media, dividing them into two sections based on the social- and media-component. The analysis below will focus on the media usage and will review three relevant points – the choice of social media applications, the activity alignment within all communication channels, and its integration in the media plan.

5.1.1. Application choice

The offer of social media applications is immense and is growing everyday as new platforms are emerging. For companies it is essential to identify which are the appropriate applications that will help them reach their target group and existing customers, as well as to attract new ones. There are country-specific social media applications; others are focused on certain audience; or offer special functionalities – some are appropriate for photographers, other for musicians, artists, etc.

It is quite impossible to participate in all applications that exist on the market; even it is not possible to be active in all where the consumers are active.

Companies should focus their efforts on a few selected applications, which they can manage effectively and “be active” as these are key requirements of success of the social media marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The target groups of the organic brands include young, showing affinity to social media, and elderly consumers. The mostly involved target group of “Conscious and Critical” buyers include the hard-core eco group (see for reference chapter **3.2.3. Target groups**). These consumers are often reluctant to use the widespread social media applications due to issues with the data privacy. However, they are often searching in Internet for in-depth information, exchanging knowledge in forums and blogs.

The target group of “Cooking Fans” includes consumers with interests in the healthy and pleasure food. These often search for tips and ideas in Internet, following a guru cook, e.g. Jamie Oliver, or participating in community website with recipes and video instructions, e.g. www.chefkoch.de. These consumers are often participating in many social applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Pinterest, etc. They become daily updates, news and ideas from the channels where they are subscribed for, the accounts they are following or have liked.

The third potential target group for organic food products is the “Brand and Industrial”. These consumers are interested in convenience products and buy functional food. They prefer to buy well-established brand products and lack the knowledge of the positive aspect of the consumption of organic products.

The LOHAS consumers are dispersed in different social media applications – Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc. What they appreciate is the open communication; expect individual and fast feedback on their inquiries. In order to attract LOHAS users the content should be intriguing and related to environmental, sustainability, etc, pleasure and healthy topics (Schneiders, 2011).

In the analysis, the eight reviewed companies and brands have focused on the most popular social media applications that are available at the moment (see Table 14).

Brand	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Google+	Pinterest	Instagram	Blog
Ja!Natürlich	√	√	√	√		√	√
Zurück zum Ursprung	√	√	√	√			
Alnatura	√	√	√	√			√
denn's Biomarkt	√						
Adamah Biohof	√	√					
HelloFresh	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sonnentor	√	√	√	√	√		√
Zotter	√	√	√	√	√	√	

Table 14: Social media presence by brands 2014

Source: Own research

The undisputable leader Facebook is the application where the eight brands have focused the majority of their efforts. All profiles are well managed, updated with content on a daily basis, and possess the highest fan base (for reference see chapter **4.2.1. Facebook**). Companies are spending extra marketing budgets to publish sponsored stories and ads within Facebook, in order to enlarge their fan base, get extra attention and reach of the messages.

Google+ is relatively undeveloped social media networking site by these brands, although some of them are updating messages on a daily basis, using the content from the Facebook communication (*Zurück zum Ursprung*, *HelloFresh*, *Zotter*). The users who are following the content are relatively small group, but at the same time it provides companies with an opportunity to reach new potential customers. Some of the brands have opened their accounts only in relation to the YouTube channel, e.g. *Ja!Natürlich*. Others have opened accounts, but are not actively managing the pages with daily updates (*Sonnentor*, *Alnatura*).

Twitter is well utilised by seven of the organic brands as a micro-blogging application, as two have been recently opened in the beginning of 2014 and show little activity so far. Youtube is the preferred platform for content community and video sharing – six out of the eight brands have uploaded brand related videos. Pinterest and Instagram are the preferred applications for photo content communities, each utilised by three brands.

Corporate blogs are maintained by four of the reviewed brands hosting content about products, news and company philosophy. These are often the meeting point for all target groups – hard-core ecological types or cooking fans, who are

searching for new products information, cooking ideas or topics about environment and sustainability.

5.1.2. Activity alignment

The analysis shows that each of the reviewed brands has decided to use more than one social media application in order to have a larger reach and cover different target groups. Therefore, it is vital for the marketing success to ensure that all social media activities are aligned with each other. One aim of the communication is to reduce uncertainty, and “nothing is more confusing than contradicting messages across different channels” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

A prime example of activity alignment within the social media applications is the 20th anniversary of *Ja!Natürlich* and its celebration in all used channels. Celebration messages were posted in Facebook and Twitter on 24 January 2014, including a link to the corporate blog and a post dedicated to the history of the brand and focus on the goals of the brand. Instagram hosts series of pictures with the anniversary theme. A few days later, on the YouTube channel the TV spot with the same topic is uploaded – long and short version.

In similar spirit, the message about a discovery trip to Albania organised by *Sonnenor* is communicated in the most social media channels. Facebook and Twitter are making announcing messages, leading to a descriptive post hosted on the corporate blog.

In overall, the leading communication goes through the Facebook pages, where all relevant content is shared and linked – blog articles, video uploads. Each blog post is shared on Facebook and Twitter. In many cases the Facebook content is duplicated in Google+ and adapted to fit the 140 characters in Twitter.

5.1.3. Media plan integration

The relationship between social media and traditional media is as important as the relationship between the different types of social media. Although these two might be considered by the consumers as two separate fields, they both contribute to the corporate image and are strongly related to the marketing communications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Print media, posters and leaflets include links and redirect consumers to the social media profiles of the brands. Dedicated print issues in the conventional supermarkets, e.g. Hofer, present their organic food product line *Zurück zum Ursprung*. In the leaflet information about the Facebook and Twitter presence is included, inviting users to join and to write their questions, wishes and proposals.

On the other side, social media channels as YouTube are hosting advertorial spots that are running on television. For example, the YouTube channel of *Ja!Natürlich* has a dedicated subcategory called “TV spots” that contains in total 16 videos from the last 4 years, all advertorial spots initially designed for TV ads. However, these have generated a great number of views – in total almost 122,000 views or almost 25 percent of all views for the channel.

Zurück zum Ursprung has not only included TV spots, but also the making of videos in their YouTube channels, to give an extra insight for their fans. The channel includes also parts of television shows featuring the food products of the Austrian organic brand, as well as knowledge about organic production, animal housekeeping, carbon footprint, etc. In a similar manner, *Alnatura* has uploaded interviews and part of entertainment programmes that feature the production of their products in the YouTube channel.

5.2. Social media marketing objectives

Depending on the type of organisation, the objectives of the social media marketing can vary from traditional to emergent (Berthon, et al., 2005). The traditional approach treats social media channels much as the other well-established media channels, such as television, radio and print. The success of a campaign is evaluated based on classical metric such as return on investment (ROI), purchase, re-purchase as well as other marketing objectives as awareness, recall, and brand loyalty. Another approach of using social media is the experimental, which involves discovery and test of important factors, including conversation, engagement, and evangelism; and at the same time a “social ROI” is measured. The third approach is a mixture between the traditional and the experimental part, and is associated with the more “human” voice in comparison to the “corporate” communication. It also has impact on the firm’s culture and the

effects could be transformational (e.g., create more open communication, flat structures, etc.) (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).

In the analysis below, the study will focus on the traditional objectives that could be accomplished by the usage of social media – increasing product knowledge; creating brand awareness and recall; building brand loyalty; generating user engagement; and establishing and maintaining the relationship with the clients. Each type of objective will be reviewed, concentrating on the applications that serve the objective the best; furthermore, examples of the social media marketing of the selected organic brands will be provided.

5.2.1. Product knowledge

Social media channels could be used effectively to increase the product knowledge, to educate consumers about the benefits and to provide better understanding about the product. This is an essential part of the marketing communication especially for the organic brands, operating on a niche market. As reviewed in chapter **3.2.4. *Purchase barriers***, one of the obstacles when considering buying organic products is the lack of information and uncertainty within the consumers. Important topics, where knowledge enhancement is needed, are: organic labelling and certificates; organic farming and fertilisers; animal welfare and housekeeping; environmental impact, sustainability, and carbon footprint; healthy benefits about the consumption of organic products.

The observations of the selected organic brands and their social media channels show that marketers use mostly blogs, Youtube channels and the Facebook pages in order to increase the product knowledge of the consumers. Blogs provide mainly in-depth articles; giving explanation about the core principles of organic products, illustrating real cases how products are cultivated or the conditions for animals in an organic farm. In a similar way, the YouTube channels host videos that broadcast interviews with real farmers and explain production processes, as well as educating clips explaining the organic principles. The Facebook pages give the possibility to write a short information block, including rich media elements, e.g. pictures or videos; the combination of rich and involving information increase the impact of the communication message (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Moreover, a link to an article, external report or blog could

accompany the posting for those users who would like to become more detailed information.

Within the reviewed blogs in chapter **4.2.3. Blogs**, all four blogs are providing product knowledge and are informing about the brands product assortment and variety. The corporate blogs of *Ja!Natürlich* and *Sonnentor* include posts about the products themselves, as well as articles about environmental issues, sustainability, stories of the visits to organic farmers producing for the brands, etc. As in the case of *Ja!Natürlich*, within all sections there are dedicated posts in the blog such as organic farmers, sustainability, quality and security, brand's milestones, organic life. The multiple posts in the blog contribute for a better understanding of the organic principles, origin of the products and farming conditions.

Although the blog of *Alnatura* is dedicated to the bees, it manages to combine product reviews related to the topic, e.g. flower seeds, honey, etc., as well as to convey the message for organic sustainability and how consumers can contribute for the ecological sustainability. The blog of *HelloFresh* is mainly focused on the product portfolio and the healthy aspects, and does not include articles referring to the organic topics.

The YouTube channels of the selected brands also serve as communication media conveying product knowledge. The video channels of *Ja!Natürlich*, *Zurück zum Ursprung* and *Alnatura* are hosting a number of short clips that reveal the life in the organic farms, interviewing farmers and showing the production process. The brands of the conventional supermarkets are focusing their attention especially on the differentiation of the organic products, their origin and the high quality standards their production is covering. In addition to that, there are videos sharing the brand position in regard to sustainability and biodiversity in production. The limited videos in the channel of the organic farm *Adamah* also show the production process in the farm; whereas the YouTube channel of *Sonnentor* hosts only one informative video on product related topic – packaging. The other two brands – *Zotter* and *HelloFresh* do not have videos that aim to provide knowledge for the consumers in regard to organic origin, but are focused on the production line and process.

In a similar manner the social networking sites – Facebook, as well as Google+, serve as information communication channels for the brands. Although the text messages are shorter, the mix between text and pictures involves customers and tempts them to learn more, read and research in-depth articles or reports. All eight organic brands manage to post messages with information about the products, their philosophy or organic farming. The brands possessing a blog often refer to their own blog posts or to other external qualitative sources.

5.2.2. Brand loyalty

The creation of brand loyalty among consumers is one of the key objectives for marketers as it brings profitability for the firms, and helps them grow or at least keeps their market share. Keller (2008) defines brand loyalty as the final dimension of consumer brand resonance representing the consumers' ultimate relationship and level of identification with the brand. One of the recent means to build and maintain brand loyalty is the usage of social media. It can be positively affected when the firm offers advantageous campaigns, relevant and popular content, as well as appears on various platforms and applications on social media (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012).

The advantageous campaigns offered by companies to the online consumers have proved to be the most significant driver for brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Companies develop special loyalty programs to engage customers by offering special promotions – for example, Pepsi and Coca-Cola provide access to free MP3s for download (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

In the case of the analysed eight organic brands, all of them are following this golden rule and are creating on regular basis advantageous campaigns for their consumers. Voucher coupons for shopping organic products is often used as reward for the active users who participate in small contests, comment and post pictures or write stories in the social media applications. Even small firms such as *Adamah Biohof* are creative and organise give-away activities for their consumers to spread the message among other consumers and create brand loyalty. *Sonnenator* are setting a contest each spring where the prize is a week stay at an organic farm, to enjoy the nature but at the same time to work in the farmyard. In the majority of

the cases the advantageous campaigns are held either on the corporate blog or in Facebook.

Relevancy is the second most important factor that impacts brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Companies have to research and monitor the consumers' behaviour, understand more about their interest at the moment and try to respond in their social media communication accordingly. The information volume in the social media applications is immense and the applications algorithms as well as the users alone are filtering the content that is not relevant to them (Lipsman, et al., 2012). Therefore, it is vital to create engaging posts that can be intriguing for the consumers.

When it comes to organic food products, the analysed companies have gone on the safe side including seasonal recipe ideas. From one side such activities include product knowledge; on the other side they deliver valuable information for the consumers minimizing their frustration when it comes to cooking decisions. Posts with regard to Christmas, Easter and other popular holidays have proved to be quite successful, especially when they include useful tips and tricks for organic farming, cooking and decoration.

Along with the relevancy of the content, another strong point is the frequency of the content and up-to-date messages. The analysis in chapter **4.2. Presence in the social media channels** shows comparative numbers that represent how each brand is managing the different social media channels and the frequency of the postings in each social media application. Facebook and Twitter are the two applications where the content is published on a daily basis for most of the brands. The postings and messages in the social media are organised in a way to convey information about daily or weekly deals and promotions, introduction of new products or seasonal diversity – quite important especially when it comes to food products.

The involvement in many different social media applications could be seen as another influencer of the brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). The exact mixture of social media applications should be reviewed by each brand and also considered the internal resources for maintenance of each application. The analysed brands show that some, e.g. *Ja!Natürlich*, *Zurück zum Ursprung*,

HelloFresh are actively participating in the leading applications – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram. Others, e.g. *Sonnenator*, *Alnatura*, have opened accounts in the same applications, but show strong participation in Facebook, and less activities in YouTube. And finally, there are others that have chosen to rely only on Facebook and are not supporting other applications, e.g. *denn's Biomarkt*. However, the trend shows that gradually all brands are covering the leading social media applications – *Adamah Biohof* and *Zotter* have lately increased their presence in other social media channel, in order to reach new target groups and further build brand loyalty.

The popularity of the content among the friends of the consumers can also increase brand loyalty. Keeping in mind the strong impact of word-of-mouth impact, companies can make promotions, create social games or content to activate the user communication (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Exactly in this matter the contests and small give-away activities are organised by the reviewed brands. Users are offered incentives when they respond with comments, share and write posts – in this way the brands are able to reach the friends of their online community “friends” and “followers”.

5.2.3. Brand awareness and recall

Brand awareness is a term that defines the degree to which the consumers recognise a brand, can recall about it or simply know anything about it (Keller, 2008). The positive correlation of brand awareness on market outcome, as well as on overall brand equity, makes it an important marketing objective (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). Distribution intensity, price promotions, advertising in traditional media are some of the marketing tools to increase successfully brand awareness (Bruhn, et al., 2012), (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). Social media activities can also contribute to higher brand awareness and recall within consumers. Especially in combination with traditional media campaigns, it creates an unforgettable brand experience for the consumers (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012).

Firm-created social media communication transports only positive information, increasing brand awareness, which subsequently enhances the attitude toward the brand positively. The corporate blogs and the profiles in the social networking sites are best designed to improve the brand image, whereas the consumer-to-

consumer communication in social media can increase the hedonic brand image (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012).

The analyses of the selected organic brands show that the corporate blogs work intensively to improve the brand image, publishing articles on environmental and sustainability topics. Moreover, the sections with recipes and cooking tips by *Ja!Natürlich* and *HelloFresh* create sympathy among the consumers; these posts are ideal to increase product knowledge and a reminder for new or existing products.

The micro-blogging platform Twitter provides an easy tool for well-established brands to reach their communities. It allows them to stay “top-of-mind” with their consumers, sending out a short reminding message on a daily basis (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The most of the reviewed organic brands exploit Twitter, posting on average one message a day, which most probably does not overload followers’ screens. Still, *Ja!Natürlich* does not accept this “golden rule” and tweets on average more than six postings per day, making reminders to its consumers many times per day. It might not necessarily be a bad idea when it comes to fast moving consumer goods such as food, and considering the good performing numbers of retweets and user interaction (see chapter 4.2.4. *Twitter*).

The social networking sites such as Facebook and Google+ also serve in a way the function of the micro-blogging applications, making a daily reminder to the consumers with a daily posting. The power of the share button and possibility of one message to be spread to many more users by the posting to friends opens new dimensions for increasing brand awareness, as the consumer-to-consumer communication is known to drive important outcomes for companies (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Small initiatives that stimulate users to comment or share postings, for example give-aways or contests, are often used by the supermarkets – *Ja!Natürlich*, *denn’s Biomarkt*, etc. They reward the active consumers by distributing vouchers and gift coupons for shopping.

Alternatively, companies could reinforce consumer-to-consumer communication by promoting users to create user generated content and inviting them officially to promote the brand (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). For example in 2012 *HelloFresh* have sent out test boxes to consumers and organised a video contest, in which

users had to record the unboxing. As a result this activity created many user-generated videos in YouTube that show details about the product from different perspectives.

5.2.4. User engagement

The social media activities can be amplified by the companies when they evolve their approach to customers and implement listening and digital engagement activities. These efforts result in high user engagement rate and in activities that have high corporate values (Forrester Research , 2011). User engagement is defined as the quality of the user experience that highlights “the positive aspects of the interaction” and especially interaction in relation to web and social media applications; these applications are not only used, but the “users invest time, attention and emotion into them” (Lehmann, et al., 2012).

In order to measure the success of the social media marketing activities, companies have introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) that help them to track the effectiveness of their listening and engaging activities. Some of the top KPIs are the number of impressions/reach, number of social network fans/”likes”, number of microblogging followers, etc. (Forrester Research , 2011). The tools reviewed in chapter 4.2. *Presence in the social media channels* give opportunity for the marketers to go in detail for each social media application and to monitor and to compare their activities with their competitors or relate how the users react to different approaches.

The KPI used in the analysis for Facebook is called IPM and it is a metric that represent the activities per thousand users taking into consideration the likes and comments per post. The best performing companies in Facebook reviewed in the analysis in regard to the IPM metric are *Sonnenator*, *denn’sBiomarkt* Austria and *Adamah Biohof*. These companies do not possess the biggest Facebook pages with the highest number of likes, but they have managed to achieve the highest interaction and engagement rate with their users.

The standard key metrics applied for Twitter are the number of followers, favoured tweets and retweets. Within the studied organic brands, *Ja!Natürlich* and *Alnatura* are scoring the most retweets and favoured tweets. Similarly the number

of repins is used as a measurement for the engagement rate of the users in Pinterest, where *Sonnenator* has the most repins.

The most important key metric in Youtube is the number of views per video. The application also provides the users with field to comment and buttons to like or dislike video. The two Austrian organic brands *Ja!Natürlich* and *Zurück zum Ursprung* have generated the most views, publishing more than 100 videos each. Users are rarely leaving comments in the fields, or are expressing emotions with likes for the video.

Blogs could be reviewed as a webpage and therefore the classical user engagement metrics can be taken into account – for example page impressions, number of page views per user, duration spent on page (Lehmann, et al., 2012). The analysed blogs also provide a comment tool where users can share their opinion on the topic discussed in the post. However, these are not utilised on general, except from *Ja!Natürlich* on some posts where the users are stimulated to leave comments participating in give-away activities. The blog of *Sonnenator* offers an additional tool that allows users to extra like the post as well as to comment.

5.2.5. Relationship establishment and maintenance

Online communities are well-suited for customer relationship management tools as a platform for deep and richer conversations, reflecting a great variety of perspectives. In this manner they favour the establishment and maintenance of relationships between consumers and organisations/brands/products (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). However, the management of online communities is quite different to the well-known customer relationship management. Ang (2011) describes a framework which describes elements that are important for companies to convert social media users to customers.

The monitoring of word-of-mouth offline is quite a difficult task; however, the availability of tracking technologies and social monitoring facilitates this process for companies (Ang, 2011). It gives the opportunity to follow what is being said about a company/individual, product or brand on the internet. It could gather comments from social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter, monitor

customer support forums, discussion forums, etc. (Rouse, 2013). These social media monitoring tools can provide data that contains numbers of good and bad conversations that occur online (Ang, 2011). Still, the tools that are used by marketers of the reviewed brands are only available for internals and it is unfeasible to make estimations.

The analysis based on the social communities' performance key numbers and observations can reveal how each brand is maintaining the relationships with the customers in the social media. It is a well-established practice for all reviewed brands to participate actively in the communication in social media applications, especially in Facebook where users tend to ask questions or share opinions about the products/brand/company. The social media teams for all eight brands are constantly monitoring the comments below the posts and are replying to any inquiries or thanking for a good feedback. The analysed companies are showing that they have learned to talk with their customers rather than talking at them, pushing only official messages in the channels (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

6. Discussion

The analyses of this paper follow the logic of the current market situation. The social media element has penetrated in every market segment and the social media marketing has its prominent place in the mix of activities. The study goes one step beyond the research available for the organic food market, concentrating on the social media activities of selected organic brands.

6.1. Benefits for the theory

In the last two decades there have been published numerous reports regarding the growing organic market with main focus on market volume, organic farming, certification, labelling as well as market penetration and consumer types. Back in 2001, Kollibus focused on the online marketing for organic food products in the German-speaking countries, examining in detail the risks and opportunities for the growing market niche. This study paper extends the research in a direction to examine the online marketing of the organic food products with the social media element.

Furthermore, the theory can benefit from an enhancement of the knowledge about social media with the addition of market data from another examined market segment. The organic market has turned to be an interesting niche similar to luxury goods, automobile industry and clothes, where the social element is already well examined.

6.2. Benefits for the management

The analysis illustrates the current market situation in the German-speaking countries, summarising up-to-date data for the supply and demand of organic food products. An in-depth review of the social media activities of selected brands can give insights to marketers and managers from the industry, to compare what competitors are undertaking; and also create an overview of the current market situation and level of social media usage.

The paper describes numerous examples of social media activities where the companies have successfully managed to enhance brand awareness, product knowledge and to build brand loyalty to the brands. These cases could be taken as

inspiration for new campaigns and social media performance. In addition to that, the managers can observe and compare the set of activities and the mix applied by the reviewed companies.

The social media tools that help to measure KPIs and evaluate the performance are a valuable instrument in the hands of the manager. The free tools described in the paper could be used by anyone, or when the demand is bigger – sophisticated social management software could be implemented that meets the exact needs of the organisation.

7. Conclusion

The organic market has dramatically grown in the last years, and has taken its premium place in the German-speaking countries. The variety of distribution channels, brands originating from the conventional and dedicated organic supermarkets form an intensive and fast-moving market. The demand is characterised by the healthy lifestyle trends and the desire of the consumer to buy more local, free from fertilisers and ecologically sustainable products. Despite the growing interest in organic products, it still remains a niche market mainly because of the higher prices in comparison to conventional products, availability in the shopping location, information gap and uncertainty about the product qualities.

This study paper illustrates the usage of social media marketing by selected organic brands operating on the German-speaking market and the achievement of five traditional marketing objectives. The analysis investigate the social media usage, concluding that Facebook is the most popular and best exploited social media application, followed by Twitter, YouTube and the corporate blog. Moreover, the activities are well connected and the communication is aligned so the consumer can get one message through the different applications and channels. It is obvious that for the majority of the investigated brands the media plan integration reaches the social media activities and it is used as complementary or even prime channel.

Furthermore, the paper analyses the five traditional marketing objectives that are successfully served by the social media marketing and help eliminate the purchase barriers in the segment. Brands can eliminate consumer uncertainty by increasing product knowledge using a variety of social media applications, such as: blogs, sharing in depth-articles, explaining the organic principles; YouTube with videos reporting about organic farming and production; social networking sites that provide a mixture between pictures and text – involving and tempting customers to learn more. The organic brands manage to create awareness and recall using mainly their corporate blogs, building brand image and sympathy among the consumers, as well as by posting daily on Facebook, Twitter, etc. making reminders, pushing friends to share content to friends with promotional games,

give-aways, or even manage to reinforce consumer-to-consumer communication. Brand loyalty is supported by advantageous campaigns run in social media applications; relevancy of the content – topics that create response and interest within the audience; frequent and up-to-date communication; involvement in different social media applications – gradually all brands start participating in the most used applications; and by activation of the user communication, spreading the message to friends with reward campaigns, give-aways and contests. The user engagement could be measured with diverse online tools that can help managers to track the success of activities and campaigns in the applications. Social media provide platforms for deep and rich conversations, and it proves to be well utilised by organic brands for relationship establishment and maintenance.

A further step for the research could be undertaken in the mobile marketing and its usage within the organic market. Mobile marketing is the new trend after social media marketing, and it can add another dimension to the business. There are already a few successful implementations of mobile applications that serve the organic industry.

APPENDIX

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to take a snapshot of the current situation in the organic food market in the German-speaking countries and to explore the social media marketing opportunities within this market. The organic production has increased in the last decade significantly; at the same time the demand for healthy lifestyle and ecologically sustainable foods have pushed the sector. Still, the organic market remains a niche market with many purchase barriers to overcome in comparison to the conventional goods. The social media marketing is an attractive and trendy tool in the hands of the marketers to increase their market share and gain a premium position. The study reviews eight well-established brands from the organic market and analyses their performance within the social media applications, concluding that Facebook is the most popular and best exploited social media application, followed by Twitter, YouTube and the corporate blog. Moreover, the activities are well connected and the media plan integration embraces the social media activities, which are used as complementary or prime channel. Furthermore, the paper analyses the five traditional marketing objectives that are successfully served by the social media marketing and help eliminate the purchase barriers in the segment. The five objectives are as follow: increasing product knowledge, building brand loyalty, creating brand awareness and recall, creating user engagement, and establishing and maintaining customer relationship. Brands can eliminate consumer uncertainty by increasing product knowledge using a variety of social media applications, mainly blogs, YouTube, and social networking sites. The organic brands manage to create awareness and recall using their corporate blogs, building brand image and sympathy among the consumers, as well as by posting daily on Facebook, Twitter, etc. Brand loyalty is supported by advantageous campaigns run in social media applications, relevancy of the content, frequent and up-to-date communication, and involvement in different social media applications. The user engagement could be measured with diverse online tools that can help managers to track the success of activities and campaigns in the applications. Social media provide platforms for deep and rich conversations, and it proves to be well utilised by organic brands for relationship establishment and maintenance.

Zusammenfassung

Das Ziel dieses Papiers ist es, einen Überblick über die gegenwärtige Situation auf dem Markt für Biolebensmittel im Deutschsprachigen Raum zu verschaffen und Möglichkeiten für Social Media Marketing in diesem Markt zu erkunden. Die Produktion von Biolebensmitteln ist in den letzten 10 Jahren signifikant gestiegen; gleichzeitig treibt das Streben nach gesundem Lebensstil und ökologisch nachhaltigen Produkten den Sektor nach vorne. Verglichen mit konventionellen Produkten, bleibt der Biomarkt jedoch ein Nischenmarkt, mit vielen noch zu überwindenden Kaufbarrieren. Das Social Media Marketing ist ein attraktives und modernes Werkzeug in den Händen der Marketingspezialisten, um ihre Marktanteile zu erhöhen und um eine Premiumposition einzunehmen. Die Studie überprüft acht etablierte Marken aus dem Biomarkt, analysiert ihre Ergebnisse in den Social Media Anwendungen und kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass Facebook die bekannteste und am besten genutzte Anwendung ist, gefolgt von Twitter, Youtube und dem Firmenblog. Die Aktivitäten sind gut miteinander verbunden, die Integration im Mediaplan umschließt alle Social Media Aktivitäten, die als unterstützender oder primärer Kanal genutzt werden. Das Papier analysiert des weiteren die fünf traditionellen Marketingziele, die vom Social Media Marketing erfolgreich bedient werden und dabei helfen, die Kaufbarrieren im Segment zu überwinden. Die fünf Ziele sind: Steigerung des Wissens über das Produkt, Aufbau von Markenloyalität, Steigerung der Markenbekanntheit, Schaffung von Nutzer-Engagement und der Aufbau und Pflege von Kundenbeziehungen. Die Marken können die Kundenunsicherheit beseitigen, indem sie das Wissen über das Produkt über verschiedene Social Media Anwendungen steigern, vor allem Blogs, Youtube und Social Media Plattformen. Biomarken machen über die eigenen Firmenblogs auf sich aufmerksam, wobei sie auch Markenimage und Sympathie aufbauen, gleichzeitig auch über tägliche Meldungen auf Facebook, Twitter usw. Die Markenloyalität wird über Vorteilhaftigkeitskampagnen, relevante Inhalte und regelmäßige und aktuelle Kommunikation in Social Media Anwendungen unterstützt. Das Nutzer-Engagement kann mit diversen Online Werkzeugen gemessen werden, was Managern bei der Auswertung des Erfolges von Aktivitäten und Kampagnen in den Anwendungen hilft. Social Media stellt Plattformen für eine tiefe und facettenreiche Konversation zur Verfügung, die von

den Biomarken gut für Aufbau und Pflege von Kundenbeziehungen verwendet werden.

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