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Social Media Marketing Strategies in Luxury Segment: A
Comparison between China, India and Malaysia

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	6
1.1 Background.....	6
1.2 Problem Discussion, Research Problem and Research Questions	8
1.3 Parameters of the Study	9
1.4 Outline of the Thesis.....	9
2 Literature review	11
2.1 Social Media Channels	11
2.1.1 Social Networking Sites.....	13
2.1.2 Blogging.....	16
2.1.3 Microblogging.....	18
2.1.4 Media Sharing Platforms/ Social Media Sharing Sites / Content Communities	18
2.4 Marketing.....	20
2.5 Promotional Mix/Marketing Communication	23
2.5.1 Advertising.....	24
2.5.2 Sales Promotion	26
2.5.3 Public Relations	28
2.5.4 Personal Selling	32
2.5.5 Direct Marketing.....	33
2.5.6 Integrated Marketing Communication: Traditional vs. New Communication Paradigm	34
2.5.7 From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the future trends.....	35
3 Frame of Reference	37
3.1 Research Problem and Research Questions.....	37
3.2 Conceptual Framework.....	37
3.3 Conceptual Definitions	38
3.4 Schematic Diagram of the Research Problem and Questions	41
4 Research Paradigm and Methodology.....	42
4.1 Introduction to Business Research	42
4.2 Research Design	43
4.2.1 Research Philosophy	43

4.2.2 Research Approach	45
4.3 Nature of Research Design	45
4.4 Research Strategy	45
4.5 Time Horizon.....	46
4.6 Research Ethics.....	46
4.7 Research Method	46
4.7.1 Countries selection and industry selection.....	46
4.7.2 Data Collection	47
4.7.2.1 Online Observation	48
4.7.3 Data Analysis	49
5 Findings.....	50
5.1 Cases 1&2: Audi China and Audi Hong Kong.....	50
5.1.1 Company overview: Audi and its marketing goals	50
5.1.2 Case 1: Audi China social media marketing in the PRC	51
5.1.3 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong social media marketing in Hong Kong.....	82
5.2 Case 3: BMW India	91
5.2.1 Company overview: BMW and its marketing goals	91
5.2.2 Case 3: BMW India social media marketing in India	92
5.3 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia.....	115
5.3.1 Company Overview: Mercedes-Benz and its marketing goals	115
5.3.2 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia social media marketing in Malaysia.....	116
6 Analysis.....	129
6.1 Within Case Analysis	129
6.1.1 Case 1: Audi China	129
6.1.2 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong.....	130
6.1.3 Case 3: BMW India.....	132
6.1.4 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	133
6.2 Cross Case Analysis	135
7 Findings, Conclusions and Implications	137
7.1 Findings	137
7.2 Conclusions	139

7.3 Implications	139
7.3.1 Implications for Theory	139
7.3.2 Implications for Practitioners	140
7.3.3 Implications for Future Research	140
References	141
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	155
List of Figures	156
List of Tables	160
Appendixes	162
Appendix I: List of Social Media and Official Websites Links	162
Appendix II: QR code for Audi WeChat Channel	163
Appendix III: Summary	164
Appendix IV: Kurzzusammenfassung	165
Appendix V: Curriculum Vitae	166
Appendix VI: Lebenslauf	167

1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the topic of the master thesis. Then, it will provide the breakdown of the current trends in social media marketing and the Internet evolution, followed by the problem discussion. Subsequently, the research problem, the research objectives, the research questions and parameters of the study will be presented. Finally, the structure of the paper will be described.

1.1 Background

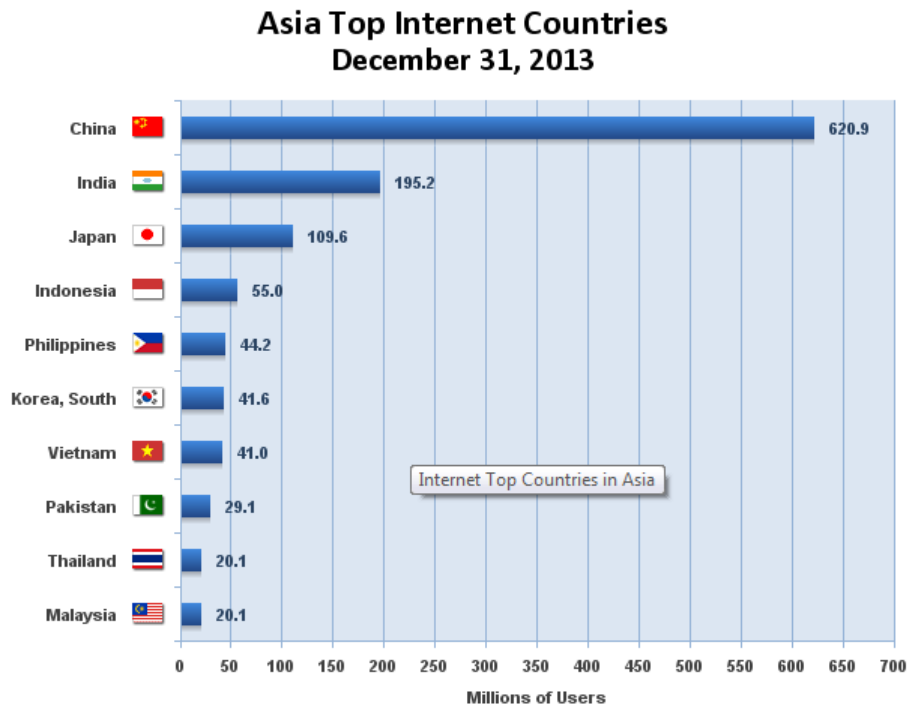
The contemporary debate on marketing is about the current shape of social media and how to promote a brand in the online area. Marketers have become quite sceptical about the traditional forms of marketing as their quotations confirm: ‘Marketing is dead’, said the CEO of Saatchi and Saatchi (cited from Bonchek 2012) and he added ‘brands need to learn how to attract people into orbit around their brand by generating social gravity’. Zarrella (2010) suggests that ‘Something strange is happening. Your advertising doesn’t work anymore, at least not like it used to’. However, the problem could be broader, as it is not simple about generating the content in the online area and it automatically attracts customers. This shift of marketing paradigm brought the question to marketers how to shape their social media marketing. It is quite difficult to measure any success from social media, and, thus, there is the question how to reach a large audience. As the marketing and in particular social marketing are not about targeting all people, or in other words being seen by the mass, it has to be about connecting with the right people (Yeager 2014).

Social media (SM) have become an omnipresent phenomenon that is covering all areas of life. One could use this new platform for networking, playing games, looking for a life partner or a dream job, and netizens also follow their favourite brands online on a daily basis. From the other point of view the companies; social media are a vast online area that offers numerous opportunities how to attract social media users. For instance, Facebook celebrated its tenth anniversary in February 2014 with a staggering number of users – 1.23 billion (Kiss 2014), which is a significant proportion of the world population. Moreover, it is stressed that companies have to be online, as Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 67) say: ‘Today, everything is about Social Media. Some industry gurus claim that if you do not participate in Facebook, YouTube and Second Life, you are not part of cyberspace anymore’. However, another problem would emerge how to sensitively attract the potential target group online, since; originally, social media were designed for networking not for business. As Piskorski (2011: 117) clarifies, SM meet two human needs: to meet new people and to strengthen existing relations.

Companies, ergo, face a very challenging issue, how to adjust their strategies in order to attract many social media users that would be eager to follow companies channels and possibly be their customers. This question is not new, however, a small number of academics have conducted their research on specific SM, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, for a specific company in a specific country.

Until now, a humble number of researchers have carried out their research in the topic of social media marketing of specific brands in China and India. These two countries are the most populated countries in the world and they do possess the biggest netizens’ community in Asia, shown in Figure 1. Besides these two most populous, only Japan exceeds one hundred Internet users, while other countries are in the range between 55 million users in Indonesia to 20.1 million in Malaysia.

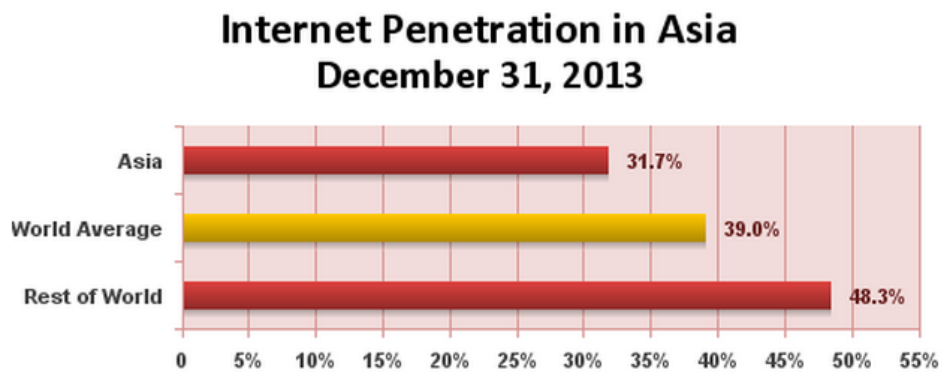
Figure 1 Asia Top Internet Countries



Source: Internet World Stats 2014

The next perspective, which describes the current share of the Internet use in Asia, is based on Figure 2 suggests that the Internet Penetration among nations reaches almost 32 per cent (Internet World Stats 2014). According to this, it is believed that the Internet penetration will grow and will achieve the level of the world average. Therefore, the marketers pay close attention to the Internet and social media in Asian countries.

Figure 2 Internet Penetration in Asia



1.2 Problem Discussion, Research Problem and Research Questions

In this thesis, it will be examined how companies from the premium sector use social media, especially, each social media platform, as a promotional tool. As was discussed in the previous paragraph, the Asian share of the Internet is remarkable and it is expected to rise in the near future. Currently, the number of social media users accounts for 1.61 billion in 2013, which will reach 1.82 billion in 2014, and according to the estimations, almost 2 billion in 2015 in the world (Statista 2014), whereas the big share of users will be from Asia.

While past literature (Kichatov and Mihajlovski 2010; Schautzer 2011) looked at the social media marketing of companies as a comprehensive tool, they did not specify in detail how certain platforms, such as Weibo, Dajie or Pinterest are used and how they differentiate. The promotional mix and social media form a new paradigm for companies that are trying to be closer to the customer. Together with the emergence of social media, also premium brands started to use social media. On the one hand, there was a worry about the suitability for luxury brands, as it can cheapen their value, while; on the other hand, the need of using social media was prevalent (Vermeren 2014).

The literature (Schautzer 2011; Kichatov and Mihajlovski 2010) reveals that companies mostly rely on primarily public relations (PR) using social media. As Schautzer explored, the IT sector abundantly utilizes almost all kinds of advertising, sales promotion and public relations in East Asia. However, the detailed analysis of social media platform as such and the structure of the promotional mix on specific social media suggests that (Stelzner 2013; Stelzner 2014) the importance of social media will be growing; however, social media differentiates each other. Each social media platform has its own features and companies have different approaches how to target their customers via them. Facebook, Twitter, WeChat or Weibo have different possibilities how to use specific tools of the promotional mix, on the one hand, for luxury brands, on the other hand, Asian countries have their own features in terms of using SM.

Based on these facts and the development of SM, it is necessary to provide a better overview of the current stage of SM platforms in the luxury segment of the selected countries. Therefore, the use of SM for the promotional activities could be different in China, India and Malaysia and the following research problem is set as follows:

How can the similarities and differences in the usage of social media platforms as a promotional tool by companies from the luxury segment in China, India and Malaysia be characterized?

This thesis elaborates the marketing concept on social media and specific targeting of customers. It strives to ascertain how the promotional mix is structured on specific social medium platforms rather than a whole strategy of all active company's social media channels.

In order to provide a clear picture of how to target luxury consumers, a current literature review will be provided and taken into account. This paper will closely look at international companies from the German premium automotive sector that offers items in the luxury segment in China, India and Malaysia. The author will analyse efforts of selected companies in these countries, how they design their marketing efforts on SM platforms and adjust them to local specifications and different kinds of SM.

The paper strives to explain the main features of marketing policies of prestigious companies in East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia along with the concept of defining the key approaches to consumers in these markets. The study strives to provide an overview of the important elements that need to be taken into consideration when attracting the affluent consumer segment on SM. This study aims to examine current trends in luxury marketing

goods, social media marketing in three Asian markets backed by two case studies. In order to achieve the author's aim, following objectives are set:

1. To explore the social media marketing strategies on specific social media channels of four cases in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, India and Malaysia.
2. To analyse the key concepts that are crucial in the process of targeting certain group of consumers.
3. To analyse the impact of social media on the marketing strategy.
4. To create a framework of social media platforms and their impact on social media marketing strategy.

According to the thesis' aim and objectives, the following main key research questions are raised:

RQ1: How can the use of social media as a promotional tool on specific social media channels by luxury brands be characterised?

RQ2: How can the motivation of specific social media platforms and the use of the promotional mix in different countries in China, India and Malaysia be characterised?

RQ3: To what extent do companies from the luxury segment use specific social media in China, India and Malaysia?

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between marketing practices in the luxury segment between China, India and Malaysia and how can they be explained?

1.3 Parameters of the Study

The main focus of the study is to answer the research questions by exploring social media settings in three Asian countries in the luxury goods sector. Additionally, the study is about exploring social media marketing strategies of concrete social media channels. It is necessary to also define and make clear what the thesis is *not* about. The study is not about measuring the success of social media marketing and benefits of that for companies, because of the two following reasons. First, it is difficult to define how to measure it (Schautzer 2011). Second, in terms of benefits, the author does not work for the selected companies; therefore, some internal data is missing, such as the impact on sales, mainly. Additionally, this thesis explores the review of business-to-customer (B2C) relations rather than business-to-business (B2B). The B2B concept would require materials and data which are internal and companies do not publish them. Moreover, social media are primarily focusing on the social communication among users, and then between companies and customers, thus, it is easier to gain data from online observing between company and customer. Finally, the research questions are focusing on the relations and communications between company and customers.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The master thesis is divided into seven chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, frame of reference, findings, analysis and conclusion.

Chapter One, *Introduction*, deals with of the background and the current debate in the discussed area. Next, it introduces the research problem, the research objectives together with the research questions. Chapter Two, *Literature review*, is devoted to current theories in social media, social media marketing and promotional mix linked to the Web 2.0, with the outcome of a frame of reference in Chapter Three. Chapter Four discusses the methodology and methods used in the research. In Chapter Five, all case studies will be presented with the findings. At the beginning of each subchapter, the selected company's overview will be provided. Company overview will discuss the focus of company and its marketing goals and targets, on one hand and, on the other hand, the marketing strategy in an analysed country. Next, each social media platform that is used by a discussed company is introduced in the country framework together with the frequency of generated social media marketing contents. Finally, within a data presentation of social media platform social media marketing structure findings are also provided. Chapter Six, *Analysis*, will bring the discussion and comparison of studied cases. The first part of this chapter will provide an analysis within each case. The promotional mix strategies will be discussed based on findings and how they are incorporated in the corporate's social media strategies in the selected countries. The other part of *Analysis* will give a cross case analysis, which is essential for this thesis, as it is a comparative study. Finally, Chapter Seven, *Conclusion*, will present the findings, comparisons, conclusions and implications for practitioners and future research.

Figure 3 Outline of the Thesis



2 Literature review

In the previous chapter, the background, the problem discussion, the research problem, the research questions and the outline of the thesis were introduced. This chapter will provide the review on theories from social media and the promotional mix.

2.1 Social Media Channels

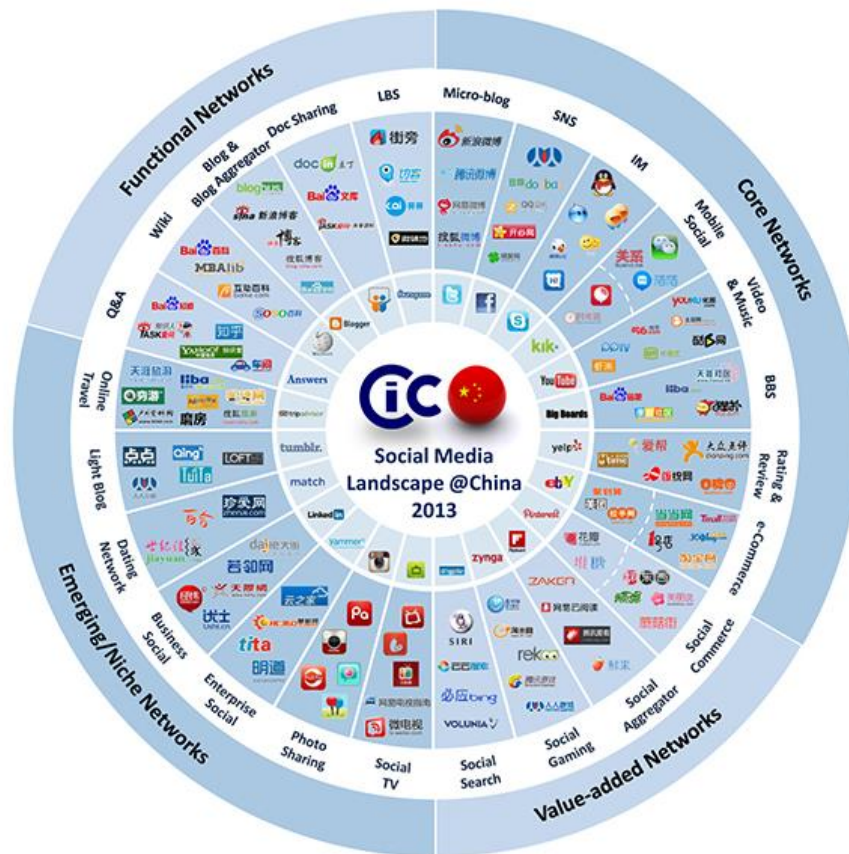
Three countries and four cases have been selected which have specific features, it is necessary to define and set up boundaries for framing social media and their landscape. The selected countries for this paper have different approaches to the access of Internet websites and social media. The main obstacle for the Chinese users is the fact that the Chinese authorities blocked social media sites (Tech 2011). China's ambassador to the UK Liu Xiaming defends China's policy (Stone 2014), and he stated that all taken measures are according to the law. Based on this fact, social media classification (see Figure 4) is often based on a Western point of view (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Schautzer 2011; Frey and Rudloff 2010; Arca 2012; Zarrella 2010). Furthermore, all mentioned papers almost ignore classifications for the Chinese market (see Figure 5 for the overview of Chinese SM), except of Schautzer (2011) who devoted his paper to social media environment in East Asia, South Korea, the People's Republic of China and Japan, respectively. Schautzer's paper brought a relatively solid overview of Chinese SM, connected to Western classifications that are related to the analysis in other papers such as Frey and Rudloff (2010) or Arca (2012) that discuss a general overview of SM contrasting specific papers on Chinese SM – (Yu et al. 2011; Yuan et al. 2013). The categorization of SM channels is elaborated mainly from Schautzer (2011) and Kaplan and Haenlein 2010 that differentiate selected social media channels; however, they do not match specific strategies to single channels, which will be elaborated in the next subchapter. Despite this fact, a short description of social media channels is needed in order to understand the architecture of social media platforms, their initial goals and social media users' structure.

Figure 4 Key Social Platforms



Source: Linky 2009

Figure 5 Social Media Landscape China



Source: Flemming 2013

In terms of using social media for marketing purposes, researchers provide a various classification of social media, such as Schautzer (2011), Zarrella (2010) or Arca (2010) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), they do not specify their importance for business. This could be found in the annual report from Stelzner (2013; 2014) who conducted a research for firms which kind of social media are crucial and to what extent they are important for online marketing. Although Schautzer (2011: 8) confirms that Facebook and Twitter are the most popular websites, he does not state from which perspective (users or companies). On the other hand, Stelzner (2013; 2014) gives us a clear point how important single social media platforms are for business aspects and promoting marketing measures towards their users. Stelzner (2013: 23) clearly shows that Facebook is the most popular SM platform, however, he and others lack measuring of the importance of Chinese SM for business. Therefore, this following subsection is going to be based on Schautzer's (2011) and Arca's (2010) classification that is structured according to Western SM, where also Chinese SM are added. Schautzer (2011:9-11) recognizes the following types of SM: Weblogs, Microblogs, Social Network Services (SNS) and Media Platform Sharing, while Arca (2010) in the analysis described five main categories: Social Networking, Blogging and Microblogging, Social Media Sharing Sites and Social Collaborative Sites.

Figure 6 Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure

		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)

Source: Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 62

It is necessary to frame social media which affects business. Arca (2010: 23) has the following distribution of social media with crucial influence in business:

- 1) Social Networks: Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google+, Renren, Kaixin
- 2) Blogs and Microblog: WordPress Blogger, Twitter, Weibo
- 3) Content Communities or Media Sharing Sites (Video/Audio/Photo/Presentations): Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, Picasa, Pinterest, Youku
- 4) Wikis or User Generated Content: Wikipedia, Wikitravel etc.
- 5) Social Bookmarking and New Sites: Digg, Google Reader etc.
- 6) Discussion Forums and Message Boards: Phorum, Yahoo Groups etc.
- 7) Social Events: Eventful, Meetup etc.

2.1.1 Social Networking Sites

Facebook types

This group encompasses sites which are based on a model resembling Facebook. Facebook and its replicas have the following features: SNS are designed for users that could have their own profiles, connect with their friends or relatives and see their profiles, communicate via email (provided by SM platform) or chat on instant messaging applications. What is crucial for enterprises is sharing information through statuses, uploading photos, videos, audio files and blogs (Kaplan 2010: 63). These sites could be further described as websites that are targeting people at creating and developing virtual friendships and facilitating the related exchange of information (Schautzer 2011: 11).

The most popular SM currently on the global basis is Facebook, founded in 2004, which has around 1.23 billion monthly active user (in December 2013) (Facebook 2014: 1), while the world population is 7,151,985,250 people (US Department of Commerce 2014). The number of active Facebook users is staggering as it represents more than one seventh of the world population in total. Therefore, this is extremely attractive for entrepreneurs. In the business point of view, Facebook provides a number of opportunities for expanding business, such as brand exposure, targeted traffic or customer interaction (Arca 2012: 46). Furthermore, Facebook is a unique platform for marketers as Mark Bonchek points out (2012) that it is becoming more important for companies, such as Apple based their success mainly on presenting their platforms rather than products. The marketers have realised how often to post on Facebook, or SNS. According to the suggestions (Lee 2014; Socialbakers 2014), marketers should post between one and twice per day on SNS.

Facebook presentation for companies could be challenging sometimes, as they could easily omit basic information about themselves. Arca (2012: 46) defines the 'About' tab

(Figure 7) as the most important element on the main Facebook page. In this section companies could provide their basic overview and put the companies' details.

Figure 7 The 'About Tab' Facebook

Name of the section	What to include
Category	Choose one from the list provided
Community Page	Link to any existing Facebook community page related to the Page
Sub-categories	Choose up to 3 sub-categories to better describe the business
Username	URL to create after having at least 25 likes - Important for SEO
Address/City/Postcode	Provide correct information to be linked automatically with Google map
Name	Name of the Facebook page – less than 75 characters
Creation	Date of creation of the company
About	Link to website + text with keywords for SEO
Description	Overview of the company
Mission	Company's mission and objectives + links to website
Rewards	List of any recognized rewards received by the company
Products	List of the products and services offered by the company + links to website
Website	Links to website and any other Social Media Sites
Email	Email to contact your company for any further information

Source: Arca 2012

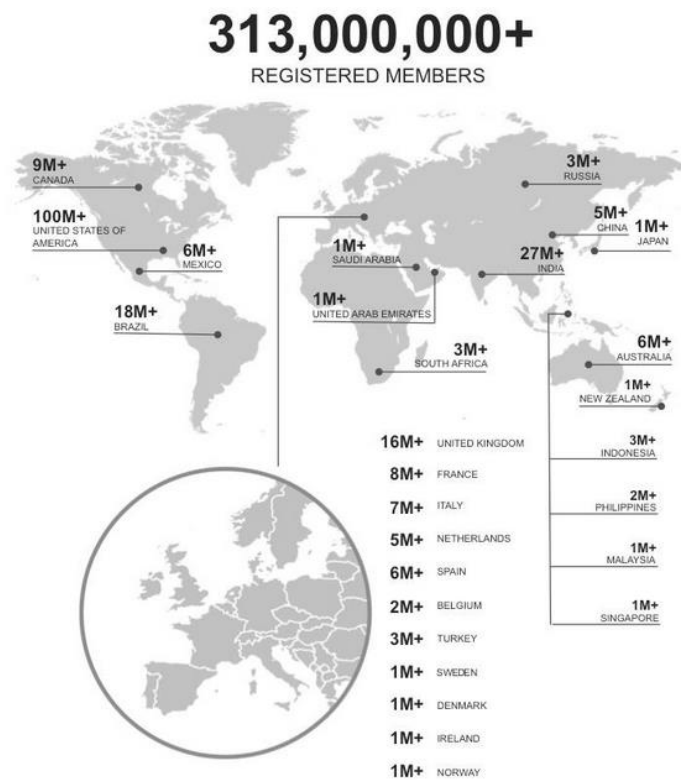
Professional business social networks (PBSN) LinkedIn types

The other significant social media site based on professional social networking is LinkedIn. This social media site was founded in 2002 and officially launched on 5 May, 2003 (LinkedIn Press Center 2014). The main goal of this website is a professionals' network. This idea is demonstrated by Jeff Weiner's quotation (CEO of LinkedIn) who says:

Facebook is largely a social utility platform. LinkedIn is a professional network.... The key distinction is that as a professional you want people to want to know who you are. People are searching for you or people like you whether you like it or not. (Dijck 2013: 207)

Meanwhile the user number has reached the staggering number of 300 million users in 2014 (Figure 8), while in 2004 there were 1,200,000 users, in 2010 about 85 million and in 2013 more than 225 million (LinkedIn Press Center 2014a). These members are called connections, and their aim is to publish their professional experience, skills and education in order to show their capacity during the job-hunting process.

Figure 8 Overview of the world distribution of LinkedIn users



Source: LinkedIn Press Center 2014

Although LinkedIn is primarily focused on creating networks among their users, the second main function is to allow companies to ‘raise brand awareness, announce career opportunities, and promote [their] products and services with a LinkedIn Company page’ (LinkedIn). At the moment, LinkedIn declares that ‘LinkedIn counts executives from all 2013 Fortune 500 companies as their members; its corporate talent solutions are used by 90 of the Fortune 100 companies’ and more than 3 million companies have official LinkedIn company pages (LinkedIn Press Center 2014). In order to gain audience effectively, marketers ought to generate content on LinkedIn once per workday (Lee 2014; Socialbakers 2014).

Mobile social network services

Mobile social network services (MSNS) are extremely popular in Asia and play a different role in comparison with Facebook or Twitter. The current literature on social media (Zarrella 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein 2011a; 2011b; Mangold and Faulds 2009; Schautzer 2011) do not discuss about any mobile social network services. Social media have been changing naturally and their hybrids have come soon. Tencent have developed a mobile application, which enables network users in order to chat online, sending voice messages and share pictures, called WeChat (China Telecom 2014). Primarily, WeChat is a mobile application, but it is also possible to run it on computer, but the user has to have an account launched in its mobile phone at the same time. Although there are many instant messaging applications, such as Chinese QQ, Viber, or Whatsapp, they cannot reach staggering numbers of users comparing to WeChat. WeChat, also known as Weixin 微信 (Wēixin) ‘micro message’, which was a former name before rebranding for international markets, is a Chinese hybrid of instant messaging available on mobile phones with additional services, but is available for broader user base (Ye 2011). Tencent have reached the mass of 350 registered million users by

September 2013, and most of users, around 50 per cent, are white-collars, while women account for 37 per cent of users, men account for 67 per cent (Digital Jungle 2014). After reaching a vast user base, WeChat became the most favourite social networking application in six countries: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Argentina and Brunei, additionally it is also among top ten most used social media in 43 different markets (Digital Jungle 2014). The success of WeChat was caused by adding a geo-location service, which means that GPS location could find users with a 1,000 meter radius of the user location, which enabled to grow the user base on the one hand, and on the other hand, Chinese mobile phones Xiaomi had this application incorporated in the device (Ye 2011). Thus, people can easily reach for chat even unknown people in their area. WeChat is similar to social network services, where users could share updates/statuses or follow companies (Roberg 2014b), however, the main difference is that it is only available and visible for a friend-circle, or subscribers (Unknown 2014). Other social media platforms, mainly, Twitter or Weibo users' postings are available to the public even the person is not the follower of the posting person. While WeChat is built on more privacy compared to other social media.

In terms of marketing, WeChat offers an alternative approach, in comparison to SNS, microblogs or blogs. The marketing possibilities are different, as WeChat users have to subscribe its favourite company messaging. Since then, WeChat users could receive directly messages, in the form of text, voice mail or picture to personal mobile. Besides these opportunities, the great success of WeChat opened a discussion on the future shape of marketing (Roberg 2014a). WeChat offers a new space for marketers called O2O (online to offline) on mobile social media. O2O campaigns, run by companies, are sending engaging content in order to produce offline results (Roberg 2014a). These campaigns are sending private messages based on subscription to customer. According to O2O, messages offer discounts, coupons, time sensitive sales in order to attract WeChat users and bring them to shops or events (Roberg 2014a; Sabrina 2014a).

2.1.2 Blogging

Blogs emerged during the 1990s with the rise of the Internet. These short articles were primarily focused on individual presentation. Blogs could be described as websites/webpages which could enable bloggers (people who write a blog) to keep logs or share their experience in a specific field which display date-steamed entries in reverse chronological order (Kaplan and Heanlein 2010). This kind of social media is on the rise as blogging is more and more crucial for business as social media analytics stress that 'corporate blogging should be the foundation of any content marketing strategy (Wagner 2012).

In terms of business, it is necessary to differentiate two main categories of blogging. The first type is personal blog and the second type is corporate blog (Fusion Marketing Experience 2014). Blogs could be defined in the following way: 'blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first' (Mohammadian and Mohammadreza 2012: 59).

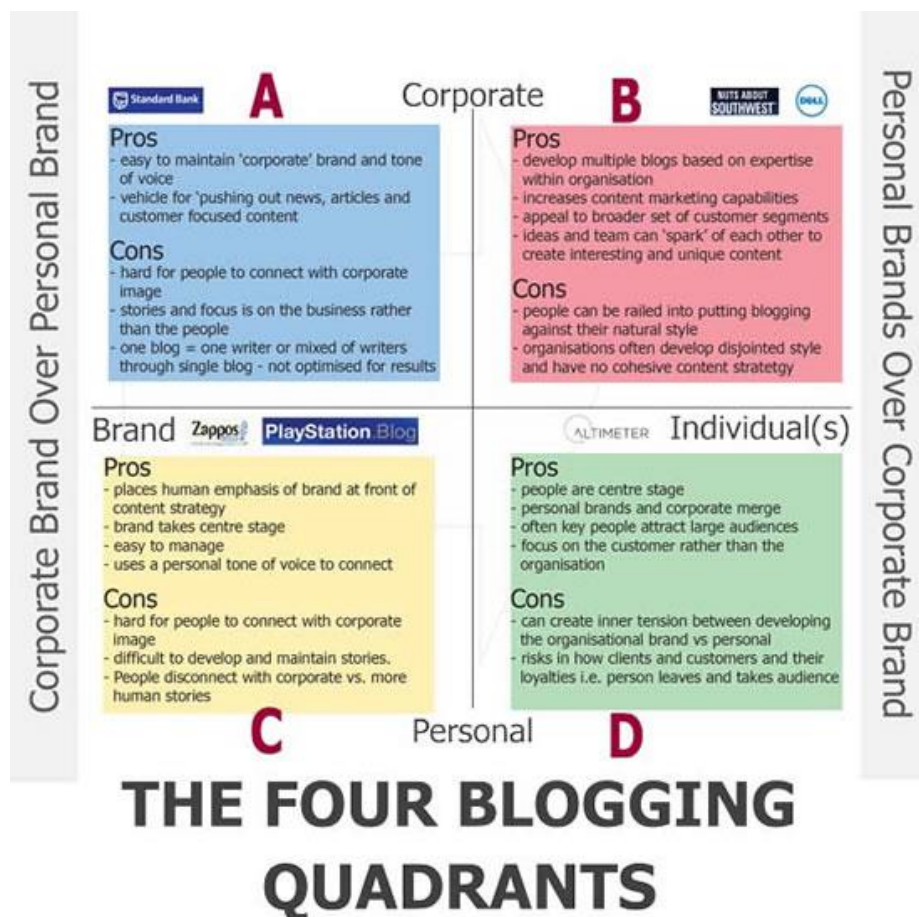
Corporate blogs aim at marketing brands and are used for the following purposes: marketing, branding, promotion or public relations (Arca 2012: 55), these categories could be widened and defined with the following goals. The main corporate blogging goals are:

- Driving awareness
- Providing the information – perspective – buyers need across the journey
- Engage various target audiences, including journalists
- Branding
- Generating leads

- Relationship building
 - Public Relations
 - Influencer marketing
 - Feedback and listening
 - Community marketing
 - Driving traffic, subscription and registration
- (Fusion Marketing Experience 2014)

In order to keep someone's attention, companies are to follow the strategy that is different from personal blogs. On the one hand, personal blogs 'axis mundi' is 'me' as the user is writing about their topic from a first-person perspective (Schautzer 2011: 9; Arca 2012: 56). While, on the other hand, corporate blogs 'offer a platform to show thought leadership and communicate views on industry issues' (Wagner 2012). As it can be seen from Figure 9, corporate blogs could be an asset for companies that could utilize blog's opportunities, these corporate blogs are very similar to press release, but they are less formal (Arca 2012). Although, it seems to be very manageable for corporations, there could be also burdens that are very hard to manage. One of the main disadvantages is the extremely time-consuming regulation and replying to readers' requests (Arca 2012: 56). However, corporate blogging is becoming more important, as there was an increase in blogging activities in 2013, about 58% marketers are blogging and it is one of the five major social media marketing tools for corporations (Stelzner 2013: 5)

Figure 9 The Four Blogging Quadrants



Source: Fusion Marketing Experience 2014

2.1.3 Microblogging

Microblogging are social media platforms that enable users to publish messages in a short way, e.g. Twitter, Tumblr, Plurk or Weibo. Kaplan and Haenlein define microblogging as follows: it ‘allows users to exchange small elements of content such as short sentences, individual images, or video links’ (Kaplan and Haenlein 2011a: 106). Moreover, they add that according to the classification, micro-blogging is between traditional blogs and social networking sites with a high degree of self-presentation (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). In terms of using microblogging among companies, they use these platforms (Twitter, Weibo or Tumblr), mainly for these purposes: marketing, branding, promotion or public relation (Arca 2012:55).

At the moment there could be more than one hundred microblogging sites (Arca 2012: 57), however, this number could be irrelevant for business, as the Social Media Marketing Industry Report found that among marketers the most important microblogging social media is Twitter (Stelzner 2013:23)¹. Short messages that are published or could be named just ‘tweets’ are often limited, for instance, Twitter just uses 140 characters long tweets. Twitter, which has been marked as the most important microblogging site, has a number of advantages that are suitable for business. Namely, companies could provide their overview and contact details on their profiles. Moreover, they can easily target their audience by different parameters: keywords in the tweets, likeness to target their existing followers, geography, interest or gender (Johnson 2014). Last but not least, in terms of frequency, the marketers on Twitter or other microblogging are encouraged to tweet without limits, but it is advised once per hour (Lee 2014; Socialbakers 2014).

2.1.4 Media Sharing Platforms/ Social Media Sharing Sites / Content Communities

Media sharing platforms of social media sharing sites are social media that enable user to upload media content and share media content between them (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010: 63). Schautzer (2011) mentions two main uploading services – videos (e.g. YouTube) and photos (e.g. Flickr); however, there are other possibilities of utilizing media sharing platforms e.g. uploading audios or slide shows (e.g. Slideshare). Arca (2012: 60) stresses that this kind of sites have an added value as it enables users to upload a visual content experience that generate messages with a very close relationship between a provider who uploads media content and a user. Moreover, other social media platforms, such as Facebook, could share media content from other media sharing platforms, in most cases from YouTube, Vimeo or Flickr. In terms of using services of content communities, users do not have to be registered in order to watch or listen to media content compared to social network sites or micro-blogging sites.

From a corporate point of view, media sharing platforms of content communities are very suitable for companies as they could upload videos or photos that could trigger a viral effect. For instance, YouTube serves over 100 million videos per day (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010: 63). In this paper, video sharing sites will be analysed and the most popular site, YouTube, is described in the next subchapter.

¹ Stelzner’s (2013) research was carried out among Western companies that promote their products on Western social media; therefore, his findings could be misleading for the Chinese Internet.

Video-sharing platform

The most popular community social medium YouTube was founded in 2005 (YouTube 2014a). YouTube has become one of the top five platforms for social media marketing among marketers and it is the top place where marketers plan to increase their activity (Stelzner 2013). According to the official website, YouTube is a platform that ‘allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos’ (YouTube 2014a). Moreover, YouTube provides a space for comments under videos. However, this service is available only for registered users (YouTube users or Gmail users). Companies that upload videos could freely see users’ reaction and communicate with them. Moreover, registered users could subscribe to their favourite channels and they could receive newsletters and video notifications on a regular basis. These features are unique opportunities for companies to enhance customer-company relations (Arca 2012: 64). Companies also could provide information about the company and links related to their products.

Photo-sharing platforms

Photo-sharing platforms (PSP), such as Flickr or Pinterest, allow to private users and companies to upload photos in high quality. On the official website, one of them: Flickr declares its two main goals

- 1) [they] want to help people make their photos available to the people who matter to them.
And
- 2) [they] want to enable new ways of organizing photos and videos.
(Flickr 2014)

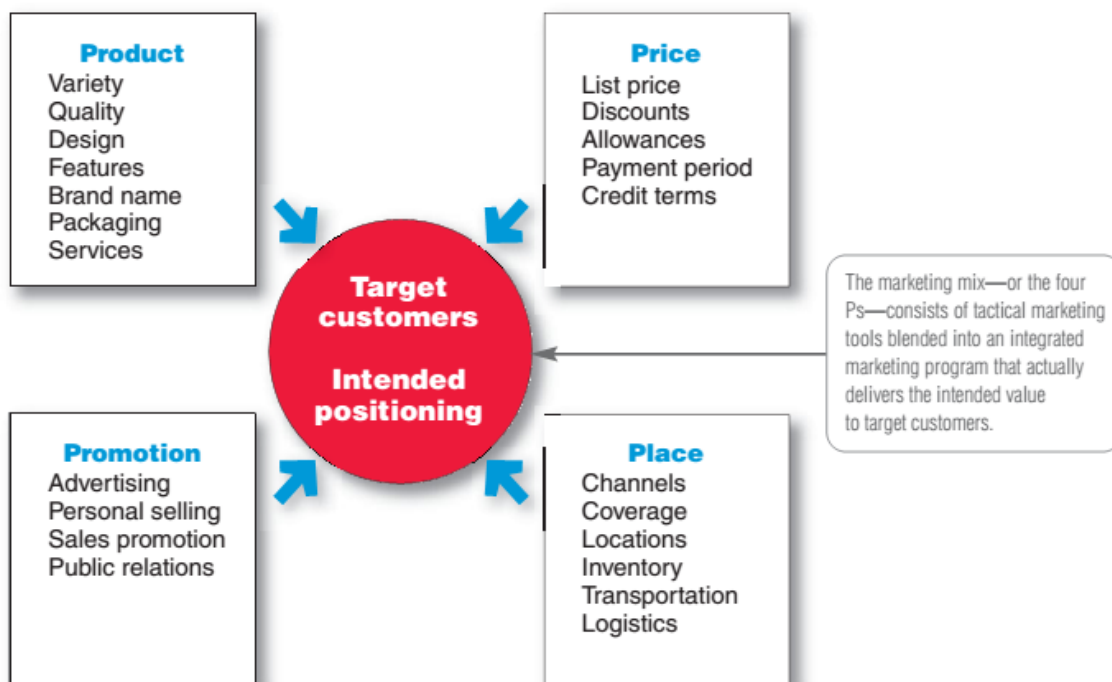
Companies could launch their social media marketing on these photo-sharing platforms for the following reasons – they enable users to share photos in real time, it means that companies could upload photos from their event or promotional actions. However, this kind of marketing can be very formal; the most valuable photos are non-marketing photos (Arca 2012:62).

2.4 Marketing

The debate on marketing among multinational companies (MNCs) has been launched mainly in the 1980s, when Theodore Levitt (1983) predicted the emerging of markets into one supranational entity. Levitt brought up the term globalization in 1983. In his article he clarifies why the process of homogenization is inevitable, as ‘consumers the world over, despite deep-rooted cultural differences, are becoming more alike’ (Levitt 1983). Levitt, furthermore, points out that the globalization is endorsed by technology and removing trade barriers and it is almost finished. Consumers are uninformed as ‘almost everyone everywhere wants all the things they have heard about, seen, or experienced via new technologies’ (Levitt 1983: 92). This statement is not completely true, as globalization is the process that is still not completed and MNCs face a number of obstacles at the international level (Ghemawat 2007). Thus, the integrated and unified strategy cannot be seen yet and companies have to adjust their marketing activities according to the local requirements, e.g. social media landscape, or consumers’ preferences.

The main goal of marketing is to present the value of certain products or services to customers in order to sell it in the most efficient way. The common definition of marketing by Kotler and Armstrong (2012) is ‘the social process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others’. The other definition by The Chartered Institute of Marketing (2012) describes it as ‘the management process for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably’. Overall, marketing could be defined as a process that is based on decision-making process of ‘Four Ps’ - product, price, promotion and place. This concept was defined and proposed by McCarthy (1964), and redefined by many scholars later, or eventually, expanded to Seven Ps’. For this paper, the author is going to frame it just for four Ps according to Tian’s framework (2007: 181-196) on Four Ps’ (Table 1) and Kotler and Armstrong (2012) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 The Marketing Mix’s Four Ps



Source: Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 52

Table 1 Four Ps' concept in the Tian's Framework

Four Ps'	Description
Product	What kind of product(s) to produce and sell in specific markets.
Price	After the product has been produced it needs to be priced in a way that maximizes the interests of the MNCs that produced it.
Promotion	In order to sell a product, companies need to make it known to customers in the overseas market they have entered – that is, they need to promote the product. They may, for instance, promote their products through mass media advertising, through direct marketing without the use of an intermediate, through exhibitions, and through such sale campaigns as free give-ways, vouchers for gifts, coupons and combinations offers.
Place	A company needs not only to make its products known to customers but also distribute those products to the customers in adequate quantities, in convenient locations and at the right times.

Source: Tian 2007: 181-197.

In the 1990s, there was a fierce debate (Lauterborn 1990) on the concept of the Four Ps as this concept was obsolete. Lauterborn (1990) strived to replace the Four Ps defined by McCarthy and Kotler by Lauterborn's Four Cs: consumer, cost, convenience and communication. Four C's were redefined as follows: product was replaced by consumer wants and needs. Next, price was replaced by consumer's cost to satisfy. Then, place was renamed to convenience to buy. Finally, promotion was replaced by the term communication.

The issue is how to effectively differentiate these two fundamental concepts of marketing. Shimizu (2009) describes the 'Four Ps' as a product-centric approach, whereas the 'Four Cs' is based on a customer-centric approach and he adds that the 'Four Cs' model makes more sense as the goal of marketing is meeting customer's needs. Shimizu extended both approaches to the Seven Ps' and the Seven Cs', but all these concepts starting from Lauterborn to Shimizu are similar and it is still the decision of the enterprise which is more suitable. Kotler with Armstrong (2012: 52) stress that the issue is not about the number of Ps' or Cs', but how to frame the company's marketing campaign in an effective way.

Table 2 Overview of 4Ps' and 4Cs'

4Ps'	4Cs'
Product	Customer solution
Price	Customer cost
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

Source: Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 52.

The debate on product vs. customer oriented marketing is still continuing. As together with the emergence of Web 2.0 and the term globalization, MNCs have to change also their

marketing in the international area in the mentioned approaches product vs. customer. The pioneer of marketing, Kotler, redefines the concept of marketing and clarifies the steps in the development of marketing (Kotler et. al 2010). He brought a new term: Marketing 3.0; however, it is necessary to describe Marketing 1.0 and Marketing 2.0 briefly. At the beginning, in the industrial era, Marketing 1.0 was dominant in the so-called 'Product-Centric Era'. Firms had to face the change of paradigm in marketing since the emergence of the concept Web 2.0. Technological changes resulted in different marketing strategies. This change is not as smooth as marketing scholars describe it (Kotler et al. 2010), since there are still a lot of companies that have not discovered the opportunities of social media marketing yet and they are quite reluctant to operating on these principles (Divol et. al. 2012). Kotler et al. (2010) coined a new term – Marketing 3.0 which points out that marketing has already moved to another stage. There are three basic marketing strategies which are characterized as follows: Marketing 1.0 is a product-centric era, Marketing 2.0 is an information era, where potential consumers could compare products. The last on-going stage is Marketing 3.0, where consumers are regarded as complete human beings whose other needs and hopes should never be neglected (ibid. 4-5), which means that current consumers on SM want to be seen and actively interact with the company. It is necessary to point out that the eras of Marketing 2.0 and Marketing 3.0 are on-going at the same time and Marketing 2.0 has not finished yet. The main challenge in the process of transforming into Marketing 3.0 for marketers is to realize the importance of word of mouth.

2.5 Promotional Mix/Marketing Communication

Promotional mix is a subdivision of marketing mix of McCarthy's definition - 4Ps – Product, Price, Promotion and Place. This paper uses categories for analysis based on the promotional mix and its subcategories on social media. This subchapter will analyse the basic patterns of the promotional mix and its subcategories extended to social media and its appropriate usage among marketers.

The aim of marketing communication is to establish a relationship between company and potential customer. As a result, companies are using marketing mix tools in order to build mutual relationships with their future customers. McCarthy defined the Four Ps' classification, promotion which is described by Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408) as 'the specific blend of advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing tools that a company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationship'. Next, Kurtz defines promotion as 'informing, persuading, and influencing the consumer's purchase decision' (Boone et al. 2009: 464) and Frey and Rudloff (2010: 3) emphasise that the goal is 'to get into contact with the target audience and build up a communication channel between the company and the customer.' All those mentioned definitions are based on the traditional view on marketing and McCarthy's Four Ps'. However, in the era of the Internet these definitions are slightly outdated and Kotler and Keller (2012) point out that promotion has to be re-defined as well. The definition of Promotion is under the term Programs and they clarify:

Programs reflect all the firms' consumer-direct activities. It encompasses the old Four Ps as well as a range of marketing activities that might not fit as neatly into the old view of marketing. Regardless of whether they are online or offline, traditional or non-traditional, these activities must be integrated such that their whole is greater than the sum of their parts and they accomplish multiple objectives for the firm.

Source: Kotler and Keller 2012: 25

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408), the next items of promotion and its subitems are defined for this paper in Table 3.

Table 3 The Elements of the Promotional Mix

Advertising	Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.
Sales promotion	Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service.
Personal selling	Personal presentation by the firm's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships.
Public relations	Building good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events.
Direct marketing	Direct connections with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationships.

Source: Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 405.

2.5.1 Advertising

Advertising is as old as the human kind and we can notice first advertisement from the pre-historical times until now. Advertising is a form of paid presentation in the media. Most of the time advertisement occurs on TV, radio, print media, billboards, catalogues, webpages, banners or emails. The main goal of advertising ‘is a specific communication task and achievement level to be accomplished with a specific audience in a specific period of time’ (Kotler and Keller 2012: 504 cited Russell H. Colley Defining Advertising Goals form Measured Advertising Results, 1961), which could be added as follows: marketing strives to persuade and inform people about products or ideas (Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 213).

Advertising is mainly typical for mass-media such as television or radio, however, in the era of the Internet advertising plays a very important role. Advertisement could be regarded as a one way technique of promotion, but on social media there is a need for companies to interact with users, as Kotler & Armstrong (2012: 17) stress ‘simply posting a humorous video, creating a social network page, or hosting a blog isn’t enough.’ As a result, companies have to be engaged in discussions under the advertising.

In order to clarify the most common types of advertising, we use the definition of three main types from Kotler and Armstrong (2012), and Kotler and Keller (2012) who define advertising in the following categories in Table 4.

Table 4 Aims and Objectives of Advertising

Aims	Objectives
Informative Advertising	
Creation of brand awareness and knowledge of new products or new features of existing products	Suggesting new uses for a product Informing the market of a price change Describing available services and support
Communicating customer value	Correcting false impressions
Building a brand and company image	
Telling the market about a new product	
Explaining how a product works	
Persuasive Advertising	
Creation of linking, preference, conviction, and purchase of a product or service	Persuading customer to purchase now Persuading customer to receive a sales call
Building brand preference	Convincing customers to tell others about the brand
Encouraging switching to a brand	
Changing customer perceptions of product value	
Reminder Advertising	
Stimulation of repeating of purchase of products and services	Reminding consumers where to buy the product
Maintaining customer relationships	Keeping the brand in a customer’s mind during off-seasons
Reminding consumers that the product may be needed in the near future	
Reinforcement Advertising	
Convincing current purchasers that they made the right choice	To confirm the purchaser status of selecting a right brand

Sources: Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 437; Kotler and Keller 2012: 504-505; Pelsmacker et al. 2010.

Firstly, informative advertising is a tool of marketing that is often used in promoting a brand new product. Secondly, persuasive advertising (also called attacking advertising) is used by companies which compare their products. Thirdly, reminder advertisement is suitable for mature products and customers who still have to know about them. Fourthly, reinforcement insists on customers to make a right decision immediately and buy the product.

Apart from a given breakdown of the main types of advertisement, there are also other classifications of advertisement. According to Pelsmacker (et al. 2010), advertisement promotions could be divided into the two groups, or also named appeals: rational appeals and emotional appeals. Both forms of appeals fall under the subcategory of creative appeal. First, rational appeals strive to ‘elicit affective responses and to convey image’ (ibid. 223). Rational appeals are mostly used when new products are introduced to the public, as it could be seen from Table 5, they are more informative compared to emotional appeals. Second, rational appeals possess features, often practical details or facts that serve as evaluation tools (ibid.). Emotional appeals, in contrast, try to evoke an emotion and do not possess practical information. Thirdly, endorsers provided by expert or celebrity. Endorsers serve as a tool that demonstrates a high quality of a product backed by an expert opinion, or a suggestion from famous people.

Table 5 Forms of creative appeals in advertising

Type of creative appeal	Form
Rational Appeal	Talking head, demonstration, problem solution, testimonial, slice of life, dramatization, comparative ads
Emotional Appeal	Humour, fear, warmth, eroticism, music.
Mixed	Include feature of rational and emotional appeal.
Endorsers	Expert endorsement, celebrity endorsement.

Source: Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 224

Media selection is a crucial point of launching any advertising campaign. Currently, the scope of media is huge and marketers could pick the most suitable channels from newspapers, televisions, radios or magazines. However, the trend is evident that the Internet plays an important role. The main advantages of the Internet for advertisement are high selectivity; interactive possibilities and relatively low costs, while, on the other hand, the limitation could be increasing clutter (Kotler and Keller 2012: 513). However, the current social media have limitations in terms of high selectivity of their users. Social media are based on the principle that they are focusing on specific groups of customers (except on Facebook or YouTube, or Renren etc.) (Stelzner 2014; Stelzner 2013).

It is necessary to add that all these aims are linked with promotion on the Internet as well. Web applications offer a placement for products where advertisement could be defined as ‘a paid or unpaid form of promotional communication through a medium, used in order to increase the number of the sales of the advertised and an awareness of the product (Schautzer 2011: 20, cited from Janoschka 2004: 47). Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 17) also stress that most marketers ‘are still learning how to interact with customers on social media’ and they define that they do not know how to enter customers’ conversations. Moreover, nowadays there is a strong tendency to monitor customers’ engagement and their reactions, which are monitored over-time (PWC 2011). Based on these presumptions the definition of advertisement on the Internet could be seen as the promotional tool that enables companies to increase their awareness among users with the strong engagement in shaping discussions.

2.5.2 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is another form of the promotional mix, which is available also on social media. This form covers a variety of tools that motivates customers to buy a product. Whereas, on the one hand, the other instruments of the promotion mix should have a long-term effect, on the other hand, sales promotion is typical for ‘action communication, used in a short-term period, which motivates existing customers to purchase a product now and it is backed by a temporary incentive or deal (Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 407). These incentives and deals could cover a wide range of coupons, contests, premiums and other forms. The next main difference between sales promotion and advertising is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 425) ‘but our product’ (a reason to buy/advertisement) and ‘buy it now’ (an incentive to buy/sales promotion). By and large, the main objectives of sales promotion are to attract new tries, reward existing customers, along with attracting occasional customers (Kotler and Keller 2012: 519) which results in enhancing consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness (Kurtz 2010: 587).

Sales promotion has also its own distinctive benefits that could enhance the selling of specific products. The key benefits are:

1. Ability to be attention-getting – They draw attention and may lead the consumer to product.
2. Incentive – they incorporate some concession, inducement, or contribution that gives value to the consumer.
3. Invitation – they include a distinct invitation to engage the transaction now.

Source: Kotler and Keller 2012: 491

Although these benefits could be attractive for marketers, there are also numbers of benefits for customers (mentioned in Table 6); however, marketers have to be aware of the fact that they cannot be used too often. The main reason is that customers should wait for sales promotions any time, and this leads to diminishing the brand (Kurtz 2010: 589).

Sales promotion has three main groups of sales: promotion tools consumer (consumer promotions provided by manufactures or consumer promotions provided by retailers), this group is very similar in nature and focuses on the end-consumer (Pelsmacker et al. 2010; Kurtz 2010). Since this paper focuses on B2C research, the consumer promotion tools are discussed. The other two groups are trade promotions provided by manufactures targeted at distributors, and business promotion tools are omitted (salesforces promotions provided by manufacturers).

Table 6 Major consumers sales promotion tools and their objectives with description.

Samples	Offers of a trial amount of a product or a service that could be delivered door-to-door sent in the mail or picked up in the store. One of the most favourite tools, which serve as promoting early trial and stimulating sales of mature brands. However, this tool requires huge costs.
Coupons	Certificates that give buyers a saving when they purchase a specified product. They could be mailed, enclosed in other products or attached to them. They are used very sensitively by companies that issue only very

Cash Refund Offers (rebates)	few of them. It is a price reduction after purchase rather than at the retail shop. Often, it is send by the company which ‘refunds’ part of the purchase after receiving ‘proof of purchase’ from customer.
Price packs (aka cents-off deals)	It is offered to consumers in the form of saving off the regular price of a product flagged on the label or package. A reduced-price pack is a single package sold at a reduced price (such as two for the price of one). A banded pack is two related products banded together.
Premiums (gifts)	Offered at a relatively low cost or free as an incentive to purchase a particular product or a service. Companies offer three kinds of gifts: with-pack premium (inside or on the package), free in-the-mail premium (sent to customers as a response to a ‘proof of purchase’, and a self-liquidating premium (sold below its normal retail price to consumers who request it). Premiums are a relatively good incentive for trying a new product.
Frequency Programs	Programs providing rewards related to the consumer’s frequency and intensity in purchasing the company’s products or services.
Prizes (contests, sweepstakes, games)	Chance to win a cash, trip, products based on purchasing a product or a service. A contest calls for consumers to submit an entry to be examined by a panel of judges who will select the best entries. A sweepstake asks consumers to submit their names in a drawing. A game presents consumers with something every time they buy—bingo numbers, missing letters—which might help them win a prize. A tool that is increasingly used on the Internet as it does not require huge costs and allows providing data immediately.
Patronage Awards	Values in cash or in other forms which are proportional to patronage of a certain vendor or group of vendors.
Free Trials	A form that invites perspective buyers to try a product.
Product Warranties	Promises from sellers to customers that the product will perform a specific period or the guarantee that seller will refund or fix it.
Tie-in Promotions	More than two companies team up coupons, refunds and contests to increase pulling

Cross-Promotions			power.
Point-of-Purchase (P-O-P) Displays and Demonstrations			One brand promotes a noncompeting brand. P-O-P displays and demonstrations set in the point of purchase or sale. This tool requires the customer's immediate decision and is often provided within the store.
Advertising specialties (promotional products)			Products having an advertiser's name, logo, or message that serve as gifts to customers. Advertising specialties serve as reinforcement for previous or future advertising and sales messages. One of the most popular forms of sales promotions among users. Advertising specialties are used by companies in order to highlight store openings and new products, increase visits to trade shows, and remind customers about the products.

Sources: Kotler and Keller 2012: 521; Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 483-485; Kurtz 2010: 590-591.

The overview of the sales promotion tools is not the only one that is in the literature. A different categorization can also be found, such as monetary incentives that include tools, such as coupons, extra refunds, extra volumes or saving cards; the chance to win a prize – contents, sweepstakes and lotteries; and product promotions – sampling, free in mail or premiums (Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 412).

Generally speaking, all given classifications (Pelsmacker et al. 2010; Kurtz 2010; Kotler and Keller 2012; Kotler and Armstrong 2012) cover the same principles and tools used by marketers. Overall, it could be summarized that sales promotions are focused on short-term incentives that lead to the immediate increase sales. Whereas, advertisement strives to cultivate a long-term relationship, sales promotion targets also at the switchers who are looking for favourable prices along with rewards.

2.5.3 Public Relations

Public relations are currently one of the most used tools of the promotional mix. Their history goes back to ancient times and they have developed together with propaganda. Nowadays public relations are connected with marketing. Rex Harlow defined public relations in 1976 according to his research, where he identified 472 definitions on public relations. Based on them he defined public relations as follows:

A distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion, defines an emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of an effectively utilized change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

Source: cited Harlow from Zappala and Carden 2010:6

The problem of this definition is that it strives to cover everything and it is quite long. Other definitions are shorter and more general as ‘PR’s main objective is to help companies create and build their brands’ (cited Steve Stratz from Cohen 2011) or currently the shape of PR is defined as:

PR focuses on building good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building a good corporate image, and handling crisis management issues. Today, a good PR firm must be experts in use of social media.

Source: cited Mark Burgess from Cohen 2011

As it is demonstrated by given definitions, PR serves as a tool that helps companies to create a favourable image in the public. There are a number of PR usages from political parties, celebrities or individuals. Overall, the goals of good PR mass communication covers the goals how to inform, teach, persuade and please the public (see more in Table 7).

Table 7 Overview of PR mass communication’s goals

Goals of PR mass communication	Implementation
To inform	Public of threats and opportunities about the environment.
To teach	Skills, knowledge and appropriate behaviour.
To persuade	People to adopt desirable behaviours and see them as acceptable.
To please	People by providing entertainment and enjoyment.

Source: Zappala and Carden 2010: 8.

PR are part of the marketing mix and it is defined as ‘building good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events’ (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 454). But is it needed to point out that in marketing the main goal of public relations is to highlight the product as Kurtz (2010: 549) points out that ‘[PR] is an efficient, indirect communication channel through which a firm can promote products’. Based on the assumption that in marketing PR serves for enhancing their image, it also propagates a company’s product. Thus, companies have PR departments that conduct PR policies in several ways: press relations, product availability, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations, development, or financial affairs (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 454; Pelsmacker et al. 346). All these mentioned activities are broad and not all of them are relevant for social media marketing. As social media brought various possibilities how to conduct PR, there are now two kinds of PR: traditional and online (Schautzer 2011). Thus, the conceptualization of these tools is needed to provide. In Table 8, the overview of the main traditional PR tool is provided, while online PR tools are discussed in the following subchapter.

Table 8 Overview traditional PR tools

Tool	Objectives and Implementations
Advertising	To conduct a corporate image campaign for introducing a new product
Events	To draw attention to a new product by arranging and publicizing special events, for instance, news conferences, seminars, outings, trade shows, exhibits, contests and

Identity Media	competitions that target the public To provide a visual identity that the public immediately recognizes. This is implemented by logos, stationery, brochures, signs, business forms, business cards, buildings, uniforms, and dress codes.
News	To find and create favourable news about a company, its products or its people and release them in the press or at press conferences.
Publications	To reach and influence companies main markets. It covers annual reports, brochures, articles, company newsletters and magazines, and audio-visual materials.
Public Service Activities	To enhance a company's image by contributing money to good causes.
Speeches	To enhance a company's image by giving interviews or talks for media at trade associations or sales meetings.
Sponsorships	To promote a brand by sponsoring publicizing sports and cultural events or highly regarded causes.

Sources: Kotler and Keller 2012: 529; Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 456.

Online PR and Social Media

The Internet and the emergence of the Web 2.0 have brought an enormous amount of opportunities for PR, especially as social media have started to play a crucial role. Social media enable companies to reach people easily and as public relations and their core strengths play well into the nature of social media – to tell a story and spark conversation - and social media are critical for a company's PR in terms of forming relationship between company and customer (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 456). The Web 2.0 and SM brought new forms of PR tool that are described in Table 9.

Table 9 Overview of online PR tools

Tool	Aim
Word of Mouth	To share and spread positive or negative experience with a product or a service between consumer and a friend or other relatives.
Electronic Word of Mouth	To repost and share testimonies from consumers and consequently control them in the online area.
Active Word of Mouth	To repost and share satisfied online users posts about their positive experience with company's products or services.
Buzz	To generate excitement, create publicity, and convey new relevant brand-related information through unexpected or even outrageous means.

Viral Marketing ('Word of Mouse')	To encourage consumers to pass along company-developed products and services or audio, video, or written information to other online.
Branch Content	To promote brand specific products in articles, movies, problem solutions or stories that possesses a 'hidden message'.
Non-Branch Content	To supply a product or a service by entertaining or an informative message unrelated to the brand.
Support via Social media	To provide support through publicly viewable social media platforms in the forms of the giving assistance in terms of products, services, campaigns, events and other corporate activities.
Social Online Integration	To communicate to the whole social group, online community, fan pages, corporate sites (followers, fans, members of groups) or individuals that has no connection with products or services offered by the company and entails no content as described in brand contend or non-brand content.
Integration of Customer	To ask customers for becoming a part of the innovation process or developing a product.
Maintenance of Digital Reputation	To show the open self-criticism to company's products or services by the company itself.

Sources: Schautzer 2011: 26-31; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Mangold and Faulds 2009; Kotler and Keller 2012; Kotler and Armstrong 2012; Kaplan and Haenlein 2011b.

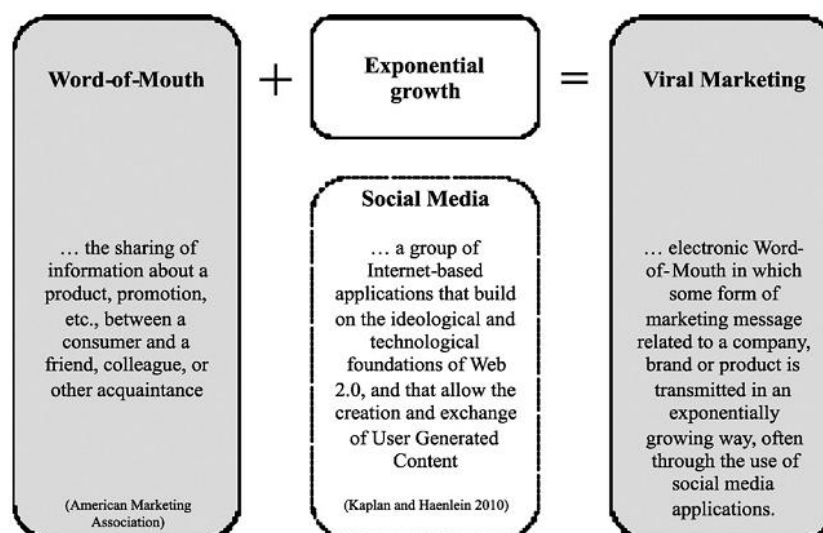
One of the main powerful tools is word of mouth (WOM) defined as 'oral, person to press communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service' (cited Arndt, 1967, p.3 from Kietzmann and Canhoto 2013). Word of mouth is a very powerful tool of marketing, as more than two-thirds of consumer behaviour is influenced by that (Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 31). Therefore, marketers are trying to reach customers utilizing WOM on social media. Other researchers point out that WOM marketing is more about encouraging customers to feel they just happened to hear about the product or service rather than to feel directly marketed to (Cao et al. 2009: 2). Although these definitions are suitable for non-social media marketing, the Web 2.0 brought the term electronic word of mouth (EWOM). According to Kietzmann and Canhoto (2013), the current definition of electronic word of mouth is

...any statement based on positive, neutral, or negative experiences made by potential, actual, or former consumers about product, service, brand or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (through web sites, social networks, instant messages, news feeds, etc.).

Traditional WOM and electronic WOM have two main differences. First, the spread of EWOM, in contrast, is quicker and, second it is easier to monitor for companies (Kaplan and Haenlein 2011b: 255). Additionally, Schautzer (2011: 31) defines WOM under the name active word of mouth and describes it as part of new public relations that companies utilize

for forwarding of posts from satisfied customers sharing their experience with a product or service. WOM or its electronic modifications would be beneficial for both sides (B2C). While senders, in this case companies, have the opportunity to shape their image through sharing customer's satisfied testimonies and enhance their self-confidence at the same time, and on the other hand, receivers could easily make decision (Schautzer 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein 2011b: 255).

Figure 11 Relationship between word-of-mouth and viral marketing



Source: Kaplan and Haenlein 2011b: 254.

In the current social media environment, there are many opportunities for companies to promote their PR. In paid media companies have their promotional activities in form of advertising. While in earned media (free media) companies do not have to pay for conducting their marketing. Thus, PR can benefit from this area, where companies could conduct their marketing without paying (Kotler and Keller 2012: 546).

2.5.4 Personal Selling

Personal selling is another form of marketing communication instrument. However, this form of marketing mix is fundamentally different from the first three instruments analysed in the previous subchapters. Personal selling, in contrast, is not used in the online area for a natural reason as it requires the personal meeting and face-to-face communication, albeit the short introduction will be provided for the comprehensive and overall discussion on the promotional mix.

Personal selling is defined by Pelsmacker et al. (2010: 529) 'as two-way, face-to-face communication used to inform, give demonstrations to, maintain or establish a long-term relationship with, or persuade specific members of a particular audience'. Moreover, Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 464) add that personal selling is 'the interpersonal form of the promotional mix'. Finally, Kurtz (2010: 566) stresses that 'the process of a seller's person-to-person promotional presentation'. Based on these definitions, it could be said that personal selling is solely focused on the human interaction that serves for promoting products. However, not only is personal selling about the personal interaction, it is also about the mutual relationship between seller and buyer. Personal selling is quite challenging as personal meeting with sellers would be inconvenient for some people and it could raise objections, as

psychological resistance (interference, preferring other brands) or logical resistance (to price, delivery etc.) (Kotler and Keller 2012: 561). This mutual relationship is built according to four cardinal questions that are as follows:

1. Situation questions – which ask about facts or explore the buyer’s present situation.
 2. Problem questions – focus on problems, difficulties and dissatisfaction based on buyer’s experience.
 3. Implication questions – ask about the consequences or effects of a buyer’ problem, difficulties or dissatisfaction.
 4. Need-payoff questions - ask about the value or usefulness of a proposed solution.
- (Kotler and Keller 2012: 560).

Personal selling is divided into several subcategories that distinguish its focus. Personal selling is traditionally targeting customers in various fields that are shown in table below.

Table 10 Types of personal selling

Type of personal selling	Target group
Trade selling	Supermarkets, groceries, pharmacies, etc.
Missionary selling	Target groups of customers of your direct customers.
Retail selling	Consumers.
Business-to-business selling	Businesses.
Professional selling	Influencers of your target group.
Direct selling	Consumers.

Source: Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 530

These types of personal selling could be used in face-to-face selling, direct email, catalogue marketing, telemarketing or Web marketing (Kotler and Keller 2012: 562). These forms offer various advantages compared to other forms of the promotional mix. The main advantages are impact, target message and interactivity, while disadvantages cover costs and control (Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 531).

Overall, personal selling and the environment of the Web 2.0 and social media are in a strong contrast. First of all, the main difference lies in the fact that personal selling strives to communicate on the face-to-face basis, whereas social media environment targets masses. Consequently and naturally, this category will not be analysed in the empirical part as it does not apply directly to social media.

2.5.5 Direct Marketing

The last element of the promotional mix is direct marketing. The current shape of direct marketing has emerged in the last few years; it has been changing since the 1960s. Pelsmacker et al. (2010: 439) stress that direct marketing originally served as a type of distribution, often used by mail order companies. Later, this tool was used for communication with customers and receiving feedback and optimising reports. Finally, in the 1990 the current form of direct marketing has become stable as a long term relationship for increasing customer loyalty (ibid.). Consequently, the literature identifies a number of definitions for current direct marketing described in the following table.

Table 11 Definitions of direct marketing

Hughes (1995)	Any marketing activity in which you attempt to reach the consumers directly, or have them reach you.
Kobs (2001)	Direct marketing gets your ad message directly to the customer or prospect to produce some type of immediate action. It usually involves creating a database of respondents.
Pelsmacker et al. 2010	Contacting customers and prospects in a direct way with the intention of generating an immediate and measurable response or reaction.
Kotler and Keller 2012	The use of consumer-direct channels to reach and deliver goods and services to customers without using marketing middlemen.
Kurtz 2010	Communication between buyer and seller, designed to generate sales, information requests, or store or Web site visits.

Direct marketing as a tool of the promotional mix has the main objective in the form of a direct sales channel or distribution technique. Direct marketing could be beneficial for both sides, as sellers could easily increase their sales, and busy costumers could very conveniently select products anywhere in the world. However, direct marketing has to face also many disadvantages (Kotler and Keller 2012: 540) that are irritation, some people may feel direct selling as an aggressive tool; unfairness – sellers could misuse less sophisticated buyers; deception and fraud, and invasion of privacy.

The last problem discussed here is the Web 2.0 and direct marketing, as the shape and environment of social media do not allow companies to conduct direct marketing on these platforms. The literature identifies (Schautzer 2011; Kichatov and Mihajlovski 2010; Kotler and Keller 2012; Mangold and Faulds 2009) a number of reasons that restrict the possibilities of direct marketing. First of all it is necessary to realise that direct selling is primarily based on the mutual communication. Kichatov and Mihajlovski (2010), according to their interviews with entrepreneurs, describe social media as an unsuitable tool for direct marketing for companies, but they use direct marketing in traditional media, such as personalized emails and print mails. Moreover, Schautzer (2011) adds that data collecting with the reference to direct marketing - one-on-one personal communication would be illegal and, thus impossible.

2.5.6 Integrated Marketing Communication: Traditional vs. New Communication Paradigm

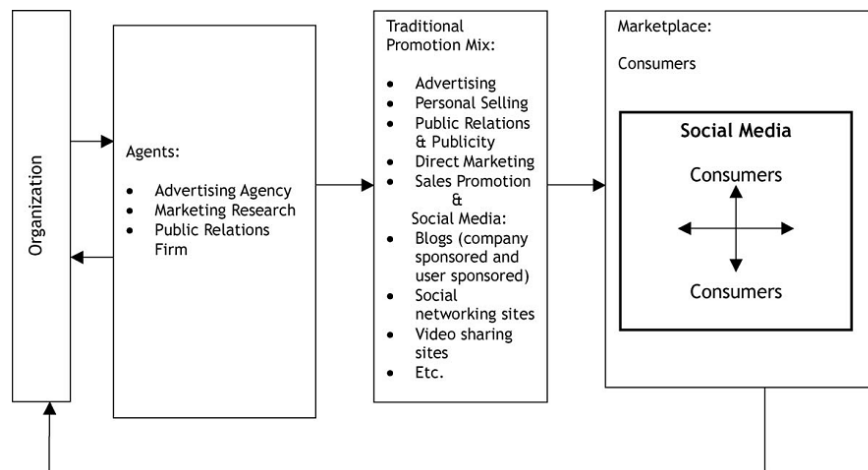
Traditional marketing communication, which was described in the previous subchapters, are in most cases in the mass media, while companies utilize only some elements of the marketing mix. There is a need to distinguish the cardinal difference that came to marketing with the era of Internet, where the literature (Mangold and Faulds 2009; Kichatov and Mihajlovski 2010) identifies that the integrated marketing communication is based on organizing and controlling the elements of the promotional mix. The traditional communication mix that was developed after the WWII (ibid., Lauterborn 1990) is quite rigid as the whole strategy is set according to corporation plans and its paid agents (advertising companies, PR consultants etc.) and it reflects more the product centric era. The Internet and the Web 2.0 enhanced possibilities for the consumer-centric era and the Marketing 3.0, when

the information about products and services is originally from marketplace based on the consumer's experience and channelled through social media (Mangold and Faulds 2009: 360).

The new communication paradigm (described in Figure 12) has brought these new impacts on communication (Mangold and Faoulds 2009: 360; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010):

- The Internet has become a mass media vehicle for consumer-sponsored communication. It now represents the number one source of media for consumers at work and the number two source of media at home.
- Consumers ignore most of the traditional mass media channels, such as radio, television or print media.
- Consumers focus on various types of social media in order to gain a broad picture about the product.
- Last but not least social media have become trustworthy source of information on products and services rather than traditional promotion in mass media.

Figure 12 The new communication paradigm



Source: Mangold and Faoulds 2009: 360

2.5.7 From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the future trends

The Internet has brought a number of opportunities for companies and marketers. As we can see the development of marketing is heading to the consumer-centric era (Kotler et al. 2010), the Internet (not synonymous with the World Wide Web, which is only a part of the Internet) shape changed as well. There are two terms that describe the current stage of the Internet development Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. The first who used the term Web 2.0 was DiNucci (DiNucci 1999: 32) and not by O'Reilly (Musser and O'Reilly 2007). The term Web 2.0 became popular and defined after 2004 during the brainstorming session (Musser and O'Reilly 2007; Aghaei et al. 2012). Nowadays we live in the two parallel constructs and parts of the Internet Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, which is not an upgrade of Web 1.0. At the beginning the concept of Web 1.0 was based on a read-only web, which is static and mono-directional with the goal of publishing information for anyone at any time and build an online presence (Aghaei et al. 2012). While, on the other hand, Web 2.0 brought a new concept of networking and connecting people. The term Web 2.0 was defined by O'Reilly (Musser and O'Reilly 2007) as follows:

Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them.

Table 12 Comparison of Web 1.0 and 2.0

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Reading	Reading/Writing
Companies	Communities
Personal Websites	Blogging
Publishing	Participation
Web forms	Web applications
Lectures	Conversation
Advertising	Word-of-mouth

Sources: O'Reilly 2005; Aghaei et al. 2012.

As was said by O'Reilly and shown in Table 12, Web 2.0 offers a number of opportunities for business, but at this stage, in contrast, requires from companies to communicate and not be passive. Tuten (2008: 3) describes Web 2.0 as 'the perfect storm' that has interactive capabilities in an environment characterised by user control and two-way communication. The term Web 2.0 is a modification of the Internet that enables companies to conduct marketing in two-way direction on social media as it is described in Table 12 of Web 2.0 characteristics.

However, it is needed to say that Web 2.0 is a part of the Internet evolution that has not finished yet. The next Internet upgrades will change its environment and along with that business opportunities that would lead also to the change of social media in the future. However, these debates are hypothetical and according to them entrepreneurs could prepare in advance for the next change. The upgrade - Web 3.0 also called the 'semantic Web' of the Internet (Matusky 2013; Aghaei et al. 2012; Getting 2007) will be based on the principles that data will be generated automatically by devices, such as computers, smartphones or cars etc. Web 3.0 or the semantic Web, will be the online area where the decisions will be made by machines not by human beings. The final stage of the Internet evolution will be Web 4.0 – symbiotic Web that will be a read-write-execution-concurrency web with intelligent interactions (Aghaei et al. 2012). This kind of Web 4.0 will enable to communicate between human minds and machines with mutual interactions.

By and large, the current stage of the Internet has brought the environment where social media are suitable tools for promoting business. In other words, companies should try to find a way how to reach customers in the online communities. However, the predictions how the Internet will look like would prepare for the next stage of social media, under the conditions they will survive.

3 Frame of Reference

The literature review discusses the current theories and discourse of social media and the promotional mix. In this chapter, the theories from the literature review will be used for building a frame of reference that is utilized for collecting and analysing data for the research of the master thesis. The frame of reference was, on the one hand, adopted from Kichatov and Mihajlovski (2010) and, on the other hand, adjusted according to the research specifications.

3.1 Research Problem and Research Questions

The thesis' research problem is set in the Introduction as:

How can the similarities and differences in the usage of social media as a promotional tool by companies from luxury segment in East Asia be characterized?

The literature review, presented theories and the main research questions has confirmed the following order:

RQ1: How can the use of social media as a promotional tool on specific social media channels by luxury brands be characterised?

RQ2: How can the motivation of specific social media platforms and the use of the promotional mix in different countries in China, India and Malaysia be characterised?

RQ3: To what extent do companies from the luxury segment use specific social media in China, India and Malaysia?

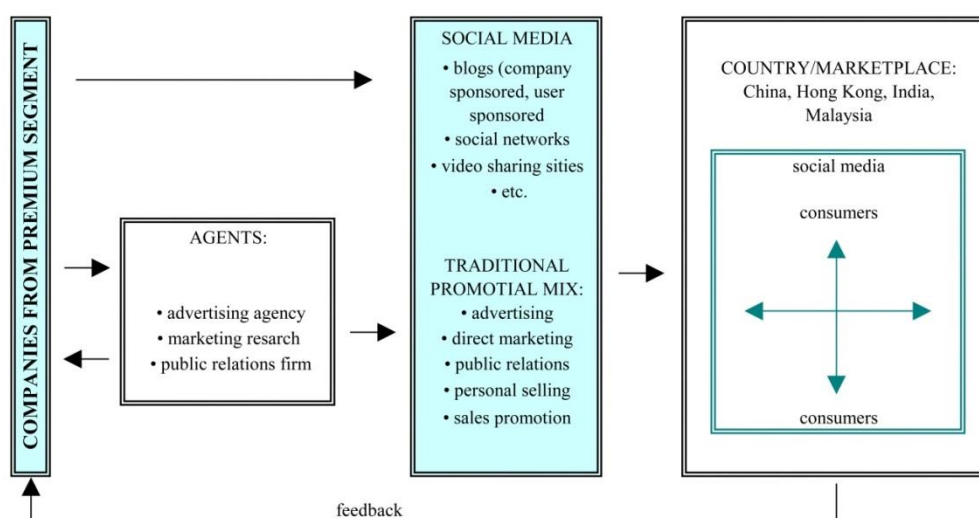
RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between marketing practices in the luxury segment between China, India and Malaysia and how can they be explained?

Based on the research problem and identified research questions that will be examined together with conceptual framework.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

Marketing of luxury brands is steadily utilizing social media and the online environment, as one of the social media marketer is saying: 'Social media is a great tool for building awareness, reinforcing values and driving customers to physical storefronts' (cited Dyer from Washenko 2013). The Social web brought many opportunities for luxury brands; however, they are not using all social platforms in order to reach consumers effectively (ibid.). This research is striving to explore social media platforms and their usage for the promotional mix of the luxury brands in China, India and Malaysia. In order to do this, two models are used – the new communication paradigm by Mangold and Faulds (2009) (Figure 13) and Kotler and Armstrong's communication mix (2012). Social media are viewed as trustworthy for consumers, where they can follow a number of social media platforms.

Figure 13 The new communication paradigm used for social media marketing



Source: Mangold and Faulds 2009: 360 (adjusted)

3.3 Conceptual Definitions

For the sake of completing the research and answering the research questions, the related theories to social media and the promotional mix were selected from the literature review and presented in Table 13.

Table 13 Conceptual Definitions

Conceptual Area	Concept	Conceptual Definitions	Operationalization
Social Media and Web 2.0	Social Media Platform	‘Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content’ (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).	Identified actively used social media platform. Number of Subscribers.
Marketing	Marketing Mix	‘A set of marketing tools that work together to satisfy customer needs and build customer relationships’ (Kotler and Armstrong 2012).	Identified/ Not Identified.
Promotion	Promotional mix	‘The specific blend of promotion tools that the company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships’ (Kotler and Armstrong 2012).	Elements of Promotional mix used or not used.

The research is conducted according to the literature review and theories, where it strives to investigate how selected companies use social media for their promotional activities defined by Kotler and Keller (2012). As was discussed in the previous chapter, direct marketing and personal selling are not suitable for social media, thus they are not included in the research. Based on the literature review of the promotional mix, each element has subcategories identified after the promotional mix in the following table. Consequently, these elements and subcategories will be used as the basis for the online observation and data collection.

Table 14 Elements of the Promotional Mix

Element of promotional mix	Definition
Advertising	Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.
Public Relations	Building good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events.
Sales Promotion	Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service.
Direct Marketing	Direct connections with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain and immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationship.
Personal Selling	Personal presentation by the firm's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships.

Source: Kotler and Keller 2012

Table 15 Elements of Advertising

Elements of Advertising				
	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative				
Persuasive				
Reminder				
Reinforcement				

Sources: Kotler and Armstrong 2012; Kotler and Keller 2012; Pelsmacker et al. 2010.

Table 16 Elements of Sales Promotion

Elements of Sales Promotion	
Advertising specialties	
Cash Refunds	
Contests, sweepstakes, games (Prize)	
Coupons	
Cross-Promotions	
Free Trials	
Frequency Programs	
Patronage Awards	
Point-of-Purchase Displays and Demonstrations	
Premiums	
Price Packs	
Price Refund Offers	
Product Warranties	
Samples	
Tie-in Promotions	

Sources: Kotler and Armstrong 2012; Kotler and Keller 2012

Table 17 Elements of Public Relations

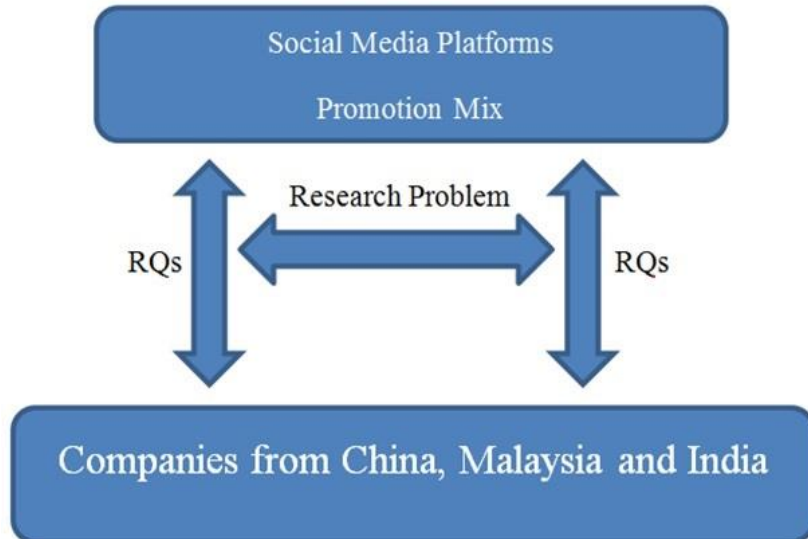
Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising		Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	
Events		Branch Content	
Identity Media		Non-Branch Content	
News		Support via Social Media	
Publications		Social Online Integration	
Public Service Activities		Integration of Customer	
Speeches		Maintenance of Digital Reputation	
Sponsorships			

Sources: Schautzer 2011: 26-31; Kaplan and Heanlein 2010; Mangold and Faulds 2009; Kotler and Keller 2012; Kotler and Armstrong 2012; Kaplan and Henlein 2011b.

3.4 Schematic Diagram of the Research Problem and Questions

According to the discussion above and the identified promotional mix elements, the following Figure has been defined. In Figure 14, the relationship between the research question and the research problem are shown.

Figure 14 Schematic Diagram of the Research Problem and the Research Questions



4 Research Paradigm and Methodology

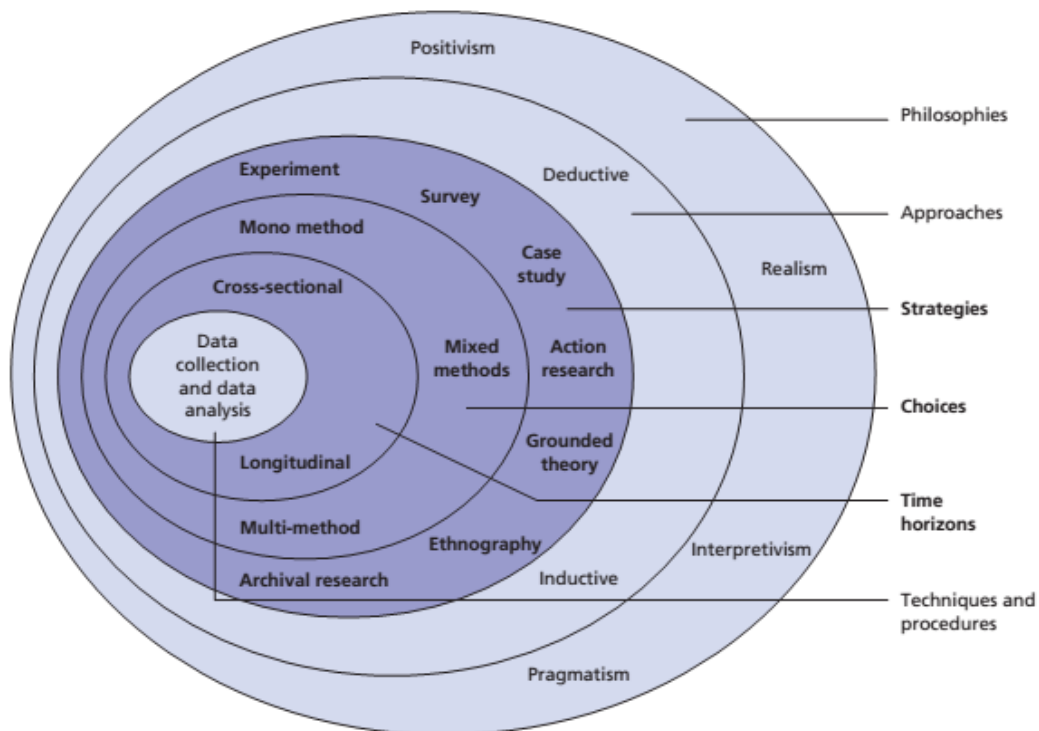
The previous chapter, the literature review, and theories linked to the research problem and questions were discussed. In this chapter, methodological issues will be provided.

4.1 Introduction to Business Research

This chapter closely looks at the process of the research and the thesis's methodology. It is needed to point out that every research has a very structured way, since it is not a haphazard process. According to the main assumptions of the research, it has the following characteristics - data are collected and interpreted systematically along with the clear purpose to find things out (Saunders et al. 2012:4-5). Collis and Hussey (2009: 3) also define research as 'a systematic and methodical process of enquiry and investigation with a view to increasing knowledge'. However, it is necessary to stress that this piece of paper focuses on marketing in the Internet area and the marketing research, conducted on social media, has this main aim: 'identify and understand the tastes, desires, relevant symbol-systems and decision-making influences of particular consumers and consumer groups' (Kozinets 2002: 62). Therefore, we can sum up these definitions to the statement that research is based on systematic work of collecting data, investigation that clarifies a problem defined by the research question.

In order to carry out a good research, it is essential to define how we overcome the stages of research where we make assumptions. As it is shown in Figure 15, we can see that the research onion reveals the following stages of the research: philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, techniques and procedures. Based on this scheme, this chapter has the same structure, where the stages are discussed.

Figure 15 The research onion



Source: Saunders et al. 2012: 128

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Research Philosophy

Master's students and doctoral students are obliged to discuss the research philosophies and adopt an appropriate research paradigm according to their research (Collis and Hussey 2009). The term philosophy is described by the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2014) as 'the critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs'. During the research we make assumptions and the way we interpret them is important. Therefore, the researchers have to adopt a research paradigm (research philosophy) that is defined as 'a philosophical framework that guides how scientific research should be conducted' (Collis and Hussey 2009: 55). The philosophies help us to interpret the world. A single philosophical approach in the research – positivism - was dominant in the natural sciences for a long time. Later, the emergence of social sciences caused a need to define a new philosophy –interpretivism. Although these two main philosophies are prevailing, there is also an alternative one, which is pragmatism. Pragmatism is regarded by students as a very attractive other side of two 'classic' paradigms, but it is very vague in its definitions. These three research paradigms are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Positivism

Positivism is a research paradigm that was dominant as the research was conducted in the natural sciences. This assumed that 'every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified' (cited Walliman 2001: 15 from Collis and Hussey 2009: 56). Based on this, positivism works with quantitative data and therefore hypothesis is tested with highly structured methodology.

Next, the ontological, epistemological, rhetorical and methodological assumptions have to be explained. The ontological assumptions describe the nature of reality. For business and management research, two aspect are crucial – objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism supposes that social entities 'exists as a meaningful reality external to these social actors concerned with their existence' (cited Crotty 1998 from Saunders et al. 2012: 131). The other aspect, subjectivism suggests that social phenomena are built by the perceptions and followed actions of affected social actors (ibid. 132).

This research philosophy assumes that in terms of ontological assumption (the nature of reality) the reality is objective and singular separated from the researcher, which means that there is only one reality. Next, from an epistemological assumption (theory of knowledge) positivists stress that researcher is independent of that being researched (Collis and Hussey 2009: 58). Then, axiological assumption (role of values) claims that research is free-value and biased. It is needed to stress that positivists believed that the interrelations of the subjects being researched were present before they started their research. Finally, rhetorical assumption defines the writing style which is a very formal style, backed by passive and quantitative words (Collis and Hussey 2009; Gill and Jones 2010 and Saunders et al. 2012).

By and large, positivism is linked with quantitative methods of analysis, structured methodology where the stress is on the quantifiable observations and results in statistical analysis.

Interpetivism

This philosophy emerged together with social sciences as positivism was not an adequate philosophical approach to the researchers that carried out the research outside the natural

sciences. Interpretivism was mainly based on the criticism of positivism that has the following objections. First of all, we cannot make research in social sciences (marketing included) with the assumption that people (actors) are separated and independent from the social context where they exist. Next, positivism has a very structured research design that could bring constraints on the results and overlooked the main findings; interpretivism offers a subjective approach to the researchers who are a part of their research, while, on the other hand, positivism is objective (Collis and Hussey 2009: 56).

As it was pointed out, positivism is objective, while interpretivism is subjective. Thus, this kind of research philosophy stresses the fact that it is crucial to understand the differences between humans in our role of social actors (Gill and Jones 2010; Saunders et al. 2012: 137; Goldkuhl 2012: 137). It is natural that interpretivism is subjective since it works with qualitative data and researcher has to understand also the reality that influences the data and the research. Therefore, positivism focuses on measuring social phenomena, whereas interpretivism strives to understand the complexity of social phenomena backed by subjective understanding of their reality.

Next, it must be described the main philosophical assumptions of interpretivism. First, the ontological assumption sees the reality subjective as seen by participants, as it is constructed by social actors. Moreover, each person has its own perspective of reality and, thus we are encircled by multiple realities (Collis and Hussey 2009: 59). Then, the epistemological assumption sets researcher into the research as one who carries out the research being a part of it. The axiological assumption claims that researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden along with presented biases (Collis and Hussey 2009; Goldkuhl 2012). Finally, the rhetorical assumption, compared with positivism, is informal, the first voice is used together with qualitative terms and limited definitions.

In a nutshell, this research philosophy is used in qualitative research, which is highly subjective and requires the understanding of the motivation of social actors. Thus, the researcher has to adopt emphatic stance (Saunders et al. 2012: 137).

Pragmatism

The alternative to two mentioned research philosophies is pragmatism. But pragmatism, compared to positivism and interpretivism, does not have a theoretical framework. For pragmatists, the most important determinant is the research question (Saunders et al. 2012: 130). Collis and Hussey (2009) point out that pragmatism is not constrained by a single paradigm and it offers to researchers to mix various methods from different paradigms in order to answer their research question. This could be attractive for students, but it is risky for them as well, as they could ignore philosophical debates about the reality and the nature of knowledge. Pragmatism is not linked to any particular philosophy and reality, as Goldkuhl (2012: 139) stresses ‘the essence of a pragmatist ontology is actions and change; humans acting in a world that is in a constant-state of becoming’.

Summary

This paper works with quantitative and qualitative data, therefore, the multiple methods choice was adopted. Pragmatism could be attractive for this purpose; however, it is better to work with structured methodologies. Thus, positivism and interpretivism were selected, positivism for a quantitative part and interpretivism for a qualitative part.

4.2.2 Research Approach

In order to answer the research questions backed by theoretical framework, it is needed to clarify what reasoning is adopted in this thesis, as it works with quantitative and qualitative data. Three main reasoning are used in the research deductive, inductive and abductive. Firstly, there is deduction, where study has a conceptual framework and it is tested by empirical observation and as a result makes a generalisation (from theory to data). Secondly, induction is in the study that develops theory from observation of empirical reality and makes particular outcomes from a general one (from data to theory) (Hussey and Collis 2009: 8). Thirdly, abduction begins with observation and continues with ‘surprising facts’ (Saunders et al. 2012: 145).

In the paper that has a multiple methods research design, there is used combined approach, quantitative and qualitative. For this reason, a theoretical perspective is used in order to provide a direction for the research.

4.3 Nature of Research Design

A number of research textbooks (Saunders et al. 2012; Collis and Hussey 2009; Gill and Jones 2010) identify these main nature of research design (Table 18) – the way how to answer the research questions for the research strategy is a case study (discussed in the next subchapter) with one of the following purpose of study: exploratory study, descriptive study or explanatory study.

Table 18 Purpose of Study

Type of Study	Aim
Exploratory Study	To clarify the understanding of a problem.
Descriptive Study	To gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations.
Explanatory Study	To establish causal relationship between variables. To explain the relationship between variables.
Experimental Study	To examine difficulties in implementing new procedures and techniques in an organization and evaluating the benefits.

Sources: Saunders et al. 2012: 170-172; Collis and Hussey 2009: 82

For this thesis, the exploratory nature was selected, as it strives to explain a phenomenon of conducting social media marketing strategies on specific social media platforms.

4.4 Research Strategy

The next step in the research design is to define a research strategy or methodology. Methodology is defined as ‘an approach to the process of the research encompassing a body of methods’ (Collis and Hussey 2009: 73). This thesis adopted a case study approach. A case study methodology is defined as a study that explores a single phenomenon in defined setting, or within the some context, or with a number of real-time contexts (Saunders et al. 2012: 179; Collis and Hussey 2009: 82). The case study strategy was selected for a number of reasons: it is used in exploratory research and it is suitable for mixed– quantitative and qualitative

methods. This thesis's research focuses on more than one country, and, hence, more than one case is presented. Consequently, multiple cases approach is incorporated, which means that findings across cases are compared.

4.5 Time Horizon

In terms of a time horizon, there are two main research periods. First, the 'snapshot' time horizon – cross-sectional study, which study that focuses on a particular phenomenon at a particular time, while, on the other hand, second, the 'diary' perspective longitudinal study aims at a long-time research that studies change and development (Saunders et al. 2012: 190).

The decision for picking up a cross-sectional approach has been made for the following reasons. Firstly, this thesis does not have the opportunity to provide a long-term research, thus, it is natural to select a cross-sectional approach. Secondly, case studies that used multiple research strategies are cross-sectional. Last but not least, time constrains, in this case several months, do not enable a longitudinal study.

4.6 Research Ethics

Research ethics is a particular thing that every business researcher has to face. As a result, every researcher is responsible for conducting the research in an honest and accurate way, especially in the qualitative research, as the quantitative research has well-defined problems with rigorous empirical investigations (Saunders et al. 2012). It includes these issues: voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality (Collis and Hussey 2009: 45-46). Firstly, marketing or business research is conducted among people and they have to participate in the research on the voluntary basis without financial intentions. Secondly and thirdly, anonymity and confidentiality have to be secured, and participants will not be identified according their opinions.

This research has data from the Internet which raises the same ethical dilemmas compared to the traditional way of gaining data. Researchers have to assure that they follow the ethical norms mentioned earlier. The Internet ethics research will be discussed later in the section of Internet data mining that is defined by Kozinets (2008).

4.7 Research Method

Method is 'technique for collecting and/or analysing data' (Collis and Hussey 2009). As this paper primarily works with quantitative and qualitative data mined from the Internet and social media, it is necessary to define the method that enables gain this kind of data. Marketing research that uses qualitative method is used for understanding needs and wishes of consumers. In the traditional oriented data collection based on 'ethnology' principles, researchers face time-consuming and expensive obstacles (Saunders et al. 2012; Collis and Hussey 2009; Gill and Jones 2010).

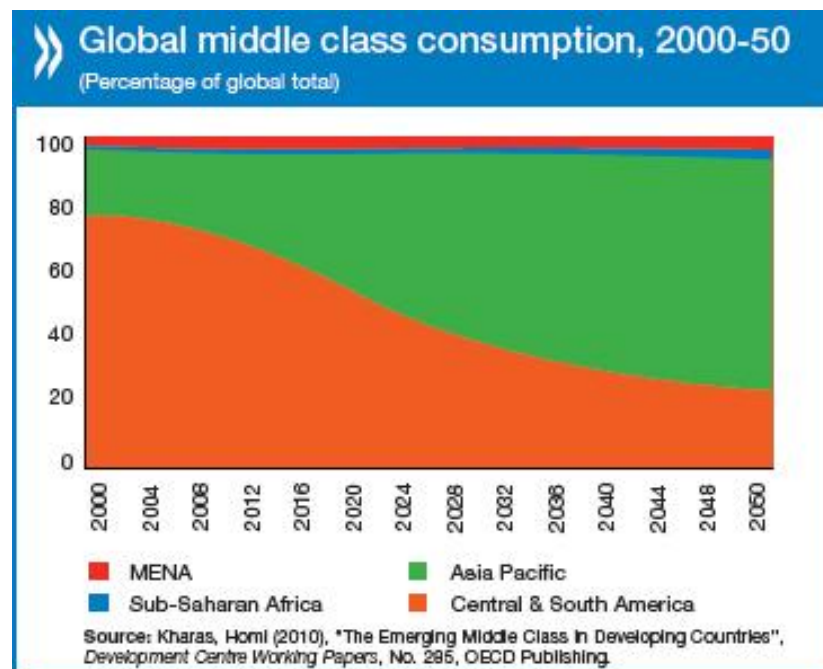
4.7.1 Countries selection and industry selection

According to the structure of master programme and its requirements, more than one East Asian or ASEAN country has to be selected for the master thesis. Because of the various definitions of Asian regions, it is necessary to define them in this paper. The United Nations

(United Nations Statistics Division 2014) divides Asia into five regions: Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia and Western Asia. Although, the scope of teaching covers East Asia and ASEAN countries, India was added as one of three cases in this paper. Author decided to select one country from East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia.

As reported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2011), there will be seven major economies: the People's Republic of China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Thailand that will contribute the most to the Asian GDP growth and they will share 87 per cent of the GDP growth in Asia and 55 per cent of the global GDP growth. This growth is crucial, but the other factor is also important – the growth of the middle class. Based on predictions (ADB 2011; Kharas and Geertz 2010) the share of Asia and the Pacific will be the highest in the world by the 2050 and around the two thirds of the global share (see Figure 16). In other words, China and India 'are expected to account for more than 40 per cent of the projected 55.7 trillion USD in global middle-class consumer spending (Kershner and Huq 2011). Malaysia as a case study is regarded as a one in seven countries that will contribute to the Asian growth (ADB 2011). China and India will share the highest contribution, therefore they are selected for this paper and Malaysia is a case study for Southeast Asia. Additionally, the companies from the premium automotive sector were selected (Audi China, Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia) and their positions in the local markets will be analysed in Chapter Five.

Figure 16 Global middle class consumption, 2000-2050 (Percentage of global total)



Source: Pezzini 2012

4.7.2 Data Collection

The literature review subchapter brought a breakdown of the main activities from the companies' point of view on the social media. According to Schautzer (2011) and his analysis, the main activities will be described and analysed considering the economic point of view. Schautzer (2011) or Hettler (2010) assert that there is no standardized method of measuring the success of social media marketing, however, it could be measured by the features and tabs that are available on social media (Damásio et al. 2012). However, for this

paper, the observation method will be used for collecting the frequency of the used promotional mix tools. As Saunders et al. (2012) suggest observation is 'the systematic observation, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people's behaviour'. As observation is a data collection method that primarily focuses on gathering behaviour of people (Collis and Hussey 2009: 155), the paper seeks to reveal the structure of observed companies how they target specific countries by their social media marketing tools. Social media marketing tools were statistically sampled and analysed according to the defined categories, discussed in the frame of reference (Chapter Three).

4.7.2.1 Online Observation

Because of the fact that the research gains its data from social media, the suitable method was selected according to the latest development in this kind of research. With the emergence of the Internet, there have appeared 'consumer tribes' (Cova et al. 2007) that share their opinions in the online area. Consequently, Robert Kozinets (2002; 2010; 2012; 2006; Saunders et al. 2012) brought a new term in data collection 'netnography'. Netnography is a combined word of ethnography and the Internet (Kozinets 2012), which describes ethnography online that will be used also for observing companies activities.

Netnography has six overlapping steps (Kozinets 1999; Kozinets 2002; Kozinets 2010):

1. Research planning
2. Entrée
3. Data Collection
4. Interpretation
5. Research representation
6. Ensuring ethical standards

According to these six steps, researchers have to provide the following kind of actions. Firstly, research planning includes a specific marketing research question and, consequently, finding proper online spaces that match research questions.

Secondly, entrée means that researchers have to learn about online areas that covers the research interest, in particular, forums, groups and for this research companies' official pages on social media. Then, the researcher has to focus more on relevant segment, frequent posting, and bigger amount of discrete message posters, detailed data and interactions between users (Kozinets 1998; Kozinets 2010: 65).

Thirdly, data collection is the phase when the marketing researcher collects data in two ways – the researcher directly copies conversation data from the website or the researcher inscribes the observation of the community (Kozinets 2010).

Fourthly, data analysis covers frequently the phase with data collection at same time. Because of the fact that this research works with qualitative data and netnography is a method based on online data, the researchers have to contextualize their data (Kozinets 2002; Saunders et al. 2012).

Fifthly, trustworthy interpretation is different from the ethnography's term validity, because netnography is mining data directly from a textual discourse, while ethnography from an oral discourse. The main problem could be the identification of social media users, where the identity is hardly to verify, whereas traditional ethnology requires the verification of persons that are in observation (Saunders et al. 2012; Collis and Hussey 2009), in our case companies and in some forms of online PR activities, such as maintenance of digital reputation – persons, or other online PR tools.

Sixthly, Kozinets (2002: 68) stresses that marketing researchers are obliged to follow two main questions: are online spaces private or public and what constitutes 'informed consents' (ibid.). As this paper's research operates within social media platforms and official corporate webs, the first question could be answered that they are public places. The other one requires confidentiality and anonymity for users and their opinions shared on social media. In order to conduct ethical research in the online area, Kozinets (ibid. 69) suggestions are to follow: disclose the presence, affiliations and intentions to online community members, the researcher guarantees confidentiality and anonymity for observed users, incorporation of feedback received from online members community.

Finally, the procedure, which was not included in the six steps data mining process, was members check, albeit it is necessary to do this process in order to provide a credible research. The main reason for member checks, in this case - followers of social media fan pages, is the difference between ethnography and netnography, where we are not in the face-to-face contact with actors. Kozinets (2002) gives three reasons for additional members check. Firstly, the researcher can obtain additional data that could reveal consumer motivation and needs that were not described at forums. Secondly, this process could enhance 'the contentious ethical concern' (ibid. 69). Thirdly, members check can reveal ongoing trends in consumer desires and needs. Last but not least, this process is more effective, compare to traditional ethnography, for two reasons, it is less time-consuming than ethnography, as netnography is conducted in the online area. The other reason, researchers can discover tastes, needs, wishes or desires quickly, as consumers could be contacted online rather than ethnographer's face-to-face presence, which they cannot provide at home or in their office.

For this paper, the structured observation is selected. Because of the nature of this paper and the defined the frame of reference, the research is based on the data collection, where the researcher adopted a detached stance. As this research also adopted structured observation the concern will be quantifying the behaviour (Saunders et al. 2012: 355) of the studied cases and their activities on social media. The structure observation has its advantages and disadvantages, especially on the Internet, where observers do not suffer from intrusiveness and possible observer bias (according to Hewson et al. 2003 from Saunders et al. 2012: 356). Next, structured observation is not only suitable for observing the frequency of events, but also observing the relationship between the activities. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is the fact that the research results are often 'limited to over action or surface indicators from which the observer must make inferences' (ibid. 359), and data mining is a slow and expensive process.

4.7.3 Data Analysis

The process of analysis of sampled data will follow according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, based on the work of Miles and Huberman 1994). It is set that data analysis has primarily three sub-processes: data reduction, data display and verifying conclusions.

This stage covers a process of selecting specific and usable data for summarising and simplifying. Sample data are gained from observation, then, follow coding and categorising. The second stage data display means organising into diagrams and visual displays (ibid.). This paper is a multiple case study which means comparing data in the graphical form. The last stage is an outcome of the first two stages is verified in the conclusion.

5 Findings

This chapter will present the collected data of each case. First, Audi's promotional mix will be presented based on the collected data from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong; followed by the findings from BMW India and at the end of the chapter Mercedes-Benz Malaysia.

5.1 Cases 1&2: Audi China and Audi Hong Kong

5.1.1 Company overview: Audi and its marketing goals

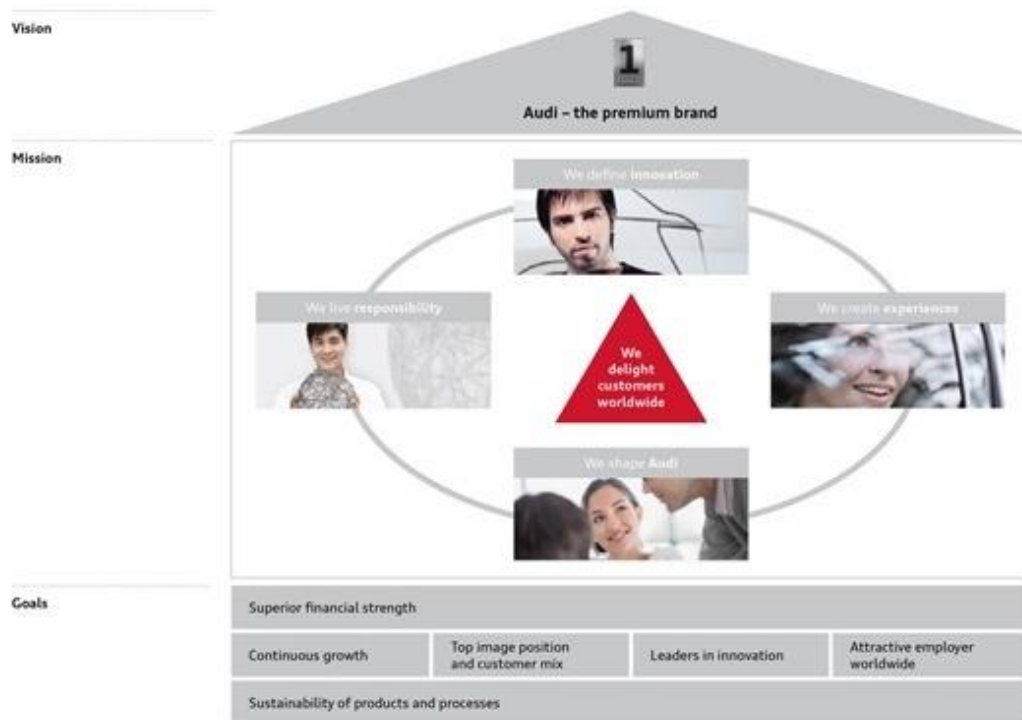
Audi is one of the most popular foreign brands in China, where the brand is known under its Chinese name - 奥迪 (Àodí). According to the Digital Luxury Group² (2012; 2013) which conducts research annually, reveals Audi has been picked as the most desired luxury brand in China for years 2012 and 2013, before brands such as BMW, Chanel, Estée Lauder or Louis Vuitton.

Audi has entered China's market as part of the Volkswagen group in 1991. At the moment Audi operates two production plants (Foshan in Guangdong province and Changchun in Jilin province) under the name FAW-Volkswagen Automotive Company (FAW-VW), and there are equity holders of joint venture as follows: Volkswagen – 20 per cent, Audi AG – 10 per cent and FAW 60 per cent (Audi 2013: 145). Audi was the first global premium car brand that entered into China's market at the beginning of the 1990s. As a result, Audi contributed to the whole performance of Volkswagen perfectly, as Volkswagen group has been the most successful car brand in China for several years and Audi has become the most prestigious luxury brand overall (Digital Luxury Group 2013; GTSpirit 2013; Young 2013).

In terms of marketing, Audi claims to be the leader of the premium car segment. Therefore, the company has set the marketing motto and advertising slogan 'Vorsprung durch Technik' ['Advancement through technology' / 'Progress through Technology'] since 1982. 'Vorsprung durch Technik' reflects Audi's ambition and its self-perception as 'playing a decisive role in defining the shape of future mobility' (Audi 2013: 180). Furthermore, Audi defines its marketing within corporate strategy in its vision, mission and goals (Figure 17; Audi 2014a). Firstly, the vision 'Audi – the premium brand' is set by the goal of becoming the world leading producer of premium cars. Secondly, the motto 'Vorsprung durch Technik' is based on the brand value sportiness, progressiveness and sophistication. Thirdly, goals are set as follows: superior financial strength; continuous growth; top image and customer mix; leaders in innovation; attractive employer worldwide; and sustainability of products and process. Among these goals, two are important for this paper: continuous growth and top image and customer mix. With regard to Audi's goals, the corporation has stressed for several years that China belongs to its key markets (Audi 2013; Audi 2012). Last but not least, top image and customer mix should be enhanced through improving brand's image also towards the public.

² Digital Marketing Group listed luxury brands according to frequent online searches from Baidu and Google that covered more than 680 million searchers.

Figure 17 Audi's marketing goals



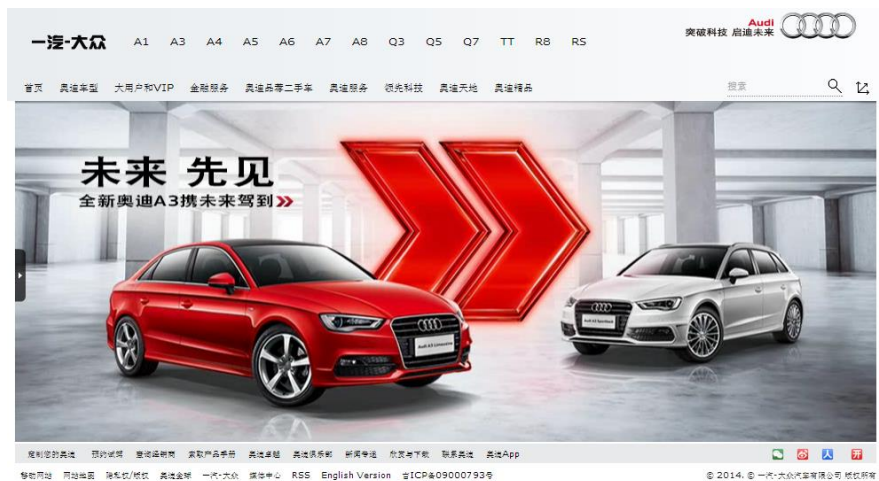
Source: Audi 2014a

Not only does Audi cover the People's Republic of China, but also the PRC's two special administrative regions Hong Kong and. The main difference of these three markets is the fact that they have three official websites three social media marketing approaches and different social media platforms for each administrative entity. As a result, the PRC and Hong Kong were selected as two cases, as they operate within two different online areas. Other reasons were that, on the one hand, the PRC legislative framework highly restricts foreign social media, and, on the other hand, Hong Kong represents markets with the access to Western social media.

5.1.2 Case 1: Audi China social media marketing in the PRC

Audi as the standard international corporation in China has its official website in two languages – modern standard Chinese and English. The main reason why Audi has also English is the fact that China is home to a huge group of expats (around 240,000) (Durnin 2014). However, in terms of social media direct links, there is a difference between the English and Chinese version, only the Chinese version contains direct links to company's official social media channels (Figure 18).

Figure 18 The Audi China official Website



Source: Audi 2014b

The direct link is quite important for social media users, as it allows them straightforwardly open social media platforms from the corporate channel. The official website offers four direct links to social media, which are as follows: WeChat (need to scan a QR code), Weibo, Renren and Kaixin. Apart from this corporate list, Audi has also its own official TV channel on Youku and two sites on PBSN LinkedIn and Dajie. Although Audi China demonstrates that its presence on China's social media is ubiquitous, the reality can be different. According to the latest trends (McCarthy 2014), luxury brands in China are reducing their activities and focus on only the main social media platforms, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Mobile social network services

Wechat/ Weixin (微信 Wēixìn)

Audi has its own marketing channel on WeChat, which is primarily mobile SM application. It is disputable to what extent WeChat can be called a social media platform, as it is defined as a mobile text voice messaging application. WeChat is the fastest growing application for communicating in China and it is broadly used by companies (Incitez China 2014). Moreover, WeChat applications – WeChat Friends and WeChat Moment have the biggest share among Chinese mobile users, 25.6 per cent and 23.4 per cent respectively (Sida 2014), which represent around 400 million users (Cecilia 2014). In China, both most successful social media, either WeChat or Weibo are used by white-collar workers mainly.

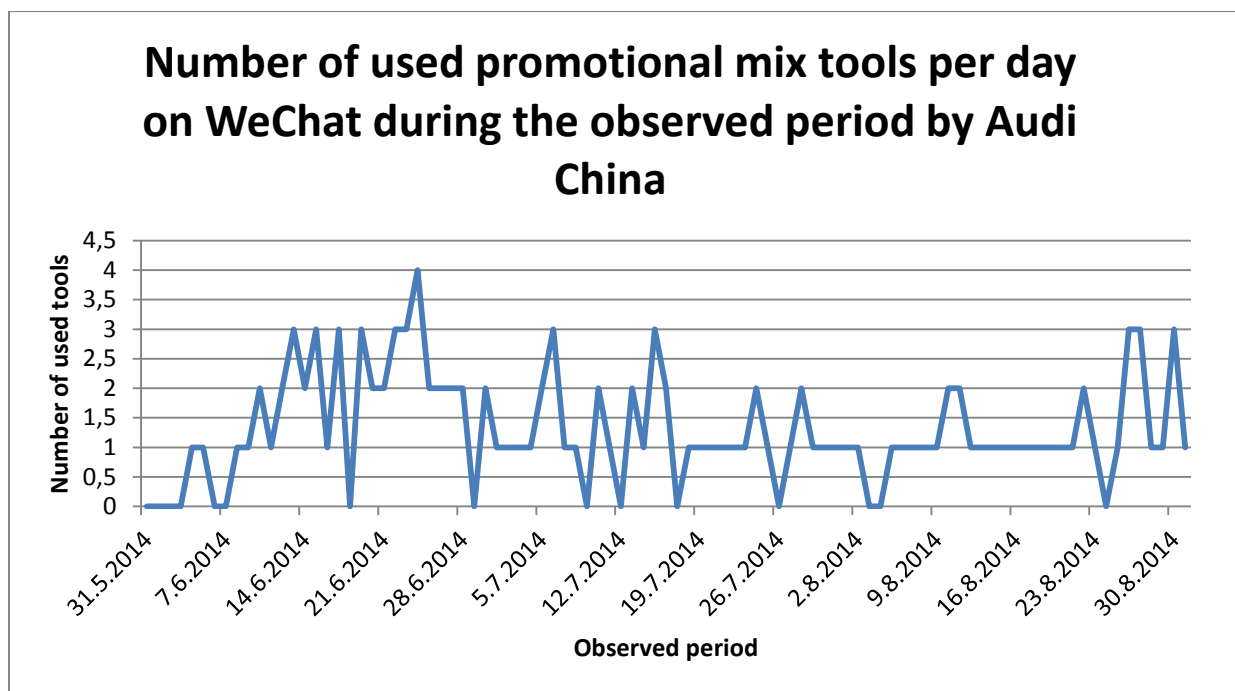
The number of fans who has Audi China subscription is not available to the public. However, during the observation, Audi China posted via non-branch content tool information on the number of all WeChat and Weibo user base number, which exceeded 1,500,000 fans and subscribers (Audi 2014d). Based on the observation from the Audi China Weibo official fan page, it has around 1,316,968 fans (Audi 2014c). Thus, WeChat account could have more than 200,000 subscriptions. Subscription can be achieved via the Audi official web site, where the QR code is provided for WeChat users, or it can be found via WeChat ID number (see Attachments I and II). In netizens point of view, they can always reach Audi services via information attached under posts via direct phone number. Moreover, Audi stresses the importance of its WeChat account as every post has encouraged the customer's curiosity by the statement:

Audi provides different personalized experience for every valued customer. Whether you are a registered Audi user or Audi first-visit enthusiasts, we will do everything to meet your needs, so you can enjoy the Audi extraordinary courtesy.

Source: Audi 2014d

The activity of Audi China on WeChat was regular and posts could be reached by two ways. First, WeChat users can launch a subscription, or, second, see posts via the history of posting. As can be seen from Figure 19, the average number of posts was more than one per day during the observed period. However, there were some periods with a higher number of posts, especially, during promotional and sponsorship campaigns. Figure 19 suggests that the higher numbers of posts were generated during June and the first half of July. This was caused by the FIFA World Cup 2014, when Audi China published various promotional mix tools, which were directly or indirectly linked with this event.

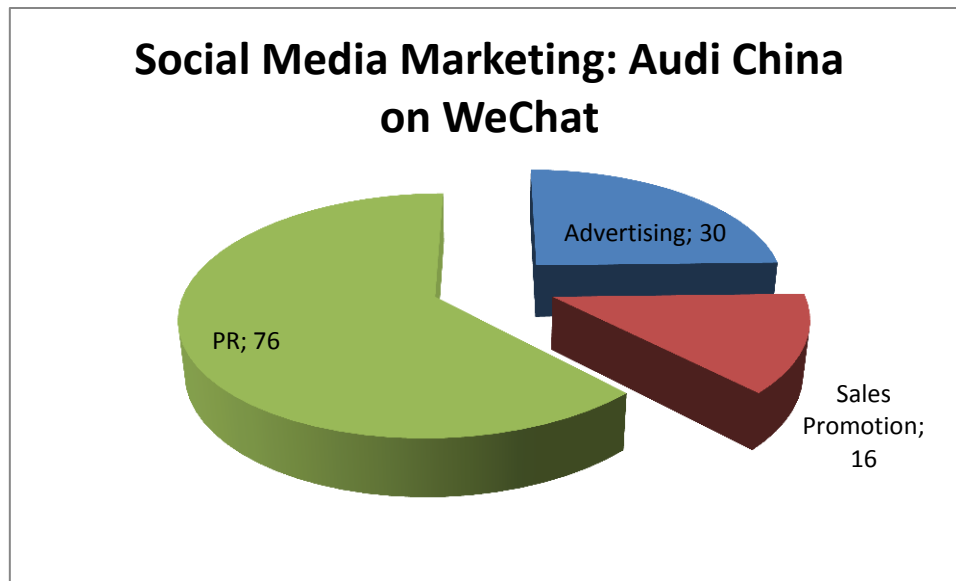
Figure 19 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on WeChat during the observed period by Audi China



Source: Author's compilation

Next, Figure 20 gives the overview of the used promotional mix tools during the researched period. From the first sight, it is evident that PR played a major role, identified in 76 occasions and accounts for 62 per cent of all used promotional mix tools on WeChat. The second most used tools were advertising as it was identified in 30 occasions and accounts for 25 per cent. Finally, sales promotion was used sporadically in 16 occasions accounting for 13 per cent.

Figure 20 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on WeChat



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, advertising was identified as the second most used tools in 30 occasions (25 per cent of all promotional mix activities on WeChat). Table 19 suggests that informative advertising with rational tools represent the majority of all advertising activities, identified in 27 occasions, and accounts for 90 per cent of all advertising used tools. This activity was dominant as Audi China used it mainly for introducing new models to the China's market. Audi China was introducing models Audi A8, Audi A8L or spare parts (see Figure 21) via posts (similar to blogs). Apart from informative/rational tools, Audi China used informative advertising with mixed tools in one case that accounts for 3 per cent. In this case, videos and photos were designed for WeChat users with rational and emotional appeals that Audi R8 is able to protect persons (Figure 22), in this occasion a young lady against dangerous situations. Finally, the last tool from advertising was persuasive rational tool, used twice which represents 6 per cent within advertising. This tool was used for convincing customers in order to make a purchase at that time due to limited editions with special pricing. Apart from the focus of advertising activities, it is necessary to mention the way they are published. Via WeChat posts, netizens are linked with the advertising contents that very often are similar to blogs. They were published with text informing about the promoted items, and also prices backed commonly with pictures and from time to time also with videos.

Table 19 Overview of advertising activities on WeChat by Audi China

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	27	0	1	0
Persuasive	2	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	30			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 21 Example: Informative/rational advertising used on WeChat by Audi China

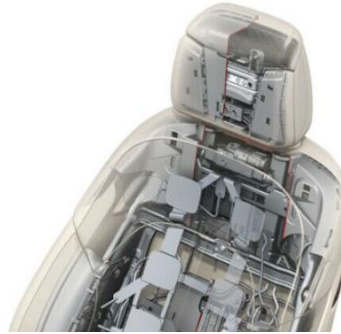
精雕细琢，独一无二——新奥迪A8L尊贵配置

2014-08-27 奥迪

有人说，尊贵是不计成本的选材，尊贵是无以复加的工艺，尊贵是至臻精美的装潢。在新的时代，尊贵将向何方进化？奢华会被怎样注解？当你打开新奥迪A8L车门的一刻，也许就能发现答案。

坐享明日奢华

新奥迪A8L的车内座椅，不仅拥有精致的设计和精湛的做工，在其低调的外表之下，还隐藏着诸多复杂的科技。



Source: Audi 2014d

Figure 22 Example: Informative/mixed advertising used on WeChat by Audi China

超难懂的奥迪广告，你知道是什么意思了吗？



Source: Audi 2014d

Secondly, sales promotion was used irregularly, but identified in 16 occasions that accounts for 12 per cent of all used promotional mix tools on WeChat. This kind of promotional mix tool is advised by marketers to use especially on WeChat as it is a suitable platform for it. However, Audi China utilized only one activity during the observation – prize (games; Figure 23). Games were used twelve times and it was the only activity from sales promotions, as other forms of sales promotion were not found.

As was stressed before, the frequency of posts was higher during the FIFA World Cup 2014 in June and July 2014. Thanks to this event, Audi as a German corporation sophisticatedly pointed out the German success over the whole tournament backed by games. Games were in the form of quizzes with published questions, or encouraged netizens to share various pictures. Audi China provided opportunities to win promotional gifts, such as cups, T-shirts and etc.

Table 20 Overview of sales promotion activities on WeChat by Audi China

Elements of Sales Promotion	
Advertising specialities	0
Cash Refunds	0
Prize (contests, sweepstakes, games)	16 (games)
Coupons	0
Cross-Promotions	0
Free Trials	0
Frequency Programs	0
Patronage Awards	0
Point-of-Purchase Displays and Demonstrations	0
Premiums	0
Price Packs	0
Price Refund Offers	0
Product Warranties	0
Samples	0
Tie-in Promotions	0
Total	16

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 23 Example: Sales Promotion tool - Prize (game) tool used on WeChat by Audi China

球星的名字，回复给奥迪，全部通关者即有机会赢取精美好礼！6月17日—6月25日引爆头脑风暴，畅享巴西盛宴！



参与方式：

- 1、根据下图所示，从兰帕德，杰拉德，斯内德中选出图中球星的名字并回复，勇闯第一关；
- 2、回答正确即可进入下一关（共6关）；
- 3、回答错误将收到与活动无关的奥迪资讯，请重新答题。

奖项设置：

幸运球迷奖3名：每人获得**热血足球纪念U盘1个**。（获奖者将从全部竞猜正确的粉丝中随机抽选）

Source: Audi 2014d

Thirdly, the most heaving used tool from the promotional mix was PR, identified in 76 occasions and accounts for 62 per cent on WeChat. Furthermore, Table 21 reveals that traditional PR elements were dominant as they were identified in 43 occasions accounting for 57 per cent of all used PR tools. While, on the other hand, online PR tools were used 33 times

and this accounts for 43 per cent of all used PR mix. During the research period Audi China did not use a very colourful PR tools. As can be seen from Table 21, they used only four tools: events on 17 occasions, accounting for 22 per cent of all PR tools; then the most used tool was sponsorship identified in 26 occasions, accounting for 34 per cent; branch content tool was used sporadically in 8 occasions, accounting for 11 per cent, and, the last tool was non-branch content identified in 25 occasions and accounting for 33 per cent, respectively.

Table 21 Overview of public relations activities on WeChat by Audi China

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	17	Branch Content	8
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	25
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	26	X	0
Sub-Total	43		33
Total	76		

Source: Author's compilation

First of all, it is obvious that sponsorship was a dominant tool. This kind of PR was used for promoting sport events throughout the whole observed period with the special focus on sports events backed by Audi China within the PRC. Then sponsorship served as a tool of identifying sports clubs and supporting local hospitals in Shanghai. The second most used tool were events, where WeChat posts were specially designed for this PR tool. Event tool announced local venues backed by Audi China, such as seminars, or sport activities of Audi.

On the other hand, online PR activities were not so dominant. Firstly, branch content posts were utilized in forms of longer articles that informed about the current trend in Audi's development mainly backed by photos or videos. Finally, non-branch tools were used abundantly owing to the FIFA World Cup. Audi China published a number of articles on the success of the German players and their route to the final match on a regular basis. Apart from this, non-branch tools were presented on reality shows and blogs of successful people. As shown below, Josep Guardiola (current manager of Bayern Munich; Figure 24) speaks about the success generally that is not linked with Audi.

Figure 24 Example: online PR non-branch content tool used on WeChat by Audi China



Source: Audi 2014d

Note: Josep Guardiola speaks about the success

WeChat is a different social media platform compared to the other presented social media. By downloading it, the user also confirms to the use of its data. Thus, in the foreseeable future, the marketing on social media will be closer to the Web 3.0, when the devices will generate data automatically and adjust a personal approach for each consumer.

Microblogs

Weibo (微博)

Audi has its microblogging official fan-page on Weibo. As Twitter is blocked in the PRC (WebSitePulse 2013), companies naturally conduct their social media marketing on Weibo. Weibo has become a dominant player on the Chinese Internet among social media. During the second quarter of 2014, the group of active users on a monthly basis accounts for 156.6 million, an increase of 30 per cent over year; while the group of daily active users accounts for 69.7 million, an increase of 32 per cent over year (CIW Team 2014). The users of Weibo are often consumers who earn more than 8,000 RMB (around 1,000 Euro) and they live in first tier cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou (Chiu et al. 2012). Moreover, most of Weibo users graduated from university – more than 70 per cent and more than 53 per cent of users are younger than 24 years (Sabrina 2014).

Based on the research data, one official channel of microblogging site was identified in the PRC of Audi. Audi has its official microblogging channel of Weibo, where it has around 1,316,968 fans (this number could have grown meanwhile). The fan page contains basic information about Audi (Figure 25), and, moreover, it provides also contact details of customer service, and, the official website also promotes the Weibo official fan page as one of its social media channels in the PRC.

Figure 25 The Audi China Weibo official fan page

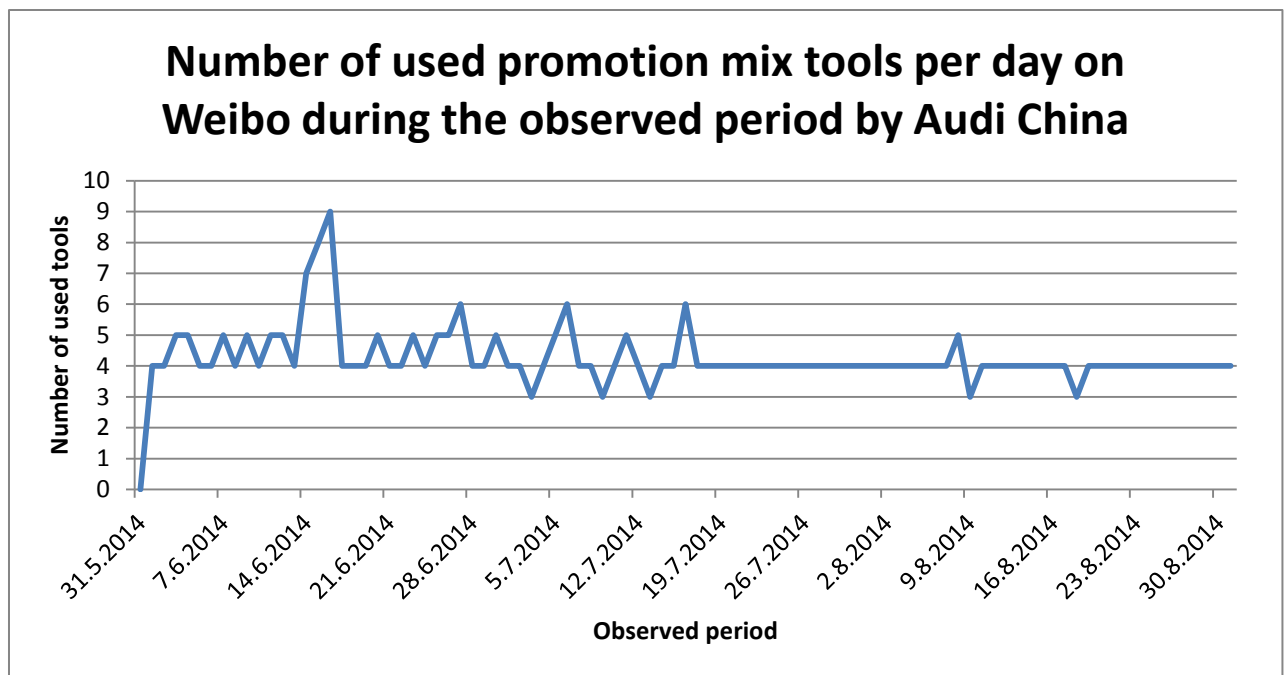


Source: Audi 2014c

This social media channel, the microblogging site, is active on a daily basis. As can be seen in the next subchapters, other official channels are not very active Chinese netizens and for some of them completely interrupted their activities compared to Weibo. However, Weibo is the most active channel of Audi China social media marketing platforms. According to the Figure 26, Audi China was active throughout the whole observed period of the thesis research. The outcome is that Audi's marketers generated some content every day, except of the very first day. The average activity was about 4 posts per day. Apart from average days, there were only a couple of days that generated higher activity. In fact, it was a period in June (see Figure 26), when the company conducted a PR action – Audi Sport Night, backed by the corporation.

Besides the daily frequency of generating contents on Weibo by Audi China, the marketing strategy set a daily plan to posting micro-blogs. Based on the observation, the official micro-blogging site generated four posts in the accurate time periods during the day divided into four time periods and the micro-blogs posts were generated in the following time sequenced first around at 11:00 am, 12:00 am, 18:00 pm, and the last post at 21:00 pm, respectively. These times were the most frequent, but there were some deviations, but overall the official fan page was generating posts around these four time points during the day. From this daily strategy set by Audi China it can be seen that Audi's marketers are trying to reach the Weibo audience on a regular basis.

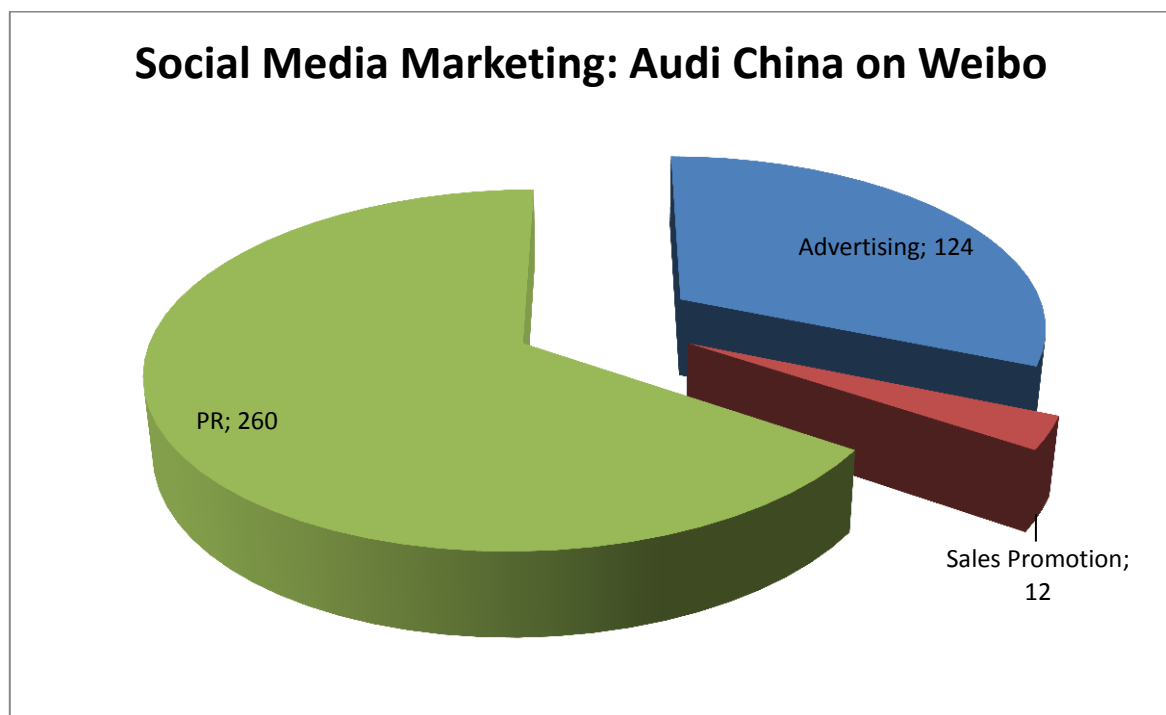
Figure 26 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Weibo during the observed period by Audi China



Source: Author's compilation

Social media marketing of Audi China on Weibo was mainly based on PR activities, then advertising and a very small proportion were from sales promotion. As can be seen from Figure 27, overall 396 promotional mix tools were identified during the observation. Public relations activities account for 66 per cent taken part in 260 occasions; advertising accounts for 31 per cent taken part in 124 occasions; and sales promotions accounts for 3 per cent taken part in 12 occasions.

Figure 27 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Weibo



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, advertising activity was the second most used tool from the promotional mix behind public relations. The observation revealed the use of advertising tools in 124 occasions accounting for 31 per cent of the whole social media marketing on Weibo. Table 22 provides the illustration how advertising during the research was used.

Table 22 Overview of advertising activities on Weibo by Audi China

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	67	9	0	5
Persuasive	13	4	0	0
Reminder	14	5	0	1
Reinforcement	0	6	0	0
Total	124			

Source: Author's compilation

First of all, it is obvious that the main tool, used in 67 occasions and accounts for 54 per cent of all advertising tools. Informative advertising with rational appeal was used mainly for introducing new models to the PRC's market. This tool was used for introducing new models or parts into the PRC's market. The example shows us the informative rational advertising tool (see Figure 28), where Audi China promoted its new model Q3 with its special characteristics. Not only was informative rational tool used for promoting new models, but also for promoting a new or upgraded parts of Audi, in particular, its led lights on new models. Rational emotional were used in videos with emotional appeal that stressed a luxurious status of new presented models. Next, informative endorser was used only in 5 cases accounts for 4 per cent of all advertising tools; however, they play an important role as an appeal from experts or celebrities. The given example below (Figure 29) shows that two scientists, Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek, revealed the advantages of the security system installed in Audi A8 in their research paper.

Persuasive tools were used with rational and emotional appeals. Persuasive tools with rational appeal was identified in 13 occasions which accounts for 11 per cent of advertising, and persuasive with emotional appeal was identified in 4 occasions and accounts for 3 per cent, respectively. Persuasive advertising was used for special offers within a limited time period that strived to persuade customers to make a right choice during the offered time.

Reminders were used for maintaining customer relations, as they informed where to buy it and to contact local dealers of Audi. Reminders with rational appeal were identified within 14 cases accounts for 11 per cent of advertising and reminders with emotional appeal in 5 cases account for 4 per cent of advertising, respectively. Next, reminder endorser was identified only in one case, accounting for one per cent. For this reason, the example was picked and shown (Figure 30). It can be seen that it is enhanced by the German celebrity (footballer) Manuel Neuer with two models Audi Q7 and Audi RS6. It serves as a reminder in order to keep products in mind and endorsed by a celebrity.

The last tool that was found was reinforcement, as it convinced the current owners of Audi that they made a good decision buying this car with emotional appeal. This tool was used in 6 cases and accounts for 5 per cent of advertising.

Figure 28 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on Weibo

#奥迪科技#全新奥迪Q3重塑时尚潮流，形成全新设计语言——强健有力的车身线条、标志性的单框进气格栅、扁平的横向镀铬条、创新结构的LED尾灯等一系列创新设计，让TA不只成为你俘获路人艳羡目光的终极利器，更成为这个时代美学风格的全新代言！预约试驾请点击：<http://t.cn/RvO4OqE>



7-6 11:00 Via 微博 weibo.com

👍(35) | Forward(38) | Favorite | Comment(18)

Source: Audi 2014c

Figure 29 Example: Informative/endorser advertising used by Audi China on Weibo

#奥迪科技#国外媒体报道了两位科学家Charlie Miller和Chris Valasek的研究报告，奥迪A8车系是在售车型中最难被黑客远程攻陷的。很多车型搭载的高科技网络都可能被攻击并夺取控制权。而在A8车内，信息处理区域与方向盘等物理零件有着很好的分隔，黑客极难夺取车辆控制权，车辆有着极高安全保障。



Source: Audi 2014c

Figure 30 Example: Reminder/endorser advertising used by Audi China on Weibo

#激情共享#诺伊尔，奥迪Q7，奥迪RS6组成的“英雄联盟”！



7-6 23:00 Via 微博 weibo.com | Report

👍(93) | Forward(261) | Favorite | Comment(49)

Source: Audi 2014c

Secondly, Audi China utilized sales promotions only in 12 occasions (3 per cent of the total share). The aim of sales promotion is to ‘encourage the purchase of sale of a product or service (Kotler and Keller 2012). However, this kind of promotional tool is utilized from time to time. Audi China utilized only games as they motivated Weibo users to participate and win Audi promotional gifts. The given example (see Figure 31) illustrates a possibility to win tickets to attend ‘Audi innovation laboratory’. As Audi China did not use any tools of integration of customer, it is a very unique opportunity to be engaged in the development process through sales promotion prizes.

Table 23 Overview of sales promotion activities on Weibo by Audi China

Elements of Sales Promotion	
Advertising specialities	0
Cash Refunds	0
Prize (contests, sweepstakes, games)	12 (games)
Coupons	0
Cross-Promotions	0
Free Trials	0
Frequency Programs	0
Patronage Awards	0
Point-of-Purchase Displays and Demonstrations	0
Premiums	0
Price Packs	0
Price Refund Offers	0
Product Warranties	0
Samples	0
Tie-in Promotions	0
Total	12

Source: Author’s compilation

Figure 31 Example: Sales Promotion tool - prize (game) tool used on Weibo by Audi China

酷热的夏天，如果你和烤肉之间只差一撮孜然，那你和创新之间的距离是什么？6月6号下午6点半，@奥迪创新实验室 将在清华科技园阳光厅和大家亲切交流，拉近创新梦想距离！届时，@徐小平 将携跨界才女@查可欣 和旗下弟子悉数登场。关注“奥迪创新实验室”微信，即有机会赢得6月6号活动门票一张！



6-5 15:03 Via 微博 weibo.com (23) | Forward(138) | Favorite | Comment(101)

Source: Audi 2014c

During the observation, some discrepancies were found between sales promotion and advertising. One of the sales promotion tools: free trials, which could motivate potential buyers to buy via trying product. Audi China actively promoted free trials on social media by advertising. Free trial were not included into sales promotions, as trials were advertised together with products, while the key goal of posts in all identified cases was to provide

information about the promoted product. Thus, if customers wish, then they can contact their nearest dealer and arrange a free trial of a product.

The main problem of sales promotion in the luxury segment and especially through media is a very sensitive area. Although it is advised to use it, the official fan page for the whole PRC market probably does not have capacity to cover the whole territory. Thus, local subsidiaries would be encouraged to use it, through social media as well and on their Weibo accounts. Moreover, local subsidiaries have often own Weibo accounts and they are engaging in the discussions, and they offer directly free trials.

Thirdly, Table 24 illustrates the breakdown of PR activities conducted on Weibo by Audi China on its official fan page. The breakdown suggests that traditional PR activities were identified in 19 cases, which accounts for 74 per cent of all used PR tools, while, on the other hand, paradoxically, online PR activities were used in 67 occasions, which accounts for 26 per cent of total PR share.

Table 24 Overview of public relations activities on Weibo by Audi China

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	81	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	11
Events	29	Branch Content	9
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	33
News	8	Support via Social Media	4
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	10
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	75	X	0
Sub-Total	193		67
Total	260		

Source: Author's compilation

Traditional PR elements were dominant because of the following reasons. The most used PR activity was PR advertising (81 occasions and 31 per cent of all used PR tools). During the quarterly observation, Audi China was continuously conducting the image campaign of the brand – advertising. The campaign was targeted at brands and not at specific models or services. This tool used by Audi China is typical for it: short statements that reflect the brand motto and the luxurious image backed by photos (Figure 32) that reflect Audi's motto and its luxurious status. Apparently, this tool was used for enhancing the image of the whole brand as a value-addition.

The second most used tool was sponsorship, used in 75 occasions, accounting for 29 per cent of all used PR tools. Sponsorship is a specific tool, in particular for luxury brands as they could gain a better image by supporting sport or arts. Audi China, via this tool, visible showed its activities as a sponsor of mainly European football clubs, such as Bayern Munich and athletes, such as Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. This sponsorship is linked with a very high popularity of footballers and European clubs that are extremely popular in China

and on Weibo (Lukman 2013). Thus, Audi China logically was trying to use its sponsorships activities with athletes and football clubs on its Weibo fan page channel.

Next, the activities events accounts for 11 per cent and news accounts for 3 per cent represented only a minor use. Audi China used Weibo for announcing events that were run by Audi within various locations in the PRC. Finally, news was utilized for press releases.

Online PR activities were identified only in 26 per cent of all PR activities, and they were used occasionally compared to other tools from the promotional mix. Non-branch content tools were used, as it was identified in 33 occasions, which accounts for 13 per cent. This tool was mainly used for two reasons. First, Audi China used non-branch content tool as a tool for celebrating the German football team success at the World Cup in 2014. Second, non-branch content micro-blogs were used for promoting a reality show with successful Chinese entrepreneurs. One of the most powerful tools in the online environment, electronic word of mouth, is used by Audi China also very occasionally, identified only in 11 cases that accounts for 4 per cent only, when micro-blogs were shared via the official fan page. The rest of used tools were identified only in a few cases and their use could be marked as very sporadically. Social online integration was identified in 10 occasions and accounts for 4 per cent of all used PR tools, branch specific content in 9 occasions and accounts for 3 per cent of all PR tools, and support via social media only in 4 occasions and accounts for 2 per cent.

From Table 24 it can be seen that maintenance of digital reputation was not found. It could be explained by the notice available under discussion that the content could be moderated, and thus, negative posts could be deleted, as the primary initiative is in the netizens hand, and maintenance of digital reputation is the reply to the negative post.

Figure 32 Example: Traditional PR advertising tool used by Audi China on Weibo



Source: Audi 2014c

Figure 33 Example: Traditional PR Sponsorship tool used by Audi China on Weibo



Source: Audi 2014c

Social Network Sites

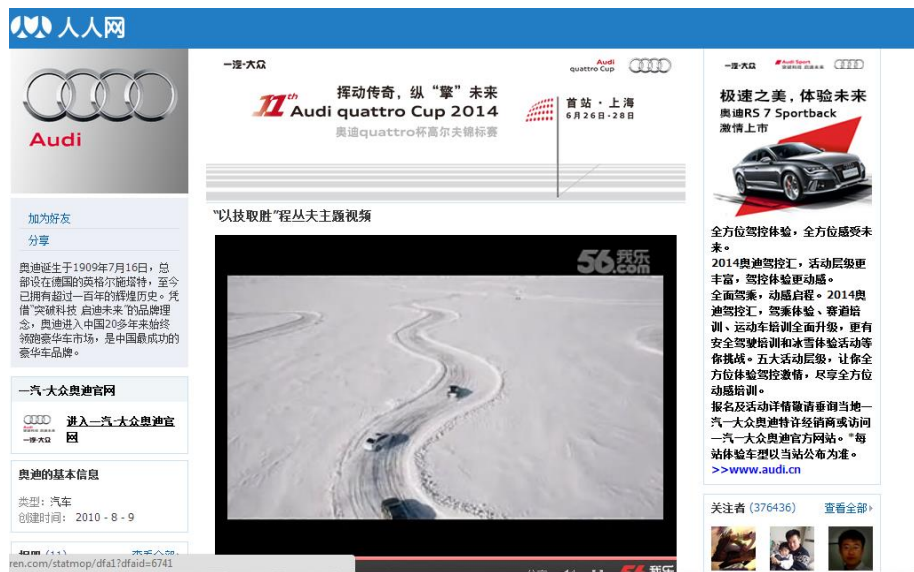
Audi China official declared to conduct social media marketing on social network sites within the PRC. However, during the researched period there were no posts, but just before launching the research, two social networks cancelled their activities. Although there were no findings during the researched period, data can be provided from three months before the Audi's social networks were closed and give an overview of social media marketing activities for illustration.

Renren (人人)

At the moment the world's most popular social network site, Facebook, has been blocked since 2009 in the PRC (WebSitePulse 2013), however, companies conduct their social media marketing on Chinese SNSs as Renren and Kaixin. Renren (人人网 Rénrénwǎng – Everyone's Website) is a social media platform mainly for middle-school users and white collar users with a number of approximately 210 million users as of 31 March 2014 (Incitez China 2014), but only around 54 million are active (Roberg 2014b). Although Renren has a relatively vast user base of white collars, who could be potential targets of companies from premium segment, it has faced a very sharp competition with Weibo and mobile social networks WeChat, mainly, and marketers do not consider this social media platform as popular (Roberg 2014).

Audi has its own official SNS channel, which has 376,436 fans. The official channel was activated on 9 September 2010. The main page contains information about Audi (Figure 34) without a direct link to the official web page, which is also promoted on the official Audi's webpage.

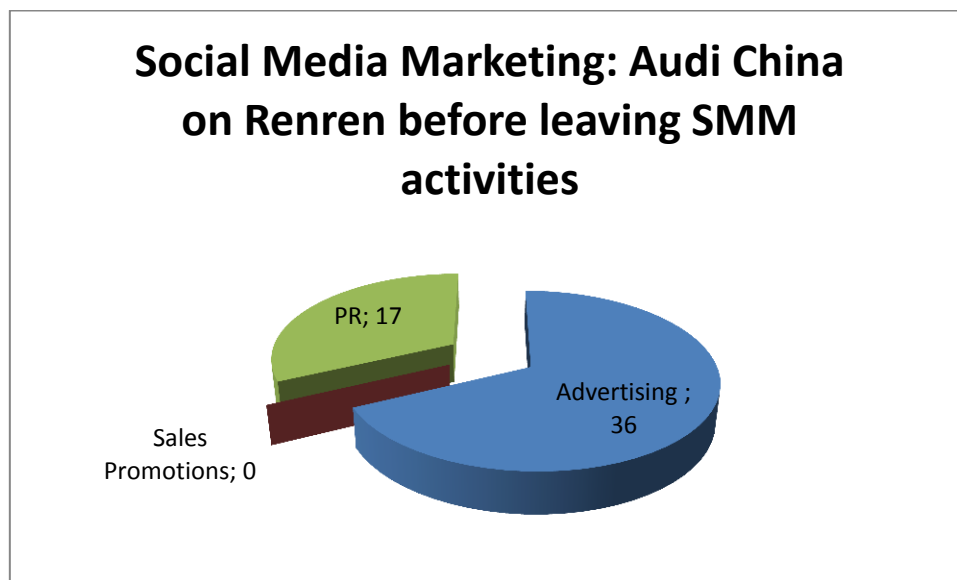
Figure 34 The Audi China Renren fan page



Source: Audi 2014e

Despite the fact that during the researched period this channel did not post any promotional tools, the period was set between January and March. During this period, the channel published 53 posts during this period. As can be seen from Figure below, Audi China before shutting down its activities used Renren for advertising and PR. During the three months, advertising was used heavily in 36 cases that accounts for 68 per cent, while PR was identified in 17 cases that accounts for 32 per cent. Sales promotions were not identified.

Figure 35 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Renren before leaving SMM activities



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, advertising used only informative tools with various appeals. Firstly, informative tools were used with rational appeal in 25 occasions that accounts for 69 per cent of all used advertising tools. This tool informed about upcoming new models. The rest of informative tools were emotional appeal identified in 6 cases, accounting for 17 per cent, mostly hyperlinked with videos from Youku. Finally, informative endorsers were used in 5 cases accounting for 14 per cent.

Table 25 Overview of advertising activities on Renren by Audi China before its cancelling

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	25	6	0	5
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	36			

Source: Author's compilation

Sales promotions were not used in any form on Renren. Therefore, any overview cannot be given.

Finally, the structure of PR tools was quite simple, as Audi's utilized only two of them, news and events. The stress was on news with 17 posts while there was only one post regarding to event.

Table 26 Overview of public relations activities on Renren by Audi China before its cancelling

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	8	Branch Content	9
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	10
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	0	X	0
Sub-Total	8		9
Total	17		

Source: Author's compilation

Kaixin (开心)

Audi also has an official fan-page on Kaixin with 304,491 fans. The audience of Kaixin consists of young professionals or white collars who are residents in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou or second tier cities. Usually, users do not upload any contents; just share information (Crampton 2011). The cover page contains information about the company (Figure 36); however, it does not contain any direct links to the official website, albeit the official website has a direct link to Kaixin's fan-page.

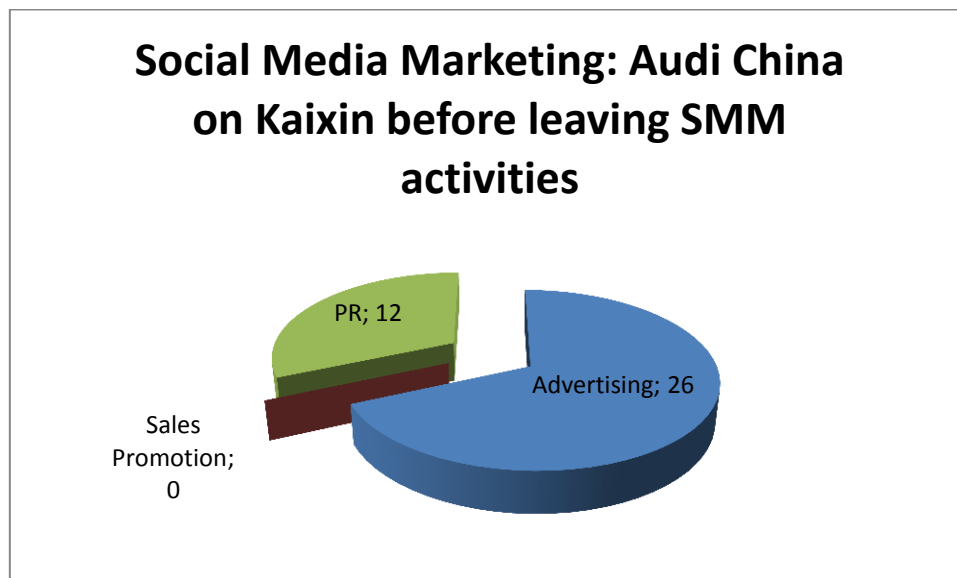
Figure 36 The Audi China Kaixin fan page



Source: Audi 2014f

The activity on this page was extremely low, and during the researched period there were no posts at all. In the history of fan-page, there were only 76 statuses posted overall, as it started on 9 September 2010 and stopped on 6 March 2014. Due to this fact, the period of observation was set between January 2014 and March 2014, when 0.5 posts were identified per day and stopped at the beginning of March. The social media marketing was based on the following activities as shown in Figure 37.

Figure 37 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Kaixin leaving SMM activities



Source: Author's compilation

As the structure of social media marketing conducted on Kaixin was almost identical with Renren during the same period and both are social network services. Thus, marketers provided the same content for both social media marketing. Therefore, in case of Kaixin, only the overviews in Tables 27 and 28 are given. Findings of the used tools are the same as Renren's social media marketing.

Table 27 Overview of advertising activities on Kaixin by Audi China before its cancelling

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	21	1	0	3
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	1	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	26			

Source: Author's compilation

Table 28 Overview of public relation activities on Kaixin by Audi China before its cancelling

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	3	Branch Content	9
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	10
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	0	X	0
Sub-Total	3		9
Total	12		

Source: Author's compilation

By and larger, the extremely low activity or better inactivity could be explained by that Renren and Kaixin have not reflected the reality of smartphones and mobile internet use (Digital in the Round 2013). Therefore it could be one of the explanations that Audi has stopped its social media marketing activities on SNSs – Kaixin and Renren.

Moreover, the contents of Renren and Kaixin were in many cases similar and sometimes identical and all advertisement activities were video published on Youku. In other words, these activities could be described as the common strategy for both SNSs.

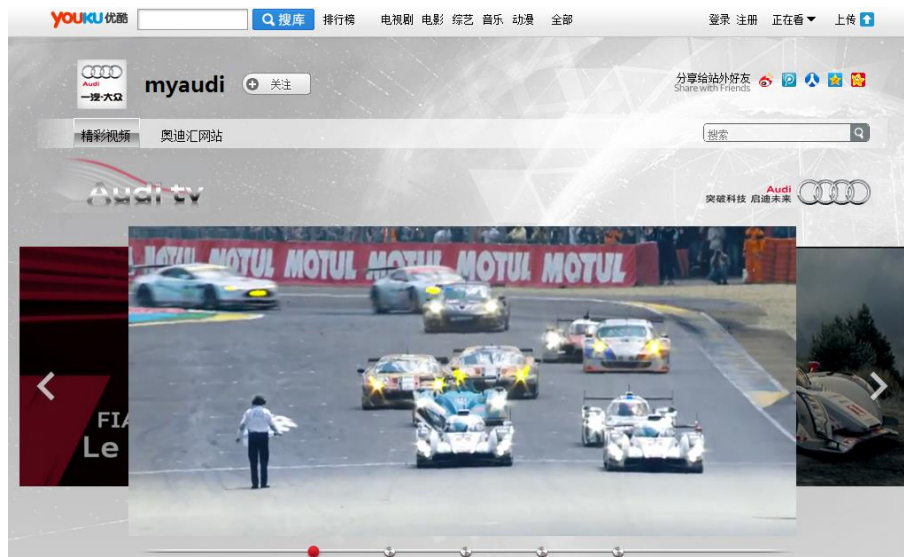
Video-sharing platforms

Youku (优酷)

Netizens in China (PRC) could find a number of video-sharing platforms that provide sharing videos and enable companies to launch their official channels. Companies and also Audi are forced to utilize Chinese local social media for video-sharing within the PRC as the Western social media are blocked, especially; YouTube has been blocked since March 2009 (WebSitePulse 2013). The most popular video-sharing social medium is Youku (Peter 2012), which is also used by Audi. The other video-sharing sites do not have an official Audi channel. Despite the fact that official Audi's website in the PRC does not include a corporate's video-sharing channel, based on research findings Audi has its own official video

channel Myaudi (Audi TV 2013) (Figure 38). The official channel enables users to follow and watch corporate videos. As can be seen from the picture Youku has a direct link to share videos to other Chinese social media –Weibo, QQ (messaging and microblogging social media), Renren, and Kaixin. Additionally, users who are registered, within these social media Weibo, QQ, Renren or Kaixin, could freely write their comments under videos. Although Audi’s Youku channel has direct links to other Chinese social media, it does not have a direct link to the corporate’s website and does not provide any official information about the company.

Figure 38 The Audi China TV Channel on Youku

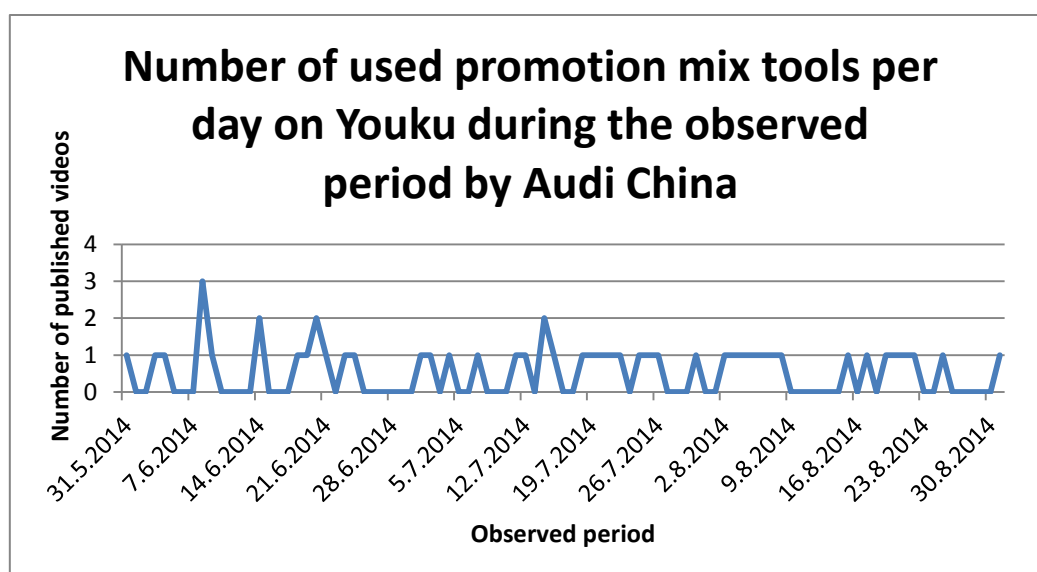


Source: Audi TV 2013

The official Audi’s TV channel has several sub-channels that have bilingual titles. Sub-channels have thematic focuses which are Product and Tech (产品&技术 chǎnpǐn & jìshù), Sports Center (体育&赛事 tǐyù & sàishì), Life-style (生活方式 Shēnghuó fāngshì), Events (企业活动 Qǐyè huódòng), and Entertainment (视觉盛宴 Shìjué shèngyàn) (Audi TV 2013). These overview of albums reveals the fact that Audi China uses its TV channel for two kinds of the promotional mix – advertising and public relations. The total number of shared videos was 471, and the number of published videos during the research reached 39.

During the observed period Audi China published 48 videos on Youku, while the average was less than one video per day. The frequency of adding new videos is shown in Figure 39.

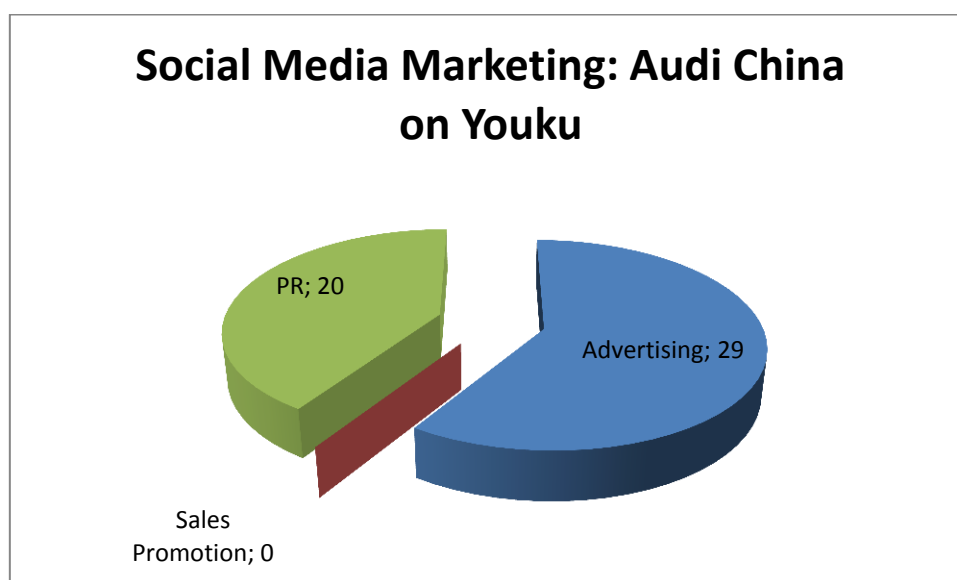
Figure 39 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Youku during the observed period by Audi China



Source: Audi TV 2013

Audi China utilizes its TV channel, mainly as a supportive social medium for Weibo, as SNSs are not used. Weibo published its micro-blogs with new videos from Youku with the following structure of the promotional mix. Audi added 29 new videos (see structure in Figure 40) from advertising that accounts for 59 per cent. While PR tools were used in 20 occasions that accounts for 41 per cent. Internet TV channel is not suitable for sales promotions which were not identified.

Figure 40 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Youku



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, it is obvious that Audi TV mainly used informative advertising with rational tool during the observation. This tool was used in 14 videos accounts for 48 per cent of advertising. This choice is essential as Audi China uses this video channel primarily as a supporting tool for its Weibo official fan page. Via informative advertising with emotional appeal, it introduces in videos new models to the China's market. It is needed to say that most

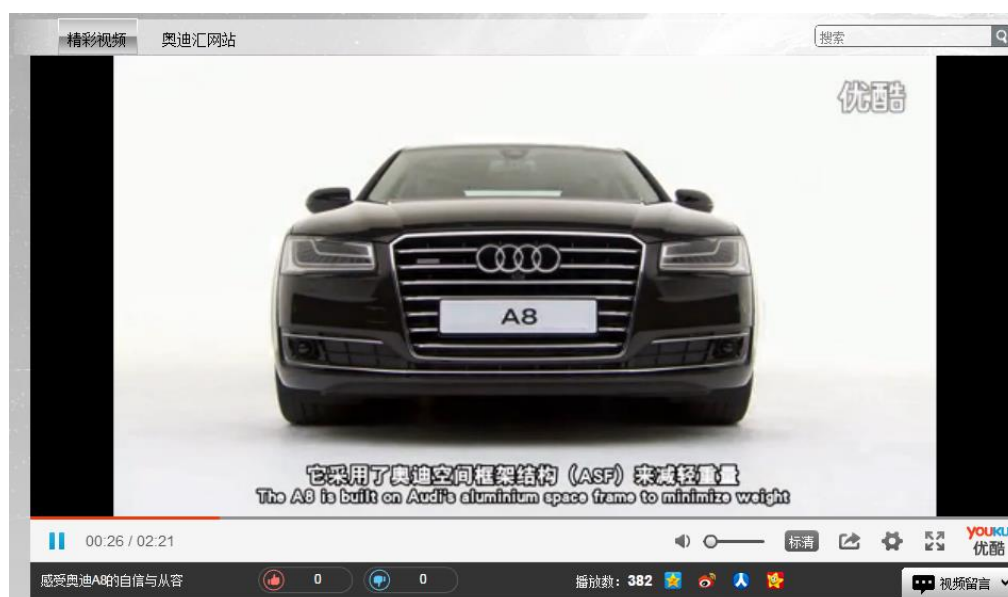
of the videos are incorporated from the global videos of Audi in the English language and for China's market they have added Chinese subtitles which can be seen in Figure 41: the example of informative/rational advertising. Other tools were identified as follows, informative advertising with emotional appeals in 6 videos accounts for 21 per cent of advertising, with endorser appeal in one video and accounts for 3 per cent; next persuasive videos with rational appeal in 2 videos accounts for 7 per cent and emotional appeals were identified also in 2 videos and accounts for 7 per cent and finally, reminder with rational appeal in 4 videos accounts for 14 per cent.

Table 29 Overview of advertising activities on Youku by Audi China

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	14	6	0	1
Persuasive	2	2	0	0
Reminder	4	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	29			

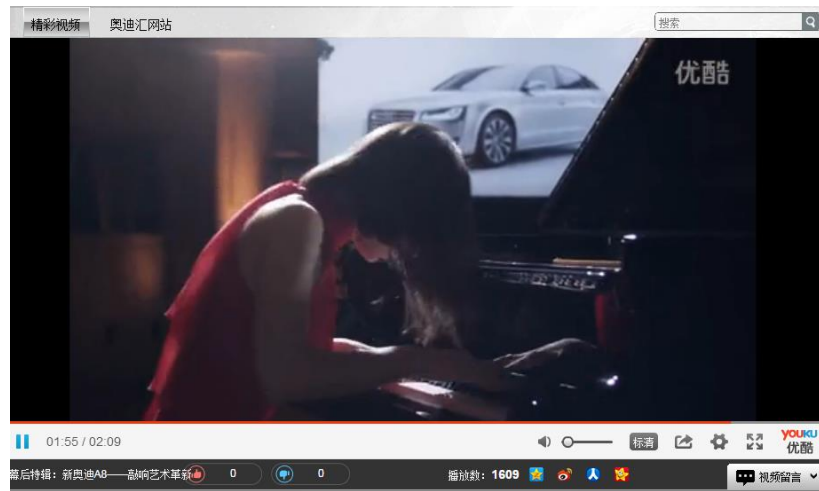
Source: Author's compilation

Figure 41 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on Youku



Source: Audi TV 2013

Figure 42 Example: Informative/emotional advertising used by Audi China on Youku



Source: Audi TV 2013

The next tool used by Audi China on Youku is PR. PR were not so dominant compared to WeChat or Weibo. Only three tools were identified within Youku. The key tool was sponsorship identified in 11 occasions accounts for 55 per cent of PR. Audi China promoted its sponsorship activities not only from China, but also from the rest of the world (shown in Figure 43: Sponsorship DTM championship from Germany). Events were used in six cases and accounts for 30 per cent. This tool was utilized mainly for informing public about events, especially, seminars or passed press conferences. Lastly, from online PR tools was used only branch content that was identified only in 3 videos accounting for 15 per cent.

Table 30 Overview of public relations activities on Youku by Audi China

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	6	Branch Content	3
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	11	X	0
Sub-Total	17		3
Total		20	

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 43 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship tool by Audi China on Youku



Source: Audi TV 2013

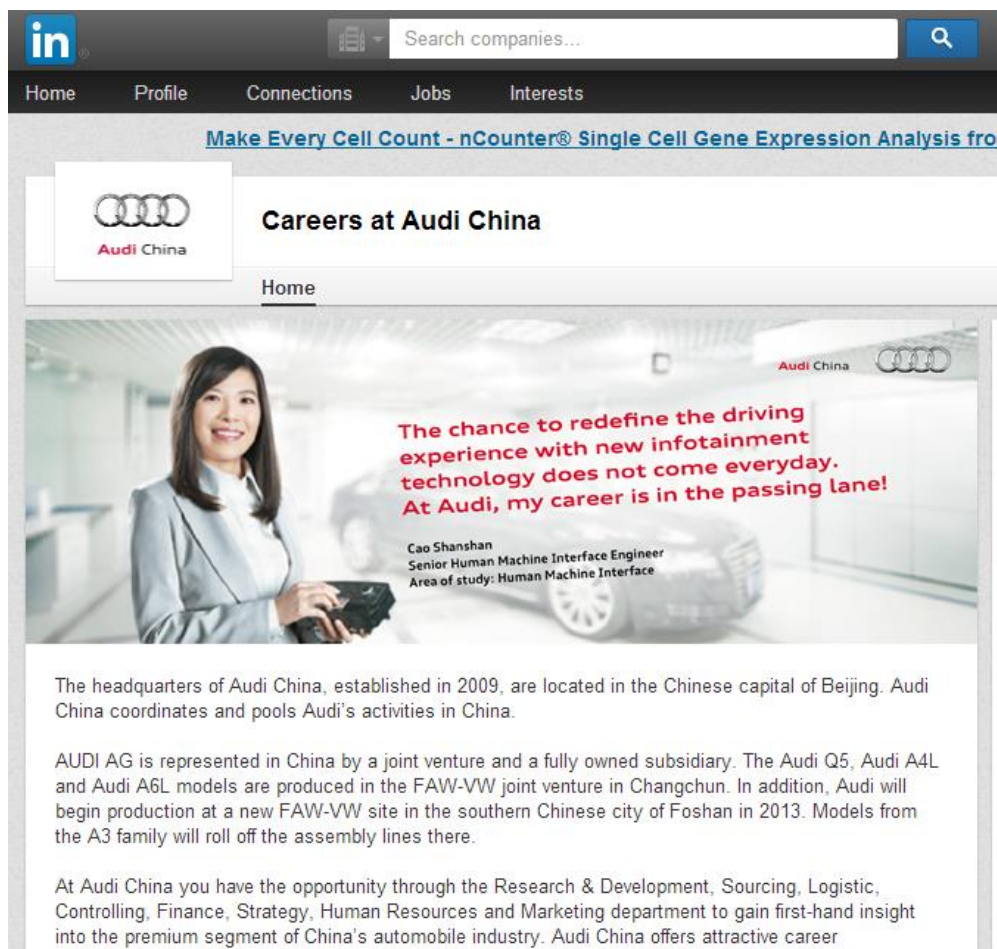
Professional business social networks

LinkedIn/ Lingying (领英)

Although the Western social media, such as Facebook or Twitter are blocked within the PRC, LinkedIn is the global social media that is still available at the moment at Chinese territory. It is needed to point out that LinkedIn has currently more than 313 million registered members (LinkedIn Press Center 2014) and the company states that more than 5 million users are from China. LinkedIn launched its Chinese version in February 2014 under the Chinese pseudonym 领英 (Lǐngyīng, 'Leading Elite') available in simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese. Together with the official launching of the 'Chinese' LinkedIn, the CEO Jeff Weiner announced the main reasons of the penetration into China, as the potential is enormous and offers a huge place to grow and connect international companies with the Chinese (Weiner 2014). However, the reason why LinkedIn is allowed in China is its willingness to run the website according to the Chinese rules, where Weiner (2014) confirms officially that 'Government restrictions on content will be implemented only when and to the extent required'.

Based on the conducted research, there were the following findings on Audi that has one official fan page with 2,447 followers – *Careers at Audi China* one group with 1,449 members – *Jobs at Audi China Enterprise Management Co., Ltd.* (Figure 44); and one connection with more than 500 connections *Careers at Audi China*. The fan page contains a direct link to the Chinese official Audi's website; information about the company could be found also on the profile of the connection, where it is also a direct link to Chinese networking site Dajie to official Audi's channel. All three pages on LinkedIn are conducted in the English language and not in the Chinese language.

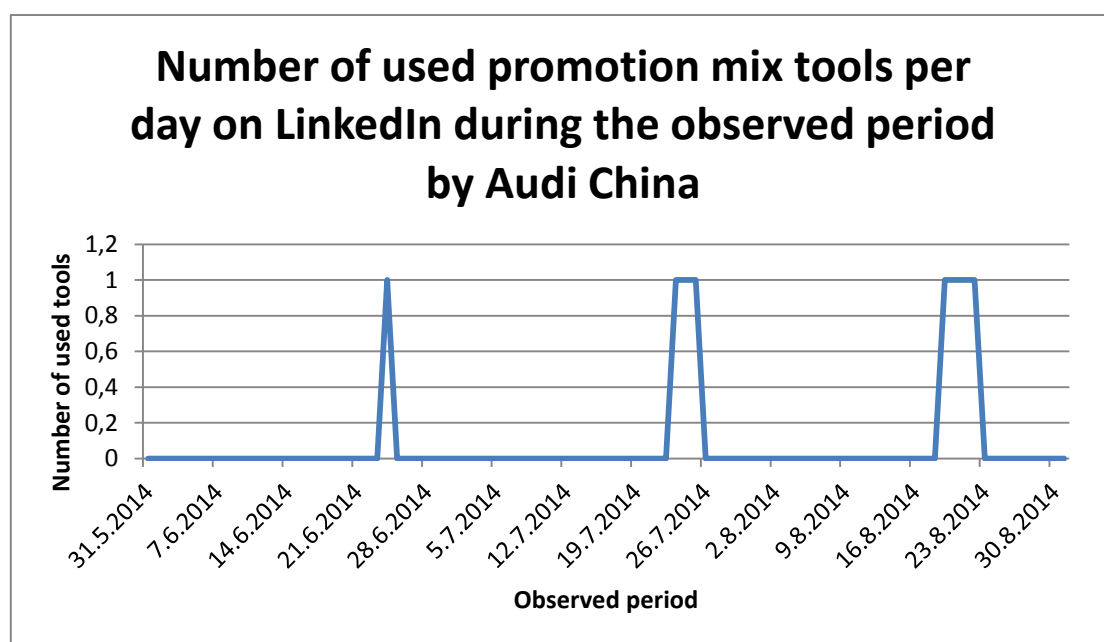
Figure 44 The Audi China official LinkedIn fan page (Careers at Audi China)



Source: Audi 2014g

The activity on LinkedIn was extremely low; during the observed period promotion mix had only 8 posts and was posted irregularly, see Figure 45. Advertisement was mainly focused on advertising job opportunities at Audi China of which all of them were written in English.

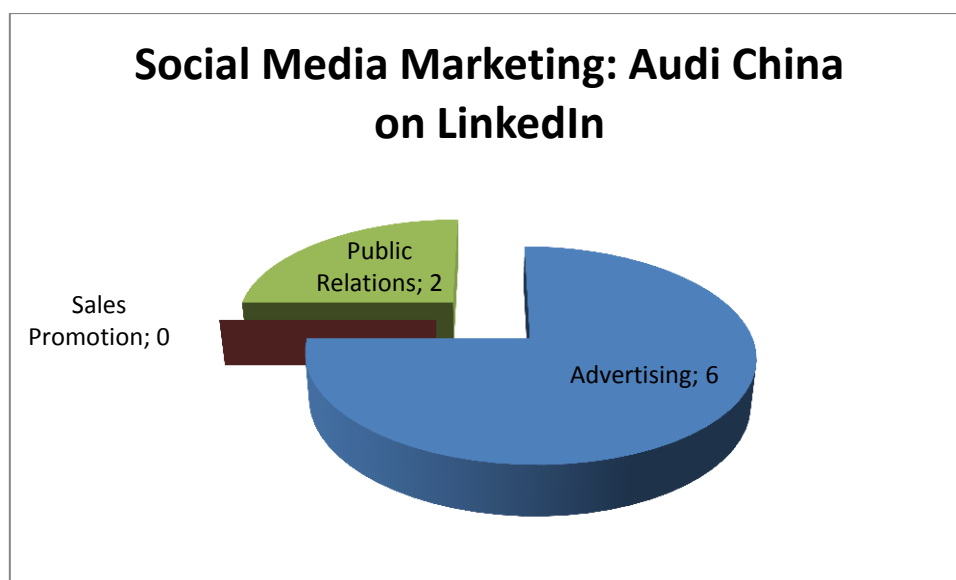
Figure 45 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on LinkedIn during the observed period by Audi China



Source: Author's compilation

The structure of social media marketing consists of two promotion mix tools advertising and PR. Advertising was used in 6 occasions and accounts for 75 per cent, while PR was identified in 2 cases and accounts for 25 per cent.

Figure 46 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on LinkedIn



Source: Author's compilation

Advertising represents the major activity on LinkedIn. Audi China posted 6 advertising tools and all of them were informative using the rational appeal. LinkedIn site advertising was used for two main purposes. First, Audi China announced vacancies within the company (see Figure 47), and second, they promoted Audi's products.

Table 31 Overview of advertising activities on LinkedIn by Audi China

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	6	0	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	6			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 47 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on LinkedIn

Careers at Audi China Are you passionate with Autos, willing to share your knowledge & enthusiasms and work in the high tech & digital environment, the position of "Audi Product Presenter" at Audi City Beijing will be your exact choice. If you speak fluent English and Mandarin and have 0-2 working experience, please apply on line no matter which major you are in. The detailed job description will be found in the following link: <http://lnkd.in/bSRcTha> less



Audi Product Presenter/奥迪产品展示专员

audi.hbcareers.com • 1)Guide and delight the customers at the Audi City 2)Present and explain Audi brand, products and activities to the visitors 3)Assist and advise potential customers in making car configurations using Audi City digital media tech 4)Collect visitors...

Like (5) • Comment (2) • Share • 2 months ago

Source: Audi 2014g

Audi China did not conduct any sales promotions; however, there was a small number of PR activities, illustrated in Table 32. The PR tool was used solely for sponsorship (Figure 48), identified in two cases and accounts for 100 per cent of all PR activities. Sponsorship promoting sport supported by Audi as it is shown in Example below.

Table 32 Overview of public relations activities on LinkedIn

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	0	Branch Content	0
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	2	X	0
Sub-Total	2		0
Total	2		

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 48 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship used by Audi China on LinkedIn

Careers at Audi China Audi R8 LMS third station went to the Sepang International Circuit in Malaysia. André Couto took a start-to-finish victory in Round 5 and Chinese driver "Franky" Cheng Congfu pulled away after taking an early lead to secure victory in Round 6.



Like (8) • Comment • Share • 1 month ago

Source: Audi 2014g

Dajie (大街)

Audi also has a Chinese version of its recruiting campaigns on social media – on Dàjiē (大街). Dàjiē is the biggest Chinese networking social media with– 926 thousand daily users (Incitez China 2014). Audi China has its official channel under the name of 奥迪（中国）企业管理有限公司 (Àodí (zhōngguó) qǐyè guǎnlǐ yǒuxiàn gōngsī / Audi China Enterprise Management Co., Ltd.). On this networking site, in contrast, Audi conducts its social media marketing entirely in the Chinese language. As this site is primarily focused on young graduates and people with small amount of experience, the fan-page contains a direct link to the Audi's career page in the PRC and not to the welcome page as such. Audi Dajie fan page has around 102,789 followers, which is much higher in comparison to the LinkedIn site.

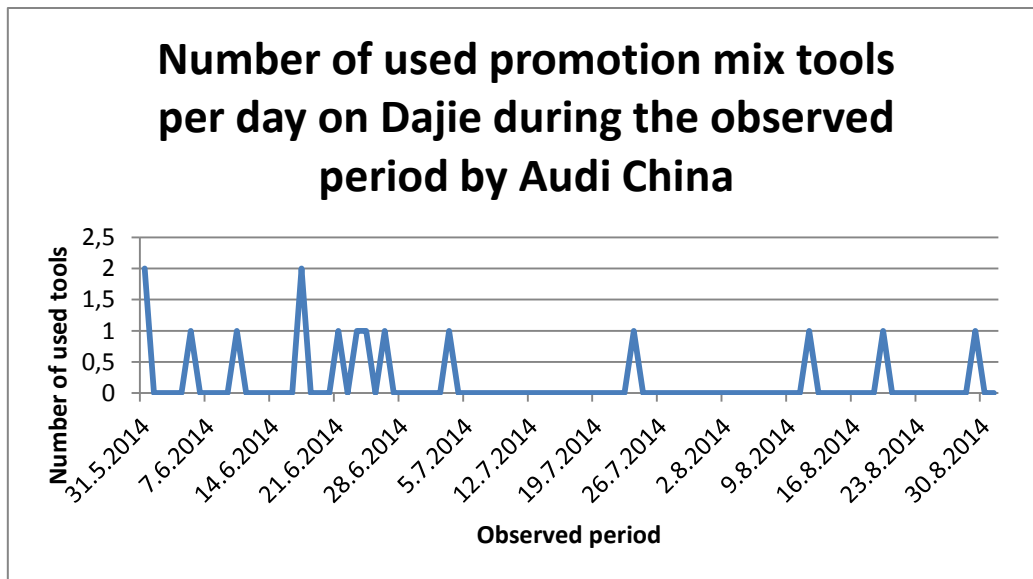
Figure 49 The Audi China Dajie official fan page



Source: Audi 2014h

The frequency of posting was minimal, as during the observation as on Dajie were generated only 15 posts, shown in Figure 50.

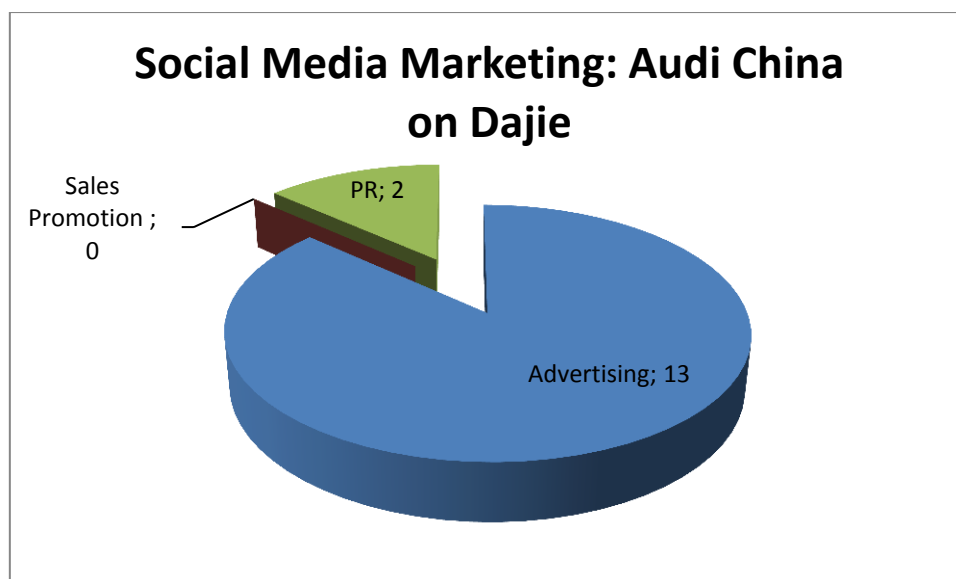
Figure 50 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Dajie during the observed period by Audi China



Source: Author's compilation

Audi China also used the same promotion mix tools (Figure 51) as on LinkedIn – advertising and PR. Advertising was also a key tool as it was identified in 13 occasions that accounts for 87 per cent. PR was a minor tool used only twice and accounts for 13 per cent.

Figure 51 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Dajie



Source: Author's compilation

In terms of advertisement, there were only 5 rational and informative posts on the main page (公司首页 gōngsī shǒuyè/ company's homepage). It is necessary to point out that the structure of promotion mix is very similar to LinkedIn. However, Dajie, in contrast, published almost everything in the Chinese language or with Chinese translation. All advertisements were focused on promoting jobs opportunities within Audi China. Audi China also used only informative advertising with rational appeals on Dajie (shown in Table 33).

Table 33 Overview of advertising activities on Dajie by Audi China

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	13	0	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	13			

Source: Author's compilation

Most of the job advertisements are published in the section of recruiting position, therefore, followers/candidates have to open this site separately.

Public relations were represented only by posted videos in other separated sections. This section was represented by two videos that are introducing Audi as a brand and to prestigious employer to followers/potential candidates. These PR posts were only electronical word of mouth. Via these EWOM, Audi's promotion mix strives to bring testimonies of its Chinese employees together with sharing their experience (depicted in Figure 52).

Table 34 Overview of public relations activities on Dajie by Audi China

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	2
Events	0	Branch Content	0
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	0	X	0
Sub-Total	0		2
Total	2		

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 52 Example: Online PR EWOM tool used by Audi China on Dàjiē



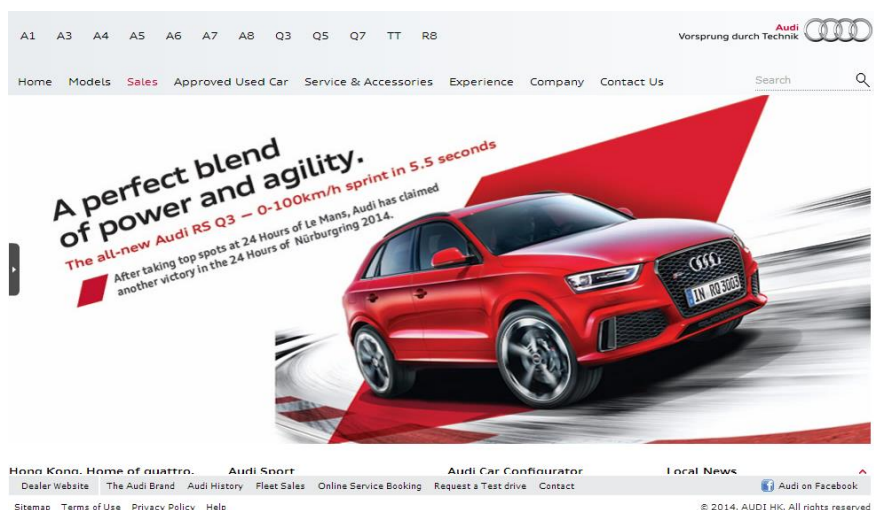
Source: Audi 2014h

Note: Testimonial video of the Audi employee engaged in a training programme sharing his testimony

5.1.3 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong social media marketing in Hong Kong

Audi has its own website for Hong Kong, which is available in English (Figure 53) and some subpages have Chinese translations. The website contains one direct link to the official social media channel – Facebook. Moreover, YouTube has the official video channel of Audi Hong Kong. At the moment, Audi Hong Kong is preparing a third official social media fan-page on Instagram (picture-sharing platform). Apart from these platforms, Audi also has the official channel of Google+.

Figure 53 The Audi Hong Kong official Website



Source: Audi 2014i

Social Network Sites

Facebook

While, Facebook is blocked in the PRC, the situation is different in Hong Kong. Hong Kong does not block neither Western nor Chinese social media. Therefore, Audi Hong Kong social media marketing is different from Audi China. Audi Hong Kong has active social media marketing on SNS - Facebook compared to Audi China's SNS services, such as Renren or Kaixin, which are inactive. Moreover, Facebook plays an important role in Hong Kong among social media, as Hong Kong's netizens population is around 5,207,762 users, Facebook active users group reaches 4,400,000 (Wearesocial 2014). According to these facts, Facebook is the most favourite social media among users in Hong Kong.

Figure 54 The Audi Hong Kong official fan page

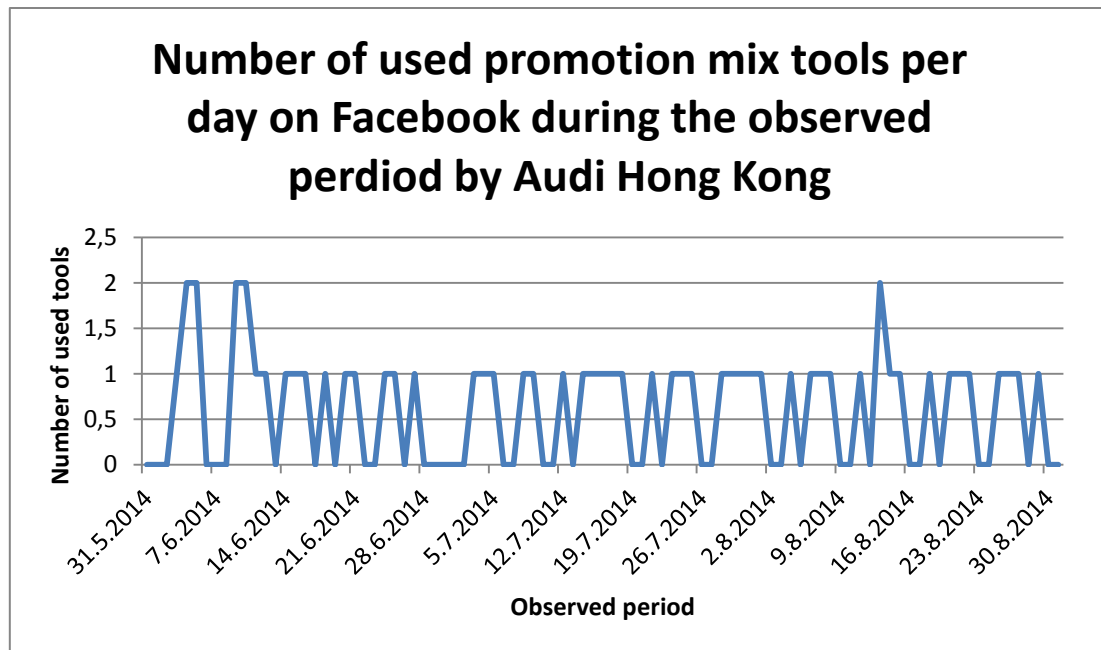


Source: Audi 2014i

Audi's Facebook page has around 128,167 fans and it has joined Facebook on 28 December 2010 and published the very first post three days later. This corporate's Facebook page contains also contact information together with a direct link to Audi's official web page. While Audi in the PRC uses only the Modern Standard Chinese in its posts, Hong Kong Facebook page always published bilingual mutation on Facebook (see Figure 54).

From Figure 55 it can be seen that social media marketing was conducted in an active way, where on average Audi Hong Kong generated 58 posts during the observed period (between 31 May 2014 and 31 August 2014).

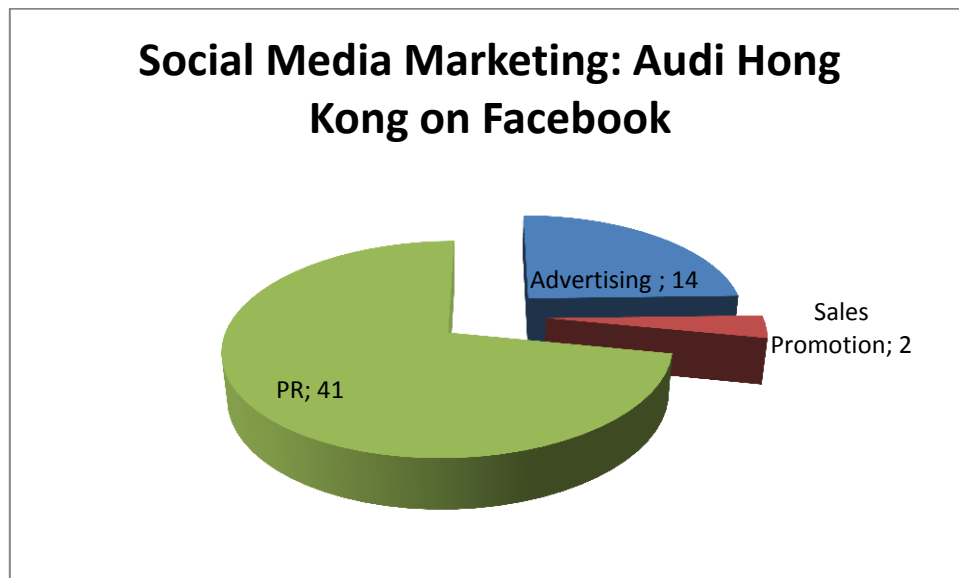
Figure 55 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by Audi Hong Kong



Source: Author's compilation

During the observation, Audi Hong Kong generated post from all three defined tools from the promotional mix (Figure 56). The most frequent used tool was PR identified tools was PR in 41 occasions and accounting for 72 per cent. The second most used tool was advertising in 14 occasions accounting for 25 per cent. Finally, sales promotion was used twice accounting for 3 per cent.

Figure 56 Social Media Marketing: Audi Hong Kong on Facebook



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, advertising was the second most used tool among the promotion mix tools. The aim of Audi's advertising in Hong Kong is to introduce its models to the broad public, where the marketing strategy heavily relies on informative/rational posts in 10 occasions, accounting for 72 per cent of advertising. On the other hand, informative/emotional used in three posts

accounts for 21 per cent of advertising, informative/mixed was used only once and accounts for 7 per cent of advertising.

Table 35 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	10	3	1	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	14			

Source: Author's compilation

Next, sales promotions were identified only in two cases, which was the smallest proportion of all three elements only 3 per cent from the whole promotional mix. In both cases, Audi Hong Kong posted sales promotion in the form of games. Both posts were asking Facebook user via quizzes that enabled them to win Audi Tumbler or tickets to special events (Figure 57).

Table 36 Overview of sales promotion activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong

Elements of Sales Promotion	
Advertising specialities	0
Cash Refunds	0
Prize (contests, sweepstakes, games)	2 (games)
Coupons	0
Cross-Promotions	0
Free Trials	0
Frequency Programs	0
Patronage Awards	0
Point-of-Purchase Displays and Demonstrations	0
Premiums	0
Price Packs	0
Price Refund Offers	0
Product Warranties	0
Samples	0
Tie-in Promotions	0
Total	2

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 57 Examples: Sales Promotion tool - Prize (game) tool used on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong



Source: Audi 2014j

The last promotion element – PR was identified in most cases 33 and represented 72 per cent. Table 37 reveals that PR tools were distributed into two segments equally. Traditional PRs, which are primarily used for mass media, were represented by events and sponsorships. This was mainly caused because during the research period there was a promotional campaign on the Le Mans 24 Race. Sponsorship was identified in 9 occasions and accounts for 22 per cent of PR, while events were identified in 8 cases and accounts for 19 per cent.

On the other hand, Audi Hong Kong is actively using the online PR tools. Specifically, maintenance of digital reputation was a dominant tool in seven cases, and accounts for 17 per cent, albeit this activity is primarily launched by Facebook users that show their anger with the brand (Figure 59). Audi China also used other elements of online PR tools, in particular, branch specific content, where in short articles inform about the latest trends identified in 4 occasions and accounts for 10 per cent of PR. Next, non-branch content tool was used also in four cases that accounts for 10 per cent of PR (Figure 58). Especially, this tool was used during the FIFA World Cup 2014, where Audi identified with the German success. The rest of tools, support via social media was used in 4 cases and accounts for 10 per cent and support via social media was used in 5 cases accounting for 12 per cent of PR, respectively.

Table 37 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	8	Branch Content	4
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	4
News	0	Support via Social Media	4
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	5
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	7
Sponsorships	9	X	0
Sub-Total	17		24
Total	41		

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 58 Example: Online PR non-branch content tool used by Audi Hong Kong on Facebook



Source: Audi 2014j

Figure 59 Example: Online PR maintenance of digital reputation tool used by Audi Hong Kong on Facebook

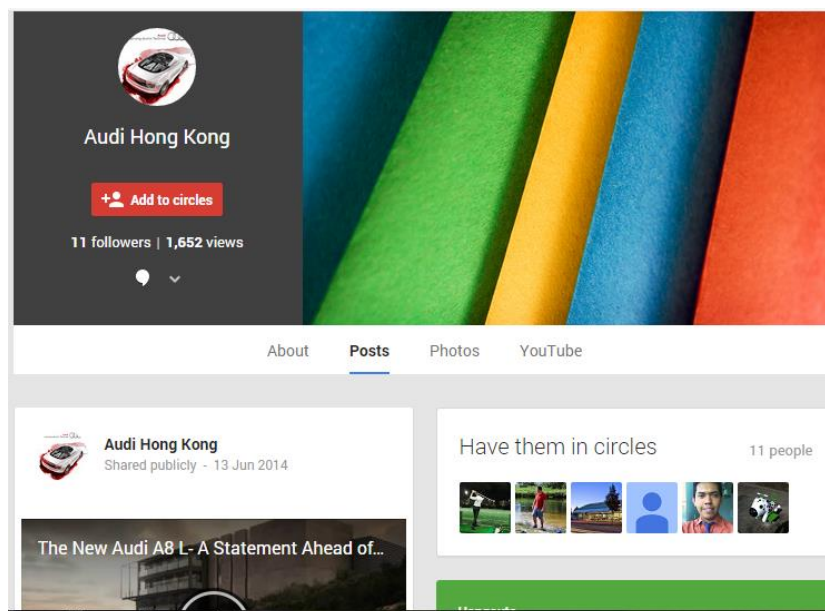


Source: Audi 2014j

Google+

Audi Hong's website does not have any direct link to this site, or Google+ Fan page does not have any direct link to Audi's official webpage. However, YouTube and Google+ put the links to each other. Audi Hong Kong has only 11 followers on this social network service (Figure 60). Although Audi Hong Kong has a small audience on Google+, the number of Google+ users in Hong Kong is around 3,020,502 (Wearesocial 2014).

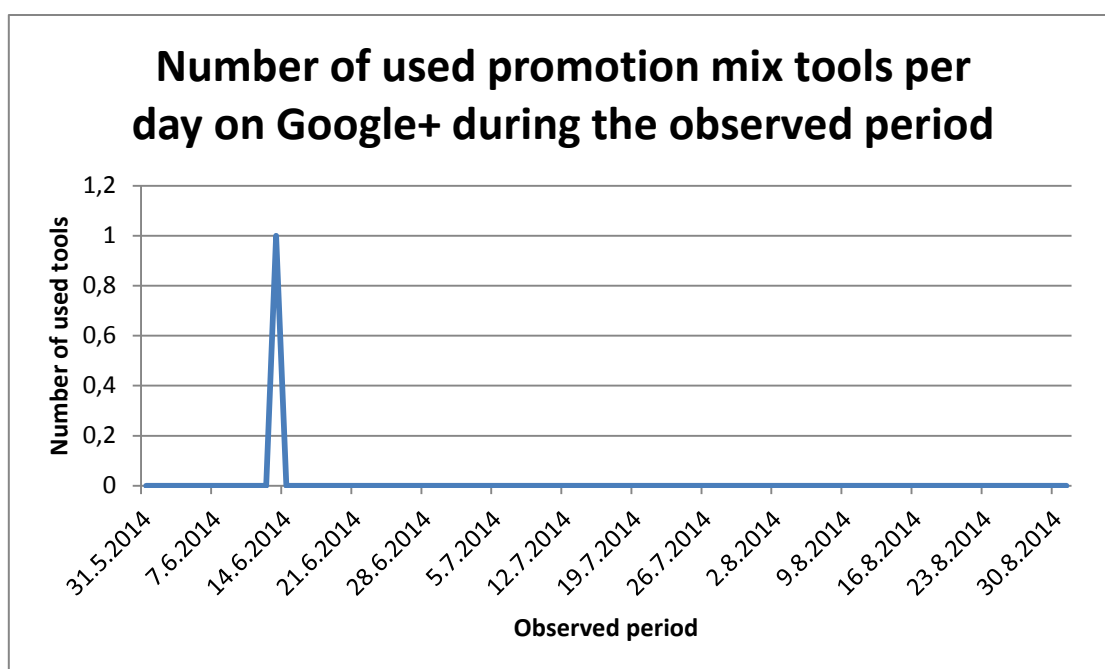
Figure 60 The Audi Hong Kong Google+ official fan page



Source: Audi 2014k

The activity on this page was minimal – one post per three months (Figure 61). During the researched period there was only one post from advertisement informative/rational. The detailed analysis is not needed as there was only one activity (Figure 62).

Figure 61 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Google+ during the observed period



Source: Author's compilation

Figure 62 Social media marketing: Audi Hong Kong on Google+



Source: Author's compilation

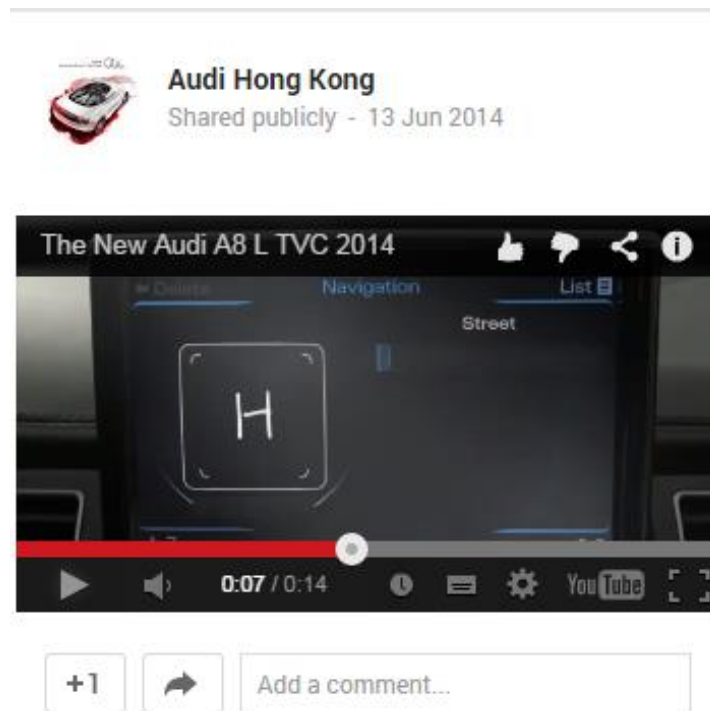
The activity on this page was minimal – one post per three months. During the researched period there was only one post from advertisement informative/rational. A detailed analysis can therefore not be provided as there was only one activity.

Table 38 Overview of advertising activities on Google+ by Audi Hong Kong

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	1	0	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	1			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 63 Example: Informative/rational advertising video used by Audi Hong Kong on Google+ and YouTube

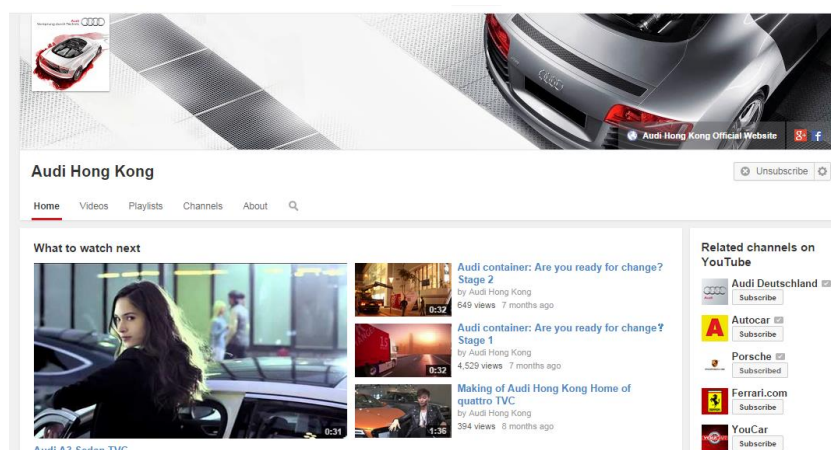


Source: Audi 2014k

Video-sharing platform YouTube

Audi Hong Kong also has an official video channel of YouTube, which is not promoted on the official website, but it promotes the official website, Facebook and Google+ fan pages. Audi Hong Kong has joined YouTube channel on 2 December 2010 and has around 1,284 subscribers.

Figure 64 The Audi Hong Kong official TV Channel on YouTube



Source: Audi Hong Kong TV 2014

Audi Hong Kong generated the identical content on YouTube and Google+ (both are Google services) during the researched period. Therefore, the overview of social media marketing is provided only for Google+.

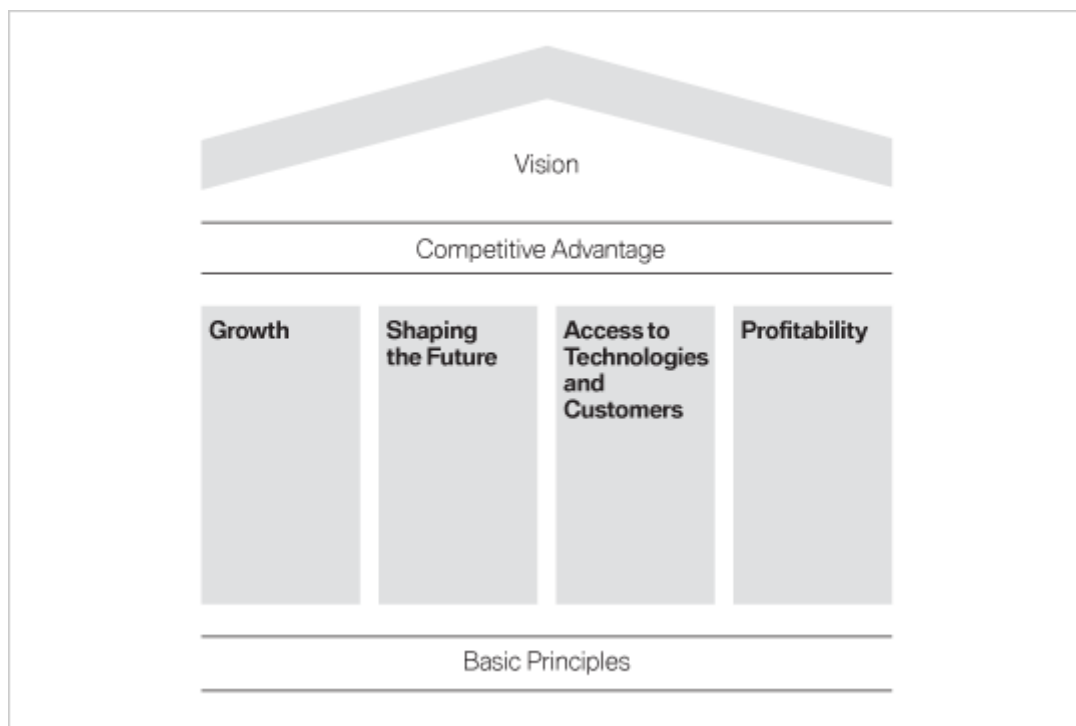
5.2 Case 3: BMW India

5.2.1 Company overview: BMW and its marketing goals

BMW is the German leading premium cars brand. Its name is an acronym of Bayerische Motor Werke. The brand was founded in 1916 and at the moment it also covers two premium brands – Mini and Rolls-Royce. Moreover, two German premium brands are the most successful – Audi and BMW in India (Siddharth 2013). Currently, India is the sixth largest car market with the perspective to be the third largest market in the world by the 2020. Therefore, BMW was selected as a case study for the Indian market.

Firstly, it is necessary to analyse BMW corporate image and marketing. The corporation clarified to meet markets and consumers needs by formulating ‘Strategy Number One’ (BMW Group 2014a). This strategy sets two targets: be profitable and to enhance long-term value in times of change. Additionally, these two targets are embodied in the business model which is built on ‘long-term thinking and responsible action’ backed with the motto ‘sheer driving pleasure’ (BMW Group 2014). Furthermore, this strategy stands on four pillars: Growth, Shaping the Future, Profitability and Access to Technologies and Consumers (depicted in Figure 65).

Figure 65 The Group House of Strategy: four strategic directions are pursued to realise the vision for the year 2020.



Source: BMW GROUP 2008

From the marketing point of view, BMW is focusing on the markets with the possibility of growth, where India is. As a result of this goal, BMW has an assembly plant in India in Chennai, which serves primarily the Indian market. BMW launched this plant on 29 March 2007 and has headquarters in Gurgaon (National Capital Region), which is a 100 per cent subsidiary of the BMW Group (BMW India Facebook 2014). The Indian market is described as the key market for BMW (BMW 2014) together with Russia and Brazil, however, in the last year 2013, the economic growth slowed down. India, in contrast, was believed to grow at a rate of more than 8 per cent, but the growth rate was 4.7 per cent in 2013

(BMW 2014). Despite this fact, India is still considered as the key market for the future company's growth.

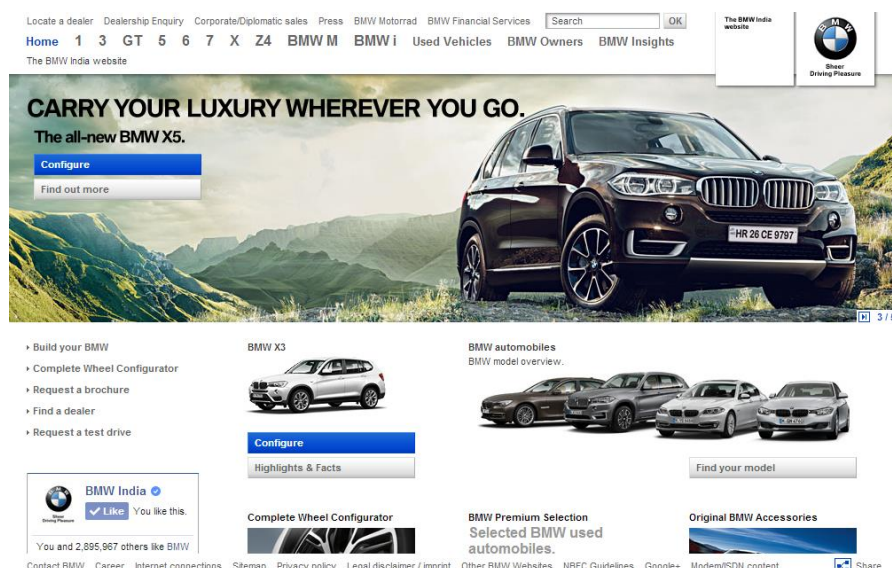
Based on this, BMW relies primarily on markets with the greatest sales volume and revenue potential, such as China and India. Their marketing strategy is identified as the investment in existing and new marketing concepts that will provide intensifying relationship with customers (BMW 2014: 79). This target was set in 2007 and defined as the service providers will be in contact with customers' and will strive to satisfy customers' needs and demands (BMW 2008). In order to conduct this type of marketing, BMW decided to promote its products, especially locally modified models via an innovative multi-channel model (BMW 2014). The BMW marketing strategy stresses the importance of digital communication. The current trend is to reach each customer on individual basis. Therefore, BMW is trying to enhance the relationship between the brand and customer, in order to 'strengthen long-term relationships and brand loyalty' (BMW 2014: 79).

The company identified social media as an important tool in communication technology. The main corporate social media channels can be found on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter that serve for '[extending] customer reach' (ibid.). Thus, social media play an important role in BMW's marketing strategy and communication approach. Moreover, BMW marketing is regarded as one of the best and successful social media marketing approaches in the world (Moth 2013) and has the biggest global fan page on Facebook (more than 18 million fans) in its industry (Socialbakers 2012).

5.2.2 Case 3: BMW India social media marketing in India

BMW India has a standard website for the local market in the English language mutation, while other languages, especially languages from India, are not available. On the official website, direct links to social media could be found. However, the official website offers only one direct link to fan pages on social media, specifically Facebook (Figure 66).

Figure 66 The BMW India official website



Source: BMW India 2014

Despite the fact that the official website provides only one official fan page, BMW India has also other official social media channels found during the research on YouTube (VSP), Google+ (SNS), LinkedIn (PBSN) and Pinterest (PSP).

Social Network Sites

Facebook

According to the observation, Facebook is the most popular social media platform, as the number of fans reached 2,901,183. Facebook is the only one social media platform that is available directly from the official website of BMW India, albeit the corporation uses also other social media channels. Moreover, the Facebook fan page is striving to interconnect with social media users by applications (BMW Financial Services, House Rules and Pinterest) that are available from this fan page. This observation suggests that Facebook is the preferred social media platform by the company. The statistics reveal that the total number of Indian Facebook users is about 90 million people as of the year 2014, which represents around seven per cent of the Indian population (Wearesocial 2014).

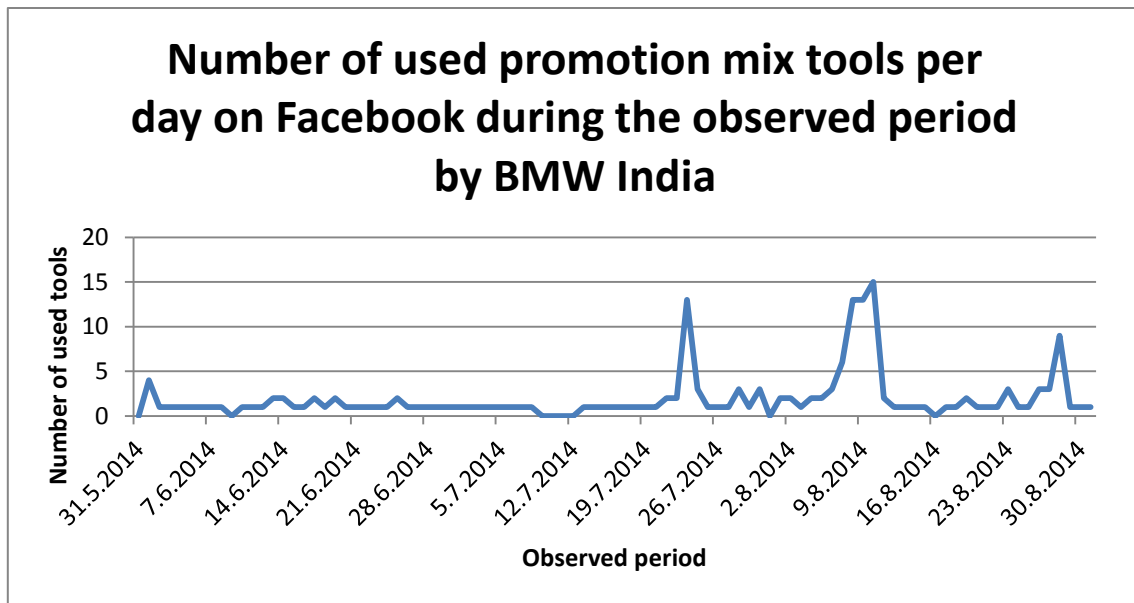
Figure 67 The BMW India Facebook official fan page



Source: BMW India 2014a

BMW India used a number of tools from the promotion mix. In India, compared to other cases in this paper, except for the PRC, BMW has a similar structure of social media marketing and the frequency of used tools during the observed period. Figure 68 reveals that Facebook fan page generates some kind of promotional tool contents almost on a daily basis with some exceptions. As can be seen from Figure 68 below, BMW India generates on average two posts per day, albeit there were some extraordinary days or periods. These unusual time periods were caused by PR campaigns when BMW India built its image via sponsorship venues (described in the PR subchapter). Overall, it can be said that two posts on average are in line with Facebook strategies that do not disturb Facebook fans.

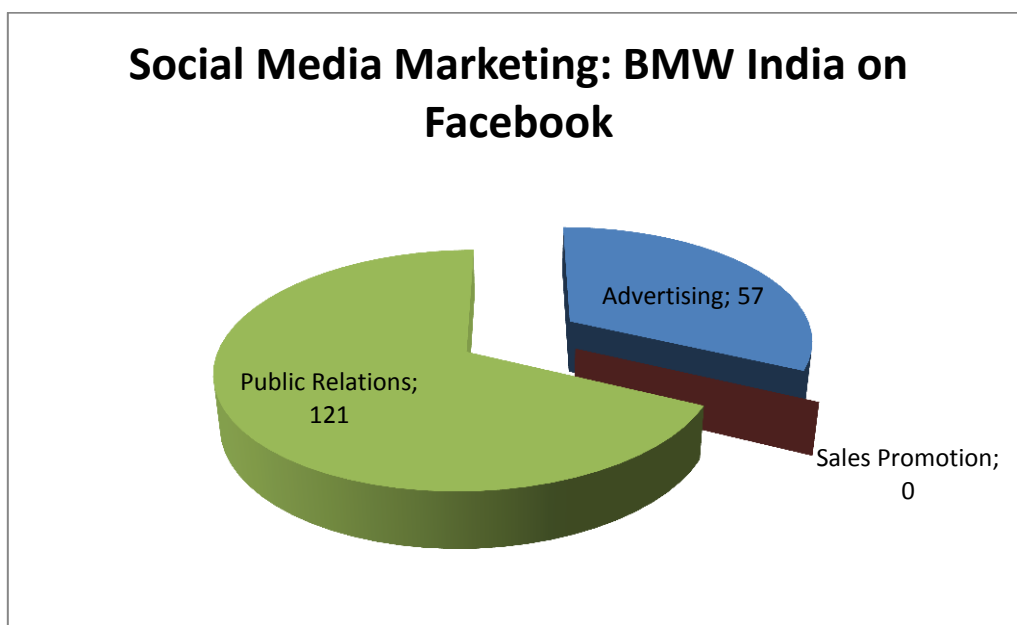
Figure 68 Number of used promotion mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by BMW India



Source: Author's compilation

Figure 69 provides the overview of used promotion mix tools. Among the three main predefined tools for social media, the most used tool was PR with 121 identified activities accounting for 68 per cent of all used tools on Facebook, while the second most used tool was advertising with 57 identified tools, accounting for 32 per cent per observed period, and there were no findings on sales promotion.

Figure 69 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on Facebook



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, advertising confirms the minority trend in the use of this promotional mix tool on SM and SNSs. Despite this fact, almost one third of all activities were devoted to various kinds of advertising, illustrated in Table 39. The chief tool of advertising was informative/rational tool with 35 identified posting that represented 61 per cent of the total use of this promotional tool.

Over the whole period, there was a campaign that advertised new products of BMW and it uses an introduction for the Indian customers. Specifically, it was a new model of BMW X3, which was heavily advertised over the whole summer for its debut in India. BMW explicitly utilizes all kinds of advertising for two models (BMW X3) for introducing it to the Indian public. The other tools were minor as informative/emotional tool was identified only once (2 per cent) and rational/mixed tool took place in three cases (5 per cent). Next, persuasive/rational tools were recognized in seven cases (12 per cent) in order to persuade customers to take a chance and buy a unique product at the right moment. As it can be seen from the given example (see Figure 70), the product is promoted in a limited edition that could evoke a feeling of buying it in a limited time. After that, reminder tools were recognized as follows: reminder/rational was utilized in six cases (11 per cent), reminder/emotional in one case (2 per cent), and reinforcement/mixed in three cases (5 per cent). Finally, the tool of reinforcement/rational that was suggested to current purchasers to make the right decision was identified in one case (2 per cent) (see example in Figure 71).

Table 39 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by BMW India

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	35	1	3	0
Persuasive	7	0	0	0
Reminder	6	1	3	0
Reinforcement	1	0	0	0
Total	57			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 70 Example: Persuasive/rational advertising used by BMW India on Facebook



Source: BMW India 2014a

Figure 71 Example: Reinforcement/rational advertising used by BMW India on Facebook



Source: BMW India 2014a

BMW India on Facebook did not use any tool from sales promotion, thus, any findings cannot be provided.

The most used promotion mix tool was PR. Table 40 demonstrates how BMW India massively utilized primarily traditional PRs, which were identified in 111 occasions that accounts for 92 per cent of PR. Whereas, online PR activities were used only on 10 occasions and accounts for 8 per cent.

First of all, the Table 40 illustrates that sponsorship was the most used element among all PR tools, identified in 65 occasions and it accounts for 54 per cent of PR activities. BMW India, similar to sponsorship activities of Audi China in the PRC or Hong Kong, actively presented its sponsorship activities on social media and also on Facebook. During the observation, Facebook, compared to Twitter, used a lower number of PR tools, but used it for promoting sponsored venues. Especially, India Bridal Fashion Week in August and sponsored sports events backed by BMW and BMW India. Next, another used tool was advertising in 22 occasions and it accounts for 18 per cent, via this tool BMW India strived to enhance its corporate image and luxurious status. Events were used, in particular, throughout the whole period (e.g. BMW Experience Tour 2014) when the company promoted its sports and seminar events in India. The last traditional tool which was used are news, which was utilized for press conferences and announcing new models in India, used in 9 occasions and it accounts for 8 per cent.

Online PR tools were in the minority and used very sporadically. Branch specific content was used only once accounting for 1 per cent. The most used tool was non-branch

content tool used in 4 occasions accounting for 3 per cent, which was utilized for wishing national festivals in India (see example below). The maintenance of digital reputation was launched by netizens in 4 occasions that accounts for 3 per cent and BMW India responses followed immediately. The last online PR tool that was used was social online integration identified only once and accounts for 1 per cent.

Table 40 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by BMW India

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	22	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	15	Branch Content	1
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	4
News	9	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	1
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	4
Sponsorships	65		
Subtotal	111		10
Total	121		

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 72 Example: Traditional PR news tool used by BMW India on Facebook



Source: BMW India 2014a

Figure 73 Example: Online PR non-branch content tool used by BMW India on Facebook

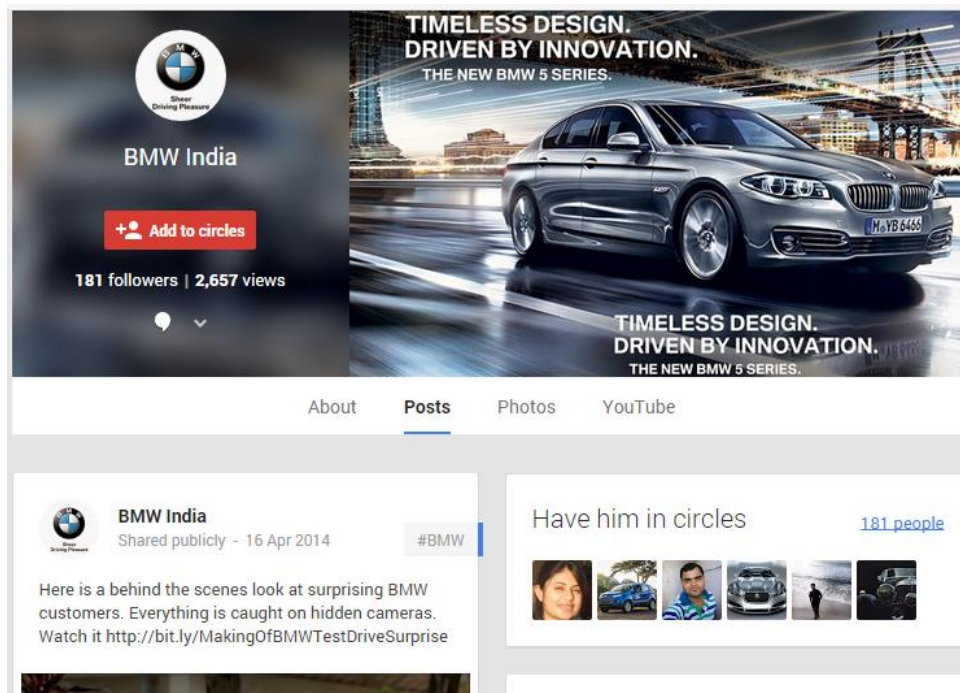


Source: BMW India 2014a

Google+

Although BMW India does not promote its other social network site – Google+, there is an official channel of this company. Moreover, Google+ site does not have any direct link to the official corporate webpage or does not provide any contact information; however, it is interconnected with other Google's service – YouTube. Google+ is a very controversial project of Google, as it is not so successful among marketers, BMW India only has 181 followers, or in other words, 181 Google users have this page in their circles (Figure 74). Despite this fact, according to the statistics, India is among the top five countries that uses Google+ in the world (Wearesocila 2014), and Google+ is among the top five social media platforms used by marketers globally (Stelzner 2014). Moreover, the number of users that own an account is about 166,140,00 and the active users number is about 74,550,000 (Wearesocial 2014).

Figure 74 The BMW India Google+ official fan page



Source: BMW India 2014b

During the observed period, BMW India did not use any of the promotional mix tools and did not share any of its social media marketing activities. Overall, the official fan page generated during its existence only three posts between 1 March and 16 April this year. This kind of activity cannot attract more users. It could be concluded that in terms of all Indian netizens, BMW does not provide any activity on Google+. As a result, the social media marketing activities cannot be analysed.

Microblogging sites

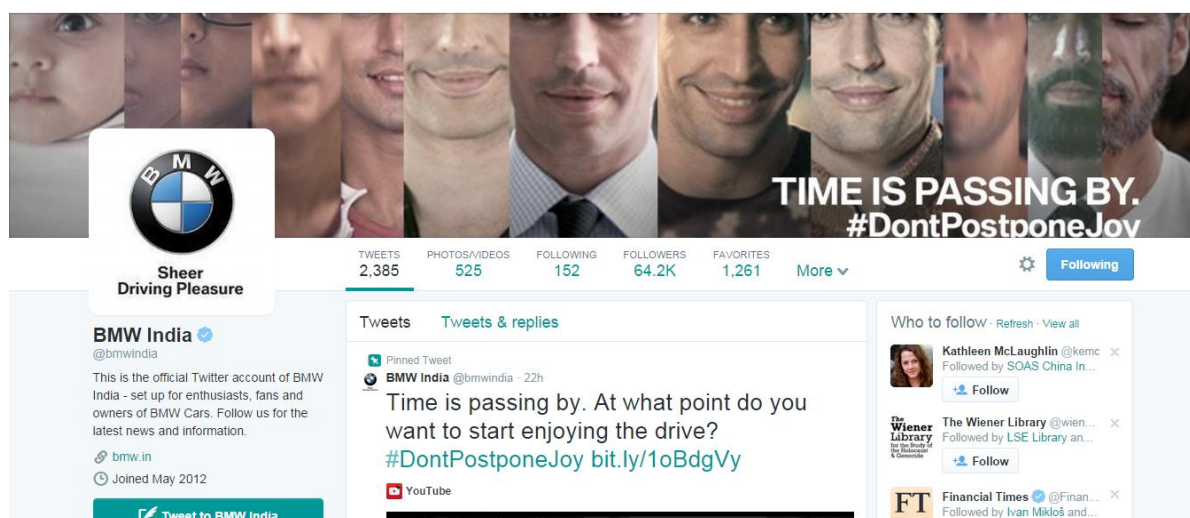
Twitter

Twitter is one of the key social media channels used by BMW India. Although this social medium is not hyperlinked on the official website; the account provides information that it is the official Twitter account of BMW India. Furthermore, the site suggests that it was set up for 'enthusiasts, fans and owners of BMW Cars' (BMW India 2014c). BMW India has been using Twitter for its social media marketing since May 2012, when the local Indian branch officially joined Twitter and then started using tweets. During the use of Twitter, BMW India has generated more than two thousand tweets. The official Twitter account of BMW India, in comparison, has less followers – about 64,197 than the Facebook fan page of BMW India having almost three million 'likes' (Figure 75). Apart from the official corporate account, BMW India has created another and focuses solely on a PR sponsorship venue India Bridal Fashion Week, during the observation it took place between 7 and 10 August 2014. Despite the fact that this Twitter account is sponsored by BMW India, it is not included as an object of research, albeit the official BMW India Twitter account actively used a large number of India Bride Fashion Week's Tweet.

Twitter is one of the most heavily used social media platforms in the world by marketers and it is the second most used social medium for marketing globally (Stelzner

2014). This microblogging channels also plays a significant role in the Indian market, which has around 213 million users. On the one hand, Twitter is number two in terms of use for social media marketing globally, on the other hand, Indian and international companies are using it as follows. In terms of having and using Twitter, there is a big discrepancy among the Indian users. By the end of the year 2013, it was estimated that the number of registered Indian users on Twitter is around 33 million, which was believed to be the third largest Twitter market in the world (Wearesocial 2014; Patel 2014). Due to the the censorship in China, where the largest community of netizens in the world has no access to Twitter, these numbers of users would be different globally. Whereas the number of active users surpasses 15 million who accessed their accounts at least one a month (Wearesocial 2014). Thus, it could be seen that Twitter could be considered as a potential space for the future growth, especially in the Indian market in the nearest future. Besides, short-designed messages also require a very precise and adequate targeting by marketers. The research has revealed that the targeting of short messages was chiefly focused on advanced, premium and luxurious values, sometimes backed by the local culture that will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

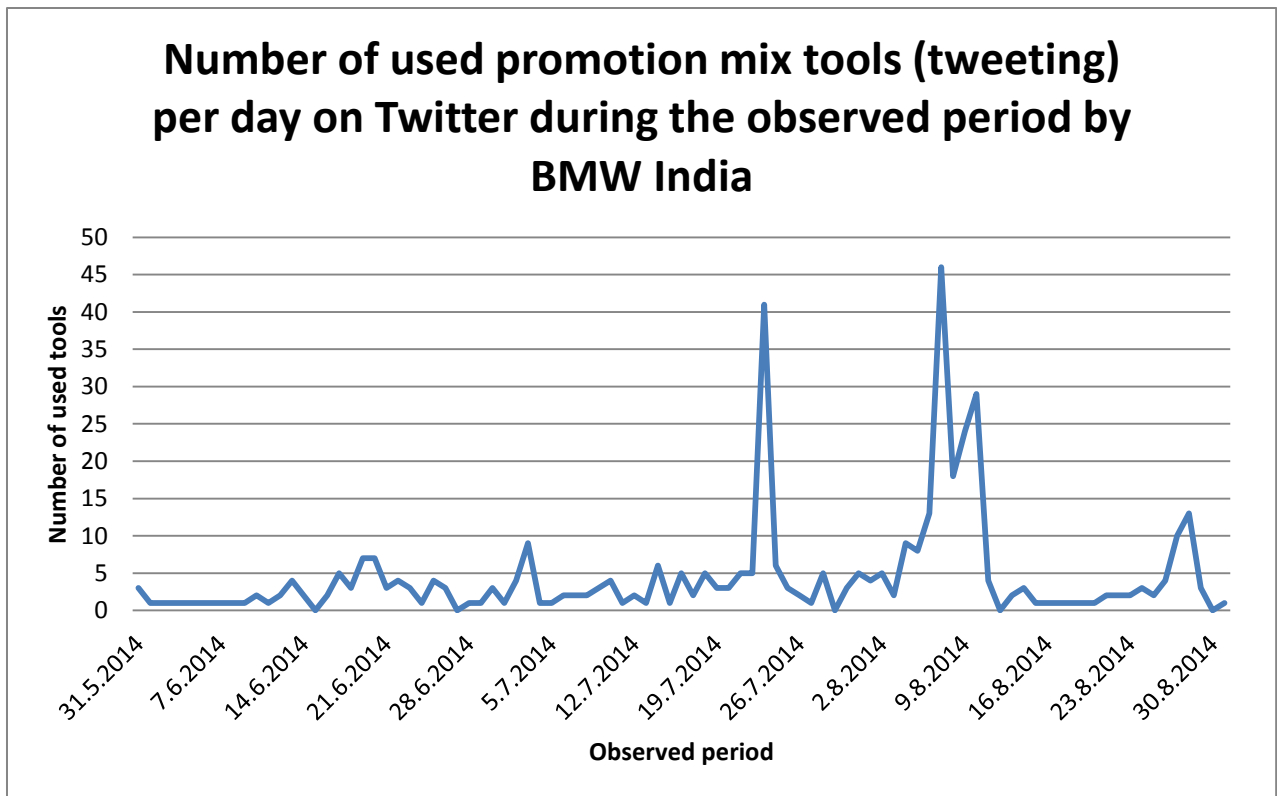
Figure 75 The BMW India Twitter official fan page



Source: BMW India 2014c

BMW India uses its official Twitter account on a daily basis with some exceptions during the observation. The overall average of posting was 4.5 per day; however, as Figure 76 shows there were only five days when there were no tweets. Next, it can be seen that there were some periods with higher frequency of tweets, which was caused by launching new products to the Indian market and, especially, during the first half of August, BMW India generated a large number of sponsorship (PR) activities.

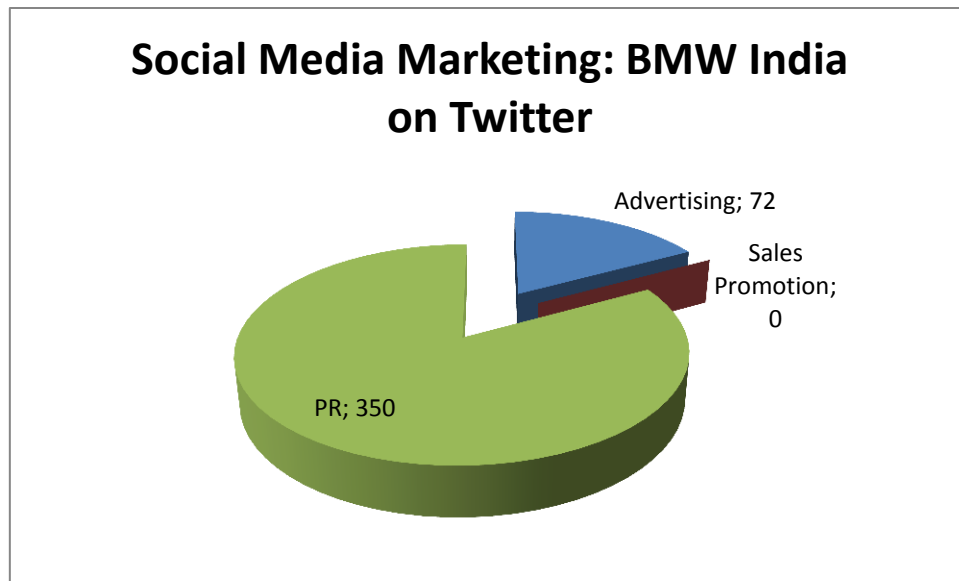
Figure 76 Number of used promotion mix tools (tweeting) per day on Twitter during the observed period by BMW India



Source: Author's compilation

The structure of Twitter's social media marketing is similar to Facebook's, but the usage of advertising and PR tools are slightly different, which is dependent on the social media platform structure. First of all, Figure 77 gives the overview of the utilized promotion mix tools as follows. The main promotional mix tool is PR that occupied a dominant position with 350 identified social media marketing used tools, representing 83 per cent per period. The second most used tool was advertising with a small use of 72 activities representing 17 per cent per period. The Twitter observation of BMW, India did not find any activity regarding sales promotions.

Figure 77 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on Twitter



Source: Author's compilation

Table 41 provides the overview of all used tools from advertising. The first category analysed is advertising that was identified in 72 cases. It is evident from Table 41 given below that the key activity was informative rational used in 42 occasions and accounts for 58 per cent of advertising. BMW India continuously used its Facebook channel for advertising through the whole observed period for introducing new models backed with short statements and pictures. Other forms of informative advertising were represented as follows, with emotional appeal in 4 occasions accounting for 6 per cent, with mixed appeal in 3 occasions and accounting for 4 per cent and finally with endorser appeal (example in Figure 78) identified in 4 cases accounting for 6 per cent. In particular, rational advertising with endorser appeal is used occasionally by the company, however, BMW India used it at least a couple of times with its president of BMW India for a new model – Active Hybrid 7. The rest of the tools were used as follows, persuasive with rational appeal in 10 occasions accounting for 14 per cent and persuasive advertising with emotional appeal in 2 cases accounting for 3 per cent. Reminder advertising was used five times and accounts for 7 per cent of advertising. Finally, reinforcement was used once with rational appeal accounting for 1 per cent and with emotional appeal also once accounting for 1 per cent, respectively.

Table 41 Overview of advertising activities on Twitter by BMW India

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	42	4	3	4
Persuasive	10	2	0	0
Reminder	5	0	0	0
Reinforcement	1	1	0	0
Total	72			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 78 Example: Informative/endorser advertising used by BMW India on Twitter (President of BMW India Mr. Phillip von Sahr)



Source: BMW India 2014c

The second category – sales promotion was not identified. Thus, there are no findings on this promotional mix activity.

The last promotion mix category and the most used PR identified in 350 cases in the observed period. First of all, it is necessary to say that the activity was heavily influenced by the periods shown in Figure 76 that illustrates the frequency of tweeting, which reveals the most frequent period that is related to India Bridal Fashion Week and activities related to this sponsored event. From Table 46, it is obvious that traditional PR tools represent only one quarter of all generated PR activities, while online PR tools were represented by three quarters. Firstly, traditional PR activities were identified in advertising, events, news, publications and sponsorships.

Table 42 Overview of public relations activities on Twitter by BMW India

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	6	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	231
Events	10	Branch Content	10
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	6
News	11	Support via Social Media	1
Publications	1	Social Online Integration	12
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	2
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	60	X	
Subtotal	88		262
Total	350		

Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, the traditional PR activities account for 25 per cent of all PR activities generated by the BMW India on Twitter. It is obvious that sponsorship played a dominant role among traditional PR tools. The sponsorship tools were used by the two extended periods, when the frequency of posting was the highest during August. As BMW was the main sponsor of BMW Bridal Fashion Week, there was naturally a need to promote this venue extensively on Twitter. All these tweets were backed by photos from this event. Moreover, most of the photos include the corporate logo in order to easily identify sponsored events with the main sponsor. Apart from sponsorship, BMW India had also campaigns for events that took place at the beginning of the observed period.

Secondly, online PR activities, identified during the observation, represent 75 per cent. But, it is necessary to point out that the majority consists of electronic word of mouth, which was identified in 231 cases; 88 per cent of online PR activities, and 66 per cent of all PR activities, respectively. BMW India used the following tools on Twitter, EWOM, branch Contents, non-branch content, and support via social media, social online integration and integration of customer. What could be seen from the overview of Twitter is that, one tool that was identified on Facebook was not found on Twitter – maintenance of digital reputation. It could be caused by the fact that marketers do not wish to retweet negative posts, while, Facebook users can post them on Facebook walls directly and it is visible to others.

The online PR activities were not distributed equally, while the key activity overall was EWOM. As was defined in the literature review, word-of-mouth represents a very powerful tool among users for promoting and enhancing the corporate image. In this case, it is only about the positive experience with BMW rather than negative statements. BMW India utilized this tool very extensively by reposting the customers' experience. In other words, almost every day, there were findings on EWOM on a daily basis, with some exceptions. BMW India shared at least one EWOM based on favourable experience or the brand admiration per day, with the exception of BMW India Bridal Fashion Week, which was sponsorship event where tweets were shared from the sponsored Twitter account. During the observation period, there three reasons for using EWOM on Twitter were identified by BMW India. First, EWOM is used as an active word of mouth, by which marketers shared the

followers' positive experience and brand admiration. Active word of mouth was also used during the promotion activities, when BMW India was introducing new models to India's market. During these events, especially, New BMW X3 or Active Hybrid7, active word of mouths were extensively used as a user-generated content from promotion venues. Second, during summer, BMW was conducting its sponsored action and for this reason, the official account extensively used sharing tweets from the sponsored Twitter account BMW Bridal Fashion Week 2014. Most of retweets were connect directly to performances backed by photos. Third, BMW India also used Twitter for Buzz which serves for generating excitement and creating publicity. This tool was identified only once (Figure 79). Buzz (EWOM) used by BMW India suggested staying connected in order to catch all news from the sponsored action. In a nutshell, it could be concluded that overall EWOM and its hybrids are the most important tool in terms of frequency and generating content on Twitter for BMW India. As a result, it is beneficial for the corporation, in particular in this premium sector of its industry to systematically give testimonies and admiration about the uniqueness of the company and enhance its image among the Indian netizens.

Next, the other online PR tools which were used modestly compared to word of mouth. The brand used branch content tool in a few cases, because of the Twitter message limitations. Via branch content, BMW India interconnected articles published on Facebook with the reference to the corporate's activity, namely, information on new products online. Next, non-branch content was used also for identical reasons as Audi in China or Mercedes-Benz in Malaysia. This tool is used for wishing during national festivals in India. Non-branch activity also celebrated and stressed the German success at the FIFA World Cup 201 in July 2014 (the same activities were identified by Audi and Mercedes Benz). Furthermore, others used tools supported via social media and social online integration were used occasionally mainly during the sponsored events, such as Bridal week.

Among used online PR tools integration of customer was identified on Twitter. This tool is quite rare, as it can be largely used in IT industry (Schautzer 2011), and in the premium car industry, it was identified rarely, as it strives to include netizens into the innovation process or developing product. Despite these facts, BMW India strived to encourage its followers to participate in this process on its Twitter account. From the given example (see Figure 80), integration of customers primarily strives to integrate local people, in this case, potential Indian customers to design a car for India's market.

Figure 79 Example: Online PR EWOM: Buzz tool used by BMW India on Twitter



Source: BMW India 2014c

Figure 80 Example: Online PR integration of customer tool used by BMW India on Twitter



Source: BMW India 2014c

Professional business social networks

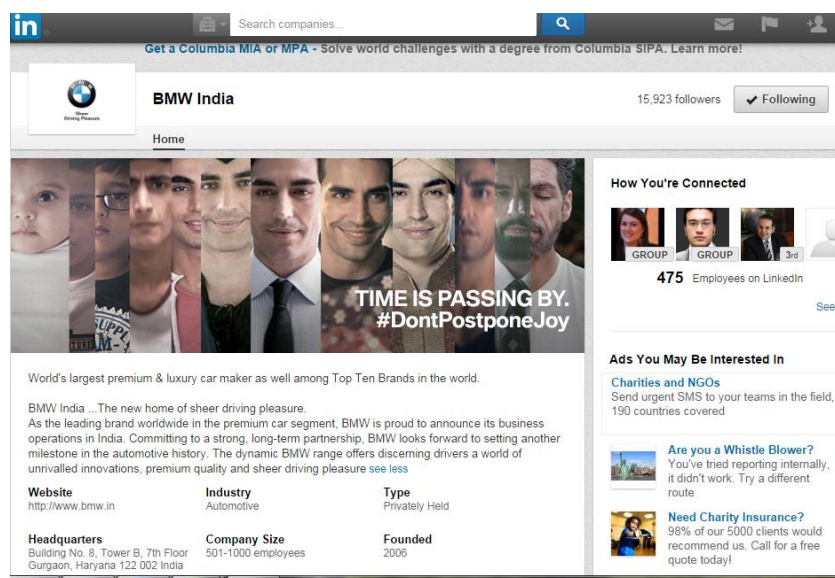
LinkedIn

BMW India has also one professional social network site on LinkedIn. This site was launched in August 2014 and generated a minimum of social media marketing activity. During the observed period, BMW India LinkedIn page had 15,923 followers and besides this number also 475 employees were registered on LinkedIn (Figure 81). The official website contains also information on the company and the link to the official website, albeit the BMW India official website did not inform about any official account on LinkedIn during the research.

Currently, LinkedIn represents one of the most perspective social media in India's market, as it attracts around 27 million active users. This number is maybe not so staggering compared to other social media in India; however, it is needed to point out that the number of Indian users of LinkedIn is the second highest in the world (LinkedIn Press Center 2014). In

other words, the number of Indian users on LinkedIn accounts for 8.6 per cent of the global user base, while the US share accounts for 33 per cent (The Hindu 2014). This growth has been recorded in the last 4 years (ibid.) and it could be higher in the future. As LinkedIn is a place for middle-class professionals, it is a suitable place for future growth of social media marketing for the premium brand like BMW and its Indian branch. As can be seen in the next paragraphs, during the observation there were only a couple of findings on LinkedIn, which is very contradictory, as this professional social medium is regarded as the second most important for marketers (Stelzner 2014).

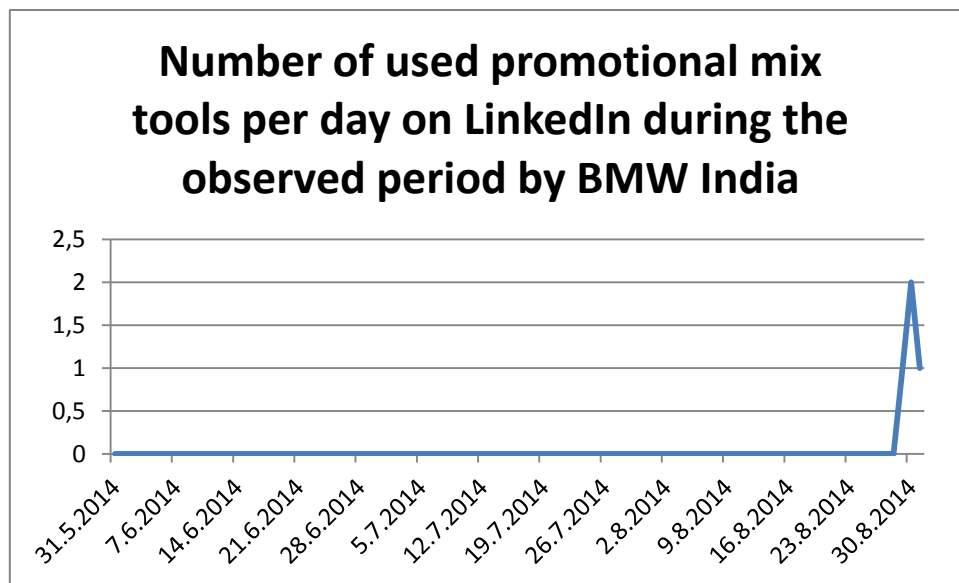
Figure 81 The BMW India LinkedIn official fan page



Source: BMW India 2014d

The LinkedIn account of India was not used extensively compared to other social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, since there were only four posts identified in total during the observation. As can be seen from the Figure 82, the activity was raised only at the end of August, and, thus, it is not worth writing about frequency per day. This inactivity was caused by the following reason. As LinkedIn serves as a PBSN for advertising jobs, and promoting job opportunities with the company, there were no job postings during the observed period. Thus, the job offer period varies and depends on the requirements by the company.

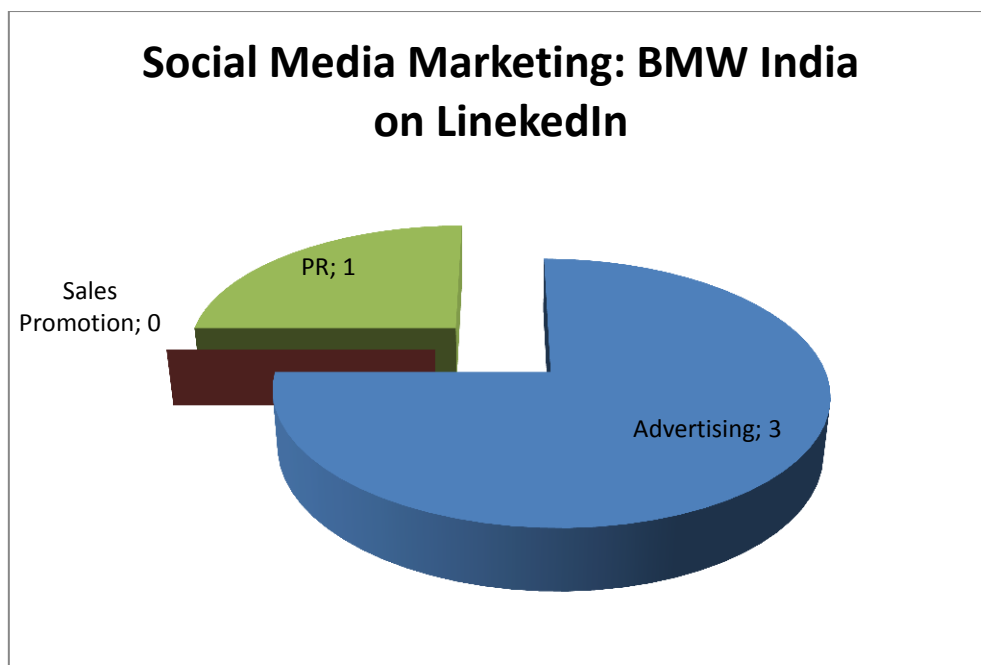
Figure 82 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on LinkedIn during the observed period by BMW India



Source: Author's compilation

Although, BMW India generated only a minimum of social media marketing activities, there were four used tools found shown in Figure 83. Firstly, advertising was identified in three cases, which also accounts for 75 per cent, while sales promotions were not used and there was only one activity from PR, accounting for 25 per cent.

Figure 83 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on LinkedIn



Source: Author's compilation

All identified used tools from LinkedIn were connected to introducing a new product of BMW to the India's market – New BMW X3. Therefore, the company used three tools from advertising in order to create the brand awareness of this new product among Indians, and, in

particular, on LinkedIn professionals. All three used tools from advertising were used for launching of a new product – BMW X3. Table 43 illustrates that informative advertising with rational appeal was used twice and accounts for 66 per cent of advertising, while rational advertising with emotional appeal was used only once and accounts for 33 per cent of advertising, respectively.

Table 43 Overview of advertising activities on LinkedIn by BMW India

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	2	1	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	3			

Source: Author's compilation

Next, the only one post from PR was from traditional PR tools – advertising – that was utilized for the corporate's image campaign. Overall, it could be said that the potential mentioned at the beginning of the subchapter was not identified, as BMW India utilized LinkedIn only in a few occasions. However, in the future, this website could be beneficial for BMW, as the Indians account for the second largest users of LinkedIn in the world and LinkedIn is believed to be the second most important social medium for markets overall. These could be arguments for BWM to extend their activities in order to attract the Indian middle class and its potential buyers in the online area.

Table 44 Overview of public relations activities on LinkedIn by BMW India

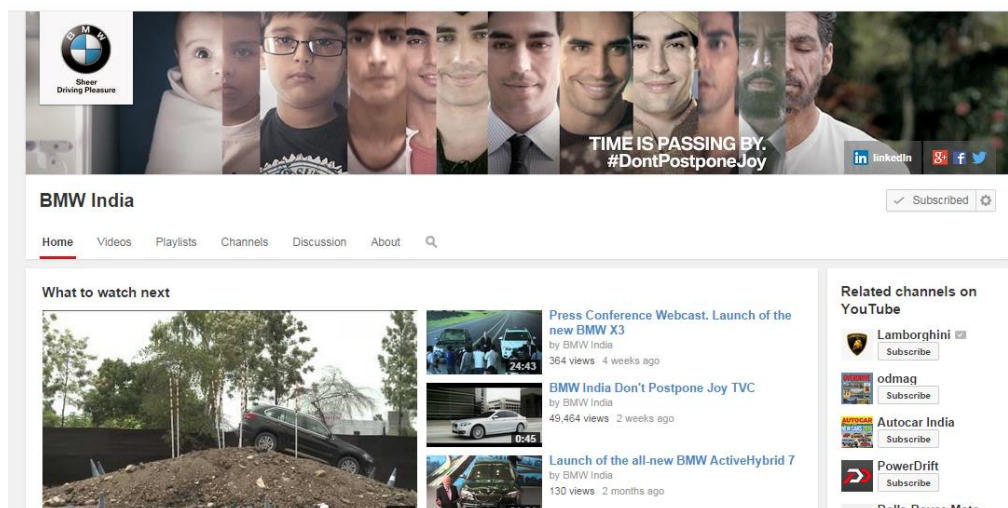
Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	1	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	0	Branch Content	0
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	0	X	
Subtotal	1		0
Total	1		

Source: Author's compilation

Video-sharing platform YouTube

BMW India has one official corporate channel on video-sharing platform on YouTube. This video channel is not promoted on the official BMW India website, but it has links to other official social media channels of BMW India (Figure 84). Apart from the official corporate channel, one sponsored channel was found – India Bridal Fashion Week, from which the official channel integrated a few videos into one album. The official BMW India channel has joined YouTube on 13 March 2008 and has around 4,784 subscribers. The information on the number of subscribers is illustrative, as the number of views was 2,396,370 (BMW India TV 2014). YouTube is a popular social medium in India, where it reached 55 million unique users per month in India (Brindaalakshmi 2013). The BMW India marketers stress that YouTube plays a crucial role in their relationship between corporation and customers and encourages netizens to communicate to them by using YouTube (BMW India TV 2014). Furthermore, the channel, in its description, emphasizes the mission of itself as it is to ‘bring the joy of BMW to YouTube’ (ibid.) and it will provide mainly news, information and entertainment.

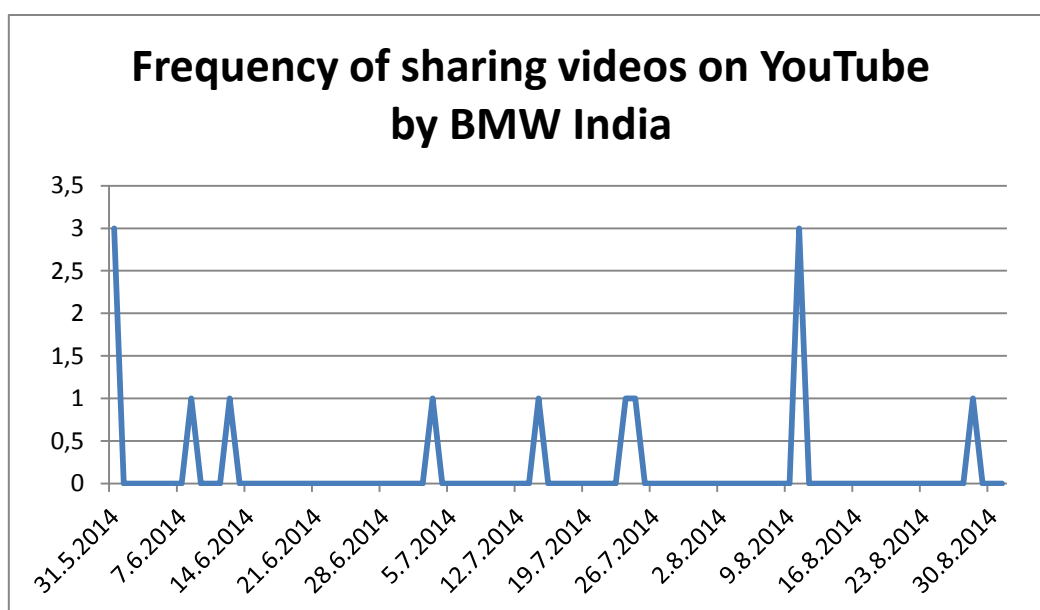
Figure 84 The BMW India TV Channel on YouTube



Source: BMW India 2014e

Social media marketing activities were observed during a three months, when BMW India generated the content in the following frequency: 14 videos per three months, shown in Figure 85.

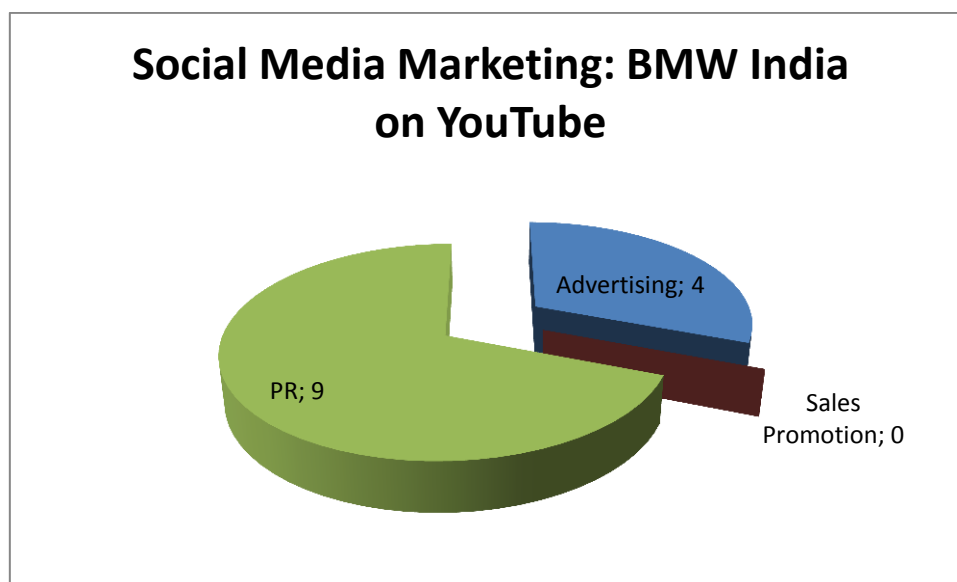
Figure 85 Number of used promotion mix tools per day on YouTube during the observed period by BMW India



Source: Author's compilation

The structure of social media marketing was highly affected by the campaigns that were held during the observed period. First of all, it is obvious from Figure 86 that the major tool adopted by BMW India was PR accounting for 9 cases (69 per cent), while advertising was used in four cases (31 per cent), and there were no findings on promotion tools.

Figure 86 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on YouTube



Source: Author's compilation

It is necessary to specify that BMW India TV serves as a tool that backs other social media, in particular, social media marketing activities on Facebook and Twitter. First of all, according to Table 45, advertising three informative/rational videos, accounts for 75 per cent and one informative/mix, accounts for 25 per cent, were all linked with the debut of new models in India market. Especially, the video that introduces the new BMW X5 is for identifying with premium sector customers (Figure 87).

Table 45 Overview of advertising activities on YouTube by BMW India

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	3	1	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	0	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	4			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 87 Example: Informative/emotional advertising tool used by BMW India on YouTube



‘Carry your luxury wherever you go with the all-new BMW X5. The all-new BMW X5. Now in India.’ [transcription]

Source: BMW India 2014e

Next, video-platform sharing as such is not suitable for offering sales promotion; therefore, any of this promotion tool activity was not recognized. Finally, the largest group of the promotion mix part, public relations, was dominant, albeit it was classified only in nine occasions (Table 46). The main difference among all social media platforms in the usage of PR used by BMW India is that YouTube was solely used for traditional PR activities. Despite the fact that BMW India in its description suggests to subscribers and BMW fans taking action and communicating on YouTube (BMW India 2014e). Online PR tools are more suitable for online communication and, especially, for social media. Tools, such as social online integration, support via social media, or electronic word of mouth were not used, as social network services and microblogging are more relevant to this kind of activities compared to video channels, albeit customers could provide comments under videos. Despite this opportunity, netizens that watch promotional videos did not leave any positive or negative comments that would lead to maintenance of digital reputation or other activities from BMW India.

As YouTube has features of traditional mass media – broadcasting videos were identically identified as traditional PR tools. Specifically, traditional PR activities were distributed among events, 2 videos promoting BMW Experience Tour 2014, accounts for 22 per cent of PR; 2 videos from news (press conferences), accounting for 22 per cent of PR, and sponsorship in 5 videos (India Bridal Fashion Week), accounting for 56 per cent.

Table 46 Overview of public relations activities on YouTube by BMW India

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	0
Events	2	Branch Content	0
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	0
News	2	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	0
Sponsorships	5	X	
Subtotal	9		0
Total	9		

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 88 Example: Traditional PR news tools used by BMW India on YouTube



Source: BMW India 2014e

Photo-sharing platform

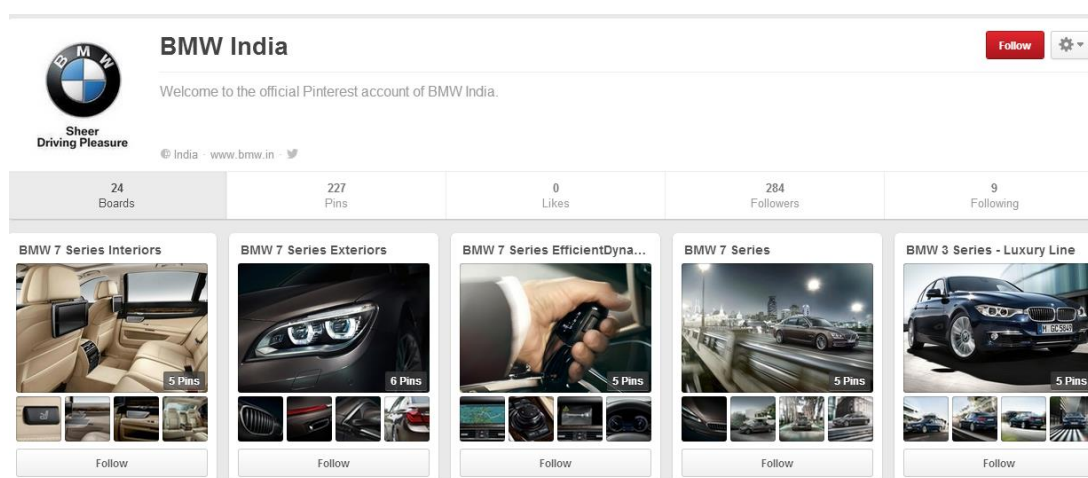
Pinterest

BMW India has an official channel on the photo-sharing social media platform Pinterest. The official channel has a direct link to the corporate official website and no contact details, but the official channel does not offer any link to this social medium. Moreover, the Pinterest fan page of BMW India offers a link to BMW India Twitter account, which is very active and

generates relatively rich social media marketing activity; while, this website does not (Figure 89). According to the fan page statistics, it accounts for 290 followers, which is a relatively low number compared to Facebook or Twitter. There were no proper statistics on the number of Indian users; however, the global share of Indian views coming from India accounts for 9.8 per cent and it is the 17th most favourite website in India (Alexa 2014). Moreover, Pinterest is regarded worldwide as the third most important B2C social media platform (Stelzner 2014). This social medium is viewed very controversially in India, and brands are struggling to attract Pinterest users, as netizens pin their interests and more than 80 per cent of users are women (AppApeal 2014 based on Alexa traffic data). As the brands can communicate only with followers and brands can only reach a couple of thousand followers ideally.

During the observation there were no findings in terms of social media marketing activities. BMW India pinned the last picture over one year ago, which did not appear within the researched period.

Figure 89 The BMW India Pinterest official fan page



Source: BMW India 2014f

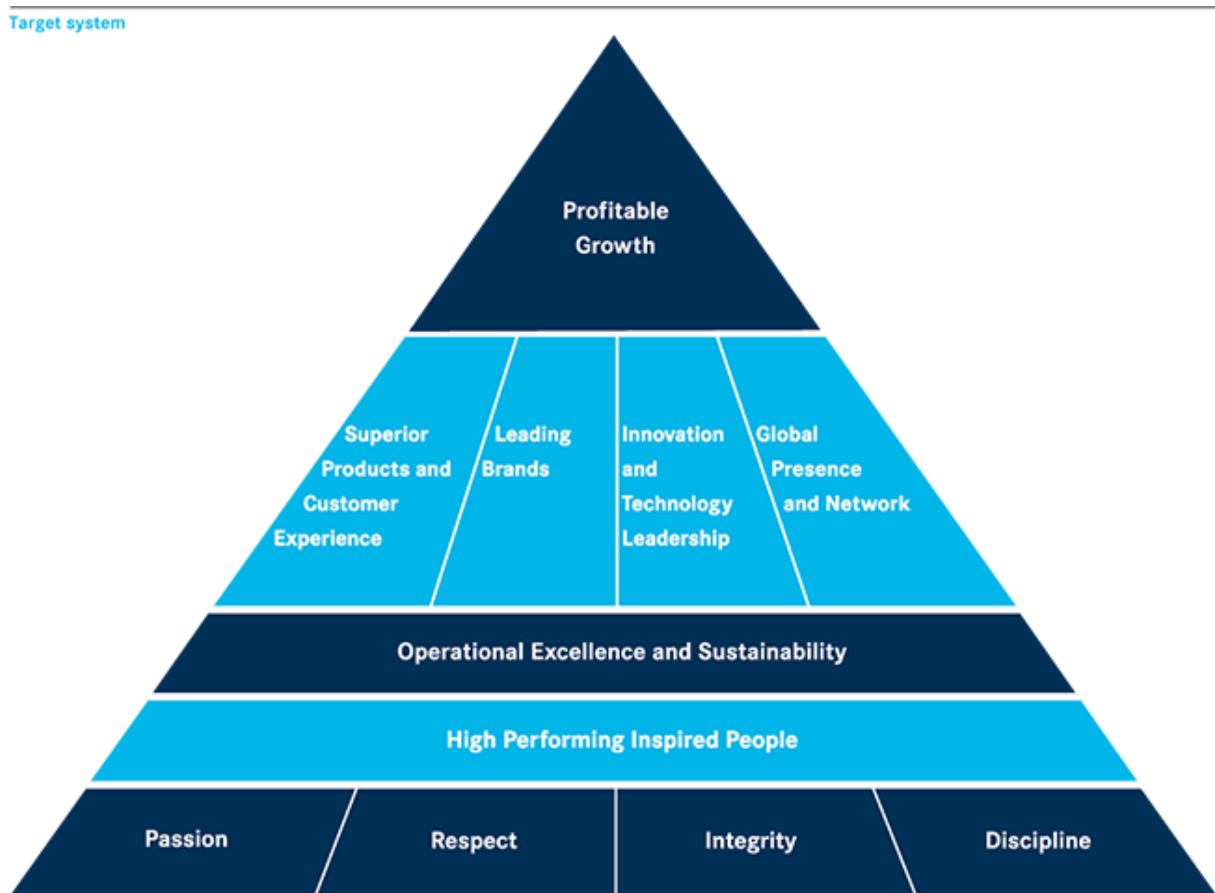
5.3 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

5.3.1 Company Overview: Mercedes-Benz and its marketing goals

Mercedes-Benz is a German premium brand that is a part of the multinational automotive corporation – Daimler AG. This brand is defined by itself as a premium car, and moreover, the world's fastest-growing premium automotive brand in 2013 (Daimler 2014: 10).

Mercedes-Benz defined its strategy and targets system for implementing its goals. The motto is “The best or nothing.” (Originally in German „Das Beste oder nichts“), which demonstrates the luxury segment orientation, overall focused on customers' needs. The main goal of the brand is the ‘Mercedes-Benz 2020’ growth strategy that claims to become the leading premium brand on a global basis (Daimler 2013; Daimler 2013). The targets focus on the customer, where the brand strives to ‘inspire its customers with [its] brands, product and services’ (Daimler 2012.).

Figure 90 The overview of Mercedes-Benz Target System



Source: Daimler 2013

Mercedes-Benz identified the core-markets for its growth also outside Europe. The growth, in particular, is taking place in Asia, where the concern pays attention to BRIC[S] countries and Malaysia as well (Daimler 2013). This strategy is becoming successful, since in the first half of 2014 Mercedes-Benz was growing by more than 24 per cent (Zaharin 2014). Furthermore, customers from Malaysia marked Mercedes-Benz as one of the fourth best premium car brand after BMW, Audi and Ferrari (Marketing Interactive 2014).

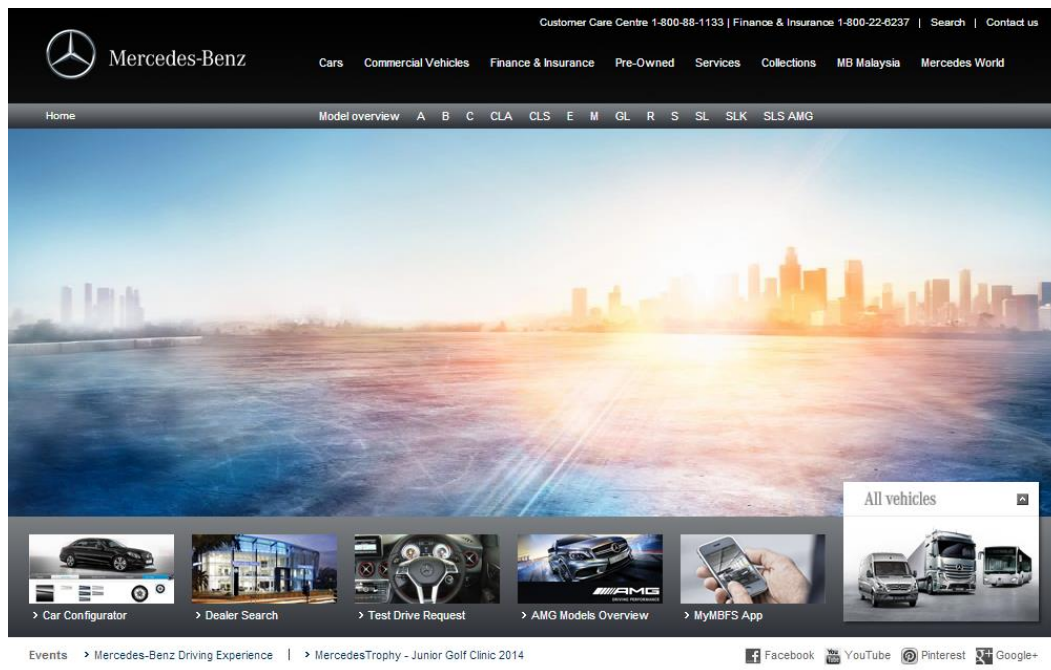
Mercedes-Benz also makes the use of social media world-wide. Daimler and also Mercedes-Benz have a number of social media fan pages on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other forms of social media globally. The company also described its strategy how to promote itself on social media in order to be visible in the online area. Daimler has its own manual 'Social Media Guidelines' that is used by marketing departments and how to deal with netizens. Daimler confirms that the current world is unimaginable without the Internet and social media (Daimler 2014a). On the one hand, Mr Howe, the Head of Global Communication in Daimler AG, stresses that 'the growing popularity of social media is highly significant for companies as well' and points out that 'anyone who ignores these discussion platforms is also ignoring an extremely effective communication channel', but, the Internet and social media are a place of uncertainty regarding its use. Therefore, Daimler employees should follow this published manual and meet its recommendations in order to conduct the social media marketing in a professional way. These tips were presented: it's always about conversation; pay attention to quality; be honest; remain polite; correct own mistakes; be professional; even as a private individual; separate opinions from fact; be yourself; handle confidential information confidentially; and observe the law (Daimler 2014a). These recommended points should be incorporated in social media marketing strategies together with the corporation targets and goals analysed in the first paragraphs. Thus, these kinds of advice should also be recognized within the case and conducting of social media marketing in Malaysia.

5.3.2 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia social media marketing in Malaysia

The Malaysian version of Mercedes-Benz is provided in the English language (Figure 91). The official website has also four direct links to official fan pages for the Malaysian market. The links covers two social network services – Facebook and Google+, one video-sharing platform – YouTube, one photo-sharing platform – Pinterest. Although, the company hyperlinked these social media platforms, it is very disputable how active they are in reality. The expectations of netizens, who are engaged in social media life, could not be met as most of platforms are not very active and some of them are not active at all, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

During the research period, findings revealed that Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has also one official microblogging site on Twitter. Apart from these channels, there were no findings regarding to blogging or official blogs for the Malaysian market. It is necessary to add that Malaysia's population reached 29,628,392 people, while internet users' number was around 19,200,408 netizens (65 per cent of population) (Wearesocial 2014).

Figure 91 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia official website



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014

Social Network Services

Facebook

Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has the official fan page channel on the most popular social network service – Facebook. This site has around 174,224 fans (Figure 92) who are based on the Facebook information provided in the age group between 25 and 34 years old, mainly. The fan page is a core stone of social media marketing of Mercedes-Benz in Malaysia compared to other social media channels. First of all, it is necessary to say that the main social media marketing activities are primarily conducted on this fan page. The fan page is promoted on the brand's official website and the Facebook fan page has a direct link to the official website as well. Moreover, Facebook provides an alternative approach to the Pinterest official fan page of Mercedes-Benz in Malaysia.

Not only are Marketers, especially in Malaysia, aware of the fact that Facebook is the most favourite B2B and also B2C social media platform globally (Stelzner 2014; Stelzner 2013), but also in Malaysia. Malaysian Internet users dominantly prefer Facebook to other social media platforms. In the last year, most of Malaysian netizens (around 95 per cent) were registered on this social medium, which represents about 18,240,388 users. Furthermore, 59 per cent of the whole Malaysian Internet population access Facebook at least once a month (Wearesocial.sg 2014).

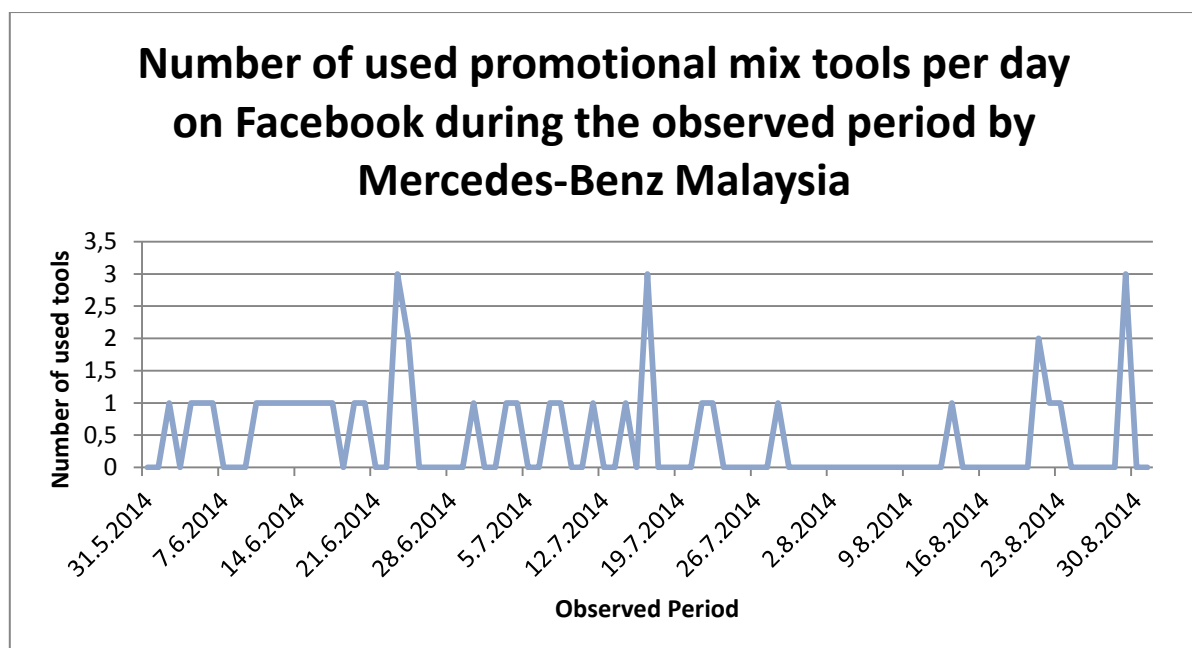
Figure 92 The Mercedes-Benz Facebook official fan page



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

The frequency of posting on Facebook was extremely low, as from the observed period the result was less than one post per day. However, it could be seen from Figure 93 that there were some periods with relatively rich postings (three posts per day), compared to the other periods. These periods were outcomes of the Mercedes-Benz campaigns during the observation and they resulted in a higher number of postings.

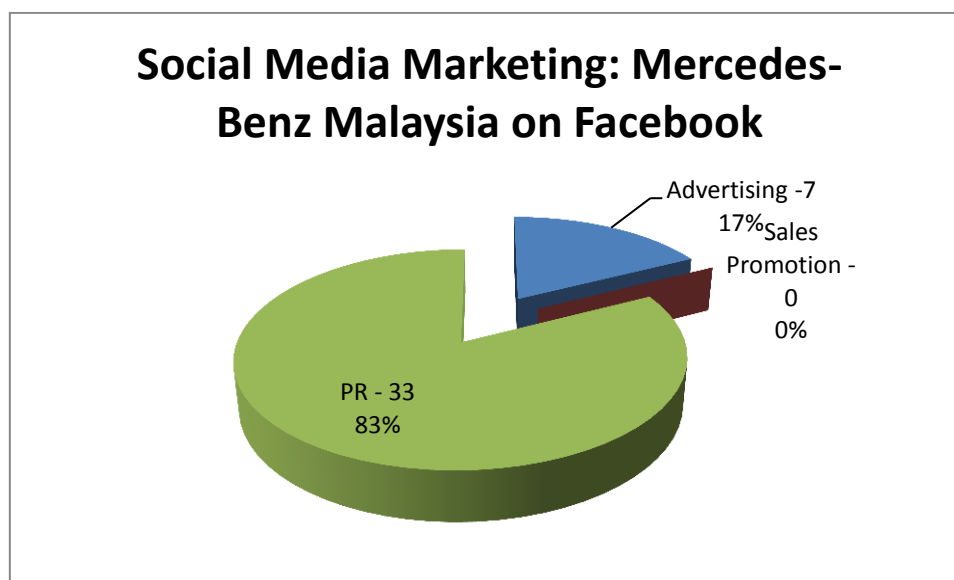
Figure 93 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia



Source: Author's compilation

Social media marketing on this fan page is not very active as was suggested in the literature review or compared to BMW Facebook fan page in India. However, posts were published decently, about less than one post per day, which is extremely low. Despite this, Mercedes-Benz has been conducting social media marketing with the use of the promotion mix tools as is shown in Figure 94.

Figure 94 Social Media Marketing: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook



Source: Author's compilation

Firstly, Mercedes-Benz marketers rely slightly on advertising, which was identified only in 7 cases (17 per cent). The activities were distributed among four advertising tools over the researched period equally depicted in Table 47. Therefore, it is necessary to point out that advertising played only a minor role in overall social media marketing structure on Facebook.

Table 47 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	2	0	3	0
Persuasive	1	0	0	0
Reminder	1	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	7			

Source: Author's compilation

Mercedes-Benz marketers used as a first tool - informative/rational elements of advertising in order to promote vacancies in the company (Figure 95) in one case. However, this kind of advertising would be more suitable on PBSN, such as LinkedIn rather than Facebook. However, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has not established its corporate's fan page on LinkedIn for the Malaysian market yet. The other case of informative/rational tool was used for promoting a value-added watch. This tool informative advertising with rational appeal was overall used twice accounting for 29 per cent of advertising. The main element of advertising was the informative/mixed element used three times accounting for 43 per cent. Via these tools, Mercedes promoted its model Mercedes-Benz new S-class, where marketers stressed the model's excellence by slogans such as 'intelligent drive', 'efficient technology' and 'essence of luxury'. In other case informative/mixed, marketers used again the word

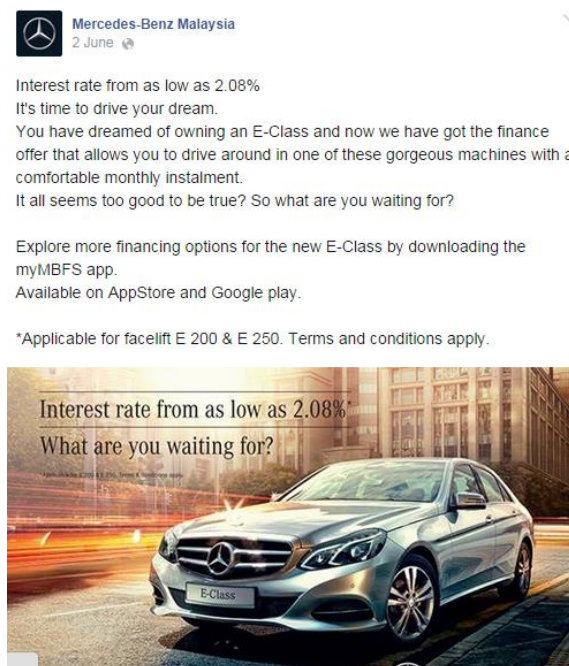
‘luxurious’ in order to emphasize the segmentation of the brand. These slogans are quite crucial, as the company is representing the luxury segment and in other words it says the Mercedes-Benz motto ‘The best or nothing’. The next group identified was the tool of persuasive advertising with rational appeal accounting for 14 per cent (Figure 96) that was trying to convince customer to make a right decision on the promoted product – Mercedes-Benz E-Class together with favourable financial conditions. It also stressed the luxurious character of the product. The last tool identified was a reminder/rational accounting for 14 per cent of advertising, which strove to remind users the possibility to buy a product in the near future backed by convenient financial guarantees. The typical feature of most of the advertisements was an attached picture, except for promoting job opportunities, where marketers promoted a certain product from Mercedes-Benz, such as Mercedes-Benz E-Class, S-Class, or a premium watch.

Figure 95 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

Figure 96 Example: Persuasive/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

Secondly, sales promotion activities were not identified. As a result, marketers from Mercedes-Benz Malaysia do not utilize this element from the promotion mix. This promotion mix tool is used very rarely on Facebook among marketers from luxury segment. In the case of India there were no findings on sales promotion and Audi in Hong Kong posted a very humble number of sales promotion posts.

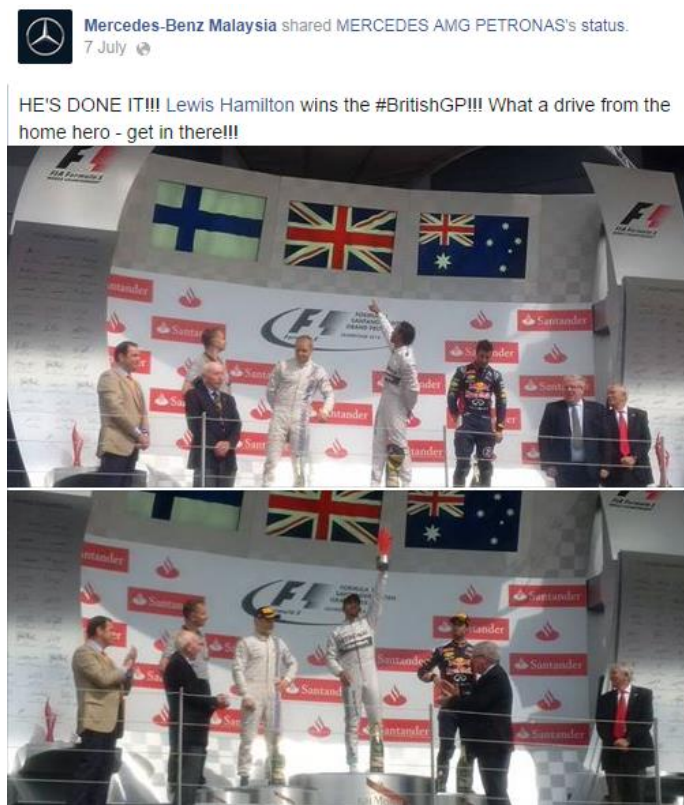
Thirdly, public relation activities were heavily used over the researched period and they are a key social media marketing activity in generally. This kind of tool from the promotion mix represents more than 80 per cent of the total number of social media marketing activities. As can be seen from Table 48, the proportion between traditional PR and online PR is almost equal.

Table 48 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

Elements of Traditional PR		Elements of Online PR	
Advertising	0	Electronic Word of Mouth (Active Word of Mouth, Buzz, Viral Marketing)	7
Events	3	Branch Content ('Advertainment')	2
Identity Media	0	Non-Branch Content	4
News	0	Support via Social Media	0
Publications	0	Social Online Integration	0
Public Service Activities	0	Integration of Customer	0
Speeches	0	Maintenance of Digital Reputation	3
Sponsorships	14	X	0
Sub-Total	17		16
Total	33		

First of all, the traditional PR will be discussed. During the observed period Mercedes-Benz Malaysia used two tools of traditional PR, specifically, events and sponsorship. Via events PR tools, used in 3 cases and accounts for 9 per cent of all PR tools, marketers announced the forthcoming venues, where a local branch of Mercedes-Benz promoted its cars to the public, on the one hand, pre-owned cars, on the other hand, featuring new models to the local market, such as CLA 45 AMG. The other traditional PR tool – sponsorship - was a dominant activity among all PR posts. Sponsorship was used in 14 cases and accounts for 43 per cent of all PR tools. This is caused mainly by the fact that Mercedes-Benz is running a formula one team (Figure 97) and it is often used for the corporate PR. Among sponsorship activities it was observed that after winning a grand prix in Formula 1 by the team of Mercedes, the post backed by photos of the winning team were attached and published. The other forms of sponsorship which were identified were venues backed by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia, in detail – Mercedes Benz Arts and Theatre, and Mercedes-Benz Trophy Junior Golf Clinic 2014.

Figure 97 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

Next, the other form of PR, online PR, was represented in 16 cases. Mercedes-Benz Malaysia actively used messages from satisfied customers via EWOM by reposting and publishing their testimonies on the Fan page site, used in 7 cases and accounts for 21 per cent of all PR tools. The two minor used tools were branch content used twice and accounts for 6 per cent. Then, the usage of non-branch content was used for specific reasons, such as winning the FIFA World Cup by the German team, used in 4 cases accounting for 12 per cent. Although, Mercedes-Benz is a partner of the German Team, they did not post PR activities linked to the activities of the German players, but just posted a picture shown in Figure 98.

Figure 98 Examples: Online PR non-branch content tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

The last online PR tool on Facebook is maintenance of their digital reputation, identified in 3 occasions accounting for 9 per cent of all PR tool. This tool is very specific, as it is not planned by the corporate marketers. This activity emerged for three times, however, twice it was rewritten by the same person who was not satisfied with the corporate's service. Thus, he was repeatedly explaining his anger and disbelief (Figure 99). Every time, the company replied stoically in order to keep the good image of Mercedes-Benz.

Figure 99 Example: Online PR maintenance of digital reputation tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook

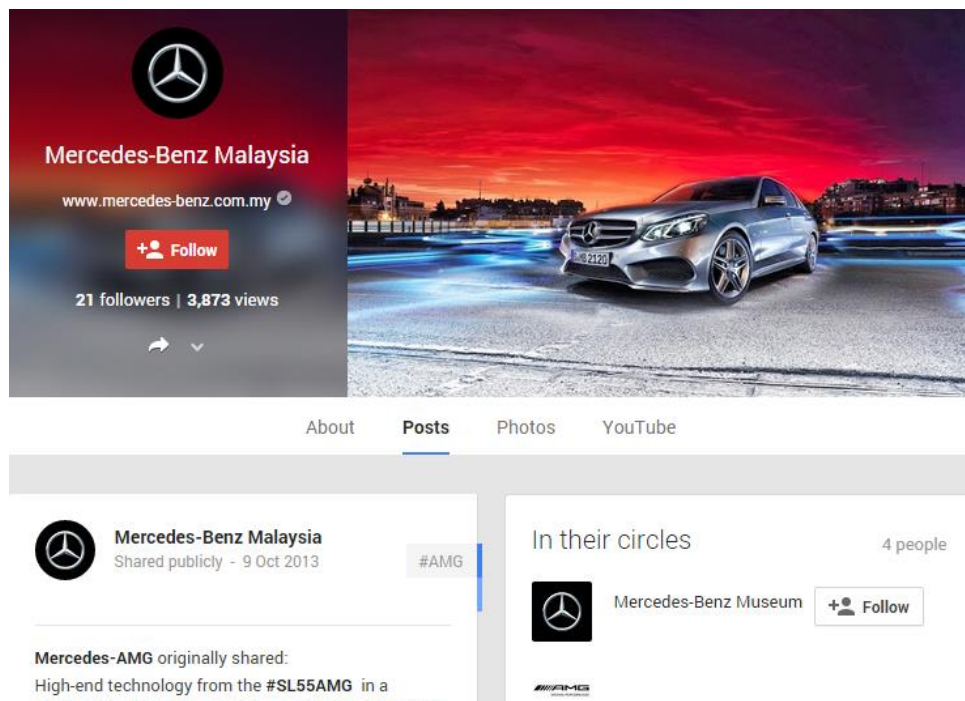


Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014a

Google+

The other social network service that is provided by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia is the official fan page on Google+. This site is also promoted on the official website and the fan page and also covers a direct link to the official Mercedes-Benz Malaysia website and phone number as the official contact details. The fan page also has an option to view videos from YouTube and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia official video channel. This is caused mainly by the fact that both platforms are run by Google, and thus, they are interconnected. Information on the registration date was not found, however, the first post was published on 9 October 2013. The page is not popular among netizens in Malaysia, as the official fan page has only 21 followers (Figure 100). The number of followers could be astonishing, as in Malaysia the number of Google+ users reached 77 per cent of all internet users – 14,783,142 and monthly active users around 32 per cent of all internet users – 6,144,131 (Wearesocial.sg 2014). The number of Marketers, who are using Google+ on the global basis, is relatively high – 54 per cent and it is among the top 6 social media platforms used for marketing (Stelzner 2014).

Figure 100 The Mercedes-Benz Google+ official fan page



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014b

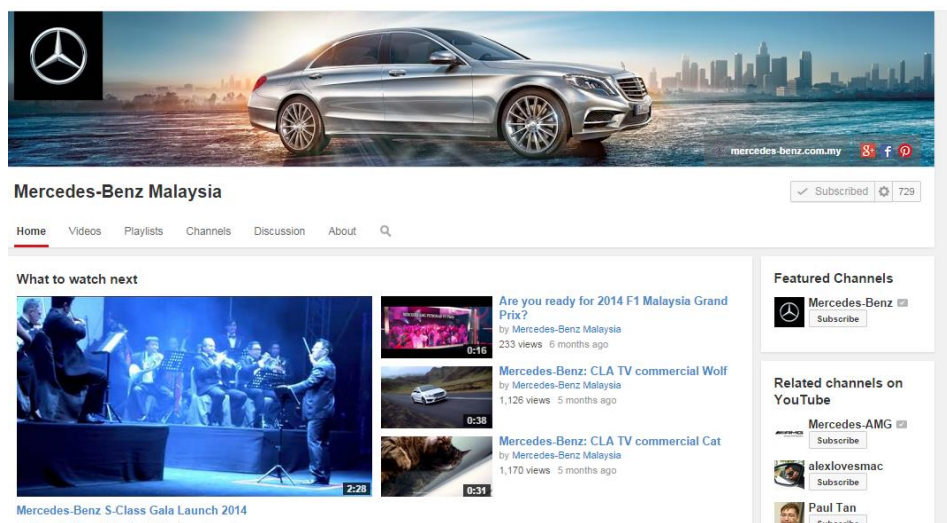
In terms of social media marketing, the trend is similar to Google+ activities of BMW India, where both companies do not conduct any activities on this platform. During the researched period, the Mercedes-Benz Malaysia fan page did not publish any posts. However, it was revealed that there were only two posts posted on 9 October 2013, which was the only activity for the whole platform.

In a nutshell, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has not been conducting any activities in terms of the promotion mix on Google+, which also reflects a relatively low number of followers. This would be harmful for the local marketers who do not use Google+ or disregard possibilities of this social network service.

Video-sharing platform YouTube

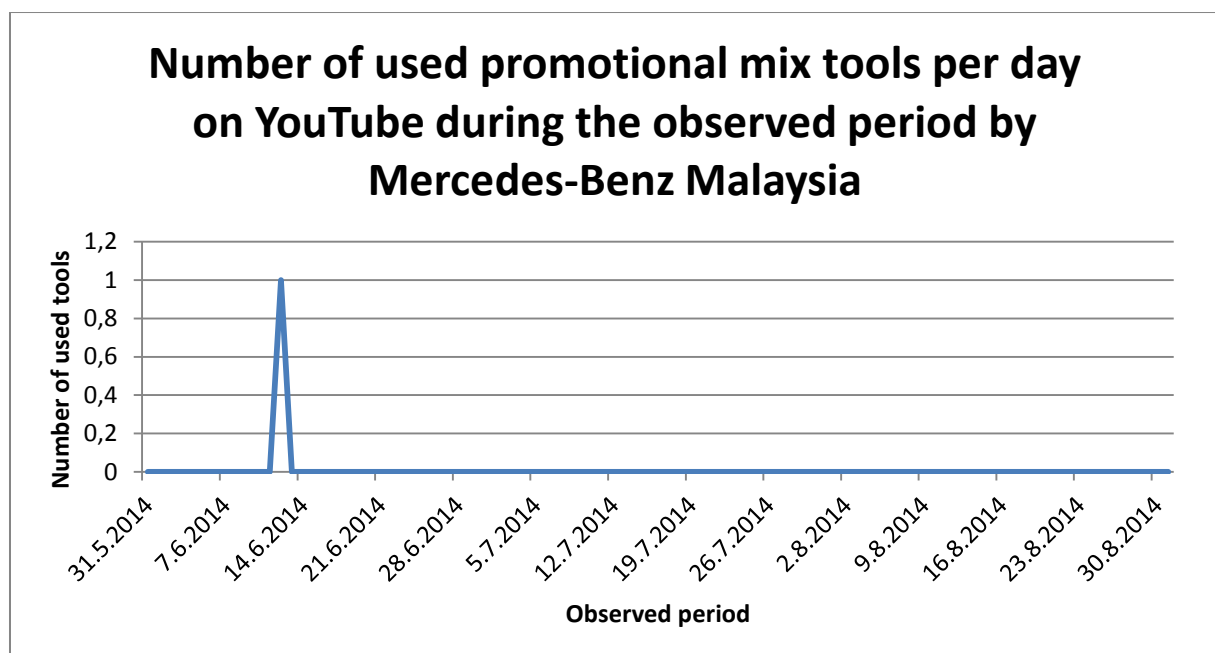
Mercedes-Benz Malaysia also officially uses the biggest video-sharing platform in the world. The official YouTube channel is hyperlinked from the official Mercedes-Benz website. However, the YouTube channel has very similar features compared to other social media platforms used in Malaysia by Mercedes-Benz (Figure 101). The official channel has only 729 subscribed followers, despite the fact that YouTube is very popular in Malaysia, where Malaysian internet users spend on average 20 hours watching online videos per week and it represents one third of spent time on social media (Malaysia Asia 2013).

Figure 101 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia TV Channel on YouTube



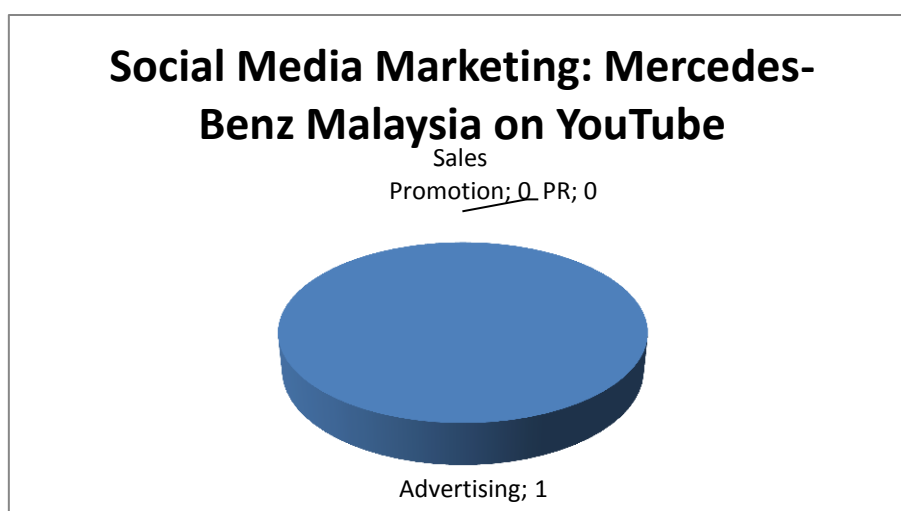
Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014c

Figure 102 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on YouTube during the observed period by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia



Source: Author's compilation

Figure 103 Social Media Marketing: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on YouTube



Source: Author's compilation

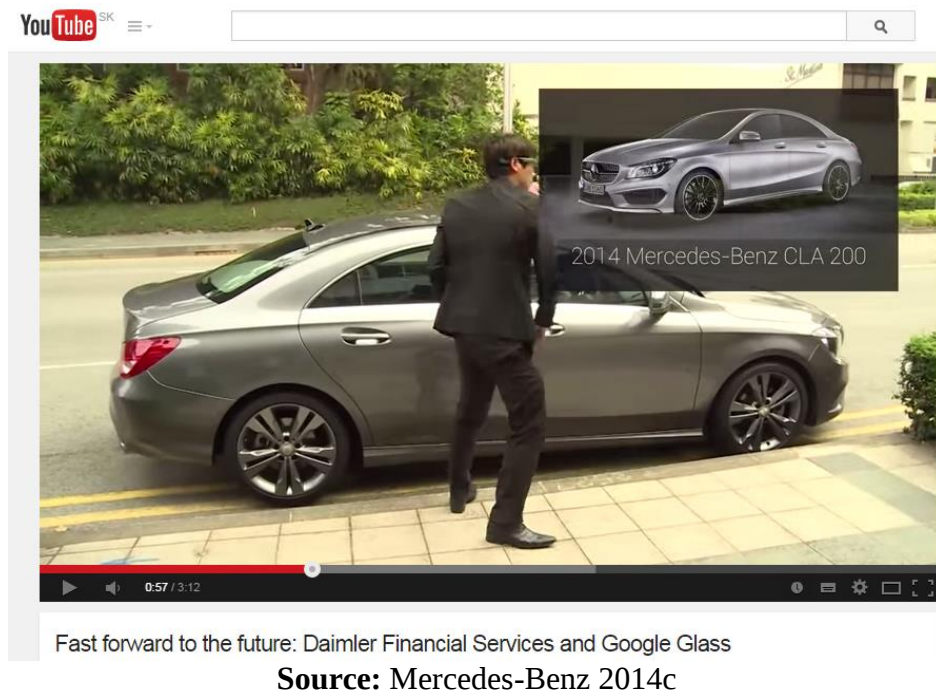
Social media marketing on YouTube used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has been observed as quite limited, as during the observed period according to Figures 102 and 103. There was only one activity. The used tool was from advertising informative with rational appeal. This advertisement informed users about the future use of Google Glass together with Mercedes-Benz services. In this case, this video was especially designed for the Malaysian market and it was not adopted from a global Mercedes-Benz TV channel.

Table 49 Overview of advertising activities on YouTube by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

	Rational	Emotional	Mixed	Endorser
Informative	1	0	0	0
Persuasive	0	0	0	0
Reminder	1	0	0	0
Reinforcement	0	0	0	0
Total	1			

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 104 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on YouTube

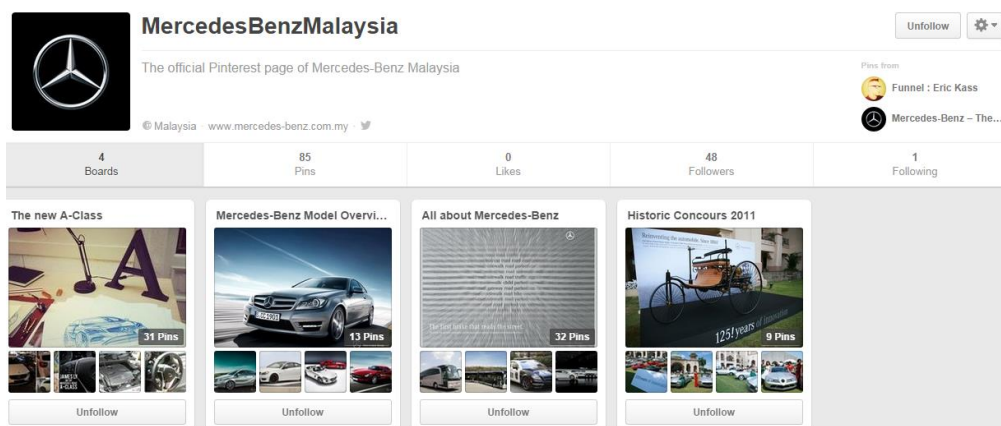


Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014c

Photo-sharing platform Pinterest

Pinterest is a relatively new social media. Despite this, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has an icon on its website as a direct link to this platform. The official fan page has a humble number of followers – 48. In terms of conducting social media marketing, or in other words, posting and pinning, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia did not post anything during the observed period. The last contributions to the fan page were almost one year ago. The published albums' (boards) contents were photographs covering the products and activities of Mercedes-Benz in general. As was found in the India case, it is very difficult for any company to attract a relatively high number of followers on Pinterest. This is caused by the fact that most users are women around (80 per cent) and communication with followers seems to be more difficult than on other social media platform. As a result, Mercedes-Benz has temporarily resigned their activities on Pinterest, albeit it is hyperlinked form the official website and Facebook.

Figure 105 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia Pinterest official fan page



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014d

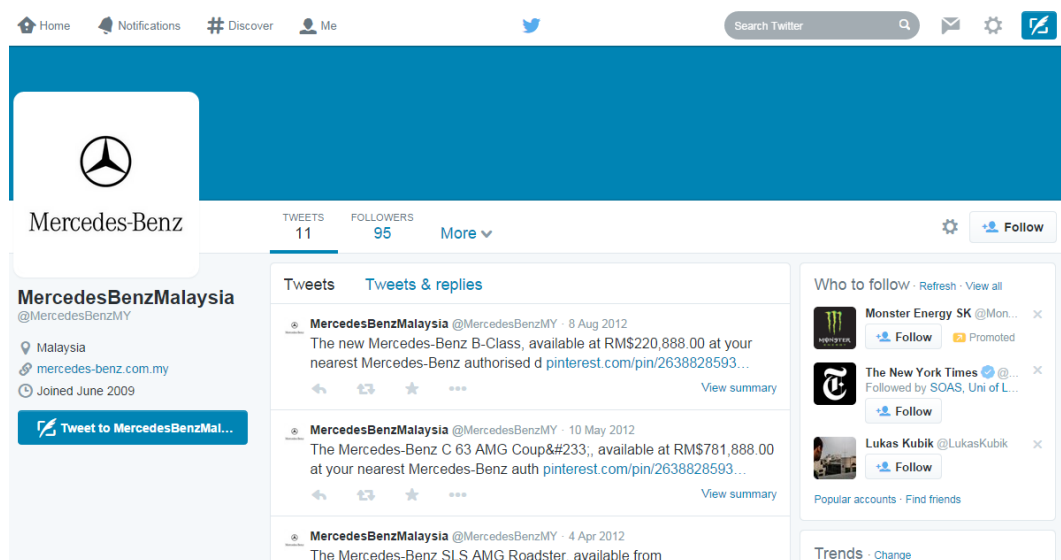
Microblogging

Twitter

Mercedes Benz Malaysia does not have any official link on its Malaysia website for microblogging service – Twitter, albeit Twitter has a direct link to the official Mercedes-Benz Malaysia website. Despite this fact, during the research, the Twitter channel was found. The official corporate Twitter account was established in June 2009, which also provides a direct link to the Mercedes-Benz official website (Figure 106).

Overall, the fan page has only 95 followers and the activities reached 11 tweets between 27 February 2012 and August 2012. The number of followers is relatively low as the total number of Twitter users in Malaysia peaked at 10,944,233, while around 4,4160,384 Twitter users are active on a monthly basis (Wearesocial.sg 2014). It is necessary to point out that all Tweets were interconnected with the photo-sharing platform Pinterest. At the moment the fan page is not active and nothing has been published since 8 August 2012.

Figure 106 The Mercedes-Benz Twitter official fan page



Source: Mercedes-Benz 2014e

During the research period, there were no findings and dates linked to social media marketing activities from the promotion mix tools. As a result, it can be said that the Twitter fan page has not been active more than two years in Malaysia. Therefore, no data could be analyzed and presented here.

By and large, it could be said that Mercedes-Benz Malaysia ignores at least some potential on Twitter, as there were no findings and it resulted in no researched promotional tools. On the one hand, there is a very small number of Twitter users in Malaysia and followers of the Mercedes-Benz account, while, on the other hand, Twitter is a significant marketing and promotional tool on a global basis. In other words, the strategy was not found for Twitter at all, albeit marketers suggest using Twitter without limitations per day, whereas for Facebook the piece of advice is to post it only a couple times per day. As a result, Mercedes-Benz is ignoring the potential of Twitter, as they have not posted any Tweets, which probably resulted in the ignorance of Twitter users as a whole.

6 Analysis

In this chapter the analysis of collected data will be provided. The gained data will be analysed within each case. Further, based on the fact that the paper is comparative, the cross-case analysis within the studied countries will follow.

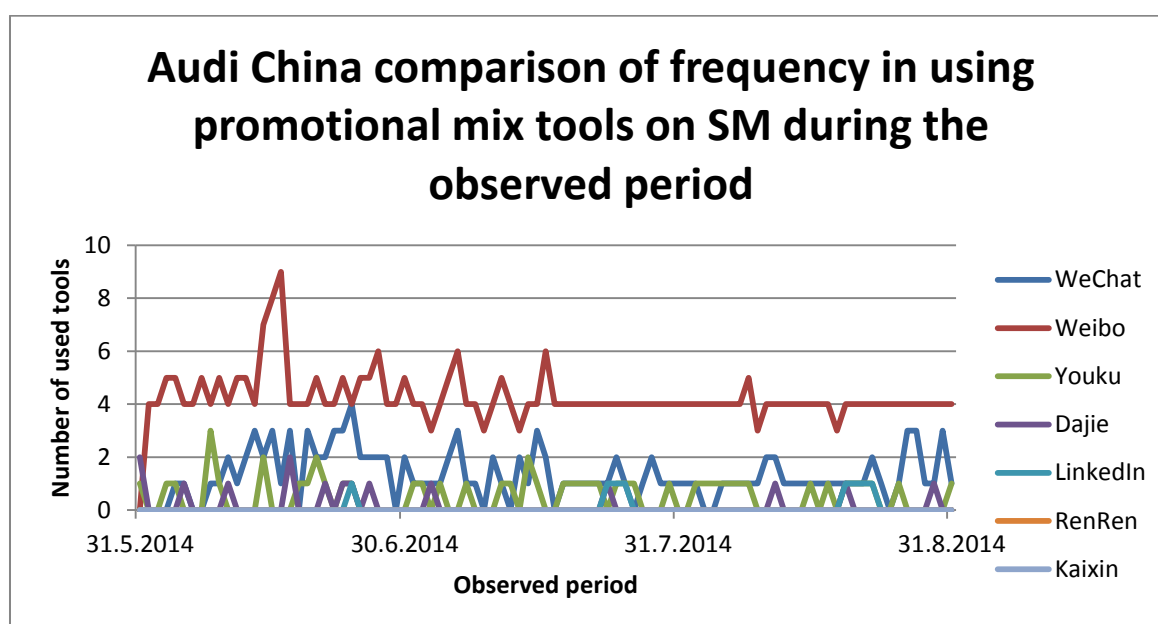
6.1 Within Case Analysis

The collected data that was gained during the research will be analysed within each case in order to provide the analysis of the promotional mix with reference to each studied social media platform.

6.1.1 Case 1: Audi China

At the moment, Audi China uses five social media platforms, while two were omitted. Social media marketing in China requires using local social media platforms, as most of Western SM channels are blocked, albeit LinkedIn defined its social media policy within Chinese censorship requirements. Thus, the in Audi China case, the usage of four Chinese and one Western social media was found.

Figure 107 Case 1: Audi China comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period



Source: Author's compilation

As can be seen from Figure 107 and Table 50, the use of social media for the promotional mix activities is relatively frequent. The most used platforms were Weibo (microblogging) and Weixin (MSN). As mentioned above, both are a hub of Chinese middle-class Internet users that could be potential affluent customers. Moreover, Weibo and Weixin are currently the most favourite social media platforms in the PRC due to the fact that two SNSs: Renren and Kaixin, were left by active users, and then by marketers.

Weibo as the most important and significant social medium attracts a vast number of Chinese netizens, and, therefore Audi China has to conduct relatively rich social media marketing activities, which primarily consist of PR and a high number of generated posts per

day that is not limited to microblogging. Traditional tools of PR were used on a daily basis, as Audi China continuously conducted PR advertising campaigns focused on its brand image. Furthermore, sponsorship activities were the second most used tool among PR. However, online PR tools, such as EWOM were not generated abundantly, albeit Chinese customers pay special attention to WOM as such.

Not only does WeChat attract users, but also marketers. Thus, Audi China launched its adjusted subscription for WeChat users. The cornerstone of this channels' content is also based on PR, then advertising and sales promotion, in particular during important events, such as the FIFA World Cup. The frequency of postings is much lower compared to Weibo, as mobile social network service is more personal and the rich messaging from marketers could be perceived intrusive by users. However, perhaps the biggest and currently untapped potential in the growing WeChat platform is for local dealers. This platform could be used as the tool for local sales promotions rather than for the whole PRC.

Table 50 Case 1: Social Media Platforms Overview of Audi China

Social media platform	Number of followers/subscribers	Promotional Mix	Elements of Promotional mix and their share
WeChat (MSN)	200,00	Identified	A (25%); SP (13%); PR (62%)
Weibo (MB)	1,316,968	Identified	A (31%); SP (3%); PR (66%)
Renren(SNS)	376,436	Not identified	None
Kaixin (SNS)	304,491	Not identified	None
LinkedIn (PBSN)	2,447	Identified	A (75%); PR (25%)
Dajie (PBSN)	102,789	Identified	A (87%); PR (13)
Youku (VSP)	Not published	Identified	A (59%); PR (41%)

*Legend: MSN – Mobile Social Network; MB – Microblogging; SNS – Social Network Service; PBSN – Professional Business Social Networks; VSP – Video-sharing platform; PSP – photo-sharing platform; A – Advertising; SP – Sales Promotion; PR - Public Relations

After that, the use of other social media is different from Weibo and WeChat. Audi China uses two PBSNs: global social medium LinkedIn and Chinese Dajie. The difference is rooted mainly in audience preferences; on the one hand, LinkedIn is relatively new in China (officially since February 2014) and has the smallest number of followers, whereas, on the other hand, Dajie has more followers than LinkedIn (see Table 50). Both PBSNs prefer advertising to PR, as users primarily look for vacancies within companies and PRs serve for building a positive image of corporations as prestigious employers from the automotive premium sector. Audi China uses two PBSNs; however their contents are not identical. LinkedIn promotes jobs that require more international experience and it is also oriented towards expats within the PRC. Dajie, in contrast, is focusing solely on Chinese professionals that have the ambition to work for a prestigious company.

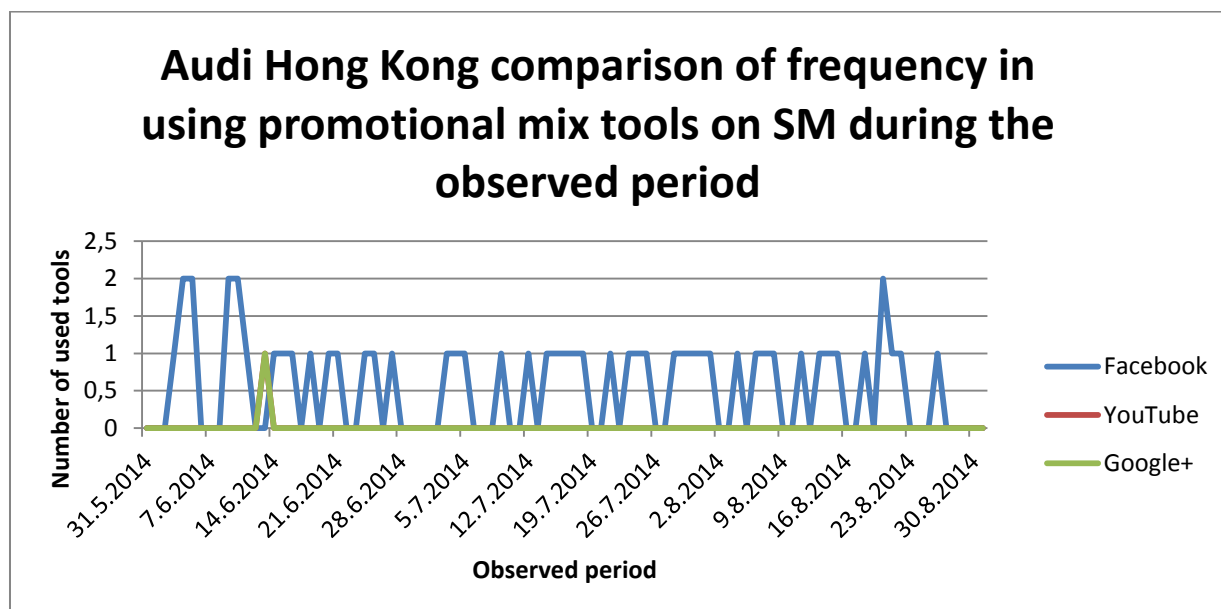
Finally, Youku is used as a TV channel with the focus on advertising and PR. Based on the research, it could be said that its function is to serve as a supported video platform which is hyperlinked to Weibo.

6.1.2 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong

Audi Hong Kong has three official social media channels; however, their use and the scope of marketing activities is very limited. Although Hong Kong is set in the Chinese cultural

environment, the researched case does not conduct social media marketing on Chinese social media. Audi Hong Kong solely uses Western social media – Facebook, Google+ and YouTube.

Figure 108 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period



Source: Author's compilation

Figure 108 and Table 51 provide the comparison of all social media used for the promotional mix activities by Audi Hong Kong. Facebook is leading in the frequency of postings, elements of the promotional mix and the number of followers. Facebook was used for all promotional mix activities, where the focus lies in public relations. The use of PR is as follows: online PR tools were used most of the time, while traditional PR sponsorship and events were the most used among all tools. Besides, advertising and sales promotions played a minor role.

Google services (Google+ and YouTube), in contrast, generated only one post/video for the whole period of the observation. Furthermore, Google+ has an insignificant number of followers – 11, which is in contrast to the number of followers on Facebook – 128,167.

Table 51 Case 2: Social Media Platforms Overview of Audi Hong Kong

Social platform	media	Number of followers/subscribers	Promotional Mix	Elements of Promotional mix and their share
Facebook (SNS)		128,167	Identified	A (25%); SP (3%); PR (72%)
Google+ (SNS)		11	Identified	A (100%)
YouTube (VSP)		1,284	Identified	A (100%)

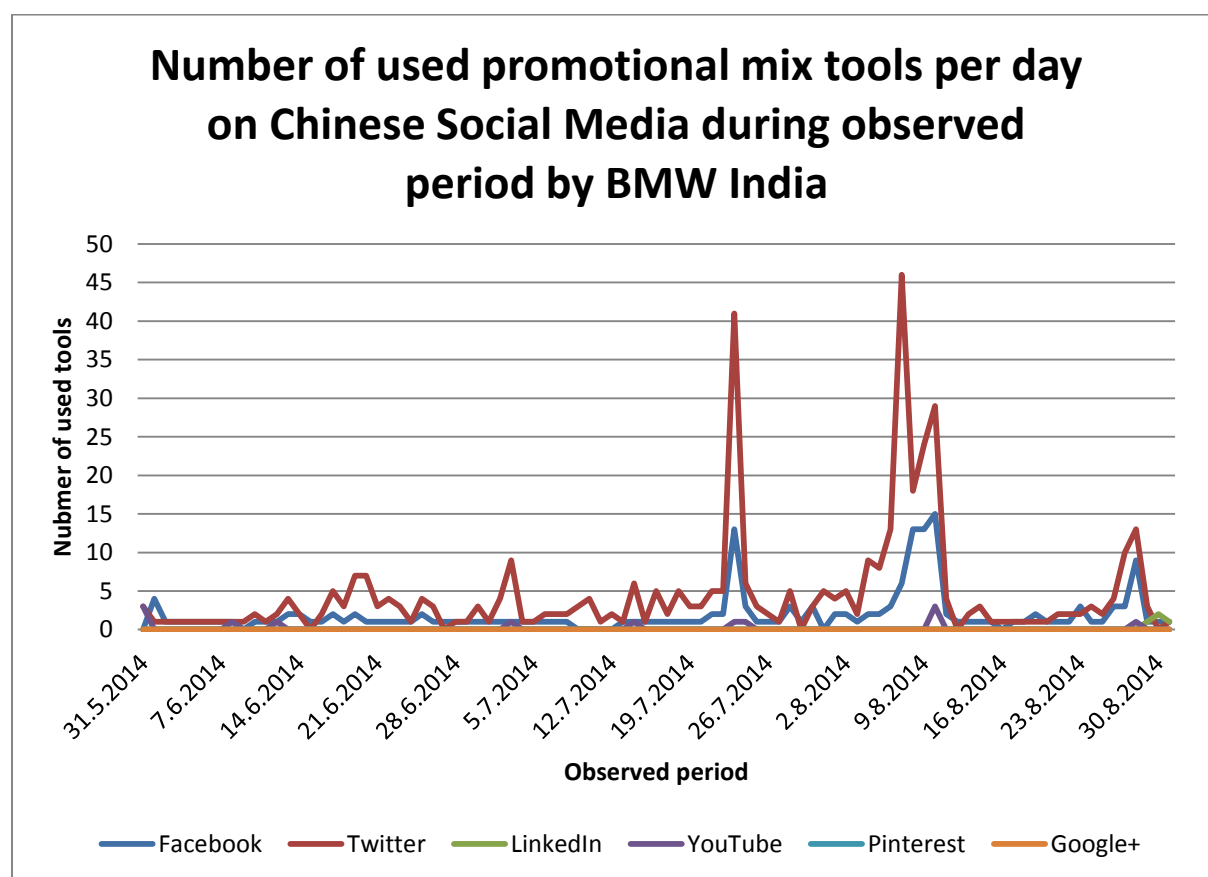
In a nutshell, it could be concluded that Audi Hong Kong's social media marketing is narrowly focused on Facebook. On the one hand, Google services – Google+ and YouTube are utilized minimally, and other Western social media are not used at all, such as LinkedIn or Pinterest. On the other hand, Audi Hong Kong could theoretically also use Chinese social

media platforms in the future, specifically WeChat as it is one of the most favourite social media in Hong Kong and adjust social media marketing for it.

6.1.3 Case 3: BMW India

According to the findings, BMW India used a number of social media platforms extensively for its social media marketing for the local market and India's netizens. India does not impose any legal or other obstacles for Western social media, and, hence, companies can conduct their social media marketing on all kinds of them. BMW India naturally selected Western social media, which are popular among local users.

Figure 109 Case 3: BMW India comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools



Source: Author's compilation

Table 52 Case 3: Social Media Platforms Overview of BMW India

Social media platform	Number of followers/subscribers	Promotional Mix	Elements of Promotional mix and their share
Facebook (SNS)	2,901,183	Identified	A (32%); PR (68%)
Twitter (MB)	64,197	Identified	A (17%); PR (83%)
Google+ (SNS)	181	Not identified	None
YouTube (VSP)	4,784	Identified	A (75%); PR (25%)
LinkedIn (PBSN)	15,923	Identified	A (75%); PR (25%)
Pinterest (PSP)	290	Not identified	None

Figure 109 and Table 52 show the comparisons of the use of social media used by BMW India. The corporation strives to target its consumers via two main social media, Facebook and Twitter. However, there is a stark contrast between the usage of Facebook and Twitter. Due to the nature of Facebook, it enjoys high popularity also in India, where BMW India has the largest audience of followers, but the number of posts is lower compared to Twitter. Despite the fact that Twitter's social media marketing conducted by BMW India was the most in the volume of posts; the number of followers 64,197 was multiple times lower in comparison with Facebook – 2,901,183.

Next, the structure of the promotional mix is relatively similar (see Table 52), whilst social media used only advertising and PR, sales promotions were not only used on Facebook and Twitter, but also on any other social media platforms used by BMW India. In terms of advertising, BMW India used a standard distribution of advertising tools with the special reference to an informative tool with rational appeal. This was caused mainly by the fact that BMW India was introducing new models to the Indian market. Then, the use of PR was extremely high on both Facebook and Twitter. Online PR tools were used largely on Twitter, notably EWOM. This kind of tool was used for enhancing the customer satisfaction via delivery of their satisfaction to the Twitter audience. Besides, both social media used sponsorship, which is critical for the premium segment as the brand could enjoy the fans' attention via sport events, or fashion venues designed specifically for Indian customers. BMW India, in contrast, did not fully use the potential of Facebook, as online PR activities were utilized minimally, namely EWOM which was not used at all.

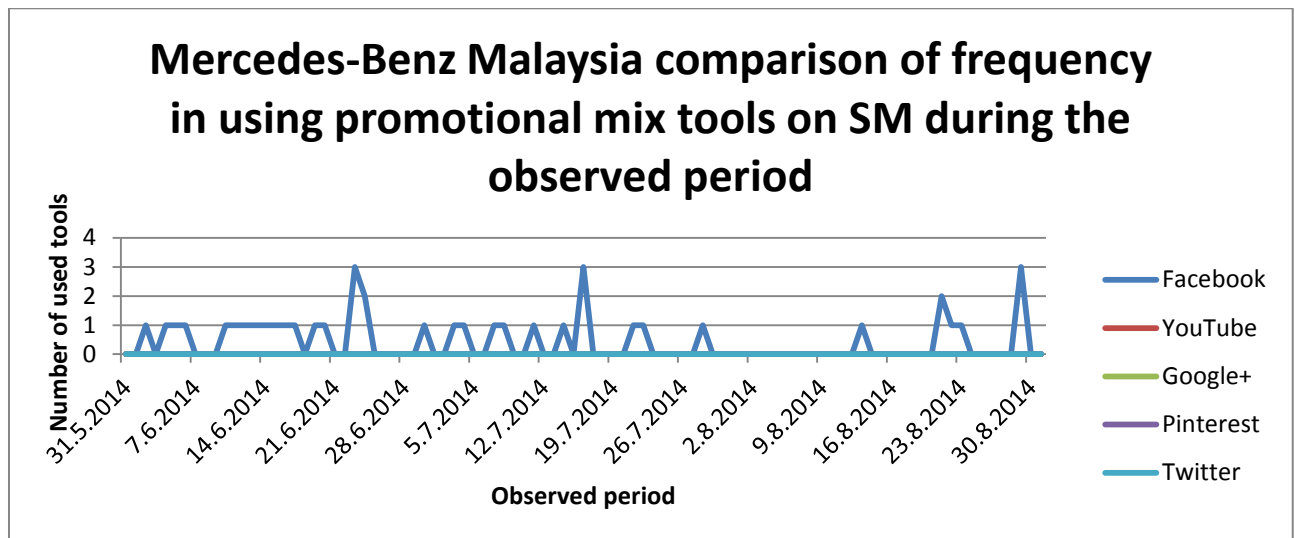
The rest of social media were used differently. The LinkedIn fan page generated a very low volume of content, based primarily on advertising, but there was a minimum of vacancies if any published via this site. The very same structure of the promotional mix was found on BMW India's TV channel on YouTube that generated videos chiefly for advertising purposes and then PR in the form of sponsorship and events.

Apart from the key social media, BMW India has two channels which did not generate any content from the promotional mix during the observation. Firstly, Google+ has a negligible number of followers – 181 in comparison to Facebook 2,901,183. Although Google+ is described as a promising social media platform for future use, BMW India abandoned their activities on this SM, but the fact is that other companies (Audi Hong Kong or Mercedes-Benz Malaysia) also struggle to find an effective strategy how to conduct their social media marketing on this platform. On the one hand, it can be seen that Pinterest is a similar case to Google+. However, the majority of users are women and the success is based on their pinning (sharing) posted photos. BMW India has an insignificant number of followers: 290, and thus, the corporation did not generate any new content, despite the fact that there was a huge sponsorship campaign, India Bridal Fashion Week, where the target audience were women.

6.1.4 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

Mercedes-Benz Malaysia's social media channels were identified in five cases. However, not all of them are actively used for social media marketing purposes. Malaysia does not block Western social media and, accordingly, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia has five fan pages on Facebook, Google+, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

Figure 110 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period



Source: Author's compilation

Table 53 Case 4: Social Media Platforms Overview of Mercedes-Benz Malaysia

Social platform	media	Number of followers/subscribers	Promotional Mix	Elements of Promotional mix and their share
Facebook (SNS)		174,224	Identified	A (17%); PR (83%)
Twitter (MB)		95	Not identified	None
Google+ (SNS)		21	Not identified	None
YouTube (VSP)		729	Identified	A (100%)
Pinterest (PSP)		48	Not identified	None

Figure 110 and Table 53 reveal that the only relevant social medium is Facebook. Mercedes-Benz Malaysia conducted its activities de facto only on Facebook, albeit in a very laconic way. According to the fan statistics, the most represented sample of followers is on Facebook. Activity was divided into advertising and particularly PR, while sales promotions were not identified on any social media platform. Firstly, advertising was used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia for introducing new models and cultivating brand-customer relationship. Secondly, PR tools were based mainly on sponsorship elements that promoted the success of the Mercedes F1 team, and from online PR tools, chiefly the German football national team achievements during the FIFA World Cup 2014 via non-branch content tool.

Other social media were not used or used only once – YouTube. From the netizens' point of view, it is quite paradoxical that the Twitter account is absolutely inactive, as it offers a large number of possibilities, namely, posting online PR tools and delivering EWOM. The Google+ fan page did not generate any content and apparently, the inactivity and a small number of followers (21) caused the brand's reluctance to be active on this Google service. Finally, the Pinterest channel also did not feature any new photos for more than one year, and marketers also cannot figure out the problem how to set a strategy that would enlarge the Pinterest audience and motivate followers to pin the uploaded content that is in favour of women. Mercedes-Benz evidently left their activities apart from Facebook and YouTube, despite the fact that Mercedes-Benz has the ambition to enlarge its sales. The corporate activities on social media are almost invisible; moreover, the brand does not have any account on professional business social networks, such as LinkedIn.

6.2 Cross Case Analysis

As this paper has a comparative character and strives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cases with their similarities and differences, the following cross case analysis will be offered.

Analysed data has shown that all four cases have to some extent active fan pages on social media. First of all, it is evident that Audi China operates in a different *modus operandi* in comparison to Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia. Not only does Audi China accept the framework of the Chinese online environment, but also other companies either from the luxury segment or other industry. This is caused by the fact that China's social media area is unique according to the legal and censorship framework and completely different from Western social media used by other cases Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia.

The recent development brought mobile social network services, especially WeChat that was used for social media marketing purposes only within our cases in the PRC, which is the starkest difference between the studied cases. Next, Chinese original social network services (Renren and Kaixin) have become insignificant for conducting any promotional mix elements and its subcategories. Other companies outside the PRC heavily focus on Facebook, as all of them have the biggest communities of followers primarily on this SNS that has been blocked in the PRC since 2009. China's MSNS WeChat represents a new trend that has been changing in the last two years in China, where netizens are turning more to mobile applications that enable them to share statuses and photos, or send instant and voice messages. In order to reach customers within the PRC, marketers build the mobile social network marketing on subscription, where customers are receiving messages with the company content, ideally one per day with several posts that are connected to the corporate content. This service is used for advertising, sales promotions and public relations. Although WeChat is not identified in other cases, it is likely that this service or other MSNS will be used for marketing purposes in these countries in the future as it is among the favourite applications among internet users in Southeast and South Asia.

In addition, the use of microblogging services is crucial for two studied cases: Audi China and BMW India. Both companies possess a fan page/channel on Weibo (Audi China) and Twitter (BMW India), respectively. According to the analysed data, for premium car brands is important to post microblogs every day. Both companies used microblogging for advertising and mainly public relations, but Audi China also used sales promotion tools occasionally. Weibo is the most dominant social medium in China for Audi China, while Twitter is the second most favourite by users and the most used by BMW in terms of generating the promotional mix tools. Firstly, Audi China Weibo account serves as a tool for enhancing its corporate image via three most used tools: advertising, sponsorship and non-branch content. BMW India, in contrast, used electronic word of mouth via retweeting posts from other users frequently, which is the most used and most important tool on microblogging. Besides, the next important tool was sponsorship, which is also the second most used tool within PR by Audi China and BMW India. Despite the fact that Mercedes-Benz has its own official account on Twitter, it is not active, and Audi Hong Kong does not have any microblogging fan page.

In regards to using SNSs, they are mainly represented in this paper by Facebook. In the PRC, SNSs were abandoned either by active users or marketers, despite the relatively high number of followers on Renren and Kaixin on Audi China fan pages. Outside the PRC, in contrast, the social network service Facebook plays a crucial role, and for marketers it is the most important social medium. All three cases – Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia have their biggest audience of followers on Facebook, where the majority consists of middle-class users. What these three companies have in common is the

use of PR that generated the main content. However, it is necessary to point out that BMW India was the most active on Facebook, as it published more posts in comparison to Audi Hong Kong and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia. The most used tool also on Facebook, among all three cases, was sponsorship, whilst other PR tools used by BMW India were advertising and events, Audi Hong Kong events and maintenance of digital reputation. Mercedes-Benz Malaysia used its official fan page for the same purposes as Audi Hong Kong or BMW India, except of using sales promotion. Thus, it could be concluded that all three brands used Facebook mainly for their PR for the local markets.

All companies that have an official channel on Google+: Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia suffer from followers' ignorance as the numbers of followers are negligible. As an illustration, Audi Hong Kong: 11. BMW India: 181 and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia: 21, so it can be seen that their activity on Google+ is meaningless to analyse and discuss, if existing at all.

Video-sharing platforms are used across all cases. All of them are utilized as the supportive channel and their contents are shared on SNSs or microblogging, with some exceptions on PBSNs. The common feature of the studied cases is the use of advertising as the most frequent tool on VSPs. The difference is that Audi China does not use YouTube, but a Chinese VSP – Youku. Other brands have their TV channels on YouTube, but it is necessary to point out that all of them generated only a few videos during the observed period.

Then, professional business network services were used by Audi China (LinkedIn and Dajie) and BMW India (LinkedIn). For both cases it is typical that their activity is very low and primarily serves as the platform for publishing vacancies supporting PR in China. BMW India has launched its activity on LinkedIn recently and its postings cover mainly advertising and some tools from PR. Audi China and BMW India use these kinds of social media platforms occasionally, as it primarily depends on the vacant position within the company and for very humble postings from PR.

Finally, in two cases, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia have their official channel on Pinterest. However, both companies did not publish any new content during the research period. Moreover, both Pinterest channels had a small number of followers: BMW India 290 and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia 48. The key problem is how to target the Pinterest audience, where the majority consist of women and it is difficult to motivate them to pin the corporate photos of the luxury cars photos.

Last but not least, with regards to other findings, all companies were observed in the period when the FIFA World Cup 2014 was held. For this reason, companies used non-branch content tools (online PR tool) on their main social media platform channels in order to stress the success of the German football team. These posts contained information on the German success supported by various thematic pictures.

Finally, although the corporate blogs are popular among markers in the world, as it was defined in the literature review. During the research, the obvious similarity was found, as any studied case did not have an official blog. All companies conducted their SMM promotional mix activities solely on MSNS, microblogging, PBSN or content-sharing platforms.

7 Findings, Conclusions and Implications

The final chapter will provide the outcome of the analysis from the previous chapters together with conclusions, and the chapter will answer the research questions and provide the implications.

7.1 Findings

This subchapter will provide answers to the research questions.

RQ1: How can the use of social media as a promotional tool on specific social media channels by luxury brands be characterised?

According to the analysed data, it can be concluded that there is no unified strategy found among cases, which was caused by the fact that there is no common social medium used by all studied cases. First of all, it is necessary to realize that the brands from the luxury segment utilize social media primarily for PR their activities. After that, the second most used tool was advertising, and finally sales promotions, while this promotional mix element was identified only occasionally. Next, the scope of the promotional mix activities is dependent on the type of social media platform. Mobile social network service WeChat is used only by Audi China within the PRC and the corporation uses this tool mainly for PR, then for advertising and occasionally for sales promotion. Microblogging sites were used for PR. EWOM was extensively used only in the case on Twitter in India. Although it could have been used by Audi China on Weibo, the main activity was PR advertising. Especially, Facebook as a SNS was used for traditional PR activities, in particular sponsorship and events. Finally, PBSN and VSP were used for advertising mainly backed by PR.

RQ2: How can the motivation of specific social media platforms and the use of the promotional mix in different countries in China, India and Malaysia be characterised?

The main motivations, for using a different scope of social media, are as follows. Companies from the luxury segment in the PRC, Hong Kong, India and Malaysia are trying to use between one to two social media for their main activities from the promotional mix. As was found, each case has at least one social medium that is targeting a huge audience owing to the fact that the majority of users are from the middle-class. However, in the PRC, Audi China is using Weibo in order to conduct PR advertising that helps the company promote its image with supportive tools from advertising and sales promotion. Next, they have started using immediately with the emergence of WeChat, also this new kind of MSNS which has also the majority of users from the Chinese middle-class workers. Moreover, people could receive subscriptions from Audi China directly to their phones on a daily basis. In the research, it was revealed that almost all observed social media platforms were solely used for public relations activities, mainly MSNS, SNSs and microblogging sites. Mobile social network service WeChat has become an important social media platform together with microblogging platform Weibo in the PRC, while SNSs are not used by Audi China and other SM, such as PBSN are used mainly for advertising. The main difference in terms of motivation to use these platforms is as follows. Audi China, on WeChat and Weibo, is trying to target a huge mass of middle-class users, via PR in order to enhance the brand image due to its luxurious status. On the other hand, PBSN are used occasionally with a low frequency in order to promote the vacancies with the company, where the audience looks for professional positions rather than PR, which is caused of the nature of PBSN (LinkedIn and Dajie).

Outside China, it was found that companies used only a limited number of social media and only the most popular. The main feature is using Facebook for enhancing their image, as it is used by the highest number of netizens and the companies are able to target the biggest audience. Facebook is mainly used by white-collar workers in Hong Kong, India and Malaysia, therefore, all three companies are trying to target this mass of middle-class netizens. Microblogging platform Twitter is used only by BMW India, where the company has a small number of followers compared to its Facebook account. Apart from this, BMW India has started using LinkedIn, where the activity was minimal. The other typical feature is that BMW India and Mercedes-Benz India have the official channels on Pinterest, but they are not attractive for mainly female users and they do not know how to target them effectively, as both companies have negligible groups of followers. Finally, Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia have their accounts on Google+, but this service is not very attractive for users and, thus, companies do not have motivation to promote their brand on this SNS.

RQ3: To what extent do companies from the luxury segment use specific social media in China, India and Malaysia?

Although in both online areas the Chinese online area and the non-restricted online area (Hong Kong, India and Malaysia), there are a number of social media platforms, companies decided overall to leave them and use only a small number for their social media marketing activities. Audi China in the PRC does not use their SNSs (Renren and Kaixin), because the majority of social media marketing is conducted on WeChat and Weibo as these two platforms are the biggest and they are utilized by the middle-class. While other kind of social media – PBSNs: LinkedIn and Dajie provide offers of vacancies and PR in a very laconic way and their usage is minimal. By and large, it can be said that all four cases in the observed countries are using the promotional mix tools relatively in a similar way, while sales promotion tools were used only in the PRC and Hong Kong. However, the use of social media is different from other cases. Therefore, Audi China does not use any social media outside the PRC, while other cases use the same social media channels. With the spread of WeChat in Asian countries can be a new social media channel for conducting social media marketing among the affluent consumers. Other studied cases use the most Facebook, and in a very limited way also YouTube. Facebook represented for them the most significant tool how to reach the middle-class audience. Other social media do not play such an important role in comparison to Facebook.

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between marketing practices in the luxury segment between China, India and Malaysia and how can they be explained?

The main similarity is the use of social media for PR. Across case studies it was found that social media are a suitable tool for enhancing the corporate image for premium brands, while companies concentrate their efforts on one or maximum two social media platforms in all observed cases. Especially, traditional PR tools as sponsorship and events that promoted the activity of the corporation in sport or cultural events were used in all cases. It can be said that the next similarity is also the proportion of the promotion mix on the most used channels. As the most used element was PR, in the PRC: PR advertising, in Hong Kong and Malaysia: PR events and sponsorship, and in India: EWOM. In terms of using PR, two companies: Audi China, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia built their PR mainly on traditional PR, whereas BMW India and Audi Hong Kong on online PR tools. The next similarity is that all studied cases used their TV channels as a supportive SM for other platforms. Audi China used Youku for sharing

videos on Weibo, while other companies used YouTube for sharing videos on Facebook or Twitter.

The main difference is the use of MSNS. The only case that uses promotional mix tools at the moment is Audi China, despite the fact that WeChat is becoming popular also in Hong Kong (the most popular SM at the moment), India and Malaysia. The next difference is that Audi China relies on MSNS and microblogging channels, while other companies rely primarily on Facebook. Moreover, Audi Hong Kong and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia de facto only use Facebook and they do not use microblogging, which could enhance their PR. Last, but not least, there is not a single social medium or social medium type that is used in each case. This fact is caused chiefly by the different social media in China, where the key platforms are microblogging and mobile social networks, while other cases rely primarily on one social network service – Facebook.

7.2 Conclusions

According to the research and its findings, the following conclusion can be provided. Firstly, the promotional mix as the main tool for social media marketing is used by all four case studies. The evident trend is that the companies selectively use one or a maximum two social media for conducting their social media marketing activities, while other social media platforms, if they have fan pages, are always generating a minimum of the promotional mix activities. Secondly, companies outside China evidentially prefer using Facebook for a simple reason. The Facebook fan pages always have the biggest audience and followers. Thus, the conducting social media marketing on this SNS is a must. On the other hand, China's online landscape is different, two SNSs are not interesting for marketers and users, and, in addition mobile social networks services will probably play a dominant role in the future for the promotional mix. WeChat the new social media has emerged in China, immediately have become one of the major tools for conducting social media marketing also in the luxury segment. However, the main tool for SMM in the PRC is still microblogging channel Weibo.

The analysed data shows that there is no unified strategy among all cases; however, all of them use SM for PR in order to enhance their status as a prestigious brand. Despite the fact that social media offer a vast place for using online PR tools, the most active user was BMW India on Twitter. The rest of the studied cases and the use of social media were primarily utilized for traditional PR – PR advertising, events and sponsorship.

7.3 Implications

7.3.1 Implications for Theory

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009) the research has shown that the combination of direct marketing and additional personal selling are not used. However, the emergence, in particular in the PRC, of mobile application could cause in the near future that marketers will rely on more direct marketing tools as well, especially, via local distribution channels, even for brands from the luxury segment. As MSNS would generate a unique bunch of data of each customer and the social media marketing will be adjusted according to the personal preferences.

7.3.2 Implications for Practitioners

As was pointed out in the literature review and in the analysis, Facebook is one of the most used social media worldwide, but not in the PRC due to the restrictions. Regarding using Google+, it is very hard to predict its usage; however, marketing experts consider it as promising, but corporations have a negligible number of followers. According to the analysed data, one specific social medium was used not used during the research, which was Pinterest by two companies: BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia. Marketers could try to incorporate some PR tools from other used social media, especially from Facebook and generate at least a couple of posts per week. In order to enhance using Pinterest, marketers would adjust the content for women that would tempt them to propagate the brand via pinning.

7.3.3 Implications for Future Research

Social media have demonstrated that they are a good place for companies from the luxury segment to conduct the promotional mix; however, the current trend could be replacing some social media, especially, MSNS WeChat. This trend is evident in the PRC, despite the fact that MSNSs are popular also in other Asian countries, such as India or Malaysia; companies have been gradually launching their SMM on this platform. Thus, for future research, it is suggested to explore the following issues:

- analysing the rising trend of mobile application and the use of promotion mix in East Asia;
and
- analysing within East Asia and the ASEAN region the political constraints in terms of conducting social media marketing for foreign companies.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

4Cs'	Consumer wants and needs, Cost, Communication and Convenience
4Ps'	Product, Place, Price and Placement
ADB	Asian Development Bank
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
EWOM	Electronic Word of mouth
MNC	Multinational Company
MSNS	Mobile Social Network Service
O2O	Online-to-Offline
PBSN	Professional Business Social Networks
PR	Public Relations
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSP	Photo-Sharing Platform
SM	Social Media
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SNS	Social Network Sites
VSP	Video-Sharing Platform
WOM	Word of Mouth

List of Figures

Figure 1 Asia Top Internet Countries.....	7
Figure 2 Internet Penetration in Asia	7
Figure 3 Outline of the Thesis.....	10
Figure 4 Key Social Platforms	11
Figure 5 Social Media Landscape China.....	12
Figure 6 Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self- presentation/self-disclosure	13
Figure 7 The ‘About Tab’ Facebook.....	14
Figure 8 Overview of the world distribution of LinkedIn users	15
Figure 9 The Four Blogging Quadrants	17
Figure 10 The Marketing Mix’s Four Ps.....	20
Figure 11 Relationship between word-of-mouth and viral marketing	32
Figure 12 The new communication paradigm.....	35
Figure 13 The new communication paradigm used for social media marketing	38
Figure 14 Schematic Diagram of the Research Problem and the Research Questions	41
Figure 15 The research onion.....	42
Figure 16 Global middle class consumption, 2000-2050 (Percentage of global total)	47
Figure 17 Audi’s marketing goals	51
Figure 18 The Audi China official Website	52
Figure 19 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on WeChat during the observed period by Audi China	53
Figure 20 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on WeChat.....	54
Figure 21 Example: Informative/rational advertising used on WeChat by Audi China	55
Figure 22 Example: Informative/mixed advertising used on WeChat by Audi China	55
Figure 23 Example: Sales Promotion tool - Prize (game) tool used on WeChat by Audi China	56
Figure 24 Example: online PR non-branch content tool used on WeChat by Audi China	58
Figure 25 The Audi China Weibo official fan page.....	59
Figure 26 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Weibo during the observed period by Audi China	60
Figure 27 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Weibo	60
Figure 28 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on Weibo.....	62
Figure 29 Example: Informative/endorser advertising used by Audi China on Weibo	62
Figure 30 Example: Reminder/endorser advertising used by Audi China on Weibo	62
Figure 31 Example: Sales Promotion tool - prize (game) tool used on Weibo by Audi China.....	63
Figure 32 Example: Traditional PR advertising tool used by Audi China on Weibo	65
Figure 33 Example: Traditional PR Sponsorship tool used by Audi China on Weibo	66
Figure 34 The Audi China Renren fan page	67
Figure 35 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Renren before leaving SMM activities...	67
Figure 36 The Audi China Kaixin fan page	69
Figure 37 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Kaixin leaving SMM activities	69
Figure 38 The Audi China TV Channel on Youku	71

Figure 39 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Youku during the observed period by Audi China	72
Figure 40 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Youku	72
Figure 41 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on Youku	73
Figure 42 Example: Informative/emotional advertising used by Audi China on Youku.....	74
Figure 43 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship tool by Audi China on Youku.....	75
Figure 44 The Audi China official LinkedIn fan page (Careers at Audi China)	76
Figure 45 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on LinkedIn during the observed period by Audi China	77
Figure 46 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on LinkedIn	77
Figure 47 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Audi China on LinkedIn.....	78
Figure 48 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship used by Audi China on LinkedIn.....	79
Figure 49 The Audi China Dajie official fan page	79
Figure 50 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Dajie during the observed period by Audi China	80
Figure 51 Social Media Marketing: Audi China on Dajie	80
Figure 52 Example: Online PR EWOM tool used by Audi China on Dàjiē.....	82
Figure 53 The Audi Hong Kong official Website	82
Figure 54 The Audi Hong Kong official fan page	83
Figure 55 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by Audi Hong Kong.....	84
Figure 56 Social Media Marketing: Audi Hong Kong on Facebook	84
Figure 57 Examples: Sales Promotion tool - Prize (game) tool used on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong	86
Figure 58 Example: Online PR non-branch content tool used by Audi Hong Kong on Facebook	87
Figure 59 Example: Online PR maintenance of digital reputation tool used by Audi Hong Kong on Facebook	88
Figure 60 The Audi Hong Kong Google+ official fan page	88
Figure 61 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Google+ during the observed period.....	89
Figure 62 Social media marketing: Audi Hong Kong on Google+.....	89
Figure 63 Example: Informative/rational advertising video used by Audi Hong Kong on Google+ and YouTube	90
Figure 64 The Audi Hong Kong official TV Channel on YouTube	90
Figure 65 The Group House of Strategy: four strategic directions are pursued to realise the vision for the year 2020.....	91
Figure 66 The BMW India official website	92
Figure 67 The BMW India Facebook official fan page	93
Figure 68 Number of used promotion mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by BMW India	94
Figure 69 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on Facebook.....	94
Figure 70 Example: Persuasive/rational advertising used by BMW India on Facebook.....	95
Figure 71 Example: Reinforcement/rational advertising used by BMW India on Facebook ..	96

Figure 72 Example: Traditional PR news tool used by BMW India on Facebook	97
Figure 73 Example: Online PR non-branch content tool used by BMW India on Facebook ..	98
Figure 74 The BMW India Google+ official fan page	99
Figure 75 The BMW India Twitter official fan page	100
Figure 76 Number of used promotion mix tools (tweeting) per day on Twitter during the observed period by BMW India	101
Figure 77 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on Twitter	102
Figure 78 Example: Informative/endorser advertising used by BMW India on Twitter (President of BMW India Mr. Phillip von Sahr)	103
Figure 79 Example: Online PR EWOM: Buzz tool used by BMW India on Twitter	106
Figure 80 Example: Online PR integration of customer tool used by BMW India on Twitter	106
Figure 81 The BMW India LinkedIn official fan page	107
Figure 82 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on LinkedIn during the observed period by BMW India	108
Figure 83 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on LinkedIn.....	108
Figure 84 The BMW India TV Channel on YouTube	110
Figure 85 Number of used promotion mix tools per day on YouTube during the observed period by BMW India	111
Figure 86 Social Media Marketing: BMW India on YouTube	111
Figure 87 Example: Informative/emotional advertising tool used by BMW India on YouTube	112
Figure 88 Example: Traditional PR news tools used by BMW India on YouTube.....	113
Figure 89 The BMW India Pinterest official fan page	114
Figure 90 The overview of Mercedes-Benz Target System.....	115
Figure 91 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia official website.....	117
Figure 92 The Mercedes-Benz Facebook official fan page	118
Figure 93 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on Facebook during the observed period by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	118
Figure 94 Social Media Marketing: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook	119
Figure 95 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook	120
Figure 96 Example: Persuasive/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook	120
Figure 97 Example: Traditional PR sponsorship tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook	122
Figure 98 Examples: Online PR non-branch content tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook	123
Figure 99 Example: Online PR maintenance of digital reputation tool used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on Facebook.....	123
Figure 100 The Mercedes-Benz Google+ official fan page	124
Figure 101 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia TV Channel on YouTube.....	125
Figure 102 Number of used promotional mix tools per day on YouTube during the observed period by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	125

Figure 103 Social Media Marketing: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on YouTube.....	126
Figure 104 Example: Informative/rational advertising used by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia on YouTube.....	127
Figure 105 The Mercedes-Benz Malaysia Pinterest official fan page	127
Figure 106 The Mercedes-Benz Twitter official fan page	128
Figure 107 Case 1: Audi China comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period	129
Figure 108 Case 2: Audi Hong Kong comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period	131
Figure 109 Case 3: BMW India comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools ..	132
Figure 110 Case 4: Mercedes-Benz Malaysia comparison of frequency in using promotional mix tools on SM during the observed period	134

List of Tables

Table 1 Four Ps' concept in the Tian's Framework	21
Table 2 Overview of 4Ps' and 4Cs'	21
Table 3 The Elements of the Promotional Mix	23
Table 4 Aims and Objectives of Advertising	24
Table 5 Forms of creative appeals in advertising	25
Table 6 Major consumers sales promotion tools and their objectives with description.	26
Table 7 Overview of PR mass communication's goals.....	29
Table 8 Overview traditional PR tools	29
Table 9 Overview of online PR tools	30
Table 10 Types of personal selling	33
Table 11 Definitions of direct marketing	34
Table 12 Comparison of Web 1.0 and 2.0.....	36
Table 13 Conceptual Definitions.....	38
Table 14 Elements of the Promotional Mix	39
Table 15 Elements of Advertising.....	39
Table 16 Elements of Sales Promotion	40
Table 17 Elements of Public Relations	40
Table 18 Purpose of Study	45
Table 19 Overview of advertising activities on WeChat by Audi China.....	54
Table 20 Overview of sales promotion activities on WeChat by Audi China	56
Table 21 Overview of public relations activities on WeChat by Audi China.....	57
Table 22 Overview of advertising activities on Weibo by Audi China	61
Table 23 Overview of sales promotion activities on Weibo by Audi China.....	63
Table 24 Overview of public relations activities on Weibo by Audi China	64
Table 25 Overview of advertising activities on Renren by Audi China before its cancelling. 68	
Table 26 Overview of public relations activities on Renren by Audi China before its cancelling	68
Table 27 Overview of advertising activities on Kaixin by Audi China before its cancelling.. 70	
Table 28 Overview of public relation activities on Kaixin by Audi China before its cancelling	70
Table 29 Overview of advertising activities on Youku by Audi China	73
Table 30 Overview of public relations activities on Youku by Audi China	74
Table 31 Overview of advertising activities on LinkedIn by Audi China	78
Table 32 Overview of public relations activities on LinkedIn.....	78
Table 33 Overview of advertising activities on Dajie by Audi China	81
Table 34 Overview of public relations activities on Dajie by Audi China	81
Table 35 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong	85
Table 36 Overview of sales promotion activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong.....	85
Table 37 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by Audi Hong Kong	87
Table 38 Overview of advertising activities on Google+ by Audi Hong Kong.....	89
Table 39 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by BMW India.....	95
Table 40 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by BMW India.....	97

Table 41 Overview of advertising activities on Twitter by BMW India	102
Table 42 Overview of public relations activities on Twitter by BMW India.....	104
Table 43 Overview of advertising activities on LinkedIn by BMW India.....	109
Table 44 Overview of public relations activities on LinkedIn by BMW India.....	109
Table 45 Overview of advertising activities on YouTube by BMW India	112
Table 46 Overview of public relations activities on YouTube by BMW India	113
Table 47 Overview of advertising activities on Facebook by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	119
Table 48 Overview of public relations activities on Facebook by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	121
Table 49 Overview of advertising activities on YouTube by Mercedes-Benz Malaysia.....	126
Table 50 Case 1: Social Media Platforms Overview of Audi China.....	130
Table 51 Case 2: Social Media Platforms Overview of Audi Hong Kong	131
Table 52 Case 3: Social Media Platforms Overview of BMW India.....	132
Table 53 Case 4: Social Media Platforms Overview of Mercedes-Benz Malaysia	134

Appendixes

Appendix I: List of Social Media and Official Websites Links

Country	Network	Brand	Page
PRC	Official Website	Audi	http://www.audi.cn/cn/brand/en.html
	WeChat	Audi	WeChat ID: audi_0000 or <i>Need to scan a QR code or look for a fan page via WeChat application in smartphone [see Appendix II]</i>
	Weibo	Audi	http://www.weibo.com/iaudi
	Renren	Audi	http://page.renren.com/600099190?checked=true
	Kaixin	Audi	http://www.kaixin001.com/audi
	Youku		http://audity.youku.com/
	Dajie	Audi	http://www.dajie.com/corp/1002569
	LinkedIn	Audi	https://www.linkedin.com/company/audi-china
Hong Kong	Official Website	Audi	http://www.audi.com.hk/hk/brand/en.html
	Facebook	Audi	https://www.facebook.com/AudiHK?fref=ts
	Google+	Audi	https://plus.google.com/103088604221813946180/posts
	YouTube	Audi	https://www.youtube.com/user/audihkofficial
	Instagram	Audi	<i>In preparation</i>
India	Official Website	BMW	http://www.bmw.in/in/en/
	Facebook	BMW	https://www.facebook.com/bmwindia?fref=ts
	Google+	BMW	https://plus.google.com/u/0/113480831839881280525/posts
	Twitter	BMW	https://twitter.com/bmwindia
	YouTube	BMW	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLjS6_PT9Vocw_25Xn9w
	LinkedIn	BMW	https://www.linkedin.com/company/bmw-india
	Pinterest	BMW	www.pinterest.com/bmwindia
Malaysia	Official Website	Mercedes-Benz	http://www.mercedes-benz.com.my/content/malaysia/mpc/mpc_malaysia_website/myng/home_mpc/passengercars.html
	Facebook	Mercedes-Benz	https://www.facebook.com/MercedesBenzMalaysia
	Google+	Mercedes-Benz	https://plus.google.com/+mercedesmalaysia
	YouTube	Mercedes-Benz	https://www.youtube.com/user/MercedesMalaysia
	Pinterest	Mercedes-Benz	http://www.pinterest.com/mercedesbenzmy/
	Twitter	Mercedes-Benz	https://twitter.com/MercedesBenzMY

Appendix II: QR code for Audi WeChat Channel

 打印


突破科技 启迪未来



关注奥迪官方微信
订阅奥迪最新产品及活动信息，参与互动活动，
畅享更多惊喜好礼



关注奥迪官方微信

订阅奥迪最新产品及活动信息，参与互动活动，畅享更多惊喜好礼。

领取奥迪微生活会员卡，获取个人会员号码，专享优惠早知情。

关注方式：扫描二维码，或查找微信公众帐号“奥迪”。

 打印

Source: Audi 2014b

Appendix III: Summary

This master thesis strives to provide an answer to the research problem and the research question how the similarities and differences in the usage of social media platforms as a promotional tool by companies from the luxury segment in China, India and Malaysia can be characterized. For this purpose, four case studies were selected from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, India and Malaysia. The theoretical framework was based on the theories of social media marketing, the Web 2.0 and the promotional mix.

In order to answer the research problem and the research question, the structured online observation of four case studies of their official fan pages channels on social media is provided. The findings reveal a number of differences and similarities between the cases. The main difference between Audi China, Audi Hong Kong, BMW India and Mercedes-Benz Malaysia is that only Audi China has started using mobile social network for marketing purposes. The main similarity among the companies from the luxury segment is the use of the promotional mix only on between one and two social media with the special focus on PR elements (sponsorship, events, EWOM, PR advertising), while other social media (VSP, PBSN, PSP) were used as the supportive tools generating a very small number of promotional mix tools (advertising, PR).

Appendix IV: Kurzzusammenfassung

Diese Masterarbeit bietet eine Antwort auf die folgende Forschungsfrage: wie können die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in der Nutzung von Social Media Plattformen als Werbeinstrument von Unternehmen aus dem Luxussegment in China, Indien und Malaysia bestimmt werden. Zu diesem Zweck wurden vier Fallstudien aus der Volksrepublik China, Hong Kong, Indien und Malaysia ausgewählt. Theoretischer Bezugsrahmen wurde basiert auf den Theorien von Social Media Marketing, Web 2.0 und Kommunikationspolitik.

Um die Forschungsfrage zu beantworten wurde eine strukturierte Onlineüberwachung von vier Fallstudien auf offiziellen Fanseiten auf Social Media-Kanälen gestellt. Die Ergebnisse zeigten eine Reihe von Unterschiede und Ähnlichkeiten zwischen den Fällen auf. Der Hauptunterschied zwischen Audi China, Hong Kong Audi, BMW India und Mercedes-Benz Malaysia ist, dass nur Audi China ein Handy-Sozialnetzwerk für die Marketingzwecke verwendet. Die wichtigste Gemeinsamkeit unter den Unternehmen des Luxussegments ist die Verwendung der Kommunikationspolitik nur auf einem oder zwei Social Media- Kanälen mit dem Schwerpunkt auf PR-Elemente (Sponsoring, Events, EWOM, PR Werbung), während andere Social Media (VSP, PBSN, PSP) als unterstützendes Instrument verwendet wurden, wodurch eine sehr kleine Anzahl von Kommunikationsinstrumenten (Werbung, PR) erzeugt wurde.

Appendix V: Curriculum Vitae

Personal Data

Name	Stanislav Miščík, MSc
Phone number	+421907145695
E-Mail	stanislavmistik@gmail.com
Citizenship	Slovak

Education

11/2010 - 2014	Postgraduate Studies – ‘East Asian Economy and Society’ at the University of Vienna, university degree <i>Master of Arts (MA)</i> ; Study period expected 4 semesters
09/2012 – 09/2013	Postgraduate Studies – ‘International Management for China’ at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, university degree <i>Master of Science (MSc)</i> conferred in December 2013; Study period expected 12 months
09/2007-09/2010	Undergraduate Studies – ‘Sinology’ at the Charles University in Prague, university degree <i>Bachelor of Arts</i> conferred in September 2010; Study period expected 6 semesters
10/2005-02/2009	Undergraduate Studies – ‘Ethnology with Vietnamese’ at the Charles University in Prague, university degree <i>Bachelor of Arts</i> conferred in February 2009; Study period expected 6 semesters
09/1997-06/2005	Attending high school in Nová Baňa, Slovakia

Foreign stays

09/2009- 06/2010	Academic year at Shanghai Normal University in Shanghai, People's Republic of China, non-degree programme: Modern Standard Chinese
09/2008-12/2008	Semester at the Hanoi National University in Socialist Republic of Vietnam, non-degree programme: Vietnamese

Competences

Mother tongue	Slovak
Other Language	English (fluent); German (very good); Chinese (very good);
Social Competences	Empathy, Enthusiasm
Hobbies / Interests	Karate Goju-ryu, music, reading, travelling, languages

Appendix VI: Lebenslauf

Persönliches

Name	Stanislav Miščík, MSc
Telefon	+421907145695
E-Mail	stanislavmistik@gmail.com
Staatsangehörigkeit	Slowakisch

Ausbildung

11/2010 - 2014	Studium des Studienganges „Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ostasiens“ an der Universität Wien, Studienabschluss <i>Master of Arts (MA)</i> ; Studiendauer voraussichtlich 4 Semester
09/2012 – 09/2013	Studium des Studienganges „International Management for China“ an der School of Oriental and African Studies, University London, Studienabschluss <i>Master of Science (MSc)</i> im Dezember 2013; Studiendauer voraussichtlich 12 Monate
09/2007-09/2010	Studium des Studienganges „Sinologie“ an der Karls-Universität Prag, Tschechische Republik, Studienabschluss <i>Bakkalaureus</i> im September 2010; Studiendauer 6 Semester
10/2005-02/2009	Studium des Studienganges „Ethnologie mit Vietnamesisch“ an der Karls-Universität Prag, Tschechische Republik, Studienabschluss <i>Bakkalaureus</i> im Februar 2009; Studiendauer 6 Semester
09/1997-06/2005	Besuch des Gymnasiums in Nová Baňa, Slowakei

Auslandsaufenthalte

09/2009- 06/2010	Studienjahr an der Shanghai Normal University in Shanghai, Volksrepublik China; Non-Degree Programm: Hochchinesisch
09/2008-12/2008	Studiensemester an der Hanoi National University, Sozialistische Republik Vietnam; Non-Degree Programme: Vietnamesisch

Kompetenzen

Muttersprache	Slowakisch
Sonstige Sprachen	Englisch (fließend); Deutsch (sehr gut); Chinesisch (sehr gut);
Soziale Kompetenzen	Empathie, Begeisterungsfähigkeit
Hobbies/Interessen	Karate Goju-ryu, Musik, Lesen, Reisen, Sprachen