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„Social Media Marketing and Tourism"

A Case Study of Tyrolian Tourism Organizations

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Content:

1. Abstract

1.1.English:

The ever-changing realm of social media has gradually become an important factor among almost every business's communication toolkit. Especially the tourism industry relies on social media platforms as part of their marketing mix. This case study examines the specific strategies that tourism organizations in Tyrol use to apply social media. Based on the uses and gratifications approach, which describes the different ways in which social media platforms are used, I try to highlight how marketing strategies vary according to platform. *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*, as the most popular social media platforms, are subject of the content analysis which is combined with expert interviews.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing, Tourism, Austria, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

1.2.Deutsch:

Das sich ständig wandelnde Universum von Social Media ist schrittweise ein immer wichtigerer Teil der Werkzeuge eines jeden Unternehmens geworden. Vor allem die Tourismusindustrie nutzt Social Media Plattformen als Teil des Marketing-Mix. Diese Fallstudie untersucht die spezifischen Strategien, welche von Tourismusverbänden in Tirol im Bereich Social Media angewendet werden. Ausgehend vom „Uses and Gratifications Approach", welcher die unterschiedlichen Weisen, auf denen Social Media genutzt wird, beschreibt, versuche ich zu beleuchten wie sich die Marketingstrategien je nach Plattform unterscheiden. *Facebook, Twitter* und *Instagram*, als die drei beliebtesten Social Media Plattformen, sind Gegenstand der Inhaltsanalyse, welche mit einer Reihe von Experteninterviews kombiniert wird.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Social Media, Marketing, Tourismus, Österreich, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

2. Introduction:

The recent phenomenon of social media offers not only countless opportunities, but also challenges, for the people who use them.

Many studies have tried to shed light on the factors that influence social media, and how social media in turn influences users. Despite numerous results there are nevertheless many things that remain poorly understood, particularly the ways in which the platforms differ: not only in terms of content but also in usage motives and received gratification remain to be explored deeper.

Several studies have tried to connect social media with the uses and gratifications approach, thus giving the user a new and active role. However, the realm of social media is constantly changing, with new features being added or entirely new platforms coming into play, and this creates a challenge for researchers who engage with the topic. Moreover, not only the platforms evolve and change their functions, but the groups of users also shift.

Not only private people use social media platforms: by now lots of businesses rely on social media as an important marketing channel. Although there is still a lack of understanding regarding the inner workings of social media and how to benefit the most from the different channels, social media marketing plays an important role—especially in the tourism industry.

With this case study of Tyrolian tourism organizations and their social media marketing strategies, I will highlight the ways in which social media is employed to communicate with (potential) customers. Furthermore, the study will cover what effects social media can

have for tourism organizations, whether there are differences among the platforms, and which challenges the organizations have to deal with.

3. Literature Review:

In this literature review I will begin by discussing the current research on social media platforms. I will highlight differences and similarities in usage of social media as well as implications for brands and businesses. This leads directly to the second aspect, marketing on social media. Since it still is a rather new field of research that is constantly changing, I will give an overview about the challenges and patterns. The general overview on this topic is followed by a closer look on the research conducted specifically on marketing on social media in the tourism industry. Finally, several case studies will be presented to highlight the current state of research as well as research gaps. This will lead to the final part of this literature review, the research questions along with the detailed methodology, as well as the conducted expert interviews and content analysis.

3.1.Social Media:

Carr & Hayes (2015, p. 49) defined social media as "Internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of masspersonal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content".

Those channels can vary significantly in how they are used, but also in terms of the users themselves. While *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* focus on communication, platforms like *Youtube* can be described as content creation communities (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Marine-Roig, Martin-Fuentes, & Daries-Ramon, 2017; Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). Despite being a platform centred around images, *Pinterest* relies more on content discovery

(Lo, Frankowski, & Leskovec, 2016). *Google+* has features that are partially similar to *Facebook*, but is rather new in comparison (Scott, 2014).

As the literature review showed that the most relevant social media platforms for the tourism sector (see section 2.5 Case Studies) are *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*, those will be covered in the next paragraphs. Those are also the platforms which focus the most on communication, making them a relevant tool for businesses and organizations.

Facebook:

According to Holahan (2008), *Facebook* is the largest social media platform on earth. Launched in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a college student directory, it soon turned into a commercial website (Markoff, 2007). As of September 2017, it counts 1.37 billion daily users and 2.07 billion monthly users. More than 23,000 employees work for the company (Company Info | Facebook Newsroom, 2018).

The age range of *Facebook* users is currently undergoing a change as many young adults are migrating to other platforms like *Instagram* (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2018).

Twitter:

Twitter is currently ranked the third most used social media platform with more than 400 million daily users (eBiz MBA, 2017).

"Tweeting" is the main function of the platform *Twitter*; that is, sharing a short post that is up to 280 characters long. However, from 2011 users have also been able to upload photos and videos (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012).

Instagram:

With more than 800 million users, *Instagram* is one of the biggest social media platforms (About Us | Instagram, 2018). It can be defined as a mobile application that allows the user to work with photos, meaning that pictures can be edited, combined with filters and ultimately shared (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

3.2.Social Media and the Uses and Gratifications Approach:

Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch (1973) developed the theory that audience members have different expectations of mass media or other sources. Therefore, there are differential patterns of media exposure which in turn result in the gratification of needs. The audience is seen as active and assumed to follow particular goals despite the gratification often happening unintentionally (McQuail, Blumer, & Brown, 2004).

Based on those results, Schramm, Lyle, & Parker (1972) claim that the audience members themselves are the point of linkage between gratification and media choice.

Despite those assumptions being made before the internet and the existence of social media, the Uses and Gratifications Approach is still relevant.

The studies presented focus mostly on television, however, the theory can be applied to modern forms of media as well.

When looking at social media, it can therefore be assumed that the user chooses each platform based on a certain set of needs they wish to fulfil.

Twitter, for example, caters the need to connect with others. It fosters para-social gratification and forms relationships through using the social network (Chen, 2010).

Papacharissi & Mendelson (2011) took a closer look at *Facebook* in this regard and came up with nine motives for using *Facebook*: habitual pass time, relaxing entertainment, expressive information sharing, escapism, cool and new trend, companionship, professional advancement, social interaction and meeting new people. Furthermore, *Facebook* use correlates significantly with recognition needs, exhibitionism and affection needs (Leung, 2013).

When looking at the use of *Facebook* in connection with tourism, Ben-Shaul & Reichel (2018) extracted several important reasons why users consult *Facebook*. Those include obtaining travel information, feeling safer about vacations and getting reliable information from tourism business but also finding deals and attractive sales.

Instagram is relevant for getting a different form of gratification. Al-Kandari, Al-Sumait, & Al-Hunaiyyan (2017) found that an important factor for using *Instagram* is self-presentation. Furthermore, the platform is used for coolness, but also for documentation and surveillance/knowledge about others (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

3.3.Social Media and Marketing:

There are different motives for businesses to become active on social media. According to Tsimonis & Dimitriadis (2014), some of those reasons are the rapid growth and popularity of social media, the viral nature of social media, the online presence of competitors as well as comparatively low costs. The core activities on social media platforms are described as daily communication with potential customers, competitions, introduction of new products and giving advice/information.

When trying to reach their customers via social media marketing, businesses need to take into account that each platform has a different set of people using it for varying reasons (see 2.2. Social Media and the Uses and Gratifications Approach). For example with *Instagram* the focus lies more on entertainment whereas *Facebook* is more important for information sharing (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Therefore, the efforts need to be adapted according to the unique audience each platform caters (Gao & Feng, 2016; Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016).

A prerequisite consequently is defining the target audience and the goals the business sets out to achieve with its online presence (Edwards, 2011).

When it comes to tourism, not only are these more general insights on social media marketing important, but many other opportunities and challenges also come into play. Those will be discussed in the next section.

3.4.Opportunities, Challenges and Techniques:

Social media provides a unique environment for tourism related businesses, as those platforms allow businesses to interact directly with visitors and to keep track of their opinions and evaluations. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for businesses in the tourism sector to incorporate social media in their efforts which can be done with different approaches (Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015).

A technique frequently used in social media marketing is celebrity endorsement. This approach is also very popular in the tourism sector. Celebrities can have a strong influence on a customer's perception towards the image of a destination (Glover, 2009; Johns, Weir, & Weir, 2015). The trust in celebrity endorsers is often transferable to the image of a hotel, along with the credibility and loyalty (Kim, Lee, & Prideaux, 2014). However, depending on the celebrity and the destination, the connection can be negative if not perceived as authentic (Van Der Veen, 2008).

Moreover, it is important for tourism related organizations, companies and brands to use social media in order to create involvement and interaction with their potential customers, especially concerning reviews (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017). Particularly when

it comes to negative reviews, the presence or absence as well as the tone of an answer has a significant impact on the customers (Sparks, So, & Bradley, 2016).

Furthermore, engagement with the customers can lead to the creation of communities which in turn can result in higher loyalty and satisfaction (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014).

Cabiddu, Carlo, & Piccoli (2014) identified three important affordances for customer engagement. Those are persistent engagement, customized engagement and triggered engagement. Therefore, businesses in the tourism industry should maintain an ongoing dialogue with customers, interact on prior knowledge of individual customer information, and instigate encounters with customers based on external events.

Along those lines, it can be said that interaction is a key element of social media activities in the tourism sector. One frequently applied technique in this field is running competitions that usually feature prizes for the contestants (Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015).

Another important aspect that had often been neglected by the tourism sector is the concept of branding. Destination branding presents itself as a unique field as the tourism product is rather complex, and therefore differs from the conventional branding approaches. Thus, it represents a challenge that often discourages tourism executives (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005).

Moreover, many tourism related businesses fall short of expanding their social media presence to its full potential due to several reasons. Those include a lack of time, personnel, and money, but many also claim they do not see the relevance or usefulness of such expansion (Roult, Gaudette, Auger, & Adjizian, 2016).

As each social media platform caters different needs for its users and has a different mode of functionality (see sections 2.2 Social Media and the Uses and Gratifications Approach, 2.1. Social Media), businesses need to apply different ways of working with them. *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* are not only the platforms with the most users but also the most popular in the tourism world. The focus of those platforms lies on communication with others and content creation is comparatively simple.

A study by Mariani, Mura, & Di Felice (2017) showed that in order to create engagement on their *Facebook* pages, tourism businesses and organizations need to pay attention to several aspects. First of all, the timing and amount of posts is important. Posts on weekends received more engagement, and those organizations who posted around four times a day had the highest level of engagement. Furthermore, adding visual content to the post also had a positive effect.

Moreover, posting early in the day and a higher post frequency can have a negative impact on user engagement (Mariani, Di Felice, & Mura, 2016).

When it comes to *Twitter*, positive results in terms of user engagement were found by Ni Gusti Ayu Dewi Paramita Arisandi, I Gede Putu Wirawan, & Linawati (2016). Additionally, user generated content and co-creation approaches can lead to e-word-of-mouth tendencies (Revilla Hernández, Santana Talavera, & Parra López, 2016; Sotiriadis & Zyl, 2013). *Twitter* can also be applied effectively to run competitions (Hay, 2010) and inform about promotions (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013).

In contrast, promoting user generated content photography has been shown to have a positive impact on user engagement on *Instagram* (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). However, the research on *Instagram* in the area of tourism is only just beginning.

3.5.Case Studies:

So far, several studies have been carried out with regard to the challenges and opportunities of social media for tourism.

The tourism regions of Asia and the Middle East were discussed in a range of papers. In a study by Al-Badi, Tarhini, & Al-Sawaei (2017) the issue is approached from the traveller's side. The results clearly underline the importance of social media in the tourism sector, as the respondents of the questionnaire claimed to obtain information from those sites and to have been influenced by (negative) reviews to a large extent.

Chan & Guillet (2011) wrote one of the very few papers that used a different perspective. They analysed the extent to which social media sites are utilized by the Hong Kong hotel industry. *Facebook* and *Twitter* turned out to be the most frequently used platforms of the 23 sites included in the study. However, 19 hotels out of the sample of 68 didn't work with social media at all. Results showed that almost all the hotels had trouble interacting with customers and disclosing their own identity properly. An in-depth survey with hotel managers in Istanbul showed that out of 19 hotels, only 13 work with social media (mainly *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*), and, as was noted in Hong Kong, problems arise in communication with customers, especially when it comes to reviews (Gulbahar & Yildirim,

2015). This is consistent with the results of Hashim & Fadhil (2017) concerning the Malaysian hotel industry.

When looking at the European tourism sector and social media, similar tendencies can be noted in the few papers on this geographical area. A study carried out among travellers coming to Catalonia also identified *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* as the major sites used to obtain information. Furthermore, the respondents claimed to use social media before and during their trip to look for reviews (Fondevila Gascón, Mir Bernal, Muñoz Blanco, & Berbel Giménez, 2016). However, the results of Munar & Jacobsen (2013) indicate contrary tendencies. Among their sample of 405 Scandinavian travellers going to Spain, the majority claimed that social media is not relevant for their travel decisions.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses:

As the literature review suggests, few studies deal with Europe and its variety of tourism regions.

Among many other important tourism countries and regions in Europe, Austria, especially the Alpine region, has a strong dependence on this income sector. For this case study, the Austrian province of Tyrol was chosen. A statistic published by the Landesstatistik Tirol reports 11,747,445 arrivals and 47,652,348 overnight stays for the year 2017 for Tyrol, in contrast with 746,153 inhabitants. The 22,055 accommodations which offer a total of 337,695 beds reveal a distinct focus on the tourism industry (Landesregierung, 2018a, 2018b).

Not only the importance of this industry, but also the challenges for regions like this, make Tyrol an interesting subject for a case study. Those challenges include climate change and environmental problems, the small business structure having to compete globally, the key role of institutionalized tourism organizations, as well as the heterogeneity of tourists and activities (Pechlaner, 1998; Pechlaner & Tschurtschenthaler, 2003; Pichler-Koban & Jungmeier, 2017). As illustrated, the Alpine region and especially Tyrol distinguishes itself from many other tourism areas. Exploring the processes concerning social media marketing in Tyrol will therefore give new and important insights.

I propose the following research questions in order to investigate how tourism organizations in Tyrol use social media for marketing purposes.

RQ 1: Which social media platforms are used to communicate with (potential) customers?

H 1.1: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Facebook* is among the used platforms.

H 1.2: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Twitter* is among the used platforms.

H 1.3: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Instagram* is among the used platforms.

H 1.4: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Pinterest* is not among the used platforms.

H 1.5: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Youtube* is not among the used platforms.

H 1.6: If the concerned organization is involved in tourism, *Google+* is not among the used platforms.

RQ 2: How does the content, strategy, and engagement differ for those platforms?

Concerning *Facebook*:

H 2.1: Posts on *Facebook* that contain photos or videos receive more engagement.

H 2.1a: Posts on *Facebook* that contain photos or videos receive more comments.

H 2.1b: Posts on *Facebook* that contain photos or videos receive more reactions.

H 2.2: Posts on *Facebook* which were made early in the day receive fewer engagement.

H 2.2a: Posts on *Facebook* which were made early in the day receive fewer comments.

H 2.2b: Posts on *Facebook* which were made early in the day receive fewer reactions.

H 2.3: Posts on *Facebook* which were made on the weekend receive more engagement.

H 2.3a: Posts on *Facebook* which were made on the weekend receive more comments.

H 2.3b: Posts on *Facebook* which were made on the weekend receive more reactions.

H 2.4: Posts on *Facebook* with longer text receive more engagement.

H 2.4a: Posts on *Facebook* with longer text receive more comments.

H 2.4b: Posts on *Facebook* with longer text receive more reactions.

H 2.5: Post featuring celebrity endorsement occur more often on *Facebook* than on other platforms.

Concerning *Twitter*:

H 2.6: Posts on *Twitter* contain more competitions than on the other platforms.

H 2.7: Posts on *Twitter* contain more promotions than on the other platforms.

H 2.8: Posts on *Twitter* contain more links to external pages than posts on other platforms.

Concerning *Instagram*:

H 2.9: Posts on *Instagram* which call for user generated content occur more often on Instagram than on other platforms.

H 2.10: Posts on *Instagram* which call for user generated content receive more engagement.

H 2.10a: Posts on *Instagram* which call for user generated content receive more comments.

H 2.10b: Posts on *Instagram* which call for user generated content receive more reactions.

H 2.11: Posts on *Instagram* with user generated content occur more often on *Instagram* than on other platforms.

H 2.12: Posts on *Instagram* which feature user generated content receive more engagement.

H 2.12a: Posts on *Instagram* which feature user generated content receive more comments.

H 2.12b: Posts on *Instagram* which feature user generated content receive more reactions.

H 2.13: Posts on *Instagram* with shorter text receive more engagement.

H 2.13a: Posts on *Instagram* with shorter text receive more comments.

H 2.13b: Posts on *Instagram* with shorter text receive more reactions.

H 2.14: Post on *Instagram* which show landscapes receive more engagement.

H 2.14a: Post on *Instagram* which show landscapes receive more comments.

H 2.14b: Post on *Instagram* which show landscapes receive more reactions.

RQ 3: Which challenges and problems occur and how do those differ according to the platforms?

H 3.1: Negative comments and criticism appear more often in comments on *Facebook* posts than on other platforms.

H 3.2: Negative comments and criticism were answered by the organization.

The hypotheses stated partly derive from current findings on the tourism sector. However, especially *Instagram* and *Twitter* are not too well researched in terms or tourism. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature on the application of social media within the Austrian tourism sector.

Therefore, not only literature research was applied to state the hypotheses. In addition to this, several interviews with representatives of tourism organizations were

conducted. Thus, the findings that occurred in most of the interviews were added to the hypotheses (see section 5.1. Preliminary Expert Interviews).

5. Methodology:

In order to receive a full picture of the social media marketing world in Tyrol's tourism sector, a method mix is proposed for this study.

First of all, a series of expert interviews was conducted. Those interviews featured representatives of different tourism organizations that work with social media. The semi-structured interviews gave a first overview on the field and provided information. Based on the information received, new hypotheses were proposed. As there appears to be a lack of literature on this particular topic, conducting expert interviews was the best way to provide a foundation for the hypotheses which will be tested in the next step.

After a series of new hypotheses was developed, a content analysis of social media channels was conducted. Those channels belong to tourism organizations with social media presence on more than one platform. For this study mainly *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* will be of importance. The tourism organizations in questions as well as their social media accounts will be presented under point 5.3.

5.1.Preliminary Expert Interviews:

A total of eight interviews were conducted with the people responsible for the social media channels of Mayrhofen - Hippach, Kaltenbach - Fügen, Kitzbühel, Ötztal – Sölden - Obergurgl, Zell – Gerlos - Krimml - Wald/Königsleiten, Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis, St. Anton, and Tux-Finkenberg. A summary of all the information obtained from each tourism organization can be found in more detail under 10.2. Interview Results.

Based on the information gathered through these interviews, a total of five new hypotheses (H 2.4, H 2.13, H 2.14, H 3.1, H 3.2) were included in the analysis.

The first point on which the interview partners mostly agreed is the text length. They consider the length of the post to be crucial for the post success. For *Facebook* longer posts with detailed information are likely to lead to favourable results (H 2.4). A point mentioned several times is that *Facebook* is used as place to gather information; therefore, the post should contain more information than on the other platforms. That is in line with previous findings discussed in sections 2.2. Social Media and the Uses and Gratifications Approach and 2.3. Social Media Marketing.

However, when it comes to *Instagram*, the exact opposite appears to be the case. On this platform, the interview partners agreed, too much text can have a negative influence. Simply adding a short quote or one line of text leads to more engagement than filling the post with detailed information (H 2.13). The main claim is that people come to *Instagram* for being entertained and looking at nice pictures. As with *Facebook*, this is in line with previous findings mentioned in the literature section.

Furthermore, the interview partners mentioned that there is a distinct difference in terms of photo content that works on a platform. One important point is that on *Instagram* photos featuring just landscapes will lead to the highest number of likes (H 2.14). If the pictures also contain people or something else (e. g. food) the engagement is lower, according to the interview partners.

Concerning research question three, dealing with the challenges and problem-solving techniques, the literature did not yield any conclusive suggestions as to which challenges are most likely to occur on the social media profiles of a tourism organization. However, during the interviews the majority of interview partners agreed that the main problem they are dealing with are negative comments and criticism (H 3.1). Since the content shared is usually in no way controversial, there are no extreme cases such as so-called ‘shitstorms’. When negative comments or criticisms do occur, the main technique mentioned was simply answering the comments in question (H 3.2). Thus, they want to appease the person who made the comment, but it also makes for a better impression on the other people reading through the comments. Letting the negative comment or criticism remain unanswered beneath the post is considered unprofessional and creates a bad image for the tourism organization.

5.2.Operationalization:

The hypotheses 1.1 to 1.6 (concerning research question 1) are operationalized as follows: The independent variable is whether the concerned organization is involved in the tourism sector. Since the choice of material already focuses on tourism organizations, this will be true for all cases.

The dependent variable is whether a certain social media platform (H1.1: *Facebook,* H1.2: *Twitter,* H1.3: *Instagram,* H1.4: *Pinterest,* H1.5: *Youtube,* H1.6: *Google+*) is used. This is determined by checking whether the organization runs a profile on the particular platform in question.

The eleven hypotheses for research question 2 are operationalized as follows:

The variable posts on *Facebook* (H2.1-2.5)/*Twitter* (H2.6-2.8)/*Instagram* (H2.9-2.14) refers to a post by a tourism organization made on the respective platform. This is the independent variable in all hypotheses for research question 2.

There are several aspects in need of definition concerning the hypotheses on *Facebook* (H2.1-2.5). Engagement is defined as number of reactions and comments on a certain post. In order to investigate whether differences between comments and reactions occur, two sub-hypotheses are included, testing for comments and reactions separately as well. Photo or video means any form of visual content added to the post. The time frame early in the day is defined as the post being made before 12 o'clock. Weekend is defined as Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday. The term longer text refers to the absolute number of words the post consists of. The higher the number, the higher the engagement should be.

Celebrity endorsement is defined as a post that features a celebrity who provides a testimonial.

For the hypotheses on *Twitter* (H 2.6-2.8) the expressions competition, promotion and external links need to be clarified. Posts featuring competitions are defined as promising some sort of prize or reward to the user after the completion of a certain task.

Posts concerning promotion, on the other hand, highlight a new product, a price reduction, etc., coming from the organization or business and being potentially beneficial to the user. The variable contains links to external pages refers to the post including a link which leads to a website outside of *Twitter*. This also includes links to *Facebook* posts.

The term 'call for user generated content' (hereafter UGC) which is used in the hypotheses about *Instagram* (H 2.9-2.10) is defined as the encouragement of users to take action and share the results online. Those actions can be taking a photo, making a video, writing a comment, etc.

Furthermore, a post featuring UGC (H 2.11-2.12) is defined as a text, photo or video which was sent in to be posted on the social media profile. It is clearly stated that the content was created by somebody other than the tourism organization.

As was the case with the variable longer text concerning the posts on *Facebook*, the variable shorter text (H 2.13) is also measured in the total number of words a post consists of. Photos or videos of landscapes (H 2.14) are defined as visual content showing only scenery. There are no people in the focus of the photo/video nor any other motives like food, clothing, etc.

The two hypotheses for research question 3 are operationalized as follows:

The expression ‘negative comments and criticism’ (H 3.1-3.2) refers to comments found below a post that point out negative aspects, declare something as bad, or attack and criticise the organization.

Furthermore, *Facebook*, as is used in H 3.1, is operationalized as the platform the negative comments and criticisms are expressed on.

Finally, a negative comment or piece of criticism is defined as answered (H 3.2) if the tourism organization running the account responds to the comment.

5.3.Choice of material for the content analysis:

The material chosen for this part of the analysis is based on a list of the top 50 tourism communities in Tyrol, published by the Landesstatistik (Landesregierung, 2018a). First of all, the tourism organization dealing with those communities were listed. As several of the communities are based within the same valley or region, the same organization is responsible for them. This resulted in a total of 26 tourism organizations. Since for this study the social media platforms *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* are of primary concern, those organizations which do not run a channel on any of those platforms were excluded. For the remaining 17 organizations the total amounts of followers on all three platforms were compared. As there was a major drop in the total number after the first nine organizations (202,170 followers for the first rank vs. 30,138 for the organization on the tenth rank) only those ranked one to nine will be subject of the analysis for research questions two and three.

The nine tourism organizations in question are Gerlos-Zell, Innsbruck, Kitzbühel, Paznaun-Ischgl, St. Anton, Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis, Mayrhofen-Hippach, Stubaital and Wilder Kaiser (in order of ranking based on the total of *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* followers).

Furthermore, the content to be analysed consists of two timeframes for each tourism organization. As there are two main tourism seasons in Tyrol, summer and winter, posts from both periods need to be taken into account.

For research questions one, all 26 tourism organizations obtained in the first step described above were taken into account, in order to see which social media channels they utilize. The additional tourism organizations are Sölden, Seefeld, Achensee, Tux-Finkenberg, Längenfeld, Wildschönau, Fügen-Kaltenbach, Lermoos, Pitztal, Nauders, Kaiserwinkel, Koppl, Galtür, Tannheimer Tal, Alpbach, Kaunertal and Ötztal.

However, as not all of them run social media channels on *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *Facebook*, and additionally the number of followers they have varies substantially, they are excluded from the rest of the analysis.

5.4.The Tourism Organizations and Their Social Media Accounts:

Gerlos-Zell:

The social media channels of the tourism organization in Zell and Gerlos are operated by Zillertal Arena. As of 31.10.2018 there are 180,633 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Zell Gerlos, 2018a), 591 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Zell Gerlos, 2018c)

and 20,946 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Zell Gerlos, 2018b). With a total of 202,170 followers, they have the biggest social media presence of all tourism organizations analysed.

Zell and Gerlos are two municipalities located in the Ziller Valley. Zell am Ziller has 1,884 inhabitants and is located 575 m above sea level (Gemeinde Zell, 2018). The market town covers an area of 2.43 km² (Gemeinde Zell, 2018). During the winter season 2017/18, 204,593 overnight stays were recorded; in the summer season 2018 it was 148,597 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Gerlos has fewer inhabitants (296) but is located about 1,246 m above sea level (Gemeinde Gerlos, 2018). Furthermore, the area over which Gerlos stretches is larger compared with Zell. The total area amounts to 118.64 km² (Gemeinde Gerlos, 2018). However, despite the lesser number of local people, Gerlos accounts for more overnight stays than Zell am Ziller: 424,974 during winter 2017/18 and 194,816 during summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Innsbruck:

Innsbruck is the capital of the province Tyrol in which all tourism regions chosen for this analysis are located.

With 142,669 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Innsbruck, 2018a), 5,076 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Innsbruck, 2018c) and 39,053 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Innsbruck, 2018b), Innsbruck has a total of 186,798 followers, placing it second in terms of numbers (as of 01.11.2018).

The capital of Tyrol has about 133,539 residents and lies 575 m above sea level. The total area comes to 104.9 km² (Landeshauptstadt Innsbruck, 2018).

Looking at the overnight stays, Innsbruck recorded 714,566 in winter 2017/18 and 845,947 in summer (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Kitzbühel:

This tourism organization has the third biggest social media presence among those chosen for analysis. There are 150,202 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Kitzbühel, 2018a), 7,770 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Kitzbühel, 2018d) and 31,178 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Kitzbühel, 2018b), leading to a total of 182,150 followers as of 31.10.2018.

The town Kitzbühel lies about 800 m above sea level and has 8,439 inhabitants (Tourism Organization Kitzbühel, 2018c). The area on which the municipality is built amounts to 58 km² (Bevölkerung.at, 2018e).

According to statistics, Kitzbühel accounts for 461,029 overnight stays during winter 2017/18 and 320,112 during summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Paznaun-Ischgl;

With 149,236 followers on its *Facebook* page, 1,523 followers on *Twitter* and 23,795 followers on *Instagram*, the tourism organization Paznaun Ischgl comes to a total of 174,554 across their channels (01.11.2018).

The municipality Ischgl is located in the Paznaun valley, which is usually referred to as "the Paznaun". Currently Ischgl has about 1593 residents and spans over an area of 103.3 km². It is located at 1376 m above sea level (Bevölkerung.at, 2018d).

When looking into the amount of overnight stays in winter, Ischgl is among the top municipalities of Tyrol. With 1,376,335 overnight stays for the winter season 2017/18 it holds the second place just behind Sölden. During summer 2018, 124,142 stays were recorded (Landesregierung, 2018a).

St. Anton:

Another tourism organization that is part of this analysis is St. Anton am Arlberg. The total of 150,053 followers consists of 114,728 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization St. Anton am Arlberg, 2018a), 6,911 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization St. Anton am Arlberg, 2018c) and 28,414 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization St. Anton am Arlberg, 2018b). These numbers date from 02.11.2018.

St. Anton currently has about 2,500 residents, and is located 1,300 m above sea level on average. The total area of the municipality amounts to 165 km² (Arlberg Insider, 2018).

During the winter season 2017/18 St. Anton am Arlberg registered 1,026,088 overnight stays, in the summer season 2018 there were 196,468 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis:

The tourism organization Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis has cultivated a social media presence with 100,794 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Serfaus Fiss Ladis, 2018a), 3,215 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Serfaus Fiss Ladis, 2018c) and 24,185 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Serfaus Fiss Ladis, 2018b). That results in a total number of 128,194 followers. Those numbers were obtained on 02.11.2018.

This tourism organization is responsible for three different municipalities. Serfaus has about 1,091 inhabitants and is located 1,427 m above sea level. It covers an area of 59.7 km² (Bevölkerung.at, 2018j; Gemeinde Serfaus, 2018). The overnight stays for Serfaus amounted to 750,427 during winter 2017/18 and 399,763 in summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

The second municipality assigned to this tourism organization is Fiss. There are about 945 residents on an area of 37.7 km². Fiss lies at an altitude of 1,436 m above sea level (Gemeinde Fiss, 2018). In winter 2017/18 606,655 overnight stays were recorded, 318,120 in summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Ladis is the third and final municipality this tourism organization is responsible for. Located 1,180 m above sea level, Ladis has about 540 residents and stretches over an area of 7.1 km² (Tourism Organization Serfaus Fiss Ladis, 2018d). The overnight stays for this

municipality amount to 195,223 during winter 2017/18 and 106,946 in summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

To summarize, that leads to a total of 1,552,305 overnight stays in winter 2017/18 and 824,829 in summer 2018.

Mayrhofen-Hippach:

With 57,232 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Mayrhofen Hippach, 2018a), 5,762 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Mayrhofen Hippach, 2018c) and 17,450 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Mayrhofen Hippach, 2018b), the tourism organization Mayrhofen-Hippach has a social media presence with a total of 80,444 followers as of 03.11.2018.

This tourism organization is responsible for the two municipalities Mayrhofen and Hippach, both located in the Ziller Valley.

Mayrhofen has 3,760 residents living on an area of 178 km² located 630 m above sea level (Gemeinde Mayrhofen, 2018). During winter season 2017/2018, 861,241 overnight stays were registered in Mayrhofen, and 576,204 during summer 2018 (Landesregierung, 2018a).

The other municipality, Hippach, has 1,418 inhabitants. The total area of 39.7 km² is located 600 m above sea level (Gemeinde Hippach, 2018). When looking at the overnight stay statistics, 163,854 were registered during winter 2017/18 and 100,357 during summer (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Therefore, the total amount of overnight stays for Mayrhofen-Hippach amounts to 1,025,095 in winter 2017/18 and 676,561 during summer.

Stubaital:

The tourism organization Stubaital has 70,488 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Stubaital, 2018a), 914 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Stubaital, 2018c) and 9,121 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Stubaital, 2018b). As of 03.11.2018 that amounts to a total of 80,523 followers on social media.

The tourism organizations discussed so far represented distinct municipalities or parts of a certain region/valley. However, the tourism organization Stubaital is responsible for the entire valley of Stubai, meaning that they take care of five municipalities: Schönberg, Mieders, Telfes, Fulpmes and Neustift. The municipalities have 1,101 residents on 7.5 km², 1,861 residents on 16.5 km², 1,570 residents on 27.4 km², 4,378 residents on 16.8 km² and 4,747 on 249 km², respectively. On average, they are located 900m above sea level (Bevölkerung.at, 2018i, 2018f, 2018l, 2018b, 2018g).

Therefore, the Stubai Valley has a total of 13,657 residents living on a total area of 317.2 km².

The records for overnight stays during winter 2017/18 amount to 13,501; 35,366; 49,725; 198,695; and 815,784 respectively (Landesregierung, 2018a). For summer 2018 the statistics come to 14,633; 24,991; 37,089; 132,588; and 456,258 respectively (Landesregierung, 2018a).

Summing up, a total of 1,113,071 overnights stays in winter 2017/18, and 665,559 in summer 2018, were recorded.

Wilder Kaiser

The tourism organization Wilder Kaiser curates a social media presence with a total of 76,746 followers. Those consist of 59,443 followers on *Facebook* (Tourism Organization Wilder Kaiser, 2018a), 1,221 on *Twitter* (Tourism Organization Wilder Kaiser, 2018c) and 16,082 on *Instagram* (Tourism Organization Wilder Kaiser, 2018b).

Similar to the Stubaital, the tourism organization Wilder Kaiser is also responsible for all four municipalities located in the area: Ellmau, Going, Scheffau and Söll (Tourism Organization Wilder Kaiser, 2018d).

The number of residents amounts to 2,828; 1,849; 1,449; and 3,631 respectively in each municipality. Looking at the areas covered by the municipalities, the numbers are 36.4 km²; 20.6 km²; 31.5 km²; and 46 km². The municipalities are located 750 m above sea level on average (Bevölkerung.at, 2018a, 2018c, 2018h, 2018k).

The region Wilder Kaiser therefore consists of 9,757 residents on an area of 134.5 km².

Considering the number or recorded overnight stays, the numbers for winter 2017/18 are 351,402; 178,595; 138,860; and 289,532 respectively. During summer 2018 377,361; 178,331; 129,940; and 245,171 overnights stays were made (Landesregierung, 2018a).

A total of 958,389 overnight stays in winter 2017/18 and 930,803 in summer 2018 were recorded for the region Wilder Kaiser.

6. Analysis:

For both seasons, a time frame of two weeks was chosen.

During the winter season, all posts made by the nine tourism organizations from 22.01.2018 to 04.02.2018 were taken into consideration. This leads to a total of 403 posts for this period. 167 were found on *Facebook*, 111 on *Twitter*, 125 on *Instagram*.

In terms of the summer season, all posts from 23.07.2018 to 05.08.2018 were analysed. Thus, a total 327 posts were considered, 134 coming from *Facebook*, 101 from *Twitter* and 92 from *Instagram*.

Table 1 – Post according to platform and season

	Facebook		**Twitter**		**Instagram**		**Total**
Summer	134	41%	101	31%	92	28%	327
Winter	167	41%	111	28%	125	31%	403
Total	301	41%	212	29%	217	30%	730

The time frames were chosen to be in the middle of the respective season. No major holiday events take place during those time frames, as events like Christmas might lead to results that differ from the rest of the year. Furthermore, both time frames span over two months each.

7. Results:

7.1.General Results:

Nine tourism organizations were considered in this analysis. As can be seen in the table below, the total amount of posts made by the organisations within the period of analysis varies from 50 posts to 162 posts. However, these numbers are not related to the number of followers the tourism organizations have on their social media channels. The organizations with the third highest number of followers (Kitzbühel with a total of 182,150 followers) had the most post within the timeframe (162 posts) whereas Zell-Gerlos (highest number of followers: 202,170) has 72 posts.

Table 2 – posts according to platform and tourism organization

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Zell-Gerlos	33	7	32	72
Kitzbühel	55	44	63	162
Innsbruck	26	44	18	88
Paznaun-Ischgl	24	23	4	51
St. Anton	26	17	35	78
Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis	27	10	23	60
Mayrhofen-Hippach	46	32	21	99
Stubaital	33	30	7	70
Wilder Kaiser	31	5	14	50
Total	301	212	217	730

As can be seen in Table 3, the amount of reactions and comments on the posts is similar for all the organizations. Only the engagement on the social media accounts of Stubaital are substantially lower than on those of the other tourism organizations. Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis

and Kitzbühel have the highest numbers with 67,758 and 59,429 points of engagement respectively. The other organizations all lie within a range of 30,000 to 50,000.

Table 3 – Total engagement, reactions, comments according to tourism organization

	Reactions	**Comments**	**Total Engagement**
Organization	Sum	Sum	Sum
Zell-Gerlos	46,566	2,389	48,955
Kitzbühel	57,801	1,628	59,429
Innsbruck	44,257	790	45,146
Paznaun-Ischgl	26,104	3,971	30,075
St. Anton	46,514	1,631	48,244
Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis	65,212	2,546	67,758
Mayrhofen-Hippach	32,508	1,039	33,547
Stubaital	7,246	181	7,427
Wilder Kaiser	32,344	2,443	34,787
Total	358,552	1,6618	37,5368

Taking a closer look at the platforms, it can be seen that the number of engagements varies. *Instagram* has the second highest amount of posts but gained by far the most engagement with users. There are 226,430 likes in total and 2,312 comments. *Facebook* has the most posts in this analysis, and also the highest number of comments (14,226). However, in terms of total engagement *Facebook* is far behind *Instagram*.

Looking at *Twitter*, it can be seen that the engagement is by far the lowest here concerning both reactions and comments (2,656 and 80 respectively). This result for *Twitter* is in line with answers from the expert interview stating that despite having Twitter, it is not considered as important or valuable as *Facebook* and *Instagram*. The main point mentioned was that in German speaking areas *Twitter* simply does not perform as well. In the United Kingdom or the Netherlands *Twitter* can be applied successfully, but the posts need to be in the relevant language (Here English or Dutch, respective) and feature relevant content.

Table 4 – Total engagement, reactions and comments according to platform

	Reactions	Comments	Total Engagement
Facebook	129,466	14,266	143,890
Twitter	2,656	80	2,736
Instagram	226,430	2,312	228,742
Total	358,552	16,618	375,368

When taking a closer look on the posting behaviour on the different platforms, it can be noted that the times at which a new post is made are very similar throughout *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. The main amount of posts is shared early and in the middle of the day.

Table 5 – posts according to time and platform

	early	middle of the day	evening	night
Facebook	128	111	36	26
Twitter	71	78	36	27
Instagram	73	77	28	39

In terms of language it can be noted that mostly German, English, or both were applied in the posts. Four times on *Facebook* and one time on *Twitter*, a different language was used (Italian and Dutch respectively).

Table 6 – languages according to platform

	German		English		Ger. + Engl.		Other		Total	
Facebook	128	42.7%	41	13.7%	127	42.3%	4	1.3%	300	100%
Twitter	70	33.2%	103	48.8%	37	17.5%	1	0.5%	211	100%
Instagram	3	1.4%	86	39.6%	128	59.0%	0	0.0%	217	100%

Furthermore, results show that posts on *Facebook* are significantly longer than on *Twitter* or *Instagram*. *Instagram*, on the other hand, has the shortest posts, also at a significant level. The total word count for *Twitter* is right in between *Facebook* and *Instagram*.

Table 7 – Differences between platforms on the level of word count

(I)Platform	(J)Platform	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.	95%-Confidence Level	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Facebook	Twitter	11.15*	1.497	.000	7.48	14.82
	Instagram	17.39*	1.487	.000	13.74	21.03
Twitter	Facebook	-11.15*	1.497	.000	-14.82	-7.48
	Instagram	6.24*	1.612	.001	2.28	10.19
Instagram	Facebook	-17.39*	1.487	.000	-21.03	-13.74
	Twitter	-6.24*	1.612	.001	-10.19	-2.28

Finally, the amount of hashtags also varies substantially depending on the platform. Although hashtags can be used on all platforms, *Instagram* has the highest number of tags per post. *Twitter* and *Facebook* show rather similar results with 2.76 and 1.94 hashtags respectively. The difference among *Instagram* and the other two platforms is significant.

Table 8 – hashtags per post according to platform

Platform	Average	Standard Deviation	N
Facebook	1.94	2.658	301
Twitter	2.76	2.829	212
Instagram	11.10	5.926	217
Total	4.90	5.659	730

Table 9 – differences in number of hashtags according to platform

(I)Platform	(J)Platform	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.	95%-Confidence Level	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Facebook	Twitter	-.82	.355	.070	-1.69	.05
	Instagram	-9.16*	.353	.000	-10.03	-8.30
Twitter	Facebook	.82	.355	.070	-.05	1.69
	Instagram	-8.34*	.382	.000	-9.28	-7.40
Instagram	Facebook	9.16*	.353	.000	8.30	10.03
	Twitter	8.34*	.382	.000	7.40	9.28

7.2.Results for RQ 1: Which social media platforms are used to communicate with (potential) customers?

For this research question, a total of six hypotheses was tested. In order to determine which social media channels are run the most often, 26 tourism organizations were considered.

Hypothesis 1.1 is fully supported, as all of the organizations in question have a profile on *Facebook*.

However, apart from *Facebook* the number of profiles varies substantially based on the social media platform in question.

Results show that *Twitter* is used by 18 of the organizations in question. *Instagram* is more popular: 25 out of 26 tourism organization have a profile on that platform. *Pinterest* appears to be the least applied platform, with 8 organizations having an account there.

Youtube on the other hand is rather popular with 22 accounts. It needs to be taken into account, however, that *Youtube* is often a preliminary stage to upload videos which are then shared on other platforms.

The platform *Google+* is used by less than half of the tourism organizations in question (12). According to the results from expert interviews, this platform is mostly used in connection with Google Ads.

Facebook and *Instagram* are by far the most popular social media channels among the 26 tourism organizations chosen for this analysis. Therefore, H 1.1 and H 1.3 are supported. As *Pinterest* and *Google+* have the least amount of social media profiles in terms of tourism organizations, H 1.4 and H 1.6 are also supported.

However, *Youtube* is applied very often, so H 1.5 needs to be discarded. *Twitter* is ranked just after *Youtube* with roughly 70% of the tourism organizations running a profile there.

Table 10 – platforms used by tourism organizations

Facebook		**Twitter**		**Instagram**		**Pinterest**		**Youtube**		**Google+**	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
26	0	18	8	25	1	8	18	22	4	12	14

As described *2.1 Social Media*, *Youtube* has a rather different nature than *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. Therefore, only those three are considered for analysis in the next research questions.

7.3.Results for RQ 2: How does the content, strategy and engagement differ for those platforms?

Hypotheses concerning Facebook:

The first hypothesis dealing with *Facebook* investigates the relationship of visual material. The literature suggested that posts with photos or videos should perform better in terms of engagement. The number of posts with photos/videos is almost even with the number of posts without any visual material (142 and 157 respectively).

The average engagement for posts with visual material amounts to 696.59 whereas posts without photos or videos only come to 280.24 reactions and comments. The results indicate a significantly higher amount of engagement, therefore validating H 2.1.

The t-test applied to get these results was run two more times in order to check the results for comments and reactions separately in addition to the total engagement. The results are consistently significant in all cases.

Table 11 – Total engagement on Facebook depending on visual content

Total Engagement on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Posts with Photos/Videos	143	696.59	765.065
Posts without Photos/Videos	158	280.24	352.932

Table 12 – reactions on Facebook depending on visual content

Reactions on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Posts with Photos/Videos	142	623.73	682.537
Posts without Photos/Videos	157	260.49	325.649

Table 13 – comments on Facebook depending on visual content

Comments on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Posts with Photos/Videos	143	76.53	148.302
Posts without Photos/Videos	158	20.77	48.913

Hypothesis 2.2 focuses on the timeframe during which a post was made on *Facebook*. According to literature the engagement should be lower when a post was made early in the day. However, the results obtained indicate that there is no significant difference whatsoever based on the time. 133 posts were made on *Facebook* early in the day, 98 in the middle of the day, 42 in the evening and 28 at night. The average for all times frames is almost the same (see table 14).

The analysis was conducted three times: with total amount of engagement, with reactions alone and with comments alone. All three results indicated the same outcome and no significant differences were found.

Table 14 – Total engagement on Facebook depending on time frame

Total Engagement			
Time	Average	Standard Deviation	N
Early	436.82	647.421	133
Middle of the day	545.07	623.889	98
Evening	472.83	637.816	42
Night	318.79	419.078	28
Total	478.04	620.977	301

Table 15 – differences in total engagement on Facebook depending on time frame

(I)Time	(J)Time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.	95%-Confidence Level	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
early	middle of the day	-81.25	82,.61	.809	-313.66	151.16
	evening	-9.01	109.901	1.000	-318.01	299.98
	night	145.03	129.105	.738	-217.96	508.02
middle of the day	early	81.25	82.661	.809	-151.16	313.66
	evening	72.24	114.515	.941	-249.73	394.21
	night	226.29	133.054	.410	-147.81	600.38
evening	early	9.01	109.901	1.000	-299.98	318.01
	middle of the day	-72.24	114.515	.941	-394.21	249.73
	night	154.05	151.489	.793	-271.88	579.97
night	early	-145.03	129.105	.738	-508.02	217.96
	middle of the day	-226.29	133.054	.410	-600.38	147.81
	evening	-154.05	151.489	.793	-579.97	271.88

The third hypothesis for *Facebook* works with the timeframe on a bigger scale. Here it was tested whether posts on a weekday, or on the weekend, received more engagement. Literature indicated that posts on the weekend should perform better.

According to the results of this analysis, no major differences were found. More posts were made during the week than on the weekend, but the average engagement is of no significant difference.

Again, the analysis was made three times to check for total engagement, reactions and comments separately. As before, the results are consistent and no significant differences were found in any of the analyses.

Table 16 – Total engagement on Facebook depending on weekday/weekend

Total Engagement on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
weekday	218	503.62	668.035
weekend	83	410.84	472.741

Table 17 – reactions on Facebook depending on weekday/weekend

Reactions on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
weekday	216	456.08	605.309
weekend	83	372.93	396.271

Table 18 – comments on Facebook depending on weekday/weekend

Comments on Facebook			
	N	Average	Standard Deviation
weekday	218	50.82	107.521
weekend	83	37.92	121.643

The final hypothesis for *Facebook* is based on the expert interviews that were conducted. According to those results, post with longer text should lead to more engagement than shorter texts. First of all, the correlation of the amount of words and the total number of interactions (i.e. total engagement) was computed. The results indicate a tendency contrary to what was expected. The correlation is negative at a significant level; in other words, the engagement diminishes with a higher number of words.

However, the analysis was also conducted separately for reactions and comments, and showed different results in those cases. In terms of reactions the result is the same as before. There is a negative correlation, which is significant. But for comments, the opposite is the

case. Here the hypothesis is supported. The positive correlation (at a significant level) indicates that longer posts and more comments are linked.

The total word count on *Facebook* varies from 0 to 180 words in a post and is significantly higher than on the other platforms.

Table 19 – correlation of total engagement and word count on Facebook

		Total Engagement	**Word Count**
Total Engagement	Correlation after Pearson	1	-.117*
	Significance (2-way)		.042
	N	301	301
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	-.117*	1
	Significance (2-way)	.042	
	N	301	301

Table 20 – correlation of reactions and word count on Facebook

		Word Count	**Reactions**
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	1	-.162**
	Significance (2-way)		.005
	N	301	299
Reactions	Correlation after Pearson	-.162**	1
	Significance (2-way)	.005	
	N	299	299

Table 21 – correlation of reactions and word count on Facebook

		Word Count	**Comments**
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	1	.134*
	Significance (2-way)		.020
	N	301	301
Comments	Correlation after Pearson	.134*	1
	Significance (2-way)	.020	
	N	301	301

Hypothesis 2.5, the last one focusing on *Facebook*, suggests that celebrity endorsement occurs more often on *Facebook* than on the other platforms. As *Facebook* was named as the main place to convey information, and on *Instagram* landscapes create more engagement than posts featuring people, it is assumed that posts featuring celebrity testimonials are made on *Facebook.*

The results show that this assumption is correct. Celebrity endorsement occurred significantly more often on *Facebook* than on any of the other platforms.

Table 22 – celebrity endorsement according to platform

			Facebook	**Twitter**	**Instagram**	**Total**
Celeb Endorsement	**no**	Amount	279	204	214	697
		% within Platform	92.7%	96.2%	98.6%	95.5%
	yes	Amount	22	8	3	33
		% within Platform	7.3%	3.8%	1.4%	4.5%
Total		Amount	301	212	217	730
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

Hypotheses concerning Twitter:

Moving on to *Twitter*, the hypotheses deal with comparisons between the platforms rather than differences on *Twitter* alone. Literature indicated that competitions (H 2.6), promotions (H 2.7) and external links (H 2.8) would be shared more often on *Twitter* than on *Facebook* or *Instagram*.

The results for H 2.6, however, indicate something quite different than was expected. No competitions had occurred on *Instagram*, but *Facebook* was ahead of *Twitter*. A total of 4.3% of *Facebook* posts concern competitions, whereas only 0.9% on *Twitter* do.

The difference between *Facebook* and *Twitter* is significant, but it needs to be taken into account that on both platforms competitions occurred only very sporadically.

Table 23 – competition according to platform

			Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Competition	**no**	Amount	288	210	217	715
		% within Platform	95.7%	99.1%	100%	97.9%
	yes	Amount	13	2	0	15
		% within Platform	4.3%	0.9%	0.0%	2.1%
Total		Amount	301	212	217	730
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

When looking at promotions (H 2.7), *Twitter* does have the highest percentage of posts across all platforms. Promotions rarely appear on *Instagram*, whereas *Facebook* and *Twitter* have rather similar results. Although *Twitter* has a higher percentage than *Facebook*, the difference is not significant.

Table 24 – promotion according to platform

			Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Promotion	**no**	Amount	151	98	196	445
		% within Platform	50.2%	46.2%	90.3%	61.0%
	yes	Amount	150	114	21	285
		% within Platform	49.8%	53.8%	9.7%	39.0%
Total		Amount	301	212	217	730
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

The final hypothesis for *Twitter* is linked with H 2.7. As *Twitter* was expected to have the most promotions, it was also expected that links to external pages appear more often on Twitter than on the other platforms.

Once more, *Instagram* was hardly ever used to share links to external pages. On *Twitter* and *Facebook*, it occurred in about half of the posts (in 59.4% of posts for *Twitter* and 43.2% for *Facebook*). In this case the difference is significant, thus validating H 2.8.

Table 25 – external links according to platforms

			Facebook	**Twitter**	**Insta-gram**	**Total**
External Links	**no**	Amount	171	86	213	470
		% within Platform	56.8%	40.6%	98.2%	64.4%
	yes	Amount	130	126	4	260
		% within Platform	43.2%	59.4%	1.8%	35.6%
Total		Amount	301	212	217	730
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

Hypotheses concerning Instagram:

The first four hypotheses for *Instagram* deal with UGC. Based on literature review it is expected that posts calling for UGC should receive more engagement and occur more often on Instagram than anywhere else. As those posts should be more popular on *Instagram*, it was also expected that not only calls for UGC, but also UGC itself, are shared more often on *Instagram* than on *Facebook* or *Twitter*, and that those post receive more engagement.

There is a total of 21 posts on *Instagram* calling for UGC, as well as 196 posts that don't. 22 posts feature UGC, contrasted with 195 posts that don't.

Hypothesis 2.9 investigates the relationship between calls for UGC and the social media platforms. According to the literature, the calls should appear more often on *Instagram* than on *Facebook* or *Twitter*.

As the results show, calls for UGC hardly ever appear on *Twitter*. When it comes to *Facebook* and *Instagram*, *Facebook* has a slightly higher amount of this type of posts. The difference, however, is not significant.

Therefore, the hypothesis needs to be discarded, as *Instagram* is not the platform were calls for UGC are shared most often.

Table 26 – calls for UGC according to platform

			Facebook	**Twitter**	**Instagram**	**Total**
Call For UGC	**no**	Amount	269	204	196	669
		% within Platform	89.4%	96.2%	90.3%	91.6%
	yes	Amount	32	8	21	61
		% within Platform	10.6%	3.8%	9.7%	8.4%
Total		**Amount**	**301**	**212**	**217**	**730**
		% within Platform	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Furthermore, contrary to expectation, no significant differences occurred in terms of engagement for H 2.10. Posts that call for UGC should receive more engagement, but this is not the case.

The analysis was executed two more times for reactions and comments respectively. The results for reactions were nearly the same as for total engagement. However, in terms of comments, the difference among the two post types was bigger and verging on significance.

Table 27 – total engagement for calls for UGC on Instagram

Total Engagement on Instagram			
Call for User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	21	1091.38	641.566
no	196	1050.12	688.716

Table 28 – reactions for calls for UGC on Instagram

Reactions on Instagram			
Call for User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	21	1091.38	641.566
no	196	1050.12	688.716

Table 29 – comments for calls for UGC on Instagram

Comments on Instagram			
Call for User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	21	15.62	12.200
no	196	10.12	12.783

The next hypothesis focuses on posts that include UGC. As the literature suggested that calls for UGC appear more often on *Instagram*, it was assumed that the UGC is then also shared more often on this platform than on *Facebook* or *Twitter*.

The cross tables show that *Instagram* does have the highest amount of UGC; however, the difference is not significant.

Table 30 – UGC according to platform

			Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
UGC	**no**	Amount	280	191	195	666
		% within Platform	93.0%	90.1%	89.9%	91.2%
	yes	Amount	21	21	22	64
		% within Platform	7.0%	9.9%	10.1%	8.8%
Total		Amount	301	212	217	730
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

Hypothesis 2.12 further investigates UGC on *Instagram*. It was expected that posts featuring UGC should perform better.

The results show that there is a difference in total engagement which is verging on significance. However, in this case the hypothesis needs to be discarded.

Especially in terms of comments there was virtually no difference between posts with and without UGC. The results for reactions are slightly below significance.

Table 31 – total engagement for UGC on Instagram

Total Engagement on Instagram			
User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	22	1313.91	698.195
no	195	1024.80	676.823

Table 32 – reaction for UGC on Instagram

Reactions on Instagram			
User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	22	1302.77	689.718
no	195	1014.20	666.678

Table 33 – comments for UGC on Instagram

Comments on Instagram			
User Generated Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
yes	22	11.14	9.920
no	195	10.60	13.110

The next hypothesis dealing with *Instagram* was based on the preliminary expert interviews. One of the main points stated was that shorter text works better in terms of generated engagement on *Instagram*. The results obtained with this analysis yielded a different outcome. The correlation did not show any significant differences regarding the length of the post.

The analysis was repeated for comments and reactions separately, but the results remained the same.

The total amount of words per post ranges from 0 to 53 on *Instagram* and is significantly lower than on the other platforms.

Table 34 – correlation of total engagement and word count on Instagram

		Word Count	**Total Engagement**
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	1	.008
	Significance (2-way)		.905
	N	217	217
Total Engagement	Correlation after Pearson	.008	1
	Significance (2-way)	.905	
	N	217	217

Table 35 – correlation of reactions and word count on Instagram

		Word Count	**Reactions**
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	1	.007
	Significance (2-way)		.917
	N	217	217
Reactions	Correlation after Pearson	.007	1
	Significance (2-way)	.917	
	N	217	217

Table 36 – correlation of comments and word count on Instagram

		Word Count	**Comments**
Word Count	Correlation after Pearson	1	.060
	Significance (2-way)		.382
	N	217	217
Comments	Correlation after Pearson	.060	1
	Significance (2-way)	.382	
	N	217	217

The final hypothesis for *Instagram* deals with the content of pictures and videos. As was often stated in the expert interviews, pictures of landscapes work better than photos of just people, food, etc. to get more engagement.

The results of a t-test show that total engagement is indeed significantly higher if the photo or video contains just a landscape.

Table 37 – Total engagement on Instagram according to photo or video content

Total Engagement on Instagram			
Photo/Video Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Landscape	160	1158.01	639.442
No Landscape	56	772.04	724.595

However, the analysis was also repeated for reactions and comments separately. The results for reactions remained the same as for total engagement. But when it comes to comments, no significant difference was found among the visual content types.

Table 38 – reactions on Instagram according to photo or video content

Reactions on Instagram			
Photo/Video Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Landscape	160	1147.14	629.986
No Landscape	56	761.88	712.513

Table 39 – comments on Instagram according to photo or video content

Comments on Instagram			
Photo/Video Content	N	Average	Standard Deviation
Landscape	160	10.87	12.265
No Landscape	56	10.16	14.416

7.4.Results for RQ 3: Which challenges and problems occur and how do those differ according to the platforms?

The main challenge mentioned in the expert interviews was dealing with negative comments or criticism. Several of the interview partners stated that this occurs more often on *Facebook* than on the other channels, as *Facebook* seems to be a major communication channel in terms of dealing with questions and requests.

However, according to the results of this analysis, negative comments and criticism happen least often on *Instagram*, whereas between *Facebook* and *Twitter* there is almost no difference.

What needs to be mentioned here is that for a total of 730 posts, only 33 contained negative comments (Table 40). Therefore, not much insight can be gained from such a little sample.

Table 40 – negative comments and criticism according to platform

			Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Negative Comments/ Criticism	**no**	Amount	244	32	196	472
		% within Platform	91.0%	88.9%	97.5%	93.5%
	yes	Amount	24	4	5	33
		% within Platform	9.0%	11.1%	2.5%	6.5%
Total		Amount	268	36	201	505
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

The second hypothesis for RQ 3 had to deal with a similar limitation. Based on the negative comments from H 3.1, the ways in which the tourism organizations deal with negative comments and criticism was investigated. During the interviews the main coping strategy mentioned was answering the comments.

While on *Twitter* all three negative comments were answered, the results on *Facebook* and *Instagram* look different. On those two platforms only about half of the negative comments received a reply. But, as stated above, the sample for this research question is rather small, thus not leading to any conclusive results.

Table 41 – negative comments that were answered according to platform

			Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Negative Comments Answered	**no**	Amount	11	3	2	16
		% within Platform	47.8%	100%	40.0%	51.6%
	yes	Amount	12	0	3	15
		% within Platform	52.2%	0.0%	60.0%	48.4%
Total		Amount	23	3	5	31
		% within Platform	100%	100%	100%	100%

7.5.Summary:

In terms of RQ1, most of the hypotheses were confirmed. *Facebook* (H 1.1) and *Instagram* (H 1.3) are used by almost all the tourism organizations. *Pinterest* and *Google+* are both utilized by less than half of the organizations, therefore confirming H 1.4 and H 1.6.

When it comes to *Youtube*, H 1.5 needs to be discarded. Although the majority of tourism organizations have a *Youtube* channel, the expert interviews indicated that *Youtube* is mostly used to upload videos that are later shared on the other platforms.

Twitter is used by fewer tourism organizations than *Youtube*, but still the majority of them have a *Twitter* account. H 1.2 is, therefore, validated. Additionally, it needs to be mentioned that many of the experts from the interviews reported that *Twitter* is less important to them than *Facebook* and *Instagram*, as it just doesn't work well in the German-speaking market.

RQ2 was split into three parts to investigate claims regarding *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* respectively.

The first hypothesis, dealing with *Facebook*, was validated. H 2.1 stated that posts including visual material (photos/videos) perform better in terms of engagement, which was found to be true. However, the next two hypotheses (H 2.2 and H 2.3) need to be discarded. First of all, posts did not receive significantly different numbers of engagement based on the time the post was made. Contrary to the hypothesis, posts that were made early in the day did not receive less engagement. Furthermore, there was no difference between content posted on a weekday or on a weekend: What was shared during the week performed similarly to what was posted on the weekend. For H 2.4 the results are somewhat ambivalent. The assumption that the length of the post has an influence on engagement proved to be true. However, contrary to what was expected, posts that were longer received a significantly lower number of reactions (H 2.4a). In terms of comments, the hypothesis (2.4 b) was supported. The longer the post, the more comments were made. The final hypothesis about *Facebook* deals with celebrity endorsement. The analysis confirmed the assumption that celebrity endorsement occurs more often on *Facebook* than on other platforms.

For the platform *Twitter* three hypotheses were stated. The first two need to be discarded based on the results of this analysis. Competitions were not posted on *Twitter* more often than on the other platforms (H 2.6) nor was there a significant difference in the number of promotions shared between *Facebook* and *Twitter* (H 2.7). The final hypothesis was supported. Links to external pages were shared significantly more often on *Twitter* than on the other platforms (H 2.8).

For *Instagram* a total of six hypotheses were tested, four of them related to user generated content (UGC). However, none of these showed significant results. Calls for UGC do not appear more often on *Instagram* than on other platforms (H 2.9) and do not gain more engagement than regular posts (H 2.10). UGC does appear more often on *Instagram* but

not at a significant level (H 2.11). When it comes to engagement, there are more reactions on posts featuring UGC than there are on other post types (H 2.12a). However, the results are slightly below significance. For comments no difference whatsoever was found (H 2.12b). In terms of the amount of words that accompanies an *Instagram* post, hypothesis 2.13 needs to be discarded as well. The engagement was not higher with fewer words in the post. The final hypothesis on *Instagram* deals with the content of photos/videos (H 2.14). The assumption that images or videos depicting landscapes should generate more engagement was validated for reactions (H 2.14a). However, in terms of comments, no significant difference could be found depending on the content of the visual material (H 2.14b).

The final research question (RQ3) investigated problems and their solutions on social media. Most of the interview partners stated that the main problem they have to deal with are negative comments or criticism. As *Facebook* is mainly used to generate a conversation with followers, it was assumed that negative comments should appear more often on *Facebook* than anywhere else. However, this hypothesis (H 3.1) was not validated by the analysis, as no difference was found among the platforms. Furthermore, the main strategy named to deal with negative comments and criticism was providing answers (H 3.2). Results showed that only about half of the negative comments received and answer. Therefore, H 3.2 needs to be discarded as well.

8. Discussion:

The exploration of social media use among tourism organization in Tyrol yielded interesting results. However, several points limited the value of the results obtained.

First of all, only 730 posts were analysed. While this amount was enough to gather significant results on some hypotheses, the sample size for several tests was rather small. For example, research question three deals with the problems the tourism organizations encounter on social media. As the main problem appeared to be negative comments, those were counted. But only 33 comments of that kind were found under 730 different posts. With this sample it is almost impossible to see any differences among the platforms. The same is true for H 2.6 dealing with *Twitter* and competitions. Only 15 of 730 posts features competitions, making for a very small data set.

The study could easily be conducted on a larger scale to obtain more meaningful results.

First of all, more platforms could be taken into account. *Youtube* was used by most of the tourism organizations chosen for this analysis. Although *Youtube* has different mechanics and different terms of interaction, it would make sense to incorporate it into the analysis. *Pinterest* and *Google+* were applied sporadically by the tourism organizations as well. One could investigate further why those platforms seem to be less important and have less potential.

Furthermore, when it comes to *Twitter*, the results from the expert interviews stated clearly that despite having a *Twitter* account, the platform is considered less important. Therefore,

it would make sense to investigate where the problem with using *Twitter* lies, and why the organizations keep accounts there.

Many of the organizations also keep blogs in addition to the regular social media channels, leaving a broad spectrum of questions to be investigated.

Another way of expanding this study would be to include more tourism organizations. In this study only the ones who have profiles on *Facebook, Twitter* and *Instagram* and have a similar number of followers were taken into account. However, several organizations with high follower numbers on *Facebook* and *Instagram* do not have a *Twitter* account and were, therefore, not included in this study. Adding those would help with strengthening the results concerning *Facebook* and *Instagram*.

Moreover, the time frames could be extended. With more posts from the main seasons (or even the low seasons as well) comparisons could be made. In this study a comparison didn't make sense, as the amount of posts in several categories was already rather small. Differences between the main seasons, but also between main and low seasons, could be investigated with more data. This would be especially interesting in terms of photo and video content, as many of the experts stated in the interviews that pictures of freshly fallen snow generate lots of engagement.

Additionally, tourism organizations from different provinces in Austria (Salzburg, Vorarlberg, etc.) could be considered as well. Thus, a comparison could be made not only among social media platforms, but also among the provinces. Differences might be especially visible when it comes to mountain/rural areas and urban destinations like Vienna.

On an even grander scale, the social media channels of tourism organizations of different countries could be compared. As each country has something different to offer in terms of tourism, it would be interesting to see whether social media is also utilized differently.

Furthermore, which social media channels are popular in general varies from country to country. For example, many of the expert in the interviews stated that *Twitter* doesn't work that well in German-speaking areas. Therefore, a meaningful investigation could be made in that area.

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10. Appendix

10.1. Codebook Contents:

The codebook consists of two separate parts. The first one is on the social media channels in general. The second one deals with the analysis of posts.

ID Organization
can range from 1 to 26, one unique number for each tourism organization featured

Facebook
yes (1), no (0)

Twitter
yes (1), no (0)

Instagram
yes (1), no (0)

Pinterest
yes (1), no (0)

Youtube
yes (1), no (0)

Google+
yes (1), no (0)

FB Followers
Amount of followers on this platform

Twitter Followers
Amount of followers on this platform

Instagram Followers
Amount of followers on this platform

Total Followers
Amount of Followers for FB, Twitter and Instagram combined

ID Organization
can range from 1 to 9, one unique number for each tourism organization featured

Platform
Facebook (1), Twitter (2), Instagram (3)

Post ID
Unique ID for each post, starts a new when platform is changed (always starts with one)

Time of Post
early in the day=between six and twelve o'clock (1), middle of the day=between twelve and six (2), evening=between six and twelve (3), night =between twelve and six (4)

Date
Date when the posting was made

weekday
Monday to Friday at twelve = weekdays (0), Friday afternoon to Sunday = weekend (1)

Photo included
yes (1), no (0), more than one (2)

Video included
yes (1), no (0),

Photo/Video content
Landscape (1), no landscape (0)

negative comments
Negative comments found below a post yes (1), no (0)

Answered negative comments
Answers to the negative comments found below a post yes (1), no (0)

word count
number of words the post features

number of reactions
amount of likes, etc. the posts received

number of comments
amount of comments the posts received

Total engagement

Amount of reactions and comments combined

competition
yes (1), no (0)

promotion
yes (1), no (0)

call for UGC
yes (1), no (0)

UGC
yes (1), no (0)

Celebrity Endorsement
yes (1), no (0)

Contains external Links
Yes (1), no (0)

Language of the Post
German (0), English (1), both (2), other (3)

Hashtags
Number of hashtags used for the post

10.2. Interview Results (Summary):

Mayrhofen-Hippach:

The marketing department of this tourism organization consists of six employees, who also work with social media.

There are five social media channels the organization works with: *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Youtube*, and *Google+*. However, *Google+* is by far less important for them than the other channels.

The content on the channels is either created by the tourism organization itself or bought additionally. User generated content is only rarely worked with, as it is difficult and time consuming to sort through all the material sent by followers. When it comes to sharing, the same material is used on *Facebook* and *Twitter* most of the time. The only difference is that on *Facebook* more information is added to the photo/video than on *Twitter*. *Youtube* is mainly used to upload videos which are then shared on the other platforms.

The main goal for the tourism organization Mayrhofen-Hippach is to create engagement with people and to grow their community. For that purpose *Twitter* is not as relevant as *Facebook* and *Instagram*, as *Twitter* works less well in German-speaking countries. On *Facebook* the organization wants to convey information and interact with the followers, whereas on *Instagram* they want to inspire. The text is kept shorter and there is less interaction.

When it comes to photo and video themes, landscapes work the best on *Instagram*; on *Facebook* the image is less important as long as it comes with a good text. The posts on all platforms are usually made between three and five o'clock in the afternoon. There is no significant difference among the channels based on the post time. The only problem the tourism organization has encountered so far on social media are negative comments and criticism. However, the main way to deal with this is answering the comments.

In general, social media is seen as an important marketing tool.

Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis:

The tourism organization of Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis has a marketing department with seven employees, who are also involved in operating the social media channels.

The social media channels that the organization has profiles on are *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube,* and *Google+*. However, *Twitter* and *Google+* are less important than the other channels.

The material used on the social media channels is either created by the tourism organization or bought from external sources.

Most of the time the same material is shared on all channels, a distinction only happens partially.

There is no strategy for *Twitter*, as it is not as important a tool as the other platforms. *Facebook*, however, is used to convey information and engage with followers. *Instagram* is supposed to function as an inspiration.

Looking at the themes of the pictures/videos, landscapes work best on *Instagram*, especially of the first snow in the winter. On *Facebook* the image is less important, but the text needs to be correct and informative.

The times at which posts are made vary. There is no real difference within each platform or among the platforms.

There are two problems when it comes to working with social media. The first issue is dealing with negative comments. The second one is creating a content pool.

For the tourism organization Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis social media is important as it is a cost-efficient marketing tool.

St. Anton:

This tourism organization has a marketing department with four employees. They run social media channels on *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Pinterest,* and *Google+*. All of the channels are equally important to the organization.

The content is either created in-house or bought from external sources.

Partially the same material is shared on all platforms. A distinction is only made with certain topics that are linked with certain platforms.

The images that works best are photos which show well-known landscapes or places. The main goal for the tourism organization is to create engagement with the followers. The problem mentioned here is dealing with data protection after the General Data Protection Regulation was put into place.

Nevertheless, social media is an important tool for the tourism organization St. Anton.

Tux Finkenberg:

The marketing department of the tourism organisation Tux-Finkenberg is the smallest of all organizations interviewed. There is one employee who is also in charge of social media activities.

Tux-Finkenberg runs social media channels on *Twitter, Facebook,* and *Instagram*. However, *Twitter* is less important than *Facebook* and *Instagram*.

Content is either produced by the organization or bought from photographers. Reposting user generated content was also named as an important tool. This happens mostly on *Instagram*.

On *Facebook* the focus is more on conveying information for events, etc. The image that works best is a landscape, preferably with freshly fallen snow. Those pictures are used on all channels.

The main goal is to foster engagement with (potential) guests.

The posts are shared either in the morning or in the evening. There is no distinction depending on the platform.

The problem mentioned by the tourism organization Tux-Finkenberg is also dealing with negative comments and postings. In extreme cases the only way to cope was to delete the post or disable comments.

Social media is a good additional advertising tool for Tux-Finkenberg.

Fügen- Kaltenbach:

At the tourism organization Fügen-Kaltenbach two employees are in charge of social media. The organization has profiles on *Facebook* and *Instagram* as well as on *Google+* and *Youtube*. The latter two, however, are not that important for them.

Content is either created by the employees themselves or, as is planned for the next year, bought from external sources. User generated content is also shared regularly.

On their *Instagram* channel pictures with more detail and a short text receive more engagement. When it comes to *Facebook*, landscapes work well, but only in combination with informative text.

The post times vary; however, on *Instagram* evening posts perform slightly better, whereas on *Facebook* the time does not matter too much.

The main goals are to foster engagement and build an image for the tourism organization and region.

The only problem that has occurred so far are negative comments. Those disputes could mostly be solved by answering and explaining.

The tourism organization Fügen-Kaltenbach considers social media as an important marketing tool. It is not only convenient but also necessary, as their competition is also very strong on social media.

Kitzbühel:

The tourism organization Kitzbühel has a marketing department with five to six employees, but only one person is in charge of social media. There are social media profiles on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, *Youtube*, and *Google+*. *Google+* is considered the least important social media platform for them.

The content for social media is either produced by the organization, bought form photographers or reposted user generated content (the calls for UGC are mainly shared on *Facebook*).

Mostly the same material is shared on all channels, differences occur only rarely.

An image that always works is a landscape with freshly fallen snow. The tourism organization tries to avoid pictures with people in them, as privacy rights can present a challenge. The Kitzbühel tourism organization wants to reach as many people as possible with their social media channels, spread their campaigns and generate overnight stays.

The times at which posts are made vary, and there is no difference in terms of performance.

Once more, the main problem mentioned is dealing with negative comments. The strategy of this tourism organization is also to answer and explain.

Ötztal – Sölden – Obergurgl:

This tourism organization has two marketing departments: One for classic marketing with eleven employees, and another one for online marketing with four employees. They run social media channels on *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Youtube*, *Twitter*, and *Google+*. However, *Facebook* posts are reposted on *Twitter*, and *Google+* is inactive as of now because it did not perform well.

Content is usually created in house; some additional content is purchased from external sources. The content is divided according to particular themes which are used on specific

channels. A distinct visual vocabulary for each platform is important. Sharing different material on the platforms is a significant aspect for this tourism organization.

Calls for UGC usually happen on *Instagram*, and the received content is also reposted on that platform.

In terms of photo and video content it was mentioned that pictures of fresh snow work extremely well on all platforms. On *Instagram* the content needs to be aesthetically appealing, while on *Facebook* the quality of pictures and videos is not that important in terms of engagement.

The text is kept short on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, as the attention span of followers scrolling through their feeds is low.

Content is usually shared in the morning and evening as those posts perform the best. Things shared in the afternoon or at lunchtime receive less engagement. The main goals with their social media channels are boosting the brand image and gaining customers.

They mentioned two problems regarding working with social media. First of all, the organic reach was cut by *Facebook*, so more money needs to be invested to reach the same amount of people. Secondly, followers expect quick responses which can be challenging especially on weekends.

Zell – Gerlos - Krimml - Wald/Königsleiten

In this case the social media marketing team (3 employees) is responsible for four different tourism organizations as well as for the winter sports area Zillertal Arena.

The social media channels used are *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Youtube*. *Youtube* is important especially in the winter, as a lot of video content is created during that time. *Twitter* is in general less important as it doesn't work that well in German-speaking areas. *Twitter* performs better in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, but in those cases one needs to post on the country's respective languages.

The content shared on the platforms is created by employees. Nothing is bought from external sources. It's important that the material shared on the platforms is different. On *Instagram* the text that goes with the picture is not important, it just needs to be kept short. Furthermore, photos with landscapes create the most engagement on *Instagram*. When it comes to *Facebook*, pictures with people or action are more successful. The text should be longer than on *Instagram* and contain more information, but not be too long at the same time.

UGC is usually called for in combination with competitions.

The posting times vary; however, it is important that the content matches the day time (sun rise pictures in the morning, etc.). In terms of performance there is no difference based on the posting time.

The only problem encountered so far is dealing with negative comments, complaints and criticism on social media. The strategy applied is answering the comments.

Social media is an important tool to stay in contact with guests.

10.3. Tables: