Social Media Marketing in the Event Industry: An Empirical Study to Determine Factors Influencing the Distribution of Events

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Abstract Digitization offers great potential for many areas, including event marketing. Newsletters and social media are already being used successfully by companies to draw attention to their events. Social media marketing can help to increase the reach of events. In this context, it is important to understand which factors influence the intention to interact and interest in event announcements. Using an image manipulation experiment, we examined the influence of four framework conditions on event announcements: Image (present vs. absent), number of persons interested (high vs. low), title length (long vs. short), and relationship information (present vs. absent). The results showed that event announcements with an image elicit significantly higher intention to interact. In addition, interest increases significantly when relationship information is present in the ad (when there is a basic interest in the event). Furthermore, we analyzed the influence of emotionality of event images. We show that emotionality is positively significantly correlated with the intention to interact and interest.

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1 Introduction

Social networks are becoming more and more important. Companies are also aware of this, which is why they are increasingly marketing on social networks, so-called social media marketing. One goal of this form of marketing is to ensure that content spreads particularly strongly. This can be achieved by increasing the intention to interact and the interest of people in a content. In the optimal case, there is an exponential growth in the interactions/spread of the content. This is the goal of a special form of social media marketing called viral marketing (Reichstein and Brusch, 2019). The focus of this work is on identifying influencing factors to increase the intention to interact and the interest in event announcements, in order to generate viral distribution in the best case.

Framework conditions of content in social media, provide additional information about a content (e.g., headlines, interaction counts, information if friends are interested in this content, etc.). People use framework conditions (consciously or unconsciously) to evaluate content (e.g., classifying content by headlines). Accordingly, framework conditions can serve as filters to verify one's interest in content (Reichstein and Brusch, 2019). Filtering content is necessary because the flood of information on the Internet is constantly increasing. This statement can be confirmed by looking at the facts. Statistics from (Cisco, 2019) show that 46,600 GB of data per second were used on the Internet in 2017. Facebook alone generates 4 petabytes of new data per day (Facebook, 2019). This makes it clear that people will continue to rely on additional information about content in the future. In order to make one's own content stand out from the broad mass of content and to distribute it widely, it is therefore essential to address the issue of framework conditions.

First, this study examines the influence of framework conditions on the success of content. Content in this context is event announcements published on the social network Facebook. For this work, a total of four framework conditions were tested with manipulations. These are as follows: Image (present vs. absent), number of persons interested (high vs. low), title length (long vs. short), and relationship information (present vs. absent). We investigate whether these factors have an impact on interest in an event and whether these factors have an impact on the intention to interact with the event. Second, we investigate the influence of the emotionality of the images used to present the event announcements. This leads to the following two research questions:

1. Do the framework conditions influence the intention to interact and the interest in an event presented in social media?
2. Do perceived emotions influence the intention to interact and the interest in an event presented in social media?

The structure of the work is as follows. First, a theoretical basis is created on the topics of word of mouth and viral marketing (section 2). The existing literature on the influence of framework conditions in viral marketing will also be briefly discussed. In addition, an insight into Facebook and its event function will be given. The second part of the paper presents the empirical investigation (section 3). The study includes the comparison of pairs of images (manipulated vs. original) to measure the influence of the framework condition. In addition, a correlation analysis is performed to analyze the relationship between emotions and the intention to interact and between emotions and the interest. Sections 4 and 5 summarize the results of the study.

2 Theoretical Framework

The recommendation of a product or service by a trusted person such as a friend or family member is referred to in marketing as word of mouth (WOM), (Dichter, 1966). This classic communication method has an impact on customers, since the recommendation comes from a consumer who does not see any economic advantage in this exchange of views (Allsop et al., 2007). On average, 20 to 30 brands are mentioned casually in conversations every day (Ferguson, 2008). Various studies have already shown that consumers can strongly influence each other (Phelps et al., 2004). The advantage of WOM lies above all in the constant exchange and credibility of the recommendations (Webster, 1970). This can have both positive and negative consequences (Helm, 2000). A disadvantage for companies is that WOM is difficult to control (Allsop et al., 2007). When WOM is integrated into an online network, it is referred to as viral marketing (Jurvetson, 2000).

Nowadays, messages are not only spread virally via e-mails. Viral marketing has gained more attention, especially through the increase and acceptance of social media such as Facebook (Shen et al., 2016). Social media are online applications and platforms that enable interaction, information exchange and

collaboration between users (Kim and Ko, 2012). Social media is thus a collective term for the various social networks. Compared to email, social media gives users additional functionalities and interaction options, allowing content to be shared more easily. This favors social media marketing and increases the chances for. viral marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011).
It is well known that content must trigger emotions (Dobele et al., 2007) or arouse the interest of individuals (Berger and Milkman, 2012) in order to be widely disseminated. In this work the content refers to events. However, it does not deal with the design of the contents/events themselves. Only the framework conditions under which the event is presented are analyzed. It is known that framework conditions have an influence on the intention of interaction and the interest of people in content.

An example would be headlines that can increase attention to content (Alves et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Piotrkowicz et al., 2017). Another factor are images that can present content and thus increase the virality of content (Kourogi et al., 2015). The analysis of this work examines the influence of different framework conditions (people are "interested" count; title; relationship information). In addition, the influence of images (with different emotions triggered) is investigated.

The research results of a panel discussion on events in the social media age in 2013 showed that Facebook, Twitter and blogs are best suited for marketing events (Zanger, 2013). In a survey conducted by Amiando, an online tool for event organization, the organizers were asked about their most popular social media platforms for event marketing. The result is very similar to the survey of social media users. Facebook ranks first. Twitter, XING and YouTube follow (Amiando, 2012).

A company that has a company page on Facebook can market events on Facebook free of charge. For this purpose, an event, the so-called Facebook event, is created on the company page. According to internal Facebook statistics for 2016, around 700 million people use Facebook events every month to market the event. On average, around 35 million users per day click on a public event on Facebook (Facebook 2016). Facebook consumers can search for events, view their selected events and share with friends on the Events tab in the left menu of the news feed (Facebook, 2016). Administrators will be able to monitor and analyze their marketing impact through statistics. This will enable a targeted marketing strategy for further events. Lottery games offer the possibility to

bring users into interaction (Amiando, 2012). At a public event, everyone can see who is interested in an event or who marks it with "going". Friends receive a notification in the News Feed (Facebook, 2018).

3 Empirical Study

The empirical part of this work serves to answer the following two research questions:

1. Do the framework conditions influence the intention to interact and the interest in an event presented in social media?
2. Do perceived emotions influence the intention to interact and the interest in an event presented in social media?

A distinction was made between framework conditions and emotional factors. For the control of the framework conditions, several information attributes from different events (which were presented in the original in Facebook) were manipulated. In order to investigate the emotional factors, the images for the presentation of the events in Facebook were exchanged in order to generate different emotions in the subjects. The study proceeded as follows. The subjects were divided into two groups, the control group (CG), and the experimental group (EG). The control group (CG) received an original image of an event published on the social network Facebook. The experimental group received this image in a modified form. One framework condition per image pair was manipulated. Figure 1 shows the comparison for the framework condition "persons are interested" (PI) as an example. On the left side is the original image, which was only displayed to the control group. On the right side is the manipulated version, which was only displayed to the experimental group. Only the information about the numbers of interested persons was manipulated for this event, all other information was kept the same. The following informative framework conditions were investigated:

- Influence of persons are "interested" indication (PI):
  Low (EG) vs. high (CG).
- Influence of the title length (Ti):
  Short (EG) vs. long (CG).
- Influence of the event image (I):
  Image absent (EG) vs. image present (CG).
- Influence of a relationship information (RI):
  Friend participates (EG) vs. friend does not participate (CG).

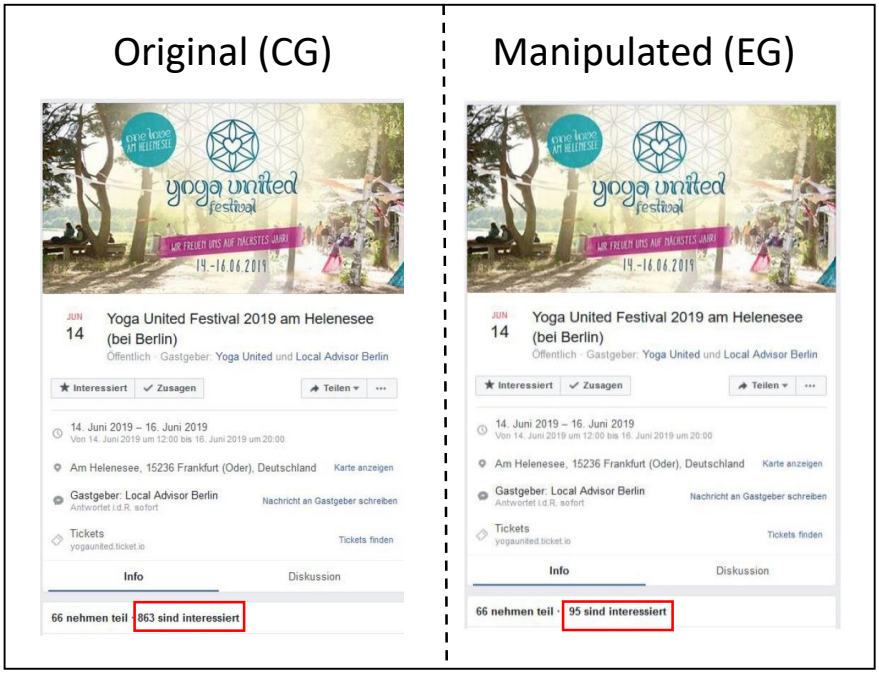

Figure 1: Image pair for the factor "Influence of persons are "interested" indication (PI)". Left image: High interest (863/CG). Right image: Low interest (95/EG).

In the second part of the study, the presentation image of the event was exchanged to express a different emotion than in the original image (CG). The following emotion comparisons were made:

- Pair 1: Sadness (CG) vs. Joy (EG).
- Pair 2: Joy (CG) vs. Neutral (EG).
- Pair 3: Joy (CG) vs. Anger (EG).
- Pair 4: Joy (CG) vs. High Joy (EG).

To verify the emotional effect of the images, the subjects were asked about the perceived emotions when viewing the individual images. In both groups, the intention to interact and the interest in the respective event were measured. Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.8 for both factors in each event.

The following items were used for the "intention to interact" factor:

- "I would mark the event with "Interested"."
- "I would mark the event with "Going"."
- "I would share the event with other people" (e.g., invite friends, share in messenger)

The following items were used for the "interest" factor:

- "I am generally interested in events of this kind."
- "I could really imagine attending the event."

Five hypotheses are presented to answer the research questions. These are divided into "a" (intention to interact with an event) and "b" (interest in an event).The following hypotheses will be examined in this work:

- If the number of "interested" persons for an event is higher, then the intention to interact (H1a) and the interest (H1b) in this event are also higher.
- If the title length for an event is shorter, then the intention to interact (H2a) and the interest (H2b) in this event are higher.

- If the event is presented by an image, then the intention to interact (H3a) and the interest (H3b) in this event are higher.
- If a friend indicates to participate in this event, then the intention to interact (H4a) and the interest (H4b) in this event are higher.
- The stronger the perceived emotion, the higher the intention to share (H5a) and the higher the interest (H5b) in the event.

The sample of the survey comprised a total of 154 participants, 121 of whom completed the questionnaire in full. The first question on the use of social media was answered with "Yes" by 109 subjects (90.1 percent). Only these subjects were used for further analysis. Before examining the social and external influencing factors, an analysis of the sociodemographic data of the survey participants and an evaluation of the two qualitative questions were carried out. The survey showed that just over half of the survey participants are female. The remaining part (42.1 percent) are male. Approximately 75 percent of the respondents are between 20 and 39 years old. All survey participants are resident in Germany. The majority of the respondents currently live in Berlin (41.1 percent) and Brandenburg (34.6 percent). Most of them have a university entrance qualification (82.5 percent) and a Bachelor's (27.2 percent) or Master's degree (26.1 percent). 19.6 percent of those surveyed stated that they did not have a professional qualification. The subjects most frequently used YouTube (82.6 percent), Facebook (67.9 percent) and Instagram (50.5 percent). Of the 109 respondents, 100 said they used their smartphone (91.7 percent) to access social media. Seventy-five people use a laptop (68.8 percent).

3.1 Quantitative Analysis – Framework Conditions

The influence of the individual factors was tested by quantitative analysis. The different pairs were analyzed using a mean value comparison. The mean values for the intention to interact and the mean values for the interest in the events were compared. The subjects rated the items on a 7 point Likert scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). The t-test for independent samples was used to check whether differences exist in the mean value pairs. It was tested to the significance level of 0.05. Table 1 shows the pair comparisons for all subjects. The table is

divided into the two factors "Intention to Interact" and "Interest". The mean values in the different categories (PI, Ti, I and RI), for the control group and the experimental group, are displayed. The column "Sig. (2-tailed)" shows the P-values of the significance test for the respective mean pair. It can be seen that there is a significant difference in the framework conditions "influence of the event image" (I) (p-value 0.049). In this comparison, the event was presented with an image only in the control group. In the experimental group, the event was presented without an image. The interaction intention was significantly lower for the experimental group with a mean value of 2.1667 than for the control group (mean value 2.6927). This means that individuals are more likely to interact with an event if it is presented through an image, which supports H3a. In terms of interest, however, no significant difference could be identified in this category. Otherwise, no difference could be found in any category.

Table 1: Mean value comparison between the groups for the tested framework conditions (all subjects) Note: * significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); Likert scales ranging from 1 ("highly unlikely) to 7 ("very likely").

Comparison		Intention to Interact			Interest		
		EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)	EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)
Persons interested (PI)	n	43	64	.649	43	64	.636
	Mean	2.6357	2.4896		3.0465	2.8906	
Title length (Ti)	n	42	64	.504	42	64	.270
	Mean	2.4841	2.6927		3.0238	3.4141	
Image (I)	n	42	63	.049*	43	63	.348
	Mean	2.1667	2.6878		2.9070	3.2063	
Relationship information (RI)	n	43	63	.989	43	64	.572
	Mean	4.0155	4.0106		5.0116	4.8438	

It should be noted that all subjects are included in Table 1. This also includes those people who were not interested in the event shown. In order to be able to make better conclusions, the subjects were divided again. The distribution was made based on interest in the respective event. The persons with a basic interest in the respective event (mean value for the factor "interest" > 3) were extracted and examined. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean value comparison between the groups for the tested framework conditions (interested subjects) Note: * significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Comparison		Intention to Interact			Interest		
		EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)	EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)
Persons interested (PI)	n	21	22	.390	21	22	.054
	Mean	3.6032	4.0455		4.4048	4.9545	
Title length (Ti)	n	18	32	.702	18	32	.616
	Mean	3.7037	3.8646		4.7500	4.9063	
Image (I)	n	13	28	.646	14	28	.253
	Mean	3.5897	3.7619		5.0357	4.5893	
Relationship information (RI)	n	35	56	.500	35	57	.039*
	Mean	4.5333	4.3036		5.6429	5.1579	

It becomes clear that the interest in an event can be increased by additional information at the relationship level (RI). In this case, in the experimental group, the additional indication that a friend is attending the event was displayed. Interest in the experimental group was significantly higher (p-value = 0.039) in this case (mean 5.6429) than in the control group (mean 5.1579), which supports H4b (under the given prerequisite). It is interesting that no concrete friend was given, but only that a friend participates in the event. Another result should be considered more closely. In the comparison of the "Interested" information, there was no significant difference. However, this result is very close with a p-value of 0.054. It should be noted that the sample was too small in this case. This factor could be further investigated in future research. No additional differences could be identified. It can be summarized that the intention to interact is significantly influenced by the presentation of an event through images. Furthermore, it was found that the information about the participation of a friend has a significant influence on the interest of an event.

3.2 Quantitative Analysis – Emotion Influence

In the second part of the study the emotional image comparisons were evaluated. The strength of the emotionality of the individual images was also queried on a 7-point likert scale. The subjects were asked to indicate the strength of the perceived emotions of joy, sadness, anger, surprise, and fear. In addition,

subjects were asked whether the image was perceived as neutral (emotionless). The pictures were then categorized based on the emotion rating given (e.g., picture 1-EG = joy, since the picture was most strongly assigned to the emotion joy with a rating of 4.46). When comparing the first three image pairs (Pair 1: Neutral vs. Joy; Pair 2: Joy vs. Sadness; Pair 3: Anger vs. Joy), no significant differences were found in the mean values. Only the last pair comparison (Pair 4) showed a significant difference (shown in Table 3). The perceived joy was significantly higher in the image of the control group with 4.95 points than in the image of the experimental group (3.94 points). Accordingly, the strength of the perceived joy was compared in this image pair. As shown in Table 3, the interest in an event is significantly stronger (p-value = 0.023) if the presentation image of the event triggers a higher perceived joy (mean value EG = 4.3214 to mean value CG = 5.0391). This result was determined with consideration of all subjects.

Table 3: Mean value comparison between the groups for the emotion pairs (all subjects)
Note: * significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Comparison (Emotion-EG vs. Emotion-CG)		Intention to Interact			Interest		
		EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)	EG	CG	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1: Joy (4.46) vs. Sadness (4.52)	n	43	62	.844	43	62	.997
	Mean	3.0310	2.9630		3.3953	3.3968	
Pair 2: Neutral (4.46) vs. Joy (4.52)	n	41	64	.934	41	64	.997
	Mean	2.6341	2.6094		3.3902	3.1328	
Pair 3: Anger (4.49) vs. Joy (4.49)	n	42	61	.940	42	61	.641
	Mean	3.1270	3.1534		3.4881	3.6508	
Pair 4: Joy (3.94) vs. Joy (4.95)	n	42	64	.107	42	64	.023*
	Mean	3.5794	4.1250		4.3214	5.0391	

This result is the first indication that emotions can increase interest in an event. One explanation for why there were no significant differences between the different emotions could be that the type of emotion is not relevant, only how strongly an emotion is perceived. To further test the influence of emotions, a correlation analysis was performed for each perceived emotion. It was examined whether the strength of the perceived emotions has an influence on the intention to interact and the interest in an event. Table 4 shows the results. The emotions were measured for the individual presentation images of the events. All subjects

evaluated each image (including the images of the opposing group). For the evaluation, however, only the evaluations of the corresponding group were used (e.g. only the emotion evaluations of the control group for the image of the event of the control group) in order to measure the correlation with the two factors (intention and interest). The control group had the emotions: Joy, sadness, fear and neutrality to choose from. The experimental group had the emotions: Joy, anger, surprise and neutrality to choose from. It should be critically noted that both groups did not use the same emotions.

The image of the control group in the first pair comparison (pair 1-CG) was rated most strongly with the emotion sadness (4.52 points). The other emotions of the respective images (in the corresponding groups) that were rated as the strongest are shown in Table 3.

Table 4: Pearson correlation values between emotion and intention to interact/interest (all subjects) Note: * significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Emotion (Image)	Emotion Mean	Intention to Interact		Interest	
		n	Pearson Correlation	n	Pearson Correlation
Sadness (Pair1-CG)	4.52	62	.377**	62	.472**
Joy (Pair1-EG)	4.46	43	-0.106	43	-0.063
Joy (Pair2-CG)	4.52	63	.325**	63	.348**
Neutral (Pair2-EG)	4.46	41	-0.143	41	-0.062
Joy (Pair3-CG)	4.49	61	.452**	61	.520**
Anger (Pair3-EG)	4.49	42	.396**	42	.310*
Joy (Pair4-CG)	4.46	43	.-0.106	43	-0.063
Joy (Pair4-EG)	3.94	42	.189	42	.190

As can be seen from the results in Table 4, the perceived emotions correlate positively and significantly with the intention of interaction and interest. Furthermore, no difference between positive and negative emotions can be observed in these examples. No significant correlation was found in the images Pair1-EG; Pair2-EG and Pair4-EG. In image Pair2-EG the reason is obvious because the image was evaluated as "neutral". Accordingly, hardly any emotions were generated by this image, which supports the thesis of the influence of emotions on the intention of interaction and interest.

It should be mentioned that Pair1-EG was an event related to the abolition of animal experiments. A happy image could, therefore, be inappropriate for the event.

In the image Pair4-EG the perceived emotion of joy was lowest compared to the other images. In addition, "neutral" was rated with 3.66 points similarly strong as joy. It could therefore be that this image was perceived as "neutral" and, therefore, there was no significant correlation between the factors.

It can be summarized that perceived emotions influence the intention to interact and the interest in an event, which supports H5a and H5b.

4 Conclusion

This work sheds light on the field of framework conditions and their influence on the perception of content. It was examined whether the framework conditions affect the intention to interact with events and whether the interest in these events is influenced. A distinction was made between framework conditions and emotional factors.

As shown, informative framework conditions can influence the intention to interact and the interest of the individual. Four different factors were examined: Influence of persons are "interested" indication (PI); influence of the title length (Ti); influence of the event image (I) and influence of relationship information (RI). There is evidence that the PI factor may have an influence, but no significant influence was found in this study, therefore H1a and H1b must be rejected. However, further research would require a larger number of subjects to further clarify this problem. Regarding Ti, no influence on the intention of interaction and interest could be found, hence H2a and H2b must be rejected as well. The influence of images (I) in general could be demonstrated. An event presented without an image has a significantly lower interaction rate, which supports H3a. The presentation without image, however, had no influence on the interest (reject H3b). For the last factor investigated (RI), the following was found. People rate an event as more interesting if they have the information that a friend of them is attending the event. The prerequisite for this is that people have a basic interest in the event. It was interesting to note that no precise information was given about which friend would attend. This result supports hypothesis H4b (under the given prerequisite), however H4a is not supported.

Events are often presented with the help of images. The influence of perceived emotions through such images was examined in the second part of the analysis. It was found that emotional images correlate significantly with the interest and interaction intention of an event. This result supports the hypotheses H5a and H5b. This means that the stronger the emotions triggered by images presenting an event, the more interesting these events are for people and the more often people interact with the event. It should be mentioned that the type of emotion is not decisive. No difference could be found between negative and positive emotions. Only the strength of the triggered emotion was crucial. In one example, there was an indication that the emotion triggered should fit the event. This means that for a sad event no joyful images should be used.

Overall, it can be stated that framework conditions can have an influence on the perception of content (in this case, events). This fact should be taken into account when creating or presenting content in order to achieve greater success with this content.

5 Limitations and Further Research

A weakness of the study is the small number of participants. In some groups of the study, the minimum number of 30 subjects could not be reached. In further studies, the sample size needs to be increased to obtain robust results. Furthermore, in a subsequent study, effect sizes for the results should be calculated through further analysis. Another point would be the analysis of further possible emotions (e.g. surprise, arousal). Likewise, the analysis of further informative framework conditions or a deeper analysis of the already investigated factors would be conceivable. The factor title name / headline should be mentioned explicitly. The influence of this factor on the interaction rate has already been studied in the literature (Kourogi et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2016; Piotrkowicz et al., 2017). In this work, only the text length and thus the information value of the title was manipulated. Future research could investigate different wording / keywords or the use of emojis in this context. Furthermore, it would be interesting to look at different social networks and examine them for similarities. This study can serve as a start for a larger study, as it provides some evidence that framework conditions can influence content popularity and interest.

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