

Optimizing a social media strategy for a nonprofit organization

Case: SIETAR Europa

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Abstract <p>The aim of this research was to determine the optimal social media strategy for an intercultural nonprofit organization for both the needs of the organization and its members. The objectives were to identify the best practices of European NGOs in their use of social media and to explore the social media activities of the case organization's members in order to provide a recommendation.</p> <p>The research strategy was that of action research. The data was collected using a mixed methods approach including both benchmarking and an online questionnaire in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon. Twenty European NGOs were benchmarked in order to examine their use of social media. The link to the questionnaire was distributed through the organization to the current members in addition to using the existing social media channels of the organization. There were 53 responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted, adopted and developed from existing questionnaires and theory. The results were triangulated with the existing social media presence of the case organization.</p> <p>The results indicated the number of social media platforms used by European NGOs, the most influential platforms used, the level of participation of the case organization members, the purposes for using social media, how different social media platforms suit their culture, and the expectations towards the case organization. A recommendation was provided for the case organization for the optimization of a social media strategy that would help the organization to better engage with its members.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli määrittää voittoa tavoittelemattomalle monikulttuuriselle organisaatiolle optimaalinen sosiaalisen median strategia, joka vastaa sekä organisaation että sen jäsenten tarpeita. Tavoitteena oli löytää sosiaalisen median parhaat käytännöt eurooppalaisissa kansalaisjärjestöissä ja selvittää, kuinka organisaation jäsenet käyttävät sosiaalista mediaa.</p> <p>Tutkimusmenetelmäksi valittiin toimintatutkimus. Koska ilmiöstä haluttiin saada mahdollisimman hyvä käsitys, aineisto kerättiin monimenetelmällä käyttäen kvalitatiivisia ja kvantitatiivisia menetelmiä, benchmarkingia ja online-kyselyä. Benchmarkingilla tutkittiin sosiaalisen median käyttöä kahdessakymmenessä eurooppalaisessa kansalaisjärjestössä. Kyselyn linkkiä jaettiin eteenpäin organisaation kautta nykyisille jäsenille sekä organisaation olemassa olevia sosiaalisen median kanavia käyttäen. Kyselyyn vastasi 53 henkilöä. Kysely pohjautui olemassa oleviin tutkimuksiin ja aiemmin kehitettyihin kyselyihin, joita muokattiin organisaation tarpeisiin sopiviksi. Tutkimusaineisto analysoitiin käyttäen monimenetelmiä. Tulokset trianguloitiin organisaation käytössä olevien sosiaalisen median palveluiden kanssa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tuloksena syntyi kuvaus siitä, mitä sosiaalisen median palveluja eurooppalaiset kansalaisjärjestöt käyttävät ja mitä sosiaalisen median palveluita organisaation jäsenet käyttävät eniten. Lisäksi tutkimuksesta kävivät ilmi syyt, miksi jäsenet käyttävät sosiaalista mediaa, heidän osallistumisasteensa sosiaalisessa mediassa ja se, miten sosiaalisen median palvelut sopivat jäsenten mielestä heidän kulttuuriinsa ja mitä organisaation jäsenet odottavat organisaatiolta. Tulosten pohjalta tehtiin suositus, jolla voidaan optimoida sosiaalisen median strategia sekä parantaa organisaation ja sen jäsenten välistä vuorovaikutusta.</p>		
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1 THE SIGNIFIGANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Social media in its many forms is based on connectivity, sharing of information, experiences and perspectives. It has become an integral part of everyday life and has changed the way people interact with each other. According to Statista (2014), social media penetration was 40% of the European region's population in the beginning of 2014. As a result of social media, the geographic boarders, which have divided individuals based on their location, are disintegrating, and people with similar interests are unified all around the world. (Weinberg 2009, 1.)

Meanwhile, the methods of marketing are changing from one-way messaging towards two-way messaging in order to interact with people. In other words, marketing today is more about people and a new form of human connection. Therefore, digital marketing, applying digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives, plays an important role in an organization. Digital marketing includes the management of different forms of online company presence, such as a company website and social media pages, and is used by companies to interact with audiences. (Agresta, Bough & Miletsky 2010, 53; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 10.)

Although digital technology enables many opportunities for organizations, it can also be seen as a threat if the opportunities are only used because they exist instead of seeing them as complementary instruments that are intergraded as part of the overall marketing strategy. It is therefore essential to extract the maximum benefits from the existing and future opportunities of digital technology by prioritizing solutions that suit the current needs of the organization. (Evans 2008, 155; Kotler et al. 2012, 140.)

The basic challenge of nonprofit organizations according to Andreasen and Kotler (2008) is to individually and collectively help the organization succeed in meeting its goals. Similarly, the for-profit sector is in the behavioral

influence business, which defines the meaning of marketing. The single most important difference is the nature of the target audiences. The for-profit organizations depend on the customers for the success or failure of the organization, whereas the nonprofits face the multiple-audience challenge, the customers, donors, and volunteers. (6, 22–23.)

Therefore, many communication decisions are needed: questions, such as how to communicate about the cause, how to attract more people to assist in promoting the cause, and how to make people more engaged with the cause are discussed in the organization. Nonprofit organizations are competing with limited numbers of resources against thousands of other organizations and businesses for the attention of people online and offline. (Levinson, Adkins & Forbes 2010, 3.)

1.1 Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research

SIETAR, the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, is a nonprofit, volunteer-run multicultural organization of interculturalists. SIETAR was founded in 1974 in the United States by a few professionals engaged in intercultural research and training activities. The goal was to provide a place where intercultural specialists could engage with each other. SIETAR soon started to attract people with similar interests and concerns from all around the world, and as a result the organization was named SIETAR International in 1982. The worldwide SIETAR today includes Japan, Argentina, India, Canada and Australia. SIETAR Europa was established in 1991 to connect interculturalists within Europe. (sietareu n.d.)

Today SIETAR Europa serves as a forum for exchanging ideas about training, theory, and research among existing national SIETAR organizations, located in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK, and uniting intercultural practitioners living in countries without a national SIETAR as well as supporting the establishment and development of new national SIETAR organizations. (ibid.)

The organization is operated by its Board and eight committees with their specific objectives. The day-to-day operations are run by the SIETAR Europa Executive Officer in accordance with the directions and policies established by the SIETAR Europa Board. The SIETAR Europa Board is the strategy-setting, decision-making body of SIETAR Europa consisting of representatives of the existing national SIETAR organizations in Europe and the direct members of SIETAR Europa. The Executive Committee consists of officers and selected members. The objective is to plan, coordinate and implement the Board's decisions and oversee the work of the working committees. The working committees include Communications Committee, 'Next Congress' Committee, Grants & Projects Committee, Research & Publication Committee, Events & Membership Committee, Finance & Development Committee and Grievance & Disciplinary Committee. The committees consist of SIETAR Europa members committed to promoting the organization. Volunteers are encouraged to approach the committees with ideas and to join the team. For the most part, the operations are run virtually. (ibid.)

Anyone interested in intercultural matters can become a member, and the membership is valid for one year. The member benefits include access to the database, work and training opportunities through SIETAR network, chance to participate in special interest groups and to receive discounts on regional, national and international SIETAR conferences. (ibid.) In this study, members consist of current members, prior members as well as potential members interested in intercultural matters.

SIETAR Europa's mission is to enable effective intercultural relationships at all levels, individual, group, organization and community, by encouraging the development and application of knowledge, values and skills. SIETAR Europa aims to contribute to more efficient communication among people of different cultures and backgrounds, and to enhance the potential of cultural diversity and intercultural awareness in policy-making, business, and education. It works towards the elimination of every kind of discrimination based on race, color, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or other status. SIETAR has an NGO status at the

United Nations and is recognized by the Council of Europe. (ibid.) In order to understand the nature of nonprofit organizations compared to for-profit organizations, the characteristics of the nonprofit sector are described next.

1.2 The nonprofit sector

The nonprofit sector is also known as the not-for-profit sector, the third sector, the voluntary sector to acknowledge the significance of volunteers and their actions, the independent sector to separate nonprofits from government and business, or the social sector to highlight the actions of nonprofits and how they enhance the social fabric of the society. The nonprofits are often called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) outside the United States. Nonprofit organizations exist to serve social purposes or a particular cause. To succeed with their mission, they must earn or raise sufficient funds in order to cover expenses and to support the organization and its members. In other words, the income is used to accomplish the organization's aims and objectives instead of distributing them between the shareholders and owners. (The Handbook of Nonprofit Governance 2010, 4.)

Andreasen and Kotler (2008, 24) state that there are different types of nonprofit organizations. The National Taxonomy of Tax-Exempt Entities-Core Code categorizes nonprofit organizations into 10 broad categories:

- Arts, Culture, and Humanities
- Education
- Environment and Animals
- Health
- Human Services
- International, Foreign Affairs
- Public, Societal Benefits
- Religion Related
- Mutual/Membership Benefit
- Unknown, Unclassified

SIETAR is classified under International, Foreign Affairs (NCCS 2014). The international group of nonprofits aims to increase common understanding across nations and their main goal is to provide services and other forms of support to achieve it (NTEE Group Profiles 2014).

To sum up, the nonprofit sector faces different types of challenges compared to the for-profit sector. First, nonprofit organizations are established to benefit the society rather than to generate profit. Second, nonprofits depend to a large degree on donations to cover expenses and to support the organization. Consequently, resources are limited and most of the activities are run by volunteers. There are different types of nonprofit organizations and all of them aim to promote their cause and motivate people to act.

1.3 Research problem and objectives

SIETAR Europa as an organization consists of people living all around Europe. Due to the nature of the organization, SIETAR Europa depends on digital technologies to engage with its members. Social media provide opportunities to build an online presence in a resource efficient way for effective knowledge sharing and to reach a wide range of audiences. While SIETAR Europa currently has some social media tools in use, there is no data whether the tools used are the right ones to interact with the members. In order to fulfill the mission statement and to achieve the aims, first, it is essential to understand the audiences, in other words, to know in what way are the members active in social media and for what purposes do they use social media, and second, to know how similar type of organizations use social media. The objective is to research how SIETAR Europa can optimize its social media presence in order to better engage with its members. Thus, it is vital to consider the social media behavior of members as well as the social media activities in order to choose the best combination of social media tools and the optimal approaches that will create added value for the organization and its members.

The research question that this study aims to answer is:

What is the optimal social media strategy for SIETAR Europa that will serve both the needs of the organization and its constituent members?

The supportive questions to the primary research questions are as follows:

1. How are the members active in social media?

2. For what purposes do the members use social media?
3. What are the expectations of members when engaging with SIETAR Europa through social media?
4. How do other European NGOs use social media?

The aim will be to answer the above questions and to provide a recommendation for SIETAR Europa to better engage with the members through social media. The structure of this study is presented in Figure 1. below.

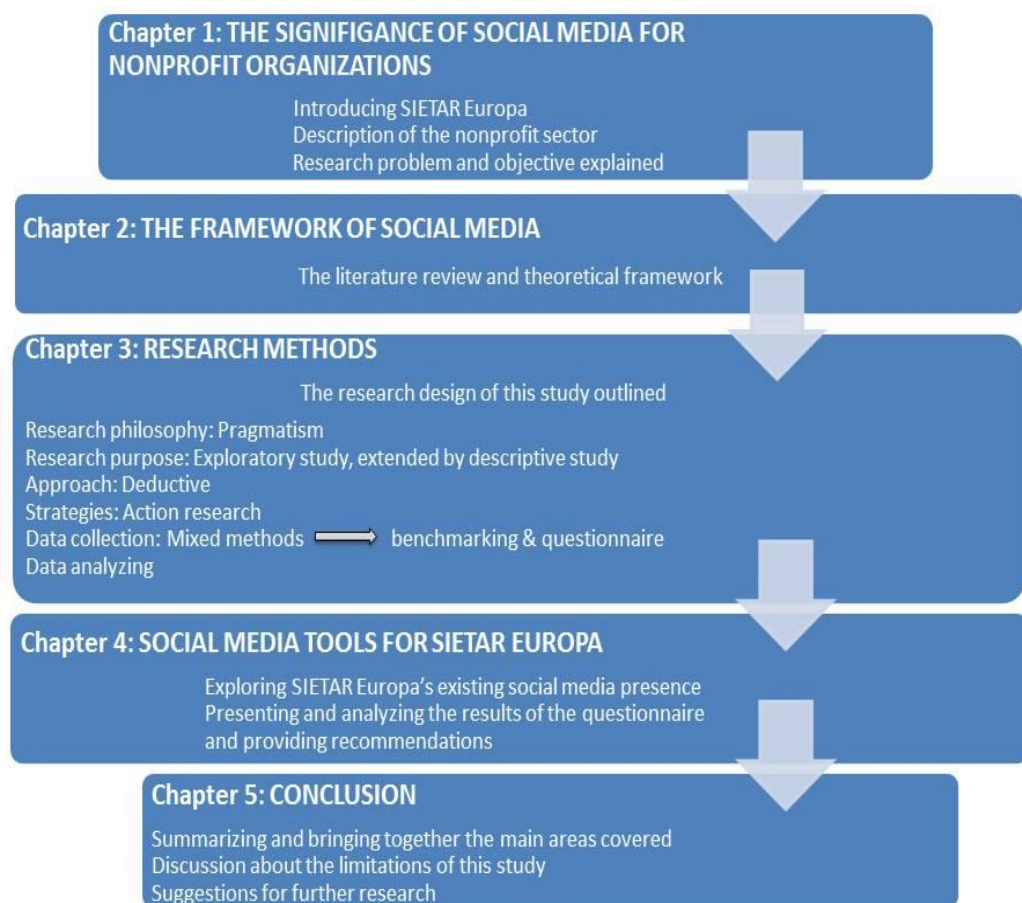


Figure 1. Overall structure of the study

2 THE FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The dynamic nature of digital technology is facilitating the shift towards interactivity and connectivity. It has changed the way people interact with the world. Earlier, the communication was mainly from the organization to the customer, but the advent of Web 2.0, the open-source, interactive and user-controlled applications, made two-way communication and social networks possible. Over the years Web 2.0 has developed into a functional infrastructure shifting the users' activities progressively online. As a result, customized services programmed with a specific purpose were created instead of simply providing a channel for social activity. In the digital age, it is crucial for organizations to understand how user networks behave and prepare their digital strategies accordingly. (van Dijck 2013, 5–6; Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen 2012, 130–133.)

The aim of this chapter is to become acquainted with the framework for optimizing a social media strategy. First, the key media channels are explained in order to gain an understanding of different ways to reach and mobilize audiences online.

2.1 Key media channels

The prioritization of solutions begins with understanding the complex and competitive online environment. There are three key media channels that need to be considered when wanting to influence audiences. *Paid media* refers to bought media, such as online ads and offline print and TV advertising. *Earned media* means publicity created through PR and word-of-mouth, offline and online, rather than publicity created through paid advertising. *Owned media* refers to the different online media owned and controlled by the organization, such as a website, e-mail lists, a blog and social media accounts, as well as offline owned media, such as brochures. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11.)

Table 1. Media classification (Strauss & Frost 2012)

	Owned Media	Paid Media	Earned Media
Physical Media	Street buzz activities	Print: newspapers, magazines	Newspaper articles News coverage on traditional media
	Flyers, posters, brochures, and so on	Outdoor (e.g., billboards, busses, sporting events)	Mentions in print or broadcast media paid for by others
	Postal mail	Other (e.g., some promotions)	Word of mouth
	Other (e.g., ads in bathrooms)		
Digital Media	Web sites	Display ads online	Another's Web site/blog
	Blogs	Paid search (e.g., keywords buys)	Natural search
	Mobile sites	Paid search site listing	Free vertical search inclusion
	Twitter account	Television program ads	Viral, online buzz
	E-mail to a list	Ads in e-mail	
	Social network pages	Sponsored content	Social networking friends/fans
		Video game placement	Online community
		Virtual world (Second Life)	

The Table 1. above presents the division of owned media, paid media and earned media into physical media, often called traditional media, and digital media. However, the line between physical (also called offline) and digital (also called online) platforms are more and more difficult to distinguish. Already, newspaper articles are available in both, online and offline. Moreover,

the differences between owned media, paid media and earned media are challenging to separate because when owned media is well executed the result often becomes earned media. Therefore, even though this study concentrates on owned media online, it does not entirely exclude earned media. (Strauss & Frost 2012, 349.)

Choosing the most appropriate digital media channels and refining them to attract audiences in a cost-efficient way is a major marketing activity today (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 484). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (ibid., 29) there are six key types of digital media channels:

- search engine marketing,
- online PR,
- online partnership,
- display advertising,
- opt-in e-mail marketing, and
- social media marketing.

Although all the digital media channels are essential, after considering the resources available, social media marketing is the most convenient way to reach and engage with a large audience. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 30) define social media marketing as facilitating customer-customer interaction and participation through online social channels to foster positive engagement with a company. According to Strauss and Frost (2012, 39), online engagement means to connect with the audience on an emotional as well as on a rational level by coaxing them to participate in the organization's content or media, such as to become a fan on Facebook, upload videos or photos, post comments and so forth.

Essentially social media marketing is listening to the community and responding accordingly. Social media marketing can benefit the organization in many ways, for instance, making audiences more aware of the organization, bringing traffic to the organization's website, triggering conversations, and building strong relationships. (Weinberg 2009, 5–7.) Next, the concept of social media is defined in order to understand the core meaning of the word and what it encompasses.

2.2 Social media defined

According to Safko and Brake (2012, 4), *social* refers to the need of people to connect and interact with other people, form groups with people with similar interests and share thoughts and experiences with each other. We use *media* to make those connections. Thus, social media refers to the use of technologies to engage and connect, and to build relationships with other people.

Other definitions of social media include:

Social media are a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kotler et al. 2012, 144).

Social media refers to online material produced by the public, distinct from content produced by professional writers, journalists, or generated by the industrial or mass media (Bozarth 2010, 11).

Social media enables the swift and easy development, creation, dissemination, and consumption of information and entertainment by both organizations and individuals (Wollan, Smith & Zhou 2010, xii).

Social media is a very broad term and there seems to be as many definitions as there are commentators. One of the core elements of the definitions of social media is the use of the Internet and other new technologies away from one-way relationship towards two-way relationship. (Hodkinson 2011, 34; Poynter 2010, 160.)

The Figure 2. below illustrates the differences between the one-to-many model and the many-to-many model and how traditional media, such as traditional TV, print and radio media, is primarily *push media*, which means that the marketing message is broadcast from the company to the customer. There is limited interaction with the customer compared to pull media, although, interaction is encouraged through direct mail communications. New media is mainly *pull media* in which the customer searches information on the web based on the needs, and attraction is created by content, search and

social media marketing. The Internet should be used to foster a dialogue between the company and the customer. The intelligence on the figure denotes the fact that the Internet can be used by the organization as a method of collecting data about the customers' characteristics through questionnaire and from the websites itself. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 35–37.)

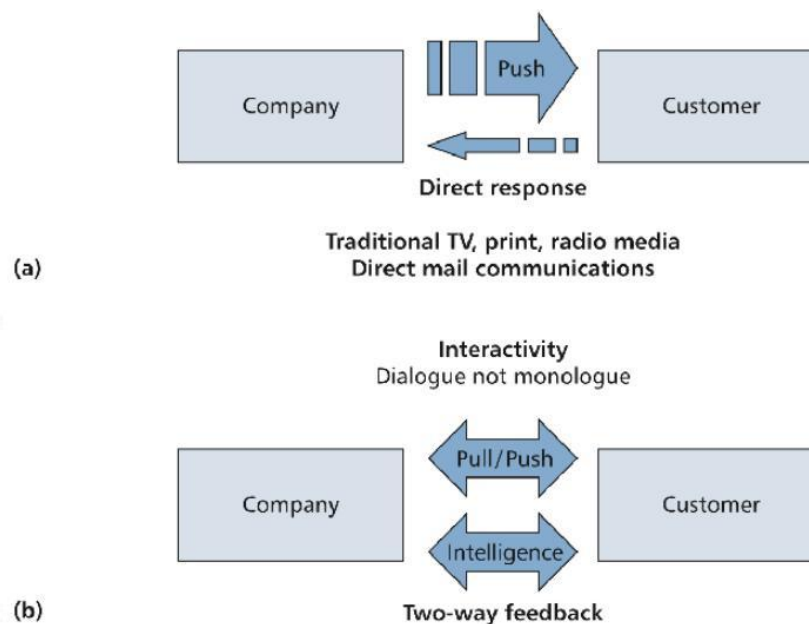


Figure 2. Summary of communication models for (a) traditional media, (b) new media (Chaffey 2012)

Dann and Dann (2011) think that social media is formed based on three complementary and interconnected elements of communication media, content and social interaction as illustrated in the Figure 3. below. The overlap between the three components provides some additional benefits from a user behavior perspective. (345–345.)

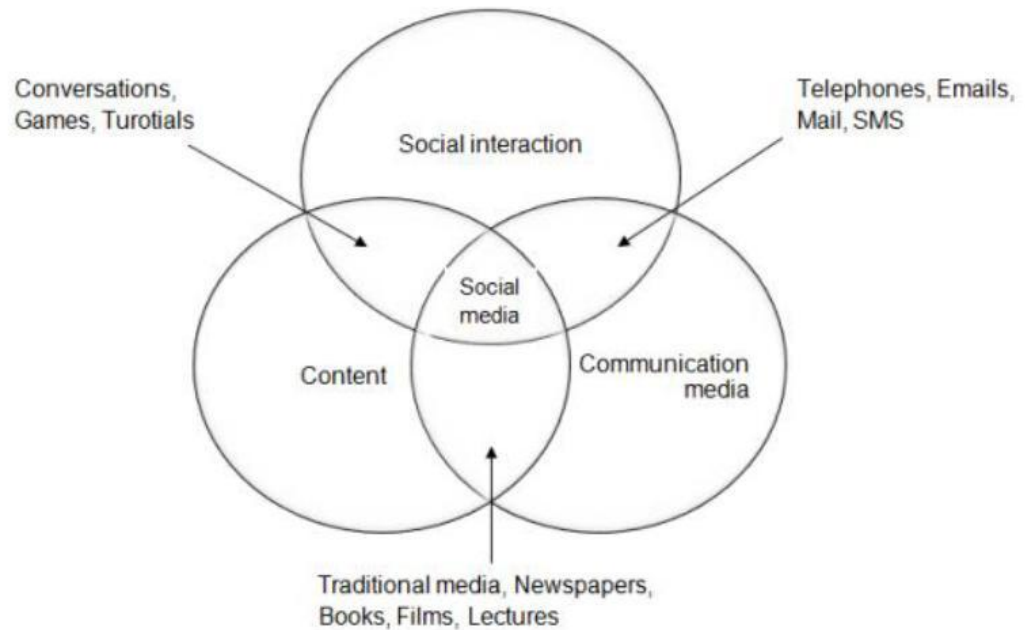


Figure 3. Social media components (Dann & Dann 2011)

Communication media is the virtual infrastructure, the network of networks, in which social interaction and content co-exist in real time. All the social networks have distinct virtual geographies without actually being virtual worlds. The content includes photos, videos, music and news, and it is the reason why people visit sites and build communities. Social interaction is the interconnection of people through Internet-based applications. (ibid., 345.)

Moreover, interaction can be more than just the interconnection of people. Jensen (1998, 188) discusses the general meaning of the word interaction, which means “exchange”, “interplay”, and “mutual influence”. He points out that the concept has numerous meanings depending on the field of study. There are three fields of study, sociology, communication studies and informatics, which define the concept of interaction relevant in this case. In sociology, the concept refers to “a reciprocal relationship between two or more people,” in communication the concept is described as “the relationship

between the text and the reader,” and in informatics as “the relationship between people and machines.” (ibid., 190.) Generally, interaction can be related to relationships between people, content and technology, which also conforms to the social media components introduced by Dann and Dann (2011, 345) earlier in this chapter. Besides understanding the concept of social media, it is useful to have a social media strategy framework to support the development of a social media strategy.

2.3 Social media strategy framework

Li and Bernoff (2011, 67) have created a four-step planning process, called the POST method, for people, objectives, strategy and technology, to help organizations to develop their social media strategy (see Figure 4).

Furthermore, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 536) suggest that the POST method is useful framework for organizations to apply.

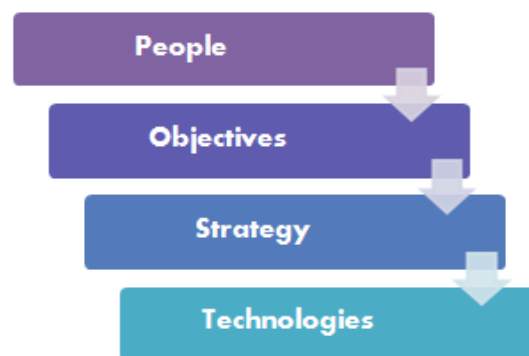


Figure 4. Forrester's POST (People, Objectives, Strategy, Technology) method

People. Knowing your audiences is a key and necessary starting point in developing a social media strategy. This includes understanding the capabilities of audiences regarding social media and knowing how they

behave online. (Li & Bernoff 2011, 67) User behavior is described more in detail on the coming subchapter.

Objectives. The next step after discovering how audiences are active in social media is to determine the aims that the organization wants to achieve (ibid). There are many different aims from driving traffic to site to customer engagement.

Strategy. Strategy answers the questions of how to achieve the aims and how the state of affairs will change once the aims are achieved. Li and Bernoff (2011) recommend starting small but having room for expansion because social media tools are changing fast making the plan obsolete. (ibid., 68, 71–72.)

Technology. Deciding on technology is the step after discovering knowledge about the audiences, determining on aims and strategy. (ibid.) Social media platforms are described after the theory about user behavior has been covered.

2.4 Online behavior of users

According to the POST framework described above, the essential starting point in developing a social media strategy is to understand people and their online behavior. Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, and Hogg (2010, 6) define consumer behavior as “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select or use products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” The online behavior can be studied from many different perspectives. In order to discover the optimum social media tools, it is critical to know the members’ level of ability to adopt new ideas, and the level of participation. Furthermore, each member has his or her habits in regard to the use of social media.

Dann and Dann (2004) list different reasons for using the Internet. The reasons listed below are not exclusive as anyone can have more than one

reason for using the Internet. In addition, related business objectives for an organization are included in the list. (Dann & Dann 2011, 145.)

Table 2. Reasons for using social media (Dann & Dann 2011, 145–146)

Reason	Explanation	Related business objectives
To learn	Looking for items of interest, new ideas etc. for learning purposes	Information dissemination, promotion
To search	Searching for specific information, such as weather forecast	Information dissemination, promotion
To communicate	To have a conversation and to maintain relationships	Promotion
For convenience	Internet-based applications provide advantages over offline activities, such as enabling people to seek jobs online	Cost saving, cost cutting, behavior change
To be part of a community	Enable to communicate and share ideas with like-minded people	Behavior change, entertainment provision
For recreation	Pursuit of leisure activities, entertainment	Entertainment provision
To keep up with the world	To follow what is going on, to keep up with trends, to read the latest news	Information dissemination, sales, behavior change

Although, the list focuses on reasons for using the Internet, it does not exclude the fact that similar reasons can be found and applied as purposes for using social media.

The ability to adopt

Dann and Dann (2011, 38) believe that every individual has a varying level of ability to handle new ideas, technologies, products and activities. The diffusion of innovation refers to the process of a new service or an idea spreading through a population. Some people adopt innovations faster than others, and some do not adopt at all. (Solomon et al. 2010, 554–555.)

A new idea starts with a small group, about 2.5 per cent, of people who try the idea because it is new. This group of people is called the innovators. The

second group, the early adopters, who make up about 13.5 per cent of the group, starts to use the new idea to differentiate themselves from the majority, at that point the innovators lose interest and continue to look for the next new idea. The early adopters provide credibility and approval of the new idea that is then adopted by the early majority (34 per cent) as an attempt to be trendy and to replicate the proper social behavior. The conservative group, the late majority (33 per cent), adopts the new idea to keep up with the world but they do not have an interest to be the first ones to follow a new trend. Finally, the new idea reaches the last group, the non-adopters also called the laggards (16 per cent), who do not see the need or have an interest or have adequate resources, such as time, to adopt the new idea. (Dann & Dann 2010, 38–39, 128–129.)

The level of participation

Social media has facilitated and encouraged participation by making the creation, sharing and storing of content simple and, in most cases, free. However, considerably more people join social networks than upload videos they have created. There is a difference in the level of online participation, and the participation can take various forms from user generated content (UGC), in which the content made by other users is shared by others, to user created content (UCC), in which the content is made by the user. (Hinton & Hjorth 2013, 55, 75; Li & Bernoff 2011, 41.)

The Social Technographics Profile

The Social Technographics Profile is a Forrester Research's methodology that focuses on technology behavior. The ladder below demonstrates the involvement level and how people can be classified based on what they do online and placed to one or more of the seven groups. The percentages of each group add to more than 100 per cent as some of the groups overlap. (Li & Bernoff 2011, 41–43.)

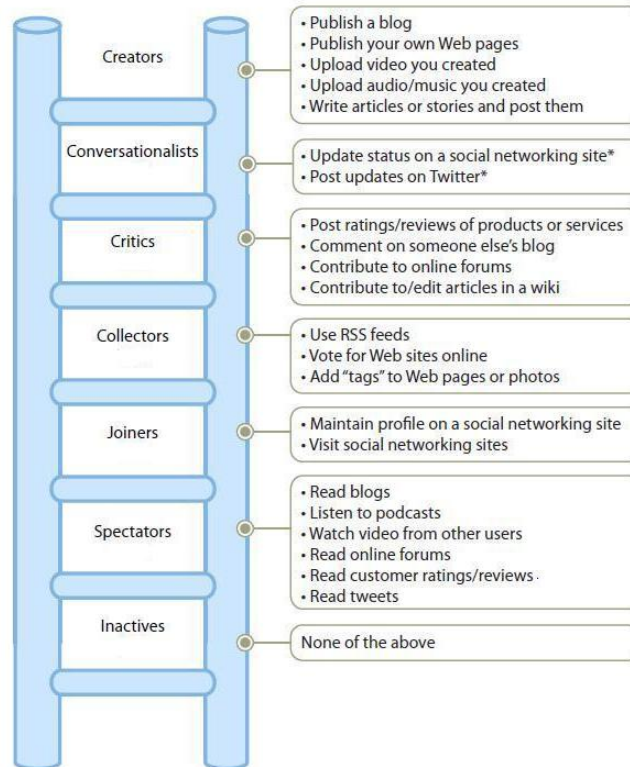


Figure 5. The Social Technographics Ladder of participation (Forrester Research, Inc. 2010)

At the top of the ladder are the *Creators* who publish their own articles or a blog, create and upload their own videos at least once a month. Creators represent 14 per cent of the online population in Europe. (ibid., 43–44.)

Conversationalists participate in frequent dialogue, such as status updates on Facebook and Twitter at least weekly. Conversationalists account for 31 per cent of the online population in Europe (ibid., 44.)

Critics respond to online content by posting comments on blogs, writing reviews, or editing wikis. One in five online Europeans is a Critic. (ibid.)

Collectors collect and aggregate information by using RSS, saving web addresses, voting for websites and adding tags to photos. Collectors include 10 per cent of online Europeans. (ibid., 44–45.)

Joiners visit and maintain their social networking sites. Joiners account for 41 per cent of everyone online in large European countries. (ibid., 45.)

Spectators use what other people create. They read blogs, watch online videos and listen to podcasts. Spectators represent 54 per cent of online population in Europe. (ibid.)

Inactives are the nonparticipants of social technologies. Inactives account for 32 per cent of online Europeans. (ibid.)

Categories of nonprofit supporters

Similarly, Miller (2010) classifies nonprofit supporters into three different groups: wallflowers, buddies and fans. *Wallflowers* prefer not to actively participate by volunteering or advocating the cause, but they subscribe the organization's newsletter or blog. In social media they are called lurkers, which means that they are paying attention what is going on but do not actively participate or create content. Lurkers comprise 90 per cent of online communities. *Buddies* sometimes volunteer and attend the events. They will occasionally comment blog posts, but if not asked to act, they most likely will not do anything on their own. Buddies comprise 9 per cent of online communities. *Fans* are heavy contributors, the loyal volunteers and advocates, who spread the word to others without being asked to do so. Fans comprise 1 per cent of online communities. (152–153.)

To convert wallflowers into buddies is done by continuing to share positive news, offering needed resources, and making it easy to become involved by offering different options that do not demand long-term obligation. To convert buddies into fans can be accomplished by thanking them personally for their efforts and rewarding them by offering special acknowledgement through social networking connections. There should be full engagement to retain the fans, to make them feel as part of the team. It is essential to acknowledge them offline, online, or both. (ibid., 153.)

2.5 Types of social media

There are numerous forms of social media presence as well as many ways to classify social media. Safko and Brake (2012, 10–14) classify social media into dozen categories (see Table 3. below).

Table 3. Social media categories

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Social networking	Platforms to connect, share, educate and build trust
Photo sharing	Photos, capturing emotions and memories in time that we share with others
Audio	Creating and sharing of sound
Video	Creating, vlogging, and sharing sound and pictures
Microblogging	Conveying short messages, audio, video
Livecasting	The process of creating content and distributing it live over the Internet; webinars, web radio, web conferencing
Virtual worlds	3-D online environment for games, conferences and text-based chatrooms
Gaming	Online video games
RSS and aggregators	Really Simple Syndication (RSS), technology that allows signing up and automatically receiving notifications whenever there is an update to the site one wishes to follow Aggregators, websites that allow choosing what type of content one wants to see and gathers all of the

	new blogs, webpages and news in one convenient web page location
Search	Enables finding items that you are looking for online; search engine optimization, optimizing web pages to maximize search engine rankings
Mobile	Easily portable device, enable access to e-mail sending, photos, audio, video, blogging, gaming and surfing online
Interpersonal	All tools that enable to connect and communicate live and in real time with individuals, small and large groups

Another way to categorize social media is to distinguish it into major types. According to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) social media can be categorized into three categories as indicated below. However, depending on the use, some of the platforms can fit into more than one category. (Smallwood 2013, 212.)

Web Publishing: Used for creating, publishing, and reusing content.

- Microblogging (Twitter, Plurk)
- Blogs (WordPress, Blogger)
- Wikis (Wikispaces, PBWiki)
- Mashups (Google Maps, popurls)

Social Networking: Used for providing interactions and collaboration among users.

- Social Networking Tools (Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Social Bookmarks (Delicious, Digg)
- Virtual Worlds (Second Life, OpenSim)
- Crowdsourcing/Social Voting (IdeaScale)

File Sharing/Storage: Used for sharing files and to host content storage.

- Photo Libraries (Flickr, Picasa)
 - Video Sharing (YouTube, Vimeo)
 - Storage (Google Docs, Dropbox)
 - Content Management (SharePoint, Drupal)
- (ibid.)

To identify the objectives of different forms of social media platforms is the key in understanding how platforms build diverse connectivity within the niche. Many platforms started in their particular domain (e.g., social networking) but over the years have started to conquer the territory and diversify the usage in order to retain the users. (van Dijck 2013, 9.)

Social media comprises many platforms. van Dijck (2013, 28) analyzes social media platforms by introducing a multilayered model and distinguishing the platforms into two layers and six constitutive elements (see Figure 6. below).

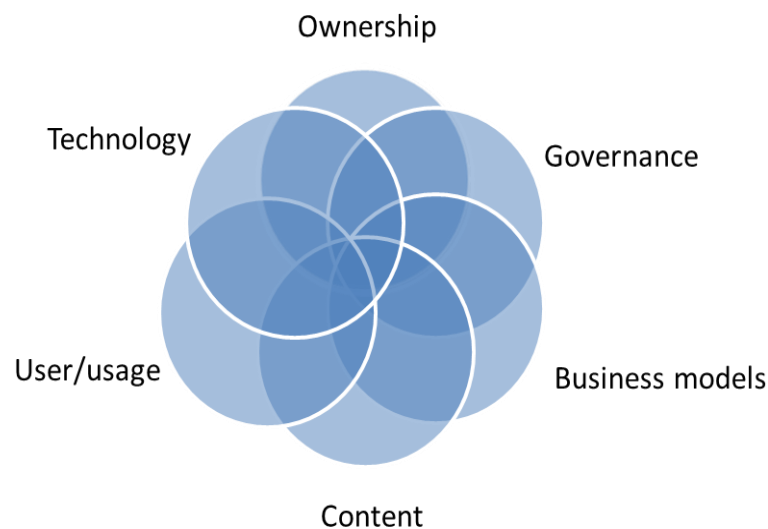


Figure 6. Multilayered model of social media platforms (van Dijck 2013, 28)

The first layer analyzes the platforms in terms of users, technology and content. Users are the participants, producers and consumers. Technology helps to convert social and cultural actions into computer language, as well as

transform computer language into social actions. Content, created by users using technology, provides information on what users like or dislike. This is also called cultural content as it reveals consumer preferences. Platforms favor the submission of uniform content, allowing users, for instance, to upload only certain size videos and pictures on Facebook, or limiting the amount of text, e.g. Twitter's 140-character restriction, to be published at once, or enforcing the same chronological CV layout, as on LinkedIn, or the Timeline on Facebook, on every member's page. (ibid., 29, 32, 35.) Hinton and Hjorth (2013, 34) affirm that there are a number of common features shared by the sites, such as a profile, lists of connections, comments, and private messaging.

The second layer examines the platforms relating to ownership, governance and business model. The ownership of platform can be public, community, nonprofit, or corporate based. Governance consists of rules and terms of service that users enter when they use social media platforms. Business models are mediators in the designing of daily lives. There is the need to invent new ways to create value in the digital age and to keep up with the development. Feenberg (2009) stresses that social media platforms are not finished products but dynamic objects that transform according to the users' needs and their owners' objectives but also in response to the competing platforms. (ibid., 2013, 7, 37–39.)

So far, social media has been examined from the users' perspective as well as from the technology perspective. The elements including the content, ownership, business model and governance have also been mentioned in order to understand the overall picture. Hodkinson (2011, 100) claims that excluding any part of the overall picture can result in a distortion or partial picture of the whole. However, culture adds another dimension which has an impact on the whole. There are too many ways to examine cultural influences in one study and it would perhaps require a study on its own. Therefore, culture is described next in order to obtain a basic understand of the dimension and how it relates to social media.

2.6 The role of culture in social media

There are too many definitions of culture to describe them all. According to Usunier and Lee (2005, 5), Goodenough (1971) defines culture as a set of beliefs and standards shared by a group, which assist the individual in making decisions on how to feel, what can be, what to do, and how to set about doing it. Based on this definition Usunier and Lee (ibid.) argue that there is no need for culture to be equated with a whole particular society. Instead, individuals may choose different cultures in which to interact depending on the situation and the group in question.

As a consequence of the ease with which we can communicate with people all over the world, we are en route towards what Marshall McLuhan called the “global village”, or the so-called melting pot of all cultures. Schneider and Barsoux (2003, 3–4) challenge the myth as the world is getting smaller people are becoming alike, and argue that rather than a cultural melt-down, people are much more dissimilar than alike.

The European melting pot was expected in 1992, but still today as indicated by the European Parliament Eurobarometer-survey (2013, 23), almost half (49%) of the citizens of the different member states see themselves in the near future by their nationality as well as Europeans, when a mere 3% define themselves only as Europeans and almost one out of ten (38%) solely by their nationality. (Schneider and Barsoux 2003, 4.)

The lack of knowledge about individual countries tends to make people see more similarities than differences, e.g. Americans see all Europeans alike, Europeans see all Asians alike and so on. It is true that some cultural traditions related to life events, such as marriage and death, are shared by European cultures, differentiating Europeans from Asians. However, if the focus is only placed into Europe, the apparent homogeneity of Europe disappears and cultural variances can be observed inside Europe. Such variances can be seen in family relations, religion, the organization of everyday life, including meals, social, family and business life. The grouping of

Europe into Nordic and Latin, Benelux, or Mediterranean can be misleading as there are differences between countries grouped into the same category and even if they share the same language. There are cultural differences between European countries that influence the behavior. Yet, cultural borders do not constantly follow national borders; there are regional differences as well as cultural overlap between different countries. (de Mooij 2011, 13–14; Solomon et al. 2010, 13; Usunier & Lee 2005, 165.)

Moreover, demographics, age, income, education, and gender, influence the online behavior. Similarly, the attitude towards technology has an impact on the online behavior, and whether it is understood as a mean to make life easier and richer or more complicated. (Strauss & Frost 2012, 185.)

Schneider and Barsoux (2003, 51) point out how challenging it is to identify whether it is the differences between countries or nations or subcultures that are most significant. In reality, it is difficult to distinguish what the cultural differences are today. Behavior is partly based on personal characteristics and partly on the group membership. Social representations are collective images, which are formulated and continuously updated within a particular society through social situations, individual actions, and social activities. The media and news summaries are sources which people base their opinions on and in turn simulate social information, which again updates the social representations. Social representations are different across societies and have cultural value when we decide how to feel, what to do and how to do it. Thus, perceptions, opinions, attitudes and behavior develop within the group. In the case of social media, the concept of privacy and the sharing of personal data, stories and photos with the whole world is an example of how the attitudes and behavior has changed over the years. (Agresta et al. 2010, 56; de Mooij 2011, 187; Usunier & Lee 2005,16.)

Furthermore, van Dijck (2013, 19) states that standardization happens through various levels of adjustments, technology features and terms of use, and through gradual transformation of user habits and changing level of acceptance. Then again, de Mooij (2011, 12) argues that the Internet is not a

homogenizing factor and it does not change people's habits and values, but enhances the existing values and practices instead. There is a demand to adapt to the local language and laws of individual users based on their geographical location (ibid).

According to Hofstede (1997, 212) an environment in which people can meet and mix as equals is required in order to establish integration among the members of culturally different groups. Hinton and Hjorth (2013, 27) see the term platform from the Web 2.0 perspective as a stand where the users can be treated as equals. Similarly, Schneider and Barsoux (2003, 244) state that technology-mediated communications may improve member participation as compared to face-to-face communications as there are fewer indications to status and cultural stereotypes. On the other hand, others argue that social barriers are not that easily overcome.

As a result of the technologies with which we can communicate with people all over the world, it is almost a norm to use a common language for this interaction. Language is a common source to misunderstandings. Although English is a very widely used language in the world, the fluency of using it varies extensively. According to Eurobarometer 386 conducted in 2012, there are 23 officially recognized languages within the European Union, and more than 60 ethnic and minority languages. English is the mother tongue for 13% of Europeans and the most fluent language spoken as a second language by 32% of Europeans. The issue facing many Europeans is the fact that the native English speakers assume that the use of English by those speaking English as their second language make them also think like native English speakers, which normally is not the case and can lead to misunderstandings. (de Mooij 2011, 14.)

Moreover, according to de Mooij (ibid., 13) international marketers among others are convinced that their ideas are universal and try to impose them to others. For example, many of the social media platforms have been developed and designed by Americans and, as mentioned earlier, demand the submission of a uniform content to a readymade framework, such as videos of

a certain size to a Facebook's Timeline, by all participants whether they feel that it suits to their culture or not.

Weinberg (2009, 9) sees that many social media sites are built around the idea of a collective mindset. Communities are established when individuals share a common interest or belief that gives a base for common understanding, feel a sense of belonging and participate in the community, which assists in developing the community. There are three types of communities: real, virtual and cybercommunities. Real communities are time and place dependent. Virtual communities share a common bond that is independent of common geography or physical connection.

Cybercommunities exist within computer-mediated environment and are less likely to have face-to-face meetings compared to virtual communities. (Dann & Dann 2011, 262–264.) According to Hinton and Hjorth (2013, 43), Parks (2011) derived three characteristics that constitute a virtual community: membership, personal expression and connection, in other words, how often people use a site, how often they update their profiles and how many friends they have.

All in all, social media is based on the popularity principle: the more connections one has, the more valuable one becomes. People or organizations with more friends or followers become more influential and their reputation increases through more clicks. The same popularity principle applies to content as well; the content which is "liked" has the potential to become a worldwide trend. (van Dijck 2013, 13.) On the other hand, Hodgkinson (2011, 98–99) argues that as users have gained greater level of control over the content, e.g. what to create and share, when to create and share and where to create and share, it does not matter what technologies or content are made available because the audiences will create their own meanings and uses of their own.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research philosophy refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. The research philosophy adopted will have a significant impact on what we do and how we understand the investigated phenomenon. However, the key influence will be the worldview of the researcher and how the knowledge is related to the process by which it is developed. A position of pragmatism was chosen as it allows the use of multiple aspects to answer the research question. Furthermore, the pragmatic view enables the use of mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, within one study. Ontology, the study of the nature of reality, has two aspects, objectivism and subjectivism. According to objectivism, social entities are separate from social actors. As in subjectivism, the actions of social actors create those social phenomena. Thus, to be able to understand the actions, there is a need to explore the subjective meanings motivating to those actions. In trying to make sense of the social world, it is important to understand that people interpret the reality based on their own views of the world. These different interpretations have an effect on how people act and the nature of their social interaction with others. The view of the world as being socially constructed is called social constructionism. (Creswell 2009, 10; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 107–111.)

3.1 Research design and strategy

Creswell (1998, 2–3) states that research design refers to the entire research process from formulating and clarifying a research topic to writing the report. Research strategy refers to the general plan how to carry out the process to answer the research question. Research purpose can be classified into three parts: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. (Saunders et al. 2009, 139, 600).

Exploratory study, according to Saunders et al. (2009, 139), assists in discovering “what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to

assess phenomena in a new light” (Robson 2002, 59). Exploratory study seeks to establish relationships between variables. Descriptive research aims to portray a profile of persons, and it can be an extension of exploratory research (Saunders et al. 2009, 140). The purpose of this study is to obtain better understanding of the social media behavior of members by asking questions using a questionnaire, and to utilize information on how other European intercultural organizations use social media, which is a combination of insights of the members’ social media behavior and what is happening in other similar type of organizations in order to propose the social media tools for use. For this reason, the exploratory study extended by descriptive study is the most appropriate one.

This study aims to change the business processes and go beyond understanding and explaining the phenomenon. Action research aims at influencing change and requires that the researcher has knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher is an active actor in the research. Action research is considered as qualitative research, but it does not exclude quantitative research methods. (Kananen 2011, 148–150.) I have done part of my internship for the organization, I volunteer as a member of the SIETAR Europa’s Communications Committee, and I am a member of SIETAR Europa. Therefore the decision of action research and to conduct this study was chosen.

Besides being an active participant of the research, another strategy is needed in order to collect data. Saunders et al. (2009) note that the strategies are not exclusive, for example survey strategy can be used as part of some other strategy. Thus, survey strategy is used together with action research as it allows the collection of large amounts of data from a large population in a cost-efficient way. (141, 144.)

3.2 Data collection

There are quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Quantitative focuses on numbers and qualitative on non-numerical data. According to

Creswell (1998, 15–16), Ragin (1987) describes that qualitative approach works with a few variables and many cases while quantitative approach relies on a few cases and many variables. Mixed method approach combines both, qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, in a study. The mixed methods approach was chosen in order to gain more insight of the phenomenon, and to view the same phenomenon from various perspectives, and to utilize the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to propose a solution to the research problem. In addition, one data source would have been insufficient to provide a complete understanding of the research problem. In other words, it would not have been sufficient to benchmark European NGOs or to conduct a questionnaire. Thus, the second method was required to enhance the other. Concurrent mixed methods procedure was chosen to collect qualitative and quantitative data at the same time in order to provide comprehensive analysis of the research question in a time-efficient way. (Creswell 2011, 8; Creswell 2009, 14, 203; Saunders et al. 2009, 151.)

Research questions can be answered by using some combination of secondary and primary data. Secondary data is data originally collected for some other purpose. Primary data is new data collected for this purpose. (Saunders et al. 2009, 256.) Secondary data was collected from online sources as well as from books. The cases of similar type of organizations were collected by using online search. Part of the questionnaire was developed by using questions from existing questionnaire and research and modified according to the needs of the case organization.

Questionnaire

First, possible data collection methods were evaluated. Questionnaire was chosen in order to ask the same set of questions from as many members as possible in a short timeframe. Questionnaire was also easy to distribute through multiple channels. The data was collected by self-constructed online questionnaire, which was adapted, adopted and developed using existing research conducted by SOCIALSTRAT (Barkan 2011), the Social

Technographics Profile (Forrester Research 2010) with consent, and other theories covered in this study. SurveyMonkey was chosen to develop the online questionnaire due to the fact that the case organization has an existing account, which enables the access to the results afterwards. The questionnaire was kept as short and neat as possible, starting with more general questions about the topic and ending with demographic questions (Davies 2007, 88–89). The online questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to give the respondents freedom to express themselves and to obtain insights from them. (See Appendix 1.)

Population and sampling

Saunders et al. (2009, 212) define the population as the whole collection of cases from which the sample is taken. SIETAR Europa has currently about 1,000 members consisting of professionals, academics, consultants, trainers and researchers working in the intercultural field, as well as students interested in intercultural matters. However, in this study population consists of the current, former, and potential members of SIETAR Europa. Due to the large size of the population, it is too resource consuming and impractical to test each individual in the population, thus sampling technique was applied (ibid). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, 172) state that there is little written about mixed methods data collection procedures beside writings about sampling strategies by Teddlie and Yu (2007), who discuss that there is no widely acceptable classification of mixed methods sampling strategies.

The sampling process involves determining the sites for the research, the participants who will take part in the research, the number of participants, and the way how the participants are recruited for the research. This sampling process applies to both, qualitative and quantitative research, although there are differences in the sample size and sampling techniques depending on if the research is qualitative or quantitative. (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, 172.)

There are two types of sampling techniques: probability sampling in which it is possible to make statistical inferences about the population, as the probability of each case to be selected from the population is known and equal, and non-

probability sampling in which the probability of each case to be selected is unknown and unequal, and thus it is impossible to make generalizations on a statistical sense. However, it is possible to make generalizations from non-probability samples. This study is an exploratory study aiming to recommend social media tools for use by using a questionnaire and benchmarking rather than testing a hypothesis. Davies (2007, 54) points out that the sample size for a descriptive or an exploratory survey is normally smaller compared to a survey testing a hypothesis, which requires much bigger sample. Moreover, instead of concentrating only on existing members, this study takes into consideration previous members as well as potential members, which makes the identification of a sampling frame challenging as there is no existing list of all potential members. For these reasons, non-probability sampling was more practical and appropriate. Non-probability sampling provides numerous techniques to select the sample and it is based on the subjective judgment of the researcher. Self-selection sampling was chosen to find people who are interested in the topic, consider it important and want to influence the outcome. On the other hand, self-selection sampling does not guarantee representative sample of the population, but it provides valuable insights from those who are willing to participate. (Saunders et al. 2009, 213, 233–241.)

A draft of the questionnaire was sent to a couple of SIETAR Europa's Communications Committee members to receive feedback. After receiving feedback, the questionnaire was amended accordingly. The questionnaire was piloted among four people. After piloting the questionnaire, it was sent via SIETAR Europa Secretariat to the direct members and via the SIETAR Europa Executive Officer to the Board, representing the national SIETARs as well as direct members, asking them to participate. The questionnaire was also shared on SIETAR's Facebook Page and on SIETAR Europa's LinkedIn groups. The link to the questionnaire was accompanied with a message informing about the purpose of the questionnaire and that the results are processed in a way that the respondent's identity remains anonymous. It was important to reach people through different channels, LinkedIn, Facebook and

through e-mail, to obtain divergent views in order to arrive at conclusion. Data was collected between 10.9.2014-24.9.2014.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is defined as a measurement of the quality of an organization's processes or performance in comparison to similar measurement of peers to discover where improvements are needed and to design new standards or to improve processes (BusinessDictionary.com 2014.) Benchmarking was done to provide real-life examples of how other intercultural not-for-profit organizations use social media in addition to determine how well SIETAR Europa is currently performing on social media compare to the peers.

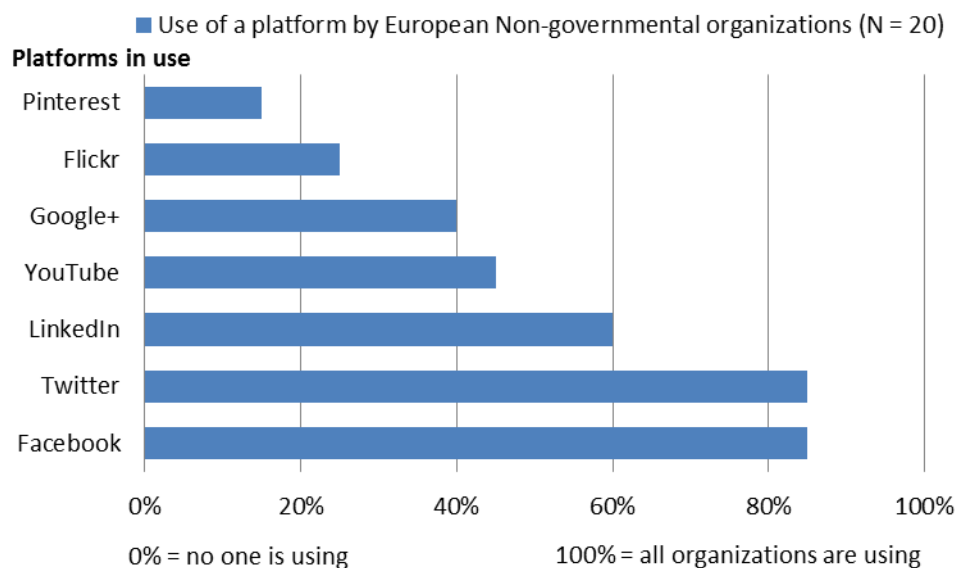
First, non-governmental organizations were searched online by using keywords, such as "NGOs in Europe" and "European NGO". Next, the list of European NGOs was reviewed based on their cause and mission, and 20 of those concerned with culture, cultural diversity and elimination of discrimination were selected. Then, the official websites of the selected NGOs were visited and social media presence was studied based on the number of Facebook Page likes, Twitter tweets, following and followers, LinkedIn members and the number of members on any other social media platforms in use. The likes and followers count were chosen as a measure of social media presence, as those provide indication of the degree of success and are easy to measure and understand. (Appendix 5.)

The Table 4. shows that there are organizations using only one social media platform as well as organizations using seven different social media platforms. However, more than half of the organizations (n = 11) have one to three social media platforms in use.

Table 4. Number of social media platforms in use in European NGOs

	Number of organizations
1 social media platform in use	4
2 social media platforms in use	4
3 social media platforms in use	3
4 social media platforms in use	1
5 social media platforms in use	4
6 social media platforms in use	1
7 social media platforms in use	3
Total	20

The Figure 7. below suggests that the most common social media platforms in use in European NGOs benchmarked in this study are Facebook and Twitter by 85% of the organizations using them. LinkedIn is used by over half (60%) of the organizations and YouTube by almost half (45%) of the organizations. Google+, Flickr and Pinterest are used by less than half of the organizations.

**Figure 7. Social media platforms in use in European NGOs**

It seems that the number of likes and followers does not depend on the number of social media platforms in use. For instance, one organization has only one social media platform in use and only 5 likes on Facebook, and another organization has seven social media platforms in use and 23,753 likes on Facebook. However, even though there are numerous social media platforms in use by the same organization, there appears to be one social media platform, or maximum two, which is more successful than rest of the platforms in use by the same organization. Based on the findings, it seems that resources play an important role in creating a successful social media presence. The majority of the organizations use English to communicate online.

Generally, SIETAR Europa is doing fine compared to the other European NGOs examined. In the case of SIETAR Europa, LinkedIn is the most successful social media platform in use by the organization and compared to the other organizations. Based on the benchmarking, 50% of the European NGOs examined are doing better on Facebook and Twitter than SIETAR Europa. There are some organizations that have more Facebook likes and Twitter followers than SIETAR Europa. Those organizations were studied more closely, by examining the content and the frequency of posting and sharing, in order to discover the activities that affect their success.

Case Example – Culture Action Europe on Facebook and Twitter

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is a Europe-wide organization aiming at promoting culture as a necessary state for sustainable development towards citizens and encouraging the democratic development of the European Union (cultureactioneurope n.d). The CAE's Facebook Page was analyzed by using Facebook tool called LikeAlyzer (likealyzer.com) to gain insights into the CAE's Facebook Page activities. Currently, CAE has 25,244 likes, which is 16% Likes Growth in the past month. The Figure 8. shows that CAE promotes its upcoming conference on its Facebook Page.



Figure 8. Facebook Page of Culture Action Europe. Screenshot on CAE on Facebook

Through analyzing the Facebook Page, it can be seen that CAE posts or shares two to three articles a week in average. The length of posts is between 100 and 500 characters. There are 17 likes, comments and shares per post. The same posts are simultaneously posted on Twitter as well. Their upcoming webinars and conferences are also promoted on Facebook as well as on Twitter. However, webinars and conferences are not the only posts on the Facebook Page or on Twitter. Besides updating members about the current activities of the organization, CAE communicates about the activities of the members. For instance, CAE congratulated one of its members for winning a seat in the European Parliament. Moreover, CAE asks questions from their members to encourage interaction. Significant amount of visuals, pictures and videos, are used on the posts.

Case Example – CArE Europe on Twitter

CARe Europe is an international network serving professionals, service users and organizations to promote components of community-based care by connecting practice, research and education in the field of mental health care, social care and welfare services for persons with disabilities (thecareurope

2014). CARe Europe has 19,600 followers on Twitter, and based on the numerous followers it seems that CARe Europe concentrates merely on Twitter. CARe Europe tweets at least once a week, and the tweets consist of own tweets as well as retweets. The most popular and retweeted posts include visuals.

In summary, consistent posting is essential. Diverse and visual content keep members attentive. Another way to keep members engaged is to ask questions to invite interaction. Acknowledging the actions of members indicate that the organization is listening and interested in what the members are doing. By posting simultaneously on multiple platforms, time can be saved and wide range of audiences reached. However, it is important to note that even if the organizations are using the same tools it does not mean that their social marketing strategies are the same.

3.3 Data analysis

According to Saunders et al. (2009, 124) there are two research approaches to analyze data: inductive and deductive. In an inductive approach data is collected to develop a theory based on it. In the deductive approach existing theory is used to formulate a theoretical or conceptual framework and tested using data (ibid., 61). The deductive approach was applied, as the questionnaire was developed from the existing theory, moving from theory to data, and the similar types of organizations to be benchmarked were chosen.

The data analysis process begins with preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data, analyzing the data, representing and interpreting the analysis, and validating the data (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, 204). The qualitative data collected from the benchmarking and the open-ended questions on the questionnaire was analyzed using qualitative data analysis processes. The processes of data collection, data analysis and developing proposals are interactive in nature, and thus allow the recognition of essential themes, patterns and relationships throughout the process. Although, there are no standardized processes for analyzing qualitative data it is, still, possible

to group data into main types of processes starting with summarizing the meanings, then developing categories and placing meaningful amounts of data in these categories, and then recognizing relationships. Quantifying some of the qualitative data is also possible especially for the purpose of counting the frequencies of certain events or in relation to specific references to a phenomenon. (ibid., 488, 490–493, 487.) After testing several different data analyzing software and reading reviews, several software solutions were chosen. The open-ended questions from the online questionnaire were analyzed with the help of a qualitative data analyzing software QDA Miner Lite. The quantitative data from the online questionnaire was analyzed using excel, the analyzing tools provided by SurveyMonkey and SOFA statistics.

Background variables of the study

The questionnaire targeted current, prior and potential SIETAR Europa members. The questionnaire was distributed through multiple channels, by e-mail and on SIETAR Europa's LinkedIn groups and Facebook Page. There are no exact data on how many people become aware of the questionnaire as it was sent through the SIETAR office and shared on social media. The total of responses was 63, but only 53 completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire settings allowed multiple responses from the same computer to ensure that everyone was able to participate. In order to avoid instances where someone had started the questionnaire but did not finish and started it again at another time, only completed questionnaires were analyzed.

The following Figure presents the membership status of the respondents. Most (88.7%, $n = 47$) of the respondents were members of SIETAR: current members (69.8%, $n = 37$), members who needed to renew their membership (13.2%, $n = 7$) or members who were not sure about their current membership status (5.7%, $n = 3$).

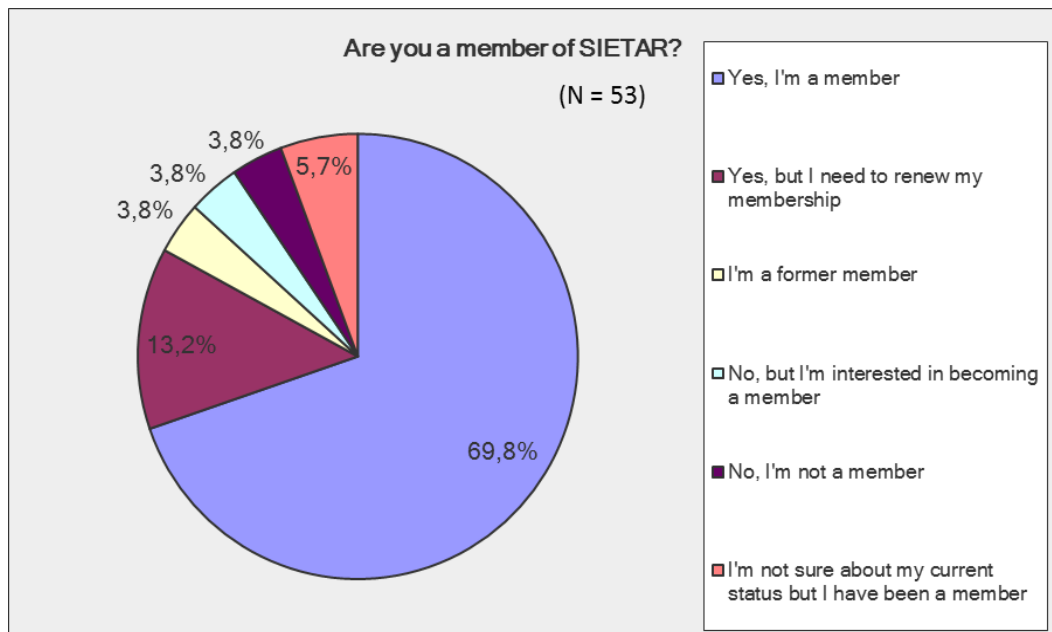


Figure 9. Membership status of respondents

As indicated by the Figure 10. below, 70% of the respondents were female, and 30% were male. It is interesting to note the high number of females in this study.

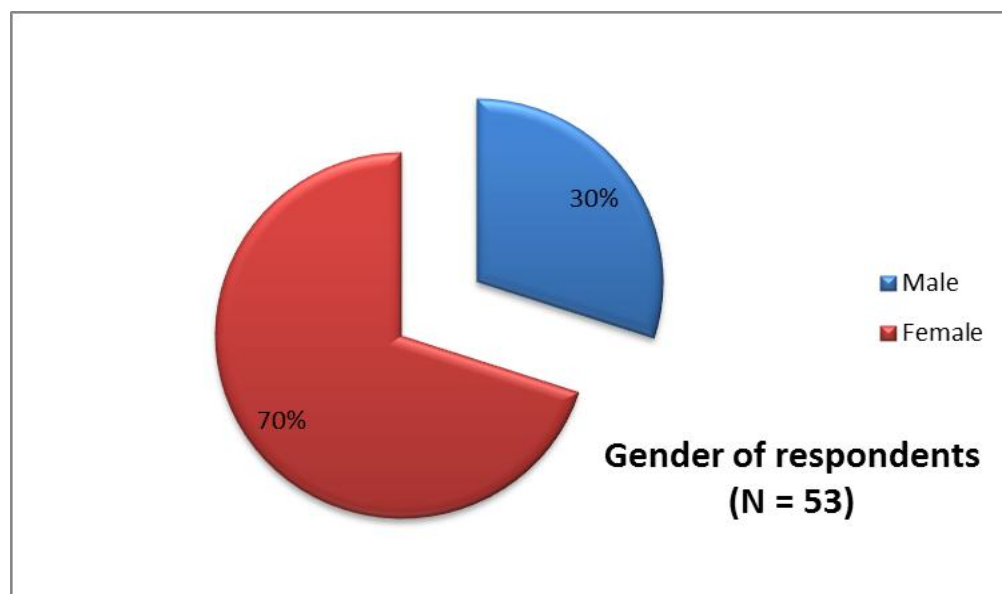


Figure 10. Respondents by gender

The Figure 11. below shows the distribution of the respondents' current country of residence. There were respondents from 21 different countries. The majority (21%) of respondents reside in Spain, 19% in Finland and 13% in Germany. 13% of the respondents currently reside in a country not given in the list of countries. The other countries not listed included Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Mexico and the United State. Most of them are current or former members of SIETAR Europa. It can be seen that SIETAR Europa has members outside Europe as well.

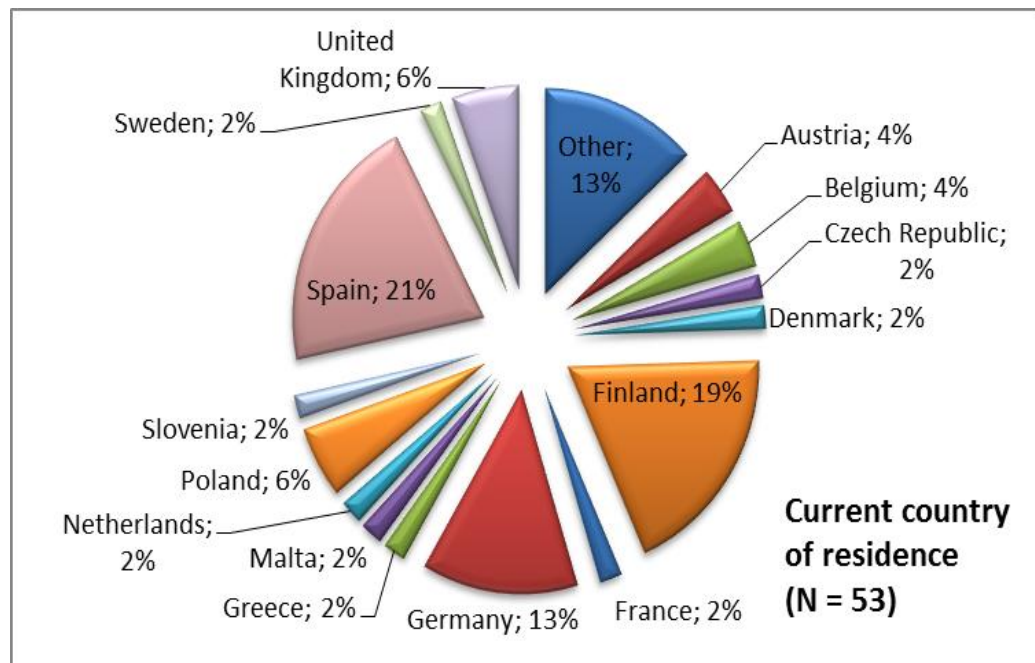


Figure 11. Respondents' current country of residence

4 SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS FOR SIETAR EUROPA

The aim of this chapter is to look into the existing social media presence of SIETAR Europa, analyze and present the results of the questionnaire, and finally propose social media tools based on the findings.

In analyzing the existing social media activities of SIETAR Europa, an existing Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and Flickr account, a blog, as well as multiple accounts on LinkedIn can be found. Some of the national SIETAR organizations have built their own social media presence by establishing their own social media accounts. However, as this study concentrates on the SIETAR Europa's social media presence, and moreover, most of the national SIETAR content is in the native language, those are excluded from this analysis.

Facebook

Facebook is the largest social network in the world. As of March 31, 2014 Facebook had 1.28 billion monthly active users and 1.01 billion mobile monthly active users, an increase of 15% and 34% respectively year-over-year (Facebook Reports First Quarter 2014 Results 2014).

Facebook's mission "to give people the power to share and to make the world more open and connected" can be seen as analogous to SIETAR Europa's mission of enabling effective intercultural relations at all levels by encouraging knowledge, values and skills development and enhancing communication between people of different backgrounds. The common denominators are sharing and making the world more open and connected by connecting people and concepts. (facebook 2014; sietareu n.d.)

People use Facebook to stay connected and to become connected with other people, to discover what is going on, and to share what matters to them. Companies use Facebook to humanize their brands and to build interaction with the community through Pages and Groups (Carter & Levy 2012, 67).

Facebook Pages are used by organizations, brands, nonprofits, and celebrities to engage with Facebook users. Pages are public and anyone can become a fan of the Page. Facebook Pages allow the administrator to customize the Page by altering the look and by adding needed applications and to control what the fans can upload or post on the Page. Compared to the personal profile page, Pages provide analytics called Insights, information about the engagement and posts by the fans, and the number of friends is unlimited. Groups can be private and require the fan to request an access to join the group, unless the fan is added to the Group. Groups can be established for focused discussion, in creating a private community for a selected group of members or for volunteers. Pages offer more marketing and analytics options, while Groups are more private and notify Group members of activities happening in the Group. (ibid., 69, 91–92, 124.)

SIETAR Europa uses Facebook Page to market upcoming workshops within SIETAR community and to share links to topics on intercultural matters. The Page was created February 23rd, 2013. The profile picture of the page is SIETAR Europa's logo, and the cover picture is promoting the upcoming congress. SIETAR Europa allows fans to post comments or articles on their Facebook Page, which requires more monitoring from the administrator. On the other hand, the possibility to share and comment can encourage fans to communicate with the organization. As of May 30th, 2014, the Page has 561 likes. SIETAR Europa also has a profile page on Facebook with 627 friends. (SIETAR Europa 2014.)

SIETAR Europa's Facebook Page was analyzed using the Facebook analysis tool LikeAlyzer, which provides recommendation based on the current activities on the Page. According to the recommendations presented in the Figure below, SIETAR Europa should publish posts more often, create more engaging content, review the length of the posts, ask more questions as well as encourage fans to ask more questions.



Figure 12. Recommendations for SIETAR Europa's Facebook Page using Facebook analysis tool.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with 300 million members in over 200 countries providing access to people, jobs, and news. LinkedIn's mission is "to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful." SIETAR Europa aims to connect professionals working in the intercultural field, and through effective intercultural relationships make them more prosperous. (linkedin 2014; sietareu n.d.)

SIETAR Europa has a company page, two closed groups and two profiles. The company page is categorized as nonprofit organization management, it has a link to the official homepage, and 112 followers. SIETAR Europa discussion forum has 530 members and SIETAR Europa: Competence in intercultural professions has 4,754 members as of May 30th, 2014. Both the groups have discussions about intercultural matters, upcoming workshops and congresses. Based on the analysis conducted by LinkedIn's group statistics, Competence in intercultural professions group has ten discussions and over

20 comments a week in average. The discussion forum has one discussion and one comment a week in average. SIETAR Europa also has a profile, located in the Amsterdam area, Netherlands, Professional Training & Coaching as the field of specialty with 500+ connections. The other profile page is located in Southend on Sea, the United Kingdom and International Affairs is the field of specialty with 500+ connections. Under experience it has a description of what SIETAR is and what it does. Top five skills & endorsements for SIETAR Europa are intercultural communications endorsed for 87 times, international relations endorsed for 86 times, intercultural training for 59 times, intercultural for 36 times and cross-cultural teams for 26 times. (SIETAR Europa 2014.)

SIETAR on Twitter

There are 255 million monthly active users on Twitter, and 77% accounts are outside the U.S. Twitter describes its mission as “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers.” SIETAR Europa encourages the development of knowledge without barriers, which resembles with Twitter’s mission. (twitter 2014; sietareu n.d.)

The Twitter platform allows businesses to promote the business, network with like-minded people, customers as well as colleagues, gather opinions, find new volunteers and members, forward traffic to other online destinations, and to schedule events and meetings. Twitter can be used as a search tool to discover what is going on in the world and what people are saying, it can be also used as a social tool, business tool, or a combination of the tools needed. (Weber n.d., 13.)

SIETAR Europa’s Twitter account was created in February 2010. As of May 30th, 2014, it has 1,280 tweets, 825 followers and 368 followings. Most of the recent tweets are from the Tallinn Congress 2013 from last fall. The page has the SIETAR Europa logo and a short description of what SIETAR is about and a link to the official website.

SIETAR on Photo Sharing Networks – Pinterest and Flickr

There are numerous different photo sharing networks available. SIETAR Europa has an existing account on Pinterest and on Flickr. Pinterest is a Pinboard type platform, which is arranged by themes. People use Pinterest to discover new ideas for projects and interests by following people's boards or re-Pinning images from others, or just liking or commenting images. Flickr has two main goals: to help people make their photos available to others and to enable new ways to organize them. Flickr's free version however has a limitation of storage space, whereas Pinterest has no such limitations. Flickr is better in case of many personal photos whereas Pinterest is a mixture of sharing personal photos and allowing sharing of photos found elsewhere online. (flickr n.d., pinterest 2014.)

SIETAR Europa's Pinterest page has a short description of what SIETAR is about and a link to the official website as well as to the SIETAR Europa's Facebook Page. SIETAR Europa has five boards: Tallinn 2013, Places to visit, colours of culture, Quotes for your travels and Lost in Translations. It has 180 pins, 26 followers and 57 followings. SIETAR Europa's Flickr page has two albums: Cultural Detective with 38 photos and SIETAR-Europa with 168 photos from the congress in Sofia, Bulgaria from April 2007. The page has been viewed 538 times. (SIETAR Europa 2014.)

4.1 Members of SIETAR Europa on social media

The results from the online questionnaire are presented in the order of the supportive research questions covered in the beginning of this study. First, the use of social media by SIETAR Europa members is presented. Next, the findings about the purposes why social media is used are given. Finally, the expectations of SIETAR Europa members are presented.

SIETAR Europa members' use of social media

The respondents were asked whether they were current users, having an account, planning to use or not a user of listed social media platforms in order

to discover which social media platforms are currently used by the respondents (see Figure 13). Most (83%, $n = 44$) of the respondents were current users of LinkedIn, and more than half (72%, $n = 38$) were current users of Facebook. Almost half (49%, $n = 26$) were current users of YouTube, and nearly every tenth (8%, $n = 4$) planned to use YouTube in the future. Although 65% of the respondents had an account on Twitter, it is used only by every fifth (23%, $n = 12$). The same applied to Google+, 66% had an account but it is used by 15% of the respondents. The least used social media platforms were MySpace (0%), Flickr (6%, $n = 3$), and Pinterest (13%, $n = 7$).

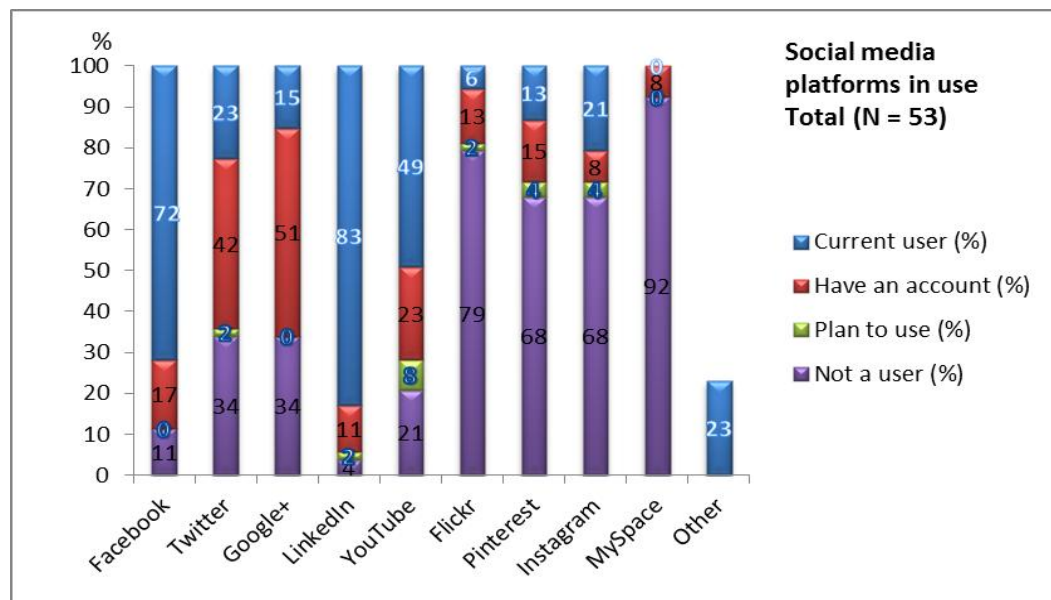


Figure 13. Social media platforms in use by the respondents

The respondents were also asked whether they were using some other platforms excluded from the list. Every fifth (23%) of the respondents were using some other platform in addition to the list provided. The most popular platforms mentioned were XING (4%), WhatsApp (4%) and Tumblr (4%).

The Table 5. below represents the participation level of respondents. There are more people viewing what others have created than those who create their own content. Nearly everyone (85%) read what others have written or watches videos online (81%) more than once a month. Over half (70%) reposts interesting articles, comments on someone else's updates (68%) or maintain a profile on a social media networking site (58%) at least once a month. There were 96% of respondents who never upload audio they created and 83% who never upload videos they created. 36% of the respondents keep a blog or write articles or stories and post those (38%).

Table 5. Participation level of respondents

Social media activities	Never	Less than once a month	More than once a month	N = 53
I keep a blog.	64% (34)	17% (9)	19% (10)	100%
I upload videos I created.	83% (44)	13% (7)	4% (2)	100%
I upload audio I created.	96% (51)	4% (2)	0% (0)	100%
I write articles or stories and post them.	62% (33)	25% (13)	13% (7)	100%
I update status on social media site.	21% (11)	30% (16)	49% (26)	100%
I comment on someone else's updates.	11% (6)	21% (11)	68% (36)	100%
I repost interesting articles and posts of others.	8% (4)	23% (12)	70% (37)	100%
I contribute to online forums.	38% (20)	26% (14)	36% (19)	100%
I use RSS.	89% (47)	4% (2)	8% (4)	100%
I save web addresses.	23% (12)	19% (10)	58% (31)	100%
I maintain a profile on a social media networking site.	11% (6)	30% (16)	58% (31)	100%
I read what others have written.	4% (2)	11% (6)	85% (45)	100%
I watch videos online.	4% (2)	15% (8)	81% (43)	100%
I listen to podcasts.	26% (14)	40% (21)	34% (18)	100%

SIETAR Europa has several groups in social media, and the purpose was to discover whether the respondents belonged to any of the existing social media groups (see Figure 14). Over half of the respondents belonged to the LinkedIn groups, 73% belonged to the Competence in Intercultural profession group and 58% to the Discussion Forum. Nearly half (42%) were a fan of the Facebook Page and one fifth (17%) followed SIETAR Europa on Twitter. No one followed SIETAR Europa's Pinterest board.

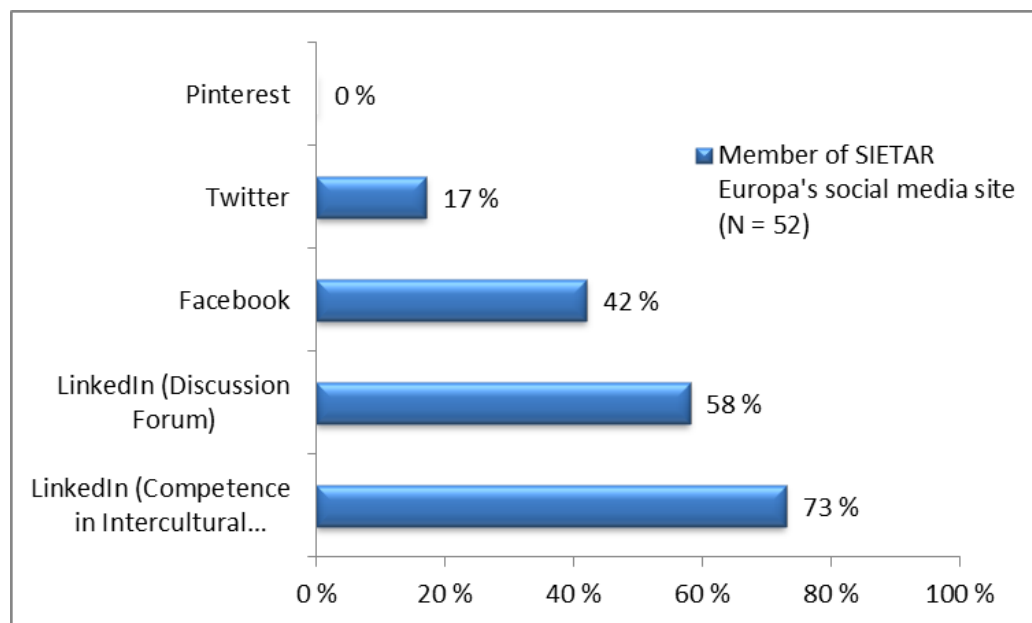


Figure 14. Members on SIETAR Europa's social media sites

There were 33 respondents who answered the question about what would make them more active in SIETAR Europa's social media sites (Figure 15). Every third (31%) replied that interesting content would make them more active in SIETAR Europa's social media sites. Nearly every fifth (18%) responded that more opportunities for learning and collaboration would make them more active. Another 18% replied that more time would be needed in order to be more active, and one tenth (12%) of the respondents stated that nothing would make them more active, or that it was hard to say what would make them more active.

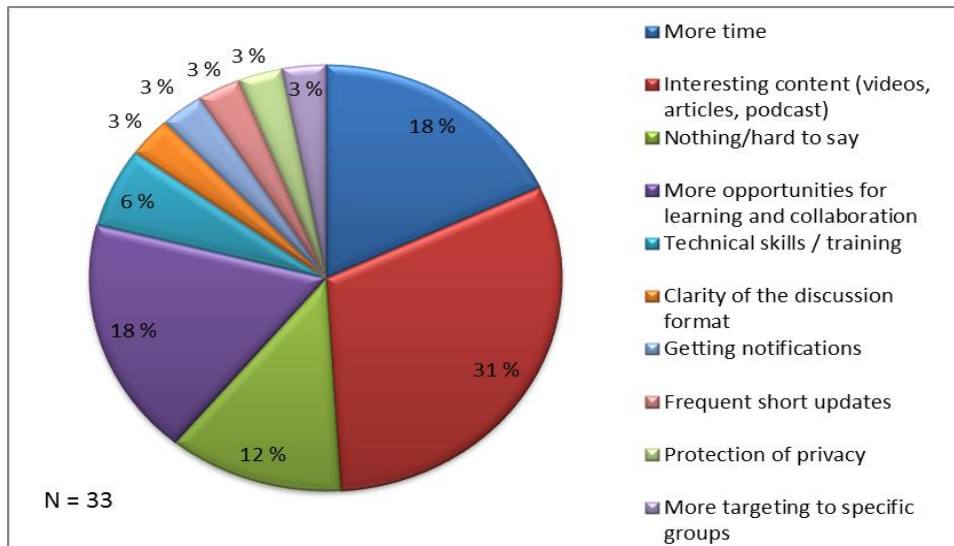


Figure 15. Factors that would make respondents more active in SIETAR Europa's social media sites.

Purposes why SIETAR Europa members use social media

The respondents were asked to rate ten social media activities in order, one being the most important and ten being the least important. The closer the average is to one the more important it is (see Figure 16. below).

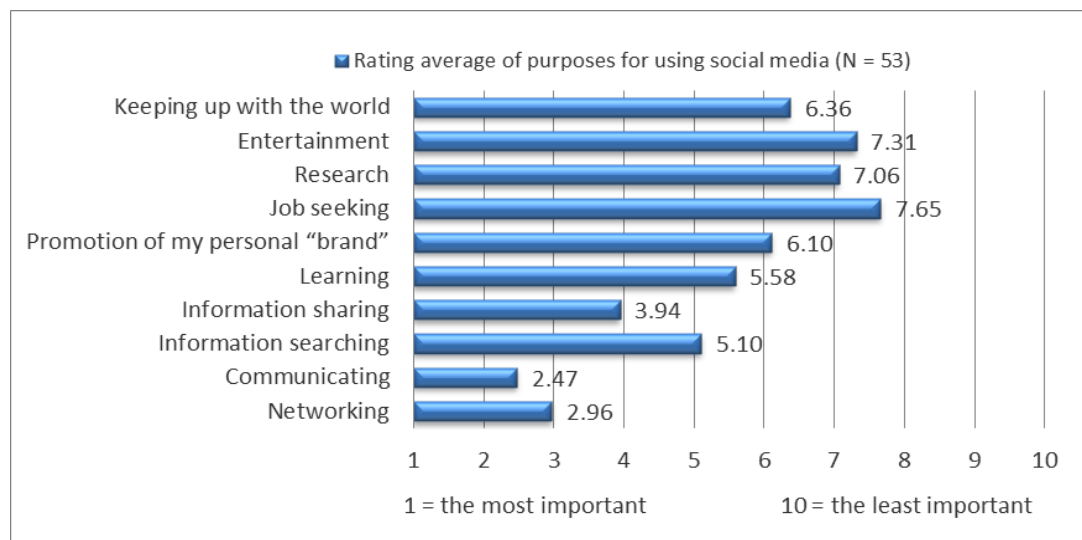


Figure 16. Rating average of purposes for using social media

Communicating was rated as the most important (rating average 2.47) purpose for using social media, and the second most important (rating average 2.96) was networking. The least important purposes to use social media were job seeking and entertainment with a rating average of 7.65 and 7.31 accordingly. In addition to the given activities, social media was also used to research potential business partners and customers, find music and for virtual collaboration.

The Table below shows how gender affects the reasons to use social media.

Table 6. Influence of gender on the reason to use social media

n =	Male	Female	Total (N)
	%	%	%
I like to be among the first to try a new social media site.	6.3	8.1	7.5
I use social media sites because everyone else is using them.	18.8	10.8	13.2
I use social media to keep up with the world.	43.8	59.5	54.7
I don't care about social media and I see no value in them.	0	5.4	3.8
Other	31.3	16.2	20.8
TOTAL	100	100	100

Chi2 = 3.169, df = 4, 1-p = 47%. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

Over half (54.7%) of the respondents use social media to keep up with the world. There were only 3.8% who did not care about social media. Every fifth (20.8%) use social media for some different purpose than what was listed. The results show that there are slight differences between males and females, 59.5% of females use social media to keep up with the world, whereas less than half (43.8%) of men use social media for the same purpose. Every third

(31.3%) men use social media for professional purposes only, when females (16.2%) specified other purposes as using social media because it is important and a practical tool. Statistically, however, the differences are not significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 3.169$, $\text{df} = 4$), but the results should be treated with reservation since some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

The results of this study indicate that LinkedIn is the most used social media platform. A comparison was made whether all the age groups felt that LinkedIn suits their native or host culture or not.

Table 7. LinkedIn's suitability to one's own culture by age groups.

	Age group					Total (N)
	21–30 y	31–40 y	41–50 y	51–60 y	Over 61	
n =	9	18	10	10	6	53
	%	%	%	%	%	%
LinkedIn suits my culture	33.3	50	90	90	66.7	64.2
LinkedIn doesn't suit my culture	33.3	22.2	0	0	0	13.2
I don't know	33.3	27.8	10	10	33.3	22.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

$\text{Chi}^2 = 13.664$, $\text{df} = 8$, $1-p = 90.9\%$. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

The Table above shows that most (64.2%) of the respondents felt that LinkedIn suits their culture. Every fifth (22.6%) did not know if LinkedIn suits their culture, and every tenth (13.2%) felt that LinkedIn does not suit their culture. The results indicate some differences between the two younger age groups and the three older age groups. In the youngest age group (21–30 years old) every third (33.3%) either felt that LinkedIn suited their culture, or that it did not suit their culture or did not know. In the age group of between 31

to 40 years old, half (50%) felt that LinkedIn suits their culture, and every fifth (22.2%) felt that LinkedIn did not suit their culture. Almost all (90%) of the age groups between ages 41 years old to 60 years old felt that LinkedIn suits their culture, and none of the older age groups felt that LinkedIn does not suit their culture. Statistically the differences are slightly significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 13.664$, $\text{df} = 8$), but the results should be treated with reservation because some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

The Table 8. below examines how males and females felt about LinkedIn suiting their native or host culture. The results indicate that there are almost no differences between males and females. Moreover, statistically the difference is not significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 0.075$, $\text{df} = 2$), but the results should be treated with reservation because some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

Table 8. The suitability of LinkedIn to one's own culture by gender.

Do you feel LinkedIn suits your native or host culture	Gender		Total (N)
	Male	Female	
n =	16	37	53
	%	%	%
Yes	62.5	64.9	64.2
No	12.5	13.5	13.6
I don't know	25	21.6	22.6
TOTAL	100	100	100

$\text{Chi}^2 = 0.075$, $\text{df} = 2$, $1-p = 37\%$. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

The questionnaire had an open-ended question asking the respondents to specify their response to the question of LinkedIn suiting their native or host

culture. LinkedIn is described as a neutral and highly professional platform compared to the other social media platforms, and no particular cultural differences are perceived. The following two extracts validate the neutrality and the usefulness of LinkedIn.

Although the US-culture factor is true y think there is a transnational culture rather than a national culture. I would think more in terms of a transnational community of users that share a common culture.

We Americans like to present our qualifications and accomplishments as a way to brand and promote ourselves. And sometimes we have a tendency to overstate our accomplishments. LinkedIn provides a vehicle for both an honest profile as well as for a little embellishment.

However, the respondents who felt that LinkedIn does not suit their native or host culture stated the fact that the whole platform is in English, which can cause misunderstandings. Another respondent was concerned with the use of one-size fits all format.

People are not used to update their job information online and they do not know how to use this kind of platform. There is a lack of culture on making an own formal/professional profile for job contacts.

Facebook is the second most used social media platform. A comparison was made whether all the age groups felt that Facebook suits their native or host culture or not (see Table 9). Over half (62.3%) of the respondents felt that Facebook suits their culture, and one fifth (9.4%) felt that Facebook does not suit their culture. There are some differences between the age groups of 21–30 years old and the over 61 years old. Over half (55.6%) of the 21–30 years old felt that Facebook suits their culture, and little less than half (44.4%) did not know. Less than every fifth (16.7%) of the age group over 61 years old felt that Facebook suits their culture, and over half (66.7%) of the same age group did not know. There seems to be no significant differences among the three age groups between the youngest and the oldest. Statistically, however, the differences are not significant ($\chi^2 = 10.643$, $df = 8$), but the results should

be treated with reservation because some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

Table 9. Facebook's suitability to one's own culture by age group.

n =	Age group					Total (N)
	21–30 y	31–40 y	41–50 y	51–60 y	Over 61	
	9 %	18 %	10 %	10 %	6 %	53 %
Facebook suits my culture	55.6	61.1	80	80	16.7	62.3
Facebook doesn't suit my culture	0	11.1	10	10	16.7	9.4
I don't know	44.4	27.8	10	10	66.7	28.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Chi2 = 10.643, df = 8, 1-p = 77.7%. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

The Table 10. below examines how males and females feel about Facebook suiting their native or host culture. There seems to be slight differences between males and females. Every fifth (18.8%) man but only 5.4% of women felt that Facebook does not suit their culture. More than every third (35.1%) woman but only every tenth (12.5%) man did not know if Facebook suits their culture. Statistically the differences are not significant (Chi2 = 4.285, df = 2), but the results should be treated with reservation because some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

Table 10. The suitability of Facebook to one's own culture by gender.

Do you feel Facebook suits your native or host culture	Gender		Total (N)
	Male	Female	
n =	16	37	53
	%	%	%
Yes	68.8	59.5	62.3
No	18.8	5.4	9.4
I don't know	12.5	35.1	28.3
TOTAL	100	100	100

Chi2 = 4.285, df = 2, 1-p = 88.3%. There is at least one cell with zero frequency hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

The respondents could specify how Facebook suits or does not suit their native or host culture. Facebook divides opinions, some want to stay away and think that it is a waste of time and invasion of privacy, when others see it as a great tool to share photos and stay connected to friends.

Expectations of SIETAR Europa members

The respondents were asked about their social media competence level as well as whether they expected SIETAR Europa to do something to make them more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups. Those variables were cross tabulated to see whether the competence level was related to the expectations of the respondents (Table 11). Over half (61%) of the respondent were experts (41.5%) or competent (19.5), every third (34.1%) were neither beginners nor competent, and only 4.8% were inexperienced (2.4%) or beginners (2.4%). It seems that those who expect SIETAR Europa to do something are competent or experts (75% = 45% + 30%) or neither beginners nor competent (25%). Nearly half (42.9%) of the respondents who described themselves as neither beginner or competent do not expect SIETAR Europa to do anything to make them more active. Statistically the differences are not significant (Chi2 = 5.18, df = 4), but the results should be treated with reservation since some of the criteria of Chi2 test are not met.

Table 11. Social media competence level of SIETAR Europa members compared to their expectations

Social media competence level	Would you expect SIETAR Europa to do something in order for you to be more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups?		Total (N)
	Yes	No	
n =	20	21	41
	%	%	%
Inexperienced	0	4.8	2.4
Beginner	0	4.8	2.4
Neither beginner nor competent	25	42.9	34.1
Competent	45	38.1	41.5
Expert	30	9.5	19.5
TOTAL	100	100	100

Chi2 = 5.18, df = 4, 1-p = 73.1%. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable.

The Figure 17. below shows responses to the question on what the respondents would like SIETAR Europa to do to make them more active on SIETAR Europa's social media groups categorized by keyword coding.

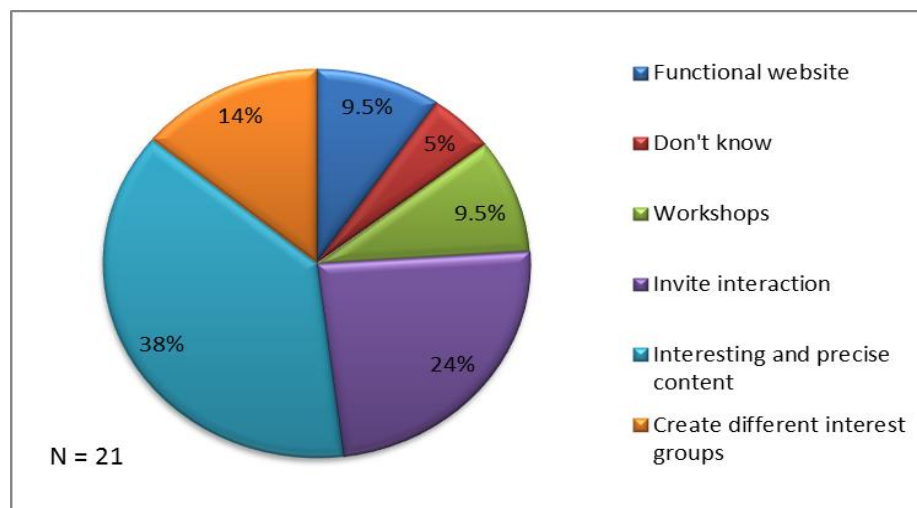


Figure 17. Respondents' recommendations of social media activities for SIETAR Europa

The respondents hoped for more interesting content (38%), more interaction with the members (24%), and creation of different interest groups (14%). Every tenth (9.5%) hoped for workshops. Moreover, 9.5% emphasized the importance of a functional website.

The following three extracts endorse the fact that interesting content is wanted without overwhelming the members, and therefore different interest groups would be useful.

Research which sites may be interesting for SIETAR membership, then cull (weekly) the best of the best articles, videos, podcasts, etc. to forward to the members. A weekly newsletter, with 3-5 interesting and relevant topics would probably be welcomed by most members.

make information easy to grasp, not send overwhelmingly much (no overflow of information), make sure that information is to the point

More targeted groups, the one size fits all approach doesn't work with 1,000+ members, even only 2 groups dont work with that...

The Figure below indicates that more than half of the respondents (57%) prefer to receive communication from SIETAR Europa through e-mail. The second most preferred way to receive communication is through E-Newsletter (55%) and the third through LinkedIn group (38%). The least preferred ways to receive communications from SIETAR Europa is through SMS text message (7%), blog (40%) and Facebook group (34%). Twitter was also stated as preferred way to receive communication. The percentages add to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to choose more than one option.

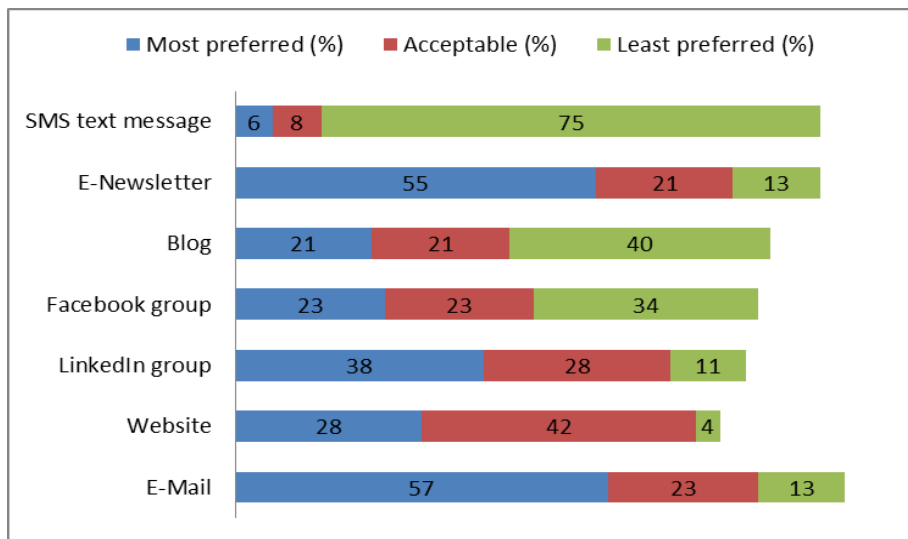


Figure 18. Most preferred ways of receiving communications from SIETAR Europa.

4.2 Recommendation

This subchapter will provide a recommendation for SIETAR Europa on how to use social media to better serve and engage its members. The recommendation is based on the findings. The tools recommended are researched by the author, and the usefulness of the tools has been determined based on the knowledge about the organization, acquired while volunteering in the organization, and through discussion with the chair of the Communications Committee.

The primary platforms to use at the present time are LinkedIn and Facebook. This does not mean that there cannot be other platforms in use, but when considering the resources, it is essential to concentrate on those that are used the most. Over half (65%) of the respondents have a Twitter account, but only 23% are current users of Twitter. However, the study does not reveal if the respondents having an account on Twitter are planning to continue to use Twitter in the future. SIETAR Europa has an existing Twitter account and hundreds of followers, and thus, Twitter should not be ignored. Moreover, this study revealed the purposes to use social media. The top three purposes

were communicating, networking and information sharing. It can be seen that the mission statements of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter conform to the top three purposes. In addition, almost half (49%) of the respondents were current users of YouTube and another 8% were planning to use it in the future, which makes YouTube another platform that should be considered in the near future.

According to this study, hardly anyone is using Flickr or Pinterest. Thus, Flickr and Pinterest accounts are not needed. It is not necessary to close the accounts as there are numerous pictures from previous congresses and seminars, but no resources should be used to maintain those accounts at this point.

The results indicated three factors that would make respondents more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups: interesting content, inviting interaction, and creating different interest groups. However, there is no specific data what is considered interesting content. The results revealed that over half (70%) of the respondents repost interesting articles created by others. More interaction can be created by asking audiences to share interesting articles.

The first step would be to invite interaction by asking members on LinkedIn groups and Facebook which kind of interest groups they would like to have, and based on the responses create several different groups. Interests groups can provide more opportunities for learning and collaboration, which was one of the factors that would make members more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups. It is important to have someone responsible for the groups in order to monitor the discussions. Once the groups have been established, the members should be informed about the different groups for example through monthly e-newsletter.

The next step would be to set up social media content tools in order to monitor the Web. Google Alerts is a useful tool to receive alerts according to keywords on interesting up-to-date content that can be shared on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Paper.li is a tool that can be used for making newsletters of interesting articles, blog posts and rich media content, which can be shared

with the audience. News.me is a tool that summarizes the Twitter posts from the followers and sends them by e-mail to the organization to view. This tool could be used to find interesting content to share with the members.

SlideShare, a slide hosting service, is another way to upload and share PowerPoint presentations, documents and infographics. One of the respondents recommended Upworthy, a website of diverse content, which uses virality to promote stories. The stories are classified into categories which makes it easy to find appropriate topics.

In order to engage with members in a time-efficient way, applications that facilitate the membership engagement should be considered. There are tools that can be used for a specific platform, such as TweetBeep and Tweriod for Twitter, as well as tools that cover multiple platforms, for instance Buffer and Hootsuite. TweetBeep (tweetbeep.com) keeps up with tweets that mention the organization, or any keyword given, by alerting about it by e-mail. This way SIETAR Europa can follow the mentions and reply accordingly. Tweriod is a free twitter tool that helps to make the most of Twitter by informing about the best time to tweet.

Another way to save time is to use social media management tools. It would be a good idea to consider a tool or tools that help to manage multiple social media networks simultaneously. Buffer (bufferapp.com) allows setting up scheduled posts on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter throughout the day or week, and provides insights to track the success on different platforms. Another social media management tool is Hootsuite (hootsuite.com) with similar functions. The free version of Hootsuite includes the management up to three social profiles, basic analytics reports, and basic scheduling.

All the tools described are available for free. However, most of the tools can be upgraded to a paid version, which in turn provide wide-ranging uses of the services.

The Table 12. below provides a social media weekly plan for SIETAR Europa. The purpose of the social media plan is to propose ideas of postings and schedule that can be used as a framework. It is possible that more than one

person will take care of the social media activities, thus the name of the person can be added to the table. Moreover, there can be several Facebook groups and LinkedIn groups in the future, which mean that every group would need a person responsible for the activities in that group. This social media plan can be used as a tool to coordinate actions for the next week or a month.

Table 12. Social media week plan (adapted from the Convio Social Media Guide 2010, 28)

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
LinkedIn	<u>Name</u> Question day Ask for favorite event experience etc.		<u>Name</u> Inter-cultural tip day Ask or give	<u>Name</u> Ask respondents to share top story/video/photo of the week	<u>Name</u> Share top 3 news of the week	<u>Name</u> Slide-share day	<u>Name</u> Remind about the upcoming events
Facebook	<u>Name</u> Question day Ask for favorite event experience etc.		<u>Name</u> Inter-cultural tip day Ask or give	<u>Name</u> Ask respondents to share top story/video/photo of the week	Share top 3 news of the week	<u>Name</u> Slide-share day	<u>Name</u> Update Facebook event calendar Remind about the upcoming events
Twitter	<u>Name</u> Share video/photo and mention person who gave the idea		<u>Name</u> Inter-cultural tip day	<u>Name</u> Share video/photo and mention person who gave the idea	Share top 3 news of the week	<u>Name</u> Slide-share day	<u>Name</u> Remind about the upcoming events

In addition, share interesting articles, photos and videos posted by the members. Listen to the audiences, acknowledge and thank them for their participation as well as answer any questions they may have. It is important to measure the performance to determine which actions are successful and what to do differently. For example, LikeAlyzer (likealyzer.com) helps to measure and analyze the performance of the organization's Facebook Page. In addition, social media management tools provide analytics tools.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to determine the optimal social media strategy for an intercultural nonprofit organization, SIETAR Europa, by identifying the practices of other European NGOs in addition to exploring members' use of social media, the purposes for using social media and the expectations of members towards SIETAR Europa in the use of social media. A recommendation was provided based on the findings.

The benchmarking revealed that most of the European NGOs used one to three social media platforms, and the most common social media platforms in use were Facebook and Twitter. All in all, SIETAR Europa's current use of social media, analyzed in this study, can be placed between the European NGOs having the most followers and the organizations having the least followers. The benchmarking indicated that SIETAR Europa is doing very well on LinkedIn compared to the other European NGOs. The practices of European NGOs performing well in social media included consistent sharing, the use of diverse content, and inviting interaction by asking questions from their members.

The questionnaire revealed that LinkedIn is the most popular platform in use. LinkedIn is perceived as a neutral and professional platform to interact with people. Facebook is the second most popular platform in use. However, some perceived Facebook as a waste of time when others saw it as a useful tool. Although only one fifth (23%) of the respondents use Twitter, SIETAR Europa has hundreds of followers on Twitter, and based on the benchmarking it is used by many of the European NGOs. Therefore, Twitter cannot be ignored.

According to this study, communicating, networking and information sharing are the three most common reasons to use social media. More than half (54.7%) of the respondents use social media to keep up with the world, in other words, they belong to the early majority. Nearly every tenth (7.5%) are early adopters who like to be among the first to try a new social media site. Only 3.8% are non-adopters who do not care about social media and see no

value in it. (Dann & Dann 2010.) Based on the responses and the fact that it was challenging to obtain responses to the questionnaire, it seems that the majority of members are spectators (85%), and the second largest groups are joiners (68%) and critics (58%). (Li & Bernoff 2011.)

SIETAR Europa is expected to share interesting content, invite interaction by asking questions and create different interest groups. There seems to be no relation between the social media competence level of members and whether the members are expecting SIETAR Europa to do something to make the members more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups. In fact, those who expected SIETAR Europa to do something were competent or experts in the use of social media.

The recommendation serves as a guideline based on the results from benchmarking and the responses from the questionnaire. It narrows down the platforms to use and suggests a social media week plan as well as social media tools that could be useful for SIETAR Europa. In order to discover how the recommendation influences the engagement rate, the results, such as engagement rate and like growth, should be monitored and measured using analytics tools, such as LikeAlyzer, and the actions should be modified accordingly.

Social media is a useful tool but it should be considered as a complementary instrument intergraded into the overall marketing strategy. In other words, social media should not replace other marketing activities, such as updating the organization's website, e-mail marketing and e-newsletters. Moreover, the results indicated that the most preferred ways of receiving communication from SIETAR Europa is by e-mail and the e-newsletter.

It can be concluded that the objective of this study was achieved to a great extent. The research was conducted and improvement proposal was made based on the findings. However, as action research focuses on the future, implementation and estimation of the success of the improvement proposal, there is no data at this point whether the tools suggested are the optimum

ones (Kananen 2011, 150). Moreover, social media tools are changing fast. Therefore, it is essential to measure the success on a regular basis.

5.1 Reliability and validity

In order to ensure the quality of the study, reliability and validity of the study need to be considered. There are differences between the concepts of reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative research. Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency and repeatability of the research results. (Kananen 2011, 125–126.) This means that to ensure reliability the questionnaire should be repeated, which would be time consuming. Additionally, social media platforms and trends change over time, which can affect the results if the questionnaire would be repeated.

Validity is an indication of whether the research measures the right things. External validity refers to the generalizability of the findings to the population. Different types of sampling methods were studied and non-probability sampling was chosen based on the lack of sampling frame and resources. However, it is almost impossible to make generalizations that would apply to the whole population due to the small sample ($N = 53$) and because self-selection sampling technique was used. Moreover, in most cases the dependencies between variables were not significant. This can be caused by the fact that some of the frequencies were less than five and the rules of Chi2 were not really applicable, and consequently the results had to be treated with reservation. Combination of responses into fewer groups was considered but there seemed to be still less than five responses in some of the groups.

All in all, it was challenging to obtain a sufficient number of respondents, although the mailing was sent by the secretary of SIETAR Europa and the questionnaire was shared through the official SIETAR Europa Facebook account in order to share the message through the proper channels. The questionnaire was developed using existing questionnaires and theory and piloted among several experts. However, it is worth to mention that there was a comment from one of the respondents that the ranking system on question 2

was problematic if one wanted to change the sequence. Internal validity refers to the execution of the study and how well it is conducted. Documentation of this study has been made to improve the level of internal validity. (Kananen 2011, 128.)

Moreover, the use of mixed methods, triangulation, improves the validity and reliability of the study as it uses different methods in one study to confirm the results in variety of ways in addition to providing a better understanding of the phenomenon (Kananen 2011, 130).

Language is another matter to consider in this study. The questionnaire was developed in English and proofread by a native English speaker in order to decrease the possibility of misunderstandings. However, most of the respondents speak English as their second language, and it is therefore important to mention that some of the comments can be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

5.2 Suggestions for future research

In the process of this study, more research possibilities emerged. Social media provide opportunities to engage with audiences as well as with people within the organization. A study about how SIETAR Europa can use social media for internal purposes would be helpful to improve the internal processes, to coordinate actions and keep everyone involved and informed.

In addition, similar kind of study to this study could be conducted within the national SIETARs to optimize the social media strategy within SIETAR organizations.

Moreover, a study how culture influences people using social media or how social media influences people's behavior could provide valuable insights and better understanding of the phenomenon.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire design

Question	Scale	Source
Social media sites and purposes for use		
<p>1. Which of the following social media sites do you use?</p> <p>Current user/have an account but not using it/plan to use/not a user</p> <p>Facebook Twitter Google+ LinkedIn YouTube Flickr Pinterest Instagram MySpace Other social media sites that you are currently using (please specify)</p>	<p>4 points scale (Nominal)</p>	<p>Question amended from SOCIALSTRAT, How are the members of associations using social media today – questionnaire (Barkan 2011, 13)</p> <p>Six classes of interview data, facts about the ‘here and now’. (Davies 2007, 106)</p> <p>Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites (eBizMBA 2014)</p>
<p>2. For which purposes do you use social media?</p> <p>Please rank the activities from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important)</p> <p>Networking Communicating Information searching (e.g. checking the weather forecast etc.) Information sharing Learning Promotion of my personal “brand” Job seeking Research Entertainment Keeping up with the world</p> <p>Added N/A option “I don’t use social media”</p>	<p>Rank order scale</p>	<p>Question amended from SOCIALSTRAT, How are the members of associations using social media today – questionnaire (Barkan 2011, 9)</p> <p>Outline of different uses of the Internet (Dann and Dann 2011, 144-147)</p>
<p>3. Do you use social media for other than above mentioned purposes (please specify)?</p>	<p>Open question</p>	<p>Researcher Social media behavior (Miller 2010, 153)</p>
<p>Note, please continue the survey even if you have replied that you don't use social media.</p>		

Participation level		
<p>4. Which statement describes you the best?</p> <p>I like to be among the first to try a new social media site.</p> <p>I use social media sites because everyone else is using them.</p> <p>I use social media to keep up with the world.</p> <p>I don't care about social media and I see no value in them.</p> <p>Other (please specify)</p>	(Nominal)	Diffusion of Innovation (Dann & Dann 2010, 128-129.)
<p>5. Below you can see various types of social media activities. Please indicate your participation level.</p> <p>Never/less than once a month/once a month/weekly/daily</p> <p>I keep a blog.</p> <p>I upload videos I created.</p> <p>I upload audio I created.</p> <p>I write articles or stories and post them.</p> <p>I update status on social media site.</p> <p>I comment on someone else's updates.</p> <p>I repost interesting articles and posts of others.</p> <p>I contribute to online forums.</p> <p>I use RSS.</p> <p>I save web addresses.</p> <p>I maintain a profile on a social media networking site.</p> <p>I read what others have written.</p> <p>I watch videos online.</p> <p>I listen to podcasts.</p>	5 point scale (Ordinal)	The Social Technographics Profile (Li & Bernoff 2011, 43.)
6. What are the factors that would make you more active in SIETAR Europa social media groups?	Open question	Researcher Social media behavior (Miller 2010, 153)
Social media know-how		
7. Would you expect SIETAR Europa to do something in order for you to be more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups?	Yes/No (Nominal)	Researcher
8. If yes, what would you like SIETAR Europa to do?	Open question	Researcher
9. Please rate your competence level in the use of social media? 1 = inexperienced 5 = expert	Rank order scale	Researcher

Culture and social media		
The next questions deal with the topic of social media and culture, and if you feel that social media sites allow for the expression of different cultural values or are they too US-culture specific.		
10. Do you feel Facebook suits your native or host culture?	Yes/No/I don't know (Nominal)	Researcher
Please specify.	Open question	
11. Do you feel Twitter suits your native or host culture?	Yes/No/I don't know (Nominal)	Researcher
Please specify.	Open question	
12. Do you feel LinkedIn suits your native or host culture?	Yes/No/I don't know (Nominal)	Researcher
Please specify.	Open question	
13. Do you feel Google+ suits your native or cost culture?	Yes/No/I don't know (Nominal)	Researcher
Please specify.	Open question	
SIETAR on social media		
14. Social media is important to SIETAR 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree	5 points Likert scale	Six classes of interview data, attitudes or opinions. (Davies 2007, 106)
15. Are you a member of any of the SIETAR Europa's social media sites? LinkedIn (Competence in Intercultural professions) LinkedIn (Discussion Forum) Facebook Twitter Pinterest	Yes/No (Nominal)	Researcher
16. How would you prefer to receive information from SIETAR Europa? Note, please select at least 1 most preferred and at least 1 least preferred. Most preferred/Acceptable/Least	3 point scale (Ordinal)	Question amended from SOCIALSTRAT, How are the members of associations using social media today – questionnaire (Barkan 2011, 20)

preferred E-Mail Website LinkedIn group Facebook group Blog E-Newsletter SMS text message Some other way (please specify)?		
Background information		
17. What year were you born?	Quantity question	Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The age factor (Davies 2007, 106)
18. Male/Female		Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The gender factor (Davies 2007, 106)
19. Country of origin Other (please specify)		Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The nationality factor (Davies 2007, 106)
20. Which of the following best describes you (or your background)? American Indian or Alaskan Native Asian or Pacific Islander Black or African American Hispanic or Latino White / Caucasian Prefer not to answer	(Nominal)	Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The nationality factor (Davies 2007, 106)
21. Current country of residence		Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The nationality factor (Davies 2007, 106)
22. Are you working abroad or at the country where you live? At the country where I live Abroad Both		Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and now'. The nationality factor (Davies 2007, 106)
23. Are you a member of SIETAR? Yes, I'm a member	(Nominal)	Background data Six classes of interview data, facts about the 'here and

<p>Yes, but I need to renew my membership</p> <p>I'm a former member</p> <p>No, but I'm interested in becoming a member</p> <p>No, I'm not a member</p> <p>I'm not sure about my current status but I have been a member</p>		<p>now'. The nationality factor (Davies 2007, 106)</p>
<p>24. Anything else you would like to communicate?</p>	<p>Open question</p>	<p>Researcher</p>

Appendix 2. Screenshot of the online questionnaire

SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

Dear SIETAR member,

Welcome to the SIETAR Europa's use of social media survey. This questionnaire aims to develop SIETAR Europa's social media activities in order to better service the members. If you could take about 15 minutes to fill out this questionnaire, that would be very helpful.

Thank you for your participation,
Heidi Helander, a student at JAMK University of Applied Sciences
And on behalf of the SIETAR Europa Communications Committee

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

Social media sites and purposes for use

* 1. Which of the following social media sites do you use?

	Current user	Have an account but not using it	Plan to use	Not a user
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flickr	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pinterest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MySpace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other social media sites that you are currently using (please specify)

*2. For which purposes do you use social media?

Please rank the activities from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important)

<input type="text"/>	Networking	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Communicating	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Information searching (e.g checking the weather forecast etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Information sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Promotion of my personal "brand"	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Job seeking	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Research	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media
<input type="text"/>	Keeping up with the world	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't use social media

3. Do you use social media for other than above mentioned purposes (please specify)?

Note, please continue the survey even if you have replied that you don't use social media.

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

Participation level

*4. Which statement describes you the best?

- I like to be among the first to try a new social media site.
- I use social media sites because everyone else is using them.
- I use social media to keep up with the world.
- I don't care about social media and I see no value in them.
- Other (please specify)

*5. Below you can see various types of social media activities. Please indicate your participation level.

	Never	Less than once a month	Once a month	Weekly	Daily
I keep a blog.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I upload videos I created.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I upload audio I created.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I write articles or stories and post them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I update status on social media site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I comment on someone else's updates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I repost interesting articles and posts of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I contribute to online forums.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use RSS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I save web addresses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I maintain a profile on a social media networking site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read what others have written.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I watch videos online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen to podcasts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What factors would make you more active in SIETAR Europa social media groups?

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

Social media know-how

7. Would you expect SIETAR Europa to do something in order for you to be more active in SIETAR Europa's social media groups?

- Yes
- No

8. If yes, what would you like SIETAR Europa to do?

*9. Please rate your competence level in the use of social media?

Inexperienced	Beginner	Neither Beginner nor Competent	Competent	Expert
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

Culture and social media

The next questions deal with the topic of social media and culture, and if you feel that social media sites allow for the expression of different cultural values or are they too US-culture specific.

*** 10. Do you feel Facebook suits your native or host culture?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please explain

*** 11. Do you feel Twitter suits your native or host culture?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please explain

*** 12. Do you feel LinkedIn suits your native or host culture?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please explain

*** 13. Do you feel Google+ suits your native or host culture?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please explain

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey

SIETAR on social media

*** 14. Social media is important to SIETAR**

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

15. Are you a member of any of the SIETAR Europa's social media sites?

	Yes	No
LinkedIn (Competence in Intercultural professions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn (Discussion Forum)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pinterest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 16. How would you prefer to receive information from SIETAR Europa?**

Note, please select at least 1 most preferred and at least 1 least preferred.

	Most preferred	Acceptable	Least preferred
E-Mail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E-Newsletter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SMS text message	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Some other way (please specify)

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SIETAR Europa's use of Social Media Survey
Background information

***17. What year were you born?**

***18. Are you male or female?**
 Male
 Female

***19. Country of origin**

 Other (please specify)

20. Which of the following best describes you (or your background)?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White / Caucasian
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

***21. Current country of residence**

 Other (please specify)

22. Are you working abroad or at the country where you live?

- At the country where I live
- Abroad
- Both

***22. Are you a member of SIETAR?**

- Yes, I'm a member
- Yes, but I need to renew my membership
- I'm a former member
- No, but I'm interested in becoming a member
- No, I'm not a member
- I'm not sure about my current status but I have been a member

If a member, please specify which SIETAR

23. Anything else you would like to communicate?

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Appendix 3. A copy of the covering letter to the online questionnaire

(E-mail)

To the Board:

Subject: Developing SIETAR Europa's use of social media questionnaire, please take part

Dear Colleagues, as you may have heard already, I am doing my final thesis for SIETAR Europa, and now I would appreciate your help by taking part of this questionnaire. The aim of my thesis is find the social media activities of members and to optimize SIETAR Europa's social media activities accordingly. If you could take about 15 minutes to fill out this questionnaire for my final thesis, that would help me and SIETAR a lot! :)

Link to the questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T6VLXVP>

The results are processed so that the respondent's identity remains anonymous.

Thank you in advance for your participation,

Heidi Helander, a student at JAMK University of Applied Sciences

To the direct members:

Subject: SIETAR Europa's Social Media questionnaire

Dear colleague,

one of the members of SIETAR Europa's Communication Committee, Heidi Helander, is about to finish her studies at JAMK University of Applied Sciences Jyväskylä Finland and has decided to do her final thesis for SIETAR Europa about social media and how the social media activities of an organization such as SIETAR Europa could be optimized.

By responding to this questionnaire the soonest, you can contribute to the optimization of social media activities of SIETAR Europa.

This information will be very useful to better serve the members.

Please find the link to the questionnaire below

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T6VLXVP>

Thank you very much for your participation in advance!

Best Regards,

SIETAR Europa office

Appendix 4. A copy of the invitation to answering the questionnaire posted on LinkedIn and Facebook

Subject: Dear SIETARians in Europe, please help to develop SIETAR Europa's use of social media by answering this questionnaire. Link to questionnaire

Hello SIETARians in Europe, I am a student in final year of International Business studies. I am also a member of SIETAR Europa's Communications Committee and decided to do my final thesis for SIETAR Europa in order to combine my passion with getting my degree. This questionnaire aims to optimize SIETAR Europa's social media activities in order to better service the members. If you could take about 15 minutes to fill out this questionnaire for my final thesis, that would help me and SIETAR a lot! :)

Link to the questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T6VLXVP>

The results are processed so that the respondent's identity remains anonymous.

Many thanks in advance!

Appendix 5. Benchmarking social media platforms of European NGOs

Organization	Facebook #Page likes	Twitter #tweets #following #followers	LinkedIn	Other social media tools in use (#followers)
SIETAR Europa	633 likes	1,284 tweets 372 following 871 followers	4881 members	Pinterest (31) Flickr
The European Federation for Intercultural Learning	847 likes	4 tweets 17 following 11 followers	-	-
European Social Network	-	1,632 tweets 623 following 782 followers	Private group with 266 members	Flickr
Volonteuropa	201 likes	85 tweets 46 following 133 followers	-	-
Solidar	1,365 likes	1,595 tweets 622 following 1,999 followers	-	YouTube (514) Google+ (4) Flickr
Center for Intercultural Dialogue	777 likes	390 tweets 40 following 148 followers	Open group with 158 members	YouTube (13) Google+ (22) Pinterest (13) Wikipedia
Culture Action Europe	23,753 likes	411 tweets 191 following 2,513 followers	Company page with 106 followers	YouTube (9) Google+ (2) Pinterest Flickr
Caritas Europa	9,756 likes	3,027 tweets 726 following 6,978 followers	Caritas Europa Communication with 3 connections	YouTube (96) Google+ (81) Pinterest (20) Flickr
International Association for intercultural education	208 likes	-	-	-
Citizens for Europe	1,773 likes	4,382 tweets 562 following 3,128 followers	Open group with 652 members	-
European Multicultural Foundation	5 likes	-	-	-
The International Association of Cross Cultural Competence and	-	34 tweets 8 following 35 followers	-	-

Management				
International Regulator of Coaching and Mentoring (IRCM)	Link not working on official website	291 tweets 1672 following 659 followers	-	-
Challenges Worldwide	965 likes	1,146 tweets 1202 following 940 followers	Company page with 274 followers	YouTube (0)
International Association for Community Development (IACD)	1,403 likes	42 tweets 96 following 111 followers	Company page with 253 followers Closed group for board of directors with 6 members	-
Future Society Institute	320 likes (not in English)	-	Company page with 14 followers	-
Academia Europaea	76 likes	96 tweets 145 following 58 followers	Open group with 51 members	YouTube (0) Google+(0)
The European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)	186 likes	48 tweets 190 following 41 followers	-	-
Eurocities	207 likes	1,884 tweets 158 following 4,932 followers	Private group with 34 members	YouTube (75) Google+ (8) Flickr
European Network Against Racism (ENAR)	4,768 likes	2046 tweets 418 following 2696 followers	Open group with 244 members	YouTube (96) Google+ (4)
CARe Europe	274 likes	1130 tweets 19,8k following 19,6k followers	From official webpage to Profile Jodee L. with 125 connections	YouTube (0) Google+ (0)

(Social media platforms accessed 23 Aug 2014)