The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on B2B Social Media Content Tactics

A qualitative study examining how the Covid-19 Pandemic influenced B2B Social Media Tactics on LinkedIn

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Abstract

Objective: Social media marketing has gained greater importance among B2B organizations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Existing literature on the topic points into the direction that social media content of organizations was influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. While social media communication is beneficial for B2B organizations the scope of literature examining how the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the content tactics of B2B companies is scarce.

Method: To achieve the main objective of this study, a qualitative content analysis was performed based on a corpus consisting of 100 social media posts gathered from five B2B organizations. To discover how the Covid-19 pandemic influenced social media content tactics, 50 posts from before and 50 during the pandemic were coded and interpreted. Then, a comparison of both time periods was made, to uncover how B2B social media content tactics changed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Results: The following B2B social media content tactics changed during the Covid-19 pandemic: sharing information regarding the future of the company and work industry, giving advice to the online public, and the implemented hashtags. More specifically, it was found that B2B organizations incorporated the topic of the pandemic within the tactics. Next to that, the findings show that the Covid-19 pandemic did have an influence on the main objective communicated by B2B organizations regarding the dissemination of positive and emotional content. Concretely, B2B organizations incorporated tactics related to this objective more frequently during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before.

Conclusion: Previous research examining how social media content tactics have changed is scarce. Based on expectations formulated from existing literature, the findings of study were able to give an answer to the main research question. Further, it provides a foundation for future research opportunities regarding the topic.

Limitations and recommendations: This study contributes to literature since it is one of the first to explore B2B social media content tactics during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, this study was limited to analyze B2B social media posts not taking into consideration the user engagement of the post. Therefore, for future research it is recommended to apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods analyzing both the content tactics and the engagement of the post in which they were used.

Keywords: B2B organizations, social media, content tactic, Covid-19 pandemic, marketing, crisis

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Introduction

In the last few decades, the Internet has changed the traditional ways of communication by developing new channels and platforms through which individuals can interact among each other (Ismagilova et al. 2017). According to Kunsman (2018, as cited in Dwivedi et al., 2021), social media had a big impact on the technical adaption of businesses regarding the process of digitalization. In general, social media is defined as an interactive communication tool that is used to create and share opinions, knowledge, information, and any other forms of expressions and feelings through social networking platforms and sites (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Further research on the topic explains that previously, social media was used simply to share general information about the brand. However, in the recent years, organizations implement social media within their marketing strategies with the aim to get more involvement and insights from the consumer (Alalwan et al. 2017).

Moreover, research on the topic of business-to-business (B2B) marketing points in the direction that social media tools are becoming an appealing way to communicate and interact in this sector (Huotari et al., 2015). To be specific, B2B or business-to-business are organizations or brands that provide products and services relevant only to other organizations, hence they have no contact with the end-user (Lucking-Reiley & Spulber, n.d. as cited in Asipi & Duraković, 2020). According to survey, 82% of the B2B clients pay great attention to social media content when making a purchase (Ancillai et al. 2019). In addition, according to Pulizzi and Handley, (2016, as cited in Vasudevan et al., 2018) 83% of all B2B marketing specialists share content on at least one of the four most popular social media platforms in this case LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. According to Huotari et al. (2015) the type of content B2B brands share most often is rich on information, since the messages are generally aimed at industry professionals. Furthermore, a study by Juntunen et al. 2020 explains that social media posts are aimed to fulfill a certain marketing goal or objective. Moreover, they provide information regarding the

means in which a certain objective is accomplished. The study of Juntunen et al. (2020) refers to those means as content tactics and in this research paper they will be addressed as tactics as well.

In general, it has been reported that social media marketing provides many benefits to the organization in the case that it was successfully implemented. According to Andersson and Wikström (2017), companies in the B2B context have been adopting social media strategies in order to enhance customer engagement, support sales, boost brand awareness, and share information. Furthermore, by engaging in social media B2B companies can better understand customers' needs, inform and share knowledge, and build strong relationships and trust (Altshuler & Tarnovskaya, 2010).

Currently, there are many practical sources such as company reports (Edelman, 2020; Bages-Amat et al., 2021) which show that there has been a shift in the working processes of B2B organizations during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Moreover, according to Moorman (2020) organizations have experienced a rise in the significance of digital experiences from the consumers' side. Further research into the topic shows that, the Covid-19 Pandemic has influenced the clients' purchase-decisions as well as their purchase behaviors (Mason, 2020). As an example, the introduction of many restrictions concerned with the limitation of personal contact and other similar policies is a factor that has influenced the purchase-decisions. According to Mason (2020), byers were more conscious in the decision-making process and they required significantly more information about a product before making a purchase. Hence, the social distancing rules and policies have led to increase the importance of social media as a marketing tool to communicate in the B2B world (Mason, 2021).

While there is existing research analyzing how the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the social media content of business-to-consumer (B2C) organizations, none of the sources were concerned with the shift of B2B social media content tactics. Studies have shown that marketing specialists in the B2B sphere have adopted social media networking platforms as a part of their marketing strategy during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic (Rangarajan et al. 2021). A study by Azer et al. (2021) on the topic of

social media content during the Covid-19 pandemic shows that it is beneficial for organizations to share news about the crisis that are relevant to the public and primarily focuses on positive feelings, and emotions. Therefore, it is expected that B2B organizations will incorporate content that is more personal with the aim to induce feelings of hope and calmness. Furthermore, since prospective clients need more information regarding a product in the decision-making process, it is anticipated that B2B organizations will share product-related information during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the research question was formulated as it follows: "How has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced social media content tactics on LinkedIn of B2B organizations?"

The study offers a general overview of B2B social media marketing processes and the use of LinkedIn for B2B social media communication. Furthermore, the most common B2B social media content objectives and tactics were identified and the Covid-19 factor was introduced. The empirical examination is based on a corpus consisting B2B social media posts that were collected before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Then, the paper discussed the findings of the performed analysis, sheds light on the contributions and limitations, and gives suggestions for future research opportunities. By analyzing the existing B2B social media content and identifying changes in the content tactics of B2B organizations that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study aims to contribute to B2B social media marketing practices during a critical time.

Theoretical background

This section of the research paper aims to provide important background knowledge into the topic of B2B social media marketing. Moreover, the first sub-section is concerned with explaining the difference among B2B and B2C business models and how they implement social media marketing. Furthermore, an overview of the effects of social media adoption in B2B organizations was given. Additionally, LinkedIn was recognized as one of the most popular social media platforms among B2B companies. Next to that,

the B2B content objectives and their respective tactics were specified and the following sub-question was introduced:" What content tactics B2B brands implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic?". By adding this sub-question, the researcher was able to make detailed and valuable conclusions related to the answering of the main research question. Last but not least, the Covid-19 factor was introduces and information regarding the change in social media content during the Covid-19 pandemic was provided.

2.1 Difference in B2B and B2C social media marketing

Before the differences in B2B and B2C social media marketing are discussed it is important to provide definitions and more information on both business models. The distinction between both business models is important. The existing literature that identifies a difference in B2B and B2C social media marketing shows that the discrepancy is based on the ways in which both models operate (Salo, 2017). To be more specific, the business-to-business (B2B) model is defined as the transfer of products and services across organizations without having a direct contact to the consumer. To further elaborate, B2B business models are generally appropriate for big organizations that sell their products to other businesses and governmental entities such as distributors, financial institutions and suppliers. On the other hand, the business-to-consumer (B2C) model is focused on businesses selling the end-product directly to the consumer.

However, when it comes to B2B and B2C social media marketing practices, a very limited amount of sources explored how and why they differ from each other. The research paper, from Moore et al. (2013), shows that B2B and B2C organizations differ in terms of their social media platform preferences. Most commonly, B2B companies choose more professional social media platforms such as LinkedIn, whereas B2C brands focus their communication on mass-consumption social media networks such as Facebook. Additionally, they recognize that B2B companies strive to build stronger personal relationship with customers during the selling process compared to B2C organizations (Moore et al., 2013). Next to that, research on the topic provides evidence that B2B and B2C social media content

differs (Swani et al.2014). In the same study Swani et al. (2014) specify that B2B organizations focus on content that is informative and include more website links for product information within their social media posts. Furthermore, B2B organizations use social media marketing to enhance their SEO (Search Engine Optimization) by transferring traffic to the website, which results in stronger customer relationships and engagement (Swani et al., 2014; Itani et al., 2017).

2.2 Effects of social media use

There are existing studies examining the effects of social media proven to be important for the performance and success of B2B organizations. Furthermore, these factors summed up to be the following: customer relationship and satisfaction, credibility, and brand awareness. The following part of the study provides more detailed information regarding the different effects of social media usage in B2B organizations.

Customer relationship and satisfaction

Social media networks are an effective tool for communication between business and user, or other specialists and distributors in the working industry (Salo, 2017; Huotari et al., 2015; Nunan et al., 2018). By communicating with relevant users through social media, B2B organizations are able to strengthen their personal relationship with their customers (Hollebeek, 2017). In-depth research on the topic, found that social media positively affects the communication of product information, knowledge, and versatility which further affects the efficiency of the customer relationship (Ogilvie et al., 2018). Additional research on the topic suggests that, the establishment of stronger customer relations can be accomplished by raising brand awareness (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

A study by Agnihotri et al. (2016) concentrated on finding whether and how the adoption of social media by a salesperson will affect customer satisfaction in B2B organizations. Thereby, the results

from the research show that the implementation of social media has a positive effect on information communication which further facilitates higher customer satisfaction rates.

Credibility

Furthermore, Holliman and Rowley (2014) are the first to explore the use of digital content marketing as a toll to build an established position among other B2B organizations. Therefore, recently Barry and Gironda (2017) came up with a framework for thought leadership in B2B organizations. They define thought leadership to be both a capability and an outcome, which translates into trusted authority recognition. Thus, the thought leadership strategy is best to put an emphasis on the role of social media in building trust and relationships (Nunan et al., 2018). Furthermore, a study by Kho (2008) emphasizes on the benefits that social media integration can have on strengthening the brand's credibility. In addition, Kho (2008) explains how this positive effect was achieved due to the fact that social media enables brands and organizations to provide more details regarding their products and services.

Brand awareness

Many B2B organizations have increasingly raised their awareness in regard to the importance of brand building. In their research, Bendixen et al. (2004) found that a good brand reputation assures the customer of the products' quality thus making them willing to pay a higher price. More specifically, a high number of global technology markets have realized that establishing a brand name is the first step towards gaining the customers' trust (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Furthermore, Hsiao et al. (2020) found that by incorporating a famous brand name in a company social media post it is perceived to have more engagement thus raising brand awareness and customers' interest in the organization.

2.3 Activity on LinkedIn

As there is growing interest in social media marketing from B2B organizations, researchers have highlighted the importance of social networking through some specific platforms. A leading social media channel across many available networking platforms is LinkedIn. In addition, LinkedIn is reported to be the most well-known and valued social media channel for B2B marketing professionals (Jackson, 2018; Siamagka et al., 2015). According to a study by LeadFormix, (as cited in Bodnar & Cohen, 2011) LinkedIn has helped B2B organizations gain more prospective customers almost three times the amount compared to Twitter. Furthermore, Bodnar and Cohen (2011) mention that 61% of the B2B organizations that use LinkedIn have reported that they acquired a customer thanks to the platform. They conclude that this is the highest percentage of customer acquisition facilitated by a social media channel. Therefore, LinkedIn can be used as a tool to gain more customers while engaging in social media marketing activities.

Further research on the topic shows that LinkedIn is beneficial for different types of social interactions and for creating a feeling of connectedness, while offering a big variety of functions to generate customer engagement (Agnihotri, 2020). Moreover, according to Diba et al. (2019) B2B managers connect via LinkedIn and create a relationship with each other, reach out to other brands within the same industry in order to learn from one another, share content and hence grow together. Additionally, it is important to explain what is depicted by content and namely that there are different types of digital material such as written text, visual design in the form of an image or video uploaded, and voice recordings which are uploaded on social media (Juntunen et al., 2020). According to Agnihotri (2020) social media content should be examined from a knowledge-based perspective in order to incorporate social media marketing into the overall strategic framework of marketing and sales in the B2B context.

2.4 Social media content objectives and tactics

In their research, Juntunen et al. (2020) provide a systematic summary of all existing strategies and tactics in the literature concerning B2B organizations and social media marketing. Furthermore, they elaborate on the types of content that B2B brands implement in their social media communication in order to fulfill the predefined content objectives. The following four content objectives – *awareness* (Andersson & Wikström, 2017), *knowledge* (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) *and trust* (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), *interest, and liking* (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) follow different strategies and thus are executed in a specific way content wise. According to the authors the content B2B organizations upload on social media is depicted as content tactics and they aim at fulfilling the content objectives.

Firstly, according to Juntunen et al. (2020) for the objective *awareness* there have been identified two strategies. Corporate strategy is mainly applied with the aim to communicate the brand in the online environment of social media channels. The type of content B2B brands communicate most frequently is brand, company, product name or logo. On the other hand, according to Bolat et al. (2016) the Generic strategy is mainly used to promote new products and services. Thus, the type of content shared on social media is concerned with showing the product in action (Hanssens & Weitz, 1980), sharing news and/or information, making association with a typical person, lifestyle, or situation, and adding brand descriptions (Cutler & Javalgi, 1994).

Secondly, for the objective *knowledge and trust* there has been identified one content strategy called a pre-emptive strategy that refers to sharing information or ideas (Glover et al., 1989). Furthermore, Glover et al. (1989) do not define a specific strategy however Juntunen et al. 2020 follow the dictionary definition that entails it is an act of giving one the opportunity to get information before it is offered to others. The type of content that depicts the *knowledge and trust* objective is related to information about events, the emerging trends in the industry (Leek et al., 2016), and the company's developments (Bolat et al., 2016).

Thirdly, the objective *interest* most frequently entails information search (Wijaya, 2015) since an individual's interest usually refers to their orientation in regard to a subject, topic, object or any kind of knowledge area and their eagerness to find out more about it (Schiefele, 1991, as cited in Juntunen et al., 2020). In terms of content, *interest* can be conveyed through support and inspiration or by sharing that more information on the topic is available. Furthermore, B2B organizations use tactics such as implementing a phone number (Lohtia et al., 1995, as cited in Juntunen et al., 2020), internet address (Turley & Kelley, 1997), and hashtag (#) (Swani et al., 2014).

Last but not least, the objective *liking* was introduced by Lavidge and Steiner 1961, and its' aim is to promote positive feelings and attitude toward the organizations' products and/or services. Moreover, the brand image strategy relies on making the brand distinctive by communicating with the audience with the purpose to induce emotions (Glover et al., 1989). The aim of this strategy is for organizations to create a favorable impression among users. Thereby, brands incorporate tactics that include an emotional aspect such as storytelling (Cutler & Javalgi, 1994).

In order to provide a logically structured and in-depth answer to the research question the following sub-question was introduced in this section: "What content tactics B2B brands implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic?". By answering this sub-question it will facilitate a better distinction between the B2B content tactics implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic and the tactics used during the pandemic.

2.5 The Covid-19 Factor

In the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has immensely impacted society and the world in general. The beginning of the pandemic was officially announced by The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. Furthermore, the majority of the countries that were affected from the pandemic have incorporated a variety of measures such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and

quarantine to prevent and stop the spreading of the virus (Fernandes, 2020, as cited in Kwok et al., 2021). During a time of crisis, uncertainty is the main feeling depicted among the general public (Mitroff, 2004). Hence, in crisis communication it is often expected for social media users to seek more information (Fraustino et al., 2012, as cited in Azer et al., 2021). Research on the topic of social media content during the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that in times of uncertainty organizations focus on engaging their audience by delivering messages that are important and helpful (De Valck, 2020).

Additionally, Mason (2021) performed an analysis on the importance of social media marketing during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the study it was concluded that activity on social media can benefit organizations in terms of brand exposure and decision-making processes of the consumer. In their research paper, Azer et al. (2021) found that user engagement on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic was highly perceived among posts spreading information regarding the size and impact of the crisis. Moreover, Azer et al. (2021) examine the types of social media content that inspire different feelings and behavior among users during a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic. They conclude that organizations should focus on communicating messages that help spread positive and calming feelings as hope to enhance brand image and credibility (Azer et al., 2021).

Supplementary research analyzes the specific content brands have shared in the first days of the Covid-19 pandemic (Tosun, 2022). The paper suggests that organizations should create content that is important and relevant for clients, and helps to establish them as a brand. The findings from the research show that there were four emerging themes: posts with the aim of brand and/ or product promotion, Covid-19 related messages, and posts regarding celebrating special days and occasions (Tosun, 2022).

Furthermore, research conducted by Kwok et al. 2021 on the topic of social media messages during the Covid-19 pandemic shows that organizations have actively communicated with relevant stakeholders by implementing more information regarding the pandemic. More specifically, a research

based on companies in the hospitality sector shows that their Covid-19 related messages include positive and praising information about the organizations' past activities and actions. Additionally, the organizations share news about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on their working processes (Kwok et al. 2021).

2.6 Research expectations

A couple of studies point into the direction, that the approaches of B2B and B2C organizations in terms of social media implementation are different (Moore et al., 2013; Swani et al., 2014; Itani et al., 2017). The dissimilarity in social media implementation among both business models is identified in terms of the objectives of the organization (Itani et al., 2017), the chosen social networking platforms (Moore et al., 2013), and the style and feel of the message (Swani et al., 2014). Nonetheless, social media marketing has gained more popularity among B2B organizations in the last few years. It provides a variety of benefits in terms of building stronger relationships with customers (Ogilvie et al. 2018) and helps to enhance credibility (Kho, 2008), thus making the organizations' perceived trustworthiness higher (Nunan et al., 2018). Furthermore, B2B organizations use social media platforms with the aim to spread relevant information, build brand awareness, and to be perceived as favorable. Therefore, to fulfill these content objectives B2B companies incorporate their corresponding content tactics (Juntunen et al.).

However, with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, many companies had to reorganize their working process and policies in order to adapt to the ongoing situation. In their paper Rangarajan et al. (2021) found that during the time of the pandemic consumers were more focused on researching organizations and their products online, which resulted in more social media interactions. Additionally, Mason (2021) performs a research of the importance of social media marketing during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the analysis it was concluded that activity on social media can benefit organizations in terms of helping the consumer during the decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, a very limited number of sources was identified, more distinctively, research examining how the Covid-19 has influenced the use of social media content tactics. Scholars have provided evidence that Covid-19 related topics have been included in the social media content of organizations (Kwok et al., 2021; Tosun, 2022; Azer et al., 2021). Hence, it is expected that the Covid-19 pandemic will influence B2B content tactics in terms of incorporating messages related to the crisis. Additionally, Azer et al., (2021) conclude that during critical times it is important for companies to communicate messages that provoke positive emotions to enhance the image and credibility of the brand. Therefore, it is anticipated that during the Covid-19 pandemic B2B content tactics will focus predominantly on communicating messages that lead to pleasant emotions among the online public. Furthermore, it is expected for organizations to share messages related to product information (Tosun, 2022). Consequently, it will be beneficial to analyze the available B2B social media content and make conclusions regarding the above described assumptions and expectations towards answering the main research question.

Method

3.1 Design

Due to the fact that the purpose of this research paper was concerned with analyzing how social media content has changed from before and during the time period of the pandemic, content analysis of a specific sample of social media posts was performed.

Content analysis is explained to be one of the most used methods in communication research. According to Cole, (1988 as cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007) content analysis is a method most suitable for analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages. Furthermore, this method facilitates a way to perform research in a systematic and objective manner. Content analysis is implemented in most cases as a research method with the purpose of providing knowledge, depiction of fact, and new insights (Krippendorff, 1980, as cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Moreover, this qualitative approach for analyzing

data provides opportunity to identify valuable insights on how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the type of content and way of communication with users on social media in the B2B context. By the implementation of content analysis as a method for this research new trends might be recognized in the interaction of B2B organizations with their social media audience.

Procedure

The organizations, whose social media posts were selected for this study, were chosen by the researcher through entering the specific search term in the LinkedIn search bar – "b2b organizations". Furthermore, practical blogs were analyzed providing broader variety of companies working in the B2B sector. Moreover, the websites of the organizations were researched in order to find more information regarding the company's products and/or services. The criterion for the selection of the brands was focused on the requirement to be active on LinkedIn before and during the Covid-19 Pandemic in order to provide a broad selection of social media post types. Moreover, taking into account the fact that some existing B2B brands provide services directly to the end-user rather than selling them to other businesses, it was important to select specifically B2B organizations that market their services and/or products to other businesses. The purpose was to identify the content of B2B organizations and to eliminate the possible bias of selecting any organization's posts that is in the B2C sector while constructing the corpus. Hence, five B2B organizations were chosen to be the sources of data, while being predominantly focused in the business development industry. Most of the representative companies were in the software as a service (SaaS) or informational technology sector, providing solutions for website performance, specific business software, and marketing. In order to compile the corpus the researcher went through the posts of each of the selected companies and randomly selected the units of analysis. Afterwards, the randomly selected posts for both timeframes were transferred to five separate Word documents for each of the five relative organizations.

However, before the data was transferred to the analytical software Atlas.ti all information, related to the company and other relevant organizations, has been anonymized. This ensured that the study was compliant to any ethical considerations regarding the availability of the selected data. Moreover, the organization's name was replaced with the phrase "company name" and any other companies that were mentioned in the text with "other company name". In addition, any people that were mentioned or tagged in the analyzed posts were changed to "tagged user".

Corpus

The corpus on which the content analysis was based consisted of data found on the social media platform LinkedIn. Moreover, the corpus was construed by 100 social media posts which were in written form. Any specific visual communication, that is depicted to be important for the research, was taken into consideration at the analyzing stage.

Additionally, since the focus of the study was to examine two specific time frames - before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, 20 posts per company were analyzed – 10 per time period. Furthermore, the pandemic began in the month of March, 2020. Therefore, posts that were collected before the month of March, 2020 fall under the time frame before the Covid-19 Pandemic. Hence, the period during the pandemic was set to be from April, 2020 until the end of year 2021. All in all, the corpus was constructed by 50 social media posts before and 50 posts during the pandemic.

3.2 Data analysis

The data analysis process began with the process of coding the accumulated data. The data was coded by the researcher following the methods of open and axial coding. Moreover, when open coding is performed it enables the researcher to categorize the main occurring themes and concepts among the data. Furthermore, the second method of coding is called axial coding. Its' purpose is to further refine and categorize the themes that emerged through open coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). After all

necessary data was gathered in a written form it was transferred to the qualitative analysis software –

Atlas.ti, where the coding process was performed.

Furthermore, the first step into analyzing the corpus was to perform segmenting in order to get

an idea of the emerging themes in the available data. Additionally, at the first stage the researcher was

taking notes on the already identified content tactics. By doing the segmenting, the researcher was able

to clearly differentiate between the different tactics that each specific post contained. This approach to

coding is called open coding and it was applied for this part of the research project. Moreover, the

second step was to identify which objectives were implemented by the organizations in the social media

posting. The content tactics are implemented to reach the specific objectives or goals by being included

in the social media postings. Therefore, it can be concluded that each objective has the means to be

fulfilled and that is through the particular content tactics that B2B organizations have incorporated in

their posts. Additionally, after the open and axial coding was performed and all themes and tactics that

were identified and were taken into consideration, a coding scheme was developed (see Table 1).

Thereafter, to insure the validity of the coding scheme 10% of the data was coded with the initial coding

scheme, first by the writer of this paper followed by a second researcher. Afterwards, both researchers

came together and discussed the outcomes in order to compare and eliminate any big discrepancy

between codes and sub-codes. All in all, after the adjustments of the coding scheme the inter-coder

reliability was measured in the software Atlas.ti and the Krippendorff's Alpha resulted to be sufficient

with the coefficient of 0.86.

Coding scheme

This study applies a deductive approach by altering a coding scheme developed by Juntunen et

al. (2021). In their research paper, the authors identify B2B social media content tactics and objectives

that are most engaging for the user. The modified coding scheme identified the following main

categories: *Brand Awareness*, *Interest*, *Knowledge and Trust*, and *Liking*. They are specifically related to the objective of the post, meaning the main codes focus on the initial idea and motivation behind the written post. Furthermore, each main category was found to have a number of sub-codes that explain the tactic that was implemented in that particular post in order to fulfill its' objective. For example, the main code *Brand Awareness* contains four sub-codes – *Information about Achievements*, *News/Information*, *Working Environment*, and *Recruitment*. With the main code which was related to the objective *brand awareness*, organizations aim at popularizing their brand and grabbing the attention of users with the purpose to find future clients. Additionally, the sub-code *News/Information* refers to general information or news surrounding the organization. The sub-category *Working Environment* is applied to segments that talk about the measures organizations take for the wellbeing and the environment in which their employees work. Last but not least, *Recruitment* is implemented in posts that are aimed at hiring new employees through advertisement of existing open positions at the organization. Additionally, examples with social media posts that were coded with the relevant main and sub-codes can be seen in Table A1 (see Appendix A).

Table 1

Coding Scheme

Main Code	Sub-code	Description
Brand Awareness	Information about achievements	Raising awareness towards the brand in order to become more visible and competitive
	News/Information	General news or information about the organization
	Working Environment	Information that is concerned with the working environment of employees
	Recruitment	Postings that aim at finding new employees
Interest	Linking	Letting the user know that there is more information available on the topic of interest
	Asking Questions	Asking questions throughout the posting
Knowledge and Trust	Advice	Sharing information with users with the purpose of giving them an advice on a certain topic
	Events	Communicating news about an upcoming event related to the industry
	Future Insights	Providing information and/or predictions on the future related to the industry
	Industry Topic	Communicating with users on relevant to the industry topics
	Product Info	Giving Information about a certain product/service the

		organization is providing
Liking	Appreciation	Thanking employees for certain achievements
	Exhibiting People	Sharing positive stories about people in the industry or employees
	Partnership	Letting the audience know about company partnerships

Results

4.1 Before the Covid-19 Pandemic

Interest

In this research paper, posts that aim to grab the interest of the online public were coded with

the main code *Interest*. For further information regarding the frequency of application concerning the

main codes and the sub-codes see Table B1 and Table B2 (see Appendix B). The main code *Interest*

refers to the objective depicted in the post, whereas the sub-codes *Linking* refers to the tactic

implemented in order to fulfill the objective. Furthermore, the segments of data coded with the sub-

code *Linking* are tactics which would wake the users' interest. Hence, during the analysis this content

was depicted to be website URLs, hashtags, tagged companies and/or users. Before the Covid-19

pandemic, organizations included hashtags and website URLs in majority of their posts. The

implemented hashtags were relevant to the general topic of the message and highlighted the main

points of interest for the reader. Next to that, the URLs that organizations included most often were

links to their company website or to other organizations within the same industry. However, in order to

keep the anonymity of the sources, no specific examples for the depiction of website links and hashtags

were given by the researcher. In addition, whenever there was more information available, call to action

phrases were included in the posting e.g. "Read the full article here: URL"; "Learn more about how it

works here: URL"; "Information and tickets: URL". Lastly, the tagged or mentioned companies were partners of the organizations and the users were employees and other experts from the working sphere.

Moreover, the sub-code *Asking questions* was implemented five times before the Covid-19 pandemic. More specifically, it is depicted in the social media content as a direct way of communicating with the public. Hence, the segments of the data that contain a question towards the audience are coded with the sub-code *Asking questions*, for example the quote: "How does your company create an inclusive culture?" (2). Additionally, it became apparent that two of the organizations have incorporated this tactic more compared to the other companies. The questions were implemented either in the beginning or ending of the social media post and were, in most cases, accompanied by additional text and/or website link and hashtags, for example: "Happy Monday! How do you keep up with ecommerce and marketing news? We like everything from *tagged company* to newsletters form *tagged company* and podcasts like *tagged company*." (2).

As already mentioned in the data analysis section, both sub-codes *Linking* and *Asking questions* have been additionally coded in the cases where the post has already been assigned to a certain main code and sub-code. The logic behind is that in some cases lengthier posts that depict different general topics have the tendency to incorporate a mix of the objectives that are perceived through the post. Thus, in many instances the longer posts incorporate a variety of tactics to fulfill the different objectives.

Knowledge and Trust

With the main code *Knowledge and Trust* were coded posts that are aimed at educating the public on topics relevant to the organization and sphere, for example sharing news related to the industry, informing about upcoming events and company products.

Furthermore, the first most implemented sub-code was *Industry Topic* with the number of nine quotations. In most cases, posts where this sub-code was applied were concerned with an industry topic

and the organizations' opinion and approach towards this topic. This type of content can be depicted in social media posts as the following: "Almost ¾ of CMOs say their employees have a customer-first mindset. Learn how organizations empower this culture among their employees. CMOs need to champion an enterprise-wide customer-centric culture." (1). Additionally, some organizations specifically included an employee's name in the social media posting in order to establish them as an expert on the subject e.g.: "From niche skills to diverse talent—three trends worth paying attention to according to *company name*'s Chief Economist, *employee name*." (3).

Followed by it, the sub-codes *Events* and *Product Info* were used in seven and six quotations respectively. More specifically, when organizations were referring to future company events the sub-code *Events* was applied: "We are kicking the X event series in Europe with Moscow! ➡ Join one of our local #DASEurope events to learn more on they key steps in the journey to AI." (1). Further, the length of the posts containing this content tactic varied depending on the amount of information regarding the event. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, organizations only mention the general topic of the event e.g. "*company name* is a proud sponsor of *event name* kickoff. Information and tickets..." (3). In addition, company 2 exclusively specified the speakers of the event: "Sign up to watch live as *tagged user* and *tagged user* review real merchant #ecommerce sites - you could even submit your site for free advice... (2).

The sub-code *Product Info* was applied to posts that contained information regarding the organizations' product and/or service. Concretely, there were messages containing general information on newly developed and released products and how they can be used: "#*company product* is everywhere and the use of multiple open source technologies by enterprises is on the rise in scope, complexity and maturity. Learn how to make the most of it..."(1). In addition, there were posts that focused on updates of already established products e.g.: "*company name* update! Clients can now

easily add, edit, and reorder upcoming milestones on active contracts. Learn more about how it works

here:…" (3).

The sub-codes *Advice* and *Future Insights* were the least implemented from this main category

with six and one quotations. Further, the sub-code *Advice* was implemented in posts that provided tips

and helpful information concerning the industry and working sphere. Concretely, the advice that was

given to the online public was concerned with the development of professional skills, for example:

"…Here are tips for starting your freelance career on the right track from *company name* head

freelancer and agency success, *tagged user* on BI Prime…" (3); "Retired FBI agent *tagged user*

shared how crisis negotiation techniques can help you ask for (and get!) the raise you deserve." (4).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic the sub-code *Future Insights* was implemented once. It was used where

organizations were informing or making predictions about future developments in the business sphere,

for example: "21 days until 2020! Prediction #2 of 5: outcomes will overshadow outputs of effort. Don't

be surprised if you start getting measured on the impact you had and the problems you solved, not just

the tasks you completed" (4).

Liking

The third main code was called *Liking* with 13 codes before the Covid-19 pandemic. The major

purpose of these posts was to make the organization more appealing to future customers and

employees and to picture the organization as a collaborative institution.

Furthermore, the sub-code *Exhibiting People* was applied 5 times before the Covid-19 pandemic

and it was assigned to posts communicating about employees' expertise and experience at the

company. The following quotes provide an example of the respective tactics: "We are pleased to

announce New York Times bestselling author, *tagged user*, has joined *company name* as vice

president of customer insights. In this role, *person's name* will serve as an expert source for

companies on the adoption of flexible talent solutions." (3); "…It has been almost 1.5 years with

company name and I'm doing the best work of my life. I work with cross-functional teams around the world and am learning new things every day..." (4). In addition, sharing information about employees' accomplishments was identified as one of the tactics implemented in posts before the Covid-19 pandemic, as it is depicted in the subsequent quote: ""I credit a large part of my success to online marketplaces..Read her #*company name* Success story on BI Prime..." (3).

The last two remaining sub-categories *Partnership* and *Appreciation* were both used four times before the Covid-19 pandemic. On one hand, the sub-code *Partnership* was applied to segments of posts in which organizations were communicating about collaborations with other companies. Furthermore, organizations were expressing feelings of excitement related to the partnership, for example in the quote: "We're excited to partner with *other company name* to provide customers with advanced data security capabilities through an integration..." (4). On the other hand, posts depicting celebration of employees were coded with *Appreciation*. The following quote provides an example of how the sub-code was implemented: "Happy #EmployeeAppreciationDay! A message from our CEO *employee name* to our incredible team" (2). Furthermore, organizations were expressing feelings of gratitude towards individuals who have participated in events organized by them: "...alongside a number of special guests including *tagged users and the companies they work at... Thank you to everyone who attended for sharing insights and inspiring us." (3).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the fourth main code among the complete set of codes with the number of 13 quotations. Moreover, the main code *Brand awareness* was applied to posts that were aimed at making the brand more visible to prospective clients. Hence, the following social media post was coded with *Brand awareness*: "Today we're celebrating our iconic *company product name*. Introduced on X, it revolutionized the quality of written communication at home and in the office."

Additionally, the sub-codes *News/Information* and *Info about Achievements* were coded seven and four times respectively. The sub-code *News/Information* was applied to social media content that was informing the online audience of new company blog articles: "New on the blog: 15 action-packed ecommerce" (2). Moreover, organizatons were sharing messages related to company updates: "*company name* gathered this week for our 2020 Kickoff – a chance t learn from our clients and talent, as well as get inspired for an exciting year ahead." (3). Next to that, one post contained a message aimed at giving back to customers by gifting them company' merch: "As the year comes to a close, we want to take time to reflect and celebrate your accomplishments with a chance to take home some *company name* swag..." (3).

Furthermore, the sub-code *Info about Achievements* was implemented where organizations were sharing information related to their successfully implemented corporate social responsibility activities such as: "We're proud to be recognized as one of *institution name* 2020 World's Most Ethical Companies®." (1). Following, posts that were aimed at communicating about business achievements were coded with this sub-code, for example: "#*company name* has received a substantial investment from software investor #*organization* to capitalize on the growing #RegTech Challenge for the financial services services market." (5). Last but not least, the sub-code *Info about Achievements* was applied to posts that were informing about achievements in terms of acquiring new customers: "Welcome to *company name*, *client name*! We're excited to relaunch this iconic luxury fashion retailer's online presence." (2).

Both least implemented sub-codes *Recruitment* and *Working Environment* were coded one time. Moreover, the content that was aimed at recruiting employees was the following: "Want to join #LifeAt*company name*? Check out our open roles around the world" (2). Additionally, only two organizations have shared information regarding the environment in which employees work, hence the sub-code *Working Environment* was implemented in the following posting: "Hear co-founders *@tagged

users* share why they started a group to empower people of color and allies at *company name* and in the tech community." (2)

4.2 During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Interest

The main code *Interest* was applied to messages through which organizations aim to wake the interest of the reader and provide them with more information on the topic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the sub-code *Linking* was applied to segments of posts in which the organizations included a link to their website or to other companies in the industry, for example in posts related to partnership or advice. Additionally, from the hashtags that were implemented in posts during the pandemic, one stood out by being related to the Covid-19 topic. The other organizations that were tagged in the social media posts were working in the same industry and were providing specific information to the reader such as advice on personal development and acquisition of new skills.

The sub-code *Asking questions* was implemented five times during the Covid-19 pandemic. Within their posts, organizations were asking questions addressed to the reader such as: "Want to improve your productivity?..." (3); "Is there a way to predict new regulatory updates.?.." (5). Then they would provide more information helping the reader to answer the question – "...Check out these time-saving" (3);"...In next week's webinar, *person name* will answer this..." (5).

Knowledge and Trust

With the main code *Knowledge and Trust* were coded posts that were aimed at educating the public on topics relevant to the organization and sphere e.g. "For offices to reopen when the time is right, employees must feel safe. Learn how our data-driven solutions can help..."

Furthermore, the first most implemented sub-code was *Events* with the number of nine quotations. In most cases, this sub-code was applied to posts that were communicating about upcoming

or past company's events. This type of content can be depicted in the following posts: "more about

company name 's Visual Insights deep learning model for visual recognition with this *company

name* webinar." (1); "Last week's ESG webinar with *other company* Investments was a smash hit!

Did you miss it? View the recording here..." (5). During the Covid-19 pandemic, company 4 and company

5 have incorporated more information regarding the key discussion points of the event e.g. "Join our

webinar, where we discuss how to implement *company product* with *company name* tools..., we

explore the powerful capabilities of these tools and how they enable organizations to successfully scale

company product principles and drive better business outcomes." (4); "...☞ Compliance: Beyond

Ticking Boxes <<<URL >>> Join *person name*, as he covers: How to get a clear picture of your clients

for KYC, how to conduct more accurate risk assessments, how to anticipate upcoming legislative

changes..." (5). Additionally, Company 5 specified who are the speakers in the event: "On *company

name* community conference focusing on #FIDLEG our CEO *name* will be presenting together with

other experts and solution providers..." (5).

The second most applied sub-code during the Covid-19 pandemic was *Industry Topic*.

Organizations, most commonly, shared relevant information rearding the industry they work in. In the

following post, company 2 has communicated a message related to the impact of the Covid-19

pandemic on consumer behaviour: "*other company name* found that #COVID19 is the top holiday

shopping concern for 55% of consumers, and that 61% plan to do most shopping online. Why analysts

are having a hard time predicting 2020 holiday sales:..." (2). A common practice for organizations during

the pandemic was to incorporate an employees' name in the social media post in order to establish

them as an expert on the subject, for example: "*employee name*, Global Head of Innovation Programs

at *company name*, discusses our approach to innovation." (4).

Followed by it, the sub-codes *Advice* and *Future Insights* were both used in five quotations

during the Covid-19 pandemic. More specifically, the sub-code *Advice* was applied in posts where

organizations were providing tips to the reader on how to acquire and develop new skills: "Being able to command a room, bring everyone's voice to the surface, and help your guests genuinely engage are essential skills for holding effective meetings. Read on for a few helpful meeting facilitation tips..." (4). Additionally, Company 3 has incorporated motivational aspects within this tactic. For example, the following post: "There is no better boost to productivity, creativity, and health than to take some time to recharge your energy and fuel your mind and body." had an image with an inspirational quote attached to it: "Rest when you're weary. Refresh and renew yourself, your body, your mind, your spirit. Then get back to work." (3).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, organizations shared content related to future insights on how the working processes will change after the pandemic. Hence, the sub-code *Future Insights* was applied to the following quotes: "For offices to reopen when the time is right, employees must feel safe. Learn how our data-driven..." (1); "With many employers considering a return to the workplace, *company name*'s Chief People Officer *employee name* has a message about RemoteWork and hybrid workplaces" (3); "Companies are kidding themselves if they think everyone is going back to the office... Hear on our approach to the future of work." (4).

The last sub-code in this category was *Product Info*, however during the Covid-19 pandemic organizations did not share content related to newly released products or updates on already existing products.

Liking

The main code *Liking* was applied 15 times during the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning that organizations focused more on communicating messages that make the company more favorable to the reader by storytelling. Furthermore, company 1 has specifically communicated about workplace inclusivity and diversity by sharing a story about an employee of color: "Throughout his 22-year career with *company name*, *employee name* has worked with clients who've questioned his abilities due

to the color of his skin. Watch as the Columbus-based *company name* shares his story." (1). Hence, the sub-code *Exhibiting People* was applied to this post. Moreover, the sub-code was applied seven times in total during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, Company 3 has shared a social media post that was celebrating the accomplishments of their employee: "Congratulations to *company name* CEO *tagged user* for being named to *organization*'s Top 100 Women Leaders in..." (3). Next to that, organizations shared stories about their employees' experience at the company, focusing on what they are working on: "As an FP&A Operations intern, I had the opportunity to partner with the R&D team to optimize" (4). Moreover, organizations were exclusively highlighting how their employees' work contributes to the organization: "One of our newest teammates to contribute is legal professional, and *company name* Legal & Compliance Manager, *@person name*... (5)".

The sub-code *Partnership* was used five times during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, when organizations were communicating about collaborations with other companies, it was mostly related to the development of new products and/or services: "We've partnered with *other company name* to help merchants connect" (2); "We partnered with *tagged company* to share the most effective ways to make your SMB holiday- ready! Download..." (2); "...The new partnership will strengthen *other company name*'s product offering while helping clients meet..." (5).

The last sub-code *Appreciation* was implemented three times during the Covid-19 pandemic. The posts that contain this sub-code were communicated by organizations with the aim of expressing gratitude towards their employees: "Thank you to the talented team and community members who hosted and attend our 50+ virtual events in Q2!..." (3); "...We're proud to have talented team members like you at *company name*, *employee name*! Thank you for all that you do." (3). Next to that, organizations were expressing appreciation towards other companies and representatives of the industry: "Thank you to the 800+ #*other company name*Partner companies from around the world" (2).

Brand awareness

The main code *Brand Awareness* is depicted in the social media posts as the general aim of the message was to bring more attention to the brand. Furthermore, it was the least applied main-code during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The sub-code *News/Information* was used in seven social media posts and the content that is depicted by information related to what the company is doing in general: "From reducing ocean plastic to minimizing lost parcels in the mail, our elite team of data scientists can help organizations tackle unfamiliar challenges." (1); "At *company name*, we don't just make software. We create the technology and services banks, asset managers, insurers, and funds rely on to remain compliant – no matter the regulatory change." (5). Subsequently,organizations showed transparency by communicating annual work reports: ""From the planet to people and everywhere in between, we aim to be sustainable in everything we do. Help hold us accountable. Take a look at our latest sustainability report and join our mission." (4). Similarly, the following quote shows that organizations shared with the online public their annual report by reflecting on the Covid-19 pandemic's influence on the work processes: "We doubled down on our values and beliefs, putting our teams and communities first, while answering challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19. See our watershed moments in our 2nd Annual Impact Report." (3).

Next, the sub-code *Info about Achievements* was applied three times during the Covid-19 pandemic. Here organizations shared news about their achievements and Company 1 has written a post about one of their old and established product: "Today we're celebrating our iconic *company product name*. Introduced on *date*, it revolutionized the quality of written communication at home and in the office." (1). Additionally, information about successfully performed work in terms of providing a product and/or service to the customer was communicated by organizations, for example: "How *tagged company* pivoted to get their CBD site on an #ecommerce platform that worked..." (2). The

organizations were acknowledging achievements related to their growth, as one of them had shared

news about company acquisition: "*company name* together with Software Investor *other company

name* announces the 100% acquisition of *other company name*, a provider of financial and economic

crime prevention solutions..." (5).

The third sub-code is *Recruitment* was implemented whenever organizations were providing

information about their available job positions: "We, at *company name*, are currently searching for a

Service Manager to join our Financial Engineering team!" (5). In some cases, the entire post was aimed

at persuading the reader to apply for the job position and others were referring to it with one or two

sentence in the full post.

The sub-code *Working Environment* was not applied in posts during the Covid-19 pandemic

since none of them were communicating about the working conditions that the organizations provides

to its' employees.

4.3 Summary of Results

To better discuss the results of this study, a summary of the relevant findings from the analysis

was provided. To begin with, a change in B2B social media content tactics during the Covid-19 pandemic

was found among the main codes *Knowledge and Trust*, *Brand Awareness*, *Interest*, and *Liking*.

Furthermore, the main code *Liking* was applied more frequently during the pandemic compared to

before. The tactics which were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic were: *Industry Topic*, *Future Insights*,

Advice and *News/Information*. The difference between both time periods was that the topic of Covid-19

had appeared within the implemented tactics, suggesting that B2B organizations communicated

messages regarding the impact of the pandemic on the company and on the work industry. Moreover,

the tactic of using hashtags in social media posts was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic since B2B

organizations incorporated Covid-19 themed hashtags during that time period. Additionally, the tactic of

giving advice to the online public has shifted during the pandemic into spreading more motivational and inspiring content rather than providing straightforward tips. The sub-codes *Product Info* and *Working Environment* were not coded in segments of data in the time frame of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Discussion

The objective of this research paper was to examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social media content tactics of B2B brands, posing the following research question: "How has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced social media content tactics on LinkedIn of B2B organizations?". To further support the answering of the main research question a sub-question was introduced: "What content tactics B2B brands implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic?". This study is based on expectations formulated on grounds of existing literature providing information on changes in social media content during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results served to answer the sub-question and the expectations, which will now be closely elaborated on.

The sub-question regards the use of B2B social media content tactics before the Covid-19 pandemic. The results from this study show that before the Covid-19 pandemic, B2B organizations incorporated a variety of tactics within their posts aimed at creating a message that will fulfill its' main objective. Furthermore, in the context of this study, the most prominent B2B content objectives were: *knowledge and trust*, *brand awareness*, *interest* and *liking*. Therefore, these findings can be supported with research performed by Juntunen at al. (2020) that makes a clear distinction of B2B social media content objectives. In general, B2B organizations use tactics such as implementing hashtags, company URL and mentioning people or employees in order to fulfill the objective *interest* (Swani et al., 2014). Hence, in the context of this study, B2B organizations were utilizing these tactics by adding hashtags related to the topic of the post and provided the reader with links to company' or partners' websites.

Additionally, the tactic of tagging users in B2B social media posts was commonly applied in combination with tactics related to the objectives *of knowledge and trust*, and *liking*.

Moreover, the results from this research paper show that the objective of spreading valuable information related to the industry and its' respective tactics are in accordance with previously identified B2B content tactics by Leek et al. (2016) such as: sharing information about current or future developments in the industry and events. According to Hanssens and Weitz (1980) product information is a tactics that is applied for the execution of the objective *awareness*. However, it can be argued that this content tactic can be used in posts depicting the objective *knowledge and trust* since it can be interpreted as a company development (Bolat et al., 2016).

Next to that, the objective *awareness* was aimed at communicating messages about the brand, hence making the reader aware of the organization and its' activities (Andersson & Wikström, 2017). The identified respective tactic of incorporating company name and logo within the social media post can be supported by existing research on the topic (Juntunen et al., 2021). Interestingly, one of the organizations has shared a post that incorporated a tactic of giving away company merchandise to the online public, which according to Peattie (1999) is generally a promotional technique used in social marketing campaigns. Additionally, Cutler and Javalgi (1994) support the finding that B2B organizations apply the tactic of communicating news and information about their brand. Furthermore, literature on the topic of corporate communication suggests that organizations disseminate messages on company achievements, more specifically, related to their corporate social responsibility activities (Falchi et al., 2022). The previous statement supports the findings of this study that B2B organizations shared information regarding their successfully implemented CSR initiatives in terms of employee wellbeing and environmental impact. Moreover, a study examining the communication of corporate image through job advertisement on LinkedIn shows that organizations use the recruitment of employees as a way to boost

their brand visibility (Coelho et al., 2022). Therefore, the results showing that B2B organizations communicated messages with the purpose to find new employees were supported by existing literature.

According to Cutler and Javalgi (1994) storytelling is a tactics that organizations apply in social media messages to advocate positive feelings among the online public. In accordance, this study revealed that B2B organizations implemented storytelling in posts that were depicting information about employees, expressing gratitude towards them and sharing excitement about company partnerships.

5.1 Main findings

This main research question regards how B2B social media content tactics were influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. From the performed analysis it can be concluded that the following B2B social media content tactics changed during the Covid-19 pandemic: sharing information regarding the future of the company and work industry, giving advice to the online public, and hashtags. Additionally, the results show that Covid-19 pandemic did have an influence on the main objective communicated by B2B organizations regarding the dissemination of positive and emotional content.

To begin with, the objective *liking* was depicted to be more prominent during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before. This can be further explained with the research conducted by Azer et al. (2021) examining the types of social media content and the feelings that it facilitates among users during a crisis. There Azer et al. (2021) highlight the importance of spreading positive and calming feelings in order to enhance the perceived favorability and credibility of the organization. The tactic of storytelling remained the same during the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the content of messages communication about company partnership changed.

Further findings from the study show that B2B organizations incorporated inspirational motives among their tactic of giving advice through their social media postings during the Covid-19 pandemic. To support the results from this study, Dale et al. (2017) found that inspirational content predominantly

focused on the topic of overcoming existing obstacles and featured feelings of hope and support.

Additionally, Azer et al. (2021) highlight the importance of communicating messages that provoke

feelings of hope since during a crisis the online public is more likely to engage with this type of content.

This study found that the topic of Covid-19 has been depicted in tactics of implementing

hashtags and sharing news related to the company and the industry in general. Hence, the expectation

that B2B organizations will share more information regarding the influence of the pandemic on the

organization and work industry was met. The assumption was based on the findings from Azer et al.

(2021) that user engagement on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic was highly perceived

among posts spreading information regarding the impact of the crisis.

According to Tosun (2022), organizations should focus on communicating product information

more during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the findings from this study do not support the

assumption that B2B organizations will share more product related messages. The reason can be that

according to Tosun (2022) informational content is preferred by social media users to promotional type

of messages, especially during a crisis. In like manner, the statement from De Vlack (2020) that,

organizations should not engage in branding activities and content during critical times, since it can be

perceived as improper.

5.2 Strengths, limitations and future research

The main theoretical strength of this study is that it is one of the first to examine the impact of the

pandemic specifically on B2B organizations and the content tactics they implemented in social media

posts. Generally, existing literature was concerned with analyzing how social media can benefit

organizations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, scholars have previously analyzed social

media content of organizations during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of what messages achieved

higher user engagement and what topics were most frequently touched upon. Hence, more work is

needed in order to explore how Covid-19 pandemic affected the use of social media communication tactics.

As with most studies, this study has a few limitations and areas of improvement; however, they can serve as a basis for future research possibilities. To begin with, the fact that there was very limited amount of literature that provides insight on how the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced social media marketing in terms of specific content tactics was one of the main limitations for this study. Therefore, it was difficult to formulate specific expectations that will be supported with the results from the performed analysis. Furthermore, this research was limited to analyzing the content tactics of only five B2B organizations. Hence, a wider variety of posts and tactics can be identified and interpreted if more organizations were included in the analysis. For example, in their research paper Juntunen et al. (2020) distinguish B2B social media content objectives and tactics, where the analysis was performed on 10 B2B organizations.

Next to that, this study identified the general social media objectives and tactics implemented by B2B organizations before and during the Covid-19. However, a proposition for relevant future research is to apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyze the frequency and reason for use of specific words incorporated in their social media communication. Furthermore, by providing more definitive outcomes it could be argued whether some words are more successful at delivering a certain message thus making it more engaging for the online public.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore how B2B social media content tactics were influenced by the Covid-19

pandemic. It begins by explaining the relevance of social media marketing implementation within the

working processes of B2B organizations. By reviewing existing literature, it was found that the Covid-19

pandemic had an influence on the social media messages that were communicated by organizations.

Furthermore, studies show that posts provoking positive feelings are better perceived by the user during

a crisis. Hence, it was expected for B2B organizations to include more emotional content. Next, it was

anticipated that during the pandemic topics related to the Covid-19 pandemic will be depicted in B2B

social media communication. Lastly, it was expected that B2B organizations will share product related

information during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the data analysis was performed, the results showed that there has been a change in B2B

content tactics during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objective of being perceived as more favorable was

recognized to be more frequently applied during the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the tactic of

storytelling remained unchanged. The tactics of informing the online public about future or current

developments within the industry and the company were concerned with topics related to the Covid-19

pandemic. Additionally, the tactic of implementing hashtags within the social media posts was affected

by Covid-19 related themes. Moreover, the tactic of giving advice was found to incorporate inspirational

and motivational aspects that evoke a feeling of hope. However, the number of sources examining the

social media content of organizations during the Covid-19 was very limited. Furthermore, the majority of

the available academic sources were concerned with users' perception and engagement. Thus, future

research into the topic will be beneficial, where a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods will be

applied to provide an in-depth analysis of the frequencies of the implemented tactics and the use of

specific words.

To conclude, this study was the first to examine how B2B social media tactics were influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides a good base for further research into the topic since the use of social media platforms provides a variety of benefits when implemented in the working process of B2B organizations. Marketing specialists in the B2B sphere will be able to build effective social media strategies during crises, thus eliminating the negative impact. Therefore, it is important to continue research in this field to help B2B organizations in the process of disseminating messages on social media during a crisis.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Coding Scheme with Examples

Main Code	Description	Sub-code	Example
Brand Awareness	Raising awareness towards the brand in order to become more visible and competitive	Information about achievements	"*Today we're celebrating our iconic Selectric typewriter. Introduced on July 31st, 1961, it revolutionized the quality of written communication at home and in the office.*"
	General news or information about the organization	News/Information	"*We like everything from *tagged company* to newsletters form *tagged company* and podcasts like *tagged company*.*"
	Information that is concerned with the working environment of employees	Working Environment	"*Meet #BCinColor, our newest employee resource group! Hear co-founders *@tagged users* share why they started a group to empower people of color and allies at *company name* and in the tech community.*"

	Postings that aim at finding new employees	Recruitment	*"*company name* is seeking a highly motivated individual to join our team as Director, Payment Channel Sales. Apply or tag a candidate you think would love to join #Lifeat*company name*:"*
Interest	Letting the user know that there is more information available on the topic of interest	Linking	*Hashtag, Link to company website e.g. "Learn more here..."*
	Asking questions throughout the posting	Asking Questions	*"Will you be shopping for Cyber Monday deals today?"*
Knowledge and Trust	Sharing information with users with the purpose of giving them an advice on a certain topic	Advice	*"Check out these time-saving tips from the pro talent at *company name*."*
	Communicating news about an upcoming event related to the industry	Events	*"Join our webinar, where we discuss how to implement *company product* with *company name* tools– no matter where you are at in your Agile journey..."*
	Providing information and/or predictions on the	Future Insights	*"For offices to reopen when the time is right,*

	future related to the industry		*employees must feel safe. Learn how our data-driven solutions can help:..."*
	Communicating with users on relevant to the industry topics	Industry Topic	*"One year has passed since the enforcement of the #PRIIP KID regulation. The regulator requirements to the PRIIP manufacturers..."*
	Giving Information about a certain product/service the organization is providing	Product Info	*"Agencies on *company name*: If you have a Plus account, you can now create a custom URL for your agency profile."*
Liking	Thanking employees for certain achievements	Appreciation	*"Thank you to everyone who attended for sharing insights and inspiring us."*
	Sharing positive stories about people in the industry or employees	Exhibiting People	*"Congratulations to *company name* CEO *tagged user* for being named to *organization*'s Top 100 Women Leaders in Technology of 2021..."*
	Letting the audience know about company partnerships	Partnership	*"We're excited to partner with *other company name* to*

| | *provide customers with advanced data security capabilities through an integration between *company product* and *other company product*."* |

Appendix B

Table B1

Number of Main Codes Applied Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Main Code Name	Before Pandemic	During Pandemic
Interest	45	43
Knowledge and Trust	27	27
Liking	13	15
Brand Awareness	13	13

Table B2

Number of Sub-codes Applied Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Sub-code Name	Before Pandemic	During Pandemic
Asking Questions	5	5
Events	7	9
Advice	4	5
Industry Topic	9	8
Future Insights	1	5
Product Info	6	0
News/Information	7	7
Info about Achievements	4	3
Recruitment	1	3
Working Environment	1	0
Exhibiting People	5	7
Appreciation	4	3
Partnership	4	5